

Islamic Christian Dialogue

Coexistence. Brotherhood. Love

Dr. Lama Al-Yahiya

## Dedication

In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful.

In dedication to the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

To the spiritual renewer who inspired this research.... His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Kufaro mercy be upon him, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Fatwa. The imam of the Naqshbandi Tariqah in his time.

Also dedicated to the soul of the knower of God and educator of virtue from whom it is an honor to seek knowledge from....Sheikh Dr. Rajab Deeb mercy be upon him, the first religious teacher in Damascus, Imam Naqshbandi in the Levant and in immigration countries in his time.

To mom and dad .. and to all who have favor in my scientific journey.

I dedicate this research.

# **Introduction**

A summary of a book:

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In the name of Allah the Most Gracious Most Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad, his family and companions; God creates the universe in accordance with the constant divine laws that does not change and won't change till day of Judgment. One of this laws that God chooses one of His worshippers as a prophet and a messenger whenever people go far away from Him, sunk in error, became perplexed and their silly minds invent gods; worshipped and sacred them. God's mercy was manifested in sending his worshippers a prophet or a messenger Inviting them to return to the path of the right to worship their Creator. So this situation continues till the last prophet and Imam of messengers Muhammad slave of Allah was sent.

Allah chooses him to carry the complete message of Islam which accepted by God to be valid to guide all people till the occurrence of the Hour.

Because the Islamic law is distinguished by its flexibility In devising legal provisions that are suitable with the developments of time through ages.

In addition to the general principles set by the Legislator that addresses the mind and encourages seeking science.

Islam's position of basic freedoms. So the true religion raises society to the highest levels that can a society reach over centuries.

Then the Islamic nation fell into hard times; it was then the people carrying the banner of Islam became corrupted and strayed from true Islam. Ideological differences arose and Islamic groups appeared who lacked coexistence and effective dialogue in their meetings. All this weakened the Islamic nation and strengthened its enemies.

So it was plunged in the darkness of ignorance and colonialism. While that the Industrial Revolution took place in Europe and the free capital system divided the community into two categories: needy poor and the capitalistic wealth owners.

This laid the grounds for socialism and communism which spread in Russia, China and Eastern Europe.

Then there were two camps in the world, the Western camp which believed in free capitalist system led by the United States, and the eastern camp which supported socialism.

Countries were classified into the group of major industrialized countries, the group of developed countries and the group of developing countries<sup>1</sup>, that the Islamic countries were part of it.

During this time the Islamic countries were like buried treasures of civilization, thoughts and great economic wealth. But these treasures and wealth are absent due to

the exploitation of their owners. Until the destructive wars took place, so the United Nations regulations were formed.

Military strategies changed after the Major Countries developed weapons of mass destruction, which grew in destructive potential. Also its usage is no longer that easy. This resulted in the beginning of the Cold War between the camps of east and west. Then the USA managed to monopolize leading the world as one pole with the major Countries revolving in its orbit.

American Powers wanted the world to communicate under the banner of globalization. This system that they developed according to their interests and aims to control the third world countries intellectually, economically if not militarily. Of course, Islam will be unbreakable fortress which prevents them from achieving their goals. Therefore they considered Islam as the enemy and openly showed their enmity towards it. For this there had to be something big to affect the perception of Islam all over the world. From a heavenly complete religion which calls for brotherhood, love, tolerance, free dialogue and respects different opinions and viewpoints of others to a terrorist religion that calls for violence, force and bigotry, so the strike of eleventh of September took place and was as a blow against Islam. It was exploited badly for the sake of insulting Islam as a religion, doctrine and a system of life.

This incident has put Islam in the case of charge, so that Muslims took the task of defending it, but a lot of them have failed because they used the wrong means and methods brought which backfired and resulted negatively.

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<sup>1</sup> Developed countries are the ones who have low standard of living and a decrease in gross national product, they are also called countries of the third world, see: Free encyclopedia, Wikipedia, [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

This benefits globalization, and the enemies of Islam. So one way was left for those who carry the banner of truth under all these circumstances. This way is useful to restore the correct understanding of the Islamic law, and to give the true picture and transfer it from the place of accusation to the glory of worldly sovereign that is derived from the teachings of the divine legislations.

It is dialogue.

Islam is undoubtedly based on dialogue in different meanings and multiple levels.

Firstly, it is a dialogue between God the Almighty and the human being to persuade him to respond to the call of revelation and guidance.

Secondly, it is a dialogue with an a polytheist who believes in multiple gods to persuade him mentally and subconsciously with the principle of monotheism.

Thirdly, a dialogue with Aldahry atheist who does not believe in religion because it contains the tranquility of certainty, the light of prophecy and proofs of monotheism.

Fourthly, a dialogue with People of the Book as Islam is a completion of their revelations, paves, affirms, and guide to it.

The difference between Islamic Sharia and Sharia of People of the Book is not about the nature of the people of faith, but in the legislation that was dictated by the divine wisdom.

Islam is the religion that believes in all prophets. And Islamic dialogue with the two religions Judaism and Christianity as Quran assets and Sunnah applies, and as the way the rightly guided Caliphs , is based on five basic principles:

1. Report the call of Islam to all creation, especially for people of heavenly messages, as Judaism, Christianity and Sabianism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Saba emerged from one religion into another by means of deception. Its origin underwent. Also Saba became Alsabion, they are a group from the People of the Book. Alsabion said that mastermind of the world is more than one, they say that natives are old, but they say about maximizing the seven planets and the twelve constellations and portray it in their temples and lifted, sacrifices, millet. Also they have five prayers in day and night closer to the prayers of Muslims. They fast the month of Ramadan and they direct themselves to the Kaaba in their prayers, the Sacred House. They refused to eat dead, meat, blood or pork. Today they are remnants of Haran north of Iraq, and they are very few.

2. Promote virtue and prevent vice.
3. No compulsion in religion.
4. Helping one another in righteousness and piety.
5. The prohibition of aggression and restriction of war morally.<sup>3</sup>

Still these principles constitute a valid and valuable background for a successfully opened future dialogue between the three religions.

Here we should note about the document (Nostra Aetate)1965 issued by the Vatican community that adopted dialogue with Muslims accommodated them in terms of promotion of love and unity among followers of the monotheistic religions. Though the Vatican community dictated clearly that the church looks with esteem to Muslims who worship God, The Ever-living, the Self-Subsisting, Merciful Almighty and the Creator of heaven and earth, who directed his words to humans, and they subject themselves totally to His true provision.

1) See Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, p. 169, and Ibn Hazm part of sects, passions and creeds, Cairo , Khanji Library. part 1.p. 19.

As Ibrahim submitted to Allah. Also they exalt Jesus as a prophet, as they didn't accept him as a God. In honor of his Virgin mother. Although many disputes and enmities had taken place over the centuries between Christians and Muslims, the Bible society urges everyone to try to forget the past, and seek to achieve true understanding between them by working together to maintain and support justice in society and moral values. Also peace and freedom for all

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<sup>3</sup> See Abdul-Malik Mansour Hassan Musabi, Islamic dialogue with other monotheistic religions. Backgrounds and perspectives, Social Guidance Foundation. [www.sge-irshad.org](http://www.sge-irshad.org)



mankind.<sup>4</sup> However the question is that do Muslims and Christians share the concepts and values which establish modern civilization. Especially science the West seems to forget its responsibility which the Muslim world faces from the destruction of military and media wars. Despite that Muslims must make big scientific and intellectual efforts to interpret and explain their cultural baselines. And purify themselves from extremism and toughness that are not its way, but by following the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the application of the principle of dialogue.

Though religious dialogue has an active role in keeping the world away from the dangers of extremism and terrorism.<sup>5</sup>

Through teaching the values of forgiveness and peace. This goal is reached if we pay attention to three major factors:

1. Defending international legislation and the idea of partnership between regional systems that's makes the international regulations, including the wide Muslim Arab regional system and Western regional system with its two branches the European and the American.
2. Isolate terrorism and violence movements and combat these movements that claim falsely a religious origin, whether a Jewish fanatic Sharon that is supported by fundamentalist movements, or Christian or Muslim

movements.

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<sup>4</sup> Conciliar documents, The Second Ecumenical Council, converted to Arabic by Youssef Bsharah, P.H, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit, 1984, P.863.

<sup>5</sup> Terrorism was defined with many definitions, but the Committee of regional experts which its meetings were arranged by the United Nations at the centre of Vienna (14 - 18 March 1988): I took this definition: terrorism is a violence strategy forbidden internationally, motivated by believing concerns , it aims at creating a scary violence inside a special segment of a particular community to gain access to power, or call for a demand or injustice, regardless of whether the perpetrators of violence work for themselves and on behalf of it, or on behalf of a state. See: Saeed network, [www.saeed.com](http://www.saeed.com) , Asaad As-Sahmarany's book: No War, Yes Jihad, Beirut, Dar Al-Nafaes, P.H, 2003, P.5 onwards.

3. Build a strong alliance between the followers of the three religions for cooperation regarding the great modern dangers facing the world, most notably the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and non-conventional weapons monopolized by the advanced industrial countries. Also the widespread of crime and violence, environmental pollution, family disintegration and loss of the moral guidance and spiritual repayment of the new technologies.<sup>6</sup>

Based on the foregoing this is a modest plan for a research that deals with a realistic picture of a society which applies the previously mentioned ideas, so it lives life of tolerance and dialogue. It also embodies cooperation and intellectual, social and national communication between religions in its nominal sense.

In the Syrian society, that a Muslim and a Christian coexist without social, humanitarian, religious distinctions. Even more! Since Syria opened her arms before and after wars through its institutions, associations and even its individuals for every Christian and Muslim, wanting to know Islam and apply its principles in understanding and dialogue and co-existence. This research, is only a simple study of the great ideas put forward by Syrian scientists about the Muslim-Christian dialogue. Ideas that seek to define Islam and its call for coexistence amongst followers of religions, so that these ideas have become role models, and foundations any dialogist can depend on them for a dialogue with the other, whether that other was a Muslim or one of the people of the Book.

So I wish that God gives me luck and diligence in this study and what I meant by themes and ideas.

May God gives me success.

The reason for the problematic study selected:

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<sup>6</sup> Abd Al-Malek Mansur Hasan Al-Musabi, Islamic Dialogue with other religions: Backgrounds and horizons, Social Guidance institution, [www.sge-Irshad.org](http://www.sge-Irshad.org).

The importance of the study and the reasons for choosing the researcher has several things:

1. Demanding satisfaction of Allah and His Messenger through conveying message of God to all human beings, including Muslims and Christians who don't understand the exalted teachings of Islam by dialogue and the recognition of the other.
2. Achieving personal interest of the researcher on the subject of religious dialogue, which has become a necessity for every researcher must see it as a science of Sharia Sciences.
3. Correct misconceptions about Islam and Muslims from the side of their enemies, or the ignorant.
4. Highlight a thing of thought, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro,<sup>7</sup> God's mercy be upon him, one of the most important scholars of the twentieth century, and one of the most important men of religious dialogue in his time. The researcher sees that it is helpful to add his ideas to the library of modern Islamic thought.
5. Add a new article in the Islamic Christian dialogue launched in Syria.

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(1) Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro (1911-2004) the son of the Syrian-rich environment with its Spectrums, ethnicity and religious doctrines that are dedicated to one goal; to Islam renewal, revival and goodness. To return it to the spirit of the Qur'an and the correct Sunnah. He got an honorary doctorate in origins of religion and Sharia sciences from Omar Farouk University in Pakistan in 1984. Also an honorary doctorate in Islamic Dawah Science from the University of Omdurman in 1994.

He was appointed head of the Supreme Council of Fatwa 1964. He was Imam of Naqshbandi Sufi in his time. His call fruited the spread of Allah's word in the East and the West, institutes and Sharia colleges which thousands of scholars and preachers graduated from. His Eminence has been to more than one hundred trips around the world to communicate the message of Islam. He also received approximately 500 delegations of researchers of truth from different human groups, colors and ethnic backgrounds. All this for more than 60 years of painstaking research and hard work. So he found a real understanding and convergence doctrine among all the doctrines of the nation, and presented an honorable presentation of the image of Islam in the west. And he established a school based on love of God and self-purification in building the virtual man.

6. Open new horizons in front of who are concerned in the subject of Islamic Christian dialogue, in order to enhance and increase its activities and its applications.

#### Aims of the research:

1. Spread of Islam and its stand of Islamic Christian dialogue which is divinely commanded on Muslims.
2. Demonstrate the greatness of Islam and Muslims struggle to stand in the face of grudges and foreign animosities.
3. Provide some realistic images of the Islamic-Christian dialogue emanating from Syria, with all the advantages of this picture and disadvantages in order to develop the positives and avoid the negatives in the future.
4. Defining Syria to the west its history, its people. This country that involved the world for five years how it was before the war and what its Muslims scientists present to the call for dialogue.

#### The method used in the study:

Several approaches are followed in the research. The historical approach is followed in the first chapter and section of the second chapter. While the curriculum descriptive analytical approach is followed in the second section of the chapter II. In other chapters, on the temporal and spatial borders the search shed light on models of the contemporary dialogues that were at the hands of our Syrians scholars- on the top of them His Eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro- inside and outside Syria, with the analysis of the content of the articles and lectures.

To speak about the way to work was by the rules and assets set by the management of the college in writing researches and theses of postgraduate studies. From the collection of the scientific material to arranging and composing it on the computer.

\*The limits of the study:

Place: is what is related to the Islamic-Christian dialogue which commenced in Syria and from it into some other countries.

Time: period between the years 1950-2010

Title: Islamic- Christian dialogue, coexistence, brotherhood and love.

Difficulties in the study:

Despite the large number of activities undertaken for the sake of a Muslim-Christian dialogue in Syria, most of these activities have not been documented in the archive, or recorded. This is in addition to the loss of a lot of the archives and activities dialogue. This might weaken the abundance of the scientific material. So I hope to be excused from those responsible and all who are concerned. Other than that the research was facilitated, thanks to God and thanks to some supervisors, teachers and a veteran scientist who helped me in guidance, supervision and care.

Thank you. May God reward you on my behalf.

contents of the study:

The introduction is about the importance of the subject, reason for its choice, the followed approach in this study and previous studies, definitions of the study terms, difficulties I faced, content, and references.

-Preface about definition of terms of study.

-First chapter: a study about the Syrian environment.

1. Syrian history and culture.

-A glimpse at the history of Syria.

-Islamic conquests in the Levant.

2. Muslims in Syria.

-Their doctrines and their dispersion in Syria.

-Their systems and laws.

3. Christians in Syria.

-Their denominations and churches.

-Regulations and laws prevailing between them and the Muslims.

-The extent of the Christian presence in public life.

-Second chapter:

-Islamic- Christian dialogue in Syria.

1. A viewpoint of the Syrian Muslim-Christian dialogue:

-This dialogue rules and etiquette.

2. The first feature of this dialogue and its basics.

-A glimpse at the Muslim-Christian dialogue in general.

-The history of the Muslim-Christian dialogue in Syria (the Levant).

3. The reality of the contemporary dialogue and its levels.

- Levels of Muslim-Christian dialogue in Syria.
- Reflections on the reality of this dialogue.
- 4. Means of the Syrian Muslim-Christian dialogue and its themes.
- Means of dialogue in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- Aims of Islamic-Christian dialogue and its reflection.

-Third Chapter:

1. Belief in all Prophets and Apostles and their call for monotheism.
2. The issue of coexistence between Muslims and Christians.
3. Recognition of the other.
4. Tolerance in Islam.
5. The birth of Jesus Christ.
6. Islam and world peace.

-Chapter four:

Evaluative points about how Muslim-Christian dialogue is achieving its aims in Syria.

1. Reflections on what was presented in the search.
  - Weaknesses in the process of the dialogue.
  - Inter-religious dialogue has broad-dimensions.
2. Future vision towards the dialogue.
  - The nature of the Christian-Islamic Relations.
  - What are the points of convergence between Islam and Christianity.

- Towards a better future.
- Conclusion.
- General indexes.
- The list of sources and references.
- Contents.



## Preface: The definition of (Dialogue) vocabularies

### And its branches

#### The linguistic definition of word Discourse:

Discourse is from word hawara, and to dialogue means to respond, al-muhawara is al mujawabeh and reviewing the speech, so the dialogued means the reviewed the speaking between themselves.<sup>8</sup>

The origin Hawar carries three origins, firstly: The colour. Secondly: Returning. Thirdly, to rotate<sup>9</sup>. In searching for the meaning of the second origin that has been called Hawar, it shows that "Hawar" is the symbol of returning and it is a general symbol includes a set of accurate meanings that stopping at them helps to be acquaint with the meaning of dialogue.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2- The Idiomatic Definition of Word Discourse:

Discourse is defined as review the speaking and circulate it between two parties. It is a type of the talk between two persons or two teams where speaking is circulated equally between them, in a calm way with avoiding animosity and discrimination<sup>11</sup>, with the readiness of both parties to accept the truth even appeared at the hand of the other party<sup>12</sup>.

It is also known as a discussion between two parties or more in order to correct the speaking, show the pretext, prove the right and prevent the falsehood. More important to make each party disclose the hidden to his friend without forcing the latest to the convictions he carries and to go on the right way of inquiring to reach the right.

In order to reach, the two parties, the desired end, the must accomplish minor ends that should be draw attention to them :

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<sup>8</sup> Al-Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, modified by Mustafa Deeb Al-Baga, Beirut, Dar al-Yamama, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit, 1980, P.84.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Fares, Language Standard Lexicon, Investigation by: Abd- As-Salam Muhammad Haroun, Cairo, Mustafa Al-Bani library, 2<sup>nd</sup>Edit, 1969, Vol.2, P.116.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, P.84

<sup>11</sup> Saeed bin Faleh Al-Maghassi, Educations by Dialogue with Youths and Its Effect in Save Them from Perversion, Riyadh, Dar al-Watan, P.H, 2004, P.37.

<sup>12</sup> Adel Noor Al-Deen, A Dialogue or a Debate(Hiwar Am Jadal), Ar-Rushd Bookstore, P.H, P.12.

- 1- To recognize other viewpoints.
- 2- Search, quest, investigation and examination in enlightening the available visions and fantasies in order to reach better and more stable in following dialogues.<sup>13</sup>

- 3- The concept of dialogue in the Quranic and prophetic usage:

The word dialogue has been mentioned with its derivations three times in the Holy Quran:

- Allah says: ( **he said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument...** ) Al-kahf surah, verse 34

- Allah says: ( **he said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument...** ) Al-kahf surah, verse 37

- Allah says: (**and God (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you** ) Al-Mujadilah surah, verse 1.

" The word 'said', considering it as one of the word dialogue connotations, it has been mentioned in the holy Quran 1700 times which indicate the powerful presence of discursal scenes and stories in the Quran.

- In Hadith-Sharif: the word 'discourse' is not found in it. However, this does not mean the absence of discourse concept in his (prophet Muhammad) speech to his companions. As to his attitude of discourse which he depended on questioning and answering and he used them in his sessions and invitational attitudes, for they are innumerable and this indicates that the meaning of discourse and review the saying and the replying are existed in the Quranic and prophetic usage<sup>14</sup>.

- The holy Quran has been rich with discursal positions nearly 120 positions, distributed throughout thousand verses of the book of Allah, Exalted is He, a sixth of the Quran. Discourse patterns in the holy Quran are variable and to search for them, it needs pages and pages because each attitude contains lessons in different fields of life, for example:

- 1- The discourse of Allah the Almighty with angels and Iblis, Lucifer, curse be upon him, Allah says: {**Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not. "And He taught**

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<sup>13</sup> Adnan As-Saqqa, A Quite Dialogue (Hiwar Hade'), P.H, 2007,P.11.

<sup>14</sup> Adel Noor Al-Deen, A dialogue or a Debate (Hiwar Am Jadal), P.31.

**Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell me the nature of these if ye are right.} The Heifer, verses(30,31)**

2- The dialogues between prophet Muhammad and the people of the book once, and between him and Muslims another once that the holy Quran referred to them in many verses starting with the word( They ask thee) as Allah says in The Heifer, verse (189) { **They ask thee concerning the New Moons. Say: They are but signs to mark fixed periods of time in (the affairs of) men, and for Pilgrimage. It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back: It is virtue if ye fear God. Enter houses through the proper doors: And fear God: That ye may prosper.}**

3- Dialogues of prophets, peace be upon them, with their people. For instance, the dialogue of Ibrahim with his father, Moses' dialogue with Pharaoh and Jesus with Disciples as it is mentioned in Al-Ana 'am, verse(74) { **Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: " Takest thou idols for gods? For I see thee and thy people in manifest error."**}

4-Discoursal stories in the holy Quran are many and some of them has been mentioned in Al-Kahf (the cave) that wise Message( Quran) has narrated them in a discoursal way.

- Then, the purified prophetic sunnah has completed applying that approach. Prophet Muhammad has discoursed with polytheists in Makkah and so did with Muslims in many incidents and positions that Sunnah and Hadith have written them down. He also had a conversation with the people of the Book in Almadinah. After that, his companions ( may Allah be pleased with them) have followed prophet Muhammad's method and it would refer to examples in the following of the research, Allah willing .

#### 4) Between Discourse and Other Idioms:

Defining the concept of dialogue requires differentiating between this concept and other idioms. For instance, dispute, stubbornness, controversy, invitation, persuasion and conciliation. To make this clear, we say that discourse is the instinctive manner of the maturity of mind and its steadiness. It is also the reaction of the spirit with means better to the issues and problems it meets. If you want to be attractive in your speaking, you should formulate it in a discoursal way<sup>15</sup>. Here, the difference appears between

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<sup>15</sup> Muhammad Ahmed Abd Al-Jawad, Administration by Dialogue (Al-Idara Bl Hiwar), Egypt, The Islamic printing and publishing House, P.H, 2005, P.26.

discourse and other idioms. For more details, we defined these idioms as following:

- Dispute: linguistically: is the severity of animosity. To dispute means to debate<sup>16</sup>. Idiomatically: it is the severity of quarrel and what related to it in the frame of argument in words. Dispute might be for truth or for falsehood. Dispute and discourse are similar in being a conversation between two parties, but then they differentiate because dialogue aims at reach the truth in the subject without animosity necessarily. However, dispute require compelling the enemy and defeat him in the inference context.<sup>17</sup>
- Invitation: linguistically: is to call and to call for<sup>18</sup>. Idiomatically: is calling for, it means to fetch the other party to your side because it should be from one party and it differs from discourse, for dialogue is a comprehensive form and a manner of convergence, attraction, and interaction between the two parties.<sup>19</sup>
- Persuasion: linguistically: to be persuaded means to be satisfied<sup>20</sup>. Idiomatically: it is rational and formal processes where one of the parties attempt to affect the other one and force him to submit an idea; in other words, to apply ( I win ) plan, for persuasion is a part of discourse process but it is not substitution<sup>21</sup>.
- Stubbornness: linguistically: to stubborn , stubborn him and stubbornly or overcome and overcoming<sup>22</sup>. Idiomatically: it intend to exceed the assembly , reputation or the absolute obstinacy<sup>23</sup>. It is also different from discourse because the latest aims at reach to rightness and truth and if any of them changed his mind to prejudice, discourse would be stubbornness.
- Controversy: linguistically: to controverse your brother in a matter and how you accomplish it and it is acceptable. The controversy is the deliberation and the competition in controversing and fetch all what is

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<sup>16</sup> Al-Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, P.19.

<sup>17</sup> Zuhair Kutbi, The Art of Dialogue (Fan Al-Hiwar), Mecca, P.H, 1994, Vol.1, P.13

<sup>18</sup> Al-Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, P.205.

<sup>19</sup> Adnan As-Saqqqa, The Quite Dialogue, P.18.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Manzour, The Tongue of Arab (Lisan Al-Arab), Beirut, Dar Sader, 1<sup>st</sup>Edit, P.H, Vol.8, P.297.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Ahmed Abd Al-Jawad, Administration by Dialogue (Al-Idara Bl Hiwar), P.27

<sup>22</sup> Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Ali Al-Muqri Al-Faiyoumy, The Illuminating Lantern ( Al-Misbah Al-Munir),Beirut, Al-Ilmiyah library, P.H, Vol.5, P.523.

<sup>23</sup> Zuhair Kutbi, The Art of Dialogue,( Fan Al Hiwar), Vol.1, P.13

seen in the vision<sup>24</sup>. Idiomatically: controversy is named as deepening the one dimension and explaining it more. I want to controverse him with a view to confute or persuade him that my speaking is right<sup>25</sup>.

This is opposite to dialogue because discourse is a discussion to prove the truth and prevent falsehood. It is a cooperation between conversers with an aim to reach the truth whoever it belongs to.

- Conciliation: linguistically: The middle of something, to reconcile something, so it is reconciled, to divide the thing between them equally<sup>26</sup>. Idiomatically: it means no one would win because the both sides have to concede some of requirements.<sup>27</sup>
- Negotiation: linguistically: to delegate him the matter, in other words to return it to him. So the two partners negotiated in money means they share it and to negotiate his matter means to agree with him when people negotiate something means they negotiate each other.<sup>28</sup> Idiomatically: it is an expressional attitude based on fearing, exchanging and bringing the viewpoints close, and using all means of persuasion to save the interests to get a certain benefit by forcing the enemy to do or abstain a particular thing<sup>29</sup>. From the definition of the previous two terms, we conclude that they differ from discourse because the latest does not contain forcing or conceding any of requirements.

5- Christian- Islamic Discourse: it is the dialogue where the first party is Muslim belongs to Islamic religion while the second party is Christian belongs to Christianity that take different forms such as meeting, conferences and colloquies that brought the two parties together as well as books and articles written about discourse topic. The Islamic-Christian dialogue is distinct from other types of dialogue with rules and conditions that the converser should adhere to them.

6- Conditions of The Islamic-Christian Discourse: Islam has been pervaded in east parts or in west ones for the grace of meaningful discourse; in other

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<sup>24</sup> Az-Zubaidy, The Crown of the Pride( Taj Al-Arous), Vol.1, P.3554.

<sup>25</sup> Adnan As-Saqqa, The Quite Dialogue, P.19.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, Vol.1, P.326.

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Abd Al-Jawad, The Management in Dialogue, P.28.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Razi, Mukhtar As-Sahah, Vol.1, P.517

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Abd Al-Jawad, The Management of Dialogue, P.28.

words, accepting the equality amongst all people and nations. By discourse, persuasion, giving the true notion of Islam and trying to discuss others respect them, then Islam achieves victory and its transcendental invitation that is based on simplicity and true belief will be accepted. And, adhering to human rights especially working for justice, equality, freedom, human brotherhood and flexibility. Islamic approach is to follow the righteous and absolute way of discourse that means disclosing the abstract truth, and fulfilling friendship between conversers. Furthermore, Islam is a permanent invitation to discourse with people of other religions. Moreover, it is a true invitation to civilisations' dialogue in order to unfold the fabrication of non-spiritual civilisation and their launching only from concretes and ascertain the correctness of Islamic civilisation approach which is based on considering both materials and spirituals.

Discourse is more useful than solitude alienation, disagreement or isolation and extraversion because it accomplishes the Islamic interest by spreading out the invitation calmly as prophet Muhammad did to polytheists when he was in Makkah. Since discourse is an evidence of principle and self-confidence, and as we knew it the religion of tolerance, reasonability and stability. Moreover, to form its doctrine and implant the belief in the human spirit, Islam depends on mind, wisdom, science and its balances and the exchange of useful opinions to show the truth and prefer the interest and offer happiness atmosphere. On the other hand, it does not scorn others culture, knowledge, experiences; however, it corrects the harmful or indirect ones. Furthermore, it, unforced<sup>30</sup>, dispatch people to goodness. Today, there is a big need life and coexistence discourse and the dialogue of human and society issues with an aim to inquest religions' values, extract social forms and face circumstances and complexities of world. In this field discourse takes many trends:

- 1) The disputable critical trend: it has many trends :
  - i. Verbal trend<sup>31</sup>.
  - ii. Textual trend which take an interest in applying Islamic notions of religious text on texts of other religions.
- 2) The Jurisprudent trend: it is dominated by jurisprudent feature despite of the differences of diligences and geo-historical contexts.

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<sup>30</sup> Wahbeh Az-Zuhaily, *The Issues of the contemporary Jurisprudence and Intellect*, Damascus, Dar Al-Fekr, P.H, 2006, 573.

<sup>31</sup> This trend is the approach that Mu'tazila started it and Al-Ashaera and Maturidi continued in it.

- 3) The descriptive historical: it is distinguished by neutralism in comparison with the disputable trend.
- 4) Mystic, Sufi direction: it search for union and agreement from the differences of forms and phenomena. It is also the most understanding direction regarding to other trends.<sup>32</sup>

To confront the recent global system that based on the blind dominant material power and to face the great collapses, backwardness, starvation and poverty, it is necessary to constitute a new alliance, historical bloc and communal faithful front combines believers on the basis of rules and principles of true heavenly messages that the holy Quran has brought them in an endeavour to build a better world with the values of right, justice and dignity because the general history is not a history of religions and doctrines rather it is a history of common perceiving the values and morals of Allah. It is the history of present and future. Let us not forget the matters of human rights such as minority and majority, citizenship and Dhimmi, and administrating and governing that need mutual efforts to pervade the Islamic-Christian lawful attitude of all the previous.<sup>33</sup>

For all that and taking the previous considerations, there were conditions that Muslim must be endowed with; in order to address the discourse with the people of the Book. The basis of these conditions:<sup>34</sup>

1. Adhering to the Book and Sunnah in the process of discourse, Allah says: { **If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if ye do believe in God and the Last Day...** } An-Nisaa, verse(59).
2. Demonstrate the trusted and certain evidences, provide the right ones and avoiding the uncertain evidences to apply the rule: if you were citing, be right and if you were claimer, use evidence, as Allah says: { **Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful."** } The Heifer, verse(111).
3. Voiding, intending the rightness, and avoiding austerity and desire. It is clear that the importance of the main ideas to be free

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<sup>32</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together from Yesterday to Today, Aleppo, Syria, circulars of the Roman Orthodox Metropolitan, P.H, 2006, P.187.

<sup>33</sup> So'ud Al-Mawla, the Islamic- Christian dialogue, The Necessity of Adventure, Beirut, Dar Al-Manhal Al-Lubnani, P.H, 1996, P.40

<sup>34</sup> Al Khatib al-Baghdadi, Al-Faqih w Al-Mutafaqih, Beirut, Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit, 1980, Vol. 7, PP.18 onwards.

from the self-tendencies and earthly opportunities and victor for the self because following the truth leads to a straight way with no bend.

4. Knowing the issue of discourse and fully understanding its grounds and parts. Since the ignorance of converser in the issue is the most dangerous thing that face him, for the matter turns into a sick dispute and fruitless debate with no course or target.
5. The speaking should be free from contradictions and the converser should be characterised with sedateness and objective in expressing his ideas far from inconsistency of opinions, trouble of responds and contradiction of ideas.
6. The converser should be characterised with the following Islamic features:
  - a) Fearing Allah (Exalted be He): { **so fear Allah as much as you can** } At-taghabun, verse(16).
  - b) Sincerity in advice for Allah: Muhammad ( all prayers and blessings of Allah be upon him) says: Religion is sincerity in advice for Allah and his messenger and all Muslims and their Imams.<sup>35</sup>
  - c) Keeping on the good saying, Allah says: { **and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious** } An-Nahl, verse(125).
  - d) Listening attentively and avoid interrupting because the good listening leads to identify the difference points and reasons, and feel of the seriousness of converser and the importance of discourse and direct to the wanted benefit.
  - e) Sincerity to Allah: the converser should dedicate his spirit to be sincere to Allah in all the following. One of the most explicit aspects is to avoid the desire of appearance from his spirit as well as exposing the proficiency and predomination his equals and enemies, for pretension prevent the reward for the deed. Prophet Muhammad said: The one who strove for knowledge to compete

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<sup>35</sup> A: Narrated by Muslim, Al-Jame' As-Sahih, inquiry by Muhammad Fouad Abd Al-Baqi, Beirut, Dar Ihiaa Al-Turath, P.H, Vol.1, P.74.

B: An-Nisai'I, As-Sunan Al-Kubra, inquiry by Ahmad bin Shouaib, Beirut, Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, P.H, 1996, Vol.4, P.433, it is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, authentic Hadith.



scholars or to argue against the fools or to draw the attention of people to him, Allah will admit him to a Fire.<sup>36</sup>

- f) Modesty for the Right and not continuing in falsehood because the converser who has a spirit of arrogance is far from the truth and is prevented from luck in his work. Because the significance of being modest in the discourse is to call for familiarity<sup>37</sup>. We conclude with an important Islamic rule of dialogue: discourse with objector politely, by paying attention to his opinion, he will feel that you respect him. This feeling would build a bridge that make him able to listen to you.<sup>38</sup>

#### -The Idiom of Islamic-Christian discourse:

The concept of this idiom that the research talks about is giving a quick overview of Islamic-Christian Dialogue generally and in the region particularly with an hint of Muslims and Christians in Syria, and the regional field of the study. It is a coexistence, brotherhood and love discourse due to its advantages.

### Chapter (1)

-A study in the Syrian environment:

First: Syrian history and civilisation:

- A brief look over Syria
- The Islamic conquests of (The Levant)

Second: Muslims in Syria.

- Their sects and distribution in Syria.

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<sup>36</sup> A: Narrated by At-Turmuthy, inquiry by Ahmad Muhammad Shaker, Beirut, Dar Ihiaa Al-Turath Al-Arabi, P.H. Vol.7, P.305.

B:As-Syouti, The Collector of Hadith (Jame' Al-Ahadith), Damascus, Al-Halbouni bookstore, P.H, Vol.21, P.41, on the authority of Ka'eb bin Malik, he told At-Turmuthy that it is a strange Hadith and did not narrated but from this side, Edited by Al-Albani.

<sup>37</sup> A: Al Khatib al-Baghdadi, Al-Faqih w Al-Mutafaqih, Vol.7, P.31.

B: Khalid Abd-Allah Al-Qasem, Dialogue with People of the Book Its Bases and Approaches in The Book and Sunnah (Al-Hiwar ma' Ahl Al-Kitab, Ossosoh w Manahijoh) Al-Riyadh, Dar Al-Muslim, P.H, 1994, PP.147-159.

<sup>38</sup> Adnan As-Saqqa, The Quite Dialogue (Al-Hiwar Al- Hade'), P. 23

- Their legislations and laws.

Third: Christians in Syria:

- Doctrines and Churches.
- The common legislation and laws between them and Muslims.
- The degree of Christian presence in life.

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Firstly: Syrian History and Civilisation:

Syrian Arab Republic: is an Arabian country and is located in the south western Asia, at the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is boarded by Turkey on the north, Iraq on the east, Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, Jordan and occupied Palestine on the south. It is located between 32° and 37° N, 35° and 42° E. This geographic location has given Syria strategic privilege over history, since it is the place where Asia, Europe and Africa meet. It lies in the middle of fundamental, commercial and industrial centres in Europe and oil producing centres in Arabian Gulf area<sup>39</sup>.

1) A brief look over history of Syria:

- a) Naming Syria ( The Levant ): Syria, The Levant is known by Arabs as a country locates at the north of Arabian Peninsula, it contains all the provinces of today such like Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan<sup>40</sup>. Syria was known of this name since Cellophanes Era and continued until now. The name is very old; however, it did not emerge in Arabic literature, but after conquest. Greeks and Romans were the first who called it Syria, but what caused them to call it Syria?

Ancient scholars have many sayings, some of them:

-To begin with, it is called Syria according to its famous sea city, Tyr. Greeks have known the people of this city due to the large number of their visits to it for trade, so they called them "Tyrians" and their country "Tyria" by changing the letter "T" to "S" because letter "T" was not existed in their language. The word Tyr in the Phoenician language means "stone" or "fence or wall". This

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<sup>39</sup> Geography of The Arab League, Ahmad Al-Ghadban, Damascus, Ministry of Education Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 1998,P.44

<sup>40</sup> Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's Plans, Damascus, An-Nuri Bookstore, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1983,Vol.1, P.7

name might be seen engraved on the ancient coins that have been found in the city.

- The second saying: closer to the truth, Greeks have named this country according to Assyr or Assyria, the country of Assyrians, for it was the country of Assyrians in the period of Greeks. They announced the name Syria decreasing the utterance by deleting the first spelling and exchanging between "S" and "Sh" even in words Assyr and Asyr, Assyria and Asyria became Syria.

Some of ancient Greeks also call Mesopotamia, Armenia and some of Persia the name Syria as a synonym to Asyria which means Assyrians' Kingdom. It is also said according to Syriac, the great people who lived in it and governed it for a long period of time.<sup>41</sup>

- The word "Sham" is an Arabic utterance that Arabs attributed it to the north of Makkah. Many sayings have been mentioned about Sham. One of them, it is called thus regarding to Sam, son of Noah. The name Sam in Syriac is Sham and in Hebrew, it is Shem. Another saying, it is called Sham because it is on the north of the land where Yemen is the right direction of the land. They said: those who travelled to Sham went to north. It is also said: the first name of Sham is Syria and Arabs called it Sham<sup>42</sup>. Another reason for calling it Sham is because of the large number of beauty spots on its land either white or brown<sup>43</sup>, and Sham is on the north of Arab's Island, or Sam travelled to it. However, the letter "S" was changed into "Sh" for optimism<sup>44</sup>. It is where people travelled north to it, and Iraqis call what behind Euphrates Sham.<sup>45</sup>

b) Ancient History of Syria: history of Syria goes back to the earliest human civilisations at the beginning of the Bronze Age. It is considered as a place of assemblies of the eldest civilizations in the east. From Syria, was the first civilizational assemblies of ancient human where the basis of human activity was in it.

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<sup>41</sup> Philipp Hattie, History of Syria, translated by George Haddad and Abd Al-Karim Rafeq, supervisor of the Edition Dr. Jibra'el Jabbour, Beirut, Dar Athqafa, 1982, Chapter 6, The Arriving of Semitic People, The Name of Syria and Syrians, Vol.1, P.62

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Asaker, History of Damascus City, Damascus, Dar Al-Fekr, P.H, 2003, a chapter of mentioning the origin of the derivation of naming Sham, vol.1, P.10.

<sup>43</sup> Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Muhammad Al-Hamathay, The summary of the Book of Countries (Kitab Al-Buldan), Beirut, Dar Ihiaa Al-Turath Al-Arabi, 1<sup>st</sup>Edit, 1988, Al Qawl fe Ash-Sham, P.89.

<sup>44</sup> Shams Al-Deen Al-Ansari Al-Dimashqi, Nakhbt Ad-Dahr fe Ajaeb Al-Br w Al-Bahr, Dar Ihiaa At-Turath Al-Arabi, 1<sup>st</sup>Edit, 1988, P.285.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Maqdisi, Best Partitions in Knowing Regions (Ahsan Al-Taqaqim fe Maarefet Al-Aqalim), Dar Ihiaa Al-Turath Al-Arabi, 1987, Region of Sham, P.134.

The rich history that Syria has witnessed through its long history, make it a place of many cultures and civilisations<sup>46</sup>. It was the responsible heir for this very old history. The most important and ancient civilisations in the history of human kind have been founded in Syria such as Kana Kingdom that has flourished in the second thousand BC near to the meeting point of Euphrates and Khabur rivers, and it was one of the first civilisations. Agriculture has been discovered here, in Syria since more than 10 thousand years so Copper be done since the third thousand BC, the mixture of bronze has been invented in Tell Halaf on the bank of Khabur river. The discovery of palaces and paintings in Mary Kingdom on Euphrates river was an evidence of the commercial and cultural flourish in the middle Euphrates between east and west. In Ugarit Ras Shamra Kingdom nearby Lattakia port on the Mediterranean Sea, one of ancient civilisations has been established and been invented, and also the alphabet has been developed. The alphabetic writing which is one of eldest alphabets in the world is in Ugarit. In Ebla Kingdom, Tell Mardikh, a huge documental library has been discovered. This library contain thousands of numbers and manuscripts that organize management, diplomatic trade, industry and relations of war and peace with other civilisations. It is also considered one of the largest libraries in the history.<sup>47</sup>

- 2) The Islamic Conquest of The Levant: in the period of Abu Bakr Assediq , The Islamic army arrived to the outskirts of Sham<sup>48</sup> by confronting Roman armies in a village called Daen in Gaza, and he defeated Romans in this battle. In the period of Omar ibn Al-Khattab, Muslims could conquest The Levant completely after battles on the outer limits of all cities in Syria. All areas of Sham and in the battle of Yarmouk<sup>49</sup>, Romans

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<sup>46</sup> It is possible to list civilisations that passed by Syrian land orderly: Sumer, Acadians, Chaldean, Canaan, Hebrews, Arameans, Hittites, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Nabataeans, Byzantine, Muslim Arabs, then Crusades attacked it, after all Ottoman ruled it for 400 years until it was divided by English and French. Abd Al-Karim Rafeq, Stations in the History of the Levant, Balmand University, P.H, 2006, PP.3 onwards.

<sup>47</sup> A:Yaqout Al-Hamwi, Countries Lexicon ( Mu'jam Al-Buldan), Beirut, Dar Sader, Subject :Syria,Vol.3, P.280.

B: Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's Plans, vol.1, PP. 14 onwards.

<sup>48</sup> The first attacks of Islam were four sent by Prophet Muhammad, and they are: Dawmt Al-Jandal, Mou'ta, That As-Salasel, Tabouk, all were the beginning to conquest The Levant, Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's Plan, vol.1, P.71

<sup>49</sup> Battle of Yarmouk: (15 AH - 636 AD), which was near the Yarmouk River, in south of Syria. It was led by Khalid bin Walid and lasted for six days, Muslims could resist Roman in the first four days, and at their hands, George the commander of a Roman armies has converted to Islam, and then Mahan, the commander of one of the Roman armies asked them for a truce for three days but Khalid ibn al-Walid refused, so the position of Muslims turned from defence into attack and controlled the Levant. Ibn Atheer, The Perfect in history( Al-Kamel fe AL-Tarikh), inquiry by Ali Sherry, Beirut, Dar Ihiaa At-Turath Al-Arabi, P.H, vol. 2, p. 70.

B - Mohammed Al-Khudari, Itmam Al-Wafaa fe Sirat Al Kholafaa, Beirut, Dar Ihiaa At-Turath Al-Arabi, P.H, vol.2, P.70.

were strongly defeated then in the battle of Al-Fahl; after that Muslims entered Damascus, Homs, Shezr, Maara, Baalbek, Beirut, Jbeil and Arqa where people of these areas, especially Christians were given a protection promise and conscience as what is coming in the research.<sup>50</sup>

- Damascus, The capital city: it is the capital of Syria, the ancient city and called "The Gate of History". It is known as been inhabited since 8000 to 10000 BC, so it is the first and the eldest inhabited city throughout

history, and the most ancient one in the world. The eldest humanitarian civilisation has been established in it and came across it. Also, It was in more than one age leading and civilizational centre then it has become the most important Islamic city after the reign of Muslims over it in 636 CE. After a very short time, it reached the peak of flourishing when it became the capital of Umayyad country that extend from Pyrenees Mountains in Europe to the middle of Asia and borders of China in the period between 661-750EC. Thus the greatest Islamic country in the history been established. Damascus has a big significance in all ages. Since thousands of years, it was the capital of many kingdoms, empires and countries. Moreover, Cultures, arts, literature, industries, kingdoms and nations have flourished on its ground. Furthermore, the famous people of history, scientists, intellectuals, authors, poets, astrologists, men of religion, saints and messengers started to publish all of civilisation, knowledge, science and preaching religions and doctrines. It was the starting point for leaders, Sultans, kings, governors and princes<sup>51</sup>. Damascus kept its richness, flourish in culture, literature and science all over the old and new ages until it was selected to be the capital of Arabic culture in 2008.

## **Secondly: Muslims in Syria:**

1- Denominations of Muslims and their distribution in Syria:

There are no studies or statistics about Islamic denominations in Syria, especially people of Damascus, but if we want to examine the doctrinal origins of Muslims in Syria, we will find them refer to three origins:

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<sup>50</sup> Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's Plans( Khotat Al-Sham), vol.1, P.76

<sup>51</sup> Abd Al-Aziz Al-Azmah, The Mirror of Damascus The History of The City and Its People( Mira'at Dimashq Tarikh Al-Madina w Ahlaha) inquiry by Najdat Fathi Safwa, Chapter 1, Damascus, P.27.

Sunnah, Shia and The Monotheistic Denomination(Druze) regardless of the minority that does not form independent group in the Syrian society.

1. Sunnah<sup>52</sup>: Sunni Muslims have a common method in purifying both the spirit and the heart and refine them, by refining heart, we refine all the body. All that is by doing the following:
  - I. Monotheism Allah sincerely and avoiding polytheism and novelty that reduce the belief or originally confute it.
  - II. Recognizing Allah the Almighty by understanding the names of Him and His attributes; in addition to, studying them and working in their requirements because the devise love, obedience, glorification, fear, deputation and exaltation to Allah.
  - III. Obeying Allah and His messenger by doing all the obligatory and voluntary prayers and considering remembrances and reciting the holy Quran and send blessings on the prophet Muhammad, fasting, practice regular charity, complete the Hajj and 'Umra and other things that Allah legislate.
  - IV. Avoiding forbiddens, suspicions and keeping away from disapprovals.<sup>53</sup>

In Syria, Sunni Muslims are the majority of Muslims<sup>54</sup>. They are about 70% of Muslims and are dispersed over Syrian governorates. This category is the active one in the Islamic invitation and following prophet Muhammad's approach by it. It also face the mission of approximating amongst Islamic

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<sup>52</sup> They were called Sunnis because they stuck to and followed the sunnah of the Prophet, and were named the people of Jamaa because they are the group of Islam, who met on the right and did not disperse in religion, and followed the approach of the Imams of the right and did not get out in any order from the matters of faith. and about the origins of the doctrine of the Sunnis and Al-Jamaa: - are the origins of Islam, which is the doctrine of 'difference no roads, and therefore the rules and principles of the Sunnis and the community in the field of receiving and reasoning are represented in the following: - the source of faith is the book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger and the consensus of the good Ancestors. - Everything in the Quran is a Sharia to Muslims, and all that is true of the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah should be accepted though it was a number, as for the four juristic doctrines for the Sunnis became official in most of the books, by their appearance: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, these doctrines are only juristic schools, the all agreed in the origins, and differed in their branches, and there is no differences between them in the doctrine, as there are juristic doctrines other than these four, but did not spread like these four schools. The Juristic Encyclopedia of Kuwait, Kuwait, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 2nd Edit, 1988, vol. 25, p. 182.

<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Hamza, The Establishment of The Islamic Sects, Damascus, Dar Qutaiba, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 2005, P.15.

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's Plans, vol.6, P.239.

doctrines and discoursing with other religions. Despite of the variety of Syrian Islamic denominations in the field of invitation and discourse, the school of the scholar Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro is considered as one of the most prominent invitational schools<sup>55</sup> that launched from Damascus in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the reason of moderation and reasonability and combining knowledge and purification that his invitation was characterized with; furthermore, the global spread that the invitation has achieved and in turn drove Sheikh Kuftaro, the voice of Islam to the worldwide. According to the researcher, it is worth to say that the major existence of Sunnis in Syria does not mean that Syria is a Sunni country because the examiner of Syrian society's reality find it distinguished by its richness with doctrines and other denominations that enjoy their completed political, social and religious right, details will come later in the pages of this research. It is better, as the opinion of the researcher, to call Syria the pluralistic country not the Sunni one. Sunni people embrace both Hanafi and Shafi doctrines; however, there is no wide spread for Maliki and Hanbali in Syria except those who embrace them as a Jurisprudent doctrine (Wahhabis) and we will talk about them later.

- Wahhabism: it is an idiom for a political-Islamic movement that has been founded in Arabian Peninsula in 12 A.H – 18 EC<sup>56</sup>. It could reach to Damascus in the north and Oman in the south<sup>57</sup>. In Syria, their number is a few but they have their strong invitational activity. They are characterized by conservation and commitment to the general appearance that indicate them such as covering the faces of women, growing a

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<sup>55</sup> Of the schools of invitation launched from Damascus in the School of Sheikh Hassan Habannkeh, and the school of the senior interlocutor, Sheikh Badr al-Din al-Hasani, a school, Sheikh Saleh Al Farfour, and others.

<sup>56</sup> It was at the hands of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703 - 1792) and Muhammad bin Saud, where they joined together to spread the Salafi call, which caused the establishment of the first Saudi state

<sup>57</sup> The call to Salafi approach by the Wahhabism aimed at what it considers as purification of Muslims' creeds and to get rid of the habits and practices of worship that had spread in the countries of Islam which Wahhabism see them as contrary to the monotheistic essence of Islam like begging deaths, and parents, and everything called novelty or heresy in general. It is described by its followers as a call for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and returning to the pure Islam it is the way of good ancestors to follow the Quran and Sunnah, practically not to depend totally on the four jurisprudence Sunni schools but to depend directly on the text of the Quran and Sunnah and sayings of the Ancestors and the consensus of scholars proving their words by that statements of the four imams. Iman Al Kurdi, the history of the Islamic faith, Damascus, Dar Al-Osamaa, vol.1, 2010, p. 145.

beard for men. They dispersed in detached places, especially in Damascus and Aleppo<sup>58</sup>.

2. Shia<sup>59</sup>: Shia believe that Islam is the righteous religion and it accept no other religion. They also believe that Islam has origins, branches, judgments and morals, and the one who deny these origins, is a polytheist and unclean as well as the one who deny the three sections without either suspicion or ignorance is a polytheist too, they express it as wrong. They also think that the messenger Muhammad and his daughter Fatima Azzahraa and the twelve imams<sup>60</sup> are impeccable. As to Shia, the origins of Islam are monotheism, prophecy and The Day of Judgement. The appendage of monotheism is justice, the appendage of prophecy is Imamism as well. As for the five branches of Islam are prayer, fast, charity, Hajj, Jihad, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; adding to them, all departments of worshipping such as ablution, washing, perform Tayammum, seclusion, but they differ from Sunnah in some matters such Imamism and marriage for fun<sup>61</sup>.

Islam Shia represent few minority in Syria but it is mixed in the society, and the religious rights of Shia are respectable, for are a part of the extended Syrian society.<sup>62</sup> Although Alawis are different from Islam Shia, but they are considered as a branched sect from Islam Shia; this was according to Qardaha conference

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<sup>58</sup> Muhammad Khalil Harras, Wahhabi movement, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, P.H, PP.13 onwards.

<sup>59</sup> Name Shia refers to the followers of Ali (may Allah bless him), and then dispersed into sects and took for themselves the known Juristic Shiite doctrine, and the word Shiites are taken from (Al-Mushaiyah) it means continuance, Shia are called by this name because they follow or support Ali and his sons, and they believe that Prophet Muhammad appointed after him for Caliphate and Imamate twelve Caliphs by a command from Allah, Shiites were not at the same level over history, but there were the exaggerator and the devoted ones, as for exaggerators have exaggerated even to an extent that they apotheosized Ali, while and the devoted people, the had enough in preferring Ali from other companions, and that's what it the majority Shiites in our time are. Ahmed Amin, Encyclopedia of Islamic civilization, Beirut, Dar Noblesse, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, P.H, vol. 8, p. 783

<sup>60</sup> The twelve Imams for Shiites are: Imam Ali Commander of the Faithful, Imam Hassan, Imam Hussein, Imam Zain Al Abidin, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, Imam Jafar Sadiq, Imam Musa al-Kazim, Imam Ali al-Rida, Imam Muhammad Al-Taqi, Imam Ali al-Hadi, Imam Hassan al-Askari, Imam Al-Hujjah al-Mahdi. Mohammed Hamza, the Establishment of The Islamic Sects, p. 33

<sup>61</sup> A: Saad Rustum, The Islamic Sects and Doctrines, Syria, Dar Al-awa'el, 7<sup>th</sup> Edit, 2009, P.209.

B: Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's Plants, vol.5, P. 246. One of the best references for Shiites is Al-Sharif Al-Radi, Nahj Al-Balagha, from the words of Ali bin Abi Taleb, Lebanon, Dar Al-Kitab. In Jurisprudence: Muhammad Al-Ameli, Means of Shiites in gaining the goals of Shariah, Tehran, The Islamic Library, a book from 19 chapters.

<sup>62</sup> Samir Abdo, Shiite in Syria, Dar Hasan Malas, P.H, 2009, PP.25 onwards



in 1972<sup>63</sup>. It is not easy to base on accurate statistics about the number of religious groups in Syria. But reports have mentioned that Alawis, Ismailis and Shia represent 13% of population in Syria<sup>64</sup>. In 2011, the total population was 24,504,000 people<sup>65</sup>. Other reports indicate that Shia represent 1% of people while Alawis represent 8-9%; however, Shiite sources show that Shia in Syria are 2% out of total population<sup>66</sup>. All these numbers are approximate. They dwell in some of neighbourhoods in Damascus, some towns and villages in Homs and Aleppo. The most prominent Damascene neighbourhoods where Shia settle in is called Al-Ameen. It is named like this in accordance to the scholar Mr Mohsen Ameen Al-Husainy Al-Amely<sup>67</sup> who is buried next to Hadrat Zeinab because of his professional scientific position. In this neighbourhood, there is Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb mosque, Azzahraa mosque and the old Muhsiniyah school. Shia, here, do not follow a single traditional reference; in other words, there are 48 remembrance assemblies in Saida Zeinab area each one of them follows a reference<sup>68</sup>.

### 3. Monotheists (Druze):<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Qardaha conference, Lattakia held in / 1972 /, under the supervision of Imam Musa al-Sadr, which was signed by the senior religious scholars in Lebanon, Syria and other references, it was issued in his closing statement: they are our beliefs we are Alawis Muslims, and our doctrine is the Jaafari, who is the doctrine of people who were known of being Alawis and Shiites together, the name: Shiite and indicates to one meaning, to one category is the Category Twelver Imami Ja'fari, We consider who attribute to us something not mentioned in this statement a liar, or driven by the unseen forces interested in dispersing Muslims so they become weak, or ignorant who unjust himself and the truth. Alawis, who they are and what is their creed, www.alaweenonline.com

<sup>64</sup> The religious Freedom in The World, a report issued by the Foreign Ministry, USA, 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Statistics of The Central Statistics office, Damascus, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Cults, Descendant and races, a report issued by Ibn Khaldoun centre for development studies, Cairo, 2005.

<sup>67</sup> Mohsen Husseini: (1865 -1952 AD), has a Lebanese origin, he has writings in the faith, poetry, literature

<sup>68</sup> One of the most important figures of Shiite and the leader of Jaafari sect in Syria, Mr Abdullah Nezam, who is one of the most prominent Shiite scholars in the Levant; and Sheikh Nabil Al halbawi, Imam Saida Ruqaia Mosque. Shiites in Syria, the Straight Path newspaper, Najaf, Iraq, 5\4\2007, P.H, P.6

<sup>69</sup> Druze are Arab tribes inhabited the Jabal al-Arab, and the relationship of Druze creed with Islam was always the subject in constant research and suspecting by researchers and critics, historically, Druze has separated from Ismailis in particular, during the Fatimid caliphate in the tenth century, so, historically, Druze origins belong to Islamic ones, according to this view, but, ideologically, the views of the researchers have differentiated on the subject, there are those who do not see it as part of Islam, and some researchers said the Druze doctrine of Islamic sects, and some considered it an independent religion of itself until the situation reached a high degree of uncertainty even at the highest levels, at the same time Druze sect is considered, in Syria, an Islamic doctrine despite the presence of its own doctrinal judgements and according to them members of this community are treated differently from the treatment of other Islamic sects in Syria. Mohamed Hamza, the Establishment of the Islamic Sects, P.107.

B: Saad Rustum, The Islamic Sects and Doctrines, P.311

Druze believe that Allah there is no God but He, the One and Only, The Eternal and the Absolute. He is the Verbal and Eternal Governor of existence. The aim of monotheism science is to promote them into higher positions. It starts from the phrase of the monotheist which is to practice the best of permitted. Monotheism principles are chaste virtues, justice and chasteness then the category of truthfulness after it comes the category of limits and the category of intimacy or humanity comes later which is the highest degree of happiness and the utmost goal of creating spirits, it is the essence of monotheism. When He is absent, they should protect themselves from committing sins and doing good deeds. History of Druze goes back to about 1000 years, when the Ottoman governing came to Syria, and sent assaults to Mountain of the Druze, their main location with an aim to control them, but that was futile. Druze have fought Ottoman and hundreds of them volunteered in the Arabian Army. In Mountain of Druze a cavalry force moved with the Arabian army from the mountain was of the first who entered Damascus and raised the Arabian flag. After the French occupation to Syria, Druze have instigated The Greatest Syrian Revolution in 1925 and had many battles that caused French army massive losses ;adding to that , Druze had the bigger and essential role in the dependence from France. Druze are still keeping their special character and they have special societal tradition. They are distinguished of uttering, in a right way, all letters of Arabic language like letter {Q}. In Syria, they are the largest gathering in the world, 450,000 people. They live in many cities such as As-suwayda Governorate, Salkhad, Shabaa in Jabal al-Arab, Jaramana(near to Damascus) and Majdal Shams in Syrian Golan<sup>70</sup> and other cities.

## 2- Laws and Regulations Special for Muslims in Syria<sup>71</sup>:

Laws in Syrian Arab Republic are divided into: civil status code, criminal status law, personal status law and International code. The civil, criminal and international laws are completely ordinance, it means that Ottoman country has put them and then became French laws in the shade of French occupation. After that they became legislative authority(mentioned before). These laws develop and change through the legislative decrees that issued by Mr president. As for personal status law, Ottoman government has limited judge and advisory to the truth and preponderant of Hanafi denomination; moreover, it has changed the preponderant saying in Hanafi denomination and adopting other

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<sup>70</sup> Samir Abdo, Druze in Syria, Damascus, Dar Hasan Malas, P.H, 2006, PP.16 onwards.

<sup>71</sup> The Illustrative Memorandum of The Syrian Personal Status Law according to the decree 53 issued in 17/9/1953.

denominations. Sometimes, especially after the dependence, a complete legislative renaissance has been established, and it was necessary to collect legal judgments for personal status in one law to easily refer to. Selecting from sayings the most consistent to tradition and coincidence to the temporal interest. So that, the ministry of justice has formed a committee from represents of legislative judge, faculty of law. The result of committee's work was a project contains of judgements regarding to personal status: marriage, divorce, giving birth, inheritances, legislative will, legal proxy, custody and lineage.

- After a quick view over Muslims in Syria their doctrines, regulations, and their laws, we will do the same as for Christian and their doctrines, regulations and laws.<sup>72</sup>

### **Thirdly: Christians in Syria :**

#### 1) Christian denominations in Syria:

- Before speaking about Christian denomination in Syria, it is important to indicate the origin of them, they branched because of ecclesiastic councils that have been hold on in order to decide the Christian sect. Due to the argument about the resolution of councils, Christian doctrines have been founded.

- Ecclesiastic council: idiomatically: it is an assembly that the messengers( the twelve student of Christ) or the successors, bishops hold it legislatively with an aim to deliberate ecclesiastic and religious issues, and decide them<sup>73</sup>. Councils are divided into two parts.

I. Non-ecumenical councils: the councils where not all churches join to it.

II. Ecumenical Councils: the councils where all churches represent in it and join to its resolutions are impeccable and inspired from The Holy Spirit. Ecclesiastic councils, the eastern and western ones agree together on the ecumenism of the first seven councils except one denomination of eastern churches called Non-Chalcedon where only The first three councils are considered ecumenical councils<sup>74</sup>. The seven ecumenical councils are:

- The first council of Nicaea(325): it adopted the law of The Belief (creed) that declared the divinity of Christ.

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<sup>73</sup> Asad Rustum, The Greatest city of Allah Antioch Church, Beirut, Al-Noor posts, P.H, 1958, vol.1, P.141

<sup>74</sup> Ignatius Zakka Iwas I, the church and the foundations of the Ecumenical Council, the Patriarchate Magazine, Damascus, P.H, (109/10), PP. 435-438.

- The second council of Constantinople(381): it confirmed the Nicaea creed; adding to that ascertain the divinity of the Holy Spirit and declared that Christ is born of the father.
- The council of Ephesus(431): it proclaimed the existence of two natures of Christ divine and human, these two natures are united without being mixed. It also have proclaimed Mary as "Mother of God".
- The fourth ecumenical council: it is recognized as the reason of the eastern church separation into two parts:
  - The second council of Ephesus(449): It proclaimed that Christ has one nature after incarnation, this nature is united from two natures. The council repudiated everyone believes the Hypostatic Union. This decision divided the church into two parts: The Non-Chalcedonean church that considered this council a larcenous one and called for the council of Chalcedon.
  - The council of Chalcedon (451): The Chalcedon church has called for this council and considered it the fourth ecumenical council as well as admitted the Hypostatic union of Christ; however, they did not become one nature rather they are still two even after the union.
- The fifth ecumenical council (553): its purpose is to endorse the first three ecumenical councils, reconcile Chalcedon with Non-Chalcedon, and people of Monophysitism to the Chalcedon church.
- The sixth council of Constantinople(680): it was held with an aim to emphasize admitting the faith in Christ, son of God and one god; adding to that , he has two natures, hypostasis and one person as well as two wills without separation, division, change and mixture.
- The seventh council (Constantinople) in (786):it was held to assert respecting icons and prostrating to them to respect those who have pretended that they should not be worshipped<sup>75</sup>.
- In west, many councils were held after the seven ecumenical councils. Westerns consider these councils ecumenical ones; however, East Orthodox

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<sup>75</sup> A:Samir Nof, the history of the Christian church, Homs, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, P.H, 2002, p. 278 onwards.

B: Grassmus Masarra, the date of the separation, the history of the relations between the Eastern and Western churches, Alexandria, Azhar Press, P.H, vol.1, p. 378

does not take into consideration other councils except the seven ones. As a result of this difference, Christian denominations have been established, yet the first division was between The Eastern church and The Western. The Eastern was called Orthodox and The Western called Catholic.

1- The western church (Catholic): the word "catholic" is a Greek word that means "General", " Universal", "On the whole" because it combines all the western church. Catholic church also been called "Western" or "Latin" regarding to their widespread power, especially in the western Latin, even if it had followers in other countries. This church believes in the seven ecumenical councils, then it held on other councils and considered them ecumenical as well. <sup>76</sup>

2- The Eastern church (Orthodox): the word "Orthodox" is a Greek one that means "The right belief" or "The straight belief" . It believes only in the seven ecumenical councils. Concerning the other councils, it did not consider them ecumenical. Then, the Orthodox church has divided into two parts:

- a. The Old Eastern Orthodox church: including Coptic church, Syriac church and Armenian church. Followers of these churches are called Non-chalcedonies since they refuse the fourth ecumenical council, mentioned before.
- b. Byzantine Orthodox church: It admits the seven ecumenical councils. Today, Byzantine Orthodox are the largest denomination amongst eastern churches, and they are people of Chalcedon church. They are called like this because of their following the fourth ecumenical council. Some of their churches are: Patriarchate of Constantinople, Patriarchate of Antioch in Damascus including Roman and Orthodox in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq; in addition to the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Roman Church...etc. Old Eastern Church call the followers of Byzantine church as "Melkites "; however, Byzantine church deny this name and call itself only Orthodox<sup>77</sup> .

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<sup>76</sup> Samir Nof, The History of the Christian Church

<sup>77</sup> A: Timothy Ware, the Orthodox Church in the past and the present, Beirut, Al-Noor flyers , P.H, 1982, p. 171.  
B: and Ignatius Deck , The Christian Orient, Beirut, St Paul library, P.H , 1975, p. 119

- Both churches, The Catholic and The Orthodox agree on the seven ecumenical councils, but they differ as the catholic held on many councils and considered them ecumenical as well as defined the emerging of The Holy Spirit from both the father and the son, and admitting the infallible of Pope<sup>78</sup>. After that, another division took place and the Protestant church has been established:

3- Protestant church: the word "protestant" or "to protest" means opposition. This denomination is also called " Angelic", and followers of this church adopt The Bible alone. It also was formed as a reaction to the deviation of The Western church which talked about the infallibility of the Pope and the power it granted to itself as forgiving sins. The most significant principles of this church are:

- + The Bible is the only source for Christianity.
- + Refuse the power of church in forgiving sins.
- + Deny naming Mary as " Mother of God".
- + Admit the necessity of monastic.
- + Fighting the prostration to icons
- + Releasing The Bible from being only in the hands of men of church, and translating it to many languages<sup>79</sup>. This was concerning Christian denomination generally, yet denominations ,in Syria, are separated hereinafter:

- Christian denominations in Syria:

Christians in Syria are Syrian citizens with Syrian nationality and they adopt Christianity. There are no announced numbers of Christians all over Syrian lands the same as number of Christians in the Arab world. The number of Christian denominations in Syria was declared in the last statistic, 1956 by the statistical sets that Ministry of Economy issued it. Since that day, new numbers have been never registered in the later statistical sets.

From statistics, it is obvious that the number of population in Syria was 4 million people in 1956. In 2000, the number has doubled 4 times between 1956-2000. Statistics of the central statistical office in Damascus, 2011 indicate that the number of population in Syria is 24,504,000. Notably, the proliferation of

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<sup>78</sup> Grassmus Masarra, the date of the separation, the history of the relations between the Eastern and Western churches, Alexandria, Azhar Press, P.H,vol.1, P.375.

<sup>79</sup> Samir Nof, the history of the Christian Church, p. 473.

B: Lina Al-Homsi, Islam and Christianity one religion and various Shariahs , p. 264

Christians is unequal to the proliferation of Muslims. The increasing of Christian numbers is less quarterly than that of Muslim. For instance, if the number of Christian in 1956 was 508,999 people, it would become 1,026,997 in 2000<sup>(80)</sup>. Their number has reached nearly 192,000 in 2011.

Some of unofficial statistics as for the percentage of Syrian Christians to the rest people mention that they are 10% out of total number of people. Christian population differ according to Syrians areas. While it reaches 25% in The Upper Euphrates, and 20% in Aleppo and Coastal Plain, It decreases into less than 10% in Damascus and Ghab Plain<sup>81</sup>. As for denominations, 4 branches have grew from Antakya trunk: Syriac, Assyria, Armenia and Melkite, then other denomination branched from it. Thus, 10 denominations were the result and part of them was Eastern, the other was Western.

*First:* The Eastern Denominations are:

1. Armenian Orthodox: Christianity has entered Armenia in the third century A.D, but it did not spread out except in the beginning of the fourth century and the Armenian church has converted to monophysism. When Selcuks attacked Roman and defeated them in 1701, Armenian escaped and assembled in Cilicia, north Syrian, then they pervaded in Syria and Lebanon. In Damascus, the form a few number denomination. The centre of their diocese is located near Bab Sharqi from the inside.
2. Armenian Catholic: it defected from old Armenian sect. A group of them united in Rome, as well as in Damascus, a small group was formed with an diocese, Cathedral and a school in Bab Tuma, Damascus. Their number was almost 480,400.
3. Greek Orthodox: it is the largest and oldest Christian community in Syria, and goes back to the primal Christian centuries. Is centre is in Antioch where Patriarch of Antioch and all the east manages its affairs. Since the requisition of Antioch in the thirteenth century, the centre became in Damascus. It is an eastern Melkite church which means that it admits the teachings of Chalcedon council(451)<sup>82</sup> and it adopts the seven ecumenical

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<sup>80</sup> Samir Abdo, Christian Denominations in Syria, Damascus, House of Hasan Malas, P.H, P.31.

<sup>81</sup> Website management, Christians in Syria, Free encyclopaedia, Wikipedia. [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org).

<sup>82</sup> Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD: Is the Fourth Ecumenical Council in the Chalcedonian church, was held at Chalcedon (Asia Minor, in the presence of 500, Bishop, reached to the faithful admit that summarizes Christ has two natures, divine and human, and that they are

councils, but it differs from Catholic church in many matters: the divinity of Pope and his high authority. This sect spread out in the coastal plain and some other cities. It is still the largest Christian sect in Damascus where the centre of its patriarch and cathedral is in Old Damascus, Talle Al-Faddah, they are 741,000.

4. Melkite Greek Catholic: it is an eastern catholic sect, a sister to the Greek Orthodox. It is established as a part of it; firstly appeared in Sidon then in Damascus and Aleppo in 1700, but after a while some of the Greek Orthodox (Klerks and Secularists) went to Italy, and so the Melkite denomination was divided into Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox, then people of Greek Catholic, patriarchs and bishops have been persecuted, so they had to flee the country and settled in Lebanon until 1833. Later, the denomination has been released from the liability of Orthodox and got the decree of admitting its civil authority and denomination, Melkite Greek Catholic. Its centre is in Bab Tuma, Damascus. They are 200,400.
5. Syriac orthodox denomination: it was established firstly in al Ruhha city or Orfa. It has flourished and spread out quickly. Syriacs have separated from universal church "catholic" in ecumenical chalcedon council due to religious dispute based on the difference of linguistic conceptual between Syriac and Greek. They were called "Monophysites" which means followers of the single nature of Christ, and some called them "Jacobites" according to Jacob al Baradai one of the church pillars in its establishment. It spread out widely in the north of Syria and other areas. Their denomination has few number of people in Damascus and the center of its patriarch in Bab Tuma, Damascus and their number is 244,800.
6. Cyriac Catholic: a sister denomination to Cyriac Orthodox that separated from it, for in 1662 a separation took place between Cyriac Orthodox bishops and each part elected a patriarch. The Ottoman government adopted one of them, and the other went to Rome then been called Cyriac Catholic. In 1829, their Archbishop called the denomination of Jacob Al Halyani in Damascus for Catholicism. His community followed him except few number less than quarter. They are non-majority denomination in Damascus 12,000 people and their Archbishop is located in Bab Tuma.
7. Chaldean: it is a sister sect of Assyrian sect especially in Iraq some Assyrians have united gradually in Rome since the middle of the 16th century. Their last and official union was in 1828 and were called Chaldean, Johann Herman was a patriarch in Babel and the centre of their



patriarch is in Iraq, yet their Archbishop is an only one in Aleppo, Syria . They are 2400 people and in Damascus they are not many.

8. Maronian sect: it is an eastern Catholic belongs to Saint Maron, the hermit who spent his life alone in north Syria and some students followed his way in hermitical life and practicing virtues. After his death, they build a large monastery called (Saint Maron) between the castle of Al-Madiq and Homs ,and called themselves Maronians. They were known for their strong faith and their leap of faith in the fourth ecumenical (Chalcedon 451). In the sixth and seventh century, they spread out in Syrian Plains, but after the Arab conquest, they sat in Mountain of north Lebanon. Thereafter, they build their churches and monasteries and lived an independent solitary life. Today, the center of their patriarch is in Lebanon, and they have a church<sup>83</sup> and a diocese in Damascus. They are 96,000

*-Second: Western Denominations :*

- 1- Anglicanism: it relates to the Bible and the biblical life. Protestant reformers have used "Angelic" term to describe their rehabilitated movement in returning back to the Bible because they depend ,in the first place, on the Holy Book the Old Testament and the new One, and do not admit neither tradition , some ecumenicals nor secrets of the church and the higher ecclesiastical power. They also differ from Catholic and Orthodox in many matters. It is necessary to indicate that western preaching associations have arrived to Syria in the middle of nineteenth century, so Eastern sects tended to preach them and attracting its members from them the small-little-number denominations have been formed with one name "Angelics" denomination . The highest council of Anglican churches has been established in Lebanon and Syria, 1937. It is represented by Protestant churches in both countries; furthermore, Anglicans has many churches in Damascus where there are 4800 Anglicans.
- 2- Latin denomination: it is western Catholic relatively modern in Syria where western senders came to the East (Lebanon, Damascus and Aleppo) then founded monasteries and attracted some people of eastern denominations thus a western Latin church has been formed which is directly associated with a Pope in Rome. This church has special ritual and laws, it also has an apostolic vicariate in Aleppo since 1772. Some secular priests, monasteries and western association. The number of its followers is few in Damascus, it is nearly 2400 people and it has many churches and monasteries.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, Syria remains the cradle of Christianity where the Christian call launched

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<sup>83</sup> Metry Hagy Athyanos, monasteries and churches of Damascus and its countryside, Damascus, Churches encyclopedia, P.H, 2004, Vol.3, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Metry Hagy Athyanos , Monasteries and churches, Damascus and its countryside, vol.3, P.6.

to Anatolia, Greece. Syria was the convergence between the Christian world and the Arab one, Christianity have found a valid soil for the prosperity of ecclesiastic rituals and theological sciences. An elite of great men of religion who was privildge with their knowledge and culture.<sup>85</sup>

2.The predominant regulations and laws among the christians and between them and Muslims:

It is previously mentioned, laws in the Syrian Arab Republic are divided into: civil status code, criminal status law, personal status code and international code. As for The civil, criminal and international laws are completely ordinance, it means that Ottoman country has put them and then became French laws in the shade of French occupation. After that they became legislative authority(mentioned before). These laws develop and change through the legislative decrees that issued by Mr president, and they are one to all religions and denominations in Syria.

Personal Status Code:

As muslims in syria have personal status code, each sect of christians has a special law and court . In order to apply the jurisdiction law issued by the legslative decree (98) in 15/11/1981. The articel (33) stated that personal status code in syria consists of :

- legslativ curt for muslims.
- doctrinal corts for druze.
- spiritual courts for christians sects<sup>86</sup>.

- These courts apply specific due process of law, relating to article (10) of religious sects regulations: Syrians and Lebanese who belong to recognized denominations that have personal status, are subjected to the legislative regulation of their sects in the matters linked to personal status and to the civil code judgements in the matters that are not subjected to this regulation. Also, those who are either if they belong to a sect follows ordinary right, or who are not belong to any sect are subjected to the civil law in the matters relate to personal status.

- As for foreigners even if they were belong to a recognized sect with regulation of personal status, they would be subjected in the personal status affairs to the

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<sup>85</sup> Samir Abdo, Christians at the threshold of the third thousand

<sup>86</sup> The illustrative memorandum of Syrian Personal Status law regarding to the legislative decree(59) that been stated in 17/09/1953.

judgements of their national law. Article (11): all those who reach the age of majority and enjoys mental powers, can abandon or convert to a sect with recognised personal status. This abandonment or convert has a civil effect in the books of domicile through submitting an instrument to the to the personal status department in his place of residence, the instrument should contain a declaration of his will and if necessary an acceptance certificate from the competent authority of the sect he convert to.<sup>87</sup>

### 3. The Amount of Christian Presence in the Public Life in Syria:

Inhabitants of Syria were of the first who converted to Christianity. Old Syrians have converted to Christianity and Armanian was Christ's language. Also, Arab tribes who settled in Syria converted to Christianity.<sup>88</sup> Some historical Syrian cities in the primal Christian ages were places for churches, locations and holy centres for Hajj.<sup>89</sup>

As for Christians role in the Islamic country after Islamic conquests in Umayyad Age. In order to build the new country and its institutions, Muslims rulers had to select highly components to jobs without any discrimination in gender or religion. May Christians occupied high positions in the country due to their experience in serving Byzantine Empire. At the religious level, Christians in The Levant did not suffer from circumstances changing after conquests because conquerors did not resort to force with an aim to impose their beliefs on others. However, Syria maintained for a long time a Christian country in terms of the proportion of people and the number of well-known churches consistent to church of The Holy Sepulchre, of Lod and of Al-Ruha.<sup>90</sup> About Christians' status during Abbasid Caliphs, it is needless to say that Abbasid period has witnessed a remarkable Christian contribution in the intellectual and public life. Practically, Christians participated in introducing the Greek tradition by translating and practicing philosophy and science<sup>5</sup>. While socially, the aspects

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<sup>87</sup>Regulation of Religious denominations in the Syrian Arab Republic promulgated in the resolution No. 60 for the year 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Gassanids is one of the tribes who converted to Christianity in Hauran and South Syria. Banu Taghlib settlers of Aleppo and Upper Mesopotamia before Islamic Age until now, but they converted to Islam in 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. However, some Gassanids stayed on Christianity till this day. Samir Abdo, Christians in Syria Long Ago and Recently, Damascus, House of Alaa Al-Deen, D.T,2000. P.22.

3 Samir Abdo, Christians in Syria Long Ago and Recently. P.22.

4 Elia te'meh, Christians and Muslims together brochures of Roman Orthodox diocese. D.T, 2006. P.94.

5 Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's plans, part 4, p.27

of discourse and coexistence between Muslims and Christians that come from Muslims' doctrines were manifested in many things, as:

- The freedom of belief and the practical application to the rule {No compulsion in religion }
- Save Christian worshipping places and protect them.
- Visiting patients who are not Muslims.
- Affinity by the marriage of Muslim men to Christian women.
- Mutual visits between Muslims and Christian from all classes and reciprocate friendliness and love.
- Building mosques and next to it a monastery and a church.
- Spreading of discourse phenomenon and debate.<sup>91</sup>

- Christians in Syria during The Rule of Ottomans: The positive image of Christian presence in the shade of Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphate has taken another form under the Ottoman State because of the European influence on Christians at that time where Ottoman Empire kept threatening western countries till the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, particularly Russia and Austria, which are located next to the Empire in addition to France and Italy that strengthened their commercial and cultural relations with the Orient, then Netherland which entered into many treaties with Istanbul and founded consulates in key cities of Syria to care for the cultural and commercial interests of European countries, pretending with the rest of western countries to protect Christian minorities and preserve the rights in the Holy Places, Palestine. To study the extent of this influence on the Christian presence, it is important to distinguish between two periods:

1. The First Period till the late 18<sup>th</sup> century: it was the preliminary period to the literary and intellectual renaissance, where a large number of western merchants settled in the large cities of Syria particularly in Aleppo and Damascus. They used many Christian as middlemen for their commercial transactions, so they were affected by Christians' habits, learned their language and practiced trade with the west. At that time, consuls who enjoyed diplomatic immunity took care of westerns' affairs, but their interests were not only in caring for nationals' affairs. Some of merchants had an ecclesiastic activity in a charitable templates . A large number of local Christians gathered around consuls as translators or

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<sup>91</sup> Muhammad Munir Saad Al-Deen, the discourse and coexistence in a multicultural society, Lebanon, the development and scientific centre for researches and studies, 1<sup>st</sup>Edit, 2005, P.49.

employees, and enjoyed special privileges that exempted them from Jizya tax. They also formed "Patentee" group because they got a patent from authorities admitting their distinctiveness, then their number has increased to an extent that raised suspicions of officers, so the latest limited the Patentees in a definite number attached to each consulate. Patentees group played an important role in their community's life; furthermore, they enjoyed a social distinguished role and formed an elite with senior merchants called Gentry. It is important to mention that these commercial privileges and activities were not in that period but a cover and introduction to preaching policy and colonialism that the west started to execute them in Arab countries that used the social and commercial privileges as means to them, but they could not get enough. In addition to merchants and consuls, the European existence and influence was represented by senders where Franciscans were guarding the holy places in Palestine since the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were concerned with pilgrims coming from Europe to visit the Holy Places, yet they did not concern with Christian affairs at first; moreover, consuls sent for clergymen for their spiritual service in temples established in consulate as well as Popes also sent an ephemeral religious delegations to contact eastern churches, their mission was ephemeral and limited. Then, in the third decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century a number of monks came to Syria from variant monastics with the support of king Louise XIII, king of France, so they could settle permanently. Their first centre was in Aleppo, then they moved between Damascus, Sidon, Tripoli and the Mountain of Lebanon where these monastics and other missionaries aimed at spread French and its ideologies.<sup>92</sup>

Unfortunately, western senders have been met with welcomes and acceptance from the local ecclesiastic authorities where the authorities allowed them to preach in churches. Besides, senders were received in the temples of their monks by Eastern Christians as well as arranged lessons for them in Christian education. They also established Mariamite fraternity to deepen fearing Allah and the spiritual life, and intended to visit believers in their houses to guide them; moreover, they translated a number of western piety books, opened schools to teach reading, writing, math and principles of foreign languages, they encouraged local churches to open similar schools. However, education, in this period, did not go beyond the elementary level but only an elite who could learn

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<sup>92</sup> Talal Atrissi: Jesuit Missions, Beirut, The world agency for distribution. 1<sup>st</sup>Edit, 1987,P.161.

foreign languages, so they became qualified to continue lessons in higher institutions in Europe especially Rome and France.

2. The Second Period with The Beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: It accompanied the deterioration of Ottoman Empire. Along with the weakness of Ottoman Empire, cupidities of European countries and their interventions have increased. France and England had contradictory attitudes during the Lebanese crisis between 1841-1861, and the role of France has been enhanced as a protector of catholic, particularly Maronites; meanwhile, England stood by Druze politically, Protestant helped them religiously, and Russia obtained the role of protecting Orthodox and was active in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon to help local Orthodox and to fight off the growing authority of catholic and protestant in patriarchs of Antioch and Al-Quds.

European pressures forced Ottoman Empire to do many administrative reformations with an aim to rising from weakness that the Empire has come to. Christians legal situations had become better where they were exempted from Jizya tax, so patentee lost their privileges. Trade with the West has been weakened and Syria lost its role as a path between Europe and India. In West, mechanic textile machinery have appeared that imitated Syrian products and started to speculate them as well as means of communication have been improved by inventing Telegraph, so some western merchants left the Syrian cities, in return, Syrians learned trading with the west by mail. However, many of them travelled to Europe and constructed there shopping centres (Marseille-Livorno- Liverpool) stayed contact with the East. Most of those merchants were Christians, and some of them were affected by modern ideologies and western mentality that influenced the renaissance movement because ,in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a movement interested in preaching has been founded in British churches and the American churches linked to the British ones as well as many preaching assemblies have been established. In 1866, American senders have founded the Anglican Syrian college that became American university and International Choueifat schools in the twenties of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anglican messages have not resulted in constructing large ecclesiastic churches, for affiliation to Anglican remained limited and tiny. However, they played a role at cultural level beyond the number of their believers, and was a motivation for Eastern churches to renew their educational and pastoral means. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nunneries have been activated to up bring girls where nuns of Saint Joseph Al-Dahour came to Beirut in 1846 an to Aleppo in

1856. Also, sisters of Nazareth came to Beirut in 1868 then nuns of the good shepherd in 1893; adding to them, the holy family, sisters of charity Allezeraat, sisters love Boszn, and Franciscans nuns and other modern nunneries which increased the cultural level of women. Adding to the cultural role, nunneries played a great role in constructing orphanages and hospitals, so it stood, among their preaching activities, for the work of local churches.<sup>93</sup>

We conclude from the above: the Western and European influence on all levels was positive to Arab Christians because they enjoyed at that time an advanced cultural level qualified them to play a major role in the life of the country in addition to the privileges they enjoyed during French occupation such as: occupy vacancies, land possession and building churches and monasteries. It was an integrated role of missionaries that started at the time of Ottoman Empire and been reinforced during French occupation.

- The Christian Presence in Modern Syria: a discourse and coexistence:

The multi-culturalism and multi-civilisationalism that our country was distinguished with led to an emergence of different and various civilisations and traditions provided the general ecclesiastic tradition and human culture by riches of their bestowal and authenticity of their participation. It is the tradition to which the Second Vatican Council indicated and praised its richness and considered it as a wealth to the whole church. These traditions are still alive over different eastern churches that be enlightened by them and illuminate as well as find in them a motivation to confront the current cultural and civilizational challenges<sup>94</sup>. Despite divergences related to our different cultures, Christian brotherhood believe that a single reading to tradition is still enough, for this reason, they represent a prominent Christian presence in the Arab society generally and Syrian society particularly.

- As an origin in the religious legislation, most contemporaries of Christian brothers consider discourse as a spiritual attitude before everything a man stands with discoursing before Allah, then his soul will transcend, and his heart conscience will be purified all that will reflect on his discourse with his own self and with other individuals groups. Discourse is animism move us from

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<sup>93</sup> A: Archimandrite Ignatius, under the title: the European influence on Christian Presence, Christianity in Syria, history of radiation, Aleppo. Posts of Saint Teresa, edit 2009, P.3 onwards.

B: Muhammad Kurd Ali, Sham's plans, Vol.4, P.51.

<sup>94</sup> Bassam Ashji, Christian Presence in the Orient, Aleppo, Ibid, P.5.

exclusion into comprehension, from rejection to acceptance, from categorization to understanding, from disorder into respect, from conviction to mercifulness, from animosity to familiarity, from competition to integration, from dissonance into convergence, from hostility to brotherhood. Discoursing with another person means to know him and to recognize him, and admitting him as an complementary to us more than a rival, competent or enemy away from any type of previous ideologies, interests and selfishness; in these cases, dialogues turns to a reciprocal one without any party waive itself, its tradition, its personality or its existence<sup>95</sup>. Muslims and Christians have shared coexistence centuries ago that put mutual responsibility on both parties. Undoubtedly, Islam has implant tranquillity in Christians believers who are living with it in the same homeland.

It is not just because their religious rights are only saved but also became they are an inseparable part of society's life. Besides, Christians take similar responsibility that call them for getting rid of psychological and social complexes left by history, so they can find in their faith what free them from everything that prevent them from accepting themselves and their convergence with the other one. Thus, their presence transform to a positive truthful and strict commitment in there societies' life; with this, Christian help their society to understand them and look of them positively .

However, this invitation does not mean that Christians and Muslims suffer in a way or another from exclusion or dissonance .

An overview on the reality of Syrian society shows us that both Muslims and Christians honour and respect the sacred sites of the other. They meet their brothers and sisters in religion in weddings, funerals or other celebrations .Even in places to pray, Muslims and Christians respect silently the prayers of each other. Proving that unite them without concealing or denying what distinguish them, for in mosques and churches formulate their religions identity where youths receive a big part or their religious upbringing, so what is the concept of identity dictated to Christians and Muslim youths in churches and mosques? The answer: spiritual responsible and religion teachers of Muslims and Christians provide our both great religions as ones committed with all due respect to a discourse, not as two conflicting religions .

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<sup>95</sup> Samir Abdo: Christians in Syria in the past and present, P.33.



It is essential that youths should be dictated the ways of respect and agreement in order not to misuse religion itself to arouse malice and violence and justifying them. It is preferable if this guidance support forming platforms or discursal institutions where we meet periodically with an aim to crystalize and develop together a type of contact, interchange and cooperation that benefit everyone.

The slogan of everyone in Syria after its independence: "Be with right help your brother an oppressor was or oppressed" Syria lived after the independence an atmosphere full of national unity and disdain communalism . Even if sounds came out to take over some unresolved problems, the free and true discourse is always one prevails.

For instance, there was a work in progress to set a new constitution in Syria where some sounds came out saying that president of the country should be a Muslim. This, in turn, urged Christian sects to reservation in this matter, so the result was to change the opinion that make the religion of Syrian country is Islam. The national participations of different sects became more familiar and Syrian constitution have not state the religion of the country since that time rather it did so only the religion of the president and the sharia is the source of legislation<sup>96</sup> which gave Syrians a futile soil to form a multi society that national brotherhood prevails it and a religious discourse enriches it at all levels.

We conclude from above: the national unity between Muslims and Christians was not in vain, for they are from origins of one message, and Christians endorsed Muslims the day they were out of Arabian peninsula and supported them in their struggle with Rum. On the other hand, we can find the holy Quran praises Christians when Allah say :”will thou find the Jews and Pagans ,and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say , “ we are Christians “. Al Maida, verse(82).

-Muslims and Christians lived together as a result to their belonging to Christ, the symbol of love, brotherhood ,peace and tolerance as well as to prophet Muhammad who came with a book that its slogan is .” we make no difference between one and another of them ;And we bow to Allah (in Islam)”.Al Baqarah,

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<sup>96</sup> Samir Abdu, Christians in Syria in the past and in the present, P.33.

verse (136). Coexistence between them is an intuition of simplicity where it demands neither a will to search, nor changing mind to reach an agreement or convergence around it. It is also a fact that form the spontaneous right nature of our life as flowing does the nature of water and blowing does the nature of winds<sup>97</sup>. We saw a pattern of coexistence and cooperation in sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro Council when Sheikh Ahmed invited publicly his brothers from the pulpit of mosque to elect brothers who believe in Allah and believe in Christian as a prophet to be members of the people's Assembly if they have the ability to serve the country citizens.

We saw once again in the "Syrians fraternity family" association<sup>98</sup> that raised a slogan : "who are you? I do not care . you are suffering ,so I am existed" of course, I am existed to help you". It applied this slogan in reality by helping all who suffers without distinct between any human and another one<sup>99</sup>. Perhaps, Christian started in well conducted from Christ's saying(peace be upon him): " have you heard that it was said: to love you neighbour to hate your enemy .

But , I tell you to love your enemies ,to bless who curse you .to do a favour to the ones hate you and pray for those who persecute you<sup>100</sup> .Muslims also start in recognizing the other one and well conduct them from words of Allah : " let

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p.27.

<sup>98</sup> Syrian fraternity association has been established in Damascus by Muslims then our Christian brothers assumed it .Its work is based on human principles that take love and bid as bases for it: some of these principles are :

-everyone has a right to live dignifiedly and respectfully to achieve himself.

-Not to evaluate the human basing on his deformity himself or his figure rather his ability to love the others, challenge difficulties and achieving his humanity .

-Service is a bid message that enables human to accomplish the principles of freedom ,equation and social justice.

-Love is not merely a standard of human ,yet it is also .continuous practice and tender.

-The bid message expresses the bind of human his brother and his belief in Allah and his sincerity to his country and society.

-Only with fraternity, we contribute in build the dignify of human and make one

humanitarian society. Association's goals: -Offering social care for people with special needs and involving in qualifying and training them on careers.

Offering the necessary social services and helping needy families.

Caring for children and offering them the medical treatment inside the country and outside.

Syrian fraternity Association Website: [www.ousratikhaa.org](http://www.ousratikhaa.org)

<sup>99</sup> Adib Al-Khoury, The Problem of Recognizing the Other One, Damascus, from lectures and flyers of discourse forum held in Mar Moses, Habashi monastery in July, P.H, 2004, P.44.

<sup>100</sup> Matthew Gospel, Vol.5, P.34.

there be no compulsion in religion : Truth stands out clear from Error .Al Baqarah, verse (250)

In addition to verse (8) ,Al –Mumtahanah chapter: { God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loveth those who are just }. And Prophet Muhammad’s words: ‘All people are dependants of Allah, and the dearer of them to Him are the most helpful.’<sup>101</sup>

It is undeniable that this bright image that Muslims and Christians live it in Syria, is polluted by some impurities, but this wonderful pure page we do not see it embodied in all situations nor in all cases, we are sorry for what we see today in our contemporary society the bad relationship between man and his fellow man has infiltrated to some Syrian Muslims, just as it has done to some Syrian Christians, this scourge in which we were inflicted in this age that its standard and scales became upside down, so there was a necessity to dialogue, the one which reminds people of originality of their originality, and which link what was cut from the bonds of love between believers of Muslims and people of the book, and this is what senior Islamic scholars and senior Christian clerics in Syria worked hard for achieve it , and we will speak about it in the following, God willing

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<sup>101</sup> A: narrated by Al-Haythami, Al-Zawa’ed Council, Cairo, House of The Arabic Book(Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi), P.H, 1987, Vol.8, P.191.

B: Al-Baihaqi, doctrines of Faith, investigated by Muhammad Zaghoul, House of Scientific Books(Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah), Beirut, Edition of 1996, Vol.15, P.497 : About Anas son of Malik( may Allah be satisfied on him), Al-Albani said: it was narrated in a weak reference.

## Chapter 2

### Islamic- Christian discourse in Syria

#### **First: A look in the Syrian Islamic-Christian discourse:**

- Rules of this discourse and its courtesies.

#### **Second: The first features of this dialogue and its starting:**

- A brief look in the Islamic-Christian discourse generally.
- The history of Islamic-Christian in Syria (The Levant).

#### **Third: The reality of contemporary discourse and its levels:**

- levels of the Islamic-Christian discourse in Syria.
- Mediations in the reality of this discourse.

#### **Fourth: Means of Syrian Islamic-Christian discourse and its topics:**

- Means of discourse in the Syrian Arab Republic.
- goals of the Islamic-Christian discourse and its reflections.

#### **First: A look in the Syrian Islamic-Christian discourse:**

This discourse as we see in Syria is an Islamic duty according to the words of Allah: {**Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God;**} Chapter: Al-Imran, verse (64).

Discourse is an essential issue in the Islamic invitation today. Since 50<sub>s</sub> of this century, he called for it because this dialogue in its reality was one form of invitation to Allah; prophet Muhammad has discoursed polytheists, Jews and Nazareth and was with them in the long assemblies inviting to Allah by wisdom and good instruction. When wise inviters put the Islamic-Christian discourse to use as required and as the approach put by the Holy Quran, so we can benefit very much that our armies and authorities might not be able to. Furthermore, through discourse, we can fulfil understanding and national unity in the country

Muslims and Christians live in where people of cupidity do not interfere to discourse tumults and separation amongst them.<sup>102</sup>

- Rules of this discourse:

Islam respects all other religions and does not ask human about his belief because the issue is over as to Islam. However, why religion is not instructed to the other party? If the other party want to accept, he has the right to, or if he want to refuse, he has the right too because no compulsion in religion, and Islam is a discourse with Jews and Nazareth as it is notable in Al-Ma'eda and Al-Imran chapters and other many chapters based of discourse.<sup>103</sup>

With these words whispered by Sheikh Ahmed Kufaro, Mufti of the Syrian Arab Republic, he put the basic rule on which he established his Islamic-Christian discourse depending on essential sources he provided them in a worksheet to the Universal Council of religion in San Francisco, United states. These sources that encourage to the Islamic-Christian discourse as he cited them are:<sup>104</sup>

- I. The Holy Quran: most of it is about a respectful discourse between our lord Prophet Muhammad and prophets before him and their people who disagree with them in religion, so it was a rational, courteous and free discourse by prophets unlike people of other religions. When power and authority were added to the prophecy of Muhammad(may all prayers and peace be upon him), the Holy Quran was sent down saying: {**No compulsion in religion**} Chapter: Al-Baqarah, verse: (256).
- II. Sunnah: it means applying the freedom of religions and inviting to discourse by prophet Muhammad in the shade of ritual judgement and the clear testimony to look for truth and happiness.
- III. The Islamic History: the rightly guided Caliphs and Islamic scholars have being held religious forums where the free dialogue with all its meaning takes place in Umayyad Empire and Abbasid; in addition to that, the Holy Quran and Sunnah launch from these

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<sup>1</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, meaningful discourse with Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, Damascus, house of scholars forum, 1<sup>st</sup> E, 2008, p.75.

<sup>103</sup> Imad Naddaf, Sheikh Ahmed Kufaro talks, P.107.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, P.97.

origins, we can put rules for mutual bonds between Christians and us, these rules are:<sup>105</sup>

The First Rule: The one beliefful roots: The Holy Quran always confirm that all heavenly messages and invitations of prophets ( may peace be upon them) were issued from one lantern and one source which is the heavenly origin of them, for all prophets and apostles have come with one heavenly religion aims at making people feel happy in the world and in the afterlife, this religion is Islam. Legislations of this only heavenly religion were changing as for circumstances of nations and people, yet the pillars of creed and its principle are the same do not change from one religion to another or from one prophet to another. We read this truth in the words of Allah { **The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein** } Chapter Ash-Shura, Verse: (13). Thus, beliefful facts are for all prophets and apostles and they are represented in the following:

- Believing in Allah The One and Only, The Creator of universe characterized by perfection and is beyond all incompleteness.
- Believing in the Day of Judgement where there are Judgement, recompense then reward and punishment.
- Believing in pure angels.
- Believing in all prophets and messengers who come to guide creatures starting from Adam ( may peace be upon him) and concluding with Muhammad.
- Believing in all heavenly Books and messages that were sent to messengers and prophets.

These facts uttered by the Holy Quran, we can now read them clearly in the books of Jews and Nazareth, As written in the Gospel of Mark, the first of all commandments is: The lord is our God, The Only God, Allah is the Only and no other one but Him.<sup>106</sup> And as it came in the Gospel of John, the words of Christ: "This is the everlasting life, to know that You are the True God, Only You, and Jesus Christ you sent him."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> 1 Muhammad Kufaro, lectures about Islamic-Christian Dialogue, Damascus, House of scholars forum, 1<sup>st</sup>Edit, 2008, P.203.

<sup>106</sup> Gospel of Mark, vol.2, PP.12-29.

<sup>107</sup> Gospel of John, Vol.7, PP.3-4

-The Second Rule: honouring the lord Christ ( may peace be upon him) and his family: The Holy Quran has honoured the lord Christ and granted him, his virgin Mary and his precious family a great glorification and honour. The Holy Quran has illustrated this precious personality and its special honouring and miracles as coming:

1. Jesus Christ, son of Virgin Mary is a created human and a slave of Allah the Almighty as Allah say: { **But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle? "He said: "I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet;** } Chapter: Maryam, verses (29-30).
2. The Messiah, in The Holy Quran, is a perfect and a good ideal of faith, worship and serenity to Allah as in the words of Allah: { **He said: "I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; }** Chapter: Maryam, verse: (30).
3. The Holy Quran praises precious Christ as the word of Allah and a soul from Him, this is an addition to honouring that The Messiah is the word of Allah and his soul, Allah say: { **O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him:** } Chapter: An-Nisaa, verse (171)
4. In The Holy Quran, Jesus, son of virgin Mary is a prophet and a messenger from Allah as the rest of prophets and senders, he called for monotheism and correcting the deviation of people from their religion and from their being distant from Shariah as Allah say: { **Those apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others: To one of them God spoke; others He raised to degrees (of honour); to Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (Signs), and strengthened him with the holy spirit }** Chapter: Al-Baqarah, verse: (253).
5. The Holy Quran also praises the book sent down to our lord Jesus, The Bible and described it as the guidance, the light and the instruction when Allah say: { **And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him }** Al-Maida, verse: (46)
6. Allah has mentioned the seven miracles of the lord Christ in the Holy Quran and they are: speaking in the cradle, healing the blind man and the leper, bring the death forth, to make out of clay and breath into it so that it became a living

by Allah's permission, telling some of the vague signs in Allah's will, and the descent of the table from the sky. These miracles have never been mentioned in the current Gospels, so what an honour has the Holy Quran granted Christ!

7. In addition to praise the lord of Christ, his family and his book, Quran has also praised his followers, apostles and called them "Ansar" Allah say { **O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of God: As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, "Who will be my helpers to (the work of) God?"** } Chapter: As-Saff, verse: (14). Also, Jesus, son of virgin Mary said to apostles { **and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.** } Chapter: Al-Hadeed, verse: (27).

- The Third Rule: Mutual moral Ideals:

Since the source of heavenly religions was one, then the moral ideals and teachings have to be one. So we find courteous rules, moral values and mutual ideals between Muslims and Christians endeavouring to the meeting of one with another in the shade of love, cooperate and fraternity. We can tell some of the moral examples that Islam has uttered them and Christ had talked about them previously are:

- Honouring the human and being totally merciful toward him: Allah says: { **O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you.** } Al-Hujuraat, verse (13). Also, in the Bible, as lord Christ said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"<sup>108</sup>
- Spreading out love, doing good amongst people, Allah says: { **but do good; for God loveth those who do good** } Al-Baqarah, verse (195). Moreover, as prophet Muhammad said: "no one of you becomes true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself"<sup>109</sup>. In the Bible, as the words of The lord Christ: "A new commandment I give you: love each other"<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Gospel of Matthew, Vol.5, P.2.

<sup>109</sup> A:Published by Al-Bukhari, inquiry of Mustafa Al-Bagha, 1987, Vol.1, P.14.

B:Published by Muslim, enquiry of Muhammad Fuad Abd Al-Baqi, House of Ihiaa Al-Turath, P.H, Vol.1,P.49, on the authority of Anas.

<sup>110</sup> Gospel of John, Vol.13, P.34



- Forgiveness and Remission: it is an exalted standard to which the Holy Quran has urged in many positions when Allah says: { **Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!** } Chapter: Fusilat, verse: (34). In the Bible: Christ said: "you have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."<sup>111</sup>"
- Avoiding great sins and committing to chastity: { **Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).** } Al-Israa, verse: (32). In The Bible also:"you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart"<sup>112</sup> "
- Trust: Allah says:{ **Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants;** } Chapter: Al-Muminnun, verse: (8). According to lord Christ's words: "If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."<sup>113</sup>"
- Keeping the tongue away from sins: Allah says: { **Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best:** } Al-Israa, verse: (53). In the Bible, it was said: "And whoever shall say to his brother "RACA!" shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna"<sup>114</sup>"

- The Fourth Rule: Peace and Human Fraternity: Obviously in The Holy Quran and Sunnah, Allah has summarized in a few clear words the mission of his messenger( may peace be upon him) Saying: { **we sent thee not but as a mercy for all creatures.** } Chapter: Al-Anbayaa, verse: (107). The mercy which Allah made it a character of prophet Muhammad is not a special mercy rather it is an infinite one. A mercy of human on all other humans regardless of the religion, the colour and the language of the latest, so prophet Muhammad has put a rule that should be a decree of relationships among all people when he said: "The merciful are shown mercy by Ar-Rahman. Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy from who is

<sup>111</sup> Gospel of Matthew, Vol.5, P.38.

<sup>112</sup> Gospel of Matthew, Vol.5, P.27.

<sup>113</sup> Gospel of Matthew, Vol.5, P.23.

<sup>114</sup> Gospel of Matthew, Vol.5, P.22.

above the heaven<sup>115</sup>". Such these human startings to spread out peace and fraternity amongst people we find them clear and obvious for lord Christ (may peace be upon him) as it is mentioned in the Bible:" Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. <sup>116</sup>"

By these rules, Syrian scholars have defined the features of The Islamic-Christian discourse and decorated them with civilities the committed in their discourse, these civilities will be mentioned in the following:

- Civilities of Discourse:

Be courteous when you discourse people who disagree with you, for they will feel that you respect them when you are interested in their opinions. This feeling build a bridge makes him able to listen to you.<sup>117</sup>

Syrian scholars have adopted this principle in their discourse with Christian and have added other civilities that are appropriate with the situation of the wise proselytizer who concerns about the interests of his nation and his Islamic world, these civilities are:

- 1- Cooperation and collaboration in serving the Islamic nation and turning the effort and the great energies to its fateful issues in compliance with the words of Allah: { **Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour** } Al-Maida, verse: (2)
- 2- Cooperation in what agreed, advising in what disagreed and avoiding extravagance, austerity and stubbornness.
- 3- No difference in roots, the divergence in branches is an intellectual variety often has a mercy for the nation.

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<sup>115</sup> A: Narrated by Abu Daoud, Sunan, Vol.4, P.285.

B: Ahmad, Al-Musnad, Egypt, Cordoba Establishment, P.H, vol.2, P.160, narrated by Abdullah son of Amro, Alturmuthi said, authentic hadith.

<sup>116</sup> Gospel of Matthew, Vol.5, pp.1-10.

<sup>117</sup> Adnan Al-Saqa, The Silent Discourse, P.H

- 4- Arguing in the best ways, Allah says: { **and argue with them in ways that are best** } Al-Nahl, verse: (125).
- 5- In discourse, there is no ruler and ruled, or judge and accused rather all parties are equals.
- 6- The speech of Allah with His creatures is a speech of calling the shots where no commentator to it despite all that Allah has mentioned variable pictures of his discourse with his creatures in order to make the importance of discourse clear in reaching knowledge.<sup>118</sup>

-We conclude from the above:

- I. Discourse has started in Syria in the invitation of discourse from two roots: The Holy Quran and The Purified Sunnah. According to the researcher, every converser should start in his discourse from these two origins for the success of discourse process.
- II. Rules that Syrian scholars have put to discourse are principles on which both Islamic and Christian Shariahs. They did not depend on only Islamic rules in discourse process, yet they did Christian rules too that have origins in The Holy Book and Christian teachings which indicate to the large extent of acquaintance with the Christian Shariah of our scholars, and this is a character that the Islamic converser should have when practicing the Islamic-Christian discourse.
- III. The invitation of Syrian scholars in discourse is characterized with tolerance, averageness, accepting the other and respecting his ideas and beliefs, this is what distinguished Syrian scholars who applied these ideas in the discursal process through all means and manners by which the converser can convey the voice of peace to both the Islamic and the Non-Islamic worlds.

## **Second: The First features of this discourse and its platforms:**

- 1- A brief look in the Islamic-Christian discourse generally:

The discourse of Islam with Christianity is as old as the appearance of Islam with an aim to reporting the religion of Allah firstly; confirming the mutual

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<sup>118</sup> Ahmed Kufaro, Civility of Discourse and Difference, Damascus, House of scholars' Forum, P.H, P.12.

facts between both religions secondly; and an invitation to convergence on the same word thirdly.

The appearance of Islam and its powerful rapid strengthen in vast Asian and African lands during the journey of Islamic conquests has definitively sealed the fate of eastern Christianity that met the new religion (Islam) irresistibly and in many areas met it with greetings. The factors to which this position relates are many and the most important of them are: the tolerance of Islam toward issues relating to hold Christian rituals; secondly, because Muslim conquerors have protected Christians from the intolerant attacks and pursuits of Byzantium Empire; the third factor is embodied in the fact that Arab Muslims in their primal years of conquests depended on the Christian members of their tribes, so they used the local languages instead of Greek<sup>119</sup> in the local environments. As a result of this Islamic Arabic encouragement, a new wave of discourse between Muslims and Copts has been flourished, and it was a legislative and a legal wave.

Teachings of Islam have asserted the necessary of discoursing with the people of the book particularly Christians in ways that are the best because they are nearer to friendliness, and because dealing with ones who do not entangle in attacks on Muslims, it should be with righteousness and justice.

The history of Islamic Arab civilisation has witnessed in its building and flourishing times a deal with the other that is characterized with comprehension many civilizations of the conquered countries where Arab Muslims and Christians lived with a mutual apprehension of heavenly beliefful principles and giving the soul to Allah, so they were all members of one civilisation depending on minds and co-living, destiny partnership and the link between culture and national idea as a way to agreement and convergence in the affairs of both religion and life.

Criticism, undoubtedly, has of course an important place in discourse, yet it was in an objective way beside the self-ware criticism...according to the rule: our opinion is right but could be wrong, and the opinion of others is wrong but could be right<sup>120</sup>. Despite the experiences of the past and the imbalance in the

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<sup>119</sup> Alex Jurafsky, Islam and Christianity from competition and clash to the horizons of discourse and understanding, translated by Muhammad Khalaf, Damascus, House of thoughts, P.H, 2000, P.169.

<sup>120</sup> Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqqouq, Islam and issues of discourse, Egypt, International Sunrise bookshop, P.H, 2004, P.53.

Islamic-Christian relationships especially during confronting the invasion of Franks to the Islamic world and the phases of colonialism, a discourse was there between the Islamic Arab civilisation and the Christian European civilisation. These civilisations have entangled and the relationships have oscillated along the old, middle and modern history, and between cooperation natural phases and others conflictive ones until the concept of discourse started to appear in the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the level of formal relationships and informal ones beginning with the world conference of religion in 1936<sup>(121)</sup> and ending with the Islamic-Christian fraternity conference that was held in Damascus, 2010<sup>122</sup> we will go in details later, but it is important to stop at the attitude of The World Union of Muslims Scholars<sup>123</sup>, the attitude of Vatican and the world council of churches from the Islamic-Christian discourse as the following:

- The World Union of Muslims Scholars and The Islamic-Christian Dialogue:<sup>124</sup>

The charter of this union included in its items an article about the Islamic-Christian dialogue and the relationship of Muslim with people of other religions, this article is about: we, Muslims, believe that we are religiously commanded to discourse others, for it is a part of the approach of invitation to Islam that Allah Muhammad(may peace and prayers be upon him) and every Muslim after him as in the words of Allah: { **Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best** } Al-Nahl, verse (125). Therefore, we welcome positive discourse with everyone have different opinion as long as he wants to search the truth and not impose any particular principles, definite philosophy or specific policy on us, especially with the people of the Book and Nazareth in particular.

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<sup>121</sup> This conference was held in 1936, London. It was under the supervision of the world council of religions where many men of religion from different places of this world were invited to and first of all Sheikh of Al-Azhar at that time, Muhammad Mustafa Al-Muraghi . No information were recorded about the topics were discussed in this conference. Bassam Ajak, Islamic-Christian discourse Damascus, House of Qutaiba, 2<sup>nd</sup>Edit, 2008, P.240.

<sup>122</sup> Details of this conference are in : Bassam Ajak, Islamic-Christian discourse, PP.240-280.

<sup>123</sup> The World Union of Muslims Scholars: an Islamic Organization contains a large number of senior Islamic scholars from all countries, this union issues Fatwas and statements relate to what arise in Islamic nation as contractual, scientific and social cases basing on Quran, sunnah and the vision of the lived reality. The union has a charter put by the board of trustees that clarifies the examination of the union and its attitude of the big cases where this charter is the base that associates, basing on it, join to. The Islamic charter, The world union of Muslims scholars, P.H, P.2.

<sup>124</sup> The Islamic Charter, The world union of Muslims scholars, P.69.

The Holy Quran has taught us the policy of dialogue as Allah say: { **And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."** } chapter: Al-Ankabout, verse(46). So we are commanded to discourse the People of the Book, Jews and Nazareth in ways that are the best and the nearest to the other party except transgressors and who crossed the line with us, we have no dialogue with them. However, the others we discourse them in ways that are best by selecting the kindest terms and the softest manners in speech and mentioning the mutual points of agreement but not the difference nor the diversity ones.

The world union of Muslim scholars is not a closed union rather it is opened to the world around and to religions, civilisations and philosophies. From its own religions platform, it believes in panethnicity, multilingualism, religious pluralism and multiculturalism and it believes that Allah the Exalted is the One and the others are multiple and this multiple is by Allah's will that linked to his wisdom. The union believes in the necessity of the discourse of people with different opinions not in the inevitability of conflict between them. It also believe that discourse can pay off, in case its goals were straight, its intentions were good, its determinations was true and if it was committed to the courtesies of dialogue, so it was an argument in ways that are best as The Holy Quran commanded. Therefore, welcome the Islamic-Christian discourse particularly due to the rank of Christ and his mother according to Quran and Muslims.

We see important fields in which both parties can cooperate obviously, and these fields are:

First: believing in Allah and the hereafter in encountering the strict materialism that deny the unseen and advocate Atheism in the world; moreover, in confronting groups who believe in Allah theoretically but do not give Allah a place in their life and thoughts and do not give Him the right to command or forbid. Thus, it becomes inactive with no work.

Second: the moral values that humanity has inherited them from the quite prophecy inheritances in confronting dissoluteness and justification that almost damage the high humanitarian virtues such as justifying nakedness, homosexuality, adultery and the same-sex marriage and others.

Third: Justice, dignity and freedom: and all other relating to the human rights and ascendancy of nations and their right in recapturing their rights, and freedom in their land; for instance, the right of oppressed Palestinians whose bloods were shed, their houses were damaged, their sacrosanctities were defiled and their holy places were trampled in front of the whole world.

Every believer in Allah, His messenger, His messages and the afterlife can cooperate against those who oppose Faith and fight believers in Allah the Exalted.<sup>125</sup>

Vatican and The Islamic-Christian Dialogue: from what have been mentioned in the previous chapter, it is noticed that the ecumenical councils have not dealt, in its resolutions and constitutions, with the relationships with Muslims and explaining the attitude of Christianity from Islam rather it was only focusing on doctrinal matters and faithful confessions. Until 1961, church has not dealt with its attitude from Islam by the Second Vatican ecumenical council to which Pope Johanna XXIII has invited, and it continued from 1961 till 1964. Among the resolution issued by the council in 28-10-1965, there was an announcement regard to Muslims and the relationship with them<sup>126</sup>. Basing on the decisions and recommendations of the council, a special committee was established and called "The Secretariat of the standing committee of relationships with Muslims " and several announcements were issued from this committee that define the relationship with Muslims and the conditions of dialogue with them. Here comes a summary of the most important announcement regarding to the Islamic-Christian dialogue.<sup>127</sup>

- The first announcement: toward a dialogue with Muslims: contains the invitation of both dialogs' parties, Muslims and Christians, to patience and forbearance to change the misunderstanding and switch the fabricated ideas that Muslims have towards Christians and vice versa. It should be clarified for Muslims that Christians when they make a dialogue, they make it due to their sense of duty towards religion and towards people so they know that a Christian converses Muslims to make them his friends and to show them that he believes

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<sup>125</sup> The Islamic Charter, The World union of Muslim scholars, P.69, Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Documents published by councils, the second ecumenical council, translated into Arabic, PP. 863 onwards.

<sup>127</sup> A: Nasri Salhab, the meeting of Christianity and Islam, Beirut, House of The Arabic Book, P.H, 1970, P.43.

B: Institution of Islamic-Christian studies, the reality of Islamic-Christian dialogue 40 years after the announcement of the Second Vatican Council has been issued in the relation of the church with other religions, Beirut, House of Orient(Dar Al-Mashreq), P.H 2007,P.5 onwards.

in monotheism. All that requires from the Christian to clarify his doctrine about the exaltedness of Allah and His Greatness <sup>128</sup>.

- The second announcement: what is the religious attitude that Christians have to adopt in their discourse with Muslims: it includes that Christians should clarify their belief through dialogue with Muslims by spiritual cases and devotional rituals. Muslims, in addition to the previous matters, like to discuss the cotemporary matters related to the human being, technique and different aspects of life because even the open-minded Muslim tries to study the ways of developing his society over time, all that call Christians for confirming some religious topics in which he believes as a member associated to the church. <sup>129</sup>

- The Third announcement: it means defining Islam, teaching Christians how to deal with Muslims and how to understand his religion. The announcement contains six chapters as the following:

- Chapter one: Christians' attitude towards discourse: it is summed up in defining the applied attitudes that can achieve the Christian presence in the Arab world, they are:
  1. The reception of the other party and accepting it with its culture, history, feelings and its intellectual intentions.
  2. Accepting the Muslim as he wants to be because the reception of the other party cannot be but in the limits of our knowledge of him. The first missions of Christians are the attempt to know his Muslim partner. The knowledge must be of a friend not an acquaintance. It could be only with knowledge of the culture of conversers, their cultural and social environment and their history, pleasures and pains.
  3. Preparing the soul with a serious study in order to reach to an enough knowledge in the Islamic culture and its spiritual and collective values, its history and its contemporary problems. All that, with all appreciation, developing and activating the dialogue.
  4. Knowledge of taking from the other party because all religions have something to tell us and invite us to rethink in the way of expressing our belief. This spiritual wealth consists of the results meeting with others in an environment of emotional participation secreted by friendliness as much as secreted by respect.
- Chapter Two: the knowledge of Islamic values, for Islam is a religion, a nation, a culture, and civilisation as well. There are different Islamic earthly achievements we must recognize them as a reality.
- Chapter Three: how to talk about the Holy Quran because it is as to every Muslim is the word of Allah and it is respected by Muslims. It is not

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<sup>128</sup> Ahmad Von Denffer, Dialogue between Christians and Muslims, London The Islamic Foundation.

<sup>129</sup> op.cit ' 2/ 6



expected from Muslim interlocutor to say: Muhammad said in the Quran, but instead to say: The Quran said or something similar.

- Chapter Four: the message of prophets where the Vatican explains the message of each prophet according to the Quranic texts. It also face a debate in defining The Messiah because he is, in the Bible, the son of Allah, yet in the Quran he is a prophet of Allah, the word of Allah and a soul from Allah.
- Chapter Five: how we prepare ourselves for discourse through the text of the Second Vatican Council in regard to Muslims which demands going beyond the differences of the past and moving into the future for mutual understanding, protecting social justice and promoting for all human beings as well as the moral values, peace and freedom.
- Chapter Six: recognition of the injustice of the past. Despite the happy times that passed by Muslims and Christians, and the luminous cooperation between Muslims and Christian West, Muslims cannot forget that in some time Christians were the reason of obstructing the Islamic civilisation advance; firstly, through Crusades, secondly, through western colonialism. So that and with an aim to prove that we broke the relations off with that past which caused the hole between Eastern Muslims and Western Christian, we must be interested in the social character of Islamic nations and care for their religious and social problems and suggest solutions for them. We also should reach to respect Islam itself with all its great spiritual values.<sup>130</sup>

- The Fourth Announcement: General Lines of a sincere Islamic-Christian Dialogue through the following points:

- Truth and sincerity to our religions during discourse.
- Giving the true image of our religion.
- The ability to receive criticism from others.
- No one has the right to boast about his religion on others.
- Our brotherhood in Faith because dialogue imposes fraternity and cooperation among us.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Hasan Khalid, The Attitude of Islam towards Paganism, Judaism and Christianity, Beirut, The Institution of Arabic development, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 1986, P.495 onwards.

<sup>131</sup> ahmed von denffer , dialogue between Christian and Muslims, London , the Islamic foundation, 2/21

- The Attitude of The World Council of Churches from the Islamic-Christian Dialogue:

The world council of churches in Amsterdam, Sweden was established in 1948, with headquarter in Geneva. It is a multi-denomination international religious body includes all the Orthodox and Protestant churches that are not subjected to the authority of the Pope in the Vatican. In 1968, the sub-committee of the world council of churches for dialogue and coexistence between the living religions has emerged from the council in London, so the committee has clarified the position of the council of dialogue with Muslims, the foundations and the goals. It also sponsored many conferences of the Islamic-Christian dialogue. The foundation that the sub-committee of dialogue and coexistence between the living religions is summed up as the following:

- I. The goal of the world council of churches is to establish relations with all religions around the world.
- II. Dialogue must include all humans, doctrines and sects. It should not be confined to the intellectual and doctrinal issues and aspects, but it should also include all practical aspects for co-existence and common life.
- III. Do not commit to one style in dialogue, but discourse should be at all local, national and international levels.
- IV. It is necessary to avoid several things during the dialogue with other religions, including: not to involve or to impose their beliefs during dialogue, staying away from religious intolerance or self-culture that the parties of the dialogue have.<sup>132</sup>

- We conclude from the above that the vacation as a reference to the Catholic sects in the world, and the world council of churches as a reference of the rest Christian denominations and both of them call for a dialogue with Muslims. Although the world council of churches does not call for that directly, but its invitation includes the Islamic religion of dialogue, with the knowledge of this invitations that was circulated until 1965 while Muslims preceded to more than one thousand years since the Islamic invitation has started which imposed the dialogue with Christians in order to report Islam firstly, and to put rules for coexistence in the Islamic society secondly. It was noticed that there is an obvious openness in the attitude of Arab Christians generally towards dialogue with Muslims, a positive openness, represented in many meetings and

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<sup>132</sup> Bassam Ajk, The Islamic-Christian dialogue, PP.392 onwards.

conferences in addition to the statements and opinions that been issued from time to time in favour of the existence of a meaningful dialogue with Muslims particularly in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria considering that the dialogue with creating one environment of understanding in the communities that the Muslim and the Christian live together. However, this dialogue must be subjected to some conditions such as mutual respect, honesty, clarity and trust.<sup>133</sup>

2. Selections from the history of the Islamic Christian dialogue in the Levant : the invitation of the Islamic Christian dialogue started with the appearance of the invitation of Islam. Islam has commanded to discourse with people of their religion in order to report the religion of Allah and the invitation of Islam the historical period that this research will take in the subject of the Islamic-Christian dialogue, particularly in the Levant is a very long period and it is difficult to take all its aspects, for it prolongs between the time of the messenger of Allah and the period of the Ottoman rule. Not only this, but also the separation between the Islamic-Christian discourse in general and what was in history within the Syrian territory borders is very hard . So that the research will address some of these dialogues that were found in sources and references. Display will follow chronological order of these dialogues.

A: During the time of Prophet Muhammad and the the rightly guided Caliphs:

The messenger of Allah has put the rules of the Islamic –Christian relationships in the journey of the dialogue with Christians when he sent his oath to the Christians of the Levant in the second century A.H . According to this oath ((... and no bishop will be changed, nor a monk from his monastery, nor a hermit from his hermitage, nor a tourist from his tourism. No dwelling of their churches will be damaged . The money of their churches would not involve in building mosques, nor Muslims' houses. The one who did so will breach the conversant of Allah and disobey His messenger, And the monks, bishops and worship are charged with tax or fine, I guarantee to protect them , wherever they are on land or sea, in the east and the west, north and south, they are under my protection, covenant and safeguard from all they abhor , as well as the devotees in the mountains and in blessed places are not charged with a tax nor a tithe ... and who violated Allah's covenant and adopted the opposite of it, he would be

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<sup>133</sup> Munir Khawam, The Messiah in the modern Islamic thought and in Christianity, Beirut, The Institution of Khalifa for Printing, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 1983, P.426.

disobeyed to His covenant and His Messenger »<sup>134</sup>. This period was followed by a quiet meeting between the Prophet (may all prayers and peace be upon him) and the Christians of Najran in the tenth century A.H permeated with cursing<sup>135</sup>, which the Holy Quran has referred to: { If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, say: "Come! let us gather together, - our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie! } [Al-Imran, verse(61), this meeting is witness the first of Christian-Muslim relations in the Islamic state general developed, which defined the beginning of a clear system defines rights and duties, especially in the subsequent ages performed companion Khalid bin Walid to the people of Damascus in the fourteenth century A.H, and the reign of caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab to the Christians of the Levant in the fifteenth century A.H, and the reign of Khalid ibn al-Walid stipulates the following: In the name of Allah the most Gracious the most Merciful. This is what Khalid bin Al-Walid has given to people of Damascus if he entered it, he gave them a protection to themselves, to their money and their churches, the fence of their city would not be destructed, their monasteries would not be settled, so they have the pact of Allah and His messenger and Caliphs and believers. He will met them only with good if they pay Jizya.<sup>136</sup>

As for the text of Omar bin Al-Khattab, it was to Safar Wanyos, the patriarch of Christians. This oath is still saved in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Al-Quds Al Sharif, it includes, I, Omar bin Al-Khattab give the solemn Sheikh, patriarch of the royal nation, Safar Wanyos on Al-Zeitoun mountain in Al-Quds

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<sup>134</sup> Ibn saad, The greatest\_ largest classes, inquiry of Ihsan Abbas, Beirut, Dar Sader. P.H, Vol1, P.288

<sup>135</sup> The details of this meeting are summed up with the coming of a delegation of Christians of Najran to Prophet Muhammad in the year of delegations, where they stayed at his mosque and prayed their prayer in the prophet's mosque and discoursed with him about the character of The Messiah, when the prophet despaired of their convert to Islam, he called them for cursing, but they refused cursing due to their knowledge that no one cursed a prophet and their head stayed alive or their children grew up, so they asked Prophet Muhammad to reconcile them and leave them on their religion. He should send with them a judge of their money, so Prophet Muhammad reconcile them and wrote an oath and a security on themselves their land, money and religion.

A: Ibn Hisham, Prophetic biography, inquiry of Mustafa Al-Saqqa, Damascus, Dar Ibn Katheer, P.H, vol.1, P.292.

B: Ibn Qayem Al-Jawziyah, Hidayat Al-Hayara of Jews and Christians, Beirut, Dar Al-Kotob Al Ilmiyah, 1st Edit, 1987, P.33.

<sup>136</sup> Metry Hagy Athyanos, Monasteries and churches of Damascus and its countryside, P.10.

Al-Sharif a pact in providing security from me, believers and who will come after us to all natives, priests, monks, and nuns they are, and let safe be on them, on their churches, their monasteries and all their visits whether inside or outside. We will also be good to them and they will be exempted from Jizya tax and duties as well as they will be saved from all disasters on lands or sea. And in their entering to the church of the Holy Sepulchre and other places nothing will be taken from them. Every believer whether he/she was a sultan, a governor, or a ruler should memorize all we commanded as well as the poor and the rich and all Muslim believers men and women. <sup>137</sup>

Prophet Muhammad, in his speeches to Christians, has taken the first steps in discourse and communicating with their brothers of Christians, he also trust them in their coexistence with Muslims, and guaranteed their rights which has its respect to the Day of Judgement. Even if this type of dialogue has often taken one form, discourse from distance; however, these speeches clarified that the attitude of Islam from Christianity does not change and put limits to the suggested ideas in dialogue that the Muslim converser should not go beyond in his dialogue with Christian, so there is no talking about doctrines, no infringement of the special rights, no avoiding the personal freedoms, no compulsion in religion rather an understanding and bringing together dialogue and exchanging of the ideas as well. The famous dialogue between Khalid son of Al-Walid and the leader of Byzantine<sup>138</sup> in the battle of Yarmouk<sup>139</sup> which showed obviously the characteristics of the Muslim advocate and the etiquette of the dialogue he should have, so that was a dialogue invitation to the good with suitable, ease and clarity<sup>140</sup>, we do not forget the dialogue of the Companions, (may Allah bless them) with Negus, king of Abyssinia, when immigrants fleeing with their religion from the House of blasphemy to the

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, P.11.

<sup>138</sup> Jerjah, the lieutenant- Colonel of Byzantine camp in the battle of Yarmouk.

<sup>139</sup> Regarding to the importance of this dialogue and its many meanings we mention something from it: Jerjah, the leader of Byzantine, asked Khalid ibn Al-Walid: what are you call me for? Khalid said: to the declaration of Faith that (there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) and acknowledge what came from Allah, the Almighty. Jerjah said: what if did not respond to you. Then Jizya and we prevent them, said Khalid. And if they did not pay Jizya? Jerjah said. We will ask his permission for war and fight him, answered Khalid. Then Jerjah asked: what is the position of who respond and enter to Islam? Khalid said: we all at the same position that Allah gave us the noble, the inferior, the first and the last one. Ibn Katheer, The Beginning and The End, Beirut, Al-Ma'aref bookshop, first Edit, 1966, Vol.12, P.7.

<sup>140</sup> Bassam Ajk, The Islamic-Christian dialogue, Damascus, Dar Qutaiba, second Edit, 2008, P.170.

house of Faith, and when Negus asked them about their religion and their Prophet, and what they say about Jesus son of Mary and his mother, they answered with verses from the Holy Quran from Surah Maryam, and argued him as Allah commanded them in the ways that are best, so he gave them safety in his country, acknowledged that what brought him (Jesus), and what Mohammed brought it out of one lantern<sup>141</sup>.

B: In the Umayyad Age: Muslims lived the peak of their prosperity in the Umayyad age, but Christians found themselves about a new religion that raised many questions especially after Muslims entered a new phase of invitation after the conquest. The Christian position was often marked with taking precaution of being involved in the doctrinal matters with Christians, in all, that is a kind of response to what the both holy verses recommend {Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best} An-Nahl Chapter, verse (125) and {And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).} Al-Ankaboot, verse (46); however this discourse did not deny the invitation to Islam rather it indicates that invitation did not follow necessarily the religious controversy or refute beliefs, so Christians saw that the invitation derive an impetus, in the first degree, from the position of Islam as the religion of the new country but even if they had not to involve in controversies, they intended to formulate a defensive position explains the Christian creed and firstly aims at keeping Christian on their belief. Their attitude towards Islam was fluctuated between the astonishment but ignorance mixed with it and comprehension the element of convergence in the essential beliefful postulate and the vigilance about what came with Islam dissenting from Christianity. This vigilance led to an attitude not without duality between emphasizing on the difference in the limits of estrangement and exposing Islam in describing it as Christian heresy the latest has been enhanced by confirming the importance of the meeting that was held between prophet Muhammad and Bahira the monk<sup>142</sup>. in many

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<sup>141</sup> Muhammad bin Qayem Al-Jawziyah, *Hadaya Al-Hayara mn Al-Yahoud w Al-Nasarah*, Beirut, Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, first Edit, 1987, P. 42.

<sup>142</sup> Bahira the monk (...-... A.D) he was a monk in Busra, South Syria, he had an index of the books about the approximate of the appearance of a prophet in the Arabian Island, *Simplified Arabic Encyclopedia*, P.H, Vol.1, P.330.

hypothesises of his tracks and others related to the true ecclesiastic identity of the mentioned monk<sup>143</sup>. Whatever the duality is, the doctrinal defensiveness occupied a greater position than Islam itself mentioned. Christians enjoyed freedom in the first domain more than itself in the self-domain, and we quote here, in Syria, a Christian man who has some kind of dialogue at the time this man is Johanna al-Dimashqi<sup>144</sup> who has role was almost resemble practicing a kind of leadership on Christians through representing them before the authority and defend their right especially in the period that witnessed some deterioration in their conditions at the time of Abd al Malik bin Marwan<sup>145</sup> and onwards.

Although he did not write a lot about Islam but he dealt with limited signs of its history and what came in its creed differently from Christianity and take the form of refutation and confutation. In the defensive context, he mentioned a dialogue with one of the Easterns<sup>146</sup> which is distinct in its dependence on as many of this ancestors, on philosophy as a way to explain the Christian creed. The mentioned dialogue deals with the free will matters and the createdness of the word Allah. Perhaps just putting these matters forward, it enhances for some researchers and historians the hypothesis that al-Dimashqi meant to bring forward matters that deal with Muslims which led to affecting the intellectual attitude of them; however, Christian have followed through the school of Johanna Al-Dimashqi three methods: the first: the path of defending the Christian belief especially the doctrine of Trinity. The second is opened to the Islamic-Christian dialogue. The third is inseparable from the first one it its goal. Even if its ways in endeavour to appeal to in the doctrinal matters differ between Islam and Christianity<sup>147</sup>

-This is from the Christian side while from the Islamic side, the initiation with Christians took the course of invitation more than a discourse. Although it is

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<sup>143</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims Together, P.95.

<sup>144</sup> Johanna al-Dimashqi (675-754) his name is Mansour bin Serjon but known as Johanna Al-Dimashqi. He was born in the time of Yazid bin Moawiya. His father was a stocker of the House of Money, he was famous in Philosophy and languages, he defended the imaginations and icons of Christian belief and left book about theology and Philosophy. Muhammad Abd al-Hamid al-Hamad, Monotheism and Tritheism in the dialogue of Christianity and Islam, H.P, P.246.

<sup>145</sup> Abd al-Malik bin Marwan bin Al-Hakam (646 - 705) the fifth Caliph of Umayyads, he was one of the greatest Caliphs of Umayyads, he was called as the father of kings, Dhabi, biographies of the Masters of nobels( Siyar A'lam Al Nobalaa, Vol.4, P.246.

<sup>146</sup> This dialogue is translated into Arabic with a title" Johanna Al-Dimashqi fe Hiwar ma' Ahad Al-Sharqien, published by Morris Seil, Beirut, P.H, 1968.

<sup>147</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together from the past till today, P.95.

known that the concept of the invitation differs from the one of the dialogue, Muslims opened their doors to their Christian brothers discouraging with them and inviting them to Islam in the ways that are best; however, the history, unfortunately, did not save images from that in the Levant at that time, according to the research perhaps the reason refers to the predominance of the history in the intellectual movement and the religious conquests, Allah knows. In addition to the letters that Omar bin Abd Al-Aziz<sup>148</sup>, the prince of believers wrote them to some of the princes and kings of India calling them for Islam. The results of these letters were some of the kings and princes became Muslims. They are considered as a good omen of the entering of Islam to India, ,yet history has mentioned nothing about the essence of these letters<sup>149</sup>

C: In the Abbasid Age: Abbasids have completed what Umayyad had started to extension in the Islamic state, then the Islamic conquest spread out all over the world showing the Islamic religion with wisdom and good preaching wherever Muslims are and travel, as for their relationship with Christians, they had a high position in the intellectual life in the Islamic state. Un worthy to be mentioned, the Abbasid period of time has witnessed a remarkable Christian contribution in the Intellectual life. At that time, the most prominent figures were affiliating to the Nestorianism and Jacobeanism although we are unable to talk in details about the intellectual influences of Christians and others related to the attitude towards Islam, so we will settle for what regards to our subject about the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria- I mean by the word Syria what was at the hands of men of religion in the Levant at that time. In the second century A.H, a prominent figure from the Christian side has shone, Theodors Abu Qurrah, the bishop of Harran.<sup>150</sup> He was distinguished by his knowledge of the Arabic language and his acquaintance with Islam, in addition to his Syriac theology

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<sup>148</sup> Omar bin Abd-Al Aziz: (717 - 720 AD), the eighth caliph of Umayyad, the fifth Caliphs from the perspective of the Sunni, his lineage from his mother refers to caliph Omar bin al-Khattab, Golden, Biographies of noble figures( Siyar A'alam Al-Nobalaa) Vol. 5, p.114

<sup>149</sup> Abu All-Hasan All-Balathery, the conquest of countries, Beirut, Dar Al-Hilal bookshop, edit of 1983, Vol.1, P.411.

<sup>150</sup> Theodors Abu Qurrah (740-824 A.H) one of the students of the priest, Johanna All-Dimashqi in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, and one of the most important figures of the Christian Arabic tradition. He got the highest degrees of scientific and intellectual culture at that time. His dialogues with Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'moun were printed in a book called " Abu Qurrah and Al-Ma'moun. The argument for Pope, Wafiq Nasri Al-Yasoui, Jounieh, St Paul library, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 2010, Joseph Zeitoun ( The head of the charitable association of St Grigorius, figures of Christianity, Damascus, the association of St Grigorius, Thu,12/5/2011, 11:00 a.m.



culture and the Greek one. His interests reflect the first one which is defending the true religion- according to him- against the different Christian heresies, and the confrontation with Islam. He does not face Islam directly except few texts written in Greek but he speaks to Muslims explaining the Christian belief and he does not hesitate to deal with what is mutual between Christianity and Islam, and discuss matters from a rational point, make him closer to Mu'tazila, such as the freedom of human being, the createdness of the word Allah and His characteristics, comparing Him and exalt Him as well as some answers about Trinitarianism and Monotheism<sup>151</sup> were reported. Despite the fact that he avoided the discursal approach in historical writings, another man Temahaos Gatliq , the Nestorius patriarch<sup>152</sup>, the approach was known as the discursal defensive approach, we find this in his religious dialogues with Al-Mahdi Caliph<sup>153</sup> which clarify his theological attitudes that are characterised with endeavouring to justify the invitation of Caliph to convert to it. in his dialogues, he emphasized on the Christian privacy in a defensive manner but a calm one, at the same time looking for a satisfactory answer to ask him forum taking a clear attitude towards Prophet Muhammad<sup>154</sup>. Letimathaus was famous for his dialogue with the Abbasid Caliph, All-Mahdi and his dialogue<sup>155</sup> includes the following topics:

1- Christ, The word of Allah that is embodied to our salvation.

2- The Holy Trinity

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<sup>151</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims Together from Yesterday till Today, P.100

<sup>152</sup> Temathaos 1 : (727 – 823 AD), theologian, one of the most important Nestorian school organizers at the Abbasid Caliphate, and this Gatliq had discussed the subject of Christianity and Islam with the Caliph al-Mahdi, at a time when Mesopotamia was subjected to his school as a substitute for the Jacobean school, follower to the Western Church, Joseph Zeitoun, (Director of St. Gregory the charity), Christian figures, Damascus, Saint Gregory Society, Thursday, 05/12/2011, 11:00 am

<sup>153</sup> Abu Abdullah Muhammad son of Abdullah Al-Mansour son of Mohammed son of Ali Al Mahdi: (127 - 169 AD), he was assumed to the succession after the death of his father, Al-Mansur in 158, and was of good conduct in the period of his succession, Zarkali, figures , Beirut, Dar Al A'lam, .5th EDIT, P.H, Vol.6, p. 221

<sup>154</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims Together from Yesterday till Today, P.10.

<sup>155</sup> he printed the dialogue in a separate book in Arabic and translated from Syriac in the management of the Institute of Oriental Arts in Lebanon, in 1977, with the title: "The Church and Islam in the first Abbasid era," It is worth to notice that some of the researchers did not admit the truth of the percentage of this dialogue or its occurrence , this is because the Arabic and Islamic sources did not mention anything about this dialogue and the oldest manuscript to which the dialogue was attributed to is the manuscript of the monastery of the Virgin in north Iraq, which goes back to the third century AD.

3- What do we say about Muhammad?

4- The death of Christ on the cross.

5- why Christians do not believe in the prophecy of Muhammad (may all prayers and peace be upon him).

6-Distortion of Torah and Bible to the truth of prophets.<sup>156</sup>

This was from the Christian side ;however, from the Islamic side on the margins of the invitation of scholars at that time, history registered about Al-Aref Abu Yazid Al-Bastami<sup>157</sup> that he disguised in a costume of a monk and entered one of Sham's monasteries with the knowing of one of the monks then he disclosed his matter and a long discourse happened between him and the monks which took the form of questions that the monks asked and he was answering them, then he asked the priest about the key of heavens and Paradise and then the priest answered after he has answered his sects for security that he admits declaration, there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger. So that all the monks of the monastery converted to Islam and the monastery became a mosque.<sup>158</sup>

D: At the Time of Crusades and Mongol Invasions: dialogue regressed, in general, at that period due to the influences of these wars, few number of Christians welcomed Franks, but the majority of the Eastern Christians have seen in the Crusades an external aggression that target them as much as they target Muslim. Although the regression of the dialogue, but it did not reach the limit of cessation especially in the Levant, the place of the research, where dialogue took another course in its topics differs from what it was before, so instead of the manner of invitation by Muslims and the manner of defence by Christians, the image of friendship and peacefulness has appeared in the dialogue mixed up with total understanding to Islam and acknowledging the message of Muhammad (may all prayers and peace be upon him). Also, dialogue has dealt with the Quranic text and what come up in its verses and what accord with the Christian belief; for instance, the dialogue that took place

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<sup>156</sup> Bassam Ajk, the Islamic-Christian dialogue, P.172

<sup>157</sup> Abu Yazid All-Bastami (875-...A.D one of the senior and sheikhs of Sophie, Abu- Abd All-Rahman All-Salami, classes of Sophism, inquiry of Noor All-Deen Shraibeh, library of Cairo, Al khangi, second edit, 1969, P.67

<sup>158</sup> The text of the dialogue is in: Al-Rawd Al-Fa'eq fi Al-Mawa'eth w Al-Raqaeq by Shouaib Al-Harfish, Beirut, Dar Ihiaa Al Turath, P.H, P.149.

between the three scholars: Ibn Taymiyah<sup>159</sup>, Idrees Al-Qurafi<sup>160</sup> and Shams Al-Deen Al-Ansari<sup>161</sup> and bishops of Sidon at that time. This dialogue was followed with the message of St Paul to his Muslims friends in Sidon<sup>162</sup> that was published and was promoted in the Levant expressing the spirit of religious brotherhood that infiltrated the dialogue of Muslims and Christians at that time<sup>163</sup>. After the end of Crusades, the attempts of the west remained existed to revive the wars, so Cyprus has opened its doors to accept adventurers who want to continue Crusades against Muslims. That led to break out many battles and some Muslims became as prisoners of war in Cyprus. History, here, mentions a message that Sheikh of Islam, Ibn Taymiyah sent to Surjoas, the king of Cyprus, asking him being nice to Muslims and set them free, and offering Islam to him and inviting him to enter in Islam that was a reply to the message sent by the king of Cyprus to Muslims calling them for entering in Christianity<sup>164</sup>.

E: In The Age of The Ottoman Empire: The long period that occupied by the Ottoman Empire in the life of Arabs either Muslims or Christians has affected the Muslim-Christian dialogue dramatically. After the dialogue was depending on highlighting the teachings of the two sharias, and put various doctrinal issues, and after it developed to become from Muslims as an invitation and from Christians as defence, it witnessed at that period another development, which is focusing on the national unity that brings the two religions together which is not so surprising, for the conditions of injustice that Muslims lived at the time, and particularly in the last period of that time imposed on Muslims

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<sup>159</sup> Ibn Taymiyah: (1263 -1330 AD), Ahmed Taqi al-Din Harrani, Sheikh al-Islam, Sheikh, Imam, and scholar, the interpreter, Jurisprudent, diligent, conversationalist, , Sheikh al-Islam, the one with brilliant classifications, with excessive intelligence, Al-Dhabi, glossary of conversationalist, inquiry by: Mohamed Habib Hilal, Ta'if, Al-Siddiq library, 1stEdit, 1988, vol.1, p.25.

<sup>160</sup> Son of Idrees Qurafi: (...- 1285 AD), Shahab Al-Deen Ahmed bin Idrees Qurafi, expert in al-Maliki jurisprudence . Zirikli, Al'alam, vol.1, p.94

<sup>161</sup> () Shams al-Din al-Ansari (...AD-1326 AD), Mohammed son of Ahmed son of Hamza, called Shams Al-Deen son of Shahab al-Deen al-Ramli al-Menoufi al-Masri al-Ansari, famous as the young al-Shafi'i, a group of scholars agreed that he is the renewer of the tenth century and signed the agreement was on exaggeration in praising him, he is one of masters of scholars and reviver of Sunnah and the Mayor of jurists, seen: Zirikli, Al'alam, vol. 6, p.123.

<sup>162</sup> He is Paul Al-Mlkani Al-Antali, Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together, p. 109, no other details were mentioned about the reference, and the researcher did not find a translation about it.

<sup>163</sup> ) Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together, p. 109

<sup>164</sup> Ibn Taymiyah, The Cypriot Message, inquiry by Alaa Al-Deen Domoj, Beirut, Edit of 1990, Vol.2,P,10.

and Christians to take that trend, especially in the Levant, which was contiguous to the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire and was completely under its control.

The eastern awareness was characterized with hostility to the Christian West as it appears in the phrase that was popularized at the time, says: turbans of Sheikhs not the crowns of Cardinals<sup>165</sup>, On the other hand, this awareness looks for the way of reconciliation between the Eastern Christianity and Islam, or endeavour to a kind of mutual adaptation, which allows cooperation between them against the common enemy; therefore, invitations from the both parties, Christian and Islamic, at that time, took place to establish an Islamic Christian council in which people of the whole East are common; eventually, aims at the unity of the human race under the banner of one belief. The proclamation of the national unity and the struggle against the colonialist predominate not on the Islamic-Christian dialogue only, but on any other intellectual or religious activities, and things kept going until Syria and all other Arab countries got its complete independence from any colonialist, and after rising from a long-Dormancy, the Islamic-Christian dialogue movement in Syria reactivated at the hands of seniors Muslim scholars, and senior Christians clergymen, the modern history registers a distinct and significant Islamic initiations, and topics different from its preceding, and this is what we will talk about if Allah wills.

Thirdly: The Reality of the modern Syrian dialogue and its levels:

1.The levels of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria:

The Islamic-Christian dialogue that is launched – at the first hand – from the reality of coexistence in this country since hundreds of years, and on the other hand, from what the technical, economic, social, and globalized development imposes, which, in the end, put us in front of two roads we must choose between them, the clash road or the dialogue one. When both Islamic and Christian religions were teaching and inviting, undoubtedly, to love, peace, truth, justice, and humanity, and therefore to dialogue not to confrontation, so dialogue has become as for us - Syrians – a right and a duty at the same time.

However, it is difficult to talk particularly, at present, about the achievements of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria in the modern history in particular; perhaps those who carry out the dialogue are more hesitant than others in

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<sup>165</sup> This phrase refers to the Senior Duke of Notaras, Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together, P.113.

evaluating it in terms of keeping the promises they have made since it extended in the last thirty years. Probably, people of the dialogue - they almost know what includes – are closer to realism, so when they compare themselves to the one who throw seeds and hoping that they come up with delicious fruits, they admit that the actual and general change in the Islamic-Christian relations is not a direct reflection of the movement of ideas, nor is it merely the outcome of an irreversible accumulative process, but remains vulnerable to the effects out of the field of the dialogue itself. However, this acknowledge does not mean that the connotation of the dialogue is only symbolic, for it cannot belittle what it causes, nor ought to skip the experience gained from the dialogue in terms of thinking of the problems that contribute to a right tackling for it<sup>166</sup>.

We are not seeking ,at this place, to diagnose the reality of dialogue in Syria, through examining the multiple activities and roaming among what was written about it and for. It is sufficient for us to indicate that the large variety of initiatives and specialized bodies prevent a thorough statistical survey, so we will suggest a general and quick modeling of running dialogues and then we will display at length the means and the topics raised in dialogue, generally in Syria ,and the ones raised by the most prominent men of dialogues in the country - Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro - in particular.

In talking about the levels of the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue, four levels are noticed; to begin with the meetings of the senior religious figures which have certain signs though people disagree in evaluating their impact - they are approximate to the « the dialogue souvenir images »in the view of some people, perhaps their influence does not exceed the effect of the image on the emotions and its role in saving the memory and restore it, but it does not mean that they have no educational benefit, for they, in a way or another, reveal what is possible in terms of relations between Muslims and Christians, and indicate to all the expectations , which in this way shows that dialogue means the religious assemblies as a whole, not merely an individual, especially if the initiator of this meeting a man who carry religious and political weight and I quote this from the meeting of the Eminence Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Badr al-Din Hassoun, the Grand Mufti of the Syrian Arab Republic and the chef of Fatwa Supreme Council of the Syriac Catholic Church of the Aleppo with Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III

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<sup>166</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together, PP.76 onwards.

Yonnan,<sup>167</sup> this meeting was followed by another meeting between the Grand Mufti of the Republic and the Patriarch Ignatius in Al-Rawda mosque, Aleppo. Grand Mufti pointed out ,during the meeting, that the importance of the role assumed by religious leaders in consolidating the values of understanding, love and peace ,and enhancing dialogue between the peoples, indicating that co-existence is a part of the fabric of Syrian society, civilization and history, he also called the Patriarch to transfer realistic image he touched in Syria to the Vatican; Patriarch Yonnan, in turn, pointed out to the importance of Aleppo city and the ancient civilizations that followed one another as well as Syria's role in conveying the civilisation of ancient East to the world.<sup>168</sup>

We go back to the types of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, and the second type is the one that sponsored governments and political parties sponsor it , and through this dialogue the Islamic parties aim at fill the gap between t the East and the West; particularly regarding what they call the extremism and fundamentalism, so the stakeholders endeavour through the dialogue to change the image that westerners have, this dialogue comes from a desire to define the project of the Islamic awakening and what it offers the world; at the same time, it seeks to break the surrounding isolation around the Islamic forces, and finding an understanding westerner speaker, or at least not a close-minded in dealing with Muslims.

The third level of dialogue in Syria is that one that give the spiritual, social and educational issues more attention, called «the dialogue of believers», whether practiced by individuals, assemblies or religious institutions; moreover, this type of dialogue tends to realism, which emphasizes the convergence in all fields of life and discuss common issues, equality and cohabitation between Muslims and Christians at the local and national level.

The fourth Level: is the specialist « academic dialogue» which is no longer the preserve of researchers in religious studies, and some of it follow approach, or exceed it to a common approach of the issues of religion and the world between Christianity and Islam<sup>169</sup>),an example from the researcher Dr. Bassam Ajk<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ignatius Joseph III Yonnan: his name Joseph Yonnan, Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church, a contemporary.

<sup>168</sup> Grand Mufti of Syria visits the patriarch of the Syriac Catholic, Syria Rose, published by: Admin in the classification of the news, 21/10/2009, [www.syriarose.com](http://www.syriarose.com).

<sup>169</sup> Elia Te'meh, Muslims and Christians together, PP.76.onwards.

<sup>170</sup> the dean of the Islamic Invitation College in the council of Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro, contemporary

who presented a dissertation about the Islamic-Christian dialogue with the same title.

- Contemplations of the reality of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria: undoubtedly, the circumstances that surround our world and the terrible advance in media have entered us into the time of communication between cultures and religions, while it was thought that technological advance would get rid of the religious affiliations, we see, on the contrary, that it is no longer entails, as in the past, transformations at the social level, but social life became controlled by cultures and religions; however, in recent circumstances of acculturation and dialogue allowed by and led by the consumptional market of communication means.

This is the extent surround that our world exceeds, it is distinct with two types of effects: the first type: the numerable and innumerable attempts to adhere to cultural identity which found in religion, its only safe place, in a world globalized in his contacts, does not distinct between the limits of these identities to the point where the latest think that it does not respect them; however, effects are the easiness and inevitability of advance in these ways, those two effects the in a dialogue between confirming identity and respecting the other, this is the reality of religions. Here, in Syria, we believe that dialogue, with no doubt, is inevitable. the crisis, however, comes from the absence of the ethics of this dialogue. The ethic which allows confirming identity, abides to the freedom of dialogue and respect the other, to which people of dialogue in Syria, Muslims and Christians adhered to is called: the religious tolerance.

Religious tolerance was and is still the slogan of the dialogue in Syria, but we notice a change in its meanings, when it meant or forced the acceptance of other beliefs as they are, despite all the silence on the big contradictions it contains in the religious teachings; on other words, the religious tolerance was about accepting the other with his differentiation and disagreement. Today, however, religious tolerance is based on a new principle which is being convinced of humanitarian unity. Therefore, while the religious tolerance meant reaching to good dialogue, it turned to mean the openness to the other in an attempt not to a good dialogue, nor to accept it, but to understand its own experiences, and to discover the absolute ones in every religion.

The religious tolerance as a language and a courtesy of dialogue is no longer equalizing between the right of all beliefs in existence as they all relative, but

religious tolerance became - in the Syrian dialogue - a deep insight into what is beautiful in the experience of each religion, that respect does not mean to admit, but to consider, and this new concept of religious tolerance and the courtesies of dialogue between cultures is based on admitting the common values of humanity that every civilisation seeks to according to the capabilities it have , and the circumstances it passed through, for , in Syria, there is no dialogue between Muslims and Christians, yet there is one between the Syrian Muslims and Christians and the West, so I have a dialogue with the foreigner , but we ,in Syria, live a co-living, so that some Syrian Christians fast in the holy month of Ramadan, and even if they did not fast, they commit to its rites as well as Muslims in the Christmas put up some green trees.<sup>171</sup>

And some of the best Syrian scholars<sup>172</sup> believe that the Islamic-Christian dialogue is carried out by persons of Muslims and Christians, until now it has not become a general culture of both parties, and Islam has no institution that carry out the dialogue, the same as for Christianity even if there was a dialogue carried out by intellectual and loyal individuals because the condition of dialogue is to admit the other. Also there is no official dialogue with the West and America to defeat them by the force of arms, colonizing the Islamic lands, plundering their wealth and depart from the approach of Christianity and its tolerance, so dialogue has remained between the members of both parties, in my belief, Syria is one of the first countries that are ready for dialogue because there is a centre of religions and the oldest ones in it, if the dialogue has advanced there, it will affect the world, and some of the Muslims scholars have remained knocking the door of dialogue to indoctrinate, but these attempts have maintained individual<sup>173</sup>.

Despite all that, we cannot deny that Syria has remained as a pattern of the brotherhood between Islam and Christianity until the present time, even if the public authorities did not assign a separate activity for the Islamic-Christian dialogue-and this is not absolute- however, the subject of the Islamic-Christian dialogue and brotherhood has took an important place in the activities of the

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<sup>171</sup> Colette Khoury, (a member in the Syrian People's Council ), the role of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, Damascus, Saturday, 03.31.2012 , at 16:00

<sup>172</sup> Dr. Bassam Sabbagh ,the director of Imam Ouzai school in Damascus, and the preacher of Lala Basha Mosque, one of the disciples of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro(May Allah be merciful to him), a contemporary

<sup>173</sup> Bassam Sabbagh, (director of Imam Ouzai school in Damascus), the Islamic-Christian dialogue, the role of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro in this dialogue, Damascus, Tuesday, 20.12.2011, 14:00.



Islamic invitation, especially in the sixth general conference to approximate between the religious doctrines which was held on 14/3/2010 in Damascus. It allocated one lecture to talk about the religious brotherhood between Islam and Christianity which take from Syria a pattern for that<sup>174</sup>. In addition to the many attempts by activists of this field, to develop the Islamic-Christian dialogue and move it from the world of pens to the common work places<sup>175</sup>.

Fourthly: Some means of the Syrian Islamic-Christian Dialogue and its problems:

1- Some means of the Islamic-Christian Dialogue in Syria:

Despite the hardworking that people of intellect did in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, but the lack of publishing has affected archiving those activities. So that they were not ascertained nor a date was written down about them. As well as they were not saved except what the researcher has got which is very little. These activities were divided into five ones: Essays, Periodicals, Lectures, conferences and seminars:

First: Essays: many essays and separated ones were published in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, some of them were at the hands of Syrian writers and the others by Lebanese. However, it is worthy to be mentioned that some of these

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<sup>174</sup> Documents of the Roman Orthodox Diocese in Aleppo, the approximation conference between the Islamic doctrines, 16 /03 /2010

<sup>175</sup> for example: The Committee of the Joint Islamic- Christian action; is founded in 2003, which includes parliamentarians and Muslim scholars and Christian clergymen, some of its members: Archbishop Isidore Battiha. Parliament George Jabbour. Sheikh Hassan wahoud. Senator Zakaria Mir Alam. Father Yousef Taher. Sheikh Abdul Razzaq Al-Mou'nis. Sheikh Dr. Abdul Latif farfour. Sheikh Abdullah Te'meh. Senator Adnan Dahahni. Sheikh Mohammed Biqai. Senator. Dr. Muhammad Habash. Dr. sheikh Mazhar Jarkash. Priest. Maan Bitar. Senator Muwaffaq Habashi. the Committee seeks to enhance the national unity and to open a serious dialogue with the West to strengthen the co-existence between Islam and Christianity, the Committee of the Islamic- Christian action has introduced the first religious Syrian-American dialogue, it is the first dialogue of its kind between academic from Syria, and the American team of the dialogue was delegated by the centre of religion and diplomacy in Washington, in cooperation with the committee of the Islamic- Christian coaction., where dialogues were over three days, and the American interlocutors indicated to the serious mistake committed by the US policy in the Middle East since the occupation of Iraq, and this committee has set up several dialogues in the churches of Saidnaya, 2006. Later, the work of the Islamic-Christian coaction committee was only to issue data clarifying through them the attitude of the Committee from some of the current events in the political arena or the religious . Administration of the website, the Committee of the Islamic- Christian action issues a statement regarding to the Pope's announcements , Kassion magazine 01 / 11/2006, www.kassion.org

essays were published by the Roman Orthodox diocese in Aleppo and they were collected in a book called "Christians and Muslims Together" on the occasion of the celebration of Aleppo, the capital of the Islamic culture for the year 2006 <sup>176</sup>: two of these essays were chosen and they were written by two writers:

The first essay: with a title " The Role of religions in The Future of Civilizations" it was written by St Paul Metropolit Yazeji<sup>177</sup>. In the following there is a chosen text from the essay: so this is the extent surrounding that, today, the world of meanings exceeds, it is distinct with two kinds of effects: the first, is the several and uncountable attempts to attach to a cultural identity that its solution was found in the religion. That is a globalized world in its connections which does not distinct between the limits of these identities.

To an extent that the later thinks it does not respect it. On the other hand, the second effect is the facility and the inevitability of communication due to the advance in these means. Both effects are in a dialogue between assuring the identity and respecting the other, this is the reality of religions. We believe that this dialogue is, undoubtedly, inevitable; however, the problem comes from the absence of the courtesies of this dialogue, so what is this courtesy that allow to ascertain the identity and keep the freedom of the dialogue and respect the other?<sup>178</sup>

The second essay: its title is " The Christian Arabs, The Historical presence and Renewing the Role<sup>179</sup>" written by Hussein Awdat<sup>180</sup>, this essay dealt with ideas about the history of Christianity in Syria, the Arabism of Christians, the affiliation of some Arabs to Christianity and the relation of Copts with Arabs in the old history, then it dealt with the Christian presence in the middle Arabic history and their contribution in the scientific development in the Umayyad Age to their role in the modern Arabic renaissance

at the end, the essay dealt with the obstacles that stand in the way of renewing the Christian role in carrying out the missions related to them in the countries they belong to, in the following, a text from the essay where the writer says:" the dialogue of Civilizations and cultures was practiced in Arab countries since

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<sup>176</sup> By Archimandrite Dr. Elia Te'meh

<sup>177</sup> Bishop of Aleppo and Iskenderun and dependants of the Greek Orthodox, contemporary

<sup>178</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims Together, P.21.

<sup>179</sup> Hussein Awdat, Arab Christians: The Historical Presence and Renewing the Role. Arabs' Dialogue Magazine, Beirut, Lebanon, 2005, (7/6),PP.25-28.

<sup>180</sup> A political writer and a researcher from Syria, a Contemporary.

hundreds of years between Muslims and others, the followers of other religions. There is no doubt that the dialogue and the co-existence between Muslims and Christians in these countries are a pattern of the dialogue of civilisations and cultures. The purpose of Christian Arabs is their existence, their links and their establishments inside the homeland and outside. Muslims also have to do major national, social and cultural missions, for they are all members of one nation and live on the same land and the same expectations and ambitions collect them, they defend their common culture and their common civilisation. It stands to reason that they contribute as much as they can in renewing and defending the Islamic Arabic civilisation and the Islamic Arabic culture<sup>181</sup>.

Second: Periodicals:

In Syria many periodicals are issued , including religious, cultural, social, and entertaining, but there are periodicals specialized in the Quranic studies and the dialogue of religions, Al-Maarej magazine<sup>182</sup> , which is concerned with strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and religious, and renewing awareness by heritages of the religion and its issues, and in its basis, the essence of the moral and social values, which fight the religious extremism, fanaticism and sectarian strife in all its forms because of the belief in the sanctity of the national unity, and fortify the immunity of any interpenetration or exploiting religion.

### **Criticism an Commentary:**

In studying what is mentioned about the dialogue, the following is noticed:

- 1- As for essays: they were calling for dialogue and completely urging to it, But most of them did not care for identifying the goals to be achieved by this dialogue , nor what the topics that are to be addressed in the dialogue process.

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<sup>181</sup> Elia Te'meh, Christians and Muslims together, P.143

<sup>182</sup> Al-Maarej magazine was founded in 1989 by Sheikh Dr. Hussein Ahmad Shehadeh, a contemporary Islamic thinker which means Islamic-Christian dialogue, and the magazine is a monthly and specialized in the Quranic studies, and the dialogue of religions, and issued by Al-Maarej forum for religions dialogue, and distributed in Lebanon and Syria

2- Al-Maarej Magazine is considered a major one in introducing themes of dialogue, but who is familiar with the contents of its essays, will find that they are written mostly with the philosophical method; in addition to being the only magazine in this field in Syria specifically, making an urgent need to establish more magazines specialized in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria.

Third: Lectures: many lectures were held on about the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria from both the Christian side and the Islamic side. However, most of them have a lack of authentication and Archive.

### **Lights on These Lectures:**

The lectures that discussed The Islamic-Christian dialogue went to assuring the bonds of brotherhood and love between members of these two religions, opening, by this, the doors of dialogue, understanding and convergence in the common issues which are important to both parties. Scholars of Islam have mentioned that the theoretical baselines in Islam and the practical achievements which transformed the theoretical baselines to imperceptible and concrete ones that ascertain, undoubtedly, that Islam has built the half belongs to it from a bridge of live, brotherhood and connection,<sup>183</sup> and Christians have to complete the other half. This does not mean entering Islam because the declaration of the Christian Institution of acknowledging Islam and Muslims does not force it to leave its Christianity and to follow Islam. Allah (Exalted be He) has finished this problem as it came in His words: {If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people} Al-Ma'idah, verse(48). One of His wisdoms in His creatures is to make several religions differ in their creeds and unite in their rules and essence.<sup>184</sup> These lectures highlighted the matter of acknowledging the other and took into consideration the main subject in the forum, they have considered the other a moral existential necessity to achieve its humanity, the highness of our ideas and to refine our senses, emotions and feelings.<sup>185</sup>

Then in this forum, they highlighted the mutual points of convergence between Muslims and Christians, for in the principles of the creed, Muslims and

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<sup>183</sup> Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledging The Other (Ishkaliat Al-I'teraf bl A'akhar), P.51

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, P.35.

<sup>185</sup> Muhammad Tamim Hafez, The Moral Bases of Acknowledging The Other (Al-Osos Al-Akhlaqia l Al-I'teraf bl Akhar), Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledging The Other, P.123.

Christians agreed on the fact that God is One and Allah is the creator of heavens and earth, He is the All-Knower and the All-Wise, the most forgiver and the most Merciful, Ibrahim is the friend of Allah, and Moses is the converser of Allah, Allah will resurrect the dead and satisfy souls and He will call them to account, Muslims take into consideration the honoured morals and worship Allah especially in prayer, fast and charity, and Christians believe that Faith without worship is dead.<sup>186</sup>

However, in the modern cases, Muslims and Christians converged on an important point which is the modern world addresses thousands of challenges to the Faith in Allah, so both the Muslim and the Christian should put hand in the hand of the other to face all challenges; in order to face them, there must be the dialogue, and the dialogue that guarantee the convergence between Christianity and Islam at the intellectual level to the intended coexistence.

Finally, the fundamentals of this coexistence were put up, and they are: First, guarantee the rights for the coexisted parties, so the right of each party in the society and homeland was well-protected and was taken into consideration, never to be violated or to be offended; second, the mutual respect, that each party respect the other because the human being, regardless any characteristic of him, is respected and honoured as a confirmation to the words of Allah { We have honoured the sons of Adam } Al-Israa<sup>187</sup>, verse(70).

Fourth: Conferences: Despite the fact that Syria has witnessed many activities in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, but they were not under an official auspice except the conference of the Islamic- Christian brotherhood held in Damascus, Umayyad palace for conferences on Wednesday, 15/12/2010 with the participation of Christian clergymen and Muslim scholars and researchers in sciences of religions with an aim to emphasizing the unity of Faith in Allah, recommendations were issued by it summarized as the following:

- I. The conference blesses the invitation of Synod to the Islamic-Christian brotherhood, coexistence and unlearning sectarianism, violence, terrorism, oppression and exploiting the other.
- II. The conference considers the emphasizing of synod on the importance of the Arabic language as an official in synod and recommending to use it in

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<sup>186</sup> Johanna At-Talli, Acknowledge the other, Means and Ways of Angelic Relation, Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge the Other.

<sup>187</sup> Mahmoud Akkam, Acknowledge the other is educational matters, Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge The Other, P.150.

the roman department in the Vatican state as a qualitative step towards fruitful coordination and civilizational solidarity between the Arabic Christianity and the western one and its objective to dialogue of civilisations, cultures and religions.

- III. The idea of inconsistency between Islam and Christianity is one of the deceptive ideas that Franks wars have sowed its seeds in order to justify its aggression on the East, in this regard, references and Islamic and Christian institutions have to face this delusion and its negative repercussion on the religious speech.
- IV. The lively cultural field of Christianity and Islam is the common affiliation to Arabism as an overall humanitarian civilisation. Basing on identity, the conference calls for correcting principles of orientalism and Occidentalism and finishing up the logic of prejudgements against Arab and Islam.
- V. Prohibiting conflict and violence in all its forms and considering the religious tolerance a high Islamic and Christian virtue built on the freedom of belief and the necessity of reciprocal respect and admitting rightness in the difference and diversity.
- VI. The so-called idiom ‘religious minorities’ is one of the inward foreign idioms, so it expresses, in its Arabic reality, nothing about distinction between doctrines and religions where society with all its sects is deep-rooted in one national identity and one national affiliation.
- VII. The conference calls for renewing the objective and cognitive awareness of the Arabic Christianity and Islam. From here, it is necessary to unite the educational programs to care for juniors and youths and their promising future role in values moral development.
- VIII. The conference calls for treating the internal situation of Muslims and Christians, solve their problems by dialogue and co-working away from any external interference to exploit mistakes made by some people here or others there in order to ruin the civil peace.
- IX. The conference considers violence phenomenon widespread almost everywhere in the world is not relevant to the Christian and Islamic morals thus the only enemies to the believing nation with its two parties the Islamic and the Christian are occupation, terrorism and ignorance in all its forms.

- X. The conference refuses sayings and ideologies about the conflict of religions and civilisations, and it asserts the necessity of brotherhood, coexistence and dialogue under the sky of one flay and one homeland.
- XI. The conference warns of the excessive boom of religious satellite channels which turn to arouse sectarian sedition and doctrinal incitement, and call for a religious media honoured charter, and request from the competent authorities to work on closing all mass media which mess with the security of society and its national unity.
- XII. The conference emphasizes on make the Christian and Islamic believing values a subject of studies, conferences, seminars and Christian- Islamic meetings; moreover, programs with believing spiritual academic intellect that are common between Christian and Muslim citizens.

At the conclusion of the conference, representatives expressed their authenticity in the journey of publish the culture of brotherhood, tolerance, love and national unity amongst Syrians. All in all, the conference the conference aimed at strengthen the idea of the Islamic-Christian brotherhood and highlighting the distinction message that distinguish Syria in coexistence from the whole world.<sup>188</sup>

### **Lights on the conference**

The conference of the Islamic-Christian brotherhood was the first international conference hosted by Syria in the field of religious dialogue; however, this conference focused in its recommendations on the important and fruitful points in the field of dialogue, each and every one of these points fit to be the subject of a conference or a seminar in the future, from these points:

1. using the Arabic language as an official language at the Synod, and recommending for use it in the official departments in the Vatican State.
2. concerning with the issue of minorities.
3. Prohibiting conflict and violence in all its forms, and urging to the religious tolerance.
4. searching the danger of the boom of satellite channels that incite religious sedition.

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<sup>188</sup> The researcher was invited to the conference and she wrote down the recommendations and statements.

In addition to this conference, a mini-conference titled «Conference of prayer in the divine religions» was held on 07/03/2011, under the auspices of ‘Al-Mustafa’ University, Iran, in the possession of Imam Khomeini, in Saida Zeinab in Damascus countryside, recommendations related to prayer, worship and beg Allah for crises that happen to the nation have been issued between men that can disintegrate the national unity; however, the conference did not receive a coverage of Syrian media rather it remained within the activities of ‘Al-Mustafa’ University, Iran.<sup>189</sup>

Fifth: Seminars:

Seminars that written down in the history of the contemporary Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue:

- ✚ The Seminar of religious brotherhood held in the national Al-Assad library, Damascus on 24/1/2000. This seminar took the form of conversational sessions where speeches are made by Muslim scholars and Christian clergymen then interventions come one after another .This seminars, however, was not concluded with a statement rather with a mutual final session of many lecturers, and this session was titled as: "Syria is a leading model in the field of religious brotherhood".
- ✚ The Institution of the Islamic Fatah<sup>190</sup> in Damascus held many conversational seminars, for instance:
  - i. The international seminar "The Common amongst the divine messages and activate it" on 16/11/2006 where approximately 40 scholars from Syria and Egypt have involved in it, conversationalists dealt with the mutual values between Islam and Christianity and the ways to enhance them. This international seminar is considered the fifth international Islamic conference held in Damascus by non-governmental actors and the second conference that raised the issues of Islam and Christianity at that time after the seminar "Muslims and Christians together in

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<sup>189</sup> Jean Hanna, (manager of the Islamic-Christian relations in the monastery of Mar Tuma),The Islamic-Christian dialogue, Saidnaya, Monastery of St. Thomas, Monday, 07/11/2011, 12:30 p.m.

<sup>190</sup> Al-Fatih Islamic institution : it is a charitable cultural reformist scientific Islamic establishment, founded by the renowned scholar Saleh Al-Farfour in 1956. He set many goals for it: to develop the studies of the Islamic sciences, so it keeps the invariants and launches from variables in a constructive from not destructive and renew not scatter. The institution includes a department for sharia study before the post-elementary and another department of several universities with legislative sharia, law, Islamic studies, Arabic language after post-elementary level as well as post-graduate department. Website of Al-Fatih Islamic Institution:www.alfatihonline.com.



confronting challenges" that was held in Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro council, we will talk about it later.

- ii. The Conversational intellectual Forum, Damascus in cooperation with Alberta University in Edmonton, Canada titled as: "Islam and the West, acquaintance and dialogue for a justice world peace and a safe humanitarian future " on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Mai, 2009. Participants concluded that there is no world peace and no safe humanitarian future in the shade of the dominance of oppressor forces and overt usurpation to the rights, holies and wealth.

### **Lights on These Lectures:**

The lectures that discussed The Islamic-Christian dialogue went to assuring the bonds of brotherhood and love between members of these two religions, opening, by this, the doors of dialogue, understanding and convergence in the common issues which are important to both parties. Scholars of Islam have mentioned that the theoretical baselines in Islam and the practical achievements which transformed the theoretical baselines to imperceptible and concrete ones that ascertain, undoubtedly, that Islam has built the half belongs to it from a bridge of live, brotherhood and connection,<sup>191</sup> and Christians have to complete the other half. This does not mean entering Islam because the declaration of the Christian Institution of acknowledging Islam and Muslims does not force it to leave its Christianity and to follow Islam. Allah (Exalted be He) has finished this problem as it came in His words: {If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people} Al-Ma'idah, verse(48). One of His wisdoms in His creatures is to make several religions differ in their creeds and unite in their rules and essence.<sup>192</sup> These lectures highlighted the matter of acknowledging the other and took into consideration the main subject in the forum , they have considered the other a moral existential necessity to achieve its humanity, the highness of our ideas and to refine our senses, emotions and feelings.<sup>193</sup>

Then in this forum, they highlighted the mutual points of convergence between Muslims and Christians, for in the principles of the creed, Muslims and Christians agreed on the fact that God is One and Allah is the creator of heavens and earth, He is the All-Knower and the All-Wise, the most forgiver and the

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<sup>191</sup> Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledging The Other (Ishkaliat Al-I'teraf bl A'akhar), P.51

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, P.35.

<sup>193</sup> Muhammad Tamim Hafez, The Moral Bases of Acknowledging The Other (Al-Osos Al-Akhlaqia l Al-I'teraf bl Akhar) , Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledging The Other, P.123.

most Merciful, Ibrahim is the friend of Allah, and Moses is the converser of Allah, Allah will resurrect the dead and satisfy souls and He will call them to account, Muslims take into consideration the honoured morals and worship Allah especially in prayer, fast and charity, and Christians believe that Faith without worship is dead.<sup>194</sup>

However, in the modern cases, Muslims and Christians converged on an important point which is the modern world addresses thousands of challenges to the Faith in Allah, so both the Muslim and the Christian should put hand in the hand of the other to face all challenges; in order to face them, there must be the dialogue, and the dialogue that guarantee the convergence between Christianity and Islam at the intellectual level to the intended coexistence.

Finally, the fundamentals of this coexistence were put up, and they are: First, guarantee the rights for the coexisted parties, so the right of each party in the society and homeland was well-protected and was taken into consideration, never to be violated or to be offended; second, the mutual respect, that each party respect the other because the human being, regardless any characteristic of him, is respected and honoured as a confirmation to the words of Allah{ We have honoured the sons of Adam} Al-Israa<sup>195</sup>, verse(70).

Fourth: Conferences: Despite the fact that Syria has witnessed many activities in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, but they were not under an official auspice except the conference of the Islamic- Christian brotherhood held in Damascus, Umayyad palace for conferences on Wednesday, 15/12/2010 with the participation of Christian clergymen and Muslim scholars and researchers in sciences of religions with an aim to emphasizing the unity of Faith in Allah, recommendations were issued by it summarized as the following:

- XIII. The conference blesses the invitation of Synod to the Islamic-Christian brotherhood, coexistence and unlearning sectarianism, violence, terrorism, oppression and exploiting the other.
- XIV. The conference considers the emphasizing of synod on the importance of the Arabic language as an official in synod and recommending to use it in the roman department in the Vatican state as a qualitative step towards fruitful coordination and civilizational solidarity between the Arabic

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<sup>194</sup> Johanna At-Talli, Acknowledge the other, Means and Ways of Angelic Relation, Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge the Other.

<sup>195</sup> Mahmoud Akkam, Acknowledge the other is educational matters, Adib Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge The Other, P.150.

Christianity and the western one and its objective to dialogue of civilisations, cultures and religions.

- XV. The idea of inconsistency between Islam and Christianity is one of the deceptive ideas that Franks wars have sowed its seeds in order to justify its aggression on the East, in this regard, references and Islamic and Christian institutions have to face this delusion and its negative repercussion on the religious speech.
- XVI. The lively cultural field of Christianity and Islam is the common affiliation to Arabism as an overall humanitarian civilisation. Basing on identity, the conference calls for correcting principles of orientalism and Occidentalism and finishing up the logic of prejudgements against Arab and Islam.
- XVII. Prohibiting conflict and violence in all its forms and considering the religious tolerance a high Islamic and Christian virtue built on the freedom of belief and the necessity of reciprocal respect and admitting rightness in the difference and diversity.
- XVIII. The so-called idiom ‘religious minorities’ is one of the inward foreign idioms, so it expresses, in its Arabic reality, nothing about distinction between doctrines and religions where society with all its sects is deep-rooted in one national identity and one national affiliation.
- XIX. The conference calls for renewing the objective and cognitive awareness of the Arabic Christianity and Islam. From here, it is necessary to unite the educational programs to care for juniors and youths and their promising future role in values moral development.
- XX. The conference calls for treating the internal situation of Muslims and Christians, solve their problems by dialogue and co-working away from any external interference to exploit mistakes made by some people here or others there in order to ruin the civil peace.
- XXI. The conference considers violence phenomenon widespread almost everywhere in the world is not relevant to the Christian and Islamic morals thus the only enemies to the believing nation with its two parties the Islamic and the Christian are occupation, terrorism and ignorance in all its forms.
- XXII. The conference refuses sayings and ideologies about the conflict of religions and civilisations, and it asserts the necessity of brotherhood, coexistence and dialogue under the sky of one flay and one homeland.

- XXIII. The conference warns of the excessive boom of religious satellite channels which turn to arouse sectarian sedition and doctrinal incitement, and call for a religious media honoured charter, and request from the competent authorities to work on closing all mass media which mess with the security of society and its national unity.
- XXIV. The conference emphasizes on make the Christian and Islamic believing values a subject of studies, conferences, seminars and Christian- Islamic meetings; moreover, programs with believing spiritual academic intellect that are common between Christian and Muslim citizens.

At the conclusion of the conference, representatives expressed their authenticity in the journey of publish the culture of brotherhood, tolerance, love and national unity amongst Syrians. All in all, the conference the conference aimed at strengthen the idea of the Islamic-Christian brotherhood and highlighting the distinction message that distinguish Syria in coexistence from the whole world.<sup>196</sup>

### **Lights on the conference**

The conference of the Islamic-Christian brotherhood was the first international conference hosted by Syria in the field of religious dialogue; however, this conference focused in its recommendations on the important and fruitful points in the field of dialogue, each and every one of these points fit to be the subject of a conference or a seminar in the future, from these points:

1. using the Arabic language as an official language at the Synod, and recommending for use it in the official departments in the Vatican State.
2. concerning with the issue of minorities.
3. Prohibiting conflict and violence in all its forms, and urging to the religious tolerance.
4. searching the danger of the boom of satellite channels that incite religious sedition.

In addition to this conference, a mini-conference titled «Conference of prayer in the divine religions» was held on 07/03/2011, under the auspices of ‘Al-Mustafa’ University, Iran, in the possession of Imam Khomeini, in Saida Zeinab in Damascus countryside, recommendations related to prayer, worship

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and beg Allah for crises that happen to the nation have been issued between men that can disintegrate the national unity; however, the conference did not receive a coverage of Syrian media rather it remained within the activities of 'Al-Mustafa' University, Iran.<sup>197</sup>

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humanitarian future " on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Mai, 2009. Participants concluded that there is no world peace and no safe humanitarian future in the shade of the dominance of oppressor forces and overt usurpation to the rights, holies and wealth.

- **The activity of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro(the head of The Supreme Council for Fatwa) in the Islamic-Christian dialogue:**

Since the beginning of the call of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro in Syria, he realized that this world we inhabit is overcrowded with many religions and sects that a sane cannot ignore them , though some of these religions are closer affection to Islam than others, this is a fact confirmed by the Holy Quran: { and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant } Al-Ma'idah, verse(82).

He realized that the missionaries of proximity of religions and the missionaries of isolation are existed in every religion and every sect, and Christians who represent the most followed religion in the world are not the equals. { not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (For the right): They rehearse the Signs of God all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. } Al-Imran, verse(113). Thus a way of understanding and cooperation on the commonalities between religions should be agreed on by sane people for the benefit of human and goodness, and to avoid harm and evil as much as it is possible.

The dialogue between religions is an important platform to clarify the truth of the Islamic Sharia principles for many of those who thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance, to deliver the clear message to whom it did not reach, and to discharge our duty to your Lord, and perchance they may fear Him.

The eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro has felt the absolute of this dialogue and its logic from the texts of the Holy Book: { Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God." } Al-Imran, verse(64).

The Eminence Sheikh Kufaro and what he was met with the attack of stubborn people in the Islamic community was not worse than what he faced from extremist Christians who were seeing in this dialogue a breach of inevitable solitude to preserve the privacy of the Christian belief in order not to disappear in the stream of the Muslim majority, but his Eminence did not care to these two currents, and drew the current of dialogue and understanding to himself following the approach of the Holy Quran, Allah says: { And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)." } Al-Ankabout, verse(46).

This direction has appeared in the behaviour of Sheikh Ahmad in all his lectures, talks and speeches, and the first of his public calls in this way was his famous speech that he improvised on the table of the president of the Syrian Arab Republic at that time Shukri Al-Quwatli in 1955. He presented through this speech the interest of Islam in all, and clarified that Islam has given his hand to the common word since it is existed; however, there were no one who does the same from the other side. Since that time, Sheikh Kufaro was known as the most prominent name calls for reconciliation, dialogue and convergence in the religious establishment in Syria, but some of Syrian scholars saw that the issue of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria was confined to the personality of Sheikh Kufaro because of the disagreement of many Syrian scholars on this dialogue at that time<sup>199</sup>, and the may delegations from all religious sects and doctrines that were visiting his eminence; however, his eminence was meeting these delegations in all their tendencies qualified translators with him from his students. Not only this, but Sheikh Ahmad was sending these delegation people who invite them, so if they listened to the word of Islam, there would be who contact and keep relations with them. These delegations was not confined to only journalistic and religious delegations, but scientific, political, academic and explorational ones have come, and the western ambassadors were responsible for making appointments to their natives with Sheikh Kufaro. His eminence

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<sup>199</sup> Ahmad Rajeh, The Role of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro in The Islamic-Christian dialogue, Damascus, Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro Council, 5<sup>th</sup> Apr, 2012, 12:30 p.m.

kept on this serious effort until he moved in this invitation from the inside to the outside.<sup>200</sup>

### **- The Relationship of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro with The Pope of Vatican:**

In 1985, Pope John Paul II, the pontiff of Christians sent to Damascus both the Cardinal Arter, the Minister of Religions at the Vatican, and Dr. Anthony Luque, the vice president of the Christian Democratic Party in Italy to meet with Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, and give him a formal invitation to visit the Vatican, his eminence accepted, and when he arrived at the Vatican he was officially welcomed, and honour guards presented a show then he immediately started his activity through meetings seminars and lectures at the Vatican and Italian; however, the most important meeting for his eminence was with the pope himself, for this dialogue was the first of its kind in this age because the Pope is the first reference to all Catholics in the world, and he has the biggest effect in calling the shots with Muslims amongst all Christians in the world.<sup>201</sup>

The famous dialogue that took place between them was :

- Do you know, Mr Pope what the reason of establishment of atheism in the world is?
- What is it?
- You, and me too
- How?
- Mr Pope, when we offer people a religion contradicts the mind, differs from the instinct and confines the thought, what will be the answer of free sane people? We are calling the white dress the black then we exceeded that and say: But Allah says it is black, and the heavenly Books say so, but the mind and the eye see it white, so what will be the result? If clerics did not correct their beliefs according to the will of Allah that it is impossible to be contrary to the mind and the logic, we should prepare ourselves to the wedding of the owl.
- What is the wedding of the owl?
- It is narrated that an extravagant guy has inherited the properties of his father and they became ruined, and the hoot of the owl became a lot. When a bird came to the owl in order to engage for her son, the owl request fifty ruined villages as a dowry. The bird said: If Allah prolonged

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<sup>200</sup> Habash, The Approach of Renew and Reform, P.225.

<sup>201</sup> Bassam Ajk, The Islamic-Christian dialogue, p.237.



the age of our extravagant prince, then we will get the dowry and hold the wedding of the owl. Mr Pope if we did not change our understanding to the righteous religion that cannot differ from the mind, the wedding of the owl is coming inevitably.<sup>202</sup> He has searched with the Pope many issues such as :

- 1- The reality of Islam, the goal it came for it is the happiness and the mercy amongst all people
- 2- The issue of Palestine and Palestinians.

His eminence clarified the goal of the dialogue with the Pope saying that: " When I visit the Pope, I carry the call for Islam to him and the call for goodness and peace to stand in the face of the enemies of Allah the Exalted and the enemies of the human who call for destroying this world spiritually and existentially. It is necessary to move to a serious work addresses the mind and its conscience in a way attracting it to the real religion, otherwise the result will be ruin and devastation, when we, Muslims believed in Christ and his Bible by our belief, it did not affect us, and we remained Muslims, so as to you, Christians if you know what Islam is and believe in it, you Christianity will remain to you."<sup>203</sup>

Topics that his eminence presented to the Pope were the idea of the unity of the heavenly laws and the brotherhood of religions when he said: "We are members of one family, the family of prophets and apostles that believe in the One and Only God , and we, Muslims and Christians are still coexist for fifteen centuries, thus we were in Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, when the devil of colonialism came and implanted thorns in our way, separated us and caused problems amongst us."<sup>204</sup>

The dialogues of Sheikh Kufaro with the Pope have paid off and fetched great results in improving the relationships between Muslims and Christians of the world because of the manner that his eminence was depending on in his dialogues, that quiet manner and attractive presentation to Islam away from severity, roughness and cruelty, Of course avoiding attack the Christian belief or disclose the mistakes of Christians. The results of this visit to the Vatican and the Pope was clarified by a similar visit to Damascus by the

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<sup>202</sup> Habash, The Approach of Renew and Reform, P.198.

<sup>203</sup> Arab voice Magazine, Kuwait, 1986, (1/1), P.23, the essay was found in the archive of the special library of Dr. Bassam Al-Sabbagh

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, P.24.

Pope after five years, in 2001. He visited the Umayyad mosque, and he was the first pope visits a mosque where visited the shrine of prophet Ibrahim peace be upon him or as they call him John the Baptist then he addressed the audience and made a speech includes the following ideas:

- 1- Calling Muslims and Christians to forget the wars of the past and return to each other with the feelings of brotherhood and friendship.
- 2- Emphasizing the importance of continuing dialogue between the Catholic church and Islam, so everyone would understand the religious beliefs in a better way, and show the convergence between the two divine religions.
- 3- The dialogue between religions is more effective when it springs out of the experience of life a day after another in the same sect and the one civilisation then it will undoubtedly lead to different kinds of co-working<sup>205</sup>, after that Sheikh Kuftaro made a welcome speech in Umayyad mosque.

The pope also visited Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro council, and his eminence continued with the pope the dialogue they had started about the situations of Muslims and Christians, and Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro gave a talk where he summed up the mutual history between Muslims and Christians and dealt with the following ideas:

1. Islam is the religion of peace and mercy for all people, it came to keep good relations with all human beings and to complete what the messages of prophets came with.
2. The co-living and brotherhood between Muslims and Christians in Syria is flowed from the commitment of Muslims to the teachings of Islam o as Christians commit to the teachings of Christianity.
3. The responsibility of problems and dilemmas that humanity, these days, suffers from is laid, at the first level, on all men of religions and the honest governors in the world in order to solve them, there must be an effective dialogue and a fruitful brotherly meeting.<sup>206</sup>

The fruit of the relation between Sheikh Kuftaro and the Vatican has appeared and the directed the eastern churches after many years from the

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<sup>205</sup> John Paul 2, the first Pope enters a mosque, the public opinion newspaper, Kuwait, 7/5/2001, P.5.

<sup>206</sup> Mahmoud Kuftaro, lectures in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, Damascus, House of seminar of scholars (Dar Nadwat Al-Olamaa), 2008, 1st Edit, P.260.

death of Sheikh Kuftaro where the church ordered what Sheikh Kuftaro called for through his long journey in dialogue. The last statement that written in the message of the catholic church in the Middle East says: the religious and cultural dialogue between Muslims and Christians could not be only a passing choice because, in fact, it is a living need that our future is linked to, Muslims and Christians in the Middle East share life and fate and build society together, so it is important to enhance citizenship and the dignity of human being , equality of rights and duties and religious freedom that guarantee the freedom of worship and conscience.

Christians in the Middle East should persevere the fruitful life's dialogue with Muslims, so they look at them in a love and appreciate look refusing all negative prejudgements against them. They are called for discovering together the religious values of each party. Thus they present to the world an image about the positive meeting and about the fruitful collaboration between believers of these two religions through their mutual resistance to all kinds of violence in the name of religion.

-The relation of the Eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro with San Egidio Community:

Sant Egidio community which is the community of Saint Egidio: it is the Catholic association in Rome, Sant Egidio is a world association, its founder is Pope Andrea Rickardi, he won the European Carl Manu award for the year 2009. The association includes more than 3000 members in Rome except the members in other cities in Italy, Germany, Belgium and America. The functions of this association are only two:

1. Pray to Allah the Exalted and revive the relation between human being and his God.
2. Invite people to help the poor and old people<sup>207</sup>.

The association of Saint Egidio had a good relationship with Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro as he had with the pope of Vatican. They were invited to Syria and Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro council in 1985. After their delegation came to Syria and were informed with the Syrian experiment in the Islamic-Christian dialogue and the coexistence between members of these religions, they impressed this experiment and expressed their affection especially in the

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<sup>207</sup> leaflets of Aleppo diocese for Greek Orthodox, [www.aleppoorthodox.org](http://www.aleppoorthodox.org)

links between Muslims and Christians. These links that were overshadowed by full brotherhood, so no difference between Muslims and Christians in society but all of them live for each other the complete social life<sup>208</sup>.

Their visit had a good echo in the journey of dialogue where Sheikh Kufaro visited the headquarters of their community in Rome after one hundred days from the meeting in Syria, he was met with love and greetings and after several lectures he gave in many areas in Rome, they received him with a final meeting in the headquarters of their association, and expressed their friendship to him and their full readiness to work for a meeting between Islam and Christianity. The lecture his eminence gave had the following ideas:

- The aim of the meeting is not only to be between Islam and Christianity, but it is for saving humanity from the hell of the earth and the hell of the afterlife by converting them from blasphemy to belief as doctors not judge.
- The Holy Quran acknowledges Christianity as a religion and a state where the companions of prophet Muhammad( peace be upon him) were saying to Christians: we forbid you not from Christianity but we command you to it.
- Christians should commit to Christ's plan in love, brotherhood and mercy, Muslims, in turn, commit to his plan because Muslim cannot be a Muslim if he does not believe in Christ and his message and Muhammad and his prophecy.<sup>209</sup>

- Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro council and The Islamic-Christian Dialogue:

Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro council – which is one of the most important religious councils in Syria- that are working for achieve the scientific and educational development, and helping knowledge seekers whose material conditions prevent them from continuing seeking knowledge. It is an Islamic charity renaissance council emphasizes the exchange of civilizations and their coexistence and integration through many western delegations that have come out with an impression confirms the moderation of Islam and its global mission, There is no doubt that this matter appeared through the Quranic texts

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<sup>208</sup> the text of the speech by the head of Italian delegations in Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro council, Damascus, 1985, the text exists only in the archive of the special library of Dr. Bassam Sabbagh.

<sup>209</sup> Ahmad Kufaro, the final meeting, the headquarters of Sant Egidio association, Rome, 13/12/1985.

and hadith from which feel the greatness of the Islamic message that believe in and strengthened everything brought by the prophets and missionaries before the message of Islam, this message that constitute an invitation to all humanity to meet and acquaintance where each of them complete the other, it is a call for dialogue among civilizations and acquaintance. From this starting, scholars in our Syrian society emphasize on enhancing the social aspect, especially that in heart of the Levant lies Syria, it is a blessed country from which launched Christ to spread love and peace, and from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to his Lord to enhance guidance and mercy in it.

Starting from the fact that religion is a living scientific development renaissance message invites us to keep up with the age, and to harmony with others to adopt communities in which we live through cooperation and convergence and respect the other, the council participated in the issues of the dialogue with the other, and held a number of agreements with international universities, at first, Lund University in the Kingdom of Sweden, and Doshisha University in Japan, it is a member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars in London, and in the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic schools of thought, Iran, also in the Union of Islamic universities, and in the World Islamic Council for Da'wa and Relief - Egypt, and in the global organization Peace Without Violence - Europe - and in the global Islamic body charity, Kuwait.

The prominent goals of the council: the issue of the co-existence between Muslims and Christians in Syria through the message of Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro, the founder of this council who emphasized unity of the Syrian family and its coherence and called for more enhancing to the national unity, for delegations that visit the council come out with a very good impression because the issue of the religious co-existence in Syria became a unique pattern in the world. In the council, Students from 60 nationalities are the centre of concern by teaching them the Arab language and after it the Islamic sciences so they become safety valves in their countries and societies where they learn to love their homelands and to love religion as well. Those students are real messengers to Syria<sup>210</sup>.

With regard to the Islamic-Christian dialogue, we highlight the seminar "Muslims and Christians in Confronting Challenges" held on 11/12/2004.. Studying the recommendations of the seminar, we see that it

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<sup>210</sup> Maysoun Fahmi, Sciences and Society, A-Thawra newspaper, 13/11/2005.

was not confined to what is related to Muslims and Christians as different religions attempt by dialogue to bring opinions closer, but dialogue has gone beyond that until it became the dialogue of one nation endeavours to raise its people into the highest cultural, intellectual and civilizational level that is common amongst people either Muslims or Christians. This dialogue depends on intellectual, cultural and religious subjects serve the Syrian Arab society in what achieve more bringing closer and understanding between followers of the two religions, Islam and Christianity, and help members of the Syrian society to solve its contemporary problems in a civilized way on the other hand.

In addition to the activity of Sheikh Kuftaro council in Syria, it involved in many international and regional conferences specialised in dialogue, for instance:

1. The nineteenth international Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions in Tokyo, on 24/3/2005, titled "Religion: Peace, Conflict "where it included an elite of men of religions in the world, and it confirmed the importance of religion and studying it in the world by a large number of researchers, institutions and associations that are interested in religion. The large-scale of researches on religion and the various issues and its impact on human life confirms that religiosity is a basic instinct.

Notes and recommendations were provided about the conference stated that considering the great world interest in religions and studying them, so attending this conference has been great, both from the audience or participants in presenting papers or lectures and researches, with the obvious weakness of Islamic representation, participation in the special circles of Islam were mostly by non-Muslim researchers . Therefore, it was affirmed that it is necessary to accelerate the establishment of communities and associations to study religions and contemporary ideologies, and to participate in such global institutions, so Islam would have a strong voice.<sup>211</sup>

2. The seventh international forum held in Algeria on 24/03/2003, titled "conditions of the fruitful dialogue between cultures and dialogues"<sup>212</sup>,

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<sup>211</sup> Mazen Matbaqani a report on The nineteenth international Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions, Tokyo, titled "Religion: Peace and Conflict ",24/3/2005 [www.iahr.dk / affiateconf.htm](http://www.iahr.dk/affiateconf.htm)

<sup>212</sup> Recommendations and the final statement related to the conference were not found

the participation of the council in which it has made a lengthy speech titled: "Is there a possibility for the return of the dialogue between Islam and the West "where it showed several ideas, including: the importance of dialogue and its necessity in our time, the most important characteristics of dialogue and its marks and postulates, and some of the goals of the dialogue extrapolated from reality, adding to them the conditions of the successful dialogue that achieves the demands of the Muslims particularly in recognition Islam as a divine religion, and in renew the look of the west to the Muslims that they, like other inhabitants of this planet, have rights and duties, and they are owners of a civilization and a culture must take advantage of them. <sup>213</sup>

3. The International Conference held in Kyoto, Japan, on 08/26/2006 :it is a periodic conference held annually, includes men of divine religions and others, that year, it was held under the title: Religions for Peace.

Concluding from the above: Despite efforts in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in all its forms and means in Syria, and in spite of the positive repercussions on Syrian society, but there are some drawbacks of this dialogue:

- 1- activities of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria lacked the official and international auspice, which made them small-scale and limited activities, with the exception of the Islamic-Christian brotherhood Conference, which came out with fruitful results, but this experiment have not be repeated.
- 2- seminars and conversational meetings had mostly a national character, aims to convergence and bringing followers of Islamic and Christian religions closer, if we consider this character as a feature distinguishes the Islamic-Christian dialogue Syrian, but it is better if those in charge of the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue to move to another stage in dialogue ,the stage of put recent issues forth that Muslims and Christians are interested in, whether religious issues or social , we should not put the Islamic-Christian dialogue only within the national circle, but we are supposed to get out to a wider horizon in the dialogue.
- 3- The Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria needs more boldness in put forth the conversational topics, and moving with the recommendations in seminars and lectures that came out with from the theoretical realm to the practical application, it is not enough that the concerned give a

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<sup>213</sup> Salah Kuftaro, The Approach of The Dialogue in The Islamic vision, P.177

lecture, a seminar, or even a conference, then the recommendations remain within newspapers and papers.

We have seen some of that through other forms taken by the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue, such as the different activities which is under the auspice of the Islamic-Christian dialogue committee in Syria<sup>214</sup> as common prayers which were held at the monastery once and in the mosque again, and the preaching sessions in which alternating the Christian pope and the Muslim Sheikh in one session, in addition to the meetings and blessings in the Islamic and Christian holidays of both parties.

It is worth to say that these different forms of dialogue were not in the past, nor in the present, and will not be random in the future, even if they all were not under an official auspice of the responsible parties in Syria, but the one who search within finds that they make the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue an aware one , carrying a specific message, and clear goals; therefore, it has repercussions and effects reflect the Syrian society with social advance and prosperity, and that is highlighted below:

## 2- Goals of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria and its Repercussions:

By talking about the goals of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria , it is necessary to caution that they are real , where scholars, thinkers and cultivated Muslims should work to achieve them as well as Christians who support the Islamic-Christian dialogue in general and consider it as positive advantages not only at the national level, but at the world level.

Christians in Syria were aware of this fact and understood it fully, when France entered Syria as a colonizer in 1920, and found the State of Syria and the State of Lebanon, all that was under the pretext of protecting Christian minorities in Syria, Fares Al-Khoury<sup>215</sup> one of the Seniors intellectuals and

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<sup>214</sup> The Committee of Islamic-Christian dialogue: is A COMMITTEE that the Catholic Church assigned it , headed by Father Jean Hanna head of the monastery of St. Thomas in Saidnaya, and includes a number of Christian clergymen from all denominations and also includes a number of Muslim scholars from all sects. The Committee works on establishing a mutual activity periodically every two months, activities are varied, lectures and debates on the points of convergence between Islam and Christianity, or perform rituals or worship where it focuses on aspects of brotherhood and co-existence between Muslims and Christians, though these meetings were taking a media character, but it has in its content images of the effective and fruitful dialogue, Jean Hanna, (Director of the Islamic-Christian relations in the monastery of Mar Tuma, The Islamic- Christian Dialogue, Saidnaya, monastery of Priest Tuma, 11/7 / 2011, 12:30. P.m.

<sup>215</sup> Fares al-Khoury: (1839 - 1962), a former prime minister in Syria, the head of the Syrian delegation, which was commissioned to examine the issue of withdrawal of the French from Syria in front of the United Nations Organization, which was established in the same year, where Al-Khoury participate in signing the Charter of the United Nations on behalf of Syria, as a founding member , Zarkali, figures (A'lam), vol. 5, p. 128



men of policy in Syria stood before Umayyad mosque in Damascus during a celebration held by Muslims against the existence of France, and he made a speech saying: The justification of the existence of France in this country is to protect the Christians, I am the Christians' delegate Fares Khoury ask you, O Muslims, for protection and refuse it from France.<sup>216</sup>

This position was about being the start to push the foundations of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, it could show the goals that every Syrian converser and others should endeavour to them, and puts it in mind in every dialogue with Christians, and at this place it is necessary to emphasize some points that could be considered some of the goals of the Islamic-Christian dialogue, these points are:

1. Islamic-Christian dialogue is the application of jihad call to God Almighty principle - in one of its forms, so to speak - because jihad of the sword has ceased long ago to spread Islam in the parts of the earth, and the only substitution- currently – of publication of the Islamic faith by jihad is the call to God Almighty by pen and tongue, and the Islamic-Christian dialogue is a great field, and a suitable atmosphere where Muslims can get benefit from it freely to achieve one of the duties of their religion, and through the Islamic-Christian dialogue.
2. The Islamic-Christian dialogue is an effective mean Muslims can use it in the Islamic countries and regions which confront Christianization attacks and missionary campaigns that the biggest physical and moral possibilities were recruited by the church in the world to convert Muslims from their religion, then the Islamic-Christian dialogue comes to support Muslims morally against these campaigns, where false Christianity emerges that church is preaching it among Muslims, so it is a key factor gives Muslims larger confidence in their religion, and more awareness of what is planned, thus efforts of Christianisation collapse.
3. Religious dialogue aims at bring together Muslims and Christians who live in one country, in order to unify the word and unite the ranks to confront any common enemy threatens Muslims and Christians in that country.
4. The Islamic-Christian dialogue is the best way to prevent sectarian strife occurrence that can rupture the entity of the one homeland and one

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<sup>216</sup> George Khudr, Arab Christians, Beirut, Institution of Arabic researches, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit, 1986, P.31.

nation where Christians and Muslims live, some outsources exploit this reality to sow the seeds of strife and discord and fighting among the people of one nation, under the pretext of this one is a Muslim and this is a Christian which leads to the division of this homeland into small micro-states, or lead to continuous internal wars. Here it must be noted that if some Christians who live among Muslims thought to ask for protection from foreign countries under the pretext of fear for their fate and rights from Muslims, this is wrong and deviant thinking because history has proved that Christians who live with Muslims have no support at all, nor protection to their rights but with their fellow Muslims, the reason is when Muslims defend Christians and save them from various dangers, they do so out of religious motivation, and a legal imposition on them, which stems from the deep conviction that Christians are under the protection of Allah and His Messenger.

While foreign countries when they claim that they want to protect Christians in Muslim countries, they do so with colonial motivations and for political and economic interests and others, but the real protection for Christians in the Arab countries are in the direction of Christian to coherence and understanding with Muslims in this country, to continue together the wonderful historic journey in human brotherhood and peaceful coexistence that Christians and Muslims in this country have registered through the successive ages<sup>217</sup> which has been referred to in the first chapter of the research.

5. The Islamic-Christian dialogue can be directed to show the realities represented in Islam, erase its deformed image to non-Muslims, and face all fabrications and pretensions and deformations caused by the enemies of Islam, in order to show the ability of Islam to keep up with all developments of the modern age, and providing the appropriate solutions to all the problems and dilemmas currently face mankind in various areas of human life.
6. The Islamic-Christian dialogue is a means of display the true Christianity, by clarifying errors and distractions that Christian Church has fallen in,

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<sup>217</sup> Victor Sahab, who protects Arab Christians, Beirut, House of Unit (Dar Al-Wihda) for printing and publishing, P.H, 1986, p. 15 onwards.

so it deflected the original Christianity brought by Christ, peace be upon him.<sup>218</sup>

7. Muslim-Christian dialogue achieves identify the true Christianity by Christians themselves.
8. The Islamic-Christian dialogue - according to the opinion of the researcher - seeks a great goal within the Syrian society, this goal is: to achieve peaceful coexistence among people of one nation, Syrian interlocutors aimed in all their meetings to prove the national brotherhood under the banner of one faith, and to seek a meeting between Syrian Christians and Muslims regardless of any doctrinal disagreement where discuss is not meaningful, this is in Syria; however, the dialogue of Syrian Muslims with Christians outside Syria, his top goal was correcting the image of Islam in the eyes of the West, and repair everything ruined by the Western media in the minds of West citizens about Islam and its attitude towards other religions, also the mutual cooperation to stand in the face of the international enemy which threatens all religions in all their homelands.

- Reflections of the Islamic-Christian dialogue and its influences in Syria:

the Pope told me<sup>219</sup> after an hour of dialogue: I read the Quran every day<sup>220</sup>, this phrase shorten a long talk in the implications of Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, it has been made by his eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro in numerous meetings in which he spoke about the Islamic-Christian dialogue as the mufti of Syria, a member of the World religions Conference at the same time, which tell us that the Islamic-Christian dialogue made strides, and achieved good results for the sake of understanding and convergence between Muslims and Christians at the hands of Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro ( may Allah be merciful to him), one of Syrian scholars and imams of guidance and counselling in Syria, which is reflected on the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria with positive repercussions at the social and intellectual levels.

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<sup>218</sup> Bassam Ajk, The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.431.

<sup>219</sup> Pope John Paul II (1920 -2005), his name is Joseph Vobtella, born in southern Poland, he joined the Catechetical school, in 1946 he was ordained, then became a bishop assistant in Krakow, Poland, in 1963, he was appointed as an Archbishop of Krakow, and in 1978 was appointed as the pontiff of the Catholic Church in the world and his name became Pope John Paul II.

<sup>220</sup> Mahmoud Kuftaro, meaningful dialogues with his eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro, Damascus, House of the seminar of scholars(Dar Nadwat Al-Olamaa), 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 2008, p. 27.

At the social level, the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria has paid off through affirming the principle of recognize others on the one hand, and achieve peaceful coexistence in the same society regardless of religion or sect on the other hand; Christians and Muslims have realized by opening the doors of dialogue between them that doctrinal issues must not be an obstacle to co-existence, and to the Islamic- Christian brotherhood in all the word brotherhood meaning; moreover, Muslim's acknowledge of Christians and Christian's acknowledge of Muslims is – as the dialogue came up with- a part of Islam and Christianity, although the attempts of some people throughout history to show the opposite.<sup>221</sup>

Syria has been a pattern in applying justice and fairness, the principles of good and dialogue, and the culture of safe peaceful living, simply because it is the cradle of divine religions and the source of humanity and serious civilizations, and thus it is the ideal of peaceful coexistence, and the effects of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria in the national unity have appeared , consequently giving the positive image about Islam and Muslims.<sup>222</sup>Not only that, but to notice, he, that the Syrian society - in the opinion of the researcher - has one memory where history of Muslims and Christians integrate, for Syrians were not content with the neighbourhood principle, but they succeeded to the conversation until they reached a state of social integration, their joys are one, their sorrows are one, they share their festivals and share their livelihoods, and collaborate among themselves, for example what the committee of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in the Church of St. Thomas in Damascus countryside do when make a day in every year in which Christian clergymen in the monastery perform Muslim prayer and fasting, while a number of Muslim scholars visit them to share the activities of the monastery and its charity with them.

This is socially; however, intellectually: the religious dialogue in Syria was a part of the cultural dialogue, as religion is an aspect of culture, believers can understand religion as something more than culture or goes beyond its scope, but the religious, psychological and social phenomenon occurs by the way in a cultural scope, so on what can be built multi-religious common life? The answer to this question might be a subject of a fruitful dialogue; to believe in dialogue is attitude refers to the denomination or religion, but

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<sup>221</sup> Adib Al-Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge The Other, P.13.

<sup>222</sup> \_Bassam Sabbagh, (the head of the School of Imam Ouzai in Damascus),The Islamic-Christian dialogue, the role of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro in this dialogue, Damascus, Tuesday, 12/20/2011 , 14:00

believing in dialogue is offering a certificate of special values to this believer<sup>223</sup>, and the more his culture of dialogue deepened, it consequently reflects on the depth of his religious values, and enrich his intellectual life, and this is exactly what has been embodied in the Syrian society, the power of the Islamic-Christian dialogue has reflected on his intellectual activities, and went beyond being individual activities until it became organized by the official bodies in the country, for example the historical meeting held in Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro council, under the banner of patriotism is from the faith, and entitled: The National Arab Forum: «Muslims and Christians in the face of challenges»<sup>224</sup> therefore, the effects of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria have demonstrated and paid off in Syrian society through : the social security that prevailed in Syrian society, on the grounds that it is a pluralistic society since its establishment to the present day, and in the prevalence of the culture of peace and coexistence apart from the economic stability we notice because of mutual cooperation in the economic life between Islam and Christians.<sup>225</sup>

### **Chapter Three: Topics of The Islamic-Christian Dialogue:**

- 1- Believe in all prophets and messengers and their call for monotheism.
- 2- The issue of coexistence between Muslims and Christians.
- 3- Acknowledge the other.
- 4- Tolerance in Islam.
- 5- The birth of Christ.
- 6- Islam and the world peace.

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<sup>223</sup> Adib Al-Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge the Other, P.13.

<sup>224</sup> it was on Monday and Tuesday, 13- 14/12/2004

<sup>225</sup> Abdul Salam Rajeh (Dean of the Faculty of Sharia and Law at Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro council), The Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, Damascus, Wednesday, 10/03/2010, 14:00)

dialogue topics are divided and varied endlessly, and the more time passes the more new topics appear that need a dialogue and discuss on the level of Muslim scholars and Christian clergy and others, it is possible divided to divide the dialogue topics into:

1. Religious topics: related to the belief and legislation and what they include.
2. Social topics: deal with social phenomena in societies.
3. Political topics: which imposes themselves because of crises as well as international and regional conflicts.<sup>226</sup>

In the context of what was talked about dialogue topics in Syria, it is noted that they dealt with two issues from religious subjects: First: believe in all prophets and apostles of dialogue and their invitation to monotheism, the second: the birth of Jesus Christ peace be upon him.

As for social issues has taken up most of the dialogue topics, has raised several issues, some of them:

- 1- The issue of peaceful coexistence.
- 2- The issue of tolerance in Islam.
- 3- The issue of acknowledge the other, socially.

As for political subjects: it has employed occasions of the dialogue to deal with the Christian party the issues of :

1. Islam and the world peace.
2. The Palestinian issue and seeking to resolve it.

Details will come later, God willing:

**First: Believe in all prophets and apostles and their invitation to monotheism:**

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<sup>226</sup> Salah Kuftaro, The Approach of Dialogue in The Islamic vision, P.126.

## 1- Islam and Christianity are one religion and different canons:

Regarding the subject of one religion and multiple canons, our purpose of dealing with this topic is to make affection between Muslims and Christians, and bring both canons closer in the minds of their followers, as for the ideas that we present in this topic are:

- i. the religion of Allah is one , and His messengers are just brothers love each other, no hostility between them nor dispute, the purpose of their mission is one, and who sent them with principles of this religion is one, and no disagreement nor contrast in these principles, and the invitation of all messengers of Allah and all His prophets ( peace be upon them) were based on a stable principle and basic element namely to explain to people that there is one God, one creator and of the universe, and humans must believe in Him, and perform what must be from worship to Him that worthy of His Majesty in order to be happy with and be guided to the right path, so was the call of the apostles as an emphasis that human in this universe is the brother of human, and all people are out of their father and their mother Eve, and the measures of superiority between them are devoutness and righteousness and the virtues of works { O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. } Al-Hujuraat Chapter, verse(13), As a result to these principles : believe in Allah and the human brotherhood ,it had to be and it was natural that all humanity live in love, cooperation, brotherhood and peace.<sup>227</sup>
- ii. Since the Holy Quran was sent down and on several occasions, we were commanded to believe in all the prophets and messengers, sanctify them and love them, especially Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them, as if the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad emphasize urgently that the religions are one in their principles and one in their goal, which is bring happiness to human, how not to ! an the Quran declares that Christianity and Islam both believe in the one God the creator, and in the Day of Resurrection, and the good work that brings happiness to the mankind and save his owner from the punishment of Allah, and let him in paradise, Allah says: { Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow

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<sup>227</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, lectures in the Islamic-Christian dialogue, P.29.

the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. } Al-Baqarah, verse (62). Anyone who read the Quran and study the biography of the Messenger of Allah finds that Islam came as a defender of Christ and supporter to him, but also for all messengers of Allah and their messages not invalidate nor destroyer of them, but a collector of them and a missionary to believe in and work due to them , and you would find the Quran urges the people of the Torah and the Bible to follow their books and rebuke those who are negligent in their work, Allah says: { Let the people of the Gospel judge by what God hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel. } Al-Maida, verse(47), also says: { Say: "O People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord } Al-Maida, verse(68), we find this rebuke focused on Muslims and others who did not follow the teachings of Islam and were content with belonging to it, this divine guidance puts all the believers from all religions in front of their responsibilities towards their Creator and human, formally belonging to this religion or that does not intercede for them, but they have to follow the true faith from all their hearts, minds and actions to be get salvation, for religions are not but ways to make true believers close to Allah, and their spirits be refreshed with His lights , and their minds with the wisdom of His verses.

- iii. Religion in its essence belongs to three pillars: faith, canon and ethics, and creed and morals are one to all prophets and messengers, but what alter is the canons according to the difference of the conditions of nations and peoples that the message of sky was come to; however, the concept and the pillars of faith are one on prophets' and apostles' tongues , and this is called the one divine religion, there are no heavenly religions, but there is one divine religion from God named Islam { The Religion before God is Islam } Al-Imran, verse(19), this religion that Allah the Exalted has approved to His creatures since they were created till the day of Judgement, Allah says: { This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion } Al-Maida, verse(3),Islam means full submission to



Allah's commands and prohibitions as it was mentioned in the Quran: { If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost } chapter: Al-Imran, verse(85), so we read this fact ,in the Holy Quran, obvious and clear as Allah says: { The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein } Ash-Shura, verse(13). This is the heavenly divine religion which named Islam, that is all the messengers of Allah have called for because the beliefful facts are one for them, namely: believe in the existence of one great creator, has no partner and characterized with the absolute perfection, far above imperfections, believe in the Day of Judgment, believe in the pure angels, believe in all the prophets and messengers of Allah, and believe in all books sent down to apostles, Allah says{ Say ye: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam)} Al-Baqarah, verse(136), all prophets and all their faithful followers are called by Islam in one name (Muslims).<sup>228</sup>

iv. Mutual principles between the two religions: Islam and Christianity:

- ✓ Religions came out of one niche, in fact they call for believe in Allah the Creator the One, and not to differentiate in religion, there are the words of Jesus:" This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent<sup>229</sup> and in the Holy Quran when Allah says: { Say ye: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam) } Al-Baqarah, verse(136). And it is mentioned in Hadith { All creatures are the

<sup>228</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.182.

<sup>229</sup> .Gospel of John, vol. 17, PP. 3-4.

dependents of Allah. The most beloved of them to Allah is the one who is most beneficial to his family} <sup>230</sup>, and in the words of Christ peace be upon him: "A new commandment I give to you,9 that you love10 one another" <sup>231</sup>

- ✓ Both religions call their followers to exchange friendliness, for in the Holy Quran: {and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, "We are Christians} Al-Maida, verse(82).
- ✓ Both religions agree that justice and integrity are the foundation of society, so everyone must have a beliefful base to actuate him to the moral commitment, which limits the occurrence of crimes, for a heart with no faith in it is as a court with no judge.
- ✓ Another mutual fact between the two religions which is they meet in believing in eternal truths. Hence this world has one creator does not die, and the existence of this world was not by accident or in vain, as well as believing in the unseen, such as the predestination, angels, jinn, resurrection and the account after death, heaven as a reward to good doers, and fire as penalty to offenders. <sup>232</sup>

- v. Ways of meeting between the religions: by following :
- a. To go back to their first original books, so we collect from them what the religions have agreed on, the oneness of Allah the Almighty the Creator of everything, and the most creative system, and that the human is the brother of another human.
  - b. To look at the moral commandments that make the world happy and united if it do them after the agreement of men of religions on them, and generalize education and media, including modern means, so it do not only deliver peace to the world, but also make the world one fraternal family, as Prophet Muhammad said: "The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body

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<sup>230</sup> A: Narrated by Al-Baihaqi, Majma al-Zawa'id, Cairo, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, P.H, 1987, vol.8, P.191, B: Al-Baihaqi, Branches of Faith, inquiry by Muhammad Zaghoul, Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiah, Beirut, Edit of 1990, Vol.1, part. 15, P.497, on the authority of Anas son of Malik, Al-Albani has said, narrated in a weak reference.

<sup>231</sup> NOTE: John, vol.13, P.34

<sup>232</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.157.

responds to it with wakefulness and fever" <sup>233</sup>To realize with courage , truth and sincerity that the passage of time, the large number of translations and the presence of the people of cupidity and desires have affected some of the principles of the religion calling for love and cooperation, and open the way for the seeds of intolerance and hatred among the slaves of the One Lord, all of that must be observed and corrected, and re-consider the adverse interpretations of the religions meeting with the aid of enlightened minds and the right scientific researches, so there must be for these means conferences of free dialogue aims to reach the truth, the real meeting between religions knowledge and culture have surmounted many of the obstacles and difficulties that were preventing the international dialogue and cooperation, but there are still some obstacles in the way of this great meeting – the meeting of religions- and they are:

- 1) Intolerance, extremism and inertia, which control many of men of religion, and stand between them and the truth, and prevent them from the going along the straight path, the Holy Quran has pointed out the invalidity of this, in what was described by the unbelievers of imitation and inertia, as in the words of Allah: { When they are told to follow the (Revelation) that God has sent down, they say: "Nay, we shall follow the ways that we found our fathers (following). "What! even if it is Satan beckoning them to the Penalty of the (Blazing) Fire? } Chapter, Luqman, verse(21).
- 2) ) the existence of interpretations and explanations adopted by some of the religions followers , these interpretations distinguish between the prophets and the alienated man from his fellow man, and carry discord and hatred within them, it is the responsibility of the bright minds men of religion in order to replace these interpretations and explanations with what agree with the heavenly messages and lead to achieve the human brotherhood.
- 3) The existence of religious rituals opposite to the mind that do not agree with the stable scientific knowledge, that led in

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<sup>233</sup> A: Narrated by Muslim, Al-Jame' Al-Sahih, vol.4, P.199.

B: Al-Baihaqi, As-Sunan Al-Kabir, vol.3, P.353, on the authority of An-Nou'man son of Bashir, a right Hadith.

some countries to a historical divorce between reason and science on the one hand, and religion on the other hand, this separation between reason and religion was not beneficial, on the contrary the separation remained a weapon in the hands of adversaries of religion who use it in fighting faith. (( NOTE: Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.77))

In this context, the solution depends on the sincerity of the men of religions, their submission to the right, distinct the right from the intruder in the interpretations and the religious heritage, and get people to a reasonable faith that knowledge applauds it and faith grows for it, despite these obstacles, the way of dialogue is open and cooperation is prepared today more than ever. If there were wise, faithful and objective men and open spirited people that can promote the human brotherhood and go beyond the remnants of the centuries of hatred and grudges so that slaves of the One Lord gather on love and harmony.<sup>234</sup>

2- The difference between the one religion and the unity of religions:

a. **The meaning of the unity of religions:**

The idea of the unity of religions has clearly appeared in the seventies and eighties of the last century, through some topics that the early Orientalists began to study and show them, particularly the notion that the origin of Islam is Christianity and Judaism, and after establishing the International Institute for the Dialogue of Civilizations, Thinker and philosopher Roger Garaudy<sup>235</sup> adopted the call for the unity of divine religions and called them Abrahamic religion, he announced his conversion to Islam the published a book titled " Dialogue of Civilizations " in 1977, where he pointed out in the book to the unity of heavenly religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam religions, and the origin is the

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<sup>234</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures of The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.88.

<sup>235</sup> Roger Garaudy: (1913 - 1998), a philosopher and French writer, Garaudy was a communist, but he was expelled from the Communist Party in 1970 because of his continued criticism to the Soviet Union, since he was a member of the Communist-Christian dialogue in the sixties, he found himself attracted to religion and tried to unite Catholicism and communism during the seventies, and then he converted to Islam in 1982, remained committed to the values of social justice, and he found that Islam, as he understood it, is consistent with this and apply it well, literary Sndos network, [www.sndos.com](http://www.sndos.com).

religion of Abraham peace be upon him, in other words there are bases for the religion of the future, they called it the Abrahamic one new religion, and these bases summed up as the following:  
1- Believe in Allah the Exalted. 2- The good deed in life. 3- Believe in the Day of Judgement.

As for the legislation, belief, worship and morality it is beyond their knowledge, and there are delegated to their Lord, by these bases they see that people will live under the shadow of permanent happiness.<sup>236</sup>

b. Do Muslim interlocutors scholars calling for the unity of religions?

Based on the previous, it is clear that we did not mean to the unity of religions in our invitation at all, because this call is not but a means to destroy Islam fundamentally, it is an attempt to dissolve Islam the independent religion in the so-called Abrahamic religion, on the basis that Prophet Muhammad (all prayers and peace be upon him) did not come with a new religion, but did so with a duplicate image of the ancient Abrahamic religion, from which Judaism and Christianity are generated, and then there is the advantage of Islam, the religion of Muhammad in front of this concept,<sup>237</sup> and this is totally contrary to what we adopt in our call to Islam.

When we call that religion is one, it associates to recognize all canons Christianity, Judaism and Islam, without cancelling any of them, it means that all canons pour into one source the religion of monotheism, but they were sent down for a benefit which is the suitable time it came in, and they are not duplicated and have nothing new from the Abrahamic call, or the call all the apostles who were sent by Allah the Almighty.

In other words, we call for the meeting of religions, not to its dissolve in each other, and call for the cooperation of religions, not to cancel it, but we save the dignity of Christianity and the entity of Islam with its consideration that every Christian is a Muslim as Allah says: { Said the disciples: "We are God's helpers: We believe

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<sup>236</sup> A:Bassam Ajak, The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.438 onwards.

B:Roger Garaudy, From Atheism to Faith, Ramy Kalawi, Damascus, Dar Qutaiba, P.H, 1990, P.84 onwards.

<sup>237</sup> Bassam Ajak, The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.444.

in God, and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims. } Al-Imran, verse (52), and every Muslim is a Christian out of bringing closer and affection, and returning to the one-Abrahamic roots in the monotheism, which is consistent with the rest calls of apostles, and not out of cancelling a faith and its integration into another faith, or interpreting it to a third faith considered an origin as the people of the unity of religions faith claim, the difference is clear.

## **Second: The issue of coexistence between Muslims and Christians:**

### 1- The constitution of the relation between Muslims and non-Muslims:

The subject of coexistence between Muslims and Christians throughout the history of their relationship since fifteen centuries until this day is an issue considered one of beliefful, canonical and moral intuitions for us Muslims, and the reason is that this coexistence has put the Quran its foundations and principles, and Prophet Muhammad has applied it a realistic life and practical examples, then the companions after him have followed the same approach, and the journey of the Islamic-Christian coexistence has launched throughout these long centuries going brightly from a practical application to another one, except some dark periods in which the relation of coexistence relapses into dark negation , or neurological distasteful, or grim sectarian caused by ignorance of the truth of heavenly religion, deviant interpretations , or desires and interests and selfishness of some men of religion, or the intervention of foreigners who seek to throw the seeds of sectarianism as a prelude to colonization and exploiting the countries of both Muslims and Christians.

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The Holy Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad have put the rules of coexistence with non-Muslims, especially Christians, these rules were clear foundations based on a sacred right, namely the human dignity, Allah says: {We have honoured the sons of Adam} Al-Israa, verse (70), Allah has cleared up that humans are equals in their humanity where Allah says: {O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most

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<sup>238</sup> Ahmad Kufaro, The Islamic Brotherhood, a Historical Truth and a Social Necessity, within the activity of Brotherhood between the members of religions seminar held in Al-Assad library, Damascus 25/1/2000.

honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you } Al-Hujuraat, verse(13) as well as Prophet Muhammad prayers and peace be upon him has said: "O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no virtue of an Arab over a foreigner nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness.<sup>239</sup> Hence the immunity to all human beings, regardless of their colours and races, languages and religions, for respect and appreciation of the human personality are obvious facts in the texts of Islam, all that is without distinction between colour, creed or sex, and if we are talking – out of rationing and sufficiency – in the manner that Islam has started the fact of coexistence with others , we see that this coexistence stems from what Allah says: { God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loveth those who are just.} Al-Mumtahanah, verse(8), the verse is quite clear in deciding the relationship between Muslims and others, it is a relationship based on something greater than Justice, which is to give everyone his right, but it ascends to the charity stage which is to give more than the right willingly, it is a relationship based on charity. The wonderful thing is that Islam called non- Muslims within its community Dhimmis , people of the Covenant and the security and safety because for them is the covenant of Allah and the guarantee of His Messenger (all prayers and peace be upon him) and the safety of Muslims to live in the protection of Islam, and in safety assured under the banner of the Islamic community, and this label has nothing from inferiority, as some think, because if the Arab man said you are in my guarantee, this means in my protection and my care and under negation, I do not harm you nor do allow anyone to harm you.<sup>240</sup>

- 2- The attitude of Islam from non-Muslims within the Islamic society:
- Who treats you as himself did not aggrieve you.
  - The have what we have, and they should do what we should, they have the rights we have, and they have the duties we have according to this

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<sup>239</sup> A: Al-Haythami, Majma Al-Zawa'id, vol.3, P.266.

B: Al-Baihaqi, Branches of Faith, vol.11, P.130, on the authority of Abu Nadrah, Al-Baihaqi said: some are ignorant of its reference, At-Tabaraani said: this Hadith was not narrated from al-Jarriri except by Abu Munther Al-Warraaq, by Sahl son of Othman.

<sup>240</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.188.

two rules the nature of the relation between Muslims and Christians was explained through the following points:

1. Provide protection from the external aggression: it necessitates the Islamic society to provide all protection controls to all who are content with living in , and this is what jurists have declared in their guidance<sup>241</sup>, and perhaps the finest example of this in history is the attitude of the leader and the companion Abu Ubeida Al-Jarrah<sup>242</sup> from people of Homs and others when he gave back the money they paid in exchange for protection from external attack because of their inability of that.<sup>243</sup> And this is Ibn Taymiyah who stands violently in the face of the Tatars when they wanted to release only Muslim prisoners and keep Christians in captivity, he said: we are not satisfied but with releasing all prisoners of Muslims and others, because they are the people Dhimmi, and we do not leave any prisoner not of Dhimmis nor the people of the sect.<sup>244</sup>
2. Providing the internal protection: this protection includes:
  - a. protecting bloods and bodies: Where hadith and behaviour of the companions have consolidated on prohibit causing any harm and any injustice to any human being a citizen or a non-Muslim visitor who is in the protection of Muslims and their security, as prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him said: whoever hurts a Dhimmi, I am his opponent and whoever I was his opponent I will defeat him in the Doomsday.<sup>245</sup>
  - b. Protect honours: In Islam it should not cause any harm to Muslims or non- Muslims such as cursing, accusing, libelling, and

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<sup>241</sup> Ibn Qudamah, Al-Mughni, Beirut, Dar al-Fekr, 1<sup>st</sup> Edit, 1985, vol.8, P.496, and Al-Sarkhasi, Bada'ae Al-Sana'ae, Beirut, Dar Al-Ma'refa, P.H, vol.7, P.110

<sup>242</sup> Abu Ubeida Al-Jarrah: (584 AD -639 AD) he is Amer son of Abdullah son of Jarrah son of Hilal son of Aheab, he is one of the first precursors to Islam, and one of the ten promised paradise, he emigrated and witnessed the two migrations and the Battle of Badr and what came after, and fought in Uhud battle with Prophet Muhammad, all prayers and peace be upon him when people were defeated, scholars have agreed that Abu Ubeida was dead with plague, Al-Asskalani, Al-Isaba fe Al-Sahaba, vol.2, P.244.

<sup>243</sup> Al-Balathery, Futouh Al-Buldan, inquiry by Abdullah Al-Tabaa, Beirut, Al-Ma'aref Establishment, 1987, P.142.

<sup>244</sup> Ibn Taymiyah, The Cypriot message, P.40

<sup>245</sup> A: Syouti, Jame' Al-Ahadith, ver. Mohammed Saad, Damascus, Hashem Al- Ketbi press, P.H, 1981, vol. 19, p. 461.

B Manaawi, Fayd Al-Qadir, Beirut, Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah , 2001,vol. 6, p. 25, on the authenticity of Abdullah son of Masoud, Albani said: a weak hadith , and it was mentioned that it is narrated by Ahmad and Al-Bukhari in his history and At-Tabaraani in the reference of his known men and son of Lahi'a one of the men of Muslim in the follow-ups and the right is a good hadith.



backbiting, Jurists say: it is necessary to stop causing harm to Dhimmis and to prohibit backbiting him so as Muslims.<sup>246</sup>

- c. Protect Money: The applied reality for the judgement of the Islamic Sharia shows clearly this protection to all possessions of non-Muslims, they have the right to enter all financial dealings and practice all transactions and other economic freedoms.
- d. The custody of the House Money: The Islamic society guarantee for Muslims and non-Muslims all their requirements especially in case of the inability to earn money or get a job as an apply to the words of Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him: "All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock " and Dhimmis with Muslims are the most worthy of charity, the guarantee of the Islamic society were obvious to all groups of society with no distinction between Muslims and others.<sup>247</sup>

3. Civil liberties: these liberties include the following:

- I. The liberty of belief, perform the religious rituals and save the places of worship: Islam has admitted very clearly the liberty of belief to all people where no compulsion to anyone to enter Islam even if it was calling them for it. Calling for Islam and compelling to it are opposites, the first is possible and valid, and the second is forbidden and prevented as Allah says: { Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious... } An-Nahl, verse(125), and the verse (256) in Al-Baqarah chapter {no compulsion in religion... }, so the rule was to leave them on their religion, the best example of the high tolerance of Islam is when prophet Muhammad All prayers and peace be upon him allowed Christians of Najran to enter his mosque and stay there for several days and when it is time for their prayer, they

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<sup>246</sup> Ibn Abdeen, Al-Durr Al-Mukhtar, Damascus, Dar Al-Fekr, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit, 1966, vol.3, P.250

<sup>247</sup> A: narrated by Al- Bukhari, Al-Jame' As-Sahih, vol.1, P.431.

B: narrated by Muslim, Al-Jame' As-Sahih, P.1459, on the authenticity of Abdullah son of Omar.

direct to the east in front of Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him without any objection or prevention from him.<sup>248</sup> The right that should be showed is the greatest realist evidence of the freedom of belief in Islam, which is seen now and after fifteen centuries of the places of worship: churches, temples and monasteries scattered in the parts of the Islamic world, which enunciate the freedom of belief brought by Islam.

- II. The liberty of mobility: non-Muslims from people of other religions have the liberty of mobility, move and travel from a country to another, whenever they want, and to any direction they went, it is mentioned in the promise which prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him sent to Christians of Ayla near to Al-Aqaba: this is a security from Allah and Muhammad the messenger of Allah to John son of Ro'ba and people of Ayla, their ship and cars on land and sea, for them and the people of Sham and Yemen is the safeguard of Allah and Prophet Muhammad, and they should not be prevented from what they want either land or sea.<sup>249</sup>
- III. The liberty of thought and education: When Islam has established the rules of the Islamic society, some of its bases were spreading knowledge among all classes of that society, the best evidence of this is the increasing of scientific production that appeared at the hands of non-Muslims in various scientific fields, names of many scientists from the Jews and the Christians others became famous, for none of Islam's judgments prohibits non-Muslims from the freedom of thought and learning, they can teach their sons and bring them up according to the principles of their religion, they also can establish their private schools. Islamic universities and institutes were wide opened throughout history to Dhimmis where they studied under Muslim scientists and jurists, so Haneen

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<sup>248</sup> Ibn Hisham, Prophetic Biography, inquiry of Mustafa As-Saqqa, Mustafa Al-Babi printing press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edit, 1955, vol.1, P.574.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, vol.2, P.526 .

son of Isaac <sup>250</sup> has studied under Abu Khalil Al-Farahidi<sup>251</sup>, and Yahiya son of Odai <sup>252</sup> studied under Al-Farabi.<sup>253</sup>

- IV. The social liberty: which means the freedom to exercise all social activities such as festivals and holidays and visits, and the feature of the Islamic society was the peaceful coexistence among all sects and cults, it has already been talk about the verse that urged to charity and being good to non-Muslims; Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him was visiting non-Muslims patients and his neighbours of them, and ask about their conditions, be charitable to the needy, excuse the evildoer, and call them for Islam with softly and kindly.  
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As applying to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah all prayers and peace be upon him, we, Christians and Muslims in Syria do not feel but we are the children of one family cooperate with each other as the children of the parents of father and mother do in one family. Until Syrians have transcended in their thoughts to reject the term "coexistence" as an expression to their conditions, and adopt the "co-living" as a substitute for it, considering the word "coexistence" expresses a state of

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<sup>250</sup> Haneen son of Isaac: (810-873) A Scholar and translator and a scholar of languages and Nestorian Christian doctor. He is from Al-Hira, his father is a Christian works in pharmacy. He is a historian and translator and is one of the leading interpreters of that age, and was fluent in addition to Arabic the Syriac, Persian and Greek. He translated the works of Galen and Hippocrates and Aristotle and the Old Testament from the Greek, his translations have saved some of the works of Galen and other from loss, Al-Zirikli, Al-A'lam, vol.2, P.287

<sup>251</sup> Abu Khalil Farahidi: (718 AD - 781 AD), Abu Abd al-Rahman Khalil son of Ahmed Al-Farahidi Al-Basri, he is an Arab from Azd, he was born in Amman, and he is the founder of prosody and Sibawayh's teacher and the author of the first dictionary of the Arabic language, which the eye (Al-Ayn). He was born as Ibadi, and turned to the doctrine of the Sunnis and Al-Jamaah, Al-Dhabi, Biographies of the prominent figures, vol.7, P.429

<sup>252</sup> Yahiya son of Odai: (893 - 974 AD), he is Abu Zakaria Yahiya son of Odai son of Hamid son of Zakaria al-Tikriti. One of the most important figures of Arab Christian heritage, was born in Takrit, and he belonged to the Syriac church Jacobean, he died at the age of eighty-one years, during which he wrote more than one hundred fifty books and articles some of them are philosophical translations interpretations of Aristotle and his interpreter, articles in logic, and scientific articles, he also wrote in theology and ethics, and the sincerity of the Bible and the interpretation of some verses, monotheism and trinity and theologies, Al-Zirikli, Figures, vol.8, P.156

<sup>253</sup> Farabi: (874 - 950 AD), his full name is Abu Nasr Muhammad son of Muhammad son of Ozlg son of Tarkhan, he was born in Farab, a city in Transoxiana which is a part of what is now today as Kazakhstan, he is a Muslim philosopher known for his elaborately of philosophical sciences and he had his strength in medicine industry, Al-Zirikli, Figures, vol.7, P.20))

<sup>254</sup> Al-Bukhari, Al-Jame' As-Sahih, vol.4, P.4

adaptation between two different environments; however, "living" is a cooperation and join hands in one community and one environment.<sup>255</sup> Perhaps the most powerful image of co-living in the Syrian society we saw on the ground when the delegation of Saint Thomas monastery in Saidnaya perform their prayer at the Grand Umayyad Mosque in Damascus to Gaza, while a delegation of fast Muslims broke their fast in Ramadan twice under the auspices of the monastery of St. Thoma, those activities that are repeated annually to express the brotherly and living together of Syrians in Syrian society in all religions and sects.<sup>256</sup>

**Third: Acknowledge the other:**

1- The look of Islam to the other: if we define the other, non-Muslim briefly that he is (the different), so how Islam and Muslims look to the other? The answer: Actually, the Quran has set clear rules of the human family, and Islam has declared that all people are created from a single soul, and this means the unity of human origin as Allah says: {O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence God, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for God ever watches over you. } An-Nisaa, verse (1).<sup>257</sup> The truth is that Islam did not come to abolish the previous divine religions, but came as a renewer and complementary to them, our lord Christ says: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them

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<sup>255</sup> Joseph Zeitoun, head of the charitable St. Grigorius association, Figures of Christianity, Damascus, St Grigorius association, Thursday, 12/5/2011. 11:00 a.m.

<sup>256</sup> Jean Hanna, manager of the Islamic-Christian relations in Mar Thoma monastery, The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, Saidnaya, St Thoma monastery, 11/7/2011, 12:30 p.m.

<sup>257</sup> Jean Hanna, manager of the Islamic-Christian relations in Mar Thoma monastery, The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, Saidnaya, St Thoma monastery, 11/7/2011, 12:30 p.m.

but to fulfil them". <sup>258</sup>To this Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him has indicated and said: "The similitude of mine and that of the Apostles before me is that of a person who built a house quite imposing and beautiful, but for one brick in one of its corners. People would go round it, appreciating the building, but saying: Why has the brick not been fixed here? He said: I am that brick and I am the last of the Apostles." <sup>259</sup>And so Christ did not come to destroy the message of Moses, and Muhammad did not come to deprive Christ of his message, every prophet came confirming the previous one, and the previous prophet came paving those after him, and the Holy Quran is a junction of the heavenly messages and a call for believe in all the prophets of Allah, so the believer in Christ must acknowledge Muhammad as it is stated in the Holy Quran, and the believer in Muhammad must recognize Christ as stated in the Holy Quran too. The truth that must be declared clearly is that Islam respected the existence of others, they are disagreeing with its opinion and belief, and it always admitted their entity either they are individuals or countries, for it came in Al-Fasl chapter that separated between Muslims and others {To you be your religion, and to me mine } Al-Kafirun chapter, verse(6), and Allah says: { To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people... } Al-Ma'idah, verse(42). Allah has separated the mention of all others, and a recognition of their absolute existence, there is no way with them but with wisdom and good advice, and argument in ways that are best, and dealing that based on justice, Allah says: { Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish

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<sup>258</sup> Matthew Gospel, vol.5, P.17

<sup>259</sup> A: narrated by Muslim, Al-Jame' As-Sahih, vol.4, P.1971

B: Ibn Haban, As-Sahih, vol.14, P.292, on the authenticity of Abu Hurairah Allah be satisfied with him, a true Hadith

(scriptures), and the Sabians, Christians, Magians, and Polytheists,- God will judge between them on the Day of Judgment: for God is witness of all things. } Al-Hajj, verse(17).The relations that link Muslims with others: a humanitarian brotherhood where Muslims with all human beings meet, whether they are people of divine religions, or of earthly doctrines and groups, and the agreement in belief is not a condition to continuance of existence on the planet in the entire Islamic concept, and at the same time, the difference in belief does not mean at all the reason to abolish the whole of existence on earth, Allah says the truth: { Say: "O God! Creator of the heavens and the earth! Knower of all that is hidden and open! it is Thou that wilt judge between Thy Servants in those matters about which they have differed. }Az-Zumar, verse (46).

The people of previous religions should consider the moral commandments in their religions, and seek to apply these commandments practically between humans, and exploit media and education, and direct them according to these commandments, it would be better if people of these religions look with courage, truth and sincerity to an important matter, which is the passage of time, the many translations of Scriptures and have the existence of cupidities and desires, all that affected the origins of the sent down heavenly religion, which has opened the way for the seeds of intolerance and hostility to grow among the slaves of Allah the Exalted, then all must be monitored and corrected, for all that must be observed and corrected as well as reconsider all interpretations and misinterpretation, and resorting to enlightened minds and modern scientific researches.<sup>260</sup> Our scholars endeavoured a practical diligent seek in

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<sup>260</sup> Mahmoud Kuftaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.182

achieving the principle of acknowledge the other, that has achieved the acknowledgment of Islam and Christianity as two heavenly messages by the Protestant churches in German Democratic Republic, a mutual declaration was issued that stated: to acknowledge the two heavenly letters sent down to Jesus the Messenger of Allah and Mohammed the prophet of Allah which aim to human happiness and safety.

Efforts did not stop there, but continued to dialogue with senior clergymen seeking their recognition of Islam even the Vatican took a giant step in this regard that all the Islamic world has appreciated and thanked it, the step is: acknowledging that Islam is a heavenly religion,<sup>261</sup> this recognition is not but a first step on the way to meeting and open dialogue between the two religions, recognition of a belief is not but a stage of their faith stages.

However, it is worthy to mention that the problem of recognition of the other is still on the table yet, although we are in this country - Syria – we have an old historical experience in this field, for in this country, you enter the Council and do not distinguish between the Christian and Muslim, because historically we live this understanding and harmony with each other, we both save the other, and we both honour the other, and we both put the other in his position by honour and humanitarian respect, this is at the grass roots level. Despite all this, the problem is still at the level of the church as a whole, at the level of Islam as well, the level of institutions, the level of theology and science of Al Kalam, the level of faith, the problem at this level is actual, when a Christian tries to be open and talk about the prophecy of Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him, he will be met with rejection by his group, and in his church, and perhaps more than a rejection, and this is an evidence that the recognition of Islam is still incomplete, or that it is still within the

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<sup>261</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.128

framework of social courtesy, not scientifically and heartily.

2- Some problems of acknowledge the other: ( The marriage of Muslim women to Christian men): In this field, another problem raised by Christians which is the problem of inequality between men and women in marriage in Muslim community - as Christian brothers see - and the possibility of the marriage of Muslim men to Christian women but not the contrary, such a problem leads to a kind of seclusion of Christians within their own neighbourhoods or villages, as is the case in many areas of Syria, and it leads as Christians thought to the establishment of two worlds: a Christian and a Muslim, and it is not allowed to any type of mixing which allows coexistence. The response is that: Islam did not abolish Christianity, on the contrary, it admitted and acknowledged Christianity and Jesus peace be upon him full acknowledge no debate in it, and admitted the Christian religion by clear and explicit verses, unambiguous at all, and even Islam commanded us to treat Christians and live with them and recognize all the evidence and verses that have been sent down to them, to Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them, it is a finished matter to the Holy Quran, unquestionable and unambiguous. Marriage, however, is a private intimate relationship, it has its own issues and psychological, personal, mental and intellectual dimensions, we must not talk about the practices that some Muslims practise with regard to the relationship of men and women in marriage and then say this is Islam, Islam is not, we must differentiate between principle and practice , Practices that are carried out in the lives of many Muslims and Christians couples, it is contradictory and incompatible with the principles and morals of Islam and the teachings and tolerance of Christianity. Out of the wise legislation, Allah did not legitimate the marriage of Christian men to Muslim women, in order to avoid the occurrence of such practices,<sup>262</sup> Islam permits a Muslim man to marry a Christian or Jewish woman, because if she entered the house of the Muslim, she will find her belief sacred and respected from her husband, and thus the happiness of the family would be guaranteed. Islam has prevented Muslim women to marry Jewish or Christian men fearing let her hear calumny or contestation of her holies, and this may require the dissolution of the family, and the loss of children, if a Christian or a Jew believed in Muhammad and his

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<sup>262</sup> Adib Al-Khoury, The Problem of Acknowledge The Other, P. 268



message, as the Muslim believes in Moses and his message and Jesus and his message as well. Thus, there is no objection of the marriage.

**Fourth: Tolerance in Islam:** That everyone in the nation should have the right to believe in what they see as a right, and to have the freedom to perform the rites of his religion as he pleases, and that people of different religions be in front of the laws of the state,<sup>263</sup> this definition guarantee for all people of religions the freedom to live in the Islamic society without distinction between them and the Muslims.

1- Christianity and the Islamic tolerance:

The Islamic tolerance Included principles of Jesus Christ in particular, but also sanctified and honoured it in the character of Jesus Christ, and the character of his mother and her family, when it mentioned their birth in an aura of angelic sanctification ,and also when it called the major Quranic chapters with the name Mary and her family Al-Imran, in addition to the Holy Quran stood by them struggling, defending them and fighting their enemies, the enemies of the heavenly message of our lord Jesus.

Islam has not only been tolerant with Christianity, but it has not accept people to be Muslims unless they believe in Moses, Jesus and all prophets of the Holy book, Allah says: { ay ye: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam). } Al-Baqarah, verse(136).

Also out of the Islamic tolerance, but out of its essence that it inserted the teachings of Christ's Bible ,Moses' Torah and their recommendations, the history and biography of the prophets of Torah and the Bible in the heart of the Holy Quran, and it mentioned in it the miracles of Jesus peace be upon him that have not been mentioned in the four Gospels, Allah said in the Holy Quran: { To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety } Al-Ma'idah, verse(48), including the Holy Book from legislations and heavenly teachings, so we see when the Holy Quran speaks about justice, it decides that justice is for all people regardless of their beliefs, genders,

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<sup>263</sup> Muhammad Munir Saad Al-Deen, Dialogue and coexistence in a multi-society, P.115

colours and places, Allah says: { And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice... } An-Nisaa, verse(58).

Not only that, but jobs in the country in the early Islamic ages were given to the worthy efficient one regardless of his faith and doctrine, and so was every man is a Muslim or non-Muslim live in the Islamic tolerance guaranteed freedom of worship, life and money, income and livelihood-worker or incapable of work-as long as he is subjected to laws that organize the life of the community.<sup>264</sup>

Christians live in Islam in a mild atmosphere where they share Muslims their delights and parties the same as for Muslims, this friendliness between them is in Quran <sup>265</sup>when Allah says: { This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time } Al-Ma'idah, verse(5).

2- The response to the suspicion of the spread of Islam by the sword:

The issue of tolerance in Islam was dealt with during the response to the suspicion of the spread of Islam by the sword and the expansion of its horizons by murder and bloodshed because some exceeded and claimed that Islam was accompanied with oppression, obligation and strangle liberties where we find some thinkers, politicians and some non-Muslims men of religions who followed this mistake without adopting the truth by themselves and pursue it by their hardworking and endeavouring with the knowledge that the simplest rules of the sound method in such matters is that the sane judge things by studying them, meditating on, searching and scrutinizing, and if people committed to the words of Allah in the Holy Quran: {O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done. } Al-Hujuraat, verse(6), facts would not be absent from them and they would not confuse between what is right and false where this call is addressed to each true believer no matter what is his religion, colour or gender. If monotheism was a character of Islam and a mark of its prominent marks, religious tolerance is one of its prominent characters where it was

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<sup>264</sup> Muhammad Munir Saad Al-Deen, Dialogue and coexistence in a multi-society, P.115

<sup>265</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.47

a practiced work, a followed approach and Sunnah that must be followed, the religious tolerance is manifested in the following:

**First:** Islam has emphasized obviously that all people are created from one soul, and the human origin of all sons of humanity is one origin, Allah says: { O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence God, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for God ever watches over you. } An-Nisaa, verse(1), and even if people dispersed after that to nations, tribes, countries and genders, it is the disperse of one house, the same father and same mother.

**Second:** Islam in accordance with its world nature has embraced the heavenly messages and religions sent down before it, and decided clearly with the unity of Allah the unity of faith, the unity of the heavenly religion, and the unity of religion that all Apostles came down with, Allah says: { The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein ... } As-Shura, verse (13).

**Third:** Islam has declared that it wants to honour the mankind and his happiness with its heavenly message and divine call, and all Apostles have come with one message which is to worship Allah the Only and no partner to Him, and all Muslims must believe in all Apostles of Allah and all their messages: { Say ye: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam)." } Al-Baqarah, verse(136).

**Fourth:** Anyone who follow the biography of the Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him and who study the Holy Quran which Allah has sent down to him, and the follower of the lives of his followers who built a civilization established on love, tolerance, justice and brotherhood, the follower and studier of all this would see the belief of people in Islam was through contentment, persuasion and consideration

not through oppression, obligation and compulsion, Allah says: { Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: } Al-Baqarah, verse(256).

**Fifth:** Islam has not accepted that only his followers have the right of worship, but it also decided this right to all people of other heavenly religions, and considered their places of worship respectable. It was not enough with that only, but commanded Muslims to defend this right for them and all, thus prove that Islam is a free world system where all can live safe enjoy their religious liberties in its shadow and equal to all Muslims, Allah says: {Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure. } Al-Hajj, verse(40).

**Sixth:** Islam decides obviously the principle of equation between people, so no race should boast another one nor should a colour do another because all creatures are the dependents of Allah and the most beloved of them to Allah is the one who is most beneficial to his family thus Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him said, and Allah says in the Holy Quran: { O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you } Al-Hujuraat, verse(13).

**Seventh:** one of the aspects of religious tolerance in Islam that the difference of people in their religions does not mean at all that the discourse between them is the violence manner, but Islam emphasizes to discourse each other in the best and the limits of civility, wisdom and kindness, Allah says: {And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation) } Al-Ankabout, verse(46).

**Eighth:** the Islamic tolerance with Jews and Christians, the sons of the Holy Book is that the Holy Quran - the book of Allah sent down to Prophet Muhammad, did not describe them nonbelievers, but called and named them with the most wonderful speech styles, and the softest and most pleasant phrases in tens chapters of the Holy Quran in his words: { O, people of The Book } it means people of the Torah and the Gospel, but The Holy Quran affirmed the fact of the approach between the members

of both Islamic religion and Christianity <sup>266</sup>in His words in Quran :  
{ Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews  
and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou  
find those who say, "We are Christians"... } Al-Ma'idah, verse(82).

### **Fifth: The Birth of The Lord Christ:**

Our scholars based in their explanation of the position of Islam on lord  
Christ on what Allah has sent down in His Holy Book as He says: {  
Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word  
from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour  
in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to  
God; "He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he  
shall be (of the company) of the righteous."

She said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched  
me?" He said: "Even so: God createth what He willeth: When He hath  
decreed a plan, He but saith to it, 'Be,' and it is!

"And God will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel,  
"And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this  
message): "I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I  
make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into  
it, and it becomes a bird by God's leave: And I heal those born blind, and  
the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by God's leave; and I declare to you  
what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for  
you if ye did believe;} Al-Imran, verses (45-49).

It is noticed from the dialogues of our scholars with Christians their avoiding of  
doctrinal issues, no dialogue was registered where the topic of crucifixion, or  
the ascending of Christ, or the doctrine of the Trinity, probably that is from their  
wisdom, because such thorny topics may not do any good in the dialogue, on  
the contrary, they may lead to a futile argument reflects negatively on the  
Islamic –Christian relationship, Syrians has launched in their Christian dialogue  
from the principle of convergence and proximity, they did not deal with topics  
do not serve this goal, so their direction in raising the issue of Christ and his  
nature is a direction of love and glorification for Christ peace be upon him,  
whatever was his nature of divinity or humanity – according to the Christian  
raising-.

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<sup>266</sup> Mahmoud Kuftaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.47

Our scholars have explained the birth of lord Christ by interpreting verses of the Holy Quran, showing honouring of The Holy Quran to him and his family, and we mention a quote from that during inference and exegesis: "We, Muslims believe in Jesus and his message, and consecrate his mother Virgin Mary and love her because the Quran has commanded us that, and Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him taught us that; In the Holy Quran, the chapter of 'Al-Imran' the family of lord Christ, who is Imran? He is Mary's father, Allah says: {Behold! a woman of 'Imran said: } Al-Imran chapter, verse(35), the woman is Mary's mother; naming the chapter as the name of the family indicates honouring, admiration and appreciation.

However, the Holy Quran did not mention the birth of Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him nor the birth of his mother, but it mentioned the birth of lord Christ's mother, Mary, and named a chapter with her name, it did not mention only the birth of Mary, but also the birth of lord Christ, it did not stop at that rather it also mentioned the birth of Yahya peace be upon him, the birth of Isaac son of Israel, the father of the prophets of Israelites, {And We gave him the good news of Isaac - a prophet,- one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls. } As-Saffat, verses (112-113)

We go back to the birth of Christ's mother, Virgin Mary, as in the words of Allah: { Behold! a woman of 'Imran said: "O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: So accept this of me: For Thou hearest and knowest all things." } Al-Imran, verse (35), it means when she felt that she is pregnant, she vowed in dedication to Allah that her baby born is a servant for Jerusalem (Beit Al-Maqdis), { When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"- and God knew best what she brought forth- "And no wise is the male Like the female... } as if she was apologizing to her God because she wanted the baby born to be a male in order to be more qualified in the service because male has these characters of service more than female, {I have named her Mary, } which means the female servant, {and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected. Right graciously did her Lord accept her... } Al-Imran, verses (36-37). So as the woman of Imran wished, Allah accepted her prayer and vow and He made her grow in purity and beauty, and to the care of Zakaria was she assigned until she isolated people to devote herself to worship Allah and to live the spiritual life, so to recognize Allah in her thought and her soul and the light

of vision { 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. } Maryam, verses (16-17), then Gabriel in an appearance of a man, the most awesome creature of Allah the Almighty, { She said: "I seek refuge from thee to (God) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear God." } Maryam, verse(18) where the mark of devoutness and the Divine light is on his appearance, { He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son. She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us': It is a matter (so) decreed. } Maryam, verses ( 19-20-21).

When her pregnancy started to appear, she withdrew people and conceived him {... and she retired with him to a remote place.} which means far from people { And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): "Ah! would that I had died before this! would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight! " But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee; } Maryam: ( 23-24).

She is the chaste, worshipper, anchoress, pious, devoutness and under consideration and ideal, two thousand years have passed and she is the Saint, the virgin mother of the prophet of Allah.

Christ was born and she brought him the people, and his the first miracle, this miracle of Jesus was not mentioned in the Bible, in addition to another miracle not mentioned in the Bible too which is the descent of the table from the sky- the story mentioned in Al-Ma'idah chapter- it is the miracle of create the bird from clay after he breathed into it in the permission of Allah which was not mentioned in the Bible, so miracles mentioned in the Holy Quran about Jesus are twice the miracles mentioned in the Bible, for the Bible existed in the Holy Quran is larger than the separated one, does not this require from the members of theses world religions to meet and become acquainted what Christ sanctified, we sanctify it too. Nothing oppose to the Quran and Islam except collaboration in the Oneness of Allah, Jesus peace be upon him says: " The real life is that

they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. " <sup>267</sup>  
This means, according to the words of The Eminence Sheikh- that there is no God but Allah and Jesus is the messenger of Allah, as for the prophecy of Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him in the Bible, it is mentioned that Jews sent a delegation to prophet Yahiya peace be upon him, they asked: Are you Christ? He said: No! they said: You are Elia? He answered: No! They asked: Are you the prophet awaited? He answered: No!

So, the prophet awaited is not Christ, not prophet Elijah , nor is he prophet Yahiya peace be upon him. If the Christian world admitted what is in the Bible, and know the real Islam, it would believe in it, and the world would be on nation because each one of us completes the other, but we need scholars who are on the level of maturity and wisdom and knowledge.

#### **- Analytic View:**

It is not intended from mentioning the text to tell the story of lord Christ, for it is known to every reader of the Holy Quran either a Muslims or a Christian; however, what is intended is to demonstrate the wise technique in which the style of storytelling is formulated, that does not mean to deal the belief of Christ badly, but it is a call to Christians for believing in the true lord Christ as Muslims believed in him before. None of our scholars said once that Christ is not a God but a creature nor is the doctrine of Trinity a false one, and none used this phrase: The current Bible is twisted. Phrases used by many Muslim interlocutors, so they do not reach the wanted result of that dialogue, and they did nor deal with the subject of crucifixion and ascension in any dialogue- according the research- but they used the softest and the most artful used in persuasion; not only that, but they are phrases that no Christian can deny them such as: lord Christ is the messenger of Allah, this cannot be denied from any believer Christian, or their words: We, Muslims believe in Jesus and his message and sanctify his mother, Virgin Mary and we love her because the Holy Quran commanded us to do that, and Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him has taught us that; such a phrase is enough to put affection in the heart of Christian even if he does not believe in the message of Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him.

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<sup>267</sup> The Gospel of John, vol.11, PP.3-4



At this level, I mention the letter sent by the Eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro to the Pope of the Vatican congratulating him on the birth of lord Chris, his eminence did not mention in this letter anything about the nature of Christ nor the point of difference between Muslims and Christians in this respect; however, he directed a true call to the Pope for stand up to corruption, evil, aggression and the injustice being done to women, old men and children regardless of their religion, gender or race, and clarifying to him that Christ they believe in and sanctify his message, we also do the same, and Muhammad the messenger of Allah is a brother to him and a completer to his message, and we, Muslims in our Islamic world commit and will stay on our respect to all the humanitarian values because that is the core of our belief, and because the belief in our all prophets is an essential pillar of the pillars of Faith in Islam, and the belief in Torah, Gospel and Zabur is another pillar. The Islam of a Muslims is not right if he does not believe in Moses, Jesus, Torah and Gospel.<sup>268</sup> Thus was the speech of lord Chris to Christians in the anniversary of his birth, and so was his clarification of the attitude of Islam towards lord Christ, and thus was the message of Muslims to Christians all over the world.

### **Sixth: Islam and The World Peace:**

#### 1- The importance of peace in Islam:

World peace in Islam has a great significance, and it is a serious matter, for laws of heaven were not sent down, and Allah did not send His messengers and prophets but in order to build it, and raise its Permanent banner, with the rest of the ideals called for by Islam. Peace in Islam is not a personal matter nor a national goal, but it was also a universal global and immortal one. All prophets and apostles participated in establishing the peace -building, and the peace-building was not completed and finished except by the message of Prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him where he says: " My similitude in comparison with the other prophets before me, is that of a man who has built a house nicely and beautifully, except for a place of one brick in a

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<sup>268</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.231.

corner. The people go about it and wonder at its beauty, but say: 'Would that this brick be put in its place!' So I am that brick, and I am the last of the Prophets." <sup>269</sup>So the messages of heaven were finished, and the divine planning was completed by him to achieve the eternal peace of human, and to achieve brotherhood and world cooperation for the happiness of all humanity.

So that, our scholars have called for world peace in many dialogues, and dealt with the topic of peace in more than one meeting within Syria or at the international level, and clarifying all the time that the human mind and the honourable supporters of Islam and its lovers cannot sanctify peace as Islam did in a legislative, executive and doctrinal way. Islam has made peace at the peak of sanctity and glorification, for peace is a name of the beautiful names of Allah { God is He, than Whom there is no other god;- the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace } Al-Hashr, verse (23), then Islam came to make peace in the characteristics of heaven and paradise, Allah says: { But God doth call to the Home of Peace: He doth guide whom He pleaseth to a way that is straight. } Yunus, verse (25). Also, Allah the Exalted made the issue of peace a divine command in His Holy Book { O ye who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly... }, Al-Baqarah, verse (208).

The Holy Quran has registered many verses to support building the world peace and constructing it by giving rights to their owners, not to aggress any creature, and commanded Muslim to add justice to the holy Charity-building at all levels with human, animal, individual and group, and between white people and dark and all human beings even with the fighters enemies if they accepted peace, and not to take into consideration any emotion to a lover or a kin even if human was forced to support the right against himself, all that in the words of Allah: { O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both... } An-Nisaa, verse (135). As for apply justice with enemies, Allah says: { O ye who believe! stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the

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<sup>269</sup> A: Narrated by Muslim, Al-Jame' As-Sahih, vol.4, P.1971. B: Ibn Haban, As-Sahih, vol.14, P.292, on the authenticity of Abu Hurairah, true hadith.

hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety } Al-Ma'idah, verse (8).

Islam dealt non-Muslims from the outside of the society as three groups: the neutrals, covenantees, and fighters.

- I. The Neutrals: they, who are not in a state of war with Muslims, no treaties nor relations link them to Muslims, and no war or announcement animosity between them and Muslims, such people should be in peace and non-aggression as long as they are in a situation of neutralism with the readiness of Muslims to accept any intuition to establish a friend relationship or cooperation. The basis of the relation of Muslims with non-Muslims is peace, cooperation and devotion.<sup>270</sup>

All that is taken from the words of Allah: { God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them... } Al-Mumtahanah, verse (8). Another case is the war situation with a specific enemy, there is a nation who did not go to war, but they are in relationships with those who fight Muslims, yet they avoided going to war against Muslims, those are judged also as neutrals, Allah says: { Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace), or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people. If God had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you: Therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (Guarantees of) peace, then God Hath opened no way for you (to war against them). } An-Nisaa, verse (90).

- II. Covenantees: they who are outside the countries of Muslims and commit to agreements, treaties and charters with Muslims, those should be met with complete fulfilment and peace as well as cooperation on the principle of justice and mutual respect, and Muslims must keep their promises to them and not breach as long as they are faithful because keeping promises and charters is one of

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<sup>270</sup> Zafer Al-Qasimi, Jihad and The International Rights in Islam, Beirut, Dar Al- Malayin, P.H, 1982, PP.87 onwards

the highest degrees of Islamic duties, Allah says: { (But the treaties are) not dissolved with those Pagans with whom ye have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you. So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of their term...} At-Taube, verse (9). If those covenantees break their promises, it is necessary to treat them the same.

III. Fighters: they who are in a situation of war against Muslims because of their aggression, oppression and hurting people either a Muslim or non-Muslim, and due to their prevention of spread the call of Allah the Exalted, and stand in its face by force and violence, on those should be the rules of war applied. <sup>271</sup>It was not enough for Islam to guarantee peace from wars, but it exceeded it to peace from everything prevents the human being from his happiness, so that Islam guaranteed the peace from ignorance to humans, so it commanded seeking knowledge, and guarantee to it the peace from poverty and neediness, so it imposed working and seeking livelihood to people who can, and facilitate charity to ones who are unable, even women got their peace in the shade of Islam, the highest of her dream such as dignity and rights were lost for a long period of time, so she got her dowry, dower, her right to seek knowledge, education and working too.

2- The position of Islam on non-Muslims outside the Islamic society:

All of us are seeking a world where the spirit of peace and love prevail, but we would not reach it unless we make the real peace between human and his God and his law which guarantee all humans happiness, brotherhood, love and accord. If they legislate Jihad, that is for achieving peace and eliminate injustice, oppression, and the dominance of oppressive forces on weak peoples.

As long as the human is a prisoner of his desires and selfishness, and as long as he is still puts the orders of the heaven behind him, does not care about the starving people and the sick, does not disseminate knowledge and justice, does not deal people with love, friendliness and mercy, the peace would not be achieved, and this is a responsibility on shoulders of scholars faithful wise men of religion, and on governors' and Sultan's

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<sup>271</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.182.

shoulders and on scholars' and universities' shoulders supported by media professionals, journalists and modern media. It is not helpful to lay responsibility on others and to forget ourselves, for all of us are shepherds and responsible for our flocks. We ought to know that the aim of heavenly religions is not only peace, but to spread mercy on all people as Allah says: { We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures. } Al-Anbiyaa, verse (107). In order to achieve peace among humankind and mercy prevails amongst all people, the first responsibility is laid on men of clerics who are characterized with love and peace, so they do not sow the seeds of separation and animosity, and do not exploit the ignorance of people and goodness, and compel them to abandon their original beliefs and force them to leave out , so they make them enemies of their homeland, society, families and brothers and sisters.

Responsibility does not lie with only men of religion, but also do with economist and men of wealth, so they do not seek wealth on the account of weak the poor, weak people and drown peoples in debt because no peace so long as there is exploitation, no peace as long as avarice is the stronger, and no peace so long as we do not think of hungry people needy and as well as there is no peace as long as there are oppressor and oppressed. The prophet of Islam, Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him expels who fill his stomach and forget the hungry people around him without caring for them, Prophet Muhammad says: " He is not a believer who filled his stomach but his neighbour is still hungry" <sup>272</sup> Men of media should be the real patrons of peace and love, so they stand by the right without bias, and they should spread the truth without fabrication or exaggeration as well as make wisdom their desired quest wherever they found it out, they would be the most worthy of it. <sup>273</sup>

### 3- Islam and Christianity and the tasks of Islam:

The call of Islam is the mutual character between Islam and Christianity in the principles of belief from a side, and in confronting the current challenges from another side. Many dialogues have mentioned that philosophers had called for Utopia, they imagined it and drew it on papers, yet religions have achieved it and prophets have applied it in the

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<sup>272</sup> A: Ahmad son of Hanbal, vol.1, P.54

B: Al-Haythami, Majma' Zawa'ed, vol.8, P.167, on the authenticity of Anas son of Malik, Abu Hatem made it weak, but Al-Haythami said: narrated by At-Tabaraani and Al-Bazar, a reference by Al-Bazar Hasan.

<sup>273</sup> Mahmoud Kufaro, Lectures in The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.106.

individual, community and nation, and have made it a true reality. If scholars of religions returned religion to its sources, and renounced what came after and does not belong to it, so we would notice that the world unites and converts to one world in the shades of believing in Allah the Exalted. Therefore, the meeting of Islam and Christianity is coming inevitably that we, today, meet with our Christian brothers in mutual Arabic issues and grief; and we, peace advocates, want peace for others and ourselves, and reject the violation of our rights, for so much need for that in order to strengthen ourselves and to hold fast, all together, by the rope that Allah stretched out with and aim to be one row in defending the rights of our nation and country. Then we will be really real peace advocates, real dialogue advocates and real religious meeting advocates.

**Seventh: Islam and Christianity in front of The world future:**

1- Heavenly religions and the danger of the attack of Materialism: <sup>274</sup>

Heavenly religions especially Islam and Christianity are the approach that Allah the Exalted approved to the human for his happiness in his life and the afterlife; however, over time, Materialistic science progress and the expansion of luxuries, it is noticed that the human was accepted less the religious values, and his affectedness become weak in spiritual and moral meanings called for by prophets and missionaries peace be upon them. It is necessary to know the reason and the way to save humanity from the aspects of anxiety that increase steadily whenever the material life and its means became accessible and controlling the human mind. This source of anxiety, deviation and moral chaos that reached a point from which every bright mind in the world fears from is from material civilization the same that did not pay attention to religion and did not touch the spirituality of religion and the virtues it brings up in the spirit of the human in the path of

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<sup>274</sup> Materialism scientifically: it is a philosophical thought, its members consider that existence determines thought, and existence and material are the first truth, thought and mind are the secondary truth subjected to material " Mind is not but the highest product of material" so we asked: How does it happen that man thinking? Materialists answered because human has a brain, and thought is a product of the brain, so there is no thought without material, so that the Philosophical Materialism does not accept any truth except the material, and the conversions of this material determine necessarily all phenomena. This current found representatives of it in the ancient philosophic thought like Epicurus and Lucrece, the same as modern thought where Marx and Engels represent two considerable patterns to it. As for death, Materialist see it as the final station that no other station after it for human, the concept of material thought has branched, and its members had figment in what they translated in their philosophy of material to multiple behaviour patterns until some ones became understand the word materialist as the one who only think of material pleasures, so he indulges in them far from belief, Animism and thinking of the Day of Judgement. Perhaps Eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro intended this concept in dealing with the topic of Materialism, <http://annajma.jeeran.com/madia.htm>

this civilisation, the human has lost many of his virtues and characteristics, and what was create for him, but humanity has tired itself of falling in the sludge of lusts and running after desires as well as of worship material and pleasure. Material should be a servant for humanity not the humanity becomes a servant for it. And pleasure that was created for its owner not to enslave him and be a follower to it, so who is responsible? And what are the results? Were heavenly religions unable to guide people and persuade them? Or are there other reasons? Any heavenly religion is in its root a guidance to all those who go astray, a source of good to the rest, a righteous starting to all workers for the sake of free and dignified life, for it is in its essence the most perfect, the best and the most suitable in all affairs of life, and what was such should be followed ; however, personal diligences and superficial reading that stop at the external text without looking into a wisdom or a goal in it, also literal mistranslations have established a class based on understanding the righteous religion- which enlightened human's way- a false deviated understanding and far from reality that all heavenly religions enjoy it. Which led to a gap between religions and their followers, so people walked away from religion and fall in the materialism and its desires and deviations.

2- What are the tasks of clerics for the world future:

The tasks of clerics in confronting the danger of materialism concentrate on clarifying the reality of heavenly religions' beliefs and laws, and return the trust of peoples in their religions through the following points:

- Men of religions realize that they are not enemies to any human in what they call for even if he went astray, deviated and became an atheist and walked away from the faith because his atheism did not come about through animosity or hatred, but from the weak of understanding . Contemporaries have wanted a faith meets with knowledge and allies with intellect and satisfies the mind, but they did not find what they want due to what they saw through an austere or a bigoted man of religion, through backward thought or through a religious reality dissents from the sound mind and the right knowledge. For all that, we need a world characterized with brevity, wisdom, knowledge and sincerity to look at the atheist as a brother in humanity, he

was offered unripe food but he abhorred, so we should be good at making the food of spirit and mind so that our food will be delicious to everyone.

- Clerics, supposedly, take into consideration the transformation of the innate nature of the contemporary human from what it had to be on before. In the past, the human was accepting what a cleric addressed him without a discussion or an argument even if that was contrary to the instinct and the sound mind; however, the human of these days has been released from imitating the other and the intellectual independency, and he is criticizing freely everything even religions in their doctrines and men, and he is not satisfied with what his mind does not or his knowledge and thought accept. Here comes the task of men of religions (Muslims and Christians) which is to eliminate the wrong and irrational diligences and sediment accumulated on them deformed the reality of religions in the minds of the people of our age with what is not from the sources of religions nor from their facts.
- Some facts that should be beard in mind that the human of today and our younger generation praise all that new and renewed, and love truth and discard the old except some men of religions who do not accept renewing, criticising and correcting, and insist in many matters on what they were before hundreds of years, imitating people, preaching and guiding them. Today, things changed, where Material philosophies and philosophies far from religion have men, missionaries, teachers, establishments and media, this requires clerics to be at the level of challenge and responsibility, otherwise human is threatened with the existential bodily annihilation besides his spiritual annihilation. If we go back to the niche of Christian and Mohammedan prophecy, we find that Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him and Jesus peace be upon him have launched from one starting, and walked on one path endeavouring for one end, they were calling for believing in logic, proof, evidence, the moral behaviour and the deep sincere in words, work and what is linked to Allah the Almighty, so it called the antecedents for who coming later and the latest



acknowledge the antecedent, missionaries and men of religions should follow this principle .

In short, we are suffering from a wave of attacks by the atheist Materialism in our age, where idols became lusts, scientific ideas and international doctrines have media, education is philosophies set by the giants of intellect, knowledge and power, the difference became vast and the gap between the powers of belief and the power of releasing from it became wide and deep where belief weakened, and selfishness and libertine have enlarged. The solution- under a broad heading- is in the true call for the convergence of the two big heavenly religions in the world ( Islam and Christianity), this convergence in which all cooperate genuinely and sincerely with exclude every extrinsic to the religion that the human mind and thought do not accept it today, this cooperation should depend on many bases, some of them:

First: Realizing the essential rules and the mutual goals between the two religions.

Second: Mutual cooperation should not be confined to a special elite, but it should become a common heritage to all groups of Muslims and Christians through developing the public awareness to the Muslims and Christians in the world.

Third : this cooperation between Islam and Christianity should be on an intellectual basis to its members for an advanced steadfast faith provides happiness and peace to humanity. If this cooperation was achieved, and the convergence between people of the heavenly religions, we would be able to face the challenges of the hostile material attack to the religions, and the world future would be better to the followers of both religions in order to achieve believing in Allah by behaviour, deed, moral and approach to live in the heaven of Allah in the earth before we move to the heavenly paradise.<sup>275</sup>

It was a pattern of the topics dealt with in the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue, which is a pattern worthy of a pause of

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<sup>275</sup> Ahmad Kuftharo, Islam and Christianity in front of The world Future, the lecture given in Milano university, 1985.

evaluation and contemplation, and this is what will be in our next chapter if God willing.

#### Chapter (4)

Evaluating looks in the extent to which the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria achieve its desired goals.

**First:** Contemplations in what has been presented from the research.

- The weak points in the journey of dialogue.
- The dialogue between religions is large dimension.

**Second:** Towards a future look in the dialogue.

- The nature of the Islamic-Christian relations.
- What are the points of convergence between Islam and Christianity?
- Towards a better future.

**First:** Contemplations in what has been presented from the research:

the research in the topic of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria was different from other contemporary issues. It was used in researches to deal with a contemporary problem by presenting its aspects, sides and effects then finding appropriate solutions. As for what was in the research, it was a subject positive in its dealing almost semi-integrated aspects. Perhaps the reader sees a rosy picture to a reality maybe he thought it was in the mind of the researcher only; however, the fact is not without negatives , and the journey was not was not

without obstacles, but what prevents from presenting the positive aspects in order to comply them and follow them with a straight legislative approach as the rule that say: it is wrong to present the mistake, consequently the more beneficial is to present the right.

Both Muslim scholars and Christian clergymen in Syria were distinguished with the complete awareness and the high diplomacy to drive the journey of dialogue in Syria, this is not surprising because since the dawn of history, Greater Syria was the cradle of the heavenly messages whenever a new message be sent down, believer followers receive them with love and tolerance even if they did not enter and convert to it. The incident of prophet Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him with Bahira the monk in the journey of The Levant is not far, for although the Christianity of Bahira and the young age of prophet Muhammad at that time, but Bahira met him with love and passion rather acknowledged him after he knew him, and ordered Abu Taleb to save him from Jews and their treachery.

Fourteen century have passed, and Pope John Paul II is the first who enter a mosque, and that was in Syria where he visited Umayyad mosque, and was hosted by Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro council within the dialogue with Sheikh Ahmad may Allah be merciful to him, of course, this visit has great indications in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, for this visit indicates that the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue has made great strides in the meeting between the two religions, in addition to admitting the tolerance of Islam, its great principles in the humanitarian brotherhood and the extent to which Syrian Muslims commit to them. These heavenly morals that the prophet of Allah, Jesus peace be upon him and Prophet Muhammad have called for them particularly Syrian Muslims and Christians translated that practically in receiving it and converse with it well, the thing that no other Islamic country has achieved it and perhaps no other competent authority has sought for it, according to the opinion of the researcher this refers to two things:

First: the great efforts made by our scholars in the subject of the Islamic-Christian dialogue at the personal level or the social one.

Second: National unity is from the reasons of the success of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria that Syrians are brought up on it, based on a personal experience, there is no kind of separation in rights nor in duties between the Muslim and Christian, even you can see in the class room a Sunni

student sits with a Shiite one, Armenian Catholic one , Armenian Orthodox one and the Roman Catholic and Orthodox talking and conversing, and if anyone asked the other about the traditions of his doctrine or denomination, it is out of curiosity without affecting their friendship in the same class and desk.

However, scientifically according to what has mentioned in the research, all dialogues engaged by Muslim scholars came to emphasize the importance of the national unity and the humanitarian brotherhood far from any doctrinal, sectarian or eve religious difference.

### 1) What did our scholars provide to the Islamic-Christian dialogue?

When studying what has been mentioned before, a little from that have been found from the Islamic-Christian dialogue activities, we can say that the thought of Syrian Sharia scholars has given a new concept of the Islamic-Christian dialogue, for they took a distinct approach in the dialogue in our age, depending on the book of Allah and the sunnah of His prophet, the book of Allah that commanded the people of the book not to argue but in the ways that are best, and the Sunnah of His prophet that called for charity to the people of the book, give them safe and security in Muslims homes and treat them as Muslims do each other.

Our conversers followed the way of the Islamic-Christian dialogue, taking for that outlines that can be summarized in many basic ideas, these ideas are:

- 1- To proclaim Islam and present it to all people of religions and sects, exploit occasions of dialogue and all its forms for this purpose.
- 2- To focus on reminding of Allah, His favors and His great creation, and to link the marvellous of His creatures to the complete of His inspiration, for who perfected creating everything, it is not possible to send an imperfect inspiration lacks proof and evidence, or differs from the mind and conscience.
- 3- Calling scholars for renewing the religious speech, returning to the pure principles that the heavenly religions came with, and presenting them as they were sent down to their prophets with what do not disagree with the mind, logic and the sound sense away from superstitions and illusions. When the inspiration of the heaven mixed with the interpretations of people of desire and ignorance, an antipathy happened in the spirits of some people, but if it returned to its origin, it would be admirable and desirable.

- 4- To emphasize on believing in all prophets of Torah, Bible and sanctify them, not to differentiate between any of them, and inviting clergymen to study Islam in order to achieve love, affection and peace. At this level, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro addresses our Christian brothers saying: " we have known you in our Quran, so have you recognized us?"

Syrian scholars did not launch in their dialogue with Christians from topics and problems show any difference between Muslims and Christians, rather they do not ask for admitting to Muslims what differ from their beliefs even if these beliefs were differing the Islamic legislation, but they started from the points of convergence between the two religions, and addressed issues that are important to the members of these religions whether they were legislative issues, social or international ones, and calling at the end of their dialogues for the return of convergence and love between the members of the religions, so the dialogue was started and ended with the call for meeting, unity and coexistence between Muslims and Christians to achieve the one living and the world peace between the members of the people of the heavenly religions.

Internationally, Syrians contributed in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in many aspects, some of them:

- 1- The western world recognizes something from the approach of the life of Syrian sons. Syria which call for peace, love and the humanitarian brotherhood, Syria which translated its Islamic-Christian dialogue on the ground a coexistence, brotherhood and love between its sons, the sons of one homeland.
- 2- Our scholars, especially Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro contributed in establish friendly relations with world bodies and associates such like the Vatican and Sant Egidio association, these relations can make the bonds of love between Muslims and Christians even if their affiliation was to the west and its bodies, the matter that open doors in front of Muslim Arabs in order to present their real image to the west that deformed some of te sons of this image, and offended it.

Despite of this stunning image, but the scientific integrity requires objectivity in research. Even though positivity and transparency that encompassed the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, the journey of dialogue was not free of some weak points that affect any dialogue everywhere and every time. In the following, we indicate some of them, with the caveat that these negativities

were not inherent to the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, but they are only points deviated from the general rule followed by the dialogue.

## 2) The weak points in the journey of the dialogue:

The dialogue between Islam and Christianity is old so was the contact between Islam and Christianity, but the dialogue in its present form, manner and topics at hand is almost novelty at least to the Islamic societies away from Syria.

However, some attempts of the dialogue were afflicted with weak points, these points were not only in the Syrian dialogue, but in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in general;<sup>276</sup> however, they reached the Syrian dialogue in some positions, Some of these points:

- The first point: the dialogue sometimes focused on the abstract doctrinal element and the theological dialogue only, even without realizing the extent of the impact to reach a conviction in that aspect on the practical life. It is natural that exploitations remain strong for both parties with forgetting to speak about the intellectual aspects or the aspects based on that mutual basics and principles; moreover, forgetting to speak about the mutual moral values that both parties believe in and the social values to which both parties are attached, which may lead to the failure of all attempts of the dialogue. If the dialogue in Syria was far from this bumps, individual attempts are not free of them especially if they were by common people, without the existing of religious reference of both parties, so it is necessary to avoid and warning of them.
- The second point: some of each team were engaging in the dialogue as if they are entering a battlefield to settle the situation for himself and tell the other: you are wrong and I am right, falsehood should be deleted and the right should be proved and I am the right- this is implicit in the talk, and it does not appear as long as the dialogue is within its rules, principles and ethics, and possibly some this affected in this way the Syrian dialogue generally – If this subjective spirit was the axis, we would expect no result.
- The third point: in suspecting the other, for dialogue was taking place between two persons or two parties, each of them suspects the other. The Muslims engages the dialogue and tell the Christian: you are conversing

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<sup>276</sup> Give full details: Muhammad As-Sammak, Introduction to the Islamic-Christian dialogue, Beirut, Dar Al-Nafaes, P.H, 1998, PP.93-101. Also: Bormans, Morris, The Future of The Islamic-Christian dialogue, Damascus, Dar Al-Fekr, P.H, 2005, PP. 15 onwards.

me to achieve politic goals. Christian engages the dialogue and tell the Muslim: you are conversing me to achieve other politic goals; and within the context of suspect, dialogue is not fruitful.

- The fourth point: both parties lack the basic reference in the dialogue. Let us suppose that you- as a party of the dialogue- convinced me or I did you or we agreed on a plan, so who will accept this plan? Was it not better that there is a religious reference faces on behalf of this party, and another on that side? So if we did not agree, it would return as a rule for all. It is natural that religious references arrange their positions in each party, and to withdraw their psychological and historical sediments and throw them aside until we reach a result.<sup>277</sup> This is also what the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue suffers from; however, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro came out of this context by his position in fatwa, so he had the fullest portion of success in the dialogue process, hence this success which return to the one nation, Muslims and Christians in Syria and outside.

Finally, there is a matter special to the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria in particular, according to the researcher's opinion. After contemplation in the topics discussed in the field of the Islamic-Christian dialogue, it was clear that there are topics need to be discussed , in other words, Muslims and Christians in Syria have common space in the dialogue have not been invested yet, although they were pointed out in some places, but they did not take the good luck of studying and caring, some of these topics:

- a. Human rights: human rights is a big issue we, Muslims and Christians can cooperate to and study it hard, the matter starts from what we call the instinct: {(establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by God: that is the standard Religion..} Ar-Rum, verse(20), the instinct means the humanitarian constitution that Allah formulated to go naturally towards love and good, if we had all the meaning of science, knowledge, and faith, but we lost the love, all that would worth nothing, the instinct is the source of love, and only religion believes in the instinct, translates it to a behaviour in the life of individual and organizes and put limits on it so the instinct does not exceed the red lines in the moral system. If the human behaved in a

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<sup>277</sup> Abd Al-Sattar Al-Hiti, *The Dialogue.. The Self and The Other*, Doha, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, 2004, P. 167.

certain way, we would say: it is a human behaviour or a brutal one, and what distinct the human behaviour from the other one is the instinct on which based the human system, morals and the human knowledge. All these matters are resolved by religions in the modern society that is overcrowded with the developments of matters by cooperation and joint dialogue. We need such kind of dialogue in this hard time, for example, the marriage of homosexuals<sup>278</sup>, the problem is no longer about acknowledge them in society while many churches in Europe allowed – as a departure from their constants – the marriage of homosexuals, so it is not ruled out that an Arab church or even a Syrian one to acknowledge that, and I think the reason is that the clerics of both parties have defaulted in discussing this subject until some churches approved what is contrary to every sound instinct and every legislative right. It is worth to mention that Pope Jean Hanna<sup>279</sup> has told the Vatican about his total rejection of homosexual marriage considering it a mere adultery as in the Islamic sharia.<sup>280</sup>

- b. The topic of the western material attack: our society has suffered from the material attack so long age, but its flights of fancy took unlimited forms until it reached atheism itself<sup>281</sup>. We, Muslims and Christians are confronting this challenge as believers in the existence of Allah and his divinity, for the dialogue between Islam and Christianity would face this attack by going back to the spirituality of religions and link them right to the material, the link where no one dominate the other because the material and the spirit are linked in a authenticity joins the heavenly messages, no separation between them and each of them is indispensable for the other. Perhaps one of the reasons for the reluctance of people about spirituality is the sediments formed within religions, in addition to the confrontation between them which deformed its beautiful image and deprived them of their aim. And for people to go back to the spirituality of religions, moderation in the

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<sup>278</sup> Homosexuality is a serious issue concerns the modern world, it means the tendency to the same sex, rather than the tendency to the opposite one, and a big controversy surrounded it. Some considered it as a personal freedom, and the other attributed to a congenital defect, and some of them considered a psychological state, but the European community approved it unfortunately, President Obama has offered his approval of this marriage within his electoral campaign in 9<sup>th</sup> Mai, 2012.

<sup>279</sup> The head of the Ecumenical Islamic and Christian Relations committee, and the head of the meeting and dialogue centre in the Catholic community, a contemporary

<sup>280</sup> Jean Hanna, (The manager of the Islamic-Christian relations in the monastery of Mar Thoma), The Islamic-Christian Dialogue, Saidnaya, Monastery of St. Thomas, Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> Jul, 2011, 12:30 p.m.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, P.169



materiality of life and the sound and legislative use of material and spirit together, it is necessary to return to the one heavenly education stemming from an intellectual dialogue and divine understanding of all legislations brought by the heavenly religions.

3) The dialogue between religions is wide-ranging:

After what was presented before, we can know that the Islamic-Christian dialogue is wide-ranging, and topics that need to be on the table are much more than ones been discussed, this goes back to reasons:

- 1- Because all of them believe in the theory of the human instinct and its consequences.
- 2- Because all of them believe in many mutual values, so the human glances at a complete coincidence in the principles of rules and legislations.
- 3- Islam and Christianity call for the logic dialogue, since these religions were the spirit of civilisations, the dialogue between us allow to an inherent civilizational dialogue extended to different life spaces, and directs the civilizational discourse to more human paths.<sup>282</sup>

Adding to that, Syrian society forms a fertile soil implant good seeds of dialogue with its different topics in it, that the experience of coexistence in Syria is considered a unique one which makes for the dialogue a space more possible than others, but the question arises itself at this level: How can we evaluate this experience? What is the future vision to this reality? The answer is in the following:

### **Second: Towards a future vision in the dialogue:**

1- The nature of the Islamic-Christian relations:

Before talking about the future vision to the Syrian dialogue between Islam and Christianity, it is necessary to indicate that the Islamic-Christian relations include two inseparable sides:

- I. The relations between Islam and Christianity.
- II. The relations between Muslims and Christians.

The first side: it is an initial and theoretical one includes dialogue in the principles of faith and morals between the two religions.

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<sup>282</sup> Mohammad Ali At-Taskhiri, *The Dialogue with The Other*, Tehran, The World Forum for Proximity of Schools of Thought, P.H, 2203, P.129.

The second side: it is a life process deals with the coexistence between the people of both religions.

The two sides are inseparable and associated to each other closely, where it is not possible to treat one of them without the other, for religion aims not to organize the relation of people to Allah only, but also to organize the relation of people to each other. That relation is not confined to the members of one religion, but it is also existed between the members of this religion and of other ones. Believers of any religion are based on the teachings of their religion to build relations with all people.

If we wanted the talk in the dialogue between Islam and Christianity- in regard to belief and morals- we find that it cannot be built today or in the future but in special conditions because Christianity today is not the one existed in the Holy Quran, and Christians today differ from the people of the Book who are mentioned in the Holy Quran and talked about their teachings in many positions. So it must apply these conditions, they are:

- I. Acknowledge the fact of the doctrinal difference between the two religions- It is in the Holy Quran- but this means not that the dialogue stops at that; however the solution is to refer to the Quran and the legislation of Islam which recommended goodness for Dhimmis in order to reach brotherly coexistence and mutual respect, for the doctrinal dialogue is possible and necessary, but the aim of it should not be to convince the other of his delusion, rather to merely clarify the faith of both conversers in the context of the complete mutual respect to the other's faith.
- II. Focus on the mutual matters between Christianity and Islam, for the between Islam and Christianity should not stop at the matters that are different between both religions, but it must concentrate on the mutual matters between them, This new mentality that can serve as a basis on which focuses the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria and launches from to build coexistence, so we must start emphasizing the points of convergence between Islam and Christianity in any talk about the Islamic-Christian relations at the level of belief and morals

with an aim to enlightening minds, warning consciences and awakening the awareness of all Muslims and Christians.<sup>283</sup>

2- Towards a better future in the dialogue:

Syrian dialogue has made great advanced strides compared to other societies. Besides, the history of the positive coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Syria is continuous and should continue, grow and be saved by both parties, through the continuing of seminars, courses and meetings, it also discussed more topics that is interesting to both the Islamic and Christian parties, and direct the relation of Muslims to Christians towards the better and build a new bright future within the following notes:

- First: Muslims and Christians inside the country and outside should keep the positive mutual coexistence based on respect and appreciation. Hence the idea of negate the other is rejected.
- Second: the sheets of the fruitless debate between Muslims and Christians should be folded as prophet Muhammad did with the Christians of Najran, as in the words of Allah: {And argue not the people of the Book but in ways that are best} Al-Ankabout, verse(46).
- Third: Muslims and Christians should endeavour to face any seeds of separation and pulling apart in the rows of our society, in order not to allow any intruder to spread corruption amongst us.
- Fourth: Muslims and Christians should face any pressure by any party attempts to destroy the religious and human liberty of any human, or attempts to exploit the basic needs of mankind in order to control peoples and minorities.<sup>284</sup>

**Sixth: Cooperation between Muslims and Christians is necessary to reduce:**

1. The spread of atheism and materialism.
2. The spread of devastating wars and the exploitation of colonial forces to the developing countries.
3. The spread of vice and corruption that religion and mind refuse it such as adultery, incest, gay marriage and drugs.
4. The impact of deluding media and the financial forces supporting to it which seek to pull the Islamic nation apart.

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<sup>283</sup> Carlos salim, Ideas and Opinions in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue and the Coexistence, Beirut, Saint Paul library, P.H, 1999, P.62.

<sup>284</sup> Mahmoud Kuftaro, Lectures in the Islamic-Christian Dialogue, P.253.

5. Establishing military bases in Muslims' countries preparing for re-colonize them.

**Seventh:** Correcting the idiom "The Islamic-Christian Dialogue" and calling another name "The Dialogue between Muslims and Christian" or "The dialogue of Muslims and Christians" lest Islam and Christianity bear the errors that can take place in the dialogue process which may not be related to Islam and Christianity.

**Eighth:** Generalizing the logic of dialogue: in conclusion, it is necessary to call for generalizing the logic and the culture of dialogue after we believed that it is a matter required by wisdom, instinct and the sound mind, and calling, in this regard, for a nation of thinkers from all parties existed in the practical reality where it works on preparing conditions for this generalization and make necessary plans for that, this plan should be characterized with world moderation just like the one of Islam starting from our belief that this moderation has a common concept generalizes our imagination of existence and it includes our imagination of history and the factors affect as well as it is an expression of the nature of Islam and our attitude toward it. Starting from that, the world plan should depend on the following measurements:

- 1- Working on popularize the spirit of aware openness to the present, being not restricted blindly in the past or in the theories that are accepted with the possibility of the existence of intellectual gaps, and putting this openness in the service of the Islamic-Christian dialogue through the new discussion of the emerging issues of concern to both Islamic and Christian parties.
- 2- Seeking to generalize the human right principle drawn from the sound instinct, or at least maintain the possibility of drawing from it by all civilisations so that the apertures of dialogue remain opened before all the followers of heavenly religions.
- 3- Trending toward deepen the intellectual development principle and the new creativeness, maintain the spirit of discovering the truths alive, motivating and flowing, of course within the limits marked by the heavenly religions, and never exceed them under any circumstances, and keep the dialogue going on within this context.
- 4- Seeking to generalize the mutual human perception of risks that threaten all humanity and do not differentiate between one civilisation and another or a nationality and another, and making them subjects discussed in the

Islamic-Christian dialogue with a view to treating them from a lawful viewpoint firstly and an intellectual and social one secondly, such as the spread of ignorance, family disintegration and the dominance of the logic of aggression and others.

- 5- Calling for giving priority to reason over the extremism because it is a matter blinds insight and prevents from quite thinking, and stands as an obstacle in the face of continuation of the dialogue and its success or coming out with positive results.
- 6- Seeking to reach a balanced solution between the world trend and peoples' and nations' preservation of their cultural characteristics and others. This middle avenue is the one which guarantee the success of the world trend from one side, and save for humanity and nations their different wealth at different levels, in addition to taking into consideration that there is no way better than dialogue to reach that, and after getting this balance, there is no way to keep it except by dialogue, so first dialogue, and dialogue least.
- 7- The necessity of education- educate all- that the interests of nations are a part of what their values emphasize, then there will be no contradiction between values and interests, and ample opportunities be prepared for dialogue.
- 8- Deepen the objective human spirit to delete the transcendental racial spirit from a side, and non-emphasizing on the private civilizational values, consider them the top of civilizational production, and consider other than them backwardness, in other words, we should believe in the mutual values of faith.<sup>285</sup>

**Ninth:** activate dialogue with Christian denominations related to the Vatican, with a regard to the negative attitudes of the Vatican toward the issues of Muslim minorities in the world generally, and Muslims' issues in the Levant particularly. It is worth to mention that Muslims were and are still giving the hand of the Islamic-Christian dialogue and cooperation in order to find solutions for the troubles and disasters from which all humanity suffers.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Mohammad Ali At-Taskhiri, *The Dialogue with The Self and The Other*, P.124.

<sup>286</sup> For instance, the visit of Pope of the Vatican to Lebanon and before it the announcement from the Union of Muslim Scholars where this Union asked the pope for apologizing to Muslims for what he said in his lecture in Bologna and in the apostolic guidance as well as massacres at the hands of Crusades in Andalusia, he also apologized to Jews. It also asked the pope for not sign or support the so-called the Apostolic Guidance because it includes wrong information and stirring up the sectarian sedition between Muslims and Christians who lived

In short, the glimmers of hope to the promising future are many, from the researcher's point of view, and the future vision of the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue is full of positivities, for this common acceptance to dialogue between all sects and doctrines, these consequent meetings since the fifties of the previous century at different levels, this openness on dialogue by the different religious references, this wide trend toward morale and this spread information which disclose truths in front of all, all this and that promise us with a perfect future despite all challenges of interested globalization we face, transcendental theories, obscene injustice against peoples and double-dealing; we believe that forces of good triumph over the factors of evil according to Sunnah of Allah in the life, and praise be to Allah, Lord of all creation.

## **The Conclusion:**

**In the name of Allah, the most Gracious the most merciful.**

Praise be to Allah at first and least, and all prayers and peace be upon the prophet of guidance in the first life and the afterlife, and I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Jesus is His prophet and Muhammad is His messenger, then:

This is the conclusion of a moderate study dealt with the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, this study has come out with many conclusions we can summarize them as the following:

1. The national cohesion that Muslims and Christians lived in did not come in vain, for they are from the principles of one message, and they, Muslims and Christians lived together as a result of the natural fruit of their affiliation to Jesus Christ, the symbol of love, brotherhood and tolerance, and to prophet Muhammad who came with a Book, its slogan is: { We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to God (in Islam). } Al-Baqarah, verse(136), and the coexistence

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as partners in the country, and leaderships of the Islamic movements emphasized Christians' rights completely, the announcement that was not met up with any positive response by the Vatican.

between them is an intuition of simplicity where it does not require the will of a research nor does require to change opinion to reach an agreement on it or a convergence, it is also an automatic reality of our social life as flow forms the nature of water and blow do the nature of wind.

2. By following the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria, it is noticed that no party is called for entering the religion of the other party, for Syrian dialogue is based on clarifying values and morals towards lord Christ and Christianity, and call for co-working to exclude injustice from all humanity.
3. In spite of the efforts of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in all its forms and means in Syria and its positive reflections on Syrian society, but there are some taken defects which are:
  - a. Activities of the Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria lacked official and international patronage which make them limited except the Islamic-Christian brotherhood conference which came out with fruitful results, but this experiment has never be repeated after that.
  - b. The characteristic of most seminars and dialogue meetings is a national one aims to convergence between the followers of Islam and Christianity, if we considered it an advantage that the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue was distinct with, but it is better for the ones who depend on the Syrian Islamic-Christian dialogue to move into another phase of dialogue, a phase of discussing the new issues that concern Muslims and Christians together either were social issues or religious. We should not place the Islamic-Christian dialogue within the national circle only, but we are supposed to go out to a broader horizon in the dialogue.
  - c. The Islamic-Christian dialogue in Syria needs more courageous in discussing dialogue topics and moving from the theoretical part of recommendations in seminars and lectures that the dialogue came out with to the practical application, for it is not enough to hold a lecture, a dialogue seminar or even a conference then recommendations remain folded in newspapers and papers.
4. Our scholars contributed through the Islamic-Christian dialogue to deliver the call of Islam to the world according to the Quranic approach in all its forms through call for Allah by wisdom and good preachment, by argument in ways that are best, starting from the mutual principles of

faith, honouring lord Christ peace be upon him and his family as mentioned in the Holy Quran and other pillars and bases of the Quranic approach and pure sunnah.

5. Syrians in the journey of the Islamic-Christian dialogue were distinguished with commitment to the Book of Allah and Sunnah of His messenger, starting from the principles that both religions agree on and moderation and middle way, in addition to the power of affecting the other, accept his opinion and respect his beliefs, and seeking by all available means to serve the Islamic nation, they are characteristics that Islam called for them to those who want to practise the call for Allah and the religious dialogue at all levels.

At the end of the study, it is worth mentioning to warn of some recommendations that the study came out with which should be taken into consideration, these recommendations are:

- 1- The Islamic-Christian dialogue must be characterized with wisdom and good preachment according to the Quranic approach because it is deeper in influence and reach great positive results apart from thrusting, violence and arguments are unsatisfactory.
- 2- Attempting to start the dialogue with Christian denominations and churches that do not depend on the interpretation of ecumenical councils which deified Christ and called to Trinity as some groups of protestant.
- 3- Avoiding the Islamic-Christian dialogue to be a mean of presenting opinions and political issues, in other words, not to exploit the dialogue to political interests between the denominations.
- 4- The dialogue must never lead to say the unity of religions in any way because the point of them is to destroy Islam and dissolve its entity.
- 5- Interceptor to dialogue must be in the desired level of intellectual, religious and social awareness, in order not to fall into negative problems cause harm to the dialogue and bring it to a result may be contrary to the Islamic faith.
- 6- The need for an Islamic-Christian body, interested in the issue of the Islamic-Christian dialogue away from the external political influences by which the scientific and intellectual cadres specialized in dialogue was established to participate in any international dialogue with Christians in the world.



7- Increase and develop the post-graduate institution specialized in studying comparing religions existed in Syrian and the world.

Finally, I ask Allah for His forgiveness from any mistake, forgetting or default, and I address the Almighty to make this work pure for the sake of Allah and accept it earlier in my record of deeds, He is close (to us) and hearer to prayer and the last of our prayers is that praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

## **Appendix of Data and Documents**



**Appendix (1):** the document of the mutual announcement issued by the religious dialogue conference, Czechoslovakia , under the leadership of his eminence Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro in 1978.<sup>287</sup>

Mutual Announcement:

Based on a call from the Christian peace conference in Brag, the capital city of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, twenty Muslim and Christian clerics from six countries have met for a dialogue about religion and peace , and they declared the following mutual announcement:

- We, the participants in this meeting and the affiliates to two heavenly religions agree in believe in Allah the One and Only and the Creator of earth and skies, we also agree that there is no God but He; as followers to lord Christ and Prophet Muhammad the apostles of Allah, we bear witness of our believe in Allah and sent messages by Allah that bear wisdom, love and brotherhood.
- Under the leadership of the grand Mufti in Syrian Arab Republic, Dr. Ahmad Kufaro, and Professor chair holder of Old Testament, department of Theology at Humboldt University, Democratic German Republic, Professor Carl Heinz Bernhardt .
- Participants discussed the basic principles of the Islamic-Christian dialogue about religion and peace in the Middle East.

Starting from this mutual base, we are agree on making efforts to work together in more focus in order to fraternize our religion, secure peace and deepen brotherly love in all the world.

First, Secretary-General of Christian peace conference indicated to the priest guest Lubemir Mirejovsky that Christians have as Muslims who live side by side in many regions of the world have a special role in strengthening trust building and peacemaking. The dialogue of Brag aims at contributing in the mutual responsibility for peace and helping to achieve the big mission of humanity in creating peace, justice and religious brotherhood.

- Dr. Mirejovsky appraised the brave peace intuition by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to start from their side to stop nuclear tests through the real eventual program presented by Secretary-General of

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<sup>287</sup> Habash, The Approach of Renew and Reform, P.441

Soviet communist party, Michael Gorbachov to open a way for humanity to a new century free of nuclear weapons.

- The joint two presidents in this meeting are: General Mufti Dr. Kuftaro and Professor Bernhardt discussed in their main lectures religious motives in peace endeavors in the Middle East from the two point of views, the Christian and Islamic.
- General Mufti, Sheikh Kuftaro has made the moral religious backwardness of humanity accompanied at the same time to scientific advance one reason responsible for the current danger threatening of the end of the world.
- On the other hand, the Islamic-Christian brotherhood can be an important step on the way of defeating this crisis and for joint preclusion from nuclear war.

So he asks Allah for inspire us all, we, who stand on one stone in one row and worship the One God in order to develop our brotherhood, and so we contribute in peacemaking in the world. Since this dialogue takes place in a communist country, it is possible for it to achieve success and prove its effective contribution in the confrontation against colonialism, Imperialism and war.

- Prof. Bernhardt has introduced in his lectures the necessity of exchanging our different religious experiments and our religious traditions special to a spirit of preparation, understand and brotherhood, and to act on this base to overcome animosity, war and oppression.
- If we all wanted to reach 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should remember the responsibility of mutual peace which is also the mission of religion as it is of mind granted from Creator to every human. Including also disclose the pretexts of political differences hidden in religion.  
As a result to the developed practical cooperation, life could be achieved to mutual studied points of dialogue and a new leaf be turned over in the context of brotherly friendly understanding of religious partner and brother in the history of religion.
- All participants in discussions emphasized in their speeches on points named in the lectures, that believe in Allah and the two heavenly messages of Jesus and Muhammad from one side and the common action for peace are two associated things. This is consistent with the aspirations of peoples and all forces of peace.

- All parties of dialogue were agreed that religions are responsible for resolve the problem of the Middle East and Palestinians' right in a country special to them is an indispensable condition for such solution.
- General Mufti Talaat Tadgudinov to the Union of Communalist Soviet Republics: he emphasized, in this context on the necessity of defeating all attempts to take religion as a justification to the expansionist illegal Zionist policy that it is important to combine forces directed against oppression authorities, so this planet be a verbal homeland to all people.
- General Mufti Dr. Kuftaro expressed the conviction of all participants that the Islamic-Christian meeting serves the bilateral rapprochement and in-depth understanding between the two parties, and there must continue building, with the help of Allah on this base in order to strengthen the mutual faith and enhance peace, particularly by believers in Islam and Christianity. The necessity of that is clarified daily in front of us through the risks of arms race of all humanity.

This is from the clear symptoms of a fatal disease that humanity have not understood until this day how to recover from it. However, there is a cure, and we hope ,by the mercy of Allah to be the doctors who act with this cure represented in emphasizing love, mercy and world brotherhood with the help of the Islamic-Christian cooperation.

**Appendix (2):** The announcement issued by the Islamic-Christian meeting in Berlin, 1980.<sup>288</sup>

In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

In 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1980A.D. 11<sup>th</sup> Jumaada al-Thaany, 1400 A.H, an Islamic-Christian meeting was held in Berlin, the capital of German Democratic Republic where a delegation from Syrian Arab Republic has participated, it was headed by Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, the General Mufti and a delegation from the Association of Protestant churches in Democratic Germany headed by Bishop Albrecht Schonher, president of the Association. The meeting was held with a spirit respect and acknowledge the two heavenly messages sent down to Jesus Christ, the messenger of Allah and Muhammad, the prophet of Allah which aim at the happiness of the mankind and his safety. Mutual acquaintance of believers from both religions served this meeting as well as it helped to remove misunderstanding and achieved the possibility of a common future cooperation.. what has been showed particularly in these discussions is the consensus of Islam and Christianity on believing in Allah the One and Only Creator who sent Jesus and Muhammad as a mercy to people in order to deliver happiness to them.

Taking this consensus into consideration, compel us, in this time to a joint work based on understanding for peace and justice.

**Prof, Dr. Carl Heinz Bernhard**

**Ahmad Kufaro**

**president of the Christian peace conference**

**General Mufti of Syrian Arab Republic**

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<sup>288</sup> Habash, The Approach of Renew and Reform, P.477

**Appendix (3):** Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro's talk in the meeting with men of Reformed Church , Switzerland in 1993:<sup>289</sup>

**The Text :**

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful.

O sons of lord Christ... sons of Muhammad welcome you, Islam is the junction of the three Abrahamic religions and it calls for believe in them. If a Muslim believed in Muhammad and does not believe in Jesus, he would be considered a disbeliever, and he would be considered so if he did not believe in Moses because Islam is the total of believing in the three religions, their three prophets and all prophets. We, Muslims have known this believing brotherhood through the Holy Quran and our prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, Islam censured every one affiliates to the religions an unscientific affiliation, and it denounced them and divided the sons of these three religions into: 1- Genuine believer. 2- Fake believer.

So there are genuine Muslim, fake Muslim, genuine Christian and fake Christian, the Holy Quran referred to genuine believers from the three religions and mentioned them in more than a verse where Allah says: { Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.} Al-Baqarah, verse(62), with the difference between religions not in their essence, but in the interpretation of their subjects, for the three Abrahamic religions called for the Oneness of Allah, this Oneness does not differ in its reality but the difference is in its interpretation in some religions, that is what made many believers to keep away from belief due to the interpretation of the Oneness in a form rejected by the mind, in order to reach

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<sup>289</sup> Imad Naddaf, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro Talks. P.285.

truth, we should approach it, so we know its features and true practical reality. Therefore, I say on behalf of Islam: a Muslim would not be so if he did not believe in Jesus Christ and his message and Moses and his Torah. With the belief of Muslims that many of incorrect things were attributed to Muhammad, Jesus and Moses, and this is what made Muhammad ordered to search Islam every hundred years for fear of extraneous things on its essence which make it deformed in the reality of human life.

Islam called for the Oneness of Allah and believe in all the prophets of Torah, lord Christ and his teachings and prophets before him. It did not call for spiritual matters only, but it also called for physical life too and the unity of peoples exceeding nationalities and colours, and called for the unity of human exceeding the religious faiths, and for the international country and the international family. The former Muslims who were brought up by prophet Muhammad in his school boasted that they unite half of the ancient world as one nationality and one country with considering the liberty of belief. Although the necessity of social solidarity between peoples and in the shade of liberty of religions, Islam has urged by deep commandments that emphasize on saving Christians' churches and Jews' Synagogues. These countries were Christian, but when they saw its Christianity in Islam and the Quran, it accepted prophet Muhammad's teachings because he did not compel them to leave the Christ's teachings, and who insisted on sticking to one's Christian or Jewish belief, he let him free to hold its rites by all the word freedom means. I with all energy I have to achieves these principles for achieving peace and world brotherhood between the sons of humanity, and I beg Allah the Almighty to understand the sons of the two Abrahamic religions: Christianity and Jewish this is the fact, in order to work altogether under the umbrella of Ibrahim on making peace and believing brotherhood.



#### **Appendix (4):**

The talk of Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro in the meeting with the delegation of South German province, 1995: <sup>290</sup>

#### **The Text:**

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, The Merciful, Islam means compliance and obedience to the commands of Allah Exalted is He, show submission to Him and surrender to His orders, and act according to everything brought by His prophets, for all the heavenly religions and their prophets have come to achieve two goals and aims: The first one: Achieve the link between human's spirit to Allah the Almighty, this link would be by prayer, contemplation and address the thought and every feeling toward the greatness of Allah the Creator of universe and everything in it. This link is like food for the human's body, the body without food dies, so as human's spirit, if it did not link to Allah, its humanity would die and live in its animality and bestiality. When the human's spirit live linked to Allah, the human feels happiness not found in any food, drink, beautiful views, marriage or anything existed in the material life.

In this link, the mankind overcomes his desires in the things it likes which causes him harm such as drugs, alcohol, injustice or aggression, for in the link

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<sup>290</sup> Imad Naddaf, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro Talks, P.298.

between his spirit and Allah, he finds no difficulty or uneasiness in be compliant to the commands of Allah.

The second goal: after achieving the link of the human to the spirit of Allah, the mankind should improve his link to his brother regardless of his colour, religion or nationality. As time passes by religions and translation from a language into another and desires overcome the human, the concept of religion became away from the conviction of the human and his mentality.

One of the principles of Islam is to believe in all the messages of prophets, for instance, I as a Muslim believe in the message of Muhammad all prayers and peace be upon him and at the same time I believe in the message of Jesus peace be upon him and the message of Moses and Ibrahim, but I should use my mind in everything absurd and because religion did not come to contradict the mind rather to develop it and make the mind with religion twin brothers.

By the last building block in which the completion of religion is, prophet Muhammad has established the world nation and the world country so that humans be equals in their shade with the difference of colour, nationality, and religion.

The believing society was established by these heavenly principles from the inspiration of the heaven and that based on giving life to the mind and responding to its light, and for decades there was no jail because there was no criminal as well as there was no court or judges because no oppressor or oppressed.

Today, we find the mankind in our current age has kept away from the school of heaven and its teachings, the reason for this is not the teachings or because these teachings are not in the interest of the mankind and his happiness, but the reason lies in the mistakes took place by the Muslims, Christians and Jews scholars of religion. As a result, the excluded the religious vitality from all religions, then the mankind, and his mind has released, saw this religion not adequate to his life and his rationality, so he became a secular or away from religion, the is not his, but it is because of clerics' mistakes.

When Islam was applied at the time of prophet Muhammad and after thirty years of his death, believers in these genuine heavenly principles could establish the world nation from the borders of Spain to Beijing , and Islam could by these principles to establish the world country with that nation in order to achieve

security and duties that their existence cannot be achieved only by the existence of the country.

Islam has achieved this great work in thirty years by the primitive means of human where there were no cars, planes or wireless. If prophet Muhammad and believers with him had the means of transportation, publications, radio stations, satellite channels and others existed in the twentieth century, I think that they would be able to unite the world in one nation and one country in less than thirty years, and this is what philosophers have imagined and wished for , but could not achieve.

Finally, I say: if a mankind was able at this time and from any state, and any people to adopt this heavenly project, and by the contemporary means of Islam, I think that would achieve peace, but also brotherhood, and world's population become one family where no war, no hatred, and no misery.

#### **Appendix (5): Sheikh Ahmed Kuftaro's welcome speech in Umayyad mosque, Damascus to Pope John Paul II, pope of the Vatican in 2001:<sup>291</sup>**

I welcome the pope in this blessed land in the Levant, The cradle of the heavenly messages and the home of righteous sons.

Islam has come since fourteen centuries ago in order to keep ties with all humans and complete what the messages of prophets has come with. Islam is the religion of peace and mercy for all humans, for our Lord, the Lord of all people is the peace. O Allah, You are Peace and from You is Peace and to you peace return, and paradise is the house of peace and Allah calls all people for it to live peace in the present life and the afterlife.

The righteous religion was not once a day but a call for convergence and integration, and it was not a reason for separation, hatred and animosity. So there must be a meeting for sons of religions because the aim of differentiation and diversity which is one of the laws of Allah in His creatures is meeting and acquaintance.

We, Muslims and Christians have lived in this blessed country for long centuries, shared its resources and the ups and downs of life, lived in comfortable thanks to what it has, confronted the enemies of this nation together

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<sup>291</sup> Publication of Vatican Embassy, Pope John Paul II Visits Syria, 2001, P.63.

and our bloods were shed on this pure dust, and the oppressor enemy has gone and we have stayed. The reality you have seen in your own eyes of brotherhood, cooperation and the embrace of mosques with churches is but a bright evidence of distinct believing unity we are proud of thanks to Allah, and we call the whole world to follow this positive coexistence.

The Grand Mufti spoke about what the world face today from problems and dilemmas and said that we are all responsible in front of Allah Exalted be He, so there must be an effective dialogue and a fruitful brotherly meeting to put hand in hands and work together honestly in order to help the oppressed and weak, assist people in need and spread mercy after peace.

We do not forget that after a few miles away, there is a holy land and a blessed spot, it is Palestine the symbol of good, faith and peace over history. Introducing the history of Al-Quds city since the Islamic conquest where Muslims and Christians united against all invaders.

However, this pure country is not living in peace and safety nor liberty of religions now, since establishing Israel until now, Zionist oppression and tyranny are practised on the sons of Arab people Muslims and Christians in Palestine. The world does see massacres where houses are devastated, innocents are , hundreds of children and women are killed, thousands are injured, the sanctity of both mosques and churches is violated and ruin prevails everything at the hands of Israelis, so where is Security Council, where is the government of the united states and where are the claims of Israel's governors that they want peace?

We call for a world attitude more effective to stop these massacres, a more effective attitude.. more than prayers and wishes.. we look forward to a practical attitude by all honourable, peace lovers and religions followers to stop these brutal massacres against the sons of Christ and Muhammad peace be upon them in Palestine, and we want that the Catholic Church in the world and all governments in the western world to stand for justice and put an end to the oppression of Zionist and pressure on Israel in all means to stop its brutal aggression.

We, Muslims opened our heart over history to all humanity particularly Christians for convergence Motivated by our faith without paying attention to the past with some of its mistakes.. and we believed in Allah Exalted be He One

God and One Lord as well as believed in all His prophets and apostles and the heavenly messages.

We hope you, Pope will have a pleasant stay in Syria where believing brotherhood that its structure was raised and its paths were illuminated by a believer leader who has gone and left this precious trust to a brave leader walks on the stair of glory and faith, Mr President Bashar Al-Assad may Allah protect him.

## **Appendix (6):**

**In The Name of Allah The Most Gracious, The Merciful**

**{who preach the Messages of God, and fear Him, and fear none but God.}**

**International Union For Muslim Scholars**

**Doha, 26<sup>th</sup> Shawwal, 1433 A.H.**

**13<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.**

**The Announcement of The International Union For Muslim Scholars**

**On the occasion of the Pope's visit to Lebanon**

Praised be to Allah and all prayers and peace be upon Muhammad, the messenger of Allah and his companions and family.. then said that:

As the union works hard to calm down the anger of Muslims around the world as a result to abusing their messenger by others, being sufficient to the peaceful protest and non-aggression on any embassy or Christian site, the union asks pope of the Vatican for apologize to Muslims for what he said in his lecture, the

apostolic guidance and the massacres by Crusades in Andalusia as he had apologized to Jews.

It is known that this union adopt the moderate thought that based on peaceful coexistence and respecting others' rights, and it calls for constructive dialogue as the perfect means to resolve the problem and build balanced relations. So the union attempted with the Vatican, but it found out that it is a unilateral dialogue, besides, the current Pope accused in his lectures Islam and its great messenger all prayers and peace be upon him with false accusations, so the union asked him for apologizing, but he did not, then it broke off the dialogue with the Vatican until he apologizes or the situation changes.

On the other hand, the Pope intends to sign the apostolic guidance as he visits Lebanon soon which include a set of dangerous messages and thoughts including the obvious call for Christianize the world, warning of Islamization of the Islamic society and frightening Christians from the political Islam in the region which help to igniting the fire of sedition between the homeland's partners ( Muslims and their Christian siblings) Especially in the shade of the attempts by some Christians to publish a movie offends the great Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, the attempt of an American priest who burned the Holy Quran, and devoting one day to prosecute the Great Prophet sent as a mercy to the worlds and so on.

Strangely enough, the Pope, at the time he warns of the political Islam, he himself practises the same political Christianity of its wider doors.

And in front of what has been mentioned, Islam calls the International Union for Muslim Scholars and it affirms the following:

- 1- Its call for the Pope of the Vatican to apologize for his known lecture in one of the German universities and what Crusades did, during their wars to Muslims such as murder, expulsion, burn and compulsion in Andalusia and the Levant as the Pope apologized to Jews for what he did to them at the hands of Christians.
- 2- The union calls the Pope not to sign or support the so-called apostolic guidance because it contains false information and inciting sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians, who have lived partners in the homeland, and it emphasized that the leaders of all Islamic movements have affirmed the rights of Christians.

- 3- The union asks peoples and Islamic states for doing their duty towards their nation and religion through political and economic pressures to protect Islam and vulnerable minorities.
- 4- The union asks Muslim Scholars calls for doing their duty in awareness and show the right which is on them. And God hath full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind know it not.

**Prof. Ali Al-Qaradaghi**

**Secretary-General**

**Prof. Youssef Al-Qaradawi**

**President of the Union**

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## **In The Name of Allah The Most Gracious, The Merciful.**



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- Full Name: Lama Abd Al-Jalil Yahiya.
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- Academic Qualification:
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  - Certificate in memorization the Holy Quran from Islamic Institute for Dawah and Guidance, Ahmad Kuftaro Foundation, 2003, under the supervision of Hanaa Tarbin.
  - A bachelor in the Holy Quran and Teaching How To Read It, under the supervision of Rajab Deeb.
  - Master of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Imam Awzae, in 2006, with rating Very Good, titled: Common-Law Marriage in Rules of Islamic Law and the Syrian Personal Status Code.
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- Training Courses:
  - Principles of Nursing, in Folk Culture Institute, Ministry of Culture, in 2000.
  - How To Deal With Adolescents, Adolescence Is Difficulties and Challenges, in Al-Mamoun International Centre, in 2003.
- Writings:
  - Common-Law Marriage in Rules of Islamic Law and the Syrian Personal Status Code ( a master thesis), Dar Ghar Hira, 2008.
  - Several articles in An-Nass Magazine, Syria.

- Experience:
  - Administrative job, in Institute of Teaching Arabic For Non-native Speakers, Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro Foundation, from 2006 to 2007.
  - Teaching ( Islamic Jurisprudence and Biography), in The Islamic High school in Al-Huda Complex, Rif Dimashq, from 2007 to 2008.
  - Courses in memorization of the Holy Quran and Recital, in Daw Al-Maghribieh Mosque, Damascus.
  - Participated in local workshops, seminars and conferences related to family, society, woman rights and fighting terrorism and extremism.
  - Participated in some TV interviews in social and religious programs.

