

Christian-Muslim Encounters: A Historical Overview toward Early Muslims

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Abstract

Christian-Muslim encounter is not new but issues regarding both communities are not ending even in the postmodern time. This research also aims to track out the benefits for both communities in the mutual interaction in whole history which covers not only religious perceptives but also political, economic and sociological motives. The study intends to explore the history of relations between Christians and Muslims towards Islamic traditions and Muslims society. It also explores the conflicts and remedial activities by happening covenants and treaties between both communities. For this study, basic sources of Islamic traditions are evaluated to analysis the Muslim perception accordingly. How they adopted the way out for remedies of the conflicts among both communities? What they participated in the treaties between Christians and Muslims? Is there any positive sense from divine guidance for Muslims to invite the Christians for social coexistence to live in the state? The minorities and Non-Muslims have right to stay in Muslim states according to Sharī'ah Objective. Therefore the present study opens new horizons for further research among new comers in this field.

Keywords: Christianity, Muslims, Relations, Historical Study, Interfaith Harmony, Minority Study.

Introduction

Relations depend upon interaction when 'give and take' is detained in a society between both sides. As a whole, human beings cannot function with cruelty and violence. Sometimes, the nature of sympathizing with others awakens, and calls to care, poise and save others. Cooperation and coexistence play a pivotal role at grass-root level of human being, as well as at higher levels of societies to promote prosperity and welfare, not specifically for a particular tribe but for many countries and nations also. Such relations can be cited during the Christian-Muslim encounters throughout the reel of history.

First revelation historically is the first illustration of the Christian-Muslim encounter in the world. But at times, it portrays a relation of long-lasting coexistence of both the religions which draws a bloodshed picture of both the civilizations throughout the entire history. Christians and Muslims started conversation with one another from the very beginning of Islam. Even at the time of the first revelation, his first wife Khadijah (RA) came to Waraqah bin Nawfal¹ for the declaration of the incident of the first revelation².

¹ . Waraqa (or Waraqah) "ibn-e- [Nawfal](#) ibn [Asad](#) ibn [Abd-al-Uzza](#) ibn [Qusayy Al-Qurashi](#) ([Arabic](#) ورقه بن نوفل بن أسد بن عبد العزى بن قصي القرشي) was the paternal first cousin of [Khadijah](#), the first wife of the Islamic [prophet Muhammad](#) (PBUH). He was Christian who had studied the scriptures and was knowledgeable in his time"

² . According to Ibn Hishām, Khadijah visited Waraqah ibn Nawfal two time for the Holy Prophet (PBUH): first, when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) came back after her trading tour with high profit rate and observation of Maysrah (servant of Khadija) told her about Christian monk's words in the trading way for the clarification of Prophet's status and second, at the time

“She informed him about what the Prophet (PBUH) had told her of what he had seen and heard- Waraqah cried. “Holy! Holy! Surly, by Him in Whose hand is Waraqah’s soul, if you are telling me truth, O Khadījah, there has come to him the greatest Nāmūs (i.e. Jibrīl) who came to Mūsā before, and he is the Prophet of this nation. Tell him to be firm”¹.

That declaration proves Muhammad (PBUH) as Prophet of Allah with the statement of a Christian scholar, who had no containment of hatred, aggression, or abomination in his heart and mind. The declaration was only a representative rationale, otherwise Prophet is declared through the Divine order known as wahi (Revelation), without any consultation of an earthly entity. Keeping in view that the Prophet (PBUH) was very keen in his mission to deliver Allah’s name in whole Arabian Peninsula. With the revelation, God commanded that the Qur’an edits with Islamic perception toward earlier religions. In addition to that, Islam believes in its follower’s awareness of the “Torah and the Gospel, and of the stories of Adam, Joseph, Noah, Abrāham, Moses, Mary and Jesus” (AS). Because the Holy book of Islam keenly reveals its goal to present an evaluation of the religious beliefs and practices of the earlier faiths especially Christian, and to offer a program for their difference. The Qur’an addresses to *ahl-e-Kitāb* accordingly:

“O People of the Book, commit no excesses! In your religion: nor say Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His word, which He bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not “Trinity”: desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one God: glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the Heavens on earth. And enough is Allah as Disposer of affairs”.²

As per teaching of Islam, Christian-Muslim encounter has been stayed side by side around a double-sided pivot that featured the relations of both, acceptance and coexistence as well as controversy and disagreement, in matters of religious beliefs and faith. Here would be consequently, compiled an historical overview of these relations in following headings:

I. Perception of the Qura’n toward the Christians

Qur’anic approach about the Christians is polemical and theological but according to Christians, that is mystical also.³ To begin with expressing their status by the divine books, the text never essentially mentions them ‘Christians’, instead, both the Jews and Christians are comprised with those people the Qur’an named them ‘People of the Book’ or ‘Scriptural People’. The title is mentioned fifty-four times in the revelation in which the mostly way out was arranged in Medina through the time of the Holy Prophet’s (PBUH) life. In one verse⁴, the mater refers to the Christians as ‘People of the Gospel’. But according to the Qur’an, the Gospel don’t mention that what Christians think it is. In the Islamic assessment, the Gospel is a reveled manuscript that God has sent down to Jesus (AS), just as Moses (AS) was honored with the Torah and Muhammad (PBUH) received the Qur’an⁵. In the Qur’an, Christians are called fourteen times with the title *nasrāniyyūn* or *nasārā*, “but it may have also been referring to Nazareth and to the Arabic etymology of the radicals *n.s.r.*: the disciples identify themselves as ‘the helper of God’ (*ansār Allāh*)”⁶. Some people had already referred to this name because Christians are named by New Testament times⁷. In the East, the theory was intended that the *Nazarenes* were promoted keeping the oral tradition of Aramaic-speaking communities of Christians for some centuries. In further step, the people were belonged with language of oral tradition and they were from Syrian they were living in Persian Dynasty⁸. The people were living Arabian villages and accepted Islam with efforts of Muhammad (PBUH) because of Christian’s knowledge and transferred to Muslim community, they were called with the title “Nazarenes”. It was

of first revelation. See Ibn Hishām, abu Muhammad abd-ul-malik, *sīrat-u-nabī, dar-u-sihaba litrath, Tantā*, 1995 AD, Vol. 1, p. 258-264

ultimately used for their excitation to new religion; Islam and it had aimed to spread over to those group they belonged to Judaic tradition in the Christians.⁹ “This posture has been approached by some modern scholars to uphold their supposition that the Christians, whom Muhammad (PBUH) had encountered, were ‘Jewish Christians’¹⁰.”

Qur’an talked about Christians, their theological system, and statute necessary to substantiate their devotion to polytheistic doctrines and trinitarianism. The Qur’an has analyzed to the Christians are twofold: doctrinal and moral. From the moral perspective, “the Qur’an explains with the people of faith other than their own that in their relationships and encounter, the Muslims will find that the Christians will give them a friendlier reception than that of the Jews or the polytheists. The text gives as the reason for this friendly attitude, the fact, that among the Christians “there are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant”.¹¹

When Qur’an criticizes monks because of their misbehaving, it was pointed out that the people in the past are said to hold wrongly-knitted beliefs regarding these monks, to have taken them, instead of God, as ‘lords or ‘masters. Addressing the monks themselves, the Qur’an says:

“O ye who believe! There are indeed many among the priests and anchorites, who in Falsehood devour the substance of men and hinder (them) from the way of Allah”.¹²

Thus it is not amazing to consult any other description from the Qur’anic perception that, the progress of monasticism in the Christian community adopted a path of undeserved novelty in religious exercises. God says, “Monasticism which they invented for themselves we did not prescribe for them: (we commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done¹³”.

Otherwise, Monasticism itself is not a wrong or malicious practice, when performed with its preliminary customs and concentration, which eventually directs towards the higher and superior Ultimate reality¹⁴.

About the monks, Qur’an’s declaration gives special status from Christian community as whole with friendly relations to Muslim community than the other religion. It has consequently spacificed from other verse which contradict above notion because Qur’anic verse expresses guidance to Muslim community that Muslims nevertheless should not take either Jews or Christians as their friends,¹⁵ so that the non-Muslims may destroy all their secret missions and national action plan to them, through the means of which, they might hinder Muslim’s development. Referring the Prophet as the holder of dual statuses, God declares him both as the Prophet of a divine and revealed religion, as well as the warner for the other two major revealed religions, i.e. Judaism and Christianity. While illuminating the distinctive position of the Prophet, God also warns him about the followers of the two revealed religions. He also explicates that the Prophet may warn them but not follow their path of beliefs quoting in following words:

“Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion¹⁶”.

God has also guided, and informed the Prophet about the diverse and complex nature of man, who wills according to his own ideas and thoughts. Therefore, motivation depends upon solid reason or evidence that applies on any fresh mind. With this Verse, God does not recommend other religion, either revealed or non-revealed, as an acceptable pattern for human life in present era, and further for soul in the life hereafter. As man perceives the concept of God according to his own caliber and level of understanding, the Qur’an elucidates the innovations that the Christians have done regarding the basic tenets of their religion. Nonetheless, Qur’an does not compel, or force them to embrace, or be inspired by Islam as their own religion. The above mentioned verses,¹⁷ are twofold Qur’an’s view which are exclusively very rich to instant that the Christian Trinitarian dogma and the Incarnation are wrong and they consider not to understand by human mind. Therefore, the Christians focus such dogmas to provide rich theological

strength for its promotion in the community. The Qur'anic inspires the community with presenting imagination of God to spread the real picture Jesus Christ which is truth was formed in scripture that has approved by divine power to Jesus. The Qur'an further delineates that they are the Christian scholars, who exaggerate and misperceive the doctrines of Christianity, and explain to others, beyond what is held in reality "O people of the Book! exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the even way¹⁸."

Qur'an advised the Christian, to follow their religion, with a special title 'people of the book' which is preferred upon pagans and other polytheistic tribes. Qur'an specifies that Christians were like the polytheists, they believe that One God has off springs, the Christians are because of their viewpoints regarding dogmas, named to be patented as non-believers (*kafirun*) with its blasphemy regarding God. This infidelity is not just like worshiping of idols in the society.

"They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them¹⁹."

But with this declaration, Qur'an dealt them with a special title and status in the Muslim society, as *dhimmis* in whole history.

The "one of three" which, is formed to the Qur'an, the Christians unlawfully subordinate God as Jesus, the God as Messiah and the God as son of Mary²⁰ all are wrongfully imagined without any logical formation. The Qur'an regularly calls Jesus 'Mary's son' to insist that he strictly is not God's son, as the Christians say. As a whole, Christianity did not accept the Jesus as God status or Son of God that is exclusive perception which was not entitled them as pagans (*musrkun*) just like pagans of Makah at the time of Prophet (PBUH). The Qur'an categorically declares that Jesus is as virgin birth from Mary, who was awarded with the word of God that formed in Jesus by the message of an angel²¹. Therefore, to present that Jesus, the Messiah, is God's son logically with Arabic language, is alike to saying that Messiah is God, or a partner of God in theology. Finally the Qur'an's viewpoint highlights: "In blasphemy indeed are those who say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary. Say: Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother²²."

In the Qur'an, the doctrinal discussion between Muslims and Christians, therefore, has to do with the acumen of the truth about Jesus the Messiah. It explores the divinity of God, with the logic to show real condition between Messiah and God, who does not possess human nature as 'sonship' or any other attribute that qualifies to be a human. They argued among themselves over the detailed wording of the theological formulation, to be used formally, to precise this greeting. Some Scholars on the Qur'an put that it was with reference to these violent Christological arguments among the Christians, that God said in the Qur'an: "From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a covenant, but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent to them: so we estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the day of judgment. And soon will Allah show them what it is they have done²³". Since the Hellenistic, and Jew-Greek philosophies were the mainstream philosophies, wreathing the atmosphere of that time, Christianity molded the real status of Jesus while adapting to the environment, and thus, elevating him above his designated position. The real picture can be understood from that philosophical argumentation, by one special and important encounter, called in the history as "delegation of Najran" that was famous visit to the Medina and theological discussion was explored between both community to find out clear picture of Christ mod. It was in this construction that to say to them directly, the Qur'an advised Muhammad (PBUH) by the presenters: "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 Allah on those who lie!²⁴". After a long conversation, when the members of that delegation did not accept the real doctrinal position of Christianity, God revealed His final logical order by these verses. Abdullah Yusuf Ali say in his commentary: "They were much impressed on hearing this passage of the Qur'an explaining the true position of Christ, and they entered into tributary relations with the new Muslim State. But ingrained habits and customs prevented them from accepting Islam as a body²⁵,"

The historical encounter of the Christians with the Muslims is under discussion because Jesus was the second last Prophet, according to Muslims faith, before Muhammad's (PBUH) time. The encounter has multi-dimensional roots in the history to say some positive idea of God and neglecting human partnership with God. Likewise the divine scripture quoted: "among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to Allah: They will not sell the Signs of Allah for a miserable gain! For them is a reward with their Lord, and Allah is swift in account²⁶". According to Ibn Kathir, such people are a single group from the Christians as well as from the Jews. They disclose truth about God and His last Prophet, and they performed God's worship tonight. They would be rewarded by the heaven. He commented by different references from Qur'an and Hadith, that the Christians are preferred to Jews in this regard²⁷. In the Qur'an, a complete chapter; Mary (Surah Maryam) with the name of Mary, mother of Jesus was revealed, by which status has been declared without decreasing the personality of Mary and Messiah. Such like, Christians accept the truth in this regard about Qur'anic clarification at the Najashi court, in the history.

II. Christian-Muslim Socio-Political Encounter

Christianity and Islam existed in the world side by side, socially as well as politically. Give and take occurred at all times of need, whether religiously, politically, socially or economically. In the whole history, an encounter is evaluated with different outcomes, which has influence on the followers of both the religions. Because of this, both have several commonalities and similarities being preached across the globe and not only in a specific region. The encounter between Christians and Muslims took place in the history to present their status in the time. It has difficulties and easiness according to human need in every era and towards the dynasties of the world. The relationships was developed according to social setup of the people. The history could compare with human empowerment to display. Therefore, social system lies the religious perception among the people of both communities. That evaluation can be explored from two dimensions: first, Christian-Muslim Socio-Political Treaties and second, Christian-Muslim Correspondence.

i. Christian-Muslim Socio-Political Treaties

At the early time of Islam, when it spread to Christian territories outside the Arabian Peninsula, the Muslims conquered a large area of the world which consisted of a large Christian population. This was the treaty that was made between the Muslims and the Christians, but there had been a number of such treaties between the Muslims and other Arab clans or non-Christian communities during the era of Prophethood, such as, Treaty of Medina and Treaty of Hudaibiah. At Meccan time of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Muslims were allowed to migrate to the Kingdom of Axum (Abyssinia), a place where Christians lived at that time. The Negus, he was the king of Axum at the time Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Furthermore, King Negus, the Christian ruler of that country, accepted the migrant Muslims and protected them against oppression²⁸. According to Goddard²⁹, when the rulers of Mecca, the Quraish, sent an ambassador to Axum demanding to hand over the Muslims to Quraish, he defended the Muslims and enjoyed himself by their theological views. Goddard quoted Ibn Ishāq's literature with exciting discussion between Negus and Muslim group. The Negus attended with the group of scholars to present their view and exchange theological comments to prove Christ's personality. At the end of this discussion, Negus required to recite few verses

from Islamic scripture, The Islamic leader, *Ja'far ibn Abī Tālib* replied with the recitation few verses:

“O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing hatredness, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us an Apostle whose lineage, truth, trust worthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (enumerating the commands of Islam). We confessed the truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without associating aught with Him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we have been happy in your protection, and we hope that we shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you, O King³⁰”.

The Negus concluded that the Muslims had with them anything which is from God, in exact words this is from divine scripture. Because Ja'far recited the verses from Surh 19 which declares the birth of Massih in unhuman way that was miracle. The Negus does not feel unconsciousness because he was known by the true Christian scripture that is a divine explanation. The Negus, after hearing the true words of God, too decision that he would not be handed over these Muslim groups to Mackans. With the aggression of Qurashi leaders, they adopted new technique to get control over the Muslim community in Christian dynasty describing before Negus bout Muslim's concept towards Jesus and Mary. The King asked to Muslims to clear their notions regarding this case. Hazrat Ja'far again recited the verses from Surah Taha to explain the personality of Jesus according divine perception. He said that Jesus is servant of God and Mary is virgin and God sent word to her for the birth of Jesus without father³¹. The Negus responses by option a stick and confirming that “the difference between what he believes about Jesus and what the Muslims believe is no greater than the length of the stick”³². Muslims stayed there peacefully for a long time without any hesitation. This is the first Christian-Muslim treaty in the history. Although, it was a verbal permission by the king to Muslims to live in his country, but that was like a treaty which was issued by the Ethiopian king after discussion with whole of the ministry.

Treaty of Najrān:

Najrāni Christian delegation visited the Prophet (PBUH) in Medina, politically, for the conversation of power transformation from Christian kingdom to the first Islamic state. The treaties, which were held by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with non-Muslim minorities in Medina, may also be held accountable for the arrival of such a Christian delegation. It happened somewhere around the year 628 CA/7 HA, that the Prophet welcomed a delegation of Christians from the town of Najrān, a town which was situated in Arabian Peninsula a significant center of (Monophysite) Christian stimulus in South Arabia. The allocation of this delegation was organize with the sense of great empowerment to suspect defeated Muslim concept regarding Christology. The group of this delegation was contained with triangle from political authority; that was ‘āqib, the Sayyed, that was administer and the Bishop that was religious leader. The great leader was named Abdul Masīh (Servant of Christ) having good knowledge of religion and he

was chosen by the Byzantine dynasty. This visit had great objective to sustain Christian existence in the sider corner of Arab dynasty which may keep Christian recognition in the Arabian people. When the delegation had come to the Prophet Muhammad, he was praying the ‘asar (afternoon) prayer. After his worship, he allowed to pray in the Prophetic mosque with proving coexistence in the communal encounter. At starting of the discussion, Prophet invited them to Islam. They claimed satisfactory point according to their religion toward submission. They also replied logically having strong Christian perception to express their relationship with Jesus Christie. According to Ibn-e-Hishām, a lengthy Christological discussion followed, centering on more than eighty verses of chapter three (al ‘imrān) from Qur’an about Jesus³³. At the end of this, “a challenge was issued, namely that the issue should be decided by the mutual invocation of a curse. After some deliberation, the Christians declined and returned home, preferring to agree to differ peacefully and to be permitted to continue to practice their faith”³⁴. The treaty with Christians of Najrān, according to Ibn sa’ad, was written by the Holy Prophet, declaring liberty, peace and protection of self, status, property and religion. Prophet declared with these words, “For the Najrān and their neighbours there is the protection of Allah and the guarantee of Muhammad, the Prophet, the Apostle of Allah, over their souls, creed, land, property, those of them who are not present and those who are present and their churches. No bishop will be changed from his bishopric, no monk from his monastery and no testator (waqif) from the property of his endowment³⁵”. In the book *fatuh-ul-buldan*, the treaty of Najrān is indited with detail, more important for the application in the societies and in the times of the first three Caliphs³⁶. The treaty deals different forms of encounter like: Christian visit to the Prophet, their theological conversation with Prophet, Prophetic dealing with Christian delegation, permission of Christian to say prayer in the mosque of Prophet, Prophetic challenge to the Christians and its acceptance to the Christians, and in the end, Christian agreed to accept the Prophetic status and its treaty. The treaty of Najrān is an example, by the Prophet Muhammad, to seed harmony and religious tolerance for a peaceful encounter with the Christian community, in the newly developed Islamic state and society. It provides bright chance to understand other’s comments about their faith which they have, and to promote synchronization with the discussion of theological and doctrinal issues of both religions. Both community leaders can follow this method, to establish an emblem of peace and harmony in the society.

Treaty of Caliph Ummar bin Khatāb with the people of Īliyā (Jerusalem):

There are other examples of treaties in the history, analogous to the treaties of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in their text and comprehension, the treaty of Umar bin Khattāb with the people of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is a holy city, inhabited by the three largest monotheistic religions – Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, also called Abrahamic religions. The history of this city has long relation with reveled religion and monotheistic tradition under Abrahamic central point but with diversified names were supposed to this city likewise: Yerushaláyim, Jerusalem, Aelia, al-Quds etc. keeping all of them having various inheritances. The Muslim idea of Prophethood was based upon this city from Prophets: Sulayman and Dawood to Isa (Jesus), May Allah be pleased with them.

The historical overview of this city in Muslim tradition, is prompted when the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) journey was made a marvelous journey in the night of *Mi’rāj* which was started from Mecca to Jerusalem. At the second part of this visit uplifted the personality of the Prophet to Heaven; both part of this visit is called is defined with Isra’ and Mi’raj. The significant of this city is more clear when the second the caliphate of Islam; Umar has conquered and included it the boulder of Muslim Dynasty.

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent a letter through his ambassador to the Byzantine Empire, it was evident that they held the desire to eradicate the new religion Islam, flourishing at its southern borders contemporarily. The mission of *Tabūk* thus initiated in October 630, with Muhammad (PBUH) leading an army of 30,000 people,

to the border with the Byzantine Empire. While there was no Byzantine army, meeting with the Muslim army for a war, this mission gave way for Muslim-Byzantine wars, for as long as decades ahead.

In instead of Byzantines, the Monophysite Christians had welcomed for Muslims to come and enter the Christian cities and conquered the states because they had known doctrinal closeness. The monophysite people liked to stay in Muslim states with Islamic rule and law which laid to the new perception of God. Keeping this view, Muslim troops did not fight against many Christian cities to get power from Christian authorities

The Jerusalem was conquered with the power of Muslim troops under the command of *Khalid b. al-Walīd* and Amr ibn al-‘As. The Christian leader did not handed over the city to Muslim unless the Umar arrived in the Jerusalem and he accepted their all demands for the protection of this city.

The attractive time of the history was quoted in the books of history, when *Umar ibn al-Khattāb* was entered in the city of Prophets and he was walking before donkey riding his servant. The Christian authority of this city did not hesitate to give the control to Muslim when they observed this incident. Umar was briefed about this city and worship places of Christian community he issued declaration for the protection of Christians with their homes in the society and organized a treaty between Muslims and Christian to get the control of this city. Furthermore, he mentioned few ruling points in his treaty to honor Christian worship places for a long history. It has proved the encounter

The treaty has historical worth to prove the vision of *Umar b. Khattab* and to give the protection of Christian community in Muslim states:

“In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the assurance of safety which the servant of God, Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, has given to the people of Jerusalem. He has given them an assurance of safety for themselves for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and healthy of the city and for all the rituals which belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited by Muslims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land, on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted. No Jew will live with them in Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem must pay the taxes like the people of other cities and must expel the Byzantines and the robbers. Those of the people of Jerusalem who want to leave with the Byzantines, take their property and abandon their churches and crosses will be safe until they reach their place of refuge. The villagers may remain in the city if they wish but must pay taxes like the citizens. Those who wish may go with the Byzantines and those who wish may return to their families. Nothing is to be taken from them before their harvest is reaped. If they pay their taxes according to their obligations, then the conditions laid out in this letter are under the covenant of God, are the responsibility of His Prophet, of the caliphs and of the faithful”³⁷.

This Treaty protected the Christians of Jerusalem with religious freedom, as is dictated in the Qur’an and the sayings of Muhammad (PBUH). This was one of the first and most significant guarantees of religious freedom in history.

The value of this treaty cannot be questioned, however, such a progressive treaty has protected and provided equal rights to the minority. The treaty became a standard for Muslim-Christian relations throughout the former Byzantine Empire, with rights of conquered people being protected in all situations, forced conversions never being a sanctioned act that declare the conquest of Jerusalem, and to write a covenant with the people of *Īliyā* (Jerusalem) who were Christian, in the year of 16 Hijra. Text of this treaty shows the reflection of the treaty of *Najrān*, with the major theme and clauses to declare their liberty and bind under the Islamic rule.

ii. **Christian-Muslim Correspondence**

Diplomatic correspondence is a way to contact authority of any country. Although it does not fruit sometimes, but communication is a key to understand correspondent's views and concepts. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) adopted to hoist correspondence with various, separate provinces or countries of the world, surrounding the Arabian Peninsula. After the advent of the promulgation of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) evidently sent a letter to the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, as well as to the other authorities, calling them to embrace Islam. Heraclius replied, referring to the Prophet (PBUH), that even if he did not embrace Islam, he would recognize him as the messenger of God. This gesture of acceptance, by a Christian ruler of that time, elucidates the importance of coexistence to harbor diplomatic relations. This episode was an unambiguous sign to accept the existence of other religions, manifested by a Christian ruler to admit Islam as a prominent religion among other religious flashes of the world. While it gave a gratifying impression of Heraclius, it also established how the first posited diplomatic relations between a Muslim and a Christian ruler were apparent, through instance of politeness and mutual respect³⁸. As a consequence of Heraclius's response, there is a prominent wave of sagacity among the two concerned diplomatic groups, before the acceptance of Prophetic (PBUH) letter by him. With the reference of Heraclius response, there is some consciousness between two diplomatic concerns before the acceptance of Prophetic (PBUH) letter to him. It may spend to snatch more relation in future strategy with the stability of strong foundation and formation diplomacy between the two countries, they base upon Divine background with declaration of Qur'anic revelation³⁹.

With the revealed guideline, each divine book certifies the last Order of God, or the Book of God, and it had the signs and emblems to come up with Divine law or Prophecy. Considering it as a foundation to his actions, the Christian ruler may have expressed his thoughts in a positive and acceptable manner, that had attracted the Prophet (PBUH) towards his character, as cited and delineated in the pages of history.

This was the divine, but missionary, message which was delivered through a diplomatic method by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the rulers of the great contemporary states of the world. No message portrayed a conception of bloodshed or enmity in the minds of the masses, rather an illustration of a symmetrical, symphonic characterization of a pluralistic society. No message had such a perception of war and bloodshed, rather they spread morals of peace and harmony for the humanity. Anyone abiding by the content of this message, i.e. to believe in Allah Almighty and His Prophet, would hold the state under the sovereignty of Allah Almighty. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) delivered his missionary message through his ambassador, without any fear or vacillation, adopting the modus operandi of international diplomacy. That is determination, belief, and sincerity to accomplish the Divine mission till the last drop of blood in one's body, which attracts the will of Allah Almighty to make it strong, fearless, and a promising existence.

That was why the diplomatic letters guided the leadership of Islam after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his Caliphs. Byzantine state was the largest state of the world that provided a religio-political connection to present the existence of a new religion Islam, through diplomatic correspondence. Therefore, the encounter provides a foundation for a strong relationship between two divine religions: Christianity, and Islam. Although the hand of True One God seeded both the faiths with Prophecy and declaration of His revelation, it does not imply that both agreed to embrace each other. Later, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) informed Heraclius that Islam is the same religion, only in a revised shape, which was authenticated by his Prophet Jesus Christ (AS), according to his divine book Gospel. Both were rooted with a common tradition, with monotheistic concepts of patriarch Abraham, and shared a common divine heritage.

It should be noted that letters known through transcriptions may be documents, in which, a Muslim prince invites his addressee to embrace Islam - in line with the first

diplomatic letters thought to have been written and sent by the Prophet (PBUH)-explains to him what Islam is, or discusses one or several religious topics. It may not be a detailed discussion of theological and practical issues which had different, or common backdrop of religious relation.

Being the first Muslim initiative of forming diplomatic contacts with Christians, it can be analyzed the historical perspective of this encounter with the continuous relations between both the sides in further endeavors. "Heraclius stated that he had received such a delegation from Abū Bakr (RA), the first Caliph and Muhammad's (PBUH) successor, with a new message inviting him to convert to Islam, but that it did not go as desired by the Caliph".⁴⁰ Correspondence of Christian-Muslim arguments began, on the status of God and Jesus, in light of Qur'anic verses. Muslim discussion bases the Qur'anic theological concepts, which are either rational or textual, regarding Jesus, his mother and trinity etc. These formal relations provide a base for further contacts to raise rational and divine theoretical background. Indeed, official correspondence in a formal yet simple manner, including theological and religious discussions, appear subsequently. But these relations grew thorns alongside flowers, as the desire to expand the territories transpired among people, inclusive of any physical harm to one another.

In 8th century, *Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz* (RA) sent two letters to Byzantine Emperor; Leo III. That correspondence occurred approximately from 717 to 720.⁴¹ Diplomatic contacts may surround to control any political condition, or to assert power pressure upon each other. But according to Drocourt, Umar II had attractive habits, and would exercise more temperance and indulgence towards the Christian people.⁴² Therefore, the diplomatic relations between Byzantine and Muslim ruler, were as old as the history of contacts of both civilization gets, continually aggregated to conversion with the best spiritual and religious thrust in the human mind. Both, Byzantine and Umayyad dynasties, were representatives of each religion, politically as well as religiously.

Muslim Caliphs arranged a strategy to introduce new ways and dimensions of education, science, history, and philosophy. Although some of them were educationists and philosophers, they participated in scientific discussion of the Muslim scholars. An Arabic manuscript linked with relations between the Umayyad dynasty of al-Andalus, and Constantinople, in the middle of 10th century. The imperial author refers to a previous 'noble letter' from the caliph, demonstrating his interest in 'science' and 'the books of the philosophers' response, and its being placed just after Pseudo-Apollonius' work.⁴³ This document is genuinely concerned with the history of cultural relations between Islam and Christianity.

Since the ninth century, an anti-Islamic, polemical tradition developed in the Greek-speaking world of Byzantium, that lost no opportunity to blacken the name of Muhammad (PBUH), to ridicule the Qur'ān, and to disparage Islam.⁴⁴ Likewise, correspondence may travel between Christian scholars and rulers as well. They not only used indecent language, but also abused the poise and holy personality of the Prophet. It is important to emphasize the fact that, with very few exceptions, these texts, unlike those produced by Christians living in the Islamic world, show little concern for disclosing the actual beliefs and religious practices of Muslims. Around the world, because of the amalgamation of Christian-Muslim society, encounter might have taken place at every level of both communities. But the ruler community transforms its masses with the pioneer method of establishing harmony with others, even if others belong to pluralistic, antagonistic concepts, culture and religion. Islamic tradition provides a foundation for the congregation with the inner crux of each religion, but does not permit harm or any injurious infliction to others. Maintaining peace, and harboring chords of cooperation and coexistence in an Islamic function, for this world and the hereafter.

Conclusion

In this paper, the issue which was discussed in above lines that is the relations between Christians and Muslims in historical perceptible. The followings points can be concluded from this research to get guidelines for further study:

1. In *Sharī'ah*, there are strong groundwork to stable a state with non-Muslims they believe in God or not but with follow up some limitations.
2. The Holy Qur'ān described to the Muslims to live with Christians according to special status which raises honors and tributes them.
3. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) granted allowance to non-Muslims to live with Muslim under liberty, dignity and having rights being humanity.
4. In conflicts, *Sharī'ah* compiled regulations and themes freely to solve the conflicts of Christians according to their religious book.
5. Muslim tradition has various examples of coexistence not only with Christians but also with pagans they have higher status in the Muslim states.



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