Secular Messianism

H.E. Archbishop Cyril Salim Bustros, Archbishop of Beirut & Byblos

An interview with Salim Bostrus

Abstract*: in the following, we are going to read an interview with* ***H.E. Archbishop Cyril Salim Bustros, Archbishop of Beirut & Byblos about commonalities between religions.*** *The questioned asked were more than what included here; We selected some questions related to Islam which were asked and mentioned them in this article. To explaine the topic of our interview, knowing the meaning of Messianism seems necessary. Messianism is the belief in the advent of a messiah who acts as the savior or liberator of a group of people. Religions with a messiah concept include Zoroastrianism (Saoshyant), Judaism (the Mashiach), Buddhism (Maitreya), Hinduism (Kalki), Taoism (Li Hong), and Bábism (He whom God shall make manifest).*

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In your opinion what is the idea of Christianity concerning the issue of salvation of humanity? Especially about how Jesus returned as a savior?

We have a sentence from saint Polos who said, "Truly God punishes everyone based on his actions." Salvation and entering heaven is related to the actions of human being. Those who do good deeds will enter heaven and be salvated and those who commits evil and bad actions during their lifetime will be losers. This means that all actions of human beings are not equal with one another. Goodness exist in front of evils, recognizing and differing these two from each other is what which should be studied in all religions. According to the holy book about the beginning of creation in that time God addressed Adam and Eva and said, "There is a tree there to gnosis and by that good and bad can be realized. Do not eat from its fruit." This means that human being is not the criteria of what is good and what is bad. God Almighty decides alone and independently. He is the One who determines what is good and what is bad. Human being should take His advices about good and bad.

Therefore, salvation is related to the behavior of people. But from other hand we say Jesus is our savior. This thought belonged to the past which said, "salvation does not fulfilled unless …. Exists." Because in that time, when human being makes a mistake, this mistake in fact in done in violation of God's right." So this person deserved to die. He to compensate his mistakes and to make up for that should devote something instead, which is he should give an animal instead but when Jesus revealed he gave himself as adevotion

Nowadays Islam has been faced unkind reactions or even attacks in Christian worlds and it is introduced an equivalent for terrorism. Can you, as a Christian scholar, accept such a picture from a divine religion and its massenger?

The religion history shows that we have always been faced a kind of harshness, violence and terrorism in applying religion. Once when Jews entered the land of Canaan, they killed its habitants. Their excuse was this that the inhabitants are idol-worshipper or Mushrik, so they are Unclean نجس. In Christian part of the West, magicians, astronomers and Satanists were killed.

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Inquisition courts were held where human beings were sentenced to death. Even if we review Islamic history, we find out that Islamic conquers were achieved by a kind of harshness towards Mushriks and pagans, as we read in Quran, for example surah Tubah (verse: 5)

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ

When the sacred months are over, slay the idolaters wherever you find them.

This is a kind of terrorism against Mushriks. It should be noticed that this kind of verses were sent down at the time of wars and Qazave but today we do not have any Qazve. The word today is about the legal rulership. Nowadays, we have armies and laws. We have constitution and our countries have borders. Now we can not talk of attacking other tribes in order to survive. The mentioned verse and likewise have been descended in a specific course of history. But now, if one does this kind of actions, it is truly called terrorism. For example ISIS resorted to these verses to justify its brutal actions. But Islam is the religion of balance. It says the time of these actions is expired. In the last Islam and Christian conference, held in Al-Azhar, it was talked about citizenship. It was agreed that we should not focuse on religions or sects as all people are citizens of a single homeland. Regarding religions and sects, we are all free to have our own belief. Religion of each person is for that person and all religions should be respected because all are equal in terms of principle of citizenship.

This is the base of common life. Nowadays, this idea is being spread and for this reason, now we have “balanced Islam” or “moderate Islam” these days. This balanced Islam is based on Quranic principles. This balance-orientation is of Islamic principles. We can not say Islam is a religion of terror. Some terms or phrases are interpreted terroristically. But in fact, Islam is the religion of mercy and kindness. It is highly impossible that God orders people kill each other. It is ordered, never commit any crime. Period. This is a comprehensive order. It is not disputable. Each murder is religiously forbidden (Haram) Do not we read in Quran that anyone who kills an innocent person is similar to one who kills all people? There is such a beautiful

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sentence in Quran which also exists in all religions. Murder is forbidden. People must not be killed. There is an exception, though, which is Qisas (retaliate). Government is allowed to retaliate. The point is if by prisoning and rehabilitation, the wrongdoer can be punished and gives up wrong actions, this is what should be done. Murder should not be taken as a principle. We can not claim there is a religion which orders " to kill." No, it is not true. We do not have any terrorist religion. Terroristic actions result from misunderstanding a religion.

At the present time, in Christianity especialy among American protestans called "*Millenarian*" or Zionist Christianity, there is an attitude which strongly believed in return of Jesus. They take radical political approaches and most of the political actions they take is in order to govern the present world where is in the treshhold of reappearance of Jesus. How do you evaluate these beliefs of returning Jesus backed by political supports?

Notice that Millenarian is something and Zionist Christianity is another thing. Millenarian Christianity at first believed that after passing a thousand years Jesus will come back. But when a thousand years ended, they said we made a mistake and he will return after two thousand years. The year 2000 has come but Jesus did not come, so it should be said that this claim was based upon literal meaning of a verse which says the rulership of churches are only a thousand year. But here a thousand means a lot, countless. Therefore, we can not interprete it literally. Some Christians made other alterations and mistakes. But wordly Christianity and Catholic Church disagree these claims. No one knows when Jesus will return. In gospel, we read the students of Jesus asked him about his return. He told them, "*no one knows when it will happen*." Nor human being nor any angel, just God is aware of its time.

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