

## **The Religious and Social Reality of Christians in Al-Andalus under Umayyad Rule (138- 422 AH / 756-1031 CE)**

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### **Abstract:**

The Muslims quickly conquered Spain in 92 AH / 711 CE due to various factors and reasons, including the support of the Christian ruler of Ceuta, Julian, who allied with the Muslims and encouraged the conqueror Tariq ibn Ziyad, governor of Tangier since 85 AH / 704 CE, to enter Spain. They also punished the Gothic ruler, Duke Rodrigo Teodofredo, who ruled over Spain, and it was under his reign that Spain was conquered. The campaign was successful, with victories achieved by Tariq ibn Ziyad and the conqueror and governor Musa ibn Nusayr (86-96 AH / 705-715 CE). Toledo, the capital of the Goths, fell to the Muslims and Spain came under Islamic rule. Since the conquest, Christians in Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) lived their normal lives because the teachings of Islam respect non-Muslims (people of the covenant) if they choose to live under Islamic rule. The message of Islam came to complete Judaism and Christianity as the final divine revelation, and the application of these teachings in reality achieved respect and co-existence between different segments of society. Many Christians embraced the Islamic faith, particularly in the period after the conquest (92-95 AH / 711-714 CE), during the reign of the governors (96-138 AH / 715-755 CE) and under the Umayyad Caliphate (138-422 AH / 756-1031 CE). Some Christians, known as Mozarabs, continued to practice their own faith and coexisted with Muslims.

The purpose of this article is to describe the reality of life for Christians (Mozarabs) in Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) during the Umayyad Caliphate (138-422 AH / 756-1031 CE), which was the most powerful state in the Western Islamic world in general and in Al-Andalus in particular. The role of the Mozarabs was prominent during this period, whether through coexistence with the Muslims or through the Mozarab revolt that occurred during the reign of Prince Abd al-Rahman II ibn al-Hakam (206-238 AH / 822-852 CE). This article attempts to shed light on the reality of the Mozarabs without delving into terminology and historical narratives, relying on translated Western studies that have added considerable value to the subject compared to Arabic sources that have received less attention. The main issue addressed in this article is How did Christians live in Al-Andalus under Umayyad rule?

**Keywords:** Christians, Mozarabs, People of the Covenant, Al-Andalus, Umayyad Caliphate, coexistence, Andalusian society.

### **Introduction:**

When divine revelation came to Muhammad ibn Abdullah as the final prophet and messenger of the Islamic faith, Muhammad began to preach this heavenly message to his people and to the whole world. Thus began the Islamic conquests from Medina in the Arabian Peninsula, which spread to overthrow the Persian and Byzantine empires. They even reached China through trade routes and extended westwards to southern France. Islamic conquests also reached Africa and Central Asia and are now present in various countries around the world. For Islam does not force anyone to embrace it, as the Koran states: "There is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'an 2:256), non-Muslims, including Jews, Christians and others, have lived in dignity in most Islamic countries and in the conquered regions. Historical sources mention that the Christian ruler Julian, the governor of the city of Ceuta in the far north of Morocco, and some Jews in Morocco and Spain played a role in the Islamic conquest of Spain. After the conquest, the Andalusian peninsula went through periods of rule, including the rule of governors, until Prince Abdul Rahman ibn Muawiya, the founder of the Umayyad Caliphate, came to power. Throughout these periods, Christians lived a dignified life, unlike before when they were subjected to long periods of Roman rule and later Germanic tribes, culminating in the Goths. Christians coexisted with Muslims in accordance with the teachings of the Islamic message, which emphasises tolerance and coexistence. The Andalusian peninsula experienced only a few rebellions by the Mozarabs (Christians of Al-Andalus), although some Western studies have exaggerated the issue of the Mozarabs, similar to the concerns expressed in Arabic sources. This is the subject of this article.

**First, the Umayyad Caliphate in Al-Andalus (138-422 AH / 756-1031 CE):**

Before the establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate in Al-Andalus, there was a period of conquest in which the Christian ruler Julian, governor of the city of Ceuta, played a prominent role. The conquest of Spain began after an expedition led by Abu Zara'a Tarif ibn Malik in the month of Ramadan, 91 AH / July 710 CE. He landed in Algeciras, now called "Tarifa" after Tarif ibn Malik. The campaign was successful. Subsequently, Tariq ibn Ziyad launched a campaign from the port of Ceuta on Monday, the 5th of Rajab, 92 AH / 28 April 711 CE, with four ships provided by Julian and prepared by Musa ibn Nusayr. The army numbered more than 7,000 men. Tariq landed at the foot of Mount Calpe, now known as Gibraltar. The conquest was completed with the killing of the last leader and ruler of the Visigoths, known as Roderic, in the Battle of Guadalete on Sunday, the 28th of Ramadan / 19 July, to Sunday, the 5th of Shawwal, 92 AH / 26 July, 711<sup>1</sup> CE. Later, Musa ibn Nusayr, the governor of Ifriqiya,

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<sup>1</sup>- Anonymous: (History of Al-Andalus, Study and Investigation) by Abdul Qadir Boubaya, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1427 AH / 2007 CE, pp. 153-154. Ahmed bin Muhammad Al-Maqqari Al-Tilimsani: (The Fragrance of the Branch of Moist Andalusia and the Mention of Its Minister Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatib), explained and edited by Youssef Ali Al-Taweel and Maryam Qasim Al-Taweel, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2nd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 2012 CE, vol.1, pp. 244-250. Ibn 'Adhari Al-Marrakushi: " (The Moroccan Account in the News of Andalusia and Morocco), researched and reviewed by J.S. Cullen and Levy Provencal, Dar al-Thaqafa, 3rd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983 CE, vol. 2, pp. 7-9. Ahmed Mukhtar Al-Abadi:" (On the History of Morocco and Al-Andalus), Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, n.d., pp. 55-69. Mohammed Soheil (91-897 AH / 710-1492 CE)" (History of Muslims in Al-Andalus, 91-897 AH / 710-1492 CE), Dar al-Nafa'is, 2nd edition, 1429 AH / 2008 CE, pp. 35-42. Mahmoud Meki: (92-897 AH / 711-1492 CE)" (Political History of Al-

joined his commander Tariq ibn Ziyad in Al-Andalus in Ramadan 93 AH / June 712 AD with an army of 18,000 men. Musa ibn Nusayr took a different route from Tariq, conquering other towns until he met Tariq ibn Ziyad near the town of Talavera. They then returned to Toledo<sup>2</sup>, the capital of the Visigoths. With the conquest of these Christian Spanish cities and the fall of the Visigoth capital of Toledo, a new era began in the Iberian Peninsula. Different social elements and classes interacted under Muslim rule, and the civilisation of Al-Andalus emerged as a civilisation of coexistence and tolerance.

After the conquest of Al-Andalus, the era of the Umayyad governors began (96-138 AH / 715-755 CE). During this period, the northward expansion continued and many of the governors were martyred in battles during the campaigns in the Frankish lands (the Greater Land, beyond the Pyrenees). Examples of such governors include Al-Samh ibn Malik Al-Khawlani, Anbasa ibn Suhaym Al-Kalbi and Abd al-Rahman ibn Abdullah Al-Ghafiqi, who was martyred in the famous Battle of Tours (also known as the Battle of Poitiers) in Ramadan 114 AH / October 732<sup>3</sup> CE against Charles Martel. In the later period of the Umayyad governors, Abd al-Rahman ibn Muawiya Al-Umayyad entered Al-Andalus.

When Abd al-Rahman ibn Muawiya ibn Hisham Al-Dakhil fled from the East to the lands of Morocco and then to Al-Andalus in 138 AH / 756 CE, he was able to establish a powerful and independent emirate separate from the Abbasid Caliphate in the East<sup>4</sup>. Umayyad rule in Al-Andalus passed through two significant phases:

1) The emirate era in Al-Andalus (138-316 AH / 756-929 CE) began with Abd al-Rahman ibn Muawiya ibn Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik (138-172 AH / 756-788 CE), who founded the state and established its foundations in Al-Andalus. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Hisham al-Radhi (172-180 AH / 788-796 CE), and then by his son Al-Hakam al-Rabdi (180-

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Andalus, 92-897 AH / 711-1492 CE), from the book "The Arab-Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus), a collection of authors, edited by Salma Khadra Al-Jayousi, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2nd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 59-60. Abdul Aziz Salem: "The History of Muslims and Their Influence in Al-Andalus, from the Arab Conquest to the Fall of the Caliphate in Cordoba), Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1408 AH / 1988 CE, pp. 70-81. Mohammed Zaytoun: "Al-Fath al-Islami lil-Andalus -" (The Islamic Conquest of Al-Andalus - Study and Analysis), Majallat Kulliyat al-'Ulum al-Ijtima'iyyah, Jamiat Muhammad bin Saud al-Islamiyyah, issue 4, 1980 CE, pp. 311-319.

<sup>2</sup>- To delve into the conquest further, refer to: Ibn al-Qutiyya: "History of the Opening of Al-Andalus," Edited by Ibrahim al-Abiari, Dar al-Kutub al-Masri - Cairo - Dar al-Kutub al-Lubnani, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1410 AH / 1989 CE, pp. 29 and onwards. Unknown: "News of a Group in the Conquest of Al-Andalus and Mention of its Governors, may Allah have mercy on them, and the wars that occurred among them," Dar al-Kutub al-Masri - Cairo - Dar al-Kutub al-Lubnani, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1410 AH / 1989 CE, pp. 15 and onwards. Unknown: "History of Al-Andalus," p. 155. Ibn Adhari: "Al-Bayan," 2/09-23. Al-Abbadi: "In the History of Morocco and Al-Andalus," p. 69 and onwards. Salem: "History of Muslims," p. 81 and onwards. Taqoush: "History of Muslims in Al-Andalus," p. 41 and onwards.

<sup>3</sup>- Abdul Rahman Ali Haji: "Andalusian History from the Islamic Conquest to the Fall of Granada," Dar al-Qalam, 10th edition, 1442 AH / 2021 CE, pp. 157 and onwards. Mahmoud Maki: Previous article, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>- For further clarification on "Abdul Rahman al-Dakhil ibn Muawiya," refer to: Ibn al-Athir: "Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh," Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 3rd edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1400 AH / 1980 CE, 4/362. Ibn Adhari: "Al-Bayan," 2/40 and onwards. Al-Muqri: "Nafh al-Tayyib," 1/322. Hassan Ibrahim Hassan: "History of Political, Religious, Cultural, and Social Islam," Dar al-Jeel, Beirut, Lebanon, and Dar al-Nahda al-Masriya, Cairo, 15th edition, 1422 AH / 2001 CE, 2/187 and 188.

206 AH / 796-822 CE), who granted positions and authority to Christians during his reign. He was followed by his son Abd al-Rahman (206-238 AH / 822-852 CE), who was known as Al-Awwal (the First) and Al-Thani (the Second). During his reign, the Fitna of the Mozarabs, a Christian group in Spain, arose. After the death of Emir Abd al-Rahman II, princes weak in comparison to his strength and power succeeded him.

2) The Caliphate era in Al-Andalus (316-422 AH / 929-1031 CE) was so named because of the transition in the ruling system from emirate to caliphate. This occurred during the reign of Abd al-Rahman III, who was titled Al-Nasir li-Din Allah (the Defender of the Faith). The most significant event of his reign was his proclamation as Caliph of the Muslims in Al-Andalus in 316 AH / 929 CE, and he took the title of Amir al-Mu'minin<sup>5</sup> (Commander of the Faithful). After the death of Al-Nasir, he was succeeded by his son Al-Hakam II, known as Al-Mustansir bi-Allah (the one who seeks victory from Allah) (350-366 AH / 961-976 CE). He was followed by weak rulers, starting with his son Hisham II al-Mu'ayyad bi-Allah in 366 AH / 976 CE, who came to power at a young age but was controlled by his regent, Al-Mansur Muhammad ibn Abi Aamir. After the death of Muhammad ibn Abi Aamir, his son Abd al-Malik (392-399 AH / 1002-1008 CE) succeeded him. Then his brother Abd al-Rahman Sanchuelo, who ended the Umayyad rule, ruled in 399 AH / 1008 CE (known as the Berber Rebellion). Finally, the Umayyad dynasty officially fell in 422 AH / 1031 CE.

### **Second, the definition of the Christians of Al-Andalus (the Mozarabs):**

Arabic sources refer to the Christians of Al-Andalus by various names, including "Nasara" and "Masihiyyin" (based on religion), "Rum" and "Byzantines" (based on civilisation), "Goths" and "Spaniards" (based on ethnic origin and systems of government), "Franks" and "Castilians" (based on the regions they came from), "Ahl al-Dhimmah" (People of the Covenant), "Al-Musalama" (the Peaceful), "Al-Mu'ahidun" (the Covenanters) and "Ahl al-Kitab" (People of the Book, terms recognised in Islamic law to refer to non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians).

The Mozarabs, also known as the "Musta'ribun" or "Ajam al-Dhimmah", are the Christians of Al-Andalus. As Mahmud Ali Mekki points out, their name is a clear indication of the influence of Arab-Islamic civilisation. They adopted the dress of the Muslims, imitated their way of life and spoke their language<sup>6</sup>. According to Mikel de Epaiza, the "Mozarabs" are the Christians who lived in the Muslim-ruled Al-Andalus, that is, in Spain, which had adopted Islam from the beginning of the 2nd century AH / 8th century CE. The majority of them lived in Christian communities that dated back to the pre-Islamic period, during the time of Western Gothic Christianity and Catholic bishops<sup>7</sup>. The Mozarabs were those who maintained their Christian faith and continued to exist under Islamic rule in Al-Andalus. They lived alongside

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<sup>5</sup>- For information about his life and his title as the Caliph, you can refer to Ibn Hayyan al-Qurtubi: "Al-Muqtabis," edited and published by B. Shalmeta, Spanish-Arabic Institute of Culture, Faculty of Arts in Rabat, Madrid, 1979.

<sup>6</sup>- Mahmoud Ali Maki: "Islamic Tolerance: Al-Andalus as a Model," in the proceedings of the "Seminar on Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus and Aspects of Tolerance," presented by Muhammad Muftah and coordinated by Abdulwahid Akmir, Publications of the Center for Andalusian Studies and Dialogue of Civilizations, First Seminar, New Success Printing Press, Casablanca, Morocco, 2003, pp. 63-64.

<sup>7</sup>- Miguel de Epaiza: "Al-Musta'ribun: A Significant Christian Minority in Muslim Al-Andalus," an article in the book "Arab-Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus," 1/234.

the Muslims and spoke Arabic. Their numbers were initially significant after the conquest of Al-Andalus, but over time many converted to Islam, leading to a decline in their population. Because of their status as 'dhimmis' (protected non-Muslims) in Islam, they retained their faith and lived alongside Muslims, whether assimilating to Muslim<sup>8</sup> practices or retaining their distinctive characteristics. Therefore, in the context of this article, they are considered to be Mozarabs.

Professor Mikel suggests that the term "Mozarab" is derived from the Arabic word "musta'rib", which means "one who claims to be Arab but is not". It is also related to the term "musta'riba", which is used in Arabic studies to refer to tribes whose origins are not Arab<sup>9</sup>. The word "Mozarab" is not found in Arabic sources, but appears in Christian texts and references from the 5th century AH / 11th century CE. It is also used as a derogatory term for Christians of Arab origin who lived in the Christian Visigoth kingdoms, especially in Toledo. Francisco Javier Simonet included all Christians<sup>10</sup> living under Islamic rule, whether assimilated or not, in the category of Mozarabs. However, they remained steadfast in their Christian faith. The subject of the Mozarabs has been of interest in Christian historical records since the 8th century AD, as evidenced by the "Cronica Mozabe", a chronicle written in 754 AD by a Mozarab priest from Cordoba<sup>11</sup>. The study of Mozarabs in Christian studies has several implications, which will be explored in this article.

The rapid integration of Christians into Islamic society in Al-Andalus created a challenging situation for the clergy, who were uncomfortable with this development. They also had an influence on some of their followers as they worked to mobilise the Spanish converts and even the integrated Christians in Al-Andalus against Muslim rule. This will be discussed further in relation to martyrdom.

In truth, Christians appeared on the scene from the beginning of the Christian conquest of Spain, especially with figures like Julian and the followers of the deposed king Witiza. The conquerors expanded into one Christian city after another, until the only region left for them to expand into on the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) was the northwestern corner known as Galicia, or "picos de Europa" (peaks of Europe) as the Spanish call it. This particular region is characterised by its rocky terrain, cave-like structures, harsh climate and the defiance of its governors against the Visigoth refugees led by Pelayo. The conquerors of the time commented on the fleeing Visigoths: "What can you expect from thirty bandits? But what actually happened was the birth of a Christian state in this region"<sup>12</sup>. Some even see this period as the nucleus of the Spanish Reconquista wars<sup>13</sup>, which would affect both the Christians of Al-Andalus and the Christians outside the rule of Islamic Al-Andalus. However, it is important to note that the areas outside the control of the Muslims and the Umayyad

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<sup>8</sup>- Abdulaziz Salem: "History of Muslims," p. 130.

<sup>9</sup>- Miguel de Epalza: Previous article, 2/234.

<sup>10</sup>- Simone Neha, citing Margarita López Gómez: "Al-Mustaribun: The Transfer of Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus," an article in the book "Arab-Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus," 1/269.

<sup>11</sup>- Margarita López Gómez: Previous article, 1/272.

<sup>12</sup>- For further details, refer to: Al-Muqri: "Nafh al-Tayyib," a previous source, 6/119 and onwards. Ibn Adhari: "Al-Bayan," 2/10. Ahmed Mukhtar al-Abbadi: "In Abbasid and Andalusian History," Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1972, pp. 283-284. Hussein Muwannis: "Fajr al-Andalus," Saudi Publishing and Distribution House, 2nd edition, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1405 AH / 1985 CE, pp. 313-315. Taqoush: Previous reference, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup>- Georgius Antonius Turībah: "Doctrinal and Religious Bias in Al-Andalus and its Reflection on Literature and Myths," the third research in the series of ideological and sectarian research in the Arab and Spanish civilizations, 1986, Beirut, p. 251.

Caliphate are not the focus of this article, which focuses specifically on the Christians of Al-Andalus, although it does have some impact on certain aspects of the article.

**Thirdly, the religious reality of the Christians in Al-Andalus and the question of the Mozarabs:**

When the Muslims conquered Al-Andalus, it was under the control of the Western Goths, who, since the reign of King Recaredo (586-601 AD)<sup>14</sup>, had chosen Catholicism over the Arian doctrine. Thus Catholicism remained the official religion, while the Arian doctrine was also present before the Islamic conquest.

The Christians had their own communities and towns, each headed by a "Qays" appointed by the Umayyad governor since Abd al-Rahman ibn Muawiya al-Dakhil. They also had a well-known Christian judge, called the "Judge of the Ajam", who decided their disputes according to their own laws, based on the Visigothic legislation known as the "Liber Iudicorum". If a dispute arose between a Christian and a Muslim, there was a "Judge of the Jund" who would settle the case. This judge had to be familiar with both Gothic law and Islamic Sharia<sup>15</sup>. This allowed the Umayyad state to achieve justice and coexistence between Muslims and others.

The coexistence of Muslims and Christians in Al-Andalus began to show signs of integration. Muslim scholars warned against living in close proximity to Christians and recommended that they be kept in separate neighbourhoods. They also recommended avoiding involvement with them in matters governed by Islamic law. But this was not the reality. Christian towns and neighbourhoods emerged, and some Christians lived alongside Muslims. Ibrahim al-Qadiri Butchich, through his research of various sources, presented an example that shows that the jurist Ibn al-Haṣṣār was a neighbour of a Christian, helping and benefiting him<sup>16</sup>, despite the warnings of the scholars regarding living in close proximity to Christians.

In fact, coexistence between Christians and Muslims was achieved in Al-Andalus. Christians were allowed to keep their churches, except for some churches that were shared between Muslims and Christians, where mosques were built, such as the Great Mosque of Cordoba, which was built in a part of the church of Santa Vicente. In return, Christians were given the freedom to establish monasteries and carry out their religious activities. Examples of these monasteries are the Monastery of Guadimellato, on the road from Cordoba to Toledo, and the Monastery of San Juan de la Peña. Church bells were rung in cities such as Cordoba, Toledo and Seville, especially in their own neighbourhoods. Seville was the episcopal centre during the Umayyad period, a status that continued during the Almoravid period<sup>17</sup>. However, during the Almoravid period there was some pressure on the Christians due to the Spanish Reconquista wars, which led to a shift from coexistence to tension.

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<sup>14</sup>- Sayyid Abdulaziz Salem: "History of Muslims and Their Impact in Al-Andalus from the Arab Conquest to the Fall of the Caliphate in Cordoba," Dar al-Ma'arif, Lebanon, n.d., pp. 54-55.

<sup>15</sup>- Mahmoud Maki: "Islamic Tolerance" article, pp. 66-67. Abdulaziz Salem: "History of Muslims," p. 131.

<sup>16</sup>- Ibrahim Al-Qadri Bouchich: "Landmarks in the History of Tolerance Among Religions and Peoples in Al-Andalus," in the proceedings of the "Seminar on Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus and Aspects of Tolerance," pp. 75-76. The doctor has further examples and studies on this coexistence and tolerance, especially during the Almoravid era, which can be referred to. The understanding of this tolerance can also be explored through literary texts by Thurya Lahy: "Religious Tolerance and Human Relations through the Study of Literary Texts: Poetry and Prose," within the same seminar proceedings, p. 95.

<sup>17</sup>- Abdulaziz Salem: "History of Muslims," p. 131.

Dr Abd al-Rahman Hajji noted that the conversion of churches into mosques only occurred after they were abandoned due to the conversion of the region to Islam or as a result of replacement. This is in contrast to what happened to Muslims after the fall of Granada, when Christians<sup>18</sup> forced Muslims to renounce their religion and Arabic names, restricted their freedom of worship and set up inspection courts to search for them.

"Miguel" suggests that one of the reasons for the decline in the number of Christians during this period was the lack of priests to baptise children with blessed holy oil<sup>19</sup>. The lack of priests may have contributed to the conversion of Christians to Islam. On the other hand, "Margaret Lopez Gomez" mentions other factors that led to their acceptance of Islamic rule, including the support of Spanish and Western Gothic nobles for the Muslim conquerors. In addition, followers of the deposed King Witiza, local Jews and those persecuted for their beliefs, especially Arianism, or their racial origins, also embraced Islam. In addition, the children of the wealthy classes were happy to see the arrogant nobles who had oppressed them undermined and isolated<sup>20</sup>. There were various reasons for the conversion, but the policy of coexistence that characterised Al-Andalus and the application of Islamic doctrine to non-Muslims played an important role. The other factors can be considered as secondary.

The Christian bishops enjoyed their freedom under Umayyad rule, as noted by "Georgius Antonius" and others. They were free to hold their ecclesiastical councils, including the Council of Seville in 166 AH/782 CE and the Council of Cordoba in 238 AH/852 CE<sup>21</sup>. Religious tolerance towards Christians was evident in Cordoba, the capital of the Umayyad state. The authorities did not interfere in their religious affairs or question their beliefs and rituals. Christians were also allowed to hold administrative positions and serve in the army, and they fought alongside Muslims in battles<sup>22</sup>. Stanley Lane-Poole argues that the Christian population of Al-Andalus was not dominated by fanaticism and lived in harmony with their neighbours. They also feared a Muslim backlash if there was an increase in agitation against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad<sup>23</sup>, as seen in some cases of blasphemy. On the other hand, "Miguel" mentioned that the Umayyad state in Al-Andalus treated Christians favourably in order to benefit from Christian converts in its dialogue with other Christian states, especially in Cordoba, where they served as ambassadors and translators<sup>24</sup>. According to various Arabic and other sources, religious tolerance prevailed in Al-Andalus, and everyone was integrated into the progress of Arab-Islamic civilisation. There are numerous quotations to support this, but I don't want to burden the answer with excessive citations. For example, Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi mentioned verses that immortalised the reality of freedom of worship for Christians. Such as :

"You came to me while the horizon was shining,

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<sup>18</sup>- Haji: "Islamic Tolerance" article, p. 189.

<sup>19</sup>- Miguel de Epalza: Previous reference, 1/243-244.

<sup>20</sup>- Margarita López Gómez: "Al-Mustaribun: The Transfer of Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus," an article in the book "Arab-Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus," 1/268.

<sup>21</sup>- Georgius Antonius: Previous reference, p. 253.

<sup>22</sup>- Mohamed Abdullah Anan: "The Islamic State in Al-Andalus from Conquest to the Beginning of the Nasrid Era," Egyptian General Authority for Books, Egypt, 2001, pp. 269-270.

<sup>23</sup>- Stanley Lane-Poole: "History of the Muslim Arabs in Al-Andalus," translated by Ali al-Jarim, edited and annotated by Abdulbaqi al-Sayed Abdulhadi, reviewed and supervised by Ayman Fouad Sayed, Dar al-Masriah al-Lubnaniah, Cairo, 2020, p. 101.

<sup>24</sup>- Miguel de Epalza: Previous article, 1/245-246.

Just before the Christian bells began to ring<sup>25</sup>.

In the midst of this coexistence, Al-Andalus experienced the "Fitna of the Mozarabs", one of the unexpected events of Umayyad rule under Prince Abdul Rahman II. While the prince protected Al-Andalus from the attacks of the Zoroastrian Normans and the Christian kingdoms in the north, some zealous Christians in Al-Andalus, who had been granted freedom of worship, trade and assembly similar to that of the Muslims, suddenly became dissatisfied with their favourable situation under Muslim rule. At the same time, they witnessed a significant number of Spaniards converting to Islam and abandoning Christianity.

According to Stanley Lane-Poole, these zealous Christians felt that Islam had robbed them of their dignity and authority. Muslim tolerance of them only fuelled their fanaticism. They preferred to be persecuted and oppressed, like the martyrs of Jerusalem. They longed for martyrdom and sought revenge against Muslims because they were not persecuted or killed, believing that such acts would guarantee them paradise<sup>26</sup>. The writings of the Church mention a person called "Pasbera", which means "hope in God", as the instigator of martyrdom. Christians consider him to be the spiritual father of the Cordovan martyrs. He lived in the monastery of Chullé, near the capital<sup>27</sup>.

Doxius believed that Saint Eulogio and the scholar Alvaro were among those who influenced the zealous group<sup>28</sup> and were considered disciples of Pasbera. They incited the followers of Christianity to revolt against the reality that led to the decline of Christianity in Al-Andalus. They promoted the idea that they were living under the subjugation of a Muslim ruler. But some scholars, such as Stanley Lane-Poole, find it truly disheartening to see people sacrificing their lives and the lives of others for a false dream. Christianity does not command its followers to endure torture and death for pleasure, but for nobler purposes<sup>29</sup>. They argue that these zealous individuals have deviated from the teachings of the Gospel, which call for love of enemies, doing good to those who hate them and seeking forgiveness for those who have wronged them. Instead, these fanatics have violated the teachings of love by resorting to insults and slander against Islam, which they consider to be the religion of the ruling authority in Al-Andalus and the society in which they live. This is particularly evident in their blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and Islam.

The "Fitna of the Mozarabs" and its contemporary, Alvaro Cordubense, in 854 AD, discussed the reasons for it. Alvaro stated that the Christians in Al-Andalus spoke Arabic fluently and adopted Islamic customs to such an extent that it caused panic among the nobility, who were Christian and Spanish nationalists. The Christians developed a great passion for Arabic books, studying them diligently and praising them enthusiastically, while neglecting the beauty of Christian literature and remaining ignorant of their own Latin language and laws<sup>30</sup>. They even abandoned their own language and corresponded with each other in Arabic rather than

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<sup>25</sup>- Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi: "Tawq al-Hamama fi al-Alfa wal-Alaf," compiled, authenticated, and explained by Dr. Afif Naif Hatoum, Dar Sader, Beirut, 1424 AH / 2003 CE, p. 147.

<sup>26</sup>- Stanley Lane-Poole: Previous reference, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup>- Quoting from Fatiha Muhammad al-Wadani, "Muhammad Muhammad al-Mas'udi: The Fitna of Al-Mustaribun in Al-Andalus (235-245 AH / 849-859 CE)," in the journal "Ilm al-Bayan," College of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, Asmariya University, Libya, Ramadan 1442 AH / May 2021 CE, Issue 2, p. 218.

<sup>28</sup>- For stages of their learning and their biased behavior, one can refer to Dhu'zi's account in the previous reference, 1/89.

<sup>29</sup>- Stanley Lane-Poole: Previous reference, pp. 96-97.

<sup>30</sup>- Al-Biruni al-Qurtubi, as quoted by Mohamed Abdullah Anan: Previous reference, 1/269-270.

Latin<sup>31</sup>. This alarmed the religious authorities, who accused the moderate Christians of treason and apostasy, of sowing the seeds of discord, of fostering fanaticism, of harbouring animosity towards Muslims, of openly insulting their Prophet and the teachings of Islam, and of spreading myths and legends about the Prophet Muhammad<sup>32</sup>. While some Christian studies try to justify these actions, such justifications do not necessarily lead to coexistence in the world.

Abdul Rahman Hajji points out that the 'Fitna of the Mozarabs' was not extensively discussed in Islamic sources, especially those from Al-Andalus. Instead, much of the attention and documentation of this event comes from European sources that were biased against Islam and Muslims. It is also possible that there are books or sources on the subject that have not yet been thoroughly researched or analysed. Therefore, it is necessary to further investigate this incident in a realistic manner. Recently, there have been some specialised articles that have begun to examine the event in more detail<sup>33</sup>. However, the majority of these articles are based on Western studies, since Arabic sources have not dealt with the subject in the same way, considering it to be a local incident that cannot be generalised to all Christians in Al-Andalus.

René Dozy also attempted to advance the narrative based on Latin sources, as they provided more detailed accounts of the 'Fitna of the Mozarabs' and delved deeper into the lives, feelings and thoughts of the Christians in Al-Andalus than the Arabic sources. When the fitna occurred, Prince Abd al-Rahman II wisely addressed this strange phenomenon<sup>34</sup>. He called upon the Christian leaders to address the issue, and they in turn held a conference in 238 AH / 852 CE where they decided to reject such acts. They advised their flock that such behaviour was not in keeping with the teachings of Christianity and encouraged them to refrain from it<sup>35</sup>. Perhaps the Arabic sources did not want to inflame the situation or propagate such exceptional cases in order to maintain unity and recognise coexistence in Al-Andalus.

What puzzles researchers is that Christians held a respected position in Andalusian society in terms of religion. They enjoyed complete freedom of worship, a fact acknowledged even by opponents of Islamic rule in Al-Andalus. One manifestation of this freedom is that the celebration of "Christmas" extended beyond a single day, 25 January, to eight consecutive days. Sometimes they would refrain from work and exchange various gifts. They also celebrated the feast of St John the Apostle on 24 May. There was a spirit of love and coexistence. During the reign of Hajib al-Mansur Muhammad ibn Abi Aamir, Sundays were declared holidays for his army, whether the soldiers were Muslim or Christian, because of the large number of Christians in his army<sup>36</sup>. There are many similar examples.

To conclude, we quote the French Orientalist Henri Pérès: "No oppressed people in any part of the world has ever enjoyed the tolerance shown by the Spanish people during the Muslim domination, which manifested itself in the application of covenants and Islamic laws that granted the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) full rights to live in dignity"<sup>37</sup>. Despite

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<sup>31</sup>- Mahmoud Maki: "Islamic Tolerance" article, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup>- Anan: Previous reference, 1/267.

<sup>33</sup>- Haji: "Andalusian History," p. 284.

<sup>34</sup>- Reinhart Dozy: "Muslims in Al-Andalus," translated, annotated, and introduced by Hassan Habbashi, Egyptian General Authority for Books, Egypt, 1/81.

<sup>35</sup>- Haji: "Andalusian History," pp. 283-284.

<sup>36</sup>- Georgius Antonius: Previous reference, pp. 256-257.

<sup>37</sup>- Henry Pérez, as quoted by Jumaa Sheikh: "Andalusian Society between Bigotry and Tolerance Through Poetic Material," in the proceedings of the "Seminar on Islamic Civilization in Al-Andalus and Aspects of Tolerance," p. 151.

this religious tolerance towards the dhimmis in general (Jews and Christians), and the Mozarabs in particular, the zealots among the clergy preferred to incite fitna and create turmoil in a torturous manner, and their behaviour almost ignited a sectarian war in the contemporary sense.

#### **Fifth - The social and cultural reality of Christians in Al-Andalus:**

The favourable treatment of Spanish Christians among the Muslims led many of them to embrace Islam. Nevertheless, there were intermarriages between Muslims and Christians even before the establishment of the Umayyad state. For example, the governor of Al-Andalus, "Abd al-Aziz ibn Musa ibn Nusayr", married "Egilona", the widow of another Gothic king. Arabic sources refer to her as "Umm Asim". In addition, Ziyad ibn al-Nabigha al-Tamimi<sup>38</sup> married Christian women during the Umayyad period<sup>39</sup>.

This interaction contributed to the integration of Christians into Muslim society in Al-Andalus, whether they converted to Islam or remained Christians. This mixture of Latin and Arab-Islamic cultures, including the language, resulted in a unique cultural synthesis.

According to Dozy, the freedom and joy experienced by Christians in Al-Andalus made them forget their Spanish lives. They imitated the Arab Muslims in everything and studied the works of Muslim jurists and philosophers. According to contemporary accounts, they immersed themselves in Arabic poetry and stories, appreciating the brilliance of Arab civilisation. This cultural exchange was significant and influenced the language and intellectual pursuits of the Christians of Al-Andalus<sup>40</sup>.

Some of the clergy in Al-Andalus did not accept the favourable situation of the Christians and the social integration and coexistence that existed between them and the Muslims. They opposed this stable social integration, claiming that it was necessary to protect Christianity from disappearing. A prominent example is the priest "Elvira", who came from a prestigious family in Cordoba. He was known for his religious fervour, as described by Lynn Townsend White Jr. and others. Elvira went to great lengths in asceticism and devotion, even to the point of inflicting punishment on himself. He went to extremes and fought against everything that had to do with Muslims, considering them to be a deviation from the true faith. He instilled a spirit of sacrifice in the Christians and was supported by a wealthy young man from Cordoba called "Alvaro" and some other Christians.

There was also the case of the girl "Flora", who was influenced by what she heard from Elvira. Her mother was a Christian and her father a Muslim. She converted to Islam and the priests were accused of kidnapping her when her Muslim brother went looking for her. When she returned home, she revealed her Christianity and remained steadfast in it. Her brother took her to the judge to decide her fate, claiming that she had apostatised. But the judge did not sentence her to death<sup>41</sup>. Later she returned with her friend and they both insulted Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, which led the judge to imprison them. Because of their insistence on

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<sup>38</sup>- Ibn Adhari Al-Marrakushi, in "Al-Bayan," p (2/27-28).

<sup>39</sup>- Haji" Andalusian history p.193

<sup>40</sup>- Dozy . The previous reference (1/85).

<sup>41</sup>- Levi-Provencal: The Civilization of the Arabs in Andalusia, translated by Dhuqan Qarqut, Publications of Dar Maktabat Al-Hayat, without place or year of printing, page 80. Stanley Lane-Poole, the aforementioned reference, page 98. This can be explored further in Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/91.

insulting Islam, they were sentenced to death and the sentence was carried out in 237 AH / 24 November 851 CE<sup>42</sup> as mentioned by Stanley Lane-Poole.

Another priest mentioned is "Perfectus", who insulted Islam and was sentenced to death on the day of Eid al-Fitr. He was buried by the priests of Cordoba<sup>43</sup>. Dozy also gave details about Perfectus, who was a priest of the church of St Eulalia. He was asked by some Muslims for his opinion on "Muhammad and Jesus", as Perfectus was fluent in Arabic. He told his questioners: "If I speak, you will report my words to the judge and he will kill me". They promised him that they would not. When Perfectus told them what he thought of their Prophet Muhammad and expressed his contempt, they let him go on the basis of their promise. At a later meeting, however, they incited the public against him and reported him to the magistrate, who imprisoned him despite his denials. Perfectus then openly proclaimed his beliefs when he realised he would undoubtedly be killed. He was indeed killed during the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, amidst the joy of Muslims. Some Christians tried to give him a decent burial and vowed that the Lord would avenge him<sup>44</sup>. Followers of the monk Perfectus raised him from his rank to the status of a saint. As Hashimi Quruf noted, this may have been an indirect call for some fanatical Christians in Al-Andalus to follow the same path<sup>45</sup>. This represents a new shift and extremism in the church in Al-Andalus.

There were other cases of monks who insulted Islam in the presence of a judge and were sentenced to death. One such monk was named Isaac, who insulted Islam before the judge by falsely claiming that he had converted to Islam. When informed that his words could lead to his death, he defiantly said that he was eagerly awaiting it on the path of truth. He was sentenced to death on 29 Dhu al-Qa'dah 236 AH / 3 June 851 AD.

There was also a guard named Sancho, who was one of the prince's guards and a disciple of Eulogius. He insulted Muhammad and as a result his head was cut off<sup>46</sup>. Dozy mentions the reality of this priest who, despite his knowledge of Arabic and access to Arabic books, did not know much about the life of Muhammad. Instead, he chose to believe and authenticate an old book full of myths about Muhammad.

The execution of the priest Eulogius, who inspired many suicides<sup>47</sup>, aroused the anger of the Christians in Al-Andalus in 244 AH / 21 March 859 CE. With his death, the incidents of suicide, insults and slander against Islam and the Prophet subsided<sup>48</sup>. There were other examples of fanatics who preferred suicide or martyrdom, as they claimed.

Stanley mentions that eleven men were killed in less than two months in 237 AH / 851 CE, and the Christian zealots in Al-Andalus did not achieve what they set out to do<sup>49</sup>, which was to restore the Christians to their religion, language and ethnicity. Instead, they were a reason for some of them to embrace Islam because of the good treatment they found in society and in the Umayyad state, thus highlighting the tolerance of Islam and the coexistence of Muslims.

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<sup>42</sup>- Stanley, the aforementioned reference, pages 102-103.

<sup>43</sup>- The same, page 99.

<sup>44</sup>- Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/95-96.

<sup>45</sup>- Hachani Qurauf: "Threats to Coexistence Between Muslims and Christians in Andalusian Society: Historical, Objective Causes and Contemporary Effects," *Al Hya Journal*, University of El-Hadj Lakhdar Batna, Algeria, Issue 32, January 2023, page 470.

<sup>46</sup>- Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/100-101. Stanley, the aforementioned reference, page 101.

<sup>47</sup>- Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/87.

<sup>48</sup>- Stanley, the aforementioned reference, page 104.

<sup>49</sup>- The same, page 100.

Dozy mentions that the general public was indeed angered by the behaviour of the martyrs, arguing that they worshipped the Lord freely and saying: "The Sultan allows us to perform our religious rituals and does not force us to do anything. What is the reason for this extreme effort? Those you call martyrs are not martyrs at all; they are a group of suicides who acted out of arrogance, which is the worst of all sins... Isn't it madness to commit suicide in this way? How do we respond to these objections, which we think are valid? But Eulogius, in his book "Memoriale sanctorum" ("Memories of the Martyrs"), responded by presenting evidence from myth and the Gospels to justify their classification as martyrs<sup>50</sup>. He replied to his opponents<sup>51</sup>, including the priests, and indeed coexistence has been extensively documented as the dominant feature of the history of the Muslims in Al-Andalus.

Despite the rejection of the priests, which had nothing to do with Christianity, Dozy saw in it a spirit of national dignity that did not die. They refused to be servile in the palaces of the great, and it disturbed them that the Sultan's palace in their city of Cordoba was still Muslim<sup>52</sup>. He mentioned that the rulers were imposing circumcision on the Christians, which was unacceptable behaviour, but they could not find a way to revolt because they were in the capital city of Cordoba<sup>53</sup>. So they chose martyrdom.

Levi-Provençal believed that some of the rare persecutions suffered by Christian communities were always caused by fanatical Christians themselves. Other fair-minded people have come to the same conclusion.

Dozy mentions an excuse for the riots, which he sees as having nothing to do with the Islamic religion itself, but rather with the character of the pleasure-seeking Arabs, who were rejected by the priests, who emphasised self-discipline, repentance, asceticism and spiritual exercises. However, Muslim society as a whole despised the priests for such behaviour and appearance, and scorned their religiosity, labelling them with ugly characteristics<sup>54</sup>.

The Mozarabs played an important role in bridging the gap between Arab and European cultures, as they were fluent in Arabic as well as Spanish and Latin. Prominent figures in this field include "Yusuf al-Nasrani" at the court of Cordoba, who was the brother of Eulogio and Leovigild, physicians such as Romanus, a Christian nobleman from Cordoba, Hostegesis de Malaga, a descendant of Count Julian Gomez Iben Antonio, who represented the Christian authority in the General Council of the Church in 238 AH / 852 CE<sup>55</sup>, and Qomis ibn Antian, who held a position in the Chancellery of Correspondence during the reign of Prince Muhammad bin Abd al-Rahman.

Other notable figures include Rabi' ibn Zaid "Recemundo", the author of "Le Calendrier de Cordove", a well-known agricultural calendar, and the ambassador of Caliph Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir to the court of King Otto I in Germany. There was also Asbagh ibn Abdullah ibn Nabil, to whom the Hajib al-Mansur Muhammad entrusted the resolution of the conflict between the Amir of Castile, Shanjah ibn Garcia, and Alfonso V, regent of the Kingdom of

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<sup>50</sup>-Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/102-103.

<sup>51</sup>- For example, see Mohamed Bashir Hassan Radi Al-Amari: "Cultural Interaction Between the People of Andalusia and the Spanish Christians in the Middle Ages," Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 2015, pages 87-91.

<sup>52</sup>- Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/87-88.

<sup>53</sup>- Provençal, cited by Mohamed Bashir Al-Amari: "Aspects of Cultural Creativity in Andalusian History," Dar Aida for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 1433 AH / 2012 CE, pages 64-65.

<sup>54</sup>- Duzi, the aforementioned reference, 1/87.

<sup>55</sup>- Georgi Antonius, the aforementioned reference, pages 253-254.

Leon. There was also Mu'awiya ibn Lab<sup>56</sup>, Count of Cordoba during the reign of al-Hakam al-Mustansir, among others.

The Mozarabs enjoyed a degree of freedom that extended even to the common people in the countryside who owned land, which they did not under Visigoth rule. They had the freedom to move around Al-Andalus and to interact with the Christian kingdoms in the north. When they settled in the north, their cultural and intellectual abilities allowed them to assume positions of influence. The Arabic-Islamic civilisation had a profound influence on them, so much so that Arabic-sounding nicknames such as Abdullah, Walid, Rabi' and others can be found among the Mozarabs. They contributed to architecture and other aspects of society. In fact, this serves as an answer to Western scholars who ask about the Islamic influences in the regions where Muslims<sup>57</sup> settled in northern Al-Andalus. The answer lies in the role of the Mozarabs, who settled there and transmitted Islamic civilisation from the Muslim emirates to the Christian areas in the north.

As a result of the cultural interaction that began with the conquest and the reign of the governors, Andalusian society witnessed the emergence of a local dialect known as "Romancero" or "El romance". This dialect was a mixture of Arabic and Latin and became the local language of communication, especially in Granada. In fact, the Caliph Abd al-Rahman al-Nasir composed poetry in the Romance<sup>58</sup> language, the traces of which can still be found in the Spanish language today.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we can draw the following conclusions from the article:

- \* The conquest of Al-Andalus began with the participation of some Christians, and although the process of conquest would have continued, Julian and those who opposed the Visigothic ruler accelerated the conquest.
- \* The Mozarabs (Arabised Christians) in Al-Andalus were a shining example of Islam and its tolerant application throughout the Iberian Peninsula. For this reason, the conversion of Spaniards and Visigoths to Islam was often voluntary, due to their admiration and influence of Arab-Islamic civilisation.
- \* Although they had their own towns and neighbourhoods, the Mozarabs integrated with the Muslim population and enjoyed religious freedom, despite the opposition of some scholars in Al-Andalus who objected to living and interacting with Christians on religious grounds.
- \* The Mozarabs, living within Muslim Andalusian society, achieved status and religious freedom. In Spanish studies, they are seen as those who preserved Christian Spain in the presence of Muslim Spain. Therefore, Latin sources and current studies focus more on them than on Islamic sources and Arabic studies today.
- \* The Andalusian experience can currently be generalised to countries where different ethnic and religious groups coexist, in order to achieve concepts such as citizenship, coexistence and

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<sup>56</sup>- Mahmoud Maki, "Islamic Tolerance," pages 64-65.

<sup>57</sup>- The same, page 64. Margarita Lopez Gomez, the previous article, 1/271, 277-282.

<sup>58</sup>- Hassan Al-Warraqi: "The Space of Civilizational Interaction Between Muslims and People of the Covenant in the Works of Andalusian Jurists," within the proceedings of the Conference on Islamic Civilization in Andalusia and Aspects of Tolerance, page 499. Margarita Lopez Gomez, the previous article, 1/271.

tolerance within society, while creating laws that protect communities based on the principle of "no compulsion in religion".

\* The Mozarabs served as a bridge between Muslim Andalusia and the Christian Spanish kingdoms, especially in northern Spain behind the Pyrenees.

\* The phenomenon of suicide or martyrdom, as Westerners call it, was considered an exceptional event in the history of Al-Andalus. For this reason, it has not been given much importance in Arabic sources and studies.

\* Orientalists and scholars have differed in their views, some supporting and justifying the rebellion of the Mozarabs, while others opposed it, either at the time or in the periods that followed.

\* The priests and the Church played an important role in fuelling the discontent of the Mozarabs, contrary to the teachings of the Gospel, which call for love and tolerance.