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The Contemporary Christian Religious Current in Lebanon

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1. Introduction

Christian religious current is one of the most prominent thought movements that contribute in intellectual, political and social renaissance witnessed by Lebanese society through its scholars and thinkers who called for the necessity of interaction with Western human thought build on philosophic thought and the principles of western revolutions in order to repair and evaluation of social, economic, cultural and political situations in Lebanese society. Also this current contributes in evolution and creation of independent Lebanon State. That was represented in the efforts made by Alhwaik whom was named the Man of Independence and Lebanon Inspiration Man. Also the thinkers of this current had a great role in informing Lebanese nationals with their rights and demanding these rights as well as their demands of reforming social, political and economic situations and secularism of the state. This research concerns about enlightening reform current of the contemporary Christian current in Lebanon.

2. The Research Problem

The thought of Christian religious thoughts has great effects in Lebanese society in political, social and economic aspects. Thus the research problem introduces several questions such as what are most prominent thoughts introduced by Christian religious movement? What is the form through which the thinkers of this current introduce their political thoughts? How does they deal with the state and the regime problem? What was their thoughts role in Altaef Agreement? What are the most prominent parties that carry these current thoughts in political situation.

The Research Hypothesis

Christian Lebanese current has a vision to find a solution for sectarian and deprivation problem represented in its call to apply the mechanism of secularism, nationality and discussion that what we shall shade alight.

The Research Importance

The research importance is in that the Christian religious current makes an active presence in Lebanese society through its thought theses that calls for enlighten, intellectualism, reform and tolerance, The thoughts of this current has a great influence of the people who react with it.

The Research Curriculum

This study is a study of real current thought, Christian religious movement, thus the study depends on historical curriculum and comparative analysis curriculum.

The Research Structure

The research is divided into two axis. The first axis is about the evolution of contemporary Christian religious current in Lebanon. The second axis is about Christian political parties.

The First axis: Evolution of The contemporary Christian religious current In Lebanon

Includes all what contemporary Christian scholars produce in the thought fields of Christianity.

Christian religious current (*)¹in the middle of nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century witnessed the emergence of several thinkers and scholars who call to the necessity of interaction with Western human thought built on the origins of western philosophical thought and on the principles of Western revolutions to reform social, political, economic and cultural situations in Arabic society in general and Lebanese society in private. They call to take the ideals, examples and values of western thoughts that revolted on the backwardness of Middle ages. Thus Christian Lebanese begin to think of

*Christian religious current in Lebanon stress that there are historical and social evidences stick to the real situation of Christiane Lebanese which can be inferred in three subjects: the first is political deprivation in eastern Arabic world. The origin of this deprivation is that Christiane s in East with all their different societies and geographic locations did not take independent political support but at succession of time were subject to various of military invasion, political affiliation and cultural dominance. Those Christians even they sometimes participate individually or collectively in the state policy, they did not govern as independent free Christians. The second subject is the exam of collective political self-governing in the modern Lebanon independence. In this time they recognize that they are called to self-political compensation for centuries of political separation and social discard specially after Lebanon War and in the extent of constitution reform e. iAltaef Agreement -The religious political thought is not able to carry the real situation of Lebanese people unless it concerns of theses theological, historical and social evidences, (see: Musheer Baseel Awn, Between Religion and Policy, Christian Political tomorrow in in Theoretical structure and its Lebanese Reality, Dar ALNAHAR 1ST EDITION, Beirut, 2008, p. 168.

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philosophic sayings which the West use to build modern thought curriculums which advanced by liberty word ¹

To carry the responsibility of this renaissance two groups of Christiane Lebanese thinkers that concern to examine the methods and curriculums and have the solutions and horizons assumed this task. First group was created by people of arts, philosophy and human sciences except religious sciences who made great contributions in thought renaissance in Lebanon society and Arabic society. This group study Arabic heritage especially in its Islamic wide resource. It emphasizes that modernization of thought and society comes from investment in treasures of heritage in all its aspects. The second group (the study is about) consists of Christian scholars and experts in all Christian sciences such as bible sciences, religions sciences, universal sects and Sufism. The evolutions of this group were related with the return of Christian scholars from European capitals and the oldest group is the Maroon school in Rome. It also related to the spread of foreign missionary schools and Western cultural centers in Lebanon. ²

But the Christian religion current made its effort in late eighteenth century on care for internal religious matters avoiding the wide religious vision in social, political, living and thought aspects which Lebanese society was confused in ³. Theses avoidance has many reasons such as that Catholic religious thought in late eighteenth century and beginning of twentieth century prevent the theologians from introduce their thoughts to human real world; Christian scholars were busy with studying abstract religious sciences which prevent them from correct inference on the weakness points in Lebanese society. Also the contrast of affiliates that attracted Christian thinkers made them confused in their dealing with society issues and theological mediation in it ⁴.

This was the situation in the first decades of twentieth century and the mid century witnessed great transformation in the Lebanese Christian religious current with various reasons that made Christian scholars to get out of caring thought circle and face the issues that evoked by discrimination and renaissance problem such as the nature of motion inside world Christian thought. Others concerned in the motion nature within Arabic societies especially Lebanese society and other reasons related to the motion nature within Arabic Islamic and secular thought⁵.

The reasons related to the world Christian thought development it is worth to mention the great transformations that Christian Church witnessed in the West in spite of its various affiliations and directions. From the beginning of twentieth century Western

¹Jeroom Shaheen, Christians and Arab Renaissance, Churches of middle East Magazine, P817

churches specially Catholic church and Protestant church and somewhat less Orthodox church began to adopt in their thought and structures the energies of renaissance, renew and adaptation. Theses transformations were reflected on Christian churches in Lebanon as the Catholic theologians wake to sense the amount of renew affected their church before Vatican council. During the Council they contemplate the reality of Arabic great problems that influence Lebanon society⁶. The results of these awakens is the theologians dare on their theological principles to review, criticize and evaluate for taking the good way for them and the Christians following their thought. ⁷

For the reasons related to the situations of Arabic societies, it represented by what they obtain from independence and their need to establish the societies of right, liberty an equality. This independence affected Lebanon society which inspired to examine some of Westerns political thought. Based on the legality of human rights. As Lebanon Christians have the ability to maintain their identity and rights within the belonging to the Lebanon diverse society, the Lebanon Christian religious thought liberated from the complex of minority and subjecting. The theologians become more liberated and prepare to face Western problems that societies suffered from. They invest their theologian learning in understand the society reality and relate the martyrdom for the Bible values with belongings to the soil of East ⁸.

The reasons related with the motion nature of Arabic Islamic and secular thought suggested to Christian theologians that Islamic thoughts more openness and more sensing for the problem of religious and cultural discrimination and problem of Arabic human renaissance even it follows the trace of left and right Western secular thinking which support the trust of Christian groups and assure for them that Islamic Arabic thought as the result of regaining of old Arabic civilization. It made efforts to compromise between the requirements of renewed the honesty of Quran teachings and requirements of honesty creates Arabic nationality enriched by West secular values based on legalization of universal human rights ⁹.

All these reasons caused the emergence of reform and enlighten trends in Maroon Christian religious current in Lebanon in which have an important role in all ideological, cultural, political and geographical aspects such as (Yousif Eldibs, Jermanos Farahat, Petrarch astafan Aldwaehy. Astafan emphasis on the importance of ceremony, church and monk reforms and has many books such as The history of Times, The Lighthouse of the Holy and the Series of Antakya Maroons Patriarchs an in his time the Lebanon Maroons Monastic was established. Alhwaik Patriarch whom is considered as great Lebanon inspirational and man of independence headed on 1919 Lebanon delegate to Paris Peace Conference and had a

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²Musheer Baseel Awn Arabic Christian Religion Thought, The Requirements of Renaissance, Renew and Contemporary, Dar Altaiaa, 1est edition, Beirut, 2007, p55

³. Ibid, P56

⁴Ibid, P57

⁵Awn the same reference, p58

⁶Ahmed Sedqy, Muslims and Christians in the civilization, Merkaz Yaffa Lidrasatwalabhath, 1st edition Cairo, no publish date. P 39.

⁷Samer Radhwan, The Dialogues, Markaz Sinaet Alfiker, 1st edition, Beirut, No publish date, 2012. P 74.

⁸Awn, p59

⁹Ibid, P60.

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great role in establish great Lebanon. Other Patriarchs had no less concern in political and social life such as Antwan Aredha in forties decade. ¹

He was not convinced with the way of building the state and had many question on politician and in his opinion the Lebanon regimes "are group of conditions and exploitations accumulated within these circles from one time to another. The relatives were employed and impose their relatives on the people". He calls for fair society and emphasize that society security shall not be achieved unless we return with openness to our religion that calls for peace "2. Patriarch Anwan Khresh in seventies and eighties of twentieth century who mad maintaining Lebanon entity as a great priority and call Christians on 1985 to" Face the reality in abstraction and difference and raise to the our culture and responsibility as citizens, We the Christians had passed through stages of life led as to see Islam and Muslims with lack of likeness and evaluation until many of us imagine that we have the heaven for us 3. Thus he called the Christians to the dialogue and cooperation with Muslims to maintain the independence of Lebanon.

Patriarch Nasr Allah Sufair appeared since the end of the civil war as the only Christian leader who made his voice loud for "Democracy and liberty and rights of Christians and call for withdraw of all foreign armies from Lebanon" and denounce security forces that abused human rights such as arrest and hit Awn supporters and absence of social justice, poverty and, sectarian allocation and all things contrast with democracy life in Lebanon⁴. He said " " Lebanese witnessed black times in which we could not cooperate thus you must cooperate wherever you met the for sake of Lebanon and Lebanon fly with its two wings "⁵. Sufair take his has his moral authority from Bkerki historical location and his chair which is honored by "the Glory of Lebanon and words engraved on the church of Maroon Church "The Glory of Lebanon is given "⁶

Sufair attitudes are represented in the period after Altaef Agreement:⁷

- 1- The necessity of full and correct application of Altaef Agreement especially articles of Syrian Army withdraw.
- 2- Establishment of national census as stipulated in Altaef Agreement.

¹Kamal Deeb, This Old Bridge, The Fall of Christian Lebanon, 1920-2002, p89

3- Restore some of the Maroon president to make constitution balance and distribution of authorities.

Sufair insist that "we do not want privileges but we want what make the Christians feel that they are in the same degree with others and the if leader fail in leadership that does not mean deprive them from this right" 8

These attitudes of the Patriarch are repeated by other Christian clerics in front of their followers and among them was Bishara Alraee, Eliuas Awda, Patriarch Hezaim. That makes Bkerki express the political attitude for Christians in Lebanon.

Hamid Morany stressed that Maroons after Altaef Agreement need self – revision for any role they play in Lebanon not same Lebanon as their father wanted. Morany asks if the coming of twenty-first century is presentiment and if they could make a new role. ⁹ Patriarch Juakim Mubark hoped in new awakening of Maroon Church includes review of its mission and role in the East and changes the view on Lebanon as a shelter for minorities and considers Lebanon as an experiment for all humanity. Also Christians Lebanon is not sectarian but a modern and the Christians needs to the intention and instruments to carry on the change responsibility and openness ¹⁰. to carry enlightenment torch with Muslims to face the challenges together ¹¹.

Lebanese Christian Orthodox religious current witnessed reform trends with electing Agnatus Hezaim that deals with church reform in home and ecumenical work abroad and the church political, educational, social and economical interference from one side ¹². from other side these trends aware the role of Maroons in creating great Lebanon and how this entity maintain the minorities rights in East and establishing Orthodox Youth Movement and monastic centers (Alharf Monastry in Aljabal)and Belmind University in Alqura. Although Orthodox clerics church clerics repeatedly criticize hard attitudes of Maroons in civil war but they knew that any achievement they did shall benefit all Christians. ¹³

Patriarch Hezaim and Orthodox bishops expresses their dissatisfaction and worry about Arab Christians future especially in Lebanon in language reflected what Maroon clerics had been saying since 1990. Patriarch Hezaim did not hide his concern as his attitudes are the same of Sufair's attitudes "The Christians of the East have to work together We must confess that we are not majority in this region. All knew that this region was of Christians majority before Islam, but in the land of Christ we became minority thus we appear consistent Christianity "14.

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²Ghazy Jajaa', Mar Antwan Butus Aredha The Leader of Lebanon and Man of Independence (1883-1995) Dar Basharia 1est edition Beirut, 2006, p217-219.

³Victor Sahab, The Arabs and History of Christian question, Dar Alwehdaliltebaa' Beirut 1986, 116

⁴Kamal Deeb, This Old Bridge, The Fall of Christian Lebanon, 1920-2002, p89

⁵Aref Alabed Lebanon and Altaef, Historical cross and incomplete course, P290

⁶Tanius Yousif Mukhaiber, Third Lebanon Republic, Unpublished Dissertation, High Institution for Rights and Political Sciences, Beirut, 2010, P215-220.

⁷Kamal Deeb, p268-296

⁸ArefAlabed, p 290

⁹Kamal Deeb, ¹p441

¹⁰Samer Radhwan, Dialogues, Ibid, p76.

¹¹Patriarch Juakim Mubarkabout Lebanon and Islamic-Christians dialogue translated by Slam Diab, Dar Faraby 1st edition, Beirut –Lebanon 2014, p 14

¹²Bashar Shertoony Is There Christian question in Arabic Region Has, Dar Al-mashrewq 1st edition Beirut –Lebanon 2014, p 50 ¹³Deeb, p242

¹⁴Ibid, p243

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Patriarch Hezaim demand the equal allocation of Orthodox sect in distribution of posts and positions in Lebanon state and this thought was away from the previous attitude of orthodox church.

Orthodox religious current sees that the region and international powers after Altaef Agreement made Lebanon under Syria custody. The political solution takes from Maroons and gives Muslims in power of Christians, in the proportions of parliament representatives or in other positions, after demographic and political decline of Christians in Lebanon after civil war the Orthodox left their reservations about Maroons attitudes and evolved in political work such as GhassanTweny who was a minister, ambassador and deputy in the parliament, FuadPetrus, Beirut bishop Elias Awda and Jebel Lebanon bishop George Khuder¹. They took hardest political attitudes and express worry about freedom of expression and equality of political participations of citizens, the future of democracy, sovereignty, independence, marginalization, confiscation of authority and absence of national accordance. (FuadPetrus) said "Since the enforcement of Altaef I said peaceful coexistence is something and national accordance is another thing is the establishment which everything is built on "

Lebanon Orthodoxy was politicization the archbishop started in the parish series of masses of Sundays were broadcasted on television to the public with social and political content. That raise the concern of the public opinion and political class which never see the clerics involved in policy. The bishop Awda said that the matters as it is without evasion of politicians as work in the way of Christ in saying the right and attack the method of administration of the state which concern about people and deprived another people and government corruption ².

Bishop George Khuder was partner in intelligent Lebanon life since sixties and always criticized western way of Maroons, defending on church Arabism, called for civil state, respect other religions, affiliate to Arabic cultural environment. After Altaef Agreement. He reliefs his opinions about the Maroons, their role and reality of Christians "If the Maroons still separated politically as they are today all Christians shall lose. No orthodox shall gain from Maroons backward but the Muslims Sunni and Shiite shall gain the benefits "³

Khuder sees that Orthodox must change third way between standing the Maroons or give up to the real fact. The orthodox must reach to the hardness of Maroons but by words not by arms and he was worried about Christians in Islamic societies and remove of authority from Christians does not mean to accept Dhimmis Muslims again and Orthodox stayed for centuries Dhimmis to

Ottoman after the fall of Constantinople in hands of Turk⁴. Turk⁴.

Lebanon Christians Catholic religious current had reform represented by the course of Gregor Hadad the archbishop of Beirut who called for reform and secularism of government in Lebanon state. He said "The request in non sectarian rule in which nobody use the others to achieve his aims as there are few prophets in our age " who seeks to bring the society to secular regime, it is possible to believe that Lebanon may reach someday to secularism " ⁵. Also call for reform of East churches and free God from from the confusions of theologians serpentine structures and free the children from the biases of forcing ideological attraction and makes economic social change to give hope to poor people and stand against injustice⁶. He established (Social Movements) on 1957 as Jerom describe it, nongovernmental non party, non doctrinal organization. It does not claim of charity. Movement of collective work with self-motives to create more human man works in the light of studies and research"⁷.

On 1968 bishop Hadad issue enlightened statement with the Christian Youth:

- 1- Refuse to affiliate to sectarian shrieked on itself and on its privileges and wanted to belong to Christ church only.
- 2- Refuse money richness or properties material, lands or projects and political dominance of Catholic church and must be one church works according to the Christ well.
- 3- Refuse a church defend on capital and feudal sector and there must be a church commit to the matters concern to all people classes and be with them to free it in economy and achieve its hope in human life.
- 4- Refuse strange church related to Western civilization and must be a church considered itself part of Arabic world.
- 5- There must be a church and Christians whom are part of the third world.

This statement made a great debate in Christian churches and many articles were written about it. But Hadad continue within the war years on the reform and secularism of the state. This kind of dialogue ked to synods for Lebanon1995 and other reform attempts for East churches and Hadad participate in sessions in Islamic–Christian dialogue in Lebanon and abroad ⁸.

Social movement was not enough to prove Gregore Hadad concern with all people because it does not deal with religious matters and he decided to establish Afaq Magazine with Polis Alkhoury and Jerom Shaheen and other cultured people. The magazine had future vision of origin renaissance in Arabic Christianity and in social,

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¹Osama Meqdesy, The Setarian Culture, darAladab, N D P. Beirut, 2005. P79.

²Sharl Shartoony Is there Christians question in Arabic Region, P53

³Samer Faraht, Patriarch George Khudur, This World is not enough, N P H, NPD, Beirut, 2006, P93.

⁴Deeb, 244

⁵Kamal Ali Alhammod, Civil Communication Magazine, issue 16, Beirut, Lebanon 2016, P20

⁶Adeem Mahfoodh. That how they see it, Civil Communication Magazine issue 16, Beirut, Lebanon 2016, P15.,

⁷Deeb, P520.

⁸Deeb, 521.

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political and cultural development. Hadad went in theologian way response with the requirement of social and political reality and the crises of the environment to determine its identity. Thus the Afaq project is to liberate Christ and human He increased his work against church and political authorities in Lebanon in seventies decade and appeared in meetings with Muslims and Christians clerics participated his thought concerns such as his meeting with Musa Alsadr in which they agree on the priority of the deprived people and religions dialogue.

Afaq Magazine made a crises in Lebanon and known as (Gregor Hadad Case) after the magazine declared its principles, chooses commitments, independence and contribution in civilized transformation of Lebanon society towards modernity. The first six issues contain articles in religious affairs in modern spirit ².

Politicians and clerics deal with Hadad writings as by the degree of their relations. Some consider him as Shehaby and allied with President Fuad Shehab. In time of president Sharl Hilo and the war with the left and Palestinians they considered him as allied with Palestinians. Some of Catholic Clerics such as (Maximus the fifth Hakim) considered Hadad thoughts as contrast with catholic doctrine and made risk on the church. The committee the questioned Hadad declared that his writings are not against catholic doctrine. Although this result Hakim suspended Hadad from Beirut Parish and assume him honorary bishop of Adhana parish in Turkey ³

Gregor Hadad did not see in the church position against him what could stop him from support his opinions. He established on 1998 with group of Christian thinkers (Civil Society Current) as an organization depends on dialogue and integration with organizations of common principles ⁴.

In the political work Lebanon Christians religious current were represented by parties such as (Free National Current) led by Michal Awn, Almarada Current who claimed the rights of Christians and insurances from the home partners as well as claim of sovereignty which was the main reason behind Awn opposition to Altaef Agreement. Awn works for the battle of return the lost Christian role after Altaef Agreement and makes balanced participation. As (Lebanon Forces), Free Nationals, Alkataeb, Sufair, Qurnat Shahwan going in thought system to return Christians rights, they changed after the alliance with Rafiq Hariry and after that with Saad Hariry to demand sovereignty from Syria. The speech of Ameenjumail, Samir JaJa' Qurnay Shahwan, Patriarch Sufair is sovereignty ⁵.

Second Axis: Christians Political Parties

It discusses the most important parties

1- National Block Party

It was established on 1943 by Amil Eda. The first article of its law state its republican democrat party support Lebanon entity and maintain its sovereignty⁶. It is considered as a reform party and still work in Lebanon political life. ⁷

2- Lebanon Forces

In consist of previous military and security forces. it represent previous military current in kataeb Party⁸ established by Basheerjumail1976.

In 1990 the Forces project appeared in secret document tilted, Federal Lebanon State, in which h it called for federal Regime in Lebanon as the logic solution for Lebanon crises. The authors of this project think that Lebanon experiment shows two samples either dominance of sector on another or central state ended with explosion. Thus federalism secure the existence of Moslem and Christian and end the strong separation among the groups of Lebanon society. The project is based on organizing Federal authorities through:

- 1- Determine the powers of federal authorities.
- 2- Federal Assembly is founded on compound base includes all governorates (Council of Governorates) from one side and represent the sects in Parliament from other side.
- Approve the majority principle described in legislation aspect.
- 4- Give veto right as a guarantee for each group against the dominance of other.

The executive body of Lebanon Forces is headed by Sameer Jaja'. The party participated in elections and governments of Fuad Alsaniora and Saad Hariry government 2009 and it has 8 seats in the Parliament.

3-Free National Current

The roots of Free National Current is back to late eighties when Michal Awn headed the government (1988-1990) when a crowed of his supporters. Then they established secret movement after his exile to Paris 1990 after confront with Syrian Armies ⁹.

The movement developed to public current has activity in rights of youth and students ¹⁰ and transformed to political party 0n 2005 after Syrian exist from Lebanon. ¹¹

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¹Polis alkhoory, Between Originaltyane Renew, plisianliberary, NDP, Lebanon, 2007, P75.

²Hassan Alzain From Nakhla to Gregor, Civil Communication Magazine, issue 16

³Alzain, P 5.

⁴Alzain, P 6.

⁵Deeb, P3.

⁶Fadhel Shror, Parties, organizations and political forces in Lebanon, 1930-1980, p229.

⁷Marry Ma'lof, Cancelling the Sectarian, Alkhaleej Lilitibaa', NDP, Beirut, 2005, P109

⁸Maroons Leadership from Habeeb Alsaad, Arabic Center for Information, 1est edition, Beirut, 1985, P 88.

⁹Kareem Baqardoony, Impact and Resistance, Almatbooatlilnasher, Beirut, 2011, P 387.

¹⁰Tanuis Yousif Mukhaiber. The Third Republic of Lebanon Republic., P213.
¹¹Ibid, P220.

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The most important principles¹:

- 1- Concentrate that Lebanon is independent entity based on social contract approved by people well.
- Respect Lebanon constitution as a law of governing.

The most important objectives:²

- 1- Establish state of equality, justice, social solidarity and fair justice.
- 2- Maintain the family as it is the basic cell in building society and state
- 3- Stuck with free economic system within secure of man dignity and principle of social justice

Free National Current allied with Marada current that support Syria in elections of 2005 and later allied with Hezbollah and becomes with the same axis and the reason behind this transformation is the conflict on leadership in Christians society. Awn introduced Federal option and the solution in federal state ³. This current obtains the majority majority in 2005 which made it the legal representative of Christians.

4- Almarada Current

It was established on 1968 by Tony Frenjia son of President Suliman Frenjia as a military wing for the Christians in north Zigrta to confront the Left parties and Palestinian forces. They join to Lebanon Front and withdraw 0n 1978. Then their headquarter was attacked by Lebanon Forces ⁴.

After Altaef Agreement the current surrendered his weapons and established political party headed by Suliman Frenjia and he occupied several ministries since 1992. The party wins three seats in 2009 elections and it has a strong relation with Awn current and Hizbollah and Syria.

3. The Conclusion

It is clear from this study that Christians religious current thoughts was represented by the following:

- 1- Emphasis on privacy and independence of Lebanon.
- 2- Call all Lebanon sects to cooperate and dialogue
- 3- Emphasis of Christians religious current to make National accordance government as stated in Altaef Agreement.
- 4- Emphasis on the necessity of separate the state from religion.

¹Muntaser Alidany leaderships of Transformation and Political development Iraq and Lebanon As an example 1990 -2011, Alarif lilmtboat, 1st editin, Beirut- Lebanon, 2012

- 5- Call for economic and social development
- 6- Call Maroons church to raise by revision of its role in East and change the vision of Lebanon as a shelter of minorities and consider Lebanon as for humanity and face of modernity
- 7- Their thoughts after Altaef Agreement concerned about decline of their dominance and that expressed by thoughts of George Khuder.

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²TanuisYousif Mukhaiber, P213.

³Hussien Alhindawy, Lemanon 1991 aTravel in a Planet, Dar Almada, 1st edition, Beirut, 2018, P139.

⁴Tanuis Yousif Mujber, P213