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Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

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Editorial

Movement of the world towards unity in politics, economy, and culture, gives promise of the day when humans are liberated from conflicting goals and chaos in lifestyles, as well as re-defines human identity in a secure mental atmosphere. Awaiting the savior as the most significant element in making unity manages today's human thought and encourages him to break free from materialistic structures, dogmatic modernism, and loose structureless post-modernism. Globalization of 'Awaiting', which can bring gifts of peace and justice to all, demands a strategic look at the doctrine of Mahdism and also necessitates doctrine constructing in this regard, a doctrine that goes beyond the state-nation limits and releases tired hearts from the spiritual and moral crises throughout the world. The process of doctrine-making on the bases of awaiting the Savior can be realized through following attempts:

1. Global pathology of the savior

In this stage, purifying the belief in the savior is carried out on heresiography. The process of purifying necessitates a deep intra-religious study which bears fruit through cleansing the countenance of the savior from the superstitions and features of different cultures. Investigation

into the unblemished religious texts which demonstrates a proximity to the time of the Revelation is an instance that requires increasing attention in this process.

2. Introduction of the real savior to the world

After the intra-religious pathology, another step of the process will be in the extra-religious atmosphere in which the common savior of all religions, which is in harmony with human nature and divine teachings, is presented to nations. Introduction of the Savior in this step results in greater acceptability of this deeply-rooted concept of religions to humans.

3. Learning how to wait for the Savior

Finding out the real savior, attracts humans towards him spiritually and mentally. The third step is then rightly directing the process of wait in the context of society. Among specific duties of the functionaries of globalization of justice can be mentioned making distinction between 'Positive Wait', in which one endeavors to pave the way for the 'Appearance', and 'Negative Wait', in which one chooses seclusion and indifference to injustice and oppression in the society; thus culture-making among the masses is a valuable attempt, whose fruitage is that everybody can grasp the concept of the Wait and the Savior.

4. Modeling the era of the Appearance in the time of the 'Occultation'

Awaiting the chaste savior requires striving for a condition which is in harmony with the savior so that the validity of claims regarding the savior is verified in practice. This pattern-taking step is of great significance for different

pillars of society and for political, economic, and cultural organizations, so that the achievement of such a big step encourages the social agents to extend their influence in the global arena. Therefore, those responsible for the globalization of Awaiting, in particular, and all those who wait the Savior, in general, should contribute a major role in this modeling, through which they can prepare the ground for the Appearance.

5. Formation of an international organization as the justice watcher

The next step is to form external organizations to sanction the theoretical arguments inside the circles that facilitate their implementation. One of the most important elements of Appearance era is the universe-inclusiveness of justice in latitude and longitude. The world awaiting the Appearance needs to provide mechanisms of institutionalizing justice. Attending to both the internal tools like ethics and the external means such as law-making and using two Islamic valuable principles of ‘enjoining the good and forbidding the evil’ in the global expansion is advisable. Thus, to reform the structure and function of international organizations can promote the process of globalizing the wait internationally. The establishment of the justice watcher that identifies any endangering of justice in the world towards the people, whether physical or corporate, can issue formal resolutions against the oppressive behavior in the world.

6. Enrolment of the religious justice-seeking activists

Considering the issue that Justice Activists should themselves understand and believe in justice, the believers to different religions are worthy options that can link theory

(religious beliefs) to practice (religious acts), and bring the justice to a high state in the world. Establishing the active governmental and non-governmental organizations with justice-seeking mission that help reduce human catastrophe and spread justice can be special duties of these organizations.

7. Allocation of an international award to Justice-seeking

Using an enhancing and publicizing system in the area of justice-seeking has a better result for justice activists in possibility of globalizing the Awaiting. Identification of those who make strenuous efforts to spread justice and allocation of the special prize of the organization to them is one of the noteworthy actions in indoctrination of Awaiting.

Hope the last moments of awaiting be elapsed,

and Appearance of the chaste savior promised in the religions and spreading the Justice.

Messianic Movements

By: Dr. Jasim Husain

How do we look at the trends and individuals who alleged that they maintained direct contact with the 12th Imam al-Mahdi in form of direct representation or acting to preparing his way?

1. Why did we raise this question in this critical period? And what were the factors that led to the evolution of the Deputyship and those who want to pave the way of the Mahdi appearance. There are possible factors that this paper is going to focus on like first, the society crisis and pressure of the time, second, the search for supernatural solution for the ongoing crisis and third, the Return to or using religion for solution or worldly gains; which stems from the disappointment of the youth and religious students from the traditional approach of the jurists toward the challenges of the time, the Re interpreting Prophetic and Imams saying regarding the Mahdi to recruit the youth. Also certain groups making false attempts through using the religious texts to imply that it fit to a particular group or individual. Such attempts aim to twisting the neck of the text forcibly to

serve their agenda by alleging having direct deputyship and then claiming to be the Mahdi

Such trends left in the past and in the future unforgettable outcomes as it creates discord to the meaning of the religious text and the legal person that his Outcome: forgetting the society crisis and turning to the discord of the meaning of the text, and the individual that his personal description fits to the religious text.

2. What would be the position towards the two trends? First, the preparatory group and second the claimant of having direct contact with the Mahdi in the form of being physically the descendant or the direct son of the Mahdi, being the legacy of the Mahdi, being the Mahdi himself or his successor or being the Yamani. It is a fact that the originators of false claim never listen to rational arguments because such approach and method will disclose their false claim, and one would say it is better to deal with them through different methods. However, the ordinary believers and the youth in particular need to be approached through rational methods to disclose the false claimants. Perhaps a critical study to the trend and individuals claimed of having direct contact with the 12th Imam al-Mahdi in form of direct representation or acting to paving his rise would help in distinguish between the genuine trend and those trends and individuals whose aim to gain worldly interest and to create feeling of doubt and despair in the mind of the ordinary believers.

Introduction:

Why did we throw this question during this period? The issue of the Prophet's succession, the Imamah, and its occupant, became the centre of theological argument since

the first century of Islam. All agreed to the fact that the actual institution goes to a man from Quraysh. However, the fit person for this post, as the inheritor, the carrier of the religious knowledge and as a leader of the Muslim community, had become a pivot for unresolved scholastic and political arguments, sectarian formation and political struggle since the prophet's death. The Muslim Jurists and the theologians had intensively covered these two integral themes since the first century and up to the present time and the religious agreement and disagreement in most scholastic religious circles based on these themes.

In addition, Muslim theologians studied in depth, the proof and disproof the Imamate of the 12th Imam and the two periods of concealment, which his followers had witnessed since the beginning of the 3rd/ 9th century. Therefore, it is vital to touch other current issues that challenged the very purpose of the occultation. These challenges stemmed from the reoccurrence of the activities of those who inspired to work to paving the way for his return, or alleged of having direct contact with the hidden Imam through lineage or through direct deputyship.

1. Factors behind such claims: Many factors encouraged certain sincere believers to find ways for paving the way for the return of the 12th Imam. Other factors tempted other people to allege of having deputyship or having direct contact with the 12th Imam.

a. Society crisis (al zarf al-Zaghit'): studying the movements that appeared in the Muslim world since the second century of Islam indicated to one fundamental fact that there has been a correlation between the a challenging crisis the society fell in AND the appearance of messianic religious movement aiming to lift the society from the crisis

that the society passes through. During the time of such crisis like the emergence of an internal tyrant (t'aghut) or an external invasion, the society passed through a period of chaos followed to a period where the society splits itself into its natural ethnic and regional components inclining to yield to pressure, the crisis caused, rather facing it in a collective work. Nothing could put these components together except religious cause with messianic hope and slogans in the forms of preparing the way for the Mahdi or using his name to face the crisis. The first trend was a genuine one although some of its leaders, like the various revolutionary rebels, acted beyond the instructions and methods the Imams set out as guidelines. The second trend often embedded false groups.

b. The periods of the messianic movements: There were two types of messianic movements occurred in the Islamic history. The First type was the movements that appeared before the second occultation of the twelfth Imam (329/940). These movements emerged under the Umayyad period. The leaders of such movements opposed the Umayyad authority and its systematic repressive measures and used the deposition of the Prophet's household legatees, mainly Imam Ali from the political leadership and the murder of Imam al-Husayn as their slogans to recruit people. At this time, there were prophetic sayings in circulation stating clearly that the end of the suffering of the nation will be at the hand of a man of his progeny from the line of his son al-Husain. Ibn Hanbal reported that the Prophet said: The Judgment day will not take place until the Injustice, unfairness and tyranny had filled the world followed by the rise of a man from my progeny, who shall fill it with justice and fairness after it had been filled with injustice and aggression. The sixth Imam al-Sadiq, who

witnessed the Umayyad tyranny stated saying,: The world will not perish until a man from my progeny shall appear, who judges between people in David's judgment method. He will not be asked for testimony and gives each person his exact right.¹

The majority of the Muslims, who felt the Umayyad tyranny at the time, thought that the judgment day was near and time of the rise of the Mahdi was due at any moment. Many ordinary people inspired by the hope of ending the tyranny, by one Hashemite leader, began to read the prophetic sayings in their general scope applying them on a particular Hashemite figure with the hope that he would be the Mahdi the prophetic sayings were indicating to and encouraging the future Muslims to rally around him. "Allah, through His Will, shall make one of us, the prophet's household, the Mahdi'' (al-Kafi, 1, 450).²

«والمهدي يجعله الله من شاء منا أهل البيت»

They were more confused and put the populace in confusion when innocently misinterpreting the messianic prophetic texts to indicate that a particular Hashemite leader was the future Mahdi. Many understood that the descriptions of the texts fit a particular Hashemite leader of their time. In fact, often in this early period the ambitious political followers addressed their leader as the Mahdi and rally around him in their struggle to save the nation from the pressure of the tyrant of their time. The following text is narrated by Nu'aym b. Hammad al-Mirwazi. It describes the way the people read the prophetic tradition at the 2nd century regarding reference to signs of stars and movements in the sky that are associated with the rise of the Mahdi. The believers used to read these traditions and decide accordingly to refrain or to participate in the movement of

Muhammad dhul nafs al-zakiyya, who announced his rise in the year 145/762 and whose followers claimed to be the promised Mahdi.³ The Mukhtar⁴ movement and most of the Zaydites messianic movements that appeared during the Umayyad and the Abbasid period fall under this category.⁵

The second form of messianic movement: The second types of the messianic movements were other groups from the shi'a camp who had full understanding of the prophetic messianic sayings about the personality of the future Mahdi and the time of his occultation. From the time of the sixth Imam onward, the Imams began to circulate to their close disciples more descriptions about the Mahdi. These sayings began to become more specific in their descriptions to fit only to the 12th one in the line of the imams but yet without specifying his name. There were indications that these people were aware about the exact lineage line, of the awaited Imam, that these traditions indicating to, but instead they intentionally seized the opportunity of the first concealment (260-329/874-974) of the twelfth Imam to start, under their own leader, their political and militant activities against the Abbasid tyranny. The following lines indicate how the isma'ili movement benefited from using these religious texts for their political struggle against the tyrant of the time.

The Prophetic and the Imams sayings were in circulation among the shi'a in general of the time. The following text explains clearly this ambiguity about the specific personality of the Imam that made it a fertile environment for the certain Hashemite ambitious persons to utilize them for their own end.

قال ابو عبدالله جعفر بن محمد الصادق: لا تذهب الدنيا حتى يخرج رجل منى يحكم بحكومة آل داود و لا يسأل بينة يعطى كل نفس حقها. (الكليني، الكافي، ج ١، ص ٣٩٧ - ٨)

عن ابى عبدالله الصادق «اذا بلغكم عن صاحب هذا الامر غيبة فلاتنكروها عن الاصبع بن نباتة قال: أتيت امير المومنين فوجدته متفكرا ينكت فى الارض فقلت يا اميرالمومنين مالى اراك متفكرا تنكت فى الارض أرغبة منك فيها؟ فقال لا و الله ما رغبت فيها و لا فى الدنيا يوما قط و لكنى فكرت فى مولود يكون من ظهري الحادى عشر من ولدى هو المهدي الذى يملأ الارض عدلا و قسطا كما ملئت جورا و ظلما تكون له غيبة و حيرة يضل فيها اقوام و يهتدى فيها اخرون فقلت يا اميرالمومنين و كم تكون الحيرة و الغيبة؟ قال ستة ايام او ستة اشهر او ست سنين فقلت و ان هذا الكائن؟ فقال نعم كما انه مخلوق و انى لك بهذا الامر يا اصبع؟ أولئك خيار هذه الامة مع خيار ابرار هذه العترة فقلت ثم ما يكون بعد ذلك؟ فقال يفعل الله مايشاء فان له بداءات و ازادات و غايات و نهايات. (الكافي، ٣٣٨، ١)^٦

The Shi'a Ismaili movement used these religious texts to recruit the grassroots of the shi'a to their movement as they were calling for the rise of the Mahdi and were merely preparing his way to come through their activates. In doing so, they" succeeded not only to attract the majority of the ordinary shi'a in the south of Iraq and the east region of Arabia to their side but also to succeed in establishing a state in the north of Africa in the name of the Mahdi from the year 286/909.⁷

Searching for saviour: After the beginning of the long occultation in the year 329/940 the shi'a Ithna 'ashri began a period to coop with the complete cut in the communication of the Imam with his followers. It was a period of discord, challenge and a milestone to move forward. The main task, that the jurists and the narrators had' to focus on, was to

bring the remaining members of the community together through proving the existence of the 12th Imam through the previous Imams sayings that already had foretold the occultation. The second step taken was to build the intellectual foundation of the congregation based on three pillars. These were first collecting the Prophetic sayings through the Imams, second building independent school of jurisprudence and third developing the science of Kalam as a method to strengthen the congregation theology against the internal and external challenge which the 12th Imam's first concealment and his second total occultation brought about. This successful flourishing Twelvers intellectual period continued to consolidate itself on the ground in the heart of the Muslim land of being merely a persecuted religious intellectual community, with tacit political aspiration, into a faith for people in areas other shi'a communities that used to be politically active. There areas covered Iraq, Anatolia and many regions of present Iran and Hijaz area until the 6th /12th century when the tribal feudal military Turkish and Mongolian waves began to move from central Asia to the Middle east.

The inquisition stage: The Twelvers shi'a community began to fall gradually under systematic sectarian political pressure from the 4th /10 century onwards. Later Nizam al-Mulk established his infamous which anti shi'a educational religious programme that put shi'ism, Zaiydi, Ismai'ili and Ithna 'Ashari alike, in general under new phase of inquisition period. The anti shi'a educational policy creators relied on the Seljuk military feudal authority in Iraq, Syria and Egypt and Hijaz to eradicate shi'ism from every day life and turned its followers into suspicious faith and unwanted community. The shi'a community, for its survival, had to reshape its religious and social network from merely

religious missionary community to a secluded defensive community scattered in many regions with very cautious weak network of communication to serve its upper scholastic jurists. When one studies the daily life of shi'a community in Iraq, during the Seljuk period, the Shi'a Isma'ili community in the castle Almut and the biography of the life of sayed Ibn Tawlis in Iraq one would come up with clear evidence that testifies the intolerable turning point that took place in the history of the shi'a community.

The outcome of these harsh policies caused the shi'ism in general and the Twelvers in particulars to be divided on the ground into two social groups; first a secluded scholastic religious learning centres located in remote areas from the decision making political centres. These centres like Najaf, Hilla, Qatif, Bahrain, Jabal 'Amil, Qum, Ray, Ahwaz and certain centres in Khurasan . Second, in the regions where the ruling regimes the ottomans and the Mamluks adopted anti Shiite stand blessed by sectarian religious verdicts (fatawa), the living persecuted Shiite communities in north Africa, Syria, Hijaz and the Ottoman dominated regions had to adjust its daily rituals to meet the challenge of the pressure imposed by the inquisition measures. Over 80 Sunni jurists issued verdict stating that "killing a rafizi (Shiite), in its like virtue and reward, like killing seventy non-believers". Hence, many Shiite people socially were forced to adhere to the dominated non-shiite madhhab in the area, at the same time they joined a Sufi order that takes its spiritual guidance from chain (silsilah) that related to Imam Ali.

This particular stage of inquisition caused radical sectarian change on the ground. Saladin abolished the Fatimids caliphate in Egypt in 567/1011 followed by

declaring the four schools of law as the official madhhab of the" state and its subjects. Since the following dynasties followed this course with repressive measures. Later as continuation of the Seljuk policies and religious approach in central Asia, after they had moved to Anatolia in the late 5th/_{11th} century, the Hanafite law became the official madhhab for the ottoman state and its religious institutions. In Hijaz, the Shiite "Adhan of hayya 'al khayr al-'amal" was banned by the mamluks to be recited in Mecca and Medina. (<http://www.mazameer.com/vb/showthread.php?t=26385&page=2>)

The fourth stage: The inquisition period, the quietest approach prevailed in the scholastic Shiite centres and the prolongation of the second occultation of the 12th Imam created new Shiite messianic Sufi movements, in search of the return of the Mahdi, tended to reread the religious texts regarding the futuristic conditions and events and signs that preceded or lead to the appearance of the Mahdi. The collection of this literature grew to form a science of the letters ('ilm al-harf) through the examination of the religious texts, the users, as alleged, would be able to find and specify the right time and place for the movement to take action to facilitate the conditions that speed up the rise of the Mahdi. (al-Shibi; al-sila bayna al-tasawwuf wa al-Tashayu'). The use of this method faced no rejection as long as its users aimed sincerely examining the religious texts without altering or distorting the actual meaning of the texts. The outcome of these messianic movements during the 9th/15th century was the establishment of two states, the-Safawids state in Azerbaijan then in all Persia (1500-1723) and the Musha' shi'in⁸ state that was in the south of Iraq and the south west of Persia. Later on the Shaiykhiyya movement, the Babi and the Baha'I movements were similar

messianic trends that used the religious texts in search of the rise of the Mahdi. The major setback in these movements was the free interpreting of the religious text without the close consultation and obedience to the tradition main stream of the Shiite intellectual teaching regarding the future Mahdi.

However, the creation of these two states and their failure to materialize the spiritual and economic suitable conditions that might lead to the return of the Mahdi it caused new stand for reading and examining the messianic texts by the representatives of the scholastic religious Shiite circles in both Najaf and Qum.

The Jurist stand, Mahdism and Wilayat al-faqih:

The failure of the messianic previous political states confirmed, to the concerned jurists, the correctness of the traditional narrations approach in waiting for the rise of the Imam as the time of his rise is based on divine command in un-fixed time in the future. In edition to this well-known' conclusion, certain jurist came up with the notion that while the Mahdi in state of occultation one of the jurist, who believes in the Mahdi Imamate, may work along with other network of jurists to create a state in which the Shiite law may prevail and put in practice. Such stand would fulfill the religious duties required from both the jurist and his followers. *The gradual evolution and development of the concept of Wilayat al-faqih in its political and legislative form evolved from the framework of the pessimistic Shiite political background while its theological context stemmed from the environment that had been accustomed to central rule and intellectually oriented to theological methodology stemmed from philosophical premises in which the theory brought about.*⁹

The challenge that has faced the mainstream approach, in waiting for the awaited Mahdi in our time, comes from religious students that studied in the. religious circles, who

faced harsh treatment from the authorities of the day in Iraq. Many of them became unhappy with the apparent scholastic approach that the religious centers established upon while the surrounded Shiite community was facing the harsh treatment of the authority of the day. Many students while studying the academic syllabus imposed on them began to build interest in studying futuristic religious texts and implementing them as a means for recruiting youth for achieving social and political change under religious umbrella. They witnessed a new approach in the studies of messianic circles. This approach followed the foot steps of the trends appeared in the 9th/15th century. It relies heavily on the dream in making religious decision on the political life. This trend appeared in the religious circles of Qum and Mashhad among the immigrant students from Iraq and Bahrain.

The representatives of this trend alleged that they experienced meeting with the 12th Imam to solve a religious or personal matters the believers were facing at the time. The Shiite authorities in Iran and the Sunni ruling regime in Iraq, during the eighties and the nineties of last century, did not see any threat from the spread of these spiritual movements, because they did not see any direct threat comes from their activities. On the contrary, the Iraqi authorities benefited from this trend by embedding some of its religious agents to have outwardly spiritual role among the shi'a activists. They attracted the trust of these activists and began predicting to them certain events, the authorities will take against the believers, which the authorities already planned to execute in a fixed date such as releasing prisoners, sentencing others or releasing personal information, the spiritual agent already obtained from the government. In doing so many youth and simple-minded

people accepted the role and the religious position these people have reached which, if questioned by anyone the authorities and the crowd would put in trouble.¹⁰

The case of Ahmad al-hasan:

However, a careful observation of the daily life of such claimants would disclose their false claims. Soon the believers will abandon such person and move on in their messianic spiritual search. The implication of the presence of such false claimants and the disappointment of the followers might bring about confusion and despair among the followers and would put them off from the participation in any genuine religious programme that fit with the positive approach for the awaiting. However, after the failure of such trend, it is essential for the mainstream of the marji'yat is to offer rehabilitation religious educational programme for the youth of such followers to bring them back to the right understanding and the right approach toward the concepts of intizar, Zuhoor and the Mahdi.

The more disturbing movement of this type is the movement of Ahmad Al-hasan in Basra. His announcement of his message came after the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003. He studied in the religious circle of Najaf for eight years. He was in prison for a while and began his mission on putting certain allegations that after examining them one could say that no one alleged such claim before him since the time of the occultation of the 12th Imam in the year 329/940. A careful study of his claim as it appears in his writing published in the website talks in his name¹¹ will note that it comprises the following seven claims:

He alleged that he is the son of the Mahdi,

And the legatee and the messenger of the 12th Imam.

He is the first Mahdi after the 12th Imam

He is the Yamani, the religious texts talk about, who prepares al-mahdi's way.

He considers the Shiite grand jurists, who reject his claim, like idols preventing their followers from seeing the truth and their followers like cattle.

He rejects the current methodology used by the Shiite jurists to issue their religious verdicts although he uses the same method to prove his argument!!!

He relies on the dream and the science of letters ('Im al-Hunif) and hermeneutic revision of the last 12th Imam statement to his fourth safir to support his claim.

How to view the new trend in comparison to the old messianic trends?

The above seven claims cover the writings and the declaration of the claimant. He strongly believes in his message and, for this reason, he made his claim public asking the Shiite jurists to believe in his message and asked the leader of the Islamic republic of Iran, to submit the authorities to him on the ground that, as he alleged, is the rightful legatee and messenger of the 12th Imam.¹² He also addressed the main grand Shiite jurists, Sayyeds Ali Seestani, Kazim al-Haeiri, Muhammad sa'ed al-Hakim and Muhammad Husain Fadl Allah to accept his call.

In fact, most of the leaders of the messianic movements in the past inspired for their action by the pressure of the time and the religious sayings attributed to the prophet regarding future events accompanied the rise of the Mahdi. Many of them believed genuinely in disseminating the mission to create the social and spiritual conditions that would facilitate the rise of the Mahdi. While others claimed to be, the indirect gate of the Mahdi while" in the Sunni dominated environment one finds the intolerable conditions of their society pushed them to resort to arms struggle with the hope

that Hashemite rebel leader would be the expected Mahdi.¹³ Muhammad b. al-Hasan Dhul Nafs al-Zakiyya, Al-Mahdi b. Tumart in North Africa¹⁴ al-Mahdi of Sudan and AlMahdi of Sumal in the late 19th century¹⁵, falls under this category. However, none of these rebels and leaders in the past assumed that he was the son of the twelfth Imam like the claim of Ahmad al-Hasan or the hermeneutic method he used to the term of al-Qa'im, al-Mahdi, zuhzur and Mushahadah.¹⁶

Politically the strength of Ahmad b. al-Hasan relied on three points, first; the strong political pressure put on the masses that caused them to resort to religion and were ready to listen to any voice that offers a hope for delivering them from their intolerable conditions. Second; in his mission, he concentrated on the half illiterate and the youth because they are the ones that through whom social changes would take place, also they are easy to convince contrary to the older ones and the learned ones, who became a target for his harsh literary attack.¹⁷ Third, he showed ability to be selective in holy texts reading and using to attack the status of the jurists and the society and to prove his claim from biblical and quranic texts and Prophetic and Imams sayings.¹⁸

The declaration of Ahmad al-Hasan caused strong reaction among the community. Many people began looking at his statements and calls with suspicion and their response varied from refuting his claim through verdicts,¹⁹ dialogue to demolishing the centers of his calls and places of gathering in many towns in Iraq. The seven claims Ahmad al-Hasan put forward could be intellectually answered if the first two claims are examined and resolved. The answer to these two claims will clarify the nature of the whole mission, "whether it has some truth, or a movement resulted from the pressure of the time or merely another embedded

trend aimed to distort the genuine main stream of messianic shi'ism in similar method of that of the Babi trend in Karbala in the 19th century.

In his statement Bayanat al-yamani, he clearly declares that he is the son of the 12th Imam, his legatee and, as he alleged, that he receives direct instructions from the 12th Imam to declare his mission as the messenger of the Imam to the nation and he would be the Mahdi after the 12th Imam.²⁰ Nazim al-'Auqaili, one of his followers, wrote a paper in 2004 to prove the possibility that the 12th Imam would live normal life including marrying and having children. His paper is based on re-examining the books 'of Hadith and the books of supplications and visits (ziyaraat) to the Imams shrines. He concluded a hypothesis that the Imam would have lived normal life and consequently had left offspring, and therefore, according to him, if this conclusion is concluded a hypothesis that the Imam would have lived normal life and consequently had left offspring, and therefore, according to him, if this conclusion is theoretically accepted it is, therefore, according to him, logical to accept the claim of Ahmad al-Hasan being the son of the 12th Imam. al-uqaili argues, that Ahmad al-Hasan claimed that he is the son of the 12 Imam and the latter did not come forward to disapprove this claim therefore, according to him, one must accept the claim as fact.²¹

If one goes with this theoretical approach of al-Uqaili, one could assume that it is quiet plausible that the 12th Imam, during his short occultation, of being married and having children. There is evidence from this period that indicates this assumption. Al-Kulayni reports that Ahmad b. Ja'far al-Himyari asked the first if he had seen the 12th Imam in his own naked eyes after the death of the 11th Imam al-Hasan al-Askari and his name. The deputy confirmed that he had

seen the child but it is forbidden to ask about the name. The reason behind this was that the authorities of the time reached the conclusion that the 11th Imam, al-Hasan al-'Askari, had passed away without having a male inheritor and for this reason the Imam's wealth was distributed among individuals, who had no right in the bequeath. Because of this conclusion, the authorities had given up their search and pursuit about the Imam whereabouts. As result of this conclusion, the Imam's families were able to moving freely with no fear from any restriction nor anyone would be able to recognize them or causing them harm. However, if the name had been identified the search would resume along with the resumption of the inquisition period. Therefore one must refrain from asking about the personality of the Imam.²²

But this assumption does not mean that the direct children of the Imam or their offspring had legal authority upon the believers unless the previous Imam in person stipulates a particular son to succeed him in the Imamate.

It is worth taking the last statement of Ali b. Muhammad al-Samari, the fourth safir of the 12th Imam. Abu Muhammad al-Hasan b, Ahmad al-Mukattib said:

I was in Madinat al-Salam in the year in which Shaykh Abu al-Hasan Ali b, Muhammad al-Samari-may God blesses his soul, and I attended his place days before he passed away. He showed to the people a statement (signature) which states: In the name of God, the companionate, the merciful, O Muhammad. Ali al-Samari May Allah reward your brethren in you as you are going to die six '. Days from know. So do not make any person to be in charge of your place after your departure. The total occultation has commenced and there will be no reappearance until God, the Exalted, shall permit after the

extremity of time, hardening of hearts and total spread of injustice on earth. Someone shall come to my followers alleging the witness but him who alleged the witness (of me) before the rise of the Sufyani and the outcry in the sky is indeed clear liar. And there is no power nor might save in God. We have copied this statement and left him. Six days later we returned to him and found him in his deathbed. He was asked who your successor is. He replied God has a fixed matter that he shall attain then he departed. This was the last statement was heard from him. May God be pleased with him and May he makes him satisfy?²³

Ahmad al-Hassan claimed that he is the son of the 12th Imam the Mahdi and this allegation has three possibilities to argue. First, he is the son of the 12th Imam in allegiance. In fact, every Muslim shares with him in this claim. The wives of the prophet were our mothers and the prophet is more important to us than we are. Because the Imams were his successors, they hold the same status in relation to the believers. In that sense, all Muslims are the children of the 12th Imam in allegiance and in obedience. Second, If Ahmad al-Hasan is the son of the 12th Imam in lineage then this claim is possible on the ground ' that the 12th Imam left offspring. In fact all offspring share similar status with Ahmad al-Hassan but under the period of total occultation none of them will know or disclose his identity as being the descendant or the son of the Imam until the rise of the Sufyani and the outcry in the name of the imam in the sky. Therefore claiming that he is the son of the Imam and claiming seeing him is in contrast with the very message of the imam himself.

Third, the possibility that he meant in his allegation that he is the direct son of the 12th Imam and in this allegation requires one to inquire this claim from several angles to

reach the conclusion. When this claim is refuted the remaining claims will subsequently be disproved. In his audio recorded message, he stated: “O unjust ones do not feel happy because I became far from you and my immigration of your land this matter will not last long until I will return with my father Muhammad. Al-Hassan al-Mahdi, peace be 'with him), 'who will offer nothing except the sword and death under the shadow of swords. ... I will go to my father Muhammad b. al-Hassan al-Mahdi, peace be with him), to inform him that you have disbelieve me and dishonour me by slander and saying perfidy.”²⁴

In fact, in this claim Ahmad al-Hassan put him in an awkward position and defeated the whole aim of the total occultation. Claiming in this generation that one he is the direct son of the 12th Imam, as statement reads, he has to approve scientifically and legally the claim that he put forward and this requires the needed examination. If such required test went through and showed scientifically that he is not the son of the man that he was raised up with and he was merely a foster father. That will take us to the next step is to make the required scientific and legal search for the actual legal father of the claimant. The result of this investigation will put the claimant in awkward situation and jeopardize the whole purpose of the total occultation of the 12th Imam. If such investigation proved negative then all the remaining claims will collapse. His followers stated that Ahmad b. Al-Hasan stated that he is the son and the 12th Imam and since the Imam did not come forward with a statement of denying this claim this necessitates that the claim is valid. The answer for such illogical argument is since the imam denies any witness, disclosure of the identity of the Imam before his rise and did not come with statement confirming the claim of the claimant and the consensus of the jurists of such claim then the whole claim is refuted and the rest of the claims as well collapsed too.

In correspondence conducted by one of the believer with the group of Ahmad alhassan a certain test was put for him to filter the correctness of his claim. The question is quiet simple one. Whenever an Imam passed away, his followers come forward and asked the sons of the deceased imam certain question and expected the rightful successor will answer and in obtaining the required answer the Imamate of the new Imam will be confirmed. When Ahmad Alhasan was addressed with similar question he started to give polemic answers and promised to give the answer but after waiting for a year. He failed to do so.²⁵

There is consensus among the Imamiyya that the two inevitable signs for the rise of the Mahdi had to occur first. These two signs are, the rise of the sufyani and second, the outcry in the sky in the name of the Mahdi and his name. The remaining three inevitable signs will come in sequence in the same year. These signs are the rise of the earthquake in the outskirts of the Medina in which an army will be destroyed and the rise of the Yamani and lastly the murder of the pure soul in Mecca fifteen days before the rise of the Mahdi.

The claim of Ahmad al-Hassan in his hermeneutic approach in reinterpreting the religious texts and the terms used by the statements of the 12th Imam to suit his end will open wide door for future claimants. He made an attempt to reinterpret the two inevitable signs that shall precede the rise of the Imam by cancelling these inevitable signs according to the principle of Badaa.²⁶ In doing so, he has made himself the actual rise and manifestation (zuhur) of the Mahdi but in the person of Ahmad b. al-Hassan.²⁷ This new approach of hermeneutic examination of selective religious will open doors for new claimants of being the Mahdi within the camp of shi'ism when ever a social or

political crisis occur in the society. It makes Mahdism as useful for change in the society in the hand of every ambitious person and keeps the real belief in the awaited Mahdi as a cult only. In order to implicate other people with him in his belief, he dictates to his disciples to write treatise to defend his doctrine in refutation of the mainstream of the community. In doing so, the writers had no option but to carry on with the new dogma which has in the mind of the community had no return.

Notes

1. There are enormous Prophetic sayings regarding the rise of the Mahdi that reported by the Muslim narrators irrespective of their view toward Imam Ali and his successors. Although Nu'aim ibn Hammad al-Mirwazi (d.229) was anti Imam Ali, he reported many traditions regarding the future rise of the Mahdi in his book al-Fitan. Please see: Nu'aim b. Hammad al-Mirwazi, Kitab al-fitan, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub, 1997 An example of the more accepted traditions the following are example of this tepe:

قال رسول الله: لا تقوم الساعة حتى تملأ الارض ظلما و جورا و عدوانا ثم يخرج من اهل بيتي من يملأها قسطا و عدلا كما ملئت ظلما و عدوانا (مسند ابن حنبل ج ٣ ص ٣٦ و في رواية اخرى عن رسول الله انه قال: المهدي منا اهل البيت يصلحه الله في ليلة (ابن ماجه، كتاب الفتن باب خروج المهدي حديث ٤٠٨٥)

و في حديث اخر انه قال: المهدي من عترتي من ولد فاطمة (سنن ابى داود ج ٧ ص ١٣٤)

قال ابو عبدالله جعفر بن محمد الصادق: لاتذهب الدنيا حتى يخرج رجل منى يحكم بحكومة آل داود و لا يسأل بيته يعطى كل نفس حقها. (الكافي، ج ١، ص ٣٩٧ - ٨)

2. Al-kulaini, al-kafi, 1, 450

3. Nu'aim b. Hammad al-Mirwazi, Kitab al-fitan, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub, 1997, P. 151 Please 'check the text

(نعيم ابن حماد المروزي، ت ٢٢٩، ٨٤٠، كتاب الفتن، بيروت، دار الكتب العلمية، ١٩٩٧، تحقيق مجدى بن منصور الشورى، وقد حقق الكتاب قبلا سهيل زكار و نشرته دار الفكر عام ١٩٩٣ و لكنى لم استطع الحصول على تلك النسخة المحققة)

روى نعيم بن حماد المروزي في كتاب الفتن قال حدثنا الوليد قال «رأينا رجفة أصابت أهل دمشق في أيام مضين من رمضان، فهلك ناس كثير في شهر رمضان سنة سبع و ثلاثين و مائة، و لم نر ما ذكر من الواهية و هى الخسف الذى يذكر في قرية يقال لها حرسنا، و رأيت نجما له ذنب طلع في المحرم سنة خمس و اربعين و مائة مع الفجر من المشرق، فكنا نراه بين يدي الفجر بقية المحرم، ثم خفى، ثم رأيناه بعد مغيب الشمس في الشفق و بعده فيما بين الجوف لشهرين أو ثلاثة، ثم خفى سنتين او ثلاثا. ثم رأينا نجما خفيا له شعلة قدر الذراع رأى العين قريبا من الجدى يستدير حوله بدوران الفلك في جماديين و اياما من رجب ثم

خفى. ثم رأينا نجما ليس بالازهر طلع عن يمين قبلة الشام ماذا شعلته من القبلة الى الجوف الى ارمينية، فذكرت ذلك لشيخ قديم عندنا من السكاسك فقال: ليس هذا بالنجم المنتظر.
قال الوليد: و رأيت نجما فى سنين بقين من سنى أبى جعفر (الدوانيقي) ثم انعقد حتى التقى طرفاه فصال لطوق ساعة من الليل، قال الوليد: و قال كعب هو نجم يطلع من المشرق و يضىء لأهل الارض كاضاءة القمر البدر قال الوليد: و الحمرة و النجوم التى رأيناها ليست بالايات، إنما نجم الايات نجم يتقلب فى الافاق فى صفر و فى ربيعين او فى رجب، و عند ذلك يسير خاقان بالاتراك تتبعه روم الظواهر بالرايات و الصلب، قال الوليد قال: بلغنى عن كعب انه قال: يطلع نجم من المشرق قبل خروج المهدي له ذناب»

4. Al-Mukhtar: He is al-Mukhtar b. Abi Ubayd al- Thaqafi. He was from a well-known noble family, (ashraf) of the tribe of Thaqlf in al- Ta'f. His father was killed in the battle of al- Jissr in 13/634 during their fight with the sasanid empire and he was raised by his uncle Sa'd b. Mas'ud, the governor of Mada'in during the caliphate of Imam Ali. He witnessed the crucifying, on palm trees, the partisans of Imam Ali by Mu'awiyya governor in Kufa. His young age at the time saved him from the crucifying of many of the followers of Imam Ali. He benefited from the Shiite anti Umayyad feeling in Iraq among the Arabs and the non-Arabs alike. He began his activities in Kufa calling the Arabs to rally around him to avenge the killers of Imam al-Husain and called the non Arab Muslims to support him so that he will improve their social and economic status. When he took over Kufa he fulfilled his promises for both groups at the expense of the heads of the Arab tribes who were forced to withdraw to Basra to join Mas'ab B. Al-Zubair. He took ' over all Iraq and west of Persia and was treated in the mind of many Muslims as the one who was preparing the way for the coming awaited Mahdi. He linked himself to Muhammad Ibn al-Hanifiyya and the Kaysaniyya, which paved the theological route for the Hashimiyya underground movement that brought the Abbasids to power in the year 132/750. (G. R. Hawting, EI, article, al-Mukhtar, EI; Madelung, EI, Kaysaniyya; Hamid Abbas Sehati, al-Mukhtar al-Thaqafi, un published MA thesis, International Islamic University, London, 2007, ch. 2).
5. When Zaid b. Ali revolted in Kufa in 122 against Hisham b. Abd al-Malk , his followers hoped that he would be the awaited Mahdi. However, his revolt crushed badly and after he was buried, the Umayyads dig his grave and took his body. They cut his head and took it to Damascus and from there they sent it to Medina where the governor Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Makhzumi put the head near the tomb of the Prophet and encouraging his servants to curse Imam Ali and his family in public for seven days. Then the head was taken to Cairo for display but the Egyptians took the head and buried it in area near the well-known Mosque called Masjid Ra's al-Husain. The governor of Kufah crucified the body on a palm tree and erected in the middle of Kufah for display to terrify the partisans. He kept contingent to guard the body from any attempt to remove the body. Four years later the Umayyad governor, Yusif b. Umar al- Thaqafi took the body down, burned it and threw its ashes in the Euphrates so that no grave will be left to ignite people against the Umayyads. He also proudly testify the crucification of Zaid deying of him being the awaited Mahdi otherwise he will not be subject to death. He said: We have crucified your Zaid on a palm tree and it is a strange that a Mahdi could be crucified on palm tree!!

صلبنا لكم زيدا على جذع نخلة و لم أر مهديا على الجذع يصلب

6. Al-Kafi, 1, 338.

7. It is worth mentioning that the Ismaili took into consideration in their missionary work the religious background and economic situation of the people with whom they worked. Therefore we find that their propaganda spread mainly among the people who already had Shi'ite inclinations. In the occultation of the twelfth Imam the Isma'ilis seems to have found a good opportunity to use the Imamite masses in their political struggle. According to Ibn al-Athir, the Qaramita missionary Yahya b. al-Mahdi went to Bahrain, which had a large Shi'ite population. In 281/894 he contacted an eminent Shi'ite leader, Ali b. al-Mu'alla b. Hamdan, and informed him that he had been sent by al-Mahdi to inform his followers that his "rising was due. Al-Mu'alla satisfied with the message and revealed it to the Shi'ite in Qatif and other villages of Bahrain. They in turn accepted it and promised that they too would support al-Mahdi if he rose. By such means the Ismaili succeeded in disseminating their cause among the tribes of Qays and Asad, Tay and Tamim in the Sawad and also attracted Banu al-Ulays, which used to protect the trade route between Kufa and Damascus, also joined their side. Ibn al-Athir, al-Karnil, 7, 340-1; 8, 21-2.
8. Musha'shi'In: It was Shiite Arab state founded by sayyid Muhammad ibn Falah al-Musha'shi'i (d.848/1444) a descendant of the 7th Imam Musa al-Kazim. He was born in Wasit and studied under Ahmad b. Fahad al-Hilli. He developed strong view about his messianic political plan. He announced his rise (Zuhur) in the year of 828/1424 attracting many Arab tribes in the south of Iraq and Khuzistan, like the tribe of tay, Sudan, Banu Sulama. He succeeded to attract most of the Arab tribes there to his Sufi messianic mission and after his death his descendants continued his mission to spread shi'ism throughout south Iraq and south west of Persia among its Arab inhabitants. When the safawids messianic state was established in 1500 the safawids annexed the Musha'shi'i state to its territories. The Safawids strengthened their relation with the Mush'shi'im when Shah Abbas I married his sister to the Prince Nasir in 1025/1616. (Khawandmir, hablb al-Siyar, 4, 497; P. Luft, EI, article Musha'shi'a)
- 9 For more details on the different view on this issue read; Ahmad Waezi, *Shi'a Political Thought*, Islamic Centre, London, 2004, Abdulaziz A. Sachedina *The Just Ruler (al-sultan al-'ādil) in Shi'ite Islam: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imami Jurisprudence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, Said Amir Arjomand, (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988, Shahrough Akhavi, "Contending Discourses on Shi'i Law on the Doctrine of Wilayat- al Faqih," *Iranian Studies*, Vol 29, Nos. 3-4 (Summer-Fall 1996); Muhsen Kediver, *Hukmet-e Velayi*, Tahran, 1378
- 10 These information are collected through interviews with individuals that had participated in these activities in Bahrain in Prison and in Qum and Iraq during the war 1980-1988.
11. Please see the claimant's website www.almahdvoon.com. A website search indicates that a UK based person, who had atheist Marxist communist background, owns the website. He later established commercial activities in the Middle East and the Gulf.
12. Ahmad al-Hasan (Ahmad Ismael Qat'i') addressed the jurists, Sayyid Ali al-sestani, Sayed Kazim alHa'iri, Sayed Muhammad Husain Fadlalla and the leader of the Islamic republic of Iran in separate letters putting his claim forward and asking them to challenge him in public based on his two volumes book on the commentary of the Qur'an. See copies of the letters the website of his followers. www.almahdvoon.com

- ¹³. The Shiite Isma'iliya group after they established their state in North Africa and Egypt faced difficulty with the signs accompany the rise of the Mahdi and their theologian al-Qadi al-Nu'man had to find ways around that challenge that was put forward by the Imamiyya and the Sunni alike. The Isma'ili theologians, separated between the title al-Mahdi and al-Qa'im as two personalities and Interpreting them figuratively claiming that the Mahdi title and the sign of his rise were applicable to the Fatimids Mahdi while the eschatological imam and seventh apostle still expected for the future and would only be called the Qa'im. (For details on this explanation see W. Ivanov, *Ismaili tradition concerning the rise of the Fatimids*, London 1942,97-122, Article. texts, 1-31).
14. For more detail about the messianic mission of Ibn Turnart (527/1132) see F. Hopkins, EI, al-Mahdi Ibn Tumart.
15. See the detailed article of W. Madelung, EI, article Mahdi.
16. See Dia al-Zaidi, A new reading in the narration of al-Samari in refutation of Sayyed Kazim al-Haeiri statement against Ahmad al-Hasan, (qiraa'atun JadTdatun fi ruwayat al-Samari Raddan ala rnudda'I al-'Ilm al-Haeiri, np. Ansaar al-Mahdi, no 37, 2005,
17. See the paper of *Nazim al-Uqaili, al-radu al-qasim ala tnunkire ru 'yat al-qii'im*, Basra, Ansar alMahdi03/09/2007 publication, 1425,. In this paper the writer made severe attack on Sayyed al-Sestani because he reaffirm the well accepted view of the Imamiyya that the 12th Imam can not be seen or having direct representative before the Outcry in the sky and the appearance of the Sufyani.
18. See the statement of Ahmad al-Hasan claiming he is the promised Yamani and he is the first Mahdi after the 12th Imam in the group website. On an audio recoded message transcribed and published on a website, he waged a severe criticism against the ulema and praised the ordinary not knowledgeable ones. The following text is a quotation of the attack.
- و أنى لا انتظر نصره من علماء الدين. وكيف انتظر منهم نصره و الامام الصادق عليه السلام يؤكد في اكثر من حديث أن كثيرا منهم يقاتل الامام المهدي عليه السلام باللسان و السنان حتى اذا استتب له الامر استاصل سبعين من كبرائهم و ثلاثة آلاف من صغارهم. وكيف أنتظر منهم نصره و الصادق عليه السلام يقول: (ليبصرن الله هذا الامر بمن لاخلاق له و لو قد جاء امرنا لقد خرج منه من هو اليوم مقيم على عبادة الاوثان) و الاوثان أو الاصنام كما يقول الامام الصادق عليه السلام هم العلماء غير العاملين فلا اوثان في زمن الامام الصادق عليه السلام الا ابي حنيفة و اشباهه. www.almahdyoon.com
19. Sayyed Kazim al-Haeiri viewed Ahmed al-Hasan a man of innovation (bid'ah) as the 12th Imam does not have during his second occultation a deputy, representative of private messenger. The actual question and Sayyid Haeiri answer is mentioned below. Al-Sestani's office renounced his claims while Ishaq al-Fayyad renounced any person alleged he had direct deputyship from the Imam before his rise unless a clear solid proof and the Grand jurists will remain having the indirect deputyship until the rise of the Imam. Al-Ya'qubi, on the other hand advised the community not to have any contact with him or those who associate with him. Sayed Mahmud al-surkhi did like wise but in a strong wordings. Other statements were much stronger stating clearly that anyone alleged to be the Mahdi before the outcry in the sky and the rise of the Sufyani must be regarded as liar. (These statements published and circulated among the community through hard copies and electronic versions. The following is the question addressed to Sayyid al-Haeiri and his answer is and example of the grand jurist response.

السؤال ١٥: ظهر لدينا في هذه الايام او قبل مدة شخص يدعى أنه رسول الامام المهدي عليه السلام و وصيه و هذا الشخص يدعى احمد الحسن و قد سمحت لي الفرصة بأن التقى احد مويدي و انصار هذا المدعى و اخبرني أنه قد حصلت لديه بعض الروى او الامور الروحانية اكدت له ان هذا المدعى هو فعلا رسول الامام المهدي عليه السلام، و قد علمت ان هذا المدعى قد دعا جمعا من العلماء او من يمثلهم الى القسم و المباهلة و المناظرة على صحة ادعائه. فهل ان للامام المهدي عليه السلام رسلا؟ الجواب: ليس للامام المهدي عجل الله تعالى فرجه في ايام الغيبة الكبرى نائب او سفير و رسول خاص. و من يدعى لذلك فهو صاحب بدعة. المصدر: Source

<http://www.alhaeri.com/esteftaat/Hol-e-Iraq.htm>

20. See Dia ai-Zaidi, A new reading in the narration of al-Sarnari in refutation of Sayyed Kazim alHaeiri statement against Ahmad al-Hasan,

(قراءة جديدة في روايات السمري رداً على مدعى العلم الحائري، بدون تاريخ، رقم ٣٧، ٢٠٠٥، ص ٣٢)

qiraa'atun Jadldatun fi ruwayat al-Sarnari Raddan ala mudda'l al-'ilm al-Haeiri, np. Ansaar al-Mahdi, no 37, 2005, p.32" See also: bayanat al-yamani in the website www.almahdyoon.com

21. Al-Uqaili, Nazim, *Al-Rad al-Hasim 'ala mUllikiri dhurivval al-qa'im*, Basra, Anar al-Mahdi publication, 2004, Section Ibn al-Imam al-Mahdi, p.20-2

22. The following text which gives this indication is reported by both al-kulayni and al- Tusi see alKulayni, al-Kafi, 1,329-330 The following text which gives this indication is reported by both al-kulayni and al- Tusi see alKulayni, al-Kafi, 1,329-330

محمد بن عبدالله و محمد بن يحيى جميعا عن عبدالله بن جعفر الحميري قال اجتمعت انا و الشيخ ابو عمرو رحمة الله عند احمد بن اسحاق فغمزني احمد بن اسحاق ان اساله عن الخلف فقلت له: يا ابا عمرو اني اريد ان اسالك عن شيء و ما انا بشاك فيما اريد ان (صفحة ٣٣٠) أسالك عنه، فان الحجة (١) و اعلق باب التوبة فلم يك ينفع نفسا ايمانها لم تكن امنت من قبل او كسبت في ايمانها خيرا، فاولئك اشرار من خلق الله عز و جل و هم الذين تقوم عليهم القيامة و لكني احببت ان ازداد يقينا و ان ابراهيم عليه السلام سال ربه عز و جل ان يريه كيف يحيى الموتى، قال: او لم تومن قال: بلى و لكن ليطمئن قلبي، و قد اخبرني ابو علي احمد بن اسحاق، عن ابي الحسن عليه السلام قال: سألته و قلت: من اعامل او عمن اخذ، و قول من اقبل؟ فقال له: العمرى ثقنتي فما ادى اليك عنى فعدى و ما قال لك عنى فعدى يقول، فاسمع له و اطع، فانه الثقة المامون، و اخبرني ابو علي انه سال ابا محمد عليه السلام عن مثل ذلك، فقال له: العمرى و ابنه ثقتان، فما اديا اليك عنى فعدى يوديان و ما قال لك فعدى يقولان، فاسمع لهما و اطعمهما فانهما الثقتان المامونان، فهذا قول امامين قد مضيا فيك.

قال: فخر ابو عمرو ساجدا و بكى ثم قال: سل حاجتك.

فقلت له: انت رايت الخلف من بعد ابي محمد عليه السلام؟

فقال: اى و الله و رقبتة مثل ذا - و او ما بيده. -

فقلت له: فبقيت واحدة.

فقال لي: هات.

قلت: فالاسم؟

قال: محرم عليكم ان تسالوا عن ذلك، و لا اقول هذا من عندى، فليس لي ان احلل و لا احرم، و لكن عنه عليه السلام، فان الامر عند السلطان، ان ابا محمد مضى و لم يخلف ولدا و قسم ميراثه و اخذه من لا حق له فيه و هو ذا، عياله يجولون ليس احد يجسر

ان يتعرف اليهم او ينيلهم شيئا، و اذا وقع الاسم وقع الطلب، فاتقوا الله و امسكوا عن ذلك، وردت في الطوسي، كتاب الغيبة، ص ٣٥٩ - ٤١.

23. Al-Tusi: Kitab al-ghayba, 361

حدثني أبو محمد الحسن بن أحمد المكتب قال: كنت بمدينة السلام في السنة التي توفي فيها الشيخ ابو الحسن على بن محمد السمري - قدس الله روحه - فحضرته قبل و فاتته بايام، فاخرج الى الناس توقيعا نسخته:
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، يا على بن محمد السمري!... اعظم الله اجر اخوانك فيك، فانك ميت ما بينك و بين ستة ايام. فاجمع امرك و لا توص الى احمد فيقوم مقامك بعد وفاتك، فقد وقعت الغيبة التامة فلا ظهور الا بعد اذن الله تعالى ذكره، و ذلك بعد طول الامد، و قسوة القلب، و امتلاء الارض جورا، و سيأتي شيعتي من يدعى المشاهدة. الا فمن ادعى المشاهدة قبل خروج السفيناتي و الصيحة فهو كذاب مفتر، و لا حول و لا قوة الا بالله العلي العظيم.
فنسخنا هذا التوقيع و خرجنا من عنده، فلما كان اليوم السادس عدنا اليه و هو يوجد بنفسه، فقيل له: من وصيك من بعدك؟... فقال: لله امر هو بالغه.. و قضى فهذا آخر كلام سمع منه رضی الله عنه و ارضاه. الطوسي، الغيبة، ص ٣٤١.

24. See the Transcript of Ahmad al-Hasan's speech "Qissat al-Iliqaa in the website www.almahdvoon.com

و لا تفرحوا ايها الظلمة بابتعادى عنكم و هجرتى من بلادكم فلن يطول الامر حتى اعود مع ابى محمد بن الحسن المهدي عليه السلام الذى لن يعطيكم الا السيف و الموت تحت ظل السيف.... و سيأتيكم ابى غضبان اسفا بما فعلتم بى و انتهكتم من حرمتى و ستعلمون حينها عندما لا ينفعكم العلم شيئا على من اجترأتم و اى حرمة لله و لمحمد صلى الله عليه و آله و سلم و لعلى عليه السلام و لاولادهم عليه السلام انتهكتم. و ساعد لابي محمد بن الحسن المهدي عليه السلام لآخره بتكذيبكم اياى و انتهكاكم لحرمتى بالبهتان و قول الزور. بقية آل الركن الشديد احمد الحسن وصى و رسول الامام المهدي عليه السلام. الى الناس اجمعين المويد بجيراتيل المسدد بميكائيل المنصور باسرافيل ذرية بعضها من بعض والله سميع عليم التجف الاشرف ٢٨ شوال / ١٤٢٢ هـ

ق

25. The following quotation is the result of correspondences that lasted for about eight months to obtain clear picture about the real situation of the notion of Ahmad Al-Hasan. The correspondence was conducted between unanimous person and Ahmad al-Hasan followers and here you will find the questions and the answer of Ahmad al-Hassan.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم والصلوة والسلام على اشرف خلقه خاتم رسله وعلى من افترض علينا ولايته وطاعته قانعا ناطقا بالامامة فى فترة بسط اليد ام كان صامتا من أئمة فترة الامامة المقهورة بالطغاة و امامة الاستتار انتظارا للفرج على يد من ينكت الله فى قلب و قلت الامامة الظاهرة، التى بها ينمحق الباطل ويزهق و يجرى الحق و يظهر بالايات الباهرات حيث ينعم المومنون بدولة الحق ماشاء الله على يد أولياء ما بعد الظهور.

الذى يعلم خائنة الاعين وما تخفى الصدور يعلم من الذى توزه الأنا أزا ومن يطلب النجاة بسلوك الطريق الدال على أولياءه فى مرحلة الفترة والاستتار. وقد سألت السيد أحمد الحسن عن الملقب نفسه باليماني المدعى اللقاء بالامام المهدي وهو الامام الثانى عشر من آل محمد. وأقول هذا لان بدايات السيرة والدعوة تشير الى لقاء لشخص فى سامراء و فى بلد و فى كربلاء عرف بانه المهدي و لم يذكر بانه الامام الثانى عشر الذى هو المهدي. ويعلم الله سألت سؤال نجاة لا سؤال تعنت لمعرفة أشياء ثلاث هى

أقرب اليك مني ألتمس حقيقتها لتكون دليلا على صحة الولاء والتمسك وسلوك هذا الطريق الى أهله و نصرتهم بالنفس و الوقت و المال. و سيرة أصحابنا الأوائل في عصر الغيبة القصيرة هي الاعتماد على ظهور المعجز على يد النائب لاثبات صحة السفارة و قبول السفير وسيلة لسلوك طريق النجاة الى من أمرنا بالتمسك بطاعته في الامر الاول. و قد امرنا من قبل عند وقوع الغيبة بالتمسك بمن و الى الائمة من اهل العلم الصالحين العاملين بعلمهم.

و عدم الاجابة على الاسئلة الثلاث تشير الى احتمالات ثلاث لارابع لهما و ارجو ان يتسع صدركم لما يذكر هنا:

١- أنك صاحب شبهة في من إتصل بك قبل سنتين في سامراء و بلد و كربلاء زاعما أنه المهدي (الذي هو عندى الامام الثانى عشر) أو أنك ظننت بانه المهدي والشبهة يسهل تداركها بالتماس الحق عند أهله بعد اخلاص النية والدعاء للخروج من الحيرة و طرقها و ما اكثرها.

٢- انك طالب دنيا وتعسا لها من دنيا تطلب بضياع الطريقين و هلاك من يقع فريسة هذا الطلب

٣- أو انك مغرر بك من حيث لاتشعر من قبل ذئاب ناصبية أو حربية غرضها فصل الخراف عن راعيها بتشكيك الخراف باخلاص راعيها وانه أخذ بهم الى مسلخ بنى الانسان كي تذبح فتنفر الخراف من راعيها و تفر الى حيث تقع فريسة لكل مفترس كما وقع في ظهر الكوفة التي كان عليك ان تنبه كل غافل من خراف الصاحب مما يراد بها على يد الرفيق الذى أوردهم ذلك المورد ومن فعل بهم ذلك الفعل من متشعبة اللسان وبنى الاصفر وكما تعلم فان الفرد من الغنم للذئب. و الراعى فى فترة الاستتار هو راع لاغير يعمل قدر أمانته لحفظ الخراف و رعايتها حتى عودة صاحبها. وليس كل راع خائن لامانته وليس كل خائن راع فما زال فى الدنيا رعاة أمناء.

٤- أرجو ان ألتندرج تحت أحد هذه الاحتمالات وليكن قبرك وبرزخك أمام ناظريك وان عيشة كعيشة أبى ذر الطريد خير لك من عيشة قارون الذى غره ما أنت أعلم به ولايكن من إليه تزعم أنتسابك خصمك يوم القيامة باضلال او هلاك ألبسط من أولياءه دون علم والمتشابهات لايقعن الا فى المهلكات.

اجبنى عن الثلاث و سترى ما يسر كل مومن بيوم الحساب

و السلام على خير البرية و على آله المفترضة محبتهم و ولايتهم و طاعتهم اساله تعالى الثبات على المحجة البيضاء و حسن العاقبة و السلام

العبد الواله بفقد حبيبته

نصار الإمام المهدي [١٢٥٦ - windows] ع/ الاجابة: writes

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم و الحمد لله رب العالمين

بدءاً ان هذه الدعوة المباركة ليس لها علاقة لا من قريب او بعيد بما جرى من احداث فى الزرعة فى ظاهر الكوفة لقد طلبت ان يذكر لك السيد احمد الحسن ثلاثة اشياء من لسان المهدي نفسه بإظهار المعجز الا ترى ان فى طلبك هذا أنا كبيرة يقول السيد احمد الحسن ع أدعوك وكل من يطلب الحقيقة لتحمل فأسا كما حمله إبراهيم ع و تحطم كل الاصنام التي تعبد من دون الله بما فيها الصنم الموجود بين جنبيك وهو الانا و اكثر من ذكر الله واعلم انك مهما اكثر لن تعد الغافلين حتى توالى ولى الله و تكون من الساجدين وللحديث بقية تجده فى رده ع على سن ال رقم ١٤ ص ١٣ فى كتاب الجواب المنير عبر الاثير المنشور فى مكتبة الموقع كتب انصار الامام المهدي ع و فى نهاية حديثه ع دعاء يرفق طيا تدعو به اربعين ليلة بعد منتصف

الليل اذا كنت تريد روية الامام المهدي ﷺ

كما يمكنك الاطلاع على كتاب المتشابهات الجزء الثالث ص ١٨٤ و المنشور في مكتبة الموقع كتب السيد احمد الحسن ع فى كيفية محاربة الانا

ان معجزة السيد احمد الحسن ع هى تفسيره القرآن الكريم و بالذات المتشابه منه و الذى لا يستطيع احد ذلك الا المعصومين ع و هى المعجزة التى لم يتمكن اى من رجال الدين و العلماء من القيام بذلك لان السيد ع قد دعاهم الى سؤاله عن تفسير اى آية من القرآن الكريم مقابل ان يسألهم عن تفسير آية واحدة فقط و كان طلبه ان يكون ذلك امام الناس و ليس بينه و بين العلماء فقط و لكنهم ابوا ذلك لان عدم معرفتهم الجواب و الامام الناس سيحطم الانا عندهم و كبرياءهم و يحطم عروشهم وطواويسهم كما انه طلبهم للمباهلة و لم يستجيبوا

هداك الله الى معرفة الحق و اتباعه

اللهم صل على محمد و آل محمد الائمة و المهديين و سلم تسليمًا

Ansar Almahdi

www.almahdyoon.org

عنوان الرسالة: طلب جواب نص الرسالة. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وله الحمد والصلاة والسلام على اشرف الخلق محمد واله ومن تبعهم باحسان

اما بعد فقد اطلعت على ما نشر فى موقعكم الالكتروني وما فيه من المعلومات القيمة لمن اراد الاطلاع عليها و كما تعلمون فان السفراء الاربعة كانوا يقدمون الدليل على صحة سفارتهم للامام عجل الله فرجه و سهل مخرجه و ايده بخير الانصار والاصحاب بطريقة اعجازية تقنع المومن بصحة الطريق الى الحق واليوم على تباعد المدة و كثرة من جعل و نصب نفسه للتحدث او النيابة عن الامام نيابة بالشخص او بالنوع فان الانسان المومن ديدنه الحديث الشريف : دينك خليلك وخاصة بعد ما حدث فى الزركة فى ظهر الكوفة و الطريقة التى عومل بها من انتم اعرف به من بقية السيف من الفتيان

و قد طرحتم فى موقعكم ما يستوجب من المومن الا يتخلف عن الالتحاق بالركب امتثالا للواجب فى تقوية طريق اهل الحق و احياء لتلك السنة المحمودة باظهار المعجز فانى اطلب قبل الالتحاق الولاتى ان يذكر لى السيد احمد الحسن ثلاثة اشياء من لسان المهدي نفسه روحى و ارواح العالمين له الفداء وعند الجواب ستجد كل خير فى طريق ذات الصعاب و كما يعلم المومن ان صاحبنا قد دخر له الصعب جعلنا الله من انصاره المقاتلين فى فسطاطه و يعلم الله انى لا أسأل استلنى هذه تعنتا وانما طلبنا لطريق الحق فى ليلة ظلماء وانا اتلمس هذا الطريق من سنين اساله تعالى الثبات على المحجة البيضاء و حسن العاقبة و السلام.

26. Badaa is theological premise in she' ism that created confusions to the believers and their opponents. It means that certain event looks, to the mind of the people, as a matter that defiantly shall take place. However, God shows His creation that the course of event will take a direction that is different from their simple way of looking at matters and events. Al-Badaa., EI, also for detail looks at al-khu'ie, AlBadaa fi al- Takween., published in <http://www.14masom.col11/11laktabat/maktabaakaed/book23/index.htm>

27. This new perverted hermeneutic interpretation of the test could be seen in the work of dia ai-zaidi: Qiraatun fi riwaiyat al-Sarnari, p.35

وسأعود لأبى محمد بن الحسن المهدي (عليه السلام) لأخبره بتكذيبكم إياى وانتهاكم لحرمتى بالبهتان و قول الزور.

E:\ Mahdyoon/ Qisat alliqaa 1424. Htm

و محمد بن الحسن العسكري هو الاسم المعلن وهو المقصود من حديث اهل البيت(ع) (إننا المهدي لا يرى بجسمه و لا يسمى باسمه)، أن انه يرى بغير جسمه، فيظهر للناس بوصيه، و يسمى بغير اسمه فلا يسمى الامام الامهدي الا عبر وصيه (أى باب مدينة الكمالات الالهية فلا يسمى باسمه بل يسمى بالاسم المخفى (احمد) و هو اسم وصيه و اليماني الموعود، لا من باب الحلول، و لكن من باب ذوبان شخصية المهدي الاول بالامام المهدي (عج) و اختفائها فيه (ع)، و بهذا يتضح مفهوم (الظهور) ضياء الزيدى: قراءة جديدة فى رواية السمرى ص ٣٥.

However the statements of the Imam clearly indicate that the imam birth is hidden but his lineage is not obscure but well known.

ما رواه محمد بن الحسن الصفار ، عن يعقوب بن يزيد، عن أيوب بن نوح قال: قلت للرضا عليه السلام: انا نرجو أن تكون صاحب هذا الأمر، وأن يسديه الله إليك من غير سيف، فقد بويع لك وضربت الدراهم باسمك. فقال: ما منا أحد اختلفت إليه الكتب، وسئل عن المسائل، وأشارت إليه الأصابع، و حملت إليه الأموال إلا اغتيل أو مات على فراشه، حتى يبعث الله عزو جل بهذا الأمر رجلا خفى المولد و المنشأ غير خفى فى نسبه» Kamal al-din, 1, 370

Christian Zionist Messianism: How It Views Islam and Muslims

By : Dr. Yoginder Sikand

Represented by literally hundreds of small denominations and churches today, particularly in America, evangelical Christian Zionist messianism is today a formidable force and a major actor in global politics. It exercises an enormous clout in the current Bush administration in America. George Bush, too, himself can be characterized as an arch upholder of this ideology, and his policies in the Middle East and elsewhere clearly reflect or tally with the Christian Zionist messianic agenda. Firmly supportive of Zionism, Israel and Israeli expansionism, Christian Zionist messianism is today one of the principal fountainheads of Islamophobia on the global scene.

This paper provides a general overview of the ideology of Christian Zionist messianism, focusing, in particular, on the way Islam and Muslims are depicted as an integral part—in the role of the antagonistic ‘Other—of this ideology. It

shows how Christian Zionist messianic expectations generate enormously destructive imperialistic and militaristic tendencies that threaten to drown the world in an unprecedented global war, with Muslims being projected as the principal 'enemy'. The implications of this dangerous ideology, a combination of centuries of white racism and Islamophobia, Zionist claims to supremacy and aims at global domination and the machinations of the present global capitalistic order, for Muslims, and for the world at large, are then sought to be outlined. This it does by looking specifically at the writings and activities of one of the leading American Christian Zionist ideologues of today, John Hagee, senior pastor of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio in Texas, in America's notorious 'Bible-belt', which is also the bastion of white racism and supremacy in America.

Introduction

Approximately a tenth of the American population is today a devoted member of the cult of Christian Zionist messianism, writes the noted scholar-activist Dan Cohn-Sherbook, himself a Jew and Professor of Judaism at the University of Wales in a recently published book, *The Politics of Apocalypse—The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*. 'It is the fastest growing religious movement in Christianity today', he writes.¹ Many followers of the cult are from the middle and upper-middle classes, followers of televangelists who wield enormous political and economic clout.

Christian Zionist messianists are impelled by an imperialistic vision, of Jesus' impending arrival on earth as the Messiah, when he shall, so they believe, wipe out all his enemies (all non-Christians, presumably) and establish his

global dominion, with his capital at Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Christian Zionists believe that they, as allegedly God's chosen people, will be spared the horrors of the global war that shall precede Jesus' advent, and will be miraculously wafted up to heaven, where they shall watch the final destruction of the world.

Christian Zionists believe that Jesus can only return the world once the Jews colonise Palestine. This belief is based on the contentious claim that God had granted this land to the progeny of Abraham, through Isaac, that is the Jews, for eternity. This land is not restricted to the present borders of the state of Israel. Instead, Zionists, both Jewish and Christian, believe that a vast swathe of land, stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates, today inhabited by millions of Arab Muslims and Christians, belongs rightfully to the Jews, and so must be ethnically 'cleansed' of non-Jewish presence. Hence the justification they offer for their genocidal project aimed at the Arabs. Hence, too, their consistent backing to Israel, their generous funding of Jewish settlements in Palestine, and their enormous pressure on successive American governments to adopt rigorously pro-Israel and anti Palestinian policies.

Cohn-Sherbook traces the origins of Christian Zionism to the changing attitude of Christian groups towards the Jews following the Protestant Revolution. The early Catholic Church justified the witch-hunt of the Jews, labeling them as alleged Christ-killers. However, numerous Protestant sects, while equally vehemently anti-Jewish, believed that the Jews needed to colonise Palestine before Jesus would re-appear in the world to save it. This was, and still is, by no means a generous acceptance of the Jews. Rather, they believed, as Christian Zionists today do, that only those Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah would be saved.

The rest would ally themselves with the Anti-Christ and would be defeated by Jesus and his forces and, consequently, would be sent off to eternal damnation in the fires of hell.

From the seventeenth century onwards, Cohn-Sherbook shows, numerous European, and, later American, Protestant churches began evolving schemes to settle the Jews in Palestine. This was also seen as a convenient way of getting rid of the Jewish presence in Europe. They petitioned various European powers to back this scheme. By the early nineteenth century, numerous British administrators had been won round to this idea, impelled, no doubt, also by a motive to undermine the Ottoman Empire, which at that time controlled Palestine, and by a deep-rooted aversion to Islam.

Increasingly, Christian Zionists began to join hands with secular Jewish Zionists, whose plans to settling Jews in Israel had nothing to do with any messianic hopes, but, rather, arose as a response to the centuries'-old persecution of Jews by European Christians. (In contrast, Cohn-Sherbook rightly notes, 'In Arab lands, Jews had flourished for centuries while in European countries Jewry had been subject to oppression and persecution.'²

Ties between secular Jewish Zionists and Christian Zionists to pursue the common project of Jewish colonization of Palestine were strengthened by the support given to Theodore Herzl (b.1860), the Hungarian Jew who is regarded as the father of modern-day Zionism. Cohn-Sherbook traces in considerable detail the course of this close collaboration down to the present-day, describing the strong political and financial links between Christian and Israeli/Jewish Zionists and also the enormous clout of the Zionist lobby in American political circles.

Christian Zionism, based on a virulently anti-Islamic agenda, is a major hurdle to peace not just in West Asia but globally, too. Indeed, some Christian Zionists even ardently wish (and work for) a final global war or Armageddon, in the belief that this would accelerate their hoped-for wafting up to heaven and the subsequent arrival of Jesus. Christian Zionist messianism is a call for global war. The belief that Christianity is the sole truth, that all other faiths are ‘Satanic’ or ‘false’, that the Jews must all gather in Palestine to fulfill so-called Biblical prophecies, and that a grand global war will soon erupt leading to the massacre of hundreds of millions and heralding the ‘second coming’ of Jesus, who will establish his Christian kingdom extending till the four corners of the world, clearly indicate the hate-driven, global expansionist project of Christian Zionism.

In his remarkable book, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Rise of American Evangelism and the Future of Muslims*, Muhammad Arif Zakaullah brings out in considerable detail how Christian Zionist messianists have specifically framed and targeted Muslims as allegedly being in league with the Anti-Christ and against whom Jesus and the Christians must fight in a bloody war of unprecedented dimensions in the last days.³ This explains, Zakaullah writes, their unstinting support to Israel and its brutal suppression of the Palestinians, and their fervent backing of America’s invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and its so-called ‘war on terror’. Zakaullah quotes several leading American Christian messianic evangelists as describing Islam and Muslims in lurid colours and branding it as irredeemably ‘anti-Christian’. Not surprisingly, he writes, they have been among the most fierce backers of America’s imperialist misadventures that many Muslims see as directed against them. American imperialism is thus sought to be given a

suitable 'Christian' sanction, and is presented as working to usher in Jesus' triumphant return to the world. War and bloodshed on an unimaginable scale, mainly against Muslims, and not peace and reconciliation, American Christian fundamentalists seem to believe, will herald the eventual establishment of the Kingdom of God, the rule of supposedly pious Christians all over the globe.

John Hagee: Ideologue of Christian Zionist Messianic Imperialism and Advocate Of Cosmic War Against Islam and Muslims

John Hagee is today recognized the world over as one of the leading ideologues of contemporary Christian Zionist messianism. He is the founder and pastor of the Cornerstone Church, in Texas, USA, which claims some 18,000 active members. As with numerous other similar American Christian fundamentalist preachers, his church is richly endowed and media savvy. Hagee is the president of the 'Global Evangelism' media company that broadcasts his daily programmes on television and radio throughout the USA and around the world. He is the author of numerous books on Christian Zionism, some of which have been reprinted by Christian fundamentalist publishers abroad as well.

Final Dawn Over Jerusalem is one of Hagee's major writings on Christian Zionism that well exemplifies the imperialist agenda that lies at its very core.⁴ The aim of the book is to defend the Israeli occupation of Palestine, to denounce those who seek to protest Israeli atrocities, and to advocate the cause of 'Greater Israel', all this in the name of Christianity and premised on the notion of the Jews as being allegedly God's 'Chosen People'.

Racism is integral to the Christian Zionist message, as Hagee makes amply clear. The Bible, Hagee, says, describes the Jews as ‘the apple of God’s eye’ [Zech 2:8]. He quotes the Bible as addressing the Jews and declaring, ‘For you are a holy people to the LORD your God’ and ‘the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth’ [Deut.14:2]. This means, so Hagee argues, that those who harm the Jews or the state of Israel or stand in the way of the design of ‘Greater Israel’ will ‘experience the instant wrath of God’. To those who dare to challenge the oppressive Zionist state, Hagee announces, ‘The man or nation that lifts a voice or hand against Israel invites the wrath of God’. Such people will, Hagee insists, be ‘cursed’ by God.

Hagee’s notion of God thus appears to be that of a tribal Jewish deity, who functions as a willing tool in the pursuit of Jewish expansionism. The Bible was written by Jewish hands, and given that, as many liberal Christians would themselves concede, much of it is a human product, numerous Biblical verses were written in order to legitimise the interests of the community from which its writers were drawn. This would seem obvious to any discerning layman, but Biblical literalists like Hagee vehemently disagree. For them every word of the Bible is sacrosanct and divine. Biblical literalism is pressed into the service of the Christian Zionist messianic imperialist and racist agenda. Drawing upon numerous verses of the Bible, Hagee argues, ‘God watches over Israel as a protective parent hovers over an only child’. ‘The nation of Israel’, he makes so bold as to declare, ‘was created by a sovereign act of God. All other nations were created by an act of war or a declaration of men, but Israel was intentionally created by God so that He

would have a physical place of inheritance on the earth'. Accordingly, Hagee would have us believe that for this god, who is seen as in need of a 'physical place' for himself, non-Jews or Gentiles, are second-rate human beings or less, and so can easily be dispensed with if they are seen as coming in the way of Jewish imperialism.

The tribal Jewish version of God that Hagee presents appears entirely unjust and arbitrary, far from being impartial in the way he deals with His creation. Given the fact that the God of the Biblical literalist imagination is a Jewish deity, and not the universal God who looks upon His entire creation impartially, he is seen as blessing Jewish conquests of territories of their enemies. Thus, quoting the Bible, Hagee writes that God gave the land of 'Greater Israel', a vast swathe of land stretching from Egypt all the way till Iraq, to the Jews, descendants of Isaac, forever. That being the case, Hagee suggests that people living in those territories, millions of Arabs, both Muslims and Christians, have no right to live there or else must accept to live under Jewish rule. Although Hagee does not say this explicitly, what this means is that those who refuse to accept Jewish rule must, therefore, be either killed or expelled.

The god of Hagee's imagination appears as an entirely whimsical real estate agent. 'God established Israel's national geographic boundaries', Hagee writes. 'The exact borders of Israel are detailed in Scripture just as our heavenly Father dictated them', he goes on, adding, 'The divine Surveyor drove the original stakes into Judean soil and decreed that no one should ever change these property lines. The real estate contract and lands covenants were signed in blood and stand to this very hour'. Hence, he argues, 'Jews have the absolute right as mandated by God to the land of Israel and, more specifically, to the city of

Jerusalem'. Hence, he suggests, Palestinians have no claim to their own historical land, and must make way for Jewish occupiers.

Hagee's defence of Zionist imperialism goes to ridiculous lengths. Laughable as this may sound, he argues, 'Israel has a Spy in the sky'—God Himself. God, he claims, provides Israel, the Jewish people and the state of Israel, with special protection. 'No nation in the world can match the defensive force guarding the State of Israel. The archangel Michael has a special assignment to guard Israel'. And those who, for any reason oppose Israel, and this includes Palestinians fighting Israeli occupation and oppression, are said to incur God's wrath. 'The Lord stands watch in the darkest night with an eye trained on the nation of Israel and, more specifically, Jerusalem. Those who fight with Israel fight with Him', Hagee asserts.

So central is Israel to Hagee's tribalistic version of God that he goes to the extent of arguing that the fate of each and every person on the face of the planet depends essentially on his or her attitude to the Jews. 'Prosperity or punishment depends on how we treat Israel', he alleges, because, he claims, the Jews, as descendants of Abraham 'enjoy heavenly favour'. To back his claim he quotes the Bible as saying that when God entered into a covenant with Abraham, He gave him an 'awesome promise', saying, 'I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' [Gen. 12:3]. Hence, Hagee insists, the United States, and, indeed, anyone else who wishes to please God, must consistently engage in 'compassionate support of the State of Israel', adding that, 'The quickest and most effective way to be on God's side is to stand with the State of Israel and the Jewish people in their hour of need'. By

doing this, he claims, one can win God's favour, because, 'God blesses the man or nation that blesses Israel or the Jewish people'.

At no time before, Hagee firmly believes, has support for Israel and Zionist imperialism, been more crucial than today. This is because, he claims, Jesus is returning to the world soon, and Israel must be protected in order to welcome the Messiah. Hagee's image of Jesus in his 'second coming' bears no resemblance to the familiar notion of the suffering, loving Christ. Rather, in his description Jesus appears as a fierce warrior, rallying Christians to arms and heralding the final, global war, ironically in the name of the 'Prince of Peace'. In the doomsday scenario that Hagee outlines, what he calls 'fanatical attacks' by Arabs on Israel, particularly Jerusalem, would mount. In response, Christians the world over, he says, must rally behind Israel. At this hour, he insists, 'we must let the world know that if a line has to be drawn, it will be drawn around Christians as well as Jews. We are united and indivisible'.

The city of Jerusalem, Hagee believes, is the crux of the final battle before Jesus' 'second coming'. This city, considered sacred by Jews, Muslims and Christians alike, has been ordained, so Hagee argues, by God to be 'under the exclusive control of the Jewish people' until Jesus arrives again. The final battle of Armageddon will, he writes, be centred on this city, with Arabs or Muslims seeking to wrest control of it from the Jews. In this regard, Hagee says, Christians, for their part, must staunchly defend Israel and must refuse any peace offers, such as allowing for a shared Jerusalem or joint control of the town by Jews and Arabs. In particular, he appeals to the United States to do everything in its power to back Israel and to crush its opponents, claiming this is the only way to win God's

favour. If America fails to do this, so he warns, it would be crushed by God Himself!

Quoting various verses of the Bible, Hagee describes what he sees as the unfolding of events of cosmic proportions, ushering in a global war the like of which has never been witnessed hitherto and heralding the 'second coming of Jesus'. In this global war, he says, Muslims, whom he regards as followers of a 'false' religion, would ally with the Russians to fight against Israel. This would lead to a global nuclear war, with hundreds of millions being killed. At this point, the 'Anti-Christ' will appear, attack Jerusalem and will take over the reigns of the world, falsely claiming to usher in peace. But, this grand deception will not last long, and, instead, will only lead to even more devastating wars. At this time, Hagee says, Christians must defend, by every means possible, the Jews and Israel, and wage war against the armies of those opposed to God's 'Chosen Race', the Jews. Only then can they be saved, he insists.

After years of global war and terrible destruction, Hagee writes, Jesus will be sent by God to deliver the world. Mounted on a white horse, he will arrive at the battlefield at Armageddon. Defeating the 'Anti-Christ' and his army, he will establish his global kingdom with his capital in Jerusalem, there to 'rule and reign forever'. Hagee's description of Jesus' future global kingdom offers little cause to cheer for non-Christians, including, ironically, even the Jews whom he so ardently defends. It would, as he himself makes clear, be nothing short of a global Christian empire, and an antiquated one at that, with kings and queens and presidents still in place! How they would continue to be around when Jesus rules the whole world is a mystery that Hagee leaves unsolved.

Ruled by Jesus, Hagee writes, 'Jerusalem, the apple of God's eye, will become the joy of the world. The city will become the international worship center, and people from all over the world will make pilgrimages to worship in the holy temple. Kings, queens, princes and presidents shall come to the Holy City' to adore Jesus. Presumably, these all will be Christians themselves, for Hagee quotes the Bible as predicting that 'at the name of Jesus every knee should bow [...] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'.

In a more recent book on the same subject, titled *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War*, Hagee further elaborates on the theme of a global war against Islam and Muslims that he appeals to Christians and Jews to jointly launch, arguing that this is precisely what Jesus wants to happen before his Second Coming. Not surprisingly, and like other Christian Zionist messianic evangelists, Hagee is convinced that there can be absolutely no room for dialogue with Muslims, principally because, so he argues, Christians and Jews, on the one hand, and Muslims, on the other, do not worship the same God. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that the God of the Jews and the Christians is the diametrical opposite of the Muslim God.⁵ Accordingly, he presents Islam in the most lurid colours. He claims that Islam aims at nothing short of exterminating all non-Muslims and establishing a one-world Islamic government. Islam, he argues, is 'a doctrine of death'⁶ which promotes 'terrorism',⁷ He approvingly quotes George Bush as having declared that America 'is at war with Islamic fascists' and insists that 'This is a religious war' and that 'there is no room for compromise'.⁸

Hagee writes that America, and 'Christendom' more generally, along with the Jews, are now deeply involved in the final war that will supposedly herald the return of Jesus

as messiah, a war in which Christians and Jews are pitted against Muslims. All Christians (and Jews), he asserts, must participate whole-heartedly in this cosmic war because, he says, if America loses the war,

‘[T]he Law of Shariah, the Islamic law, will rule America and the Western world. Christian churches and synagogues will be burned to the ground. Every Christian who refuses to denounce Jesus to accept Allah will be decapitated [...] Radical Islam does not want us to be quiet—they want us to be dead.’

Hagee, like many of his fellow Christian fundamentalists, fervently exhorts America to take the lead in bloody attacks against Muslim states that are opposed to Israeli brutalities, because he sees these as fundamentally ‘anti-Christian’. In this regard, he singles out Iran, one of the most militarily powerful Muslim countries in the world and certainly the most vocally opposed to American imperialism, for particular attack. He claims that Iran is rapidly building up a nuclear stockpile, which it intends, so he says, to use to bomb and destroy Israel and perhaps America. Before that can happen, he insists, America must take the initiative and invade and destroy Iran, particularly targeting its nuclear facilities. This step, he argues, would actually be ‘part of God’s plan for the future of Israel and the entire world’, in that it would drive the world to the global disaster of Armageddon, ‘the countdown that will usher in the end of the world’. This will be, so he claims, followed by the rise of the Anti-Christ, and then, finally, the Second Coming of Jesus, when all non-Christians, including Muslims, will be slain.⁹ In short, a global war against Islam and Muslims is precisely what Hagee, like many others of his ilk, want to see unleashed in the hope that their wild messianic expectations will thereby be fulfilled.

Conclusion

Based on a fundamental hatred for Islam and Muslims, a legacy of many centuries, Christian Zionist messianism has emerged as one of the most pressing and disastrous threats and challenges of our times. With the massive financial and political clout that it wields, particularly in America, it is the new face of Western imperialism, one that is inherently and fiercely opposed to people of other faiths and even to Christians who do not subscribe to its bloody doctrines.

Islam and Muslims have a special place in the ideology of Christian Zionist messianic fascism: as alleged ‘enemies’ of God. Based on this bizarre belief, theological sanction is sought for bloody wars against Muslims the world over. This ideology has instigated and is being used to justify American (and Israeli) imperialist aggression in many Muslim countries today, and possibly against Iran in the near future. Clearly, Muslims need to be aware of this dangerous project and take appropriate measures. So, also, do other non-Christians, who, like Muslims, are seen as doomed to hell by Christian fundamentalists. And so, too, do other Christians, who relate to their religious traditions in different ways and who firmly believe that the Christian Zionist messianic project represents a fundamental betrayal of the message of Jesus Christ, ironically a betrayal being so aggressively perpetrated in his name.

Notes

1. Dan Cohn-Sherbook, *The Politics of Apocalypse—The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: Oneworld Books, 2006, p. xi.
2. *Ibid.*, p.44.
3. Muhammad Arif Zakauallah, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Rise of American Evangelism and the Future of Muslims*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2004.
4. John Hagee, *Final Dawn Over Jerusalem*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

5. John Hagee, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Prelude to War*, Lake Mary: Frontline, 2006, p.2.
6. Ibid., p.23.
7. Ibid., p.10.
8. Ibid., p.3.
9. Ibid., p. 38.

Humanitarian rights in the time of appearance of the Mahdi (Pbuh) or world promised Saviour.

By : Clara López de Letona

The promised Messiah or Saviour will rule the world with justice and equality for all humanity. Nobody will suffer of hunger or will be oppressed by others. He will avoid tyranny, and his appearance will mean the end of the corruption of the economic, social and political system of today's world. He will propitiate an equal distribution of world's resources. He will appoint wise political leader to govern with transparency and honesty, following the Will of God on earth.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the dramatic situation of the stateless and internally displaced people in our world today before the appearance of the Mahdi (Pubh) or Saviour and to present some of the values and principles that will have to be implemented in order to avoid this suffering to millions of people that do not have access to food, to medical assistance and not even have a place to die.

I.-The four most relevant sacred emigrations in the past. God's promises to their unshakeable faith.

ABRAHAM

“His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, son of Zohar the Hititte, east of Mamre, the field that Abraham purchase from the Hitittes. There Abraham was buried, with his wife Sarah.”¹

Abraham is the Patriarch of the three Semitic religions and the oldest representative of monotheism. He is also the archetype of prophetic religions and a friend of God. Father of Ishmael, his first-born child, who founded the Kaaba together with him as central sanctuary of the One God; and father of Isaac.

From the spiritual point of view, Abraham and Ishmael are the exemplary figures of the entire system of the pilgrimage.

Now the Lord said to Abraham , “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you, I will make of you're a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one that curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”²

Abraham abandoned the land of his fathers without a complaint, without conditions. He took his wife Sarah and his nephew, Lot, the son of his brother, and left with all the chattels he had earned and the household members that he had acquired in Aram Naharayim, heading for Canaan. At that time, the Canaanites were in the country. Abraham crossed Canaan and headed for the sacred site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.

Hunger assailed the land and Abraham had to go down into Egypt seeking pasture and food. From Egypt, on his continuous peregrinations, he went back once more to the Negev accompanied by his wife and Lot, but the land no longer made it possible for them to remain together because his chattels had multiplied and quarrels usually broke out between the shepherds of Abraham and those of Lot.

The Lord said to Abraham, after Lot had separated from him:

“Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that your see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.”³

Abraham believed in God and understood faith as “being firm”, not as “holding to be true” what could not be demonstrated; rather, it was an unyielding faith in a promise that could not be fulfilled by human means. He was a man who, on the basis of that faith, was capable of surmounting the greatest tests to which he was submitted, down to the extreme measure of sacrificing his own son.

After Moses, Abraham is the most-cited Biblical figure. And in the Qur’an he is mentioned in twenty five Suras, whereby the fourteenth Sura bears his name.

When Abraham’s Lord tested him with certain commandments, which he fulfilled, He said, “I will make you a leader of people. Abraham asked, “And will You make leaders from my descendants too? God answered, “My pledge does not hold for those who do evil.”⁴

MOSES

He is the most often cited Old Testament character. Many see him as the founder of the Jewish religion. His name is

Egyptian, although probably he was not Egyptian but Semitic. Moses led the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt.

Then the Lord said: “ I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry.....Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..(...).”⁵

He led the march of his “tribes” through the desert and conducted them towards an uncertain future. He was sustained only by his deep faith in God and in the fulfilment of his mission, accepted with a profound submission and obedience towards the divine commands. He knew that he had to fulfil the will of God, and he did not doubt at any time that that will was good for his people.

Moses said, “Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of all the Worlds, duty-bound to say nothing about God but the truth, and I have brought a clear sign from your Lord. Let the Children of Israel go with me.”⁶

Nowadays, no one will argue that the Fathers of Israel came from the desert and were nomads. Their nomadism simultaneously encompasses conquest, immigration and constructive social revolution within a coherent and absolutely structured social, political and religious model.

Through his faith and by fulfilling the will of God, he initiated and led this process of social, political and economic change played out by a group of emigrants leaving Egypt in order to “be free men”, guided by the power of God.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

The Flight to Egypt represents the displaced, the emigrants, the homeless, all those persons who, for political,

social or economic reasons find themselves forced to abandon their land and the land of their fathers to save their lives.

Now after they have left, an angel of Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”⁷

Without waiting for dawn, he prepared to flee to Egypt. The journey must have been gruelling and very hard, but nonetheless he was faithful to the words of the angel and the will of God, he made the preparations, and he trusted in the goodness of the Lord.

Egypt, as we know, was the classic country of political refuge in that time, being a Roman province. There were many Jews there, flourishing colonies and districts inhabited by them. There is no data specifying where they settled upon reaching Egypt.

Herod, fearful of a Messianic plot, gave the brutal order to kill all male children younger than two years of age in the town of Bethlehem, an order that was fulfilled and which went down in history as “the massacre of the Holy Innocents”.

“Thus says the Lord: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.”⁸

Once more, as he rested, the angel appeared to him in dreams and announced that he could return already, as Herod had died.

“Get up, take the child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.⁹

The flight to Egypt is the icon of emigration of a family, the emigration that causes hunger, wars, social marginalization and persecution. Jesus began his peregrinations as a child and became an emigrant , a refugee, someone who had to abandon his land to save his life.

MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

In the Islamic history and tradition, Ethiopia is known as the “Haven of the First Migration of Hijra.” Ethiopia was the country chosen by the Prophet (Pbuh) when his followers needed protection and freedom from oppression.

After the conversion of Hamza, the Companions of the Prophet (Pbuh) began to offer prayers publicly. In turn the Quraysh intensified their opposition by torturing the Muslims. The companions and relatives of the Prophet (Pbuh) were prepared to sacrifice and suffer all sorts of hardship and alienation rather that give up their own convictions and freedom.

“Those who believe, who migrated and strove hard in God’s way with their possessions and their persons, are in God’s eyes much higher in rank; it is they who will triumph; and their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and pleasure , Gardens where they will have lasting bliss”.¹⁰

The Prophet (Pbuh) slowly began to attract some followers, most of them young and modest social standing, including his cousin Ali (Pbuh), the son of his uncle and protector Abu Talib.

When Muhammad (Pbuh) began to impugn the traditional polytheism of his native town, the rich and powerful merchants of Mecca realized that the religious revolution taking place might be disastrous for their own interest.

Members of the two warring tribes the Banu Awz and the Banu Khazraj, asked the Prophet (Pbuh) to act as peacemaker in a conflict between them. His mediation was impeccable and revealed great political wisdom. In the Prophet (Pbuh), prophetic mission and political ability complemented each other, making him a statesman apart from Messenger of God.

The First Migration of the companions and relatives of the Prophet (Pbuh) to Ethiopia celebrates the birth of freedom of expression and beliefs, whereas, the Second Migration of the Prophet (Pbuh) to Madinah celebrates the end of oppression.

History has shown that both migrations have laid down the foundations of the Islam as an universal religion. They accepted the universality of the message of the Prophet (Pbuh) and the Qu´ran describes their belief in these words:

This people are not given to arrogance and when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth. They say, “Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses.”¹¹

The Holy Scriptures tell us that the lives of God’s Chosen are sustained by two fundamental pillars: one, their nomadic existence, and the other, their faith in God.

“Provide yourself for the journey because the call for departure has been announced...(…).You should therefore cut away all the attachments of this world and assist yourself with the provision of Allah’s fear.”¹²

Through their absolute faith in God, they progressively live their faith and their reality in perfect coherence with the promises received from God. And this opens them to a new and transcendent hope that keeps them tensing towards a future that they are called to built, knowing that the promise will come true in the same process and that it will be God

who makes it so, even in the most adverse human conditions. And it will come true unexpectedly, because their faith in the promise advances inseparably from their faith in God.

II. Emigration and mass movements in the world today

World stateless people

Recent research suggest that may be eleven million people globally without a country to “*call their own*”.

Article I of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons spells out the legal definition, indicating that, “*someone who is not a national of any state under relevant laws is therefore stateless.*”

Parents cannot officially register the birth of a newborn baby. He or she may not be able to attend school or university and when these people die, they will be buried in an anonymous burial without official recognition, like if they never existed. People who do not have a country to call their own.

The issue of statelessness is politically sensitive in many affected countries and often viewed as an internal problem. Doubt to this many governments have not made accurate figure what makes it very difficult to really know the magnitude of the actual problem.

They became stateless through a very complicated series of political, legal, or administrative directives, which includes among others: Arbitrary deprivation of nationality by a government; Administrative oversight, misunderstandings or conflicts of law; Administrative procedural problems.

Several international and regional treaties offer a degree of guidance and emphasize that everyone should have a

nationality. However, international support of these treaties has been lethargic and needs to be strengthened. Fewer governments know the precise magnitude of the problem in their countries.

Internally Displaced People

They are the world's largest group of vulnerable people. The overall number of internally displaced people is around 25 million in 52 countries and that half of them are in Africa.

The definition of the internally displaced describes them "as persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict.

The internally displaced often face a very difficult situation because they may be trapped into the ongoing internal conflict of their own country. Their governments retains ultimate control of their fate.

Competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their home or places of habitual residence.

III.- Poverty and Globalization

POVERTY AND HUNGER

"Take away from this world your hearts before your bodies go out of it, because herein you have been put on a trial, and you have been created for the other world."¹³

According to the latest data facilitated by the FAO, there are now 854 million malnourished and hungry persons in

the world and another 100 million on the verge of becoming so.

The UN calls this drama that causes the death of 25,000 human beings every day, among them one malnourished baby every five seconds, a “**silent tsunami**”. As a result of the lack of food in a fair part of the planet and the rising prices of the last three decade, reality is got worst. (El Mundo, Editorial, June 6th 2008)

The FAO, which, since 1945, has held the mandate for guaranteeing food security, spent several million of euros in gathering together representatives from 183 countries at the Food Summit, which concluded last 5th of June in Rome with “disappointing results”, according to the majority of attending observers and experts. The result was a paltry declaration of intentions that skirted around the fundamental problems. (El País, International, June 6th 2008)

The FAO and the international community have given evident signs that they are not prepared to govern a business that kills millions of people from starvation. Behind the almost 72 hours of diplomatic discussions in Rome lies a terrible reality: almost a fifth part of the population on our planet does not have anything to eat.

“O’ibne Hunaif I have come to know that a young man of Basra invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it. Foods of different colours were being chosen for you and big bowls were being given to you. I never thought you would accept the feast of a people who turn out the beggars and invite de rich.”¹⁴

Emigration

In 2007 the total number of both refugee and internally displace people came to approximately 32.9 million persons. The phenomenon of emigration today occupies international attention and public debate in numerous countries.

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? He said the one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”¹⁵

The change of millennium has come accompanied by an intense revitalization in international migratory currents, to the point of making this phenomenon, along with the free movement of capital, one of the characteristic features of our current reality: *globalization*. A greater international freedom in the flow of trade and the movement of capital in the world logically demands a greater and growing freedom of movement for people in the world.

“The poor emigrants who were driven from their homes and possessions, who seek God’s favour and approval, those who help God and His Messenger - these are the ones who are true.”¹⁶

Emigration is one of the fundamental dimensions of the globalization process that we are living. It is likewise a result of the rupture of traditional and collective ties, as well as the absence of collective and individual projects for progress in the country of origin. This is the reason why the phenomenon increases in the cases of social crisis and decomposition in the affected countries.

He prostrated himself at Jesus feet and thanked him. An he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner.”¹⁷

We are confronted with a growing and lasting phenomenon. It is not a question of tolerance, is a question of respect for the dignity of all human beings, regardless of their social situation, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, or any other difference. Only then will peaceful coexistence and the construction of a just and free global society be possible.

“What will you do with this vast house in this world, although you need this house more in the next world. If you want to take it to the next world you could entertain in it guest and be regardful of kinship and discharge all (your) obligations according to their accrual. In this way you will be able to take it to the next world.”¹⁸

Who rules de world

One of the rulers of our world today, perhaps the most powerful, is the G20.

The G20 is a group consisting of 19 of the world’s largest economies, together with the European Union. This Economies are the following: US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Russia, Japan, South Africa, China, Brazil, Australia, Argentina, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Turkey.

“Together, this countries, account for 90% of the world gross product and over 80% of the world trade. Added to this, with their combined voting power in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, these countries completely dominate these institutions.” (The New Ruling Aristocracy of the World? , Shawn Hattingh)

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”¹⁹

We live in a world with an economic system organized for the profit of the few. More and more people in the world are becoming aware of this situation that is affecting their lives and the society as a whole.

Evidence is mounting that economic growth and free trade are not leading us toward economic and justice and environmental sustainability. To the contrary, they are taking us in the direction of increasing economic injustice and environmental un-sustainability.

Capitalism in the age of the new digital technology produced hundreds of new billionaires in the world, meanwhile, three billion people, nearly half of the world, lived on less than \$2 per day.

Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”²⁰

The world’s most powerful instrument of governance is not a government, nor is a global corporation, rather is a global financial system, running dangerously out of control.

A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them: “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”²¹

Another type of Globalization

Means an integrated and supportive economy that works for peace and not for war. We know from experience which are the results of wars. Wars provoke more poverty and more hunger in the world. A real global economy cannot accept that millions of people in the world suffer from hunger and lack of food as they suffer today. Our first task is the humanization of our societies and this means working continuously on different fronts at the same time.

“Beware practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; ...(...). But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret...(...).”²²

Opening ourselves to global communication in an open and sincere dialogue will make us see that our problems are

not so different from the problems of the other people. We will then see that unity creates the necessary strength and capability to change the urgent matters that have to be changed soon.

IV.-International Responsibility

Political and social leaders.

“.....(.....) Certainly, Allah, the Sublime, has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of low people so that the poor do not cry over their poverty.”²³

The management of global issues in the 21st century will require the active participation of all members of the international community. The developing countries with 80 per cent of the world’s population, must be part of a shared vision for this new century. The success or failure of poor people and poor countries in making their way in an interdependent world will have a profound influence in shaping the 21st Century.

One should chose to be among the persecuted, rather than the persecutors.²⁴

The heads of States and Governments representative, gathered together at the United Nations General Assembly in New York between the 6th and the 8th of September 2000, adopted the “*United Nations Millennium Declaration*”.

Allow me to highlight one of the most relevant points that make reference to “*dignity, equality, equity, vulnerable people and extreme poverty*”.

“We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies,, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world’s people, specially

the most vulnerable and, in particular children of the world, to whom futures belongs. (Values and Principles, Point I, paragraph 2)

Here is my servant, whom I uphold my chosen, in who my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to nations.”²⁵

As long as there is a contradiction between the stands of righteous and the corrupt ways of worldly societies, there will be those righteous people who will rise up and call society and their rulers to account. This people will put their lives at risk to speak out for the welfare of the community.

“If however, you warn the righteous not to sin, and they do not sin, they shall surely live, because they took warning; and you will have saved your life.”²⁶

All authorities and international actors shall respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances.

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it”.²⁷

The chief concern of any government should be the welfare of its citizens. Therefore the ruler, and hence the government, should be like parent to the people, putting their concerns and needs ahead of his own. The ruler should give his highest consideration to the poor and provide them sufficient means of support. Such a government will be respected by the people, who then will easily submit to its rule.

Guardianship is not to give an order but to give one’s self.²⁸

Government should operate impartially and with integrity. Its leaders should be honest, moral, and virtuous people, who will not take bribes or act corruptly. Because people look up to a nation's leaders as role models, they should set a good example for people.

“The best deed of a great man is to forgive and forget.”²⁹

Religious Leaders

Argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, “We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you: our God and your God are one (and the same); we are devoted to Him.”³⁰

Syria's Grand Mufti Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun opening his address to Members of the European Parliament, on Tuesday 15th of January 2008, saying:

“Religion gives civilization its moral values but culture is something that we built”, he stressed adding that religion “is the work of God” whereas civilization is created by mankind.

“We do not believe, in our region, in the multiplicity of religions. Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohamed (Pbuh) came with one single religion”. Therefore, “there is no holy war, because a war can never be holy; it is peace that is holy”.

Then they came up and laid hands upon Jesus and seized him. And Behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off this ear. Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”³¹

Interreligious dialogue recognizes the plurality of the world's religious systems as a valuable resource for discovering and working together toward a common goals.

Dialogue begins with the willingness to question and to be questioned. Dialogue requires an effort to comprehend the inherent value of difference in this complex global society. Dialogue is the only instrument to achieve a real peaceful world based on mutual respect and understanding.

“All states shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief(.....) All states shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination.”³²

Civil Society

We live in a society that we call developed, a society that produces great masses of scorned, exploited, hungry human beings; a society whose supreme value is money. A society that has achieved an unparalleled technological development during the last few decades and that possesses the sufficient economic, cultural and spiritual capacity to achieve a more just and supportive universal social order for all, without excluding anybody.

“No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.”³³

The pillars of society are those people who provide its spiritual and moral vision to the society . They are righteous people with courage who realize the truth within themselves and are willing to take responsibility for their community.

We are all conscious today that our world has become a virtual communicational unity, that its nations and regions are increasingly economically interdependent, and that war is insanely destructive. The survival of the human family requires urgently the articulation of ethical principles.

“Treat people in such a way and live amongst them in such a manner that if you die they will weep over you; alive they crave for your company.”³⁴

V.- Guiding Principles from the Book of Ben Sira

Duties toward the Poor and the Oppressed³⁵

My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting.

Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need.

Do not add to the troubles of the desperate, or delay giving to the needy.

Do not reject a suppliant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor.

Prudence and Common Sense³⁶

“Do not contend with the powerful, or you may fall into their hands.

Do not quarrel with the rich, in case their resources outweigh yours; for gold has ruined many, and has perverted the minds of kings.

Concerning rulers³⁷

A wise magistrate educates his people, and the rule of an intelligent person is well ordered.

As the people’s judge is, so are his officials; as the ruler of the city is, so are all its inhabitants.

The government of the earth is in the hand of the Lord, and over it He will raise up the right leader for the time.

Human success is in the hand of the Lord, and it is he who confers honor upon the lawgiver.

Concerning humility³⁸

The poor are honored for their knowledge, while the rich are honored for their wealth.

One who is honored in poverty, how much more in wealth!

An one dishonored in wealth, how much more in poverty!

Responsible use of wealth³⁹

If one is mean to himself, to whom he will be generous? He will not enjoy his own riches.

No one is worse than one who is grudging to himself; this is the punishment for his meanness.

The miser is an evil person; he turns away and disregards people.

Do good to friends before you die, and reach out and give to them as much as you can.

The temptations of Commerce⁴⁰

A merchant can hardly keep from wrongdoing, nor is a tradesman innocent of sin. As a stake is driven firmly into a fissure between stones, so sin is wedged in between selling and buying.

If a person is not steadfast in the fear of the Lord, his house will be quickly overthrown.

VI.-Final Comments

By faith we believe and understand that the worlds were created by the Word of God.

By faith Enoch was taken so that he did no experience death.

By faith Noah, warned by God about events yet not seen he built the ark to save his household.

By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance and he set out not knowing where he was going.

By faith Moses left Egypt without fear of Pharaoh's anger and he led the people through the desert to the promised land.

Without faith is no possible to please God.

It is hard to believe that science, technology, politics and economics can effectively offer a unifying vision of the complexity of our world today and find the solutions to our everyday increasing problems.

Our world is in a state of imbalance created by man's misuse. The appearance of the Mahdi (Pbuh) or Saviour will restore and balance the earth.

We have to be prepared to change our present modes of living to ensure the future of mankind in this world. Adequate our needs according to the needs of all people of the world and enter in a new and truthful understanding of the meaning of sharing.

The Mahdi (Pbuh) or Saviour, knows that deep in the hearts of men is the aspiration for justice and love, but we need to end with the fear that stop us from living according to the light of God.

Today, from all corners of our planet we hear the cry of despair of displaced people, stateless people, emigrants; no matter how we call them, they suffer from the same disease: poverty, hunger, isolation and scorn.

Among His most important concerns is the welfare of the poor and dispossessed. Half the world's populations enter this category and present an enormous challenge to the goodwill of men. The Mahdi (Pbuh) or Saviour of the world will inspire the goodwill that will put an end to injustice and corruption.

Slowly, people will become aware that to share the resources of the world is in their own best interests and will

willingly accept the need. This will end the suffering of the poor.

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”⁴¹

Are we moving forward towards the Mahdi (Pbuh) or Saviour of the World most important concern?

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Notes

1. Genesis 25, 9-10.
2. Genesis 12, 1-3.
3. Genesis 13, 14-15.
4. Qur'an, Sura 2, 124.
5. Exodus 3,7-8.
6. Qur'an 7, Sura 7,104-105.
7. Matthew 2, 20-21.
8. Jeremiah 31, 15.
9. Matthew 2, 20-21.
10. Qur'an, Sura 9, 20-21.
11. Qur'an, Sura 5, 82-83.
12. Ali Ibn Talib (pbuh) Sermón 203, Najhol-Balagha.
13. Ali Ibn Talib (pbuh) Sermón 202, Najhol-Balagha.
14. Ali Ibn Talib (pbuh) Letter 45, Nahjol-Balagha.
15. Luke 10, 36-37.
16. Qur'an, Sura 59,8.
17. Luke 17, 12; 16-18.
18. Ali Ibn Talib (pbuh) Sermon 208, Najhol-Balagha.
19. Matthew 12, 24.
20. Luke 18, 24-25.
21. Mark 12, 42-44.
22. Matthew 6,1;3-4.
23. Ali Ibn Talib (pbuh) Sermon 208, Nahjol-Balagha.
24. Talmud, Baba Kamma 93a.
25. Isaiah 42,1.
26. Ezekiel 3, 21.
27. Matthew 7, 13-14.
28. Nyika Proverb, Kenia and Tanzania.
29. Ali Ibn Talib (pbuh) Saying 201, Najhol-Balagha.
30. Qur'an, Sura 29, 46.
31. Matthew 26, 51-52.
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33. Forty hadith of an-Nawawi 13.
34. Alib Ibn Talib (pbuh) Saying 10, Najhol-Balagha.
35. Sirach 4, 1-4.
36. Sirach 8, 1-2.

37. Sirach 10, 1-2; 4-5.
38. Sirach 10, 30-31.
39. Sirach 14, 5-6; 8 ; 13.
40. Sirach 26, 29; 27, 2-3.
41. Matthew 22, 36-40.

Belial, Antichrist, and Dajjal: Personification of Lawlessness in Abrahamic Eschatology; Signs to the Rightly Guided World

By: HR Wright

Introduction

The concept of eschatology (doctrine of the last things) as found in the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam addresses the final destiny of the world - the initiation of Divine governance. Typically, each particular tradition focuses primarily on its role and responsibility with in the context of God's final analysis and fulfillment of prophecy. Therefore, while eschatology transpires as a shared or common philosophy, theological doctrines vary significantly not only from tradition to tradition but also with traditions themselves. The ideas presented in the paper may not reflect the views and beliefs of every adherent in their particular tradition, as no religion is monolithic in praxis or orthodoxy. The celebrated Jewish proverb regarding the coming of the Moshiach emphasizes the circumstantial ambiguity in Jewish messianic anticipation,

“the Moshiach will come only to a generation which is altogether worthy or altogether unworthy”.

The impact of political crisis, psychological and physical violence, as well as religious oppression has sculpted eschatological concepts of Abrahamic tradition into individual forms that share foundational precepts. The Arabic idiom, "Every place is Karbala; every day is Ashura" underscores Islamic (particularly Shi'a) eschatological concepts; the struggle with oppression for the survival of the ideal way. The intimate connection between Judaism and Christianity and their shared experience of state endorsed persecution, creates a unity in eschatological forms of overcoming injustice as well. By examining textual sources for eschatological doctrines in context with historical crisis, we can discern the etiology of some of the mysterious symbols associated with all three eschatologies – in particular the signs or indicator of the status of divine law in the final stage of the world.

The Torah as God's everlasting law represents the eternal soul of the Jewish people. In this light, Jewish eschatology concerns itself sequentially with the collective destiny of a Covenanted People and with the righteous communities of a covenanted world. The fate of the individual soul intertwines with the immortality of God's purpose for mankind. The main thrust of Jewish eschatology propels expectation of greater things to come. YHVH's (the One True God) assessment of His People and restoration of His Kingdom i.e., Law in a transformed rather than discarded world. In Christian and Islamic eschatology, death interprets consciousness rather than terminating it; therefore, the emphasis of God's analysis or judgment of the individual ergo life after death prevails as well as that of the communal destiny redeemed in the ambers of a destroyed wicked

world. For the purposes of this year's conference, this paper will focus on the relationship of signs for the community directed toward eschatological expectation.

Apocalyptic Tradition Source of Eschatological Information:

Each of the Abrahamic eschatological traditions anticipates the advent of dynamic guidance within the subtext of a troubled world dominated by a leader, leadership or system of ungodliness (indicating the lack of God's presence in the world). The character of this wicked leadership represents the harbinger of the community ready for transformation. Each tradition manifests its greatest fears and perceptions of evil onto a unique archetype within the community – the adversary of the right path. The antagonist through guile and guise attempts to lead the world astray. Abrahamic tradition anticipates the ultimate defeat of the contender for leadership by the defender of God's way, yet it is the destiny of man to aid the hero on God's mission. Man's duty is to root out the deceiver's charade and remain steadfast to the laws of God. These traditions provide esoteric clues to the identity of the nature or character and timing of this charlatan associative with eschaton.

The metaphysical nature of religion in general and the concept of eschatology in particular find their greatest expression in an esoteric lexicon, which veils many concepts from merely one interpretation. However, their meanings are not maliciously hidden from us; rather they are often cloaked in poetic metaphor and mystery. From a historiographical perspective, the intentional reliance upon ambiguous, allegorical references and cipher i.e. signs, particularly in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic prophecy and literature, suffices in part as self-censorship to protect the author from impunity for criticizing oppression. From

the method of phenomenology, the ambiguity in eschatological language is derived in part from the fact that humanity cannot penetrate the veil of the unseen and its knowledge including the assigned hour or date when God will close this chapter of history. Qur'an says in Surah Yunus; 19, **'The unseen is only for Allah to know. Then wait ye: I too will wait with you.'** This facilitates God's purpose for humankind; Messianic anticipation is as much about God waiting for us as the world waiting for its Messiah.

In Judaism and Christian, eschatological signs are believed to be encoded in apocalyptic literature as found in the Canonical Biblical Books of Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Jeremiah, and Micah as well as the Book of Revelation. (Of these mentioned, the Book of Revelation belongs exclusively to Christian Canon.) In addition to the Biblical books, Judaism maintains extra-textual apocalyptic Pseudepigrapha¹ works and within the text known as the **Dead Sea Scrolls** exists early Jewish apocalyptic writings as well.

The word Apocalypse denotes several connotations including the popular usage for a cataclysmic disaster/warfare as well as a genre of Judaic and Christian literature marked by the prominence of prophetic supernatural visions. Apocalypse comes from the Greek verb **ποκάλυψις** meaning to 'reveal' or literally *lifting the veil*.² In the context of eschaton, the revelation or apocalypse pertains to future events. An Apocalypse in Jewish and Christian textual application purports to be a teleological disclosure of esoteric knowledge or a depiction of God's will for the future. The custom of eschatological visions was normative and expressed in many oral traditions of ancient peoples contemporary with the writers of Biblical apocalypse. Certain aspects of Jewish and Christian appear

cognate with the fantastic imagery of Babylonian and Persian eschaton of the time suggesting influence. However, many ancient eschatological doctrines pessimistically saw the world as cyclic, unreformable. With emerging monotheism (primarily witnessed in proto-Zoroastrianism), a progressive worldview launched eschatology into a linear context, heralding man with the divinely ordained task of reforming the world in lieu of soteriological anticipation. Perhaps invigorated by this budding optimism, Jewish apocalyptic tradition and by extension Christian displayed the intrinsic characteristic of God working through history to help humankind underscored by political motifs.

Jewish apocalyptic traditions flourished in the historical background of the exilic and post-exilic eras after the 'gate of prophecy had been closed'. In this period, the Children of Israel remained under the domination of 'foreign' powers, subjugated to laws contradictory to their own in stark contrast to the Biblical Promises of pre-exilic Prophecy. Comparatively, the message or vehicle of prophecy conveyed primarily the necessity of immediate reformation and repentance while, the communication of an apocalypse rendered hope and reward in a much wider temporal scope, often by assessing the present despair through the guise of retelling the past and predicting the future.

Attendant with the summon for reform, Biblical prophecy issued the consequence or fate of divine insight ignored which in many senses achieved a putative quality of prophecy fulfilled; for example, the various defeats and eventual subjugation of the Biblical nation Israel represent the consequence or God's judgment on the people for their infidelity to Him. In this perspective, the Children of Israel realized their prophesized transgressions and actualized judgment all the while awaiting the promised renewal.

Apocalyptic literature of Judaism is the progeny of the unfulfilled prophecy of glory and redemption - a bridge between reality and promise. **R. Bauckman (1980, p.74) elaborates,**

In the extended period of contradiction between God's promises and the reality of Israel's historical experience, the apocalyptists sought to assure the faithful that God had not abandoned his people, that the promised salvation was coming. To this end they stressed the divine sovereignty over history: God has predetermined the whole course of world history and the End will come at the time he has appointed.³

Some of the characteristic traits of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature include *Pseudonymity*, the practice of disguising actual authorship, attributing it to eminent sages and prophets of the past as necessitated by the end of Jewish Prophecy and the inherent 'historical' quality of apocalyptic literature. *Revelation through vision or dream* born by an angel of future cataclysmic events in which God destroys the ruling powers of evil and establishes His dominion. *Guise*, veiling a present source of malevolent oppression and agitation as a future focus for God's wrath (i.e. representation of The Empire of Babylon as a whore, the Empire of Rome as a beast). This is also achieved primarily through *Symbolical mystical imagery*, metaphoric language employed to describe persons, events and times in an effort to either obscure identity or enhance meaning through allegory. Examples include creatures and abominations described in grotesque features with distinctive markings (i.e. horns, numbers, and special eyes) as representational of evil. Apocalyptic literature relies on the thematic motif of God's elect conquering or destroying the symbols of abomination. All of these characteristics bear the hallmark

of messianic anticipation in the flux of religious/political oppression.

A diverse wealth of Jewish eschatological signs exists in the prevalence of works labeled apocryphal⁴. Originally, the word apocryphal indicated 'secret or esoteric' writings, rejected for liturgical purposes⁵. However, the connotation now implies texts outside of canon, which interject minimal dogmatic/theological value; but feed the far greater hunger for detail and extrapolation into the mysteries of religion. These works include the Books of Enoch, Noah, Elijah and other apocryphal books including The Ascension of Moses, The Testament of the XII Patriarchs, etc. The preponderance of Apocalyptic literature both Canonical and Apocryphal in Judaism stems largely from the psychological effects of a people in Exile, in the case of Christianity; the oppression and martyrdom of members during the early days of the nascent religious movement. In such times of tension and crisis, many treasured apocryphal writings often preferring them to canonical books. Apocryphal books infused profound occult hope into the most pessimistic hours of monotheistic history. The darker life grew and the more desperate the political situation, the more eagerly many turned to find promises of the end to such strife and a brighter future.

This heightened level of tension figures less predominately in the clarification of Islamic Eschatology as a whole. Perhaps the Passion of Kabala⁶ correlates to a crisis so intense it generated a literary form to galvanize generations to come. Out of the pathos of Karbala emerged a poetic oral tradition sublimely expressing the struggle and suffering of the Shiite Imamate to preserve Islam. Reciting *Marsiya* (مرثیه , an elegiac poem written to commemorate the martyrdom and valour of Imam Husayn and his comrades)

to this day remains an important ritual in the remembrance of what Shi'a see as the supreme sacrifice made in guardianship of Islamic Deen ergo; divine law. Deep within the poetic ethos of Shi'a sacrifice foments a sentiment of anticipation for deliverance from the suffering. The Marsiya like the apocryphal books of Judaism and Christianity, extol Muslims to conceptualize the potential for liberation from oppression.

Within the tradition of Islam, the signs of the eschaton share some of the qualities found in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, in particular the agency of angelic vehicle of revelation and dreams (Hadith relates that the Prophet of Islam had dreams or visions of the Dajjal (Islamic antichrist)). In Qur'an, there is the mysterious imagery of a powerful beast associative with punishing those who do not believe in the Way.⁷ Similarities also include prophesized cataclysmic events such as the atrocities of Yajuj and Majuj⁸, as well as the destruction of evil, and to a lesser extent the use of guise, (Dajjal will disguise the truth until Hell resembles paradise and Paradise appears to be Hell). Like Judaism and Christianity, many signs abound in the Qu'ran, with extra textual references found in Hadith. Hadith, a corpus of traditions and wonts of the Prophet, flesh out details lacking in the Qur'an, much like the Oral Tradition of Judaism elucidates the Torah with details not incorporated in the scripture.

Analysis of the personification of lawlessness in Abrahamic Eschaton:

Humanity's darkest hour

Jewish apocryphal and Christian Apocalyptic literature as well as Qur'an and Hadith regarding the Final Days foresee God's intervention with a worldview that challenges morality and His laws, underscored by change in leadership.

Each eschatological tradition singles out a uniquely immoral individual (the immoral individual may serve as a concealment of a system or political power) as the epitome of corruption and wicked governance - a deceiver or pretender claiming divine prerogative. This pseudo prophet (or counterfeit system) will seduce and lure many from monotheistic culture and prophetic commandments, indicating humanity's darkest hour. ^{In the context of signs indicating the approach of eschaton, the false messiah functions as the antithesis of God's will – the wrong type of governance.}

In the Abrahamic traditions, Law functions as the center of religion, the formative force, God's will. Prophecy must accompany divine law; God's messengers move the people to walk in the path of God. The task assigned to every prophet served to correct moral behavior and proclaim religious truths through the assignment of Divine Directives. Collectively, the prophets voiced a specific way of living; stressing ethical monotheism. In the Persian proto-monotheistic religion Zoroastrianism, the correct nature of human society is known as *Daena*, in Hebrew דרך (*Derekh*) means 'way' in the manner of God's acting or nature another connotation is 'straight path' in the course of one's life. The Arabic word دين (*Deen*) means 'authority' interchangeable with 'religion' implying the sacred norm by which to mold life. Euphemistically Deen is known as the 'straight path' in Islam. The application of these three words denote (from their own religious perspective) transcendent principles and the application or habit of following that Law in life. The Pretender of each tradition will strive to diminish the validity of God's laws and in doing so will diminish the value of life itself.

Belial:

Judaism as a religious tradition extols praxis over doctrine, therefore one finds very little consensus among the various ‘sects’ i.e. Chassidic, Reform, Conservative, and the other assorted movements, regarding beliefs including an eschatological philosophy. Perhaps the most adhesive element in general among the various movements aside from the Law is not *what they believe* but rather the beliefs the movements consistently reject. In this context, we can discern a uniform rejection of cosmic dualism in Judaism – based on the first five books of Tanakh little evidence supports the existence of a supernatural opponent to God.

The Biblical Book Lamentations says **From the Supernal One cannot emerge both evil and good**; Chassidic teachings regard this to mean the "evil" humankind encounters is only the concealment of good.

Rivals for the prerogative of adoration appear in the guise of various other gods; however, scripture eventually exposes the deceit in idolatry. Textually, the Children of Israel face opponents but a dichotomy of good and evil forces in the micro and macro realms of life consists only of obedience and disobedience to the Law in particular and God in general. In this respect, consistent ‘stiff necked’ disobedience to God’s law epitomizes their greatest opponent. Disobedience is concealment of good or absence of God in the world.

Torah represents the most valuable cargo a Jew bears in the caravan of life. Its Divine mitzvah (commandments) are metaphorically referred to as the ‘yoke of the kingdom of heaven’ invoking a sense of bondage or obedience to God. Within the context of eschatology and Jewish anticipation of recommitment to the laws and heritage of Torah, there exists an allegory of anyone who rebels against God’s

authority and laws as wicked or worthless. The word **Belial** is scornfully evoked for such an individual and with it is attached the rabbinical definition of “one who has thrown off the ‘yoke of heaven’ [i.e. the Torah, the law]”. Jewish exegetes suppose several possible etymons for Belial. Some writers construe ‘worthless’. The Talmud regards Belial as a compound word composed of *beli* and *ol* meaning ‘without a yoke’. Other writers posit ‘never to rise’ denoting never to do well⁹. The final etiology could function as an apt reference to not repairing the world and its consequence of exclusion from eschatological redemption. In addition, Belial is also translated in the Septuagint as ‘lawlessness’¹⁰.

Minor significance is attached to Belial in the overall scope of Judaism; the metaphor for the most part supports an eschatological concept found predominately in extra-textual material. Scripturally, Belial does not appear as a personal name but rather symbolizes opposition to God’s laws; rare references in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) usually designate persons committing wickedness, sedition and idolatry; those who disregard divine law or in Biblical language those who ‘do not fear God’. This euphemism conveys the earliest concept of religion as recognition of right from wrong. Other oblique references associate the word Belial with the netherworld, including ‘rivers of the underworld’ and ‘the land from which there is no return’. Some writers conjecture the metaphor of a ‘land of no return’ represents an exact translation into emerging monotheism of the Assyrian mythological dragon of the Abyss – an Ancient Near East cultural reference to primordial chaos. The innuendo of pre-creative chaos tracks well with the concept of lawlessness and disorder. Allusions to waterways of the underworld or ‘the deep’ keep with the

nuance of the etymon ‘never to rise’ i.e. the rejected or banished by God (omission from possible resurrection).¹¹

Belial eventually began to represent anthropomorphous of the agent of evil in Jewish apocryphal Apocalypses indicative by the many epithets associative with Belial as a personal name including the *Angel of Lawlessness*, the *Spirit of Darkness* and ultimately the *Father of all Idolatrous Nations*. This supports the precative curse associative with the meaning of Belial, ‘may he have no rising’. Eventually these ideas contributed to Christian concepts regarding the Antichrist.

In the Apocalypse known as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, appears several references to Belial’s opposition to the Law of God and the choice that must be made between obedience to God’s Holy laws and the works of Belial. The Testament purports the lives and words of the 12 sons of Jacob. Each Testament exhorts the reader to emulate the virtues elucidated and avoid the sins committed by the writer. Each Testament also possesses prophetic visions of the future. The Testaments are Jewish works originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic with Christian interpolations. Scholars have discerned similarities with The Testaments and the writings of the Christian New Testament leading to conjecture that Paul and other writers quoted from the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs in their expositions of virtue in waiting for the Second Coming of Christ.¹² In the context of Belial, *The Maccabean Testament of Levi* specifically foresees the Moshiach (messiah) receiving the ‘holy ones’ and overcoming Belial and his hosts. Therefore, Levi extols his offspring to accept the yoke of God and reject Belial. From the Testament of Issachar we see:

I sighed with every one that was troubled, and I gave my bread to the poor. I ate not alone; I broke no oath; I wrought piety and truth all my days. I have loved the Lord with all my might, and I have loved every man

even as my children. Do ye these things, my children, and every spirit of Belial will flee from you, and no deed of evil men will have power over you; and ye shall subdue every wild beast, having with you the God of heaven, that walketh with men in simplicity of heart.¹³

In addition, one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, known as *The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, describes Belial as the leader of Darkness:

'But for corruption thou hast made Belial, an angel of hostility. All his dominions are in darkness, and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and guilt. All the spirits that are associated with him are but angels of Sweed, a type of drug.' (1QM)¹⁴

A Rabbinic axiom says the Step (or Coming) of the Moshiach (messiah) is discerned in the insolence and lawlessness of the people, 'the turning of the schoolhouse into a brothel, and the turning of the rulers to heresy'.¹⁵ Belial (whether an individual leader or collective presence of mind in the world) represents a sign of degradation. Apocalyptic literature foretells the disorder in the world of man ('lawlessness i.e. Belial will prevail, causing men to hate and persecute') and disharmony in the world of nature ('birds, beast, trees, and stones and will cease to act in accord with nature')¹⁶ accompanying the disobedience to God's way. In Jewish eschatology, because of Belial, Truth and the laws of Torah will be minimized in Judaism and seem alien to the world as well. Calamity, the causality brought on by the wicked i.e. lawless behavior of man often finds expression in the Biblical plagues and curses, punitive measures exercised most frequently as a demonstration of God's supremacy. From the book of Isaiah Chapter 24

The earth is defiled by its people; they disobeyed the law, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.

Therefore, a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear the guilt... Isaiah 24; 5-6.

The plagues associative with the *End of Days* in Judaism include the signs of warfare and captivity, famine and death, terror and havoc, earthquake and fire, illness and pain; epitomizing the Talmud's plea, 'Let the end of days come but may I not live to see them, because they will be filled with so much conflict and suffering.'

Antichrist:

Watch out that no one deceives you for many will come in my name, claiming, "I am the Christ", and will deceive many.....For false Christs and false prophets will appear to perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect....

The Gospel According to Matthew

Similar to the Jewish eschatological concepts of Belial as 'lawlessness', Antichrist denotes a characterization of denial as well as a character of evil in the drama of eschaton. In both traditions of Judaism and Christianity, we see a tendency to elaborate obscure textual references into an enigmatic metaphor of evil. The word Antichrist appears only in the Johannine Epistles. The author's application of the term indicates a quality or state of being that denies the authority of Jesus.

Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, 1 John 4:2-4

The word Antichrist is derived from two ancient Greek words, *αντι + χριστος* or anti+ *khristos*.¹⁷ *Khristos* or Christos means 'the anointed' referencing divine unction, founded upon the ancient custom of consecration whereby oil was

poured on the head of those given authority. Christos as a title in junction with the name Jesus designated legitimacy as heir to the divinely ordained Davidic leadership. According to Jewish tradition as related in the Torah/Old Testament, from the lineage of David will come all the future kings of Judah and ultimately, at the end of history, the Messiah. From the perspective of Christianity, association with the Davidic covenant does not invest Jesus with power to replace the law but rather demonstrates his destiny to fulfill God's wishes and epitomize God's law on earth. The word *anti* implies several connotations including 'in place of' and the antonym of 'in opposition of'; therefore *antichristos* might denote one resembling Christ or one who opposes Christ. Both definitions resonate well within Christian eschatology regarding the great deceiver or pseudo messiah as the mirror image of Jesus Christ. Underscoring the crux of evil in every tradition - in order to seduce and deceive humankind, evil takes on the guise or charades as its opponent.

The model of Antichrist in Christianity tracks through two intertwining paths, that of heresy and the other of opposition to God – for to reject Jesus was the ultimate Christian apostasy tantamount to the rejection of God. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says,

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.

The Gospel of John 14; 6-7

From the perspective of the Johannine Epistles (in the Bible), the reference 'the spirit of antichrist' castigated individuals considered heretics in the Christian movement; ergo we see references to many antichrists. The Epistle explains that those who have rejected belief in a historical

manifestation of God upon the stage of humanity through the body of Christ are not true members of the Christian community, the inheritors of the Kingdom of God. From 1 John 2:18-19,

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

The reader must bear in mind that the Epistles and other books following the Gospels in the Bible reflect the development of Christian ideology and the various conflicts among the nascent followers of the precept of the corporeal divinity of Jesus as Christ. In most cases, the various Epistles were letters written to a specific church in a defensive context addressing a local and immediate 'situation'. So part of the orbit of concepts about an antagonistic antichrist includes adversaries to doctrinal concepts such as Jesus 'appearing in the flesh' i.e. God incarnate.

The span of Antichrist pertinent to this paper encompasses the emerging idea that an Adversary to Christ's teachings and the way of God will come in the 'Last days' and that will be a sign of the approaching Second Coming or the return of Christ as Messiah. In his second letter to the church at Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul (perhaps the Pauline authorship is pseudonymous) interchanges the term 'the man of lawlessness' or 'the lawless one' with the concept of Antichrist emphasizing the ultimate rebellion against God. From 2 Thessalonians chapter 2:

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. 4 He

opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God..... For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming.

Paul, a Hellenized Jew who converted to Christianity, masterfully connected Jewish precepts into Christian concepts to illustrate that Jesus was the awaited Messiah per the prophecies of the Torah. In ancient Greek texts of Second Thessalonians, the expression attributed by Paul for lawlessness is *anomia*. The Greek word *anomia* literally means, "Being without law" also implying transgression of the law. Paul underscores the word play of law with Torah as the yoke of Heaven i.e. God. Torah (תורה) is a Hebrew word denoting 'law'. Therefore to be lawless means to be without Torah or yoke as well meaning iniquity or transgressing the *word* of God (in the Gospel of John, 'word' is a Christian metaphor for Jesus: **In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.**). The 'lawless one' refers not to misconduct but rather defiant rejection or disbelief in the Prophesized laws of God. Paul states 'the mystery of lawlessness is already at work', which implies that this condition or state of rejecting concepts about Jesus as the fulfillment of divine law already exists but will be supremely manifest by one who will attempt to lead the world of believers astray:

he will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God, is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God 2 Thessalonians 2;4.

In the Apocalyptic book of Revelation, we see heresy and lawlessness anthropomorphous into several reviled

symbolic figures including the dragon, the harlot, and ultimately the Beast; evil incarnate also called the Son of Perdition. However, both the writing of Paul's letter to the Church in Thessalonica, and the Book of Revelation were driven by perceived external ecumenical crisis. Most of Paul's writings (none of which are categorized as apocalyptic) were meant to give specific practical guidance to a definite community and were usually incorporated into that community's liturgy. Paul's advice served as literal guidance. Paul himself said, 'I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one by who the Lord's mercy is trustworthy'.¹⁸ Yet a vast portion of the Christian canon is attributed to his authorship and that practical advice serves today as the backbone of Christianity. Paul advocated co-existing in peace with non-Christians and more importantly non-resistance to the Roman Empire. However, the author of the Apocalypse of John the last book in the Christian Testament also known as Revelation purports very little practical advice instead castigates wickedness in cloaked hyperbole and symbolism. John advocates resistance to the seductiveness of pagan Rome. However, once Rome became the capitol of Christianity, a literal interpretation of the apocalyptic themes became problematic forcing a more inward or spiritual analysis of the signs of Revelation.

Analysis of lawless figures in the Apocalyptic Books Daniel and Revelation

The book of Revelation represents the only apocalyptic book in Christian canon (the New Testament) and closely resembles the apocalyptic book in the Hebrew canon, Daniel. Daniel's visions may have influenced the ideas and symbology of Revelations – as the themes carry over into the apocalypse of the New Testament. Both books purport

to describe the signs of what will happen in the 'Last days'. Imagery found in each tome reveals the anxiety and greatest fears of a community living in oppression. The circumstances behind each story reveal times of crisis and political systems that oppose monotheism. Both rely on the use of visions or dreams in fantastic imagery to delineate God's triumph battle over wrongful governance. In each book, the symbolic descriptions i.e. horned talking beasts, dragons, should not be taken as literal descriptions, nor are the symbolism meant to be pictured realistically. They function as captivating literary devices to express intense psychological distress.

The book of Daniel was written in the period of the Maccabean revolt against a Syrian-Greek force governed by Antiochus IV Epiphanes that suppressed Jerusalem around the year 165 BC. (However, Daniel does not represent a 'manifesto' of that rebellion but rather the vision of a world transformed.) During the Seleucid dynasty, Antiochus tyrannized the Jews by desecrating their Temple and forbidding all religious practices, an action tantamount to stripping the Jews of their law ergo yoke. Antiochus belligerently attempted to destroy the bond between the Jews and God creating a state of lawless i.e. nonexistence. Those Jews, who would not compromise their principles and abandon the Law, resisted and rebelled eventually winning.

Cloaked in the 'current' crisis of the Maccabees, the character Daniel a pious young man and model Jew who figures during the Babylonian Exile a period of history prior to the Maccabean revolt, entreats the Jews to stand fast in faith and look forward to the righteous dynasty of God's Kingdom. (Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and earned the most reviled place in Jewish history for it.) The figure

Daniel purports several apocalyptic visions and ultimately a transfigured world. Included in the visions is the reoccurring description of an 'arrogant king' who defiles the Temple, sets up a "desolating abomination" i.e. idolatrous worship (or a false covenant which we may infer as inerrant law), and persecutes those who remain true to the "holy covenant". The projected arrogant king represents ultimate disobedience (living without a yoke) and wicked governance, this projection prefigures the role of the Antichrist in Christianity. In both cases, the imagery serves as a sign of the corruption that will manifest the need for reformation.

The literary device of veiling present strife and crisis in the context of past achievements is what gives apocalyptic literature its distinctively prospective character. The past is pulled into the present and both are pitched into the future. The reader senses a cycle of fulfillment and impression that God is directing the course of history. The book of Daniel represents a response on two levels. Initially, it is written in response to a political crisis with a Divine response of deliverance. Perhaps the 'religious' nature of an apocalypse obscures the fact that such tomes criticize political or power systems. However, the reader must bear in mind that no distinction existed between religion and politics in Ancient Near Eastern Culture.

Comparatively, the book Revelation like Daniel fomented in the environment of religious/political oppression by a perceived 'evil' empire. The book of Revelation, (as is the case with Daniel) prophesizes a period of world crisis dominated by counterfeit wicked leadership, a veiled reference to Rome's dominance of the region. The word Antichrist does not appear in the text of Revelation, rather the figure denominates the text in guise of 'beast' and 'false

prophet'. Beast aptly fits in the scenario of an animal that requires a yoke to direct its path with the nuance of something horrific that cannot be yoked. The vision purported by the author describes humanity's darkest hour when a political ruler will dominate the world, subjugate the faithful to laws contradictory to God's laws i.e. idolatry.

John, the author of Revelation opens the narrative by stating that he is in exile on the Island of Patmos, imprisoned in a cave, due to his extreme Christian views. The author is clearly antagonistic toward the Roman Empire of the time and his views however guised are subversive to any authority other than Christ. John's visions and imagery underscore his disgust with a perceived level of acquiesce among Christians with the idolatrous practices of Rome in particular obedience to an imperial court that worships its political leader as god. John, on the other hand, believes that the worship of the emperor was idolatry and more so that Roman laws were illegitimate. The apocalypse reflects his asceticism to worldliness and ultimate hope that God's chosen will overthrow and yoke the Roman Empire Law guised as a beast. John uses pejorative imagery of a beast and prostitute in allusion to Rome and Babylon (Babylon is associative with Rome for destroying Jerusalem.) and their religious persecution of both the Jews and Christians.

Beast, "Then I saw another beast coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast" Revelation 13; 11-12.

Harlot, "There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven head and 10 horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand filled with abominable things and the filth of her

adulteries....I saw the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the those who bore testimony to Jesus” Revelation 17;3-6.

The reference to adultery alludes not to sexual fornication but rather the Biblical troupe of infidelity to God. Jewish tradition allegorizes the relationship between the Children of Israel and YHVH (God) kindred to marriage a sacred lawful union. Eventually and by extension in Christianity, any nation including Israel that practiced idolatry was unfaithful to the One True God. John goes on to say that the woman had a title on her head saying ‘Babylon the Great the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth’.

John envisions a world of dominated by a lawless power; contextually the Romans as pagans were a people without Torah i.e. ‘revealed’ Divine Law (compare this to the Islamic concept People of the Book). Acquiesce to the laws of Rome represent Apostasy or Divine Treason. Therefore, John’s prophecy centers on signs of abomination and Divine retribution against any and all who reject God’s law.

Ad-Dajjal

"Shall I not tell you about the Dajjal a story of which no prophet told his nation? The Dajjal is one-eyed and will bring with him what will resemble Hell and Paradise, and what he will call Paradise will be actually Hell; so I warn you (against him) as Noah warned his nation against him.¹⁹

The false messiah or lawless figure in Islamic eschatology is known as Al-Masih Ad-Dajjal. The term Al-Masih Ad-Dajjal الدجال (Arabic for "The False Messiah") is also a literal translation of the term "*Meshiha Deghala*", found in the *Peshitta* or Christian Bible translated into the Syriac language. Syriac is a dialect, or group of dialects, of Eastern

Aramaic, which shares a common vocabulary with Arabic and Hebrew as related tongues.²⁰ The term *Mesih* carries the same connotations of the Greek "antichristos" representing a conversion of Christian Greek terminology into Syriac. *Masih*, the Arabic word for Messiah, is used as one of the titles associated with the prophet Isa or Jesus in Islam. The word *Masih* implies many connotations. Some suggest it means to be touched on in the head in the context of the purification rite of ablution. Some Islamic scholars correlate this with the Jewish and Christian concept of unction. *Masih* conveys the meaning of anointed. The article 'Al' heightens the meaning to 'the most anointed one'. The grammatical form of the Arabic *Masih* word also emphasizes not only an inherent quality but also ability. According to *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, vol. 1, Edited by W. Wright, L.L.D, copyright 1967, p. 136, "It is an "intensive form" that often indicates "a very high degree of the quality which their subject possesses or an act which is done with frequency ... by their subject." Indicating Al-*Masih*, the most anointed, has the ability to anoint others –perhaps the anointing of *Masih* is his teaching of Allah's will or way. The *Qur'an* does not refer to any other prophet as being "masih" ergo anointed, much less "al-*Masih*".

Another meaning associative with *Masih* is the concept of surveying the world to propagate a message. The latter concept corresponds with Ad- Dajjal as the false messiah who will attempt to deceive the world.

As is the case with Belial in Judaism, Ad-Dajjal primarily occupies a place in Islamic eschatology; no references to Ad-Dajjal exist in Qu'ran, rather the tradition of Hadith fleshes out Islamic concepts. Similar in nature to the flexibility in definition of antichrist in Christianity the word Dajjal denotes a couple of connotations, primarily associative

with a system of falsehood and deceit, also vaguely referring to Satan or an unseen force of evil who is the master of falsehood and deceit. However, with the article 'Ad' Dajjal becomes the specific End Times deceiver or false prophet. Therefore, in Islamic eschatology we clearly see two individuals with opposing titles: Isa al Masih (Jesus) and the Al-Masih Ad-Dajjal (The Deceiver). One represents the anointed or chosen way of Allah and the other is falsehood. In Islamic eschatology, Al Masih and Al Mahdi are not the same individual. Each places a significant role in the fulfillment of Allah's divine plan in the eschaton. Similar to the Jewish concept of Belial, Dajjal (without the article Ad) conceptually represents divine treason. As is the case with Belial in Jewish apocalyptic literature Ad Dajjal represents the leader of falsehood who occupies the throne of every act antithetical to Divine law.

As mentioned earlier, due to the historical circumstances of crisis and socio-religious oppression, Jewish and Christian eschatology found its greatest expression in apocalyptic literature. This particular genre (dictated by tyranny and repression) for the most part eluded Islam. However, the corpus of Hadith contains a rich tradition of apocalyptic (in the context of cataclysmic events) prophecy. While much of the esoteric symbolism necessitated by secrecy in Judaism and Christianity is absent, fantastic imagery still surrounds Ad-Dajjal.

According to one Hadith, three signs mark the End of Time (Ahara-Zamon): The fitna of the Beast (Dababah Asr²¹), The rising of the sun in West, and The Second Coming of the Masih or Jesus.

وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ أَبِي الْجَارُودِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ فِي قَوْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنْزِلَ آيَةً وَ
 سَيُرِيكَ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ آيَاتٍ مِنْهَا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ وَالدَّجَالُ وَنُزُولُ عَيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ عَ وَ
 طُلُوعُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَغْرِبِهَا

Another Hadith:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I have told you so much about the Dajjal (Antichrist) that I am afraid you may not understand. The Dajjal is short, hen-toed, woolly-haired, one-eyed, an eye-sightless, neither protruding nor deep-seated. If you are confused about him, know that your Lord is not one-eyed.²²

Another fantastic characteristic associated with Ad-Dajjal is a mark of the letters ‘KFR’ (ك ف ر) on his forehead between his eyes. KFR refers to the Arabic word Kaafir:

There is written between his eyes the word "kaafir". He then spelled the word as k. f. r., which every Muslim would be able to read²³

As recorded in *Nahj al-balaghah* or Path of Eloquence, Imam Ali related to Asbagh Ibn Nabateh, that the Dajjal will be blind in the right eye and the left eye will shine like a star. Between his eyes will be the sign of KFR visible to both the literate and illiterate. The Dajjal will come when the world is in great distress at a time when the sky no longer ‘cries’.

The root of Dajjal *dajala* signifies ‘to mix’ and expresses the meaning of deliberately confusing matters through ambiguity. According to Hadith Dajjal will bring with him what “will resemble Hell and Paradise, and what he will call Paradise will be actually Hell”²⁴. The letters KFR are the root of the Arabic word Kaafir (كافر) which means to cover or reject. Before the advent of Islam the root word KFR

described farmers burying seeds in the ground, covering them with soil while planting. In the perspective of Islam the etiology suggests covering up or 'smearing' the truth with deceit or filth. A kaafir denotes one who systematically rejects God and His messengers. In the context of this conference, the author wishes to emphasis kaafir solely as those who consciously live in spite of God and more specifically Divine law. The letters KFR on Ad-Dajjal do not seem to be apparent for the entire world to witness. They reflect a pejorative quality or characteristic distinctively known to Muslims. According to Islamic tradition, Ad-Dajjal embodies the way of kaafir, constitutes a system of confusing the truth with deceit.

In addition to the mark of KFR which correlates to the mark of the beast in Christianity (pundits posit that 666 actually represents a numerical calculation of letters for an imperial Roman title or slogan used officially for documents and commercial contracts) , the distinguishing feature of Dajjal's one eye harkens to Judeo-Christian apocalyptic symbolic characteristics as well. While Dajjal appears to have two physical eyes, one is faulty impairing his vision and character. The book of Daniel alludes to a grotesque figure. (Christians interpret the allusion as a reference to the 'Son of Perdition' the antithetical Son of God, some in Judaism posit that the figure represents a mighty empire and enemy of Israel) The figure is a beast that crushes and devours it victims, a creature with a 'horn most imposing that had eyes and a mouth that spoke'. This horn wages war against the 'holy ones' of the Most High (God). (Daniel 7; 20). Biblically a horn alludes to potency (Ancient Near Eastern religious cults portrayed gods with horns adding a supernatural or occult nuance to the symbolism in the

Biblical context). Eyes often symbolize wisdom. The Beast of Daniel possesses supernatural power and cunning.

However, in Islam, Dajjal with his eschewed sight and the epithet of Kafir in proximity of his vision possesses myopic knowledge. In Islam, knowledge is derived from two sources, 'aql and Ma'rifah. 'Aql means reason or exercise of the intellect and depends entirely on a rational process. However, reason alone is blind. Ma'rifah, or intuitive gnosis equated with wisdom is direct knowledge acquired alongside the processes of logic or reason. The Prophets and Ahlul Bayt (including the Awaited Mahdi), as recipients of Ma'rifah, possess initiated and perfect knowledge of Allah. Knowledge is therefore both a divine gift and a creative process of the human intellect. The system of Dajjal as KFR covers aql or reason and therefore cannot see clearly or analyze beyond the immediate and base needs of man. The rejection of revelation and ergo religion is not entirely rooted in corruption of the will but also in the neglect and waste of knowledge. When a person sins intelligence departs and the individual becomes more like an animal than a reasoning being. The Qur'an describes those who avoid the path of religion as "lâ ya`qilûn" (Surah Baqarah; 170-171), those who will not use their intelligence appropriately. Ad-Dajjal's possesses like all men two physical eyes, the vehicles to receive 'aql and Ma'rifah. For whatever ontological reason Ad-Dajjal utilizes only one eye; he possesses the capacity to reason if only in cunning, but not Allah's favor or enlightenment. He lacks complete vision and knowledge – he forsakes or wastes one eye. Hadith concerning the eye of Ad-Dajjal relates:

Ad-Dajjal was mentioned in the presence of the Prophet. The Prophet said, "Allah is not hidden from you; He is not one-eyed," and pointed with his hand

towards his eye, adding, "While Al-Masih Ad-Dajjal is blind in the right eye"²⁵

Islam rejects anthropomorphic references to Allah; therefore, the reference to Allah's eyes is purely metaphoric – indicating the completeness of Allah's vision or sight in contrast to the inadequate vision of Dajjal. Dajjal as the final enemy of the righteous, covers, or ignores; he 'turns a blind eye' toward Allah. The system of Dajjal in Islam represents humanity's darkest hour.

According to Hadith Ad-Dajjal will deceive many with his vision and eventually gather a great army to rebel against the righteous:

'O Messenger of Allah, how quickly will he (Dajjal) walk upon the earth?' He said, 'Like a cloud driven by the wind. He will come to the people and call them (to a false religion), and they will believe in him and respond to him.'²⁶

Ad-Dajjal as the protagonist in Islamic eschatology represents rejection of Allah's will - the metaphor of an unbridled beast wandering off the straight path, leading others astray. The period of Belial, Antichrist and Ad-Dajjal symbolizes anarchy, comparative with the primordial period before Creation in the Bible. Perhaps most profoundly, the system of Belial, Antichrist or Dajjal represents the absence of God's way. In the eschatological traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Judaism the period of lawlessness precedes the ultimate establishment of God's law in the world. Lawlessness gives birth to the reign of Law. Each tradition parlays the task of destroying or eliminating the system of lawlessness upon its messiah.

The Culmination of Eschatological Signs – Manifestation of God’s Law

Humanity’s Brightest Hour

The function of Abrahamic eschatology stresses leadership. As symbols Belial, The Antichrist and Ad-Dajjal characterize dark cynical rebellion against divine leadership and God’s laws. In the Abrahamic traditions, the erroneous faith in these systems is demonstrated by the dilapidation of the world and the appearance and triumph of the messianic figure known as Moshiach, the Messiah and al-Mahdi. In the context of Islamic eschatology, both Jesus the Messiah and The Awaited Imam Mahdi play a role in the transfiguration of a lawless world into a rightly guided one.

A salient characteristic of Abrahamic eschatological signs is the messianic campaign to destroy lawlessness; replace anarchy with order or Law. Each tradition focuses upon the manifestation of the divine statutes or right governance as the culmination of creation - the brightest hour. For instance, according to Jewish tradition the Moshiach (the Hebrew word meaning ‘anointed one’) the legitimate or divinely chosen leader of Judaism will rejuvenate and invigorated the principles of Torah among the Nation of Israel by encouraging Torah’s highest standards. Therefore, the ‘End of Days’ as understood in Judaism speaks of the end of the days of Belial – when “government will turn atheist and there will be no protest. Truth will vanish.” Sanhedrin 97a, Sotah, 49b. The coming of the Moshiach represents the restoration of God’s dominion and leadership, **“And the lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord with one name.”** Zechariah 14:9.

Jewish tradition supported by Biblical prophecy describes how the Moshiach (a completely human ruler i.e. he will not

possess any supernatural or divine qualities) will bring the Jews back to observation of the Torah- they return to their yoke. The seminal Jewish Philosopher Moses Maimonides states in Hilchos Melachim - "The Laws Concerning Kings" from his well-known work the **Mishneh Torah**:

“If a king will arise from the House of David who delves deeply into the study of the Torah and, like David his ancestor, observes its mitzvos as prescribed by the Written Law and the Oral Law; if he will compel all of Israel to walk in [the way of the Torah] and repair the breaches [in its observance]; and if he will fight the wars of G-d; - we may, with assurance, consider him Mashiach.”²⁷

The Moshiach will reestablish the Sanhedrin or Rabbinical court to correctly administer and oversee Jewish Law for the People of Israel. However, the Moshiach will not govern the world. Rather he will lead or inspire the world to achieve its zenith along side with his own community.

The Messiah will be a very great king, he will achieve great fame, and his reputation among the gentile nations will be even greater than that of King Solomon. His great righteousness and the wonders that he will bring about will cause all peoples to make peace with him²⁸

The Sages and prophets did not yearn for the Messianic Era in order that [the Jewish people] rule over the entire world, nor in order that they have dominion over the gentiles, nor that they be exalted by them, nor in order that they eat, drink and celebrate. Rather, their aspiration was that [the Jewish people] be free [to involve themselves] in Torah and its wisdom, without anyone to oppress or disturb them, and thus be found worthy of life in the World to Come²⁹

The Torah has stressed not only to the Jews, but to the other nations of the world as well, that Judaism serves humankind by being ‘a lamp unto the world’. The 613

commandments or laws found in the Torah, do not represent the laws for all of humanity, but rather for a people. Their ethical monotheistic behavior represents God's standard. Therefore, other God given laws are relevant for those not included in the Jewish covenant. The age lead by the Moshiach will be defined in part by the nations of the world co-existing peacefully through adherence to their own righteous laws (covenants with God) and religious frameworks rather than Judaic law.

In Christianity, the return of Jesus, the Messiah, is the most significant eschatological event. As the essence of Christianity the example of God consciousness, Jesus serves as the example of how God expects His people to act – a physical manifestation of righteousness or lawfulness. Relative to Judaism, eschatological concepts vary greatly within the religion from movement to movement. Several perspectives regarding the events and requirements of the Parousia³⁰ reflect this diversity. Only a few Christian organizations claim complete and authoritative interpretation of the vast symbology associated with eschatology. Regarding the timing of the Parousia, the Bible explicitly states in several verses that this knowledge is unavailable to humanity:

No one knows about the day or hours, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the father....Therefore keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Matthew 24: 36 and 42.

On one occasion while he was eating with them, he gave them this command. ...wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. They asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel? He said to them, "it is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has by his own authority". Act 1:4-7.

One elemental motif in many Christian approaches is the concept of millennial expectation. The transformation brought upon earth by the return and reign of Jesus Christ, which reverses the previous period of lawlessness and suffering. Within the context of millennialism dogma varies denominationally including these scenarios:

- An imminent 'apocalyptic' i.e. cataclysmic transformation spurs the faithful into action.
- Christ returns only after humans have established a world worthy of his kingdom through their own efforts.
- Christ returns to save a sinful humanity and defeat the forces of Satan.

The Catholic Church rejects the concept of millennialism in particular the penchant to label religious figures or political leaders as the Antichrist:

The Antichrist's deception already begins to take shape in the world every time the claim is made to realize within history that messianic hope which can only be realized beyond history through the eschatological judgment. The Church has rejected even modified forms of this falsification of the kingdom to come under the name of millenarianism, especially the "intrinsically perverse" political form of a secular messianism.³¹ (Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 194).

Within the limited scope of this paper for the Mahdaviat Conference, the significance of the return and reign of Jesus Christ is the expression of God's law on earth and the destruction or rejection of lawlessness. Rather than pessimistically waiting for the return of Jesus, many Christians believe his presence exists in the world manifest through human effort to transform inequity in the world into

justice through divine law. The greater the effort exhorted the greater the manifestation is realized.

Toward the end of Revelation found in the Christian Bible, John foresees the Rider on the White Horse:

“I saw heaven standing opened and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice, he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He is dressed in a robe dripped in blood and his name is the word of God....Out of his mouth comes a sharp words with which to strike down nations....On his robe and on his thigh he has the name written; KING OF KINGS And LORD OF LORDS” Revelation 19;11-16.

Due to the mysterious imagery, opinion varies on whether The Rider on the White Horse represents Christ or the Antichrist. Following along with the narrative, under the pretext that the Rider signifies Christ we see:

I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army...the beast was captured...the rest were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse... 19-22.

This episode in Revelation parallels a metaphor found in the passion of Imam Husayn in Shi’a Islam. Similar to the genre of apocalyptic literature, Shi’a Islam possesses a literary tradition known as *Marsiya*. The *Marsiya* is an elegiac poem written to memorialize the martyrdom of Husayn the third Imam in the initiated chain of Shi’a guidance. The literary form relies upon descriptions of the battlefield, moral edification, and portrayals of emotional states of being of the characters to induce lamentation and ‘soz’ or burning of the heart. *Marsiya* became an effective tool to galvanize feelings for reform during periods of political turmoil in Shi’a communities throughout the 19th and 20th centuries³². Imam Husayn’s confrontation and

ultimate sacrifice at Karbala with a military detachment of the Umayyad Caliph became a powerful metaphor for the revolt against tyrannical oppression, despotic sovereignty and most profoundly opposition to God. The name of Yazid (the contentious Caliph during the uprising) in Shi'a communities metamorphosed into the ultimate symbol of tyranny, corruption and, antagonism toward true Islam. In context with other eschatological writings, the event of Karbala recorded in prose imbues the present and the future – the expression of right over might becomes eternal. From a Marsiya written by Mirza Ghalib, “The glory and jewel of faith, Hussain Ibn-e Ali, who shall be called the candle of the gathering of grandeur”.

Returning to the context of the riders on a white horse, in her analytical, article Karbala and the Imam Husayn in Persian and Indo Muslim Literature [Marsiya], Anne Marie Schimmel discusses the poetic theme of resurrection for the spiritually dead through the suffering of the Imam Husayn in Shi' a Islam. In the imagery of Shi'a mythos Imam Husayn is depicted as the rider of a white horse yielding the sword of truth against unlawful leadership.

The Rider of the White Horse of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse pertains to the symbolic metaphors from the Christian Bible of the eschatological signs; *Conquest* represented by a white horse, *War* a red horse, *Famine* a black horse and *Death* a pale green horse. The Rider

‘whose name is the word of God’ and who speaks words as sharp as a sword to strike down nations mirrors the Imamate which spoke sharp words when addressing the false leadership of the Muslim Ummah. Schimmel elaborates:

when Husayn b. 'Ali drew the sword, the sword of Allah, he shed the blood of those who are occupied with, and

interested in, things other than God; graphically, the word la, the beginning of the shahada, resembles the form of a sword (preferably a two-edged sword, like Dhu'l-fiqar), and this sword does away with everything that is an object of worship besides God. It is the prophetic 'No' to anything that might be seen beside the Lord. By using the sword of 'No', Husayn, by his martyrdom, wrote the letters 'but God' (illa Allah) in the desert, and thus wrote the title of the script by which the Muslims find salvation.³³

We see a parallel in the Shi'a poetry with the apocalypse of Judaism and Christianity, where the past is pitched into the eschatological future. The two are stitched together into a mystical tapestry. The passion and dark imagery of Karbala foretells the bright future with Al-Mahdi, when the false objects of worship will be eliminated and God's governance will prevail. In Islamic eschatology, the leadership of Al-Mahdi sojourns under the white banner of good governance or Al-Liwaa. The purpose of Imam Mahdi's existence is to end corrupt governance once and for all. Both Christ as the rider of the white horse, and Imam Husayn as the progeny of the Promised Succor symbolize victory. The imagery of sacred violence i.e. warfare, blood and sacrifice are common eschatological themes in the Abrahamic traditions. The book of Isaiah (11:1-5) uses similar imagery:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and of power, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.....He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Prophecy regarding the power struggle between lawlessness and right governance foretells confrontational

battles, judgment and the slaying of wickedness. As with reading the apocalypse of Daniel and Revelation, relying on literal interpretations of the descriptions provides a superficial understanding. The symbology ‘the sword that came out of the mouth’ of the rider on the white horse (i.e. conquest) and ‘the sword of Allah’ yielded by Imam Husayn, and ‘the breath of his lips [which] will slay the wicked’, as metaphor indicate speaking the truth to all – subduing falsehood. It is not force that will defeat wickedness, only truth can conquer evil. Each sword is used not to spill blood but rather to destroy the lies, which were exchanged for the way of God. Each metaphor imparts the image of the dangerous task of obliterating the heinous to make way for restoration- “to fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with tyranny and injustice.”

In the context of Islamic eschatology Al-Faraj (an epithet for the awaited one also known as Mahdi meaning the relief (together with Isa al Masih or Jesus), will conquer hypocrisy, deceit and ultimately lawlessness.

Hadith postulates that the Mahdi will reform Islam to its pristine state:

It has come down from traditions that when Mahdi emerges.....he will remove the curtain obscuring the realities; he will enliven the holy religion of Islam and will annul all that is not in Islam and has been added to it such that people will imagine that Mahdi (a.s.) has brought a new religion and a new book.³⁴

The sixth Imam (from the initiated chain of Shi’a Islamic leaders), Imam Sadiq relates:

When our Qa'im arises he will call people anew to Islam, guiding them to the old thing from which people have turned away. He will be called Mahdi because he will guide people to the thing from which they have been separated.

He will be called Qa'im because he will be commanded to establish the truth.³⁵

The promised Mahdi as the executor of God's plans will herald the Islamic concept of good governance just as the Jewish Moshiach will reestablish the Sanhedrin. Also similar in fashion to the Christian concept of Christ returning to judge and rule the world, as 'the right hand of God'. The Islamic Promised One will restore Deen (religion) as true uncorrupted guidance for the benefit of all of mankind. As is the case with Judaism's reliance upon Torah, the Mahdi will rely on Islamic law for the norm to establish social order and a world free from oppression. According to Imam Ali, the Mahdi will 'fill the earth with justice and equity, and brilliance and rationality',³⁶.

In contrast to the system of Dajjal whose methods rely upon oppression, violence, and fear to dominate the world, the Promised One will illuminate the world; enable all of human society to reach true perfection and the full consciousness of spirituality, through the example of his very character. Imam Ali conveys,

When our Qa'im rises hostility and resentment will be eliminated from the hearts of the people, and general security will be established all over the world³⁷

Many will embrace Islam in reaction to the goodwill and peace demonstrated by the reign of the Mahdi. However, the Mahdi cannot contradict the precepts of Qur'an. Qur'an states in Surah Baqarah:

Let there be no compulsion in Religion: Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. 2:256

Those who believe in Qur'an, and those whose follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day,

and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. 2:62

The Qur'an guarantees the position of Jews and Christians as members of God's Ummah. The Mahdi's governance will continue to honor the protected status of Judaism and Christianity as *ahl al-dhimma*.³⁸

Imam Sadiq says:

The Master of the Command was named as the Mahdi because he will dig out the Torah and other heavenly books from the cave in Antioch. He will judge among the people of the Torah according to the Torah; among the people of the Gospel according to the Gospel; among the people of the Psalms in accordance with the Psalms; among the people of the Qur'an in accordance with the Qur'an.³⁹

Islam is not unique in this precept, the leadership of the Christian Messiah and the Jewish Moshiach represents the fruition of Divine Law, the purification of religion and its practice. As indicated by the cruel and wicked governance of the discussed apocalypses Daniel and Revelation characterized in literary metaphor as abominations, leaders that oppose God's law represent lawless individuals. It will be a counterfeit leadership in the guise of legitimacy, cloaked in religion that will persecute, oppress with force, and seek the elimination of any who worship the One True God- not the Chosen or Promised Leader. In the eschatological descriptions of Belial (i.e. yokeless or lawless one), Antichrist (i.e. beast or man of lawlessness), and Dajjal (visionless/myopic one who denies or covers the truth) we see nearsighted leadership that foments deceit, persecution, hatred and might over right. This contrasts with true religion and God's Law. More importantly, the Promised One in each tradition challenges that system either

reforming the system in place or restoring it to its pristine state.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with ears; but with righteousness, he will judge the needy, with justice, he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. Isaiah

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth....and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men and, he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain. He said to me. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. Revelation

Even if the entire duration of the world's existence has already been exhausted and only one day is left before the Day of Judgment, God will expand that day to such a length of time, as to accommodate the kingdom of a person out of Ahl al-Bayt who will be called by my name. He will then fill the Earth with peace and justice as it will have been filled with injustice and tyranny before then.⁴⁰

- Hadith upon whose authenticity all Muslims agree, the Messenger of Allah said.

In the dawn of a new century, humankind proudly heralds a world governed by technological advances, intellectual evolution, and a far greater sense of well being than any other generation before. These expansions for the most part have pushed eschatological ideologies aside, swept concepts of a pseudo prophet away and minimalized messianic anticipation. Perhaps this sense of comfort and intellectual superiority makes it difficult for the modern reader to appreciate the significance of an apocalypse upon the ancient mind. Such books as well as eschatological signs assuaged the human need to understand injustice and

oppression within the context of revealed monotheistic ethics and promises. The rationalized temper discounts much of the related information in this paper as fantasy or irrelevant, primarily because of the real effect human justice has achieved in this world. One facile conclusion that may be gleaned from the fantastic imagery of a pseudo messiah and promised world hero is the propensity for the mind to derive great symbols of hope in the most perverse or hopeless of times. By rationally reducing every metaphor, sign and secret meaning to the most common denominator in all three traditions, we are left with a dichotomy of evil and virtue illustrating one basic and indisputable truth- the world, as ancient man knew and we know it today, is corruptible and must continually be reformed.

In the society of Abrahamic tradition, the eschatological element of great strife and trial at the hands of lawlessness presents the persecuted community with an exalted role in the Divine mission of establishing justice. This community, like the pretender and the world hero are signs. In the past, the human creation has endured and succeeded because of the path forged by former generations who methodically plodded the right course. Failure has always occurred when too many followed erroneous leadership. All three traditions anticipate the coming of a great guide who will ultimately lead the world to perfect success. More importantly, each tradition has taught that humanity already possesses the knowledge or way (i.e. derekh and deen) to reform the world. We merely have not mastered the technology in our own hands. The task remains to continue along the course given us in anticipation of success or victory. By struggling or striving in intellectual engagement and religious dialogue to confront individual as well as 'ecumenical' ignorance and deceit we participate in the eschaton of lawlessness and

establishing truth and justice in the world. Our participation becomes a bright and shining sign of the preparation of the rightly guided world too.

Notes

1. *Pseudo* /"false", *epigraph*/ "inscription" are falsely attributed works to noted figures of the past.
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse>
3. Bauckham, R. 1980. 'Apocalyptic', in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. F. F. Bruce, Inter-Varsity Press.
4. "Secret" or even 'precious' literature outside of the 24 books of Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) of which the largest proportion are apocalypses, based on unfulfilled prophecies.
5. Primarily applied to writings, which were kept secret because they were the vehicles of esoteric knowledge considered too profound to be disclosed to anyone other than the initiated. Later the term applied in Christianity to writings that were censored because of their questionable ecumenical merit.
6. The Battle of Karbala is one of the most significant battles in the nascent history of Islam. The Battle took place on Muharram 10, 61 AH in present day Iraq. On one side were supporters and relatives of Muhammad's grandson Husayn ibn Ali; on the other side was a military detachment from the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph. In Shi'a Islam the battle represents a profound soteriological event when the "brave and charismatic" grandson of the Prophet Muhammad sacrificed himself and his family to safeguard the true values of Islam.
7. "And when the Word is fulfilled against them We shall produce from the earth a Beast to face them; He will speak to them, for mankind did not believe with assurance in our Signs" (Surah 27; 82).
8. Gog and Magog two hidden tribes of ferocious people who will break free of the dam that holds them back, and ravage the earth in Islamic eschatology. One of their most heinous crimes will be cannibalism.
9. Metzger & Coogan (1993) *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, p77.
10. A term occurring often in the Tanakh/Old Testament and applied, as would seem from the context in I Sam. x. 27; II Sam. xvi. 7, xx. 1; II Chron. xiii. 7; Job xxxiv. 18, to any one opposing the established authority, whether civil, as in the above passages, or religious, as in Judges xix. 22; I Kings xxi. 10, 13; Prov. xvi. 27, xix. 28; Deut. xiii. 14, xv. 9; II Sam. xxiii. 6. Source: <http://bible.tmtm.com/wiki/Belial>
11. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com:Belial>
12. Thes 2:16 is a quotation of Test. Patr., Levi, 6, 10; Rom 12:19 of Gad, 6, 10; Rom 12:21 of Benjamin, 6, 3; 2Cor 7:10 of Gad, 5, 7; and Eph 5:6 of Naphtali, 3, source http://bible.tmtm.com/wiki/Testaments_of_the_Twelve_Patriarchs
13. "
14. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belial>
15. [Jewish Encyclopedia.com:Eschatology](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com:Eschatology)

16. ‘‘
17. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antichrist>
18. Corinthians 7:25
19. Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 554 at USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts Hadith 554, University of Southern California, 2007.
20. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dajjal>
21. See footnote #6 for reference to the Beast in Surah Al Naml Ayat 82
22. Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 4306 Narrated by Ubadah ibn as-Samit
23. Sahih Muslim Book 041, Number 7009, reported by Anas b. Malik
24. Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 554 at USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts Hadith 554, University of Southern California, 2007
25. Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 9.504
26. Sahih Muslim, Hadith 7015
27. Hilchos Melachim - "The Laws Concerning Kings") of the final book (Sefer Shoftim - "The Book of Judges") of the *Mishneh Torah*
28. Maimonides, Commentary on Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10:1
29. Hilchos Melech HaMashiach
30. the future, visible, *return* from heaven of Jesus, the Messiah, to raise the dead, hold the last judgment, and set up formally and gloriously the kingdom of God.
31. Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 194
32. Josh Malihabadi of South Asia penned many popular marasi during the nationalist period of the 1930's and 40's. "O Josh, call out to the Prince of Karbala [Hussain], cast a glance at this twentieth century, look at this tumult, chaos, and the earthquake. At this moment there are numerous Yazids, and yesterday there was only one. From village to village might has assumed the role of truth, Once again, Human feet are in chains"
33. *Karbala and the Imam Husayn in Persian and Indo Muslim Literature*, Annemarie Schimmel, Harvard University.
34. Philosophy and Reason Behind Occultation, <http://www.al-shia.com/html/eng/books/hadith/ imam-al-mahdi/imam-al-mahdi/40.htm>
35. *Kashf al-ghumma*, Vol. 3, p. 264; Mufid, *Irshad*, p. 240, 343
36. *Ithbat al-hudat*, Vol. 7, p. 49.
37. *Bihār al-anwār*, Vol. 52, p. 316
38. أهل الذمة, *ahl al-dhimma*, the people of the *dhimma* or pact of protection is a non-Muslim subject of a state governed in accordance with sharia law. The term connotes an obligation of the Islamic state to protect the individual, including the individual's life, property, and freedom of religion and worship, in exchange for loyalty to Muslim government, and a tax.
39. Nu'mani, *Kitab al-ghayba*, p.237.
40. *Sahih Tirmidhi*, V2, P86, V9, P74–75.

Mahdism and Humans Rights

By: Elizabeth Younes

“Oh you men! Surely we have created you of a male and female, and you tribes and families so that you may know each other; surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing.” (Holy Quran, 49:13)

The issue of human rights is one of the most fundamental human issues and also one of the most sensitive and controversial. During the recent decades, this problem was more political than either ethical or legal. Although the influence of political motives, rivalries, and considerations have made difficult the correct formulation of this problem, but this should not prevent thinkers and genuine humanists from probing into this problem and ultimately obtaining a solution.

Perhaps, when we examine the causes of many social changes and political upheavals, we will find the marks of its presence and its principal ideals. During the last decades this emphasis reached its climax in the West. With the formation of the ONU after the Second World War and the subsequent drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights, a concrete model came into existence as a result of this emphasis that can serve as a criterion and basis of our judgement and analysis of the ideals voiced in the regard during the last two hundred years and especially in the last few decades.

The real worth of human being is hidden in his intellectual dimension and specialized nature and his source of perceptions, motives, and exalted tendencies take him towards perfection and make him distinguishable from other (materialistic) creatures.

Various viewpoints, ideologies and materialistic schools of thought which have attempted evaluation of human rights have gone away from the reality and Nature. As the universal Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations was finalized under the influence of the Superpowers and world oppressive forces, beside positive points, it also contains serious lacunae and shortcomings.

Since the materialistic schools of thought have drawn the intellectual human personality towards corruption, and contrary to their claims for defending the justice and human rights without giving any consideration to great intellectual dimension of humanity and by trampling upon the respect of humanity have disregarded true human rights, it's an urgent need to appreciate the importance of human values to highlight these facts and the excesses rendered by these materialistic schools on the humanity and emphasize that these schools, by disregarding the nature and intellectual dimension of man, have no right to even talk about the human rights.

As the exploitative forces, with the continuing pursuance of their plots for taking away and harming the rights of peoples and endangering the prelude and freedom of human beings and for achievements of their illegitimate gains and

their transgressive desires, have been utilizing the services of world human rights organizations including so-called champions of human rights, and it's necessary to denounces all such criminal activities and declares its support for all the oppressed people who are struggling for their independence and defence against transgression and exploitations and calls upon all the human forces under oppression to unite for getting back their lost legitimate rights and rise up face-to-face against so-called sanctioned exploitative and unjust regulation such as "veto power".

We Muslims, of course, know it very well that if the Western world and the Western civilization have paid attention to this matter in the recent centuries, Islam has dealt with it from all the various aspects many centuries back. The idea of human rights as a fundamental principle can be seen to underlie throughout Islamic teaching.

That the verses of the Quran and the traditions handed down from the Prophet and the Imams of his household, each one of them emphasizes the fundamental rights of man –something which has caught the attention of men in recent years- is known to Muslims, and there is no need for the scholars to be reminded about this fact. However, I would say, that today it is a big responsibility on the shoulders of the Islamic society to make this reality known to the world, and not to allow those essential teachings of Islam to be lost in the storm of political clamour and ballyhoo.

There are some questions which can be raised in this regard, and to answer them is one of my principal aims:

The first question is whether the efforts made during the last two centuries at least, and especially during the decades since the Second World War, in the name of human rights have been successful in their purpose or not. The addresses, the assemblies and the sessions held in the United Nations,

and the claims made regarding human rights –have they succeeded in bringing men closer to their genuine rights, or to at least the mayor section of the deprived humanity? The answer to this question is not so difficult, for an observation of the present world conditions is enough to prove that these attempts have not been successful till now. A glance at the conditions of the underdeveloped societies of the world, who form the mayor part of the human population, is sufficient to reveal the fact that not only the major part of humanity could not achieve their true rights during the last fifty years, but the methods of encroaching upon the rights of the deprived nations have become more sophisticated and complex and more difficult of remedy. We cannot accept the claims made by those who claim to be champions of human rights, while the bitter realities of the African and Asian nations and the hungry millions of the human race and before our eyes, and watch the constant spectacle of violation of the rights of several nations. Those who have been outspoken in advocating human rights during these lat forty years, have themselves grabbed the most fundamental of human rights from the people of the Third-Word countries. It is with their connivance that certain governments and regimes that deny men their most primary rights have managed to survive. The dictator of today’s world and also the despots of the last fifty years in Asia, Africa and Latin America –none of them could have established and preserved their dictatorships on their own without reliance upon the big powers. These big powers are exactly those who ha e coined most of the slogans concerning human rights; it is they who have brought into being the UNO, and even today the UN is at their service.

The economic poverty, hunger and loss of life in several countries of the world are of course the result of

intervention, repression, usurpation on the part of the big powers. Who has caused Africa, the land of plenteous resources to see this day?. Who has kept the people of Bangladesh and India for years and years under exploitation, and, despite their natural resources and great potentialities, has brought them to the point that today we hear people die of hunger in those countries? Who has plundered the wealth and resources of the Third-World countries, and has brought about

hunger, poverty and misfortune for these nations, procuring sophisticated technologies and immense wealth for themselves?

I don't of course reject the UN, I believe that this organization ought to exist, and it must be reformed. What I mean to say is that after all that effort, after all that clamour and the hopes that were attached to this organization, all of you can see how inadequate and ineffectual this organization has remained in securing human rights in the world today. Hence, the answer to the first question has become clear. We can see that the efforts made for procuring human rights and the claims made in the name of human rights through the lat several centuries and especially during the last few decades did not bear any fruit; they have failed to secure human rights.

The second question is whether, basically, these efforts had any sincerity? This question is of course historical in nature and may not have much practical value. Hence, I do not intend to discuss it at length. It suffices mention here that, these effort were not sincere. It is true that among the exponents of human right, but the arena was dominated by politicians. Look around and see as to who are those who plead the case of human rights. Some of the ex presidents of USA projected themselves as the defender of human rights

during their election campaign, and won the elections on account of it. But then, we have seen that they stood by the cruellest, the most barbarious and tyrannical of rulers, and the most adamant opponents of human rights. They supported from Shah to the tyrants of occupied Palestine, and what to say about the criminal madness put into Irak. Even now, those who pled the case of human rights, the statesmen and politicians who vociferously voice their support for human rights in conferences and international forums are not more sincere than their former counterparts. So, the answer to the second question is also clear: No! We do not believe that the efforts made by the politicians and the most vocal advocates of human rights were sincere at all.

The third question, which is the most basic of them all, is, what was the reason for the failure of these attempts? This is the point to which more attention should be paid, and I shall discuss it briefly here.

Those who have created the UN and have drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and those who most vehemently and vociferously plead for it today, regrettably the majority of them are statesmen and politicians who believe in the system of dominance and have accepted it. You can see that unfortunately the governments of the same countries which are subject to domination do not have the moral courage and guts to resist and oppose the domination of the big powers and fight them, while in our view it is quite possible. We believe that if the poor countries, the countries that have been under domination and in spite of their resources have been forced to fulfil the unjust demands made by the big powers –had they wished to stand against them, they could do so. No miracle is needed; it is sufficient that the governments

should rely upon their own people. Unfortunately, the weakness of will to resist, and more than weakness the treachery on the part of heads of some states in some cases, did not allow them to rise against the system of dominance. This system of dominance prevails over the world economy, culture, international relations and international rights.

Today, the problem of atom bomb and the use of nuclear weapons is n issue all over the world. The superpowers themselves raise it because they are afraid of each other. They wrangle over it and each tries to dupe the other by limiting the nuclear arsenals of its rival while equipping itself with more and more. But, have the smaller countries ever thought of opposing the makers of nuclear bombs, by declaring the unless these bombs are destroyed and defused and unless peace of mind is restores to humanity, which is exposed to the nuclear danger every moment, they shall not have any relations with them, not any trade nor any cooperation in any matter?. No. If you suggest this idea to them, they will say that it is an advanced technology, they possess it; they can, and so must produce such weapons.

Lastly, the fourth question: What is the remedy? In our view, the answer is return to Islam, and recourse to the Divine revelation. This is prescription equally valid for Muslims as well as for non-Muslims. For this, the Islamic societies do not have to wait for anything. Return to Islam, revival of the Quran and of Islamic mode of thinking in society, recourse to Islamic sources in legal matters –these are the things and that will enable us to understand the meaning of human rights and help us to identify those rights and guide us in our struggle to secure them.

The Quran says:

“Take by force that which We have given you”. (2:63).

God Almighty has granted these rights to mankind, and they should secure these rights by force. These are not the words of an idealist who writes about Islamic issues and Islamic ideals from the corner of a theological seminary but the historical facts shows it now and will show it a tomorrow.

The Islamic teachings are generally based on negation of all types of discrimination such of as of colour, race, and other materialistic distinctions, and piety is the only criterion for superiority of human being through which he moves towards perfection; and that the human freedom does not accept anything other than what is within the limits of worshipping *Allah* and negation of all types of submissions to devils and imaginary gods and abstinence

The world community has experimented with different philosophies and ideologies to strengthen the common vision that would guarantee harmony and justice among peoples of different races and creeds. Nationalism, communism, socialism, capitalism, and so on have alternatively divided the nations, united them partially under one or another -ism, brought them to the brink of destructive nuclear warfare, and forced them to work with each other under international organizations like the United Nations. The human search for harmony and peace with justice remain the most precious prize for the global community. At the same time, the lingering memory of two World Wars with their disastrous outcomes have provided a grim reminder of how far humanity seems to be from that lofty ideal of peace on earth.

The Qur'an presents a revolutionary program of creating an ethical order that will reflect the divine will on earth through God's righteous servants who have submitted themselves to God's will, the Muslims. The Prophet has

also informed us that the uniquely qualified person to lead humanity to become united under One God by abandoning all forms of idolatry and concentrating on the divine purposes for humanity will be the promised Mahdi, a descendant of his.

Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (P.) has conveyed the essence of *al-Qa’im’s* role in the future of humanity. He says:

“When our Qa’im rises hostility and resentment will be eliminated from the hearts of the people, and general security will be established all over the world”.

International Problems of the Minorities

What policy is to be adopted by a religion which claims to have a universal mission and by an *ummah* which considers itself commissioned to carry out a role in the world, and by these two ultimate heirs of the earth and human generation, in attaining this ultimate goal in the question of relationships with the followers of other creeds?

The question of the relationships of the Islamic lands with non-Muslims nations and groups is one of the most important political problems of Islam in its civil and international dimensions to be investigated carefully with reference to the Islamic text and jurisprudence.

The oppression and transgression against the human rights are not confined to aliens alone, as the matter of protecting the rights of racial and religious groups, who are in a minority, even though they may be the citizens of their resident country, is in itself and unsolved international problem, for the solutions of which nothing had been done until de Second World War beyond the recommendations of the international conferences and the unguaranteed regulations of the League of Nations

And why do the Islamic Courts have and option?

To find a definite answer to question as to why the Islamic courts are free in accepting the appeal of the minorities or referring them to their own courts, we must resort to the other verses of the Qur'an.

Verse N^a 43 of *suratul Ma'idah* gives us the following answer:

“And how do they make you a judge while they have the Torah wherein is Allah's judgement? Yet turn back after that and they are not believers”.

Thus the Qur'an expresses surprise at the Jews for appealing to the Prophet for justice, whereas they have the Torah, their religious book, in hand, and can see the verdict of *Allah* in it concerning their differences; but since these verdicts do not correspond with their desires, they come to the Prophet for justice though they have no faith in revelation and his divine Book and his prophethood. What kind of an appeal is this?.

The View of the Shiite Jurisprudents

The Shiite jurisprudents admit no difference between the religions of the litigant groups in their disputes. Whether they follow the same creed or a different one, they are considered equal before the Islamic courts, and in both cases the court can abstain from hearing them.

In spite of having the right of appeal to the Islamic courts, the religious minorities also enjoy the right of freedom in the manner of pleading, that is to say, they can abstain from taking their case to the Muslim courts and submit it to their own judicial and religious authorities. Thus we may say that Islam has preserved the right of judicial independence for its allies.

Regarding relation among nations, the world of today considers international arbitration as a peaceful means of removing differences between governments. Article 38 of the first Hague agreement of 1907 declares:

“International arbitration means the settlement of disputes between governments through arbitrators chosen by them, who judge on the basis of respect for legal principles”.

Thus a person or persons selected for this purpose act as impartial judges between the two hostile parties, and both sides must, with good will, carry out the issued verdict.

Such an arbitration has been envisaged in the law of Islam and is actually practised in some disputes between Muslims and non-Muslim groups. Examples of this is seen in the arbitration of Sa’d ibn Ma’adh who was chosen by both the Prophet and Jews of Banu-Qurayzah. Likewise the arbitrations, agreed upon in the battle of Siffin.

Woman from the Viewpoint of Mahdism Doctrine

The Islamic faith and its viewpoint in regard to woman’s human rights are considered as a big and glorious revolution of the world. Islam with the presentation of this ideology immediately discarded all those humiliating beliefs and false views of the pagan period and instead introduced a new model of social relationship of woman to the world.

There are so many instances in the holy Quran which show that the Paradise en blessings of this world and the world Hereafter created for men are also meant for women. Contrary to others views, not only woman is not the germ of sin and defiled by nature, it can become the specimen and symbol of chastity, piety and service to Allah like the women who have been mentioned in the holy Quran with respect and sanctity such as Mariam (Mary) and the mother of Musa (Moses).

According to Ayatollah Shaheed Motahhari in his beautiful book “Women Rights in Islam”, has discussed this matter at great length and says: “No man, except the holy Prophet and Ali can reach the position of *Hazrat Zahra (A.S.)*. The distinction that Islam makes between man and woman is in respect of move from the Truth (*Allah*) towards the world”. As far as the return from Allah towards man and the acceptance of the responsibilities of prophethood is concerned, man has been considered as most appropriate”.

Having had a look at Islamic ideology regarding man, and specially the views about woman, it would be appropriate to have a glance, item-wise, on the women’s rights within the Islamic rights system.. Women’s rights in Islam may be divided in two parts; firstly, general rights, that is to say the rights she has in common with man and there is no distinction between man and woman in regard to those rights; and secondly special rights, which are peculiar to women and these can be considered as a woman’s privilege on man.

And how to revive woman’s human rights all over the world? Of course with all the clear rules which Islam has provided regarding women’s rights and specifically defined the obligations of both men and women, it is regretted that woman has still not achieved her real and appropriate position in Islamic societies and she is still deprived of many rights.

The way leading to the restitution of woman’s human rights lies in the improvement of the conditions and factors which have caused instability for her. It is said that guidance can be projected when misguidance is prevalent everywhere.

Requiem for Racism

Last century, racist theories gave birth to two extreme political ideologies, Facism an Nazism, which ignited the flames of the Second World War and claimed as mane as 32 million lives. For example, Adolf Hitler believed that fair-haired Nordic or German peoples were far superior to what he called non-Aryans, and he set out to decimate other fellow Europeans despite the sharing of a common historical process and common religion –Christianity. His opponents, the Allied Powers, pursued a bit broader policy of racism. They pretended to accommodate other races and cultures of the world for economic and political gains, but in practice have stuck to what they think is the absolute superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race.

But the most dangerous racist ideology that the world has ever seen is without doubt Zionism. Its aim was not just the usurpation of the Arab land of Palestine to serve as a state for European Jews, but the gradual control of the world’s political and economic levers, by exploiting the Gentiles (non-Jews) and then eliminating them from all corridors of power.

“It is for this reason that we must undermine faith, eradicate from the minds of the Gentiles the very principles of God and Soul and replace these concepts by... material desires”.

4th Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Islam was and is the solution for preservation of human rights

It is clear that Islam had presented a comprehensive solution on this crucial subject of human rights 1400 years ago, which is equally valid today and should remain valid till the Last Day of the humanity.

In every part of the world there are oppressors and tyrants who rule over the helpless downtrodden people. These oppressors hold everything under their control and have used their power to terrorize ordinary people. With this in mind, how shall the *Mahdi* take the command into his hands and succeed in overthrowing these tyrants?.

Actually the triumph of the *Mahdi* is the triumph of the downtrodden people of the world over their oppressors.

The traditions provide the guidelines for the Shi'a to consider in acknowledging valid and invalid religious movements led by on or another leader. They also serve as a reminder to them that the time for the appearance of the *Mahdi* had not arrived yet. Under the circumstances that existed for the Shi'a community living as a minority under those most unfavourable circumstances that were prevalent under the caliphate, it was expedient for them not to join the bandwagon of anyone who invited them to rise against tyranny. In fact, under those conditions patience is a virtue.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you all. May God hasten deliverance through the appearance of the Supreme Remnant of God, the twelfth Imam, and may He make us all the servants of Islam and the helpers of the *Imam*.

The Doctrine of Mahdism. Tradition and Modernity – Man’s relation with Nature. An Anthropological approach, a pathway out of clash and conflict

By: Valeria Piacentini Fiorani

Islam - with its own concrete culture and reality – can no longer be disregarded. It does represent a pivotal moment. No doubt, it is a key-factor on the stage of history. The sentence “the world is a global village” is a well-known cliché. But this global village is pluralistic in a religious and cultural sense as well, and within this global village Islamic civilisation has forged its own order and dimension.

Islamic reformism was a modern movement, which came into being in the wake of European supremacy and expansion. It first emerged in the nineteenth century, and gave life to various schools of thought and religious thinking. Neo-reformism is emerging at the dawn of this present new age, the response to foreign challenges, to the integration of the Islamic order into the Western secular/economic system.

Without going into the details of another long, thorny topic, in the following discourse I purposefully leave aside both the political-strategic dimension and ensuing military-security issues on the one hand, and inter-religious dialogue on the other. In these respects there are more appropriate and authoritative forums. Conversely, I wish to focus my attention on some realities within the Muslim world, its beneficial experience on other peoples' civilisation (with whom it has come into contact), and its own highly significant cultural heritage and legacy within the world order which is nowadays dawning: the Doctrine of Mahdism and Expectation.

Obviously, these notes are the reflection of my academic life and personal experience. Both as a Catholic and as a human being, I have spent many years in the Islamic world, sharing with my Muslim friends sorrow and grief, joyful days and merry events: mutually beneficial relationships, which have largely contributed to shaping some of my worldviews.

The Doctrine of Mahdism has always been at the core of Muslim thinkers and philosophers. In other Religions too, the ideal and doctrine of a Saviour, who will come back one day to judge and reform the situation of the world, represents a focal point, is very deep in thoughts and forges Men's life, attitudes and behaviours.

The concept of 'Expectation' is a culture. It can give reasonable answers to some essential questions. It can also provide a valuable contribution to certain strategic and anthropological domains and lead to piety, understanding, mutual friendship, hope, felicity, reformation.

Within its broader framework, the Mahdism Doctrine can have an anthropological and social impact before and after the age of appearance.

A closer look reveals that one of the major threats for political and civil society undoubtedly derives from new inequalities: the new rich and the new poor, the educated and the ignorant, the powerful and those who - although having riches - have no access to power.

The Mahdism Doctrine can provide us with the hope of a pathway out of conflict and clashes. It is a pathway that, drawing from Tradition and traditional thinking, steps towards Modernity without losing its roots. No human being is despised for his colour, race, language, social status, geographical borders. Piety and friendship nullify distinctions such as wealth, beauty, social rank and position, and replace them with spiritual qualities. Hence, the Doctrine of Mahdism can involve society in its entirety, amalgamating it, creating new links between civil society and political society, and, through an accurate balance between technological development and the preservation of ancient traditions, it can make possible spiritual piety, social and economic justice.

This is the social impact of the Doctrine of Mahdism *before the age of appearance*. In this period, people have experienced different pathways, which they felt could bring them tranquillity, peace, coexistence, justice and freedom. However, they could not delete disturbances, environmental crises, global disturbance, suffering from injustice and exploitations of all kinds and various nature, bringing to relativism, instability in faith and religious beliefs, and a positive proliferation of doctrines and dogmas. This is a reality, which certifies that the contemporary Man will never manage to overcome his own barriers if he ignores his divine identity. Within this framework, and with particular regard to Modern-Contemporary times, Man's demand for Mahdism and the heavenly Saviour can provide

a concrete pathway do deliver himself from this conditions. Modernism, Post-Modernism, New-Realism are at the core of present-day debates. The relationship between Man and rationality, between the new-Man and the metaphysical notions through spirituality and worldly morality are amongst the most popular means to release himself from psychic illusions and surmount the anxieties of modernity, technology, material concerns and find Man's lost identity.

But this pathways can also induce a number of neo-thinkers to prefer the impending process of Modernity to Religion. Religion is studied through the lens of social and humanitarian ethics, pre-posing material/rational interpretation to religious notions. On the other side, a number of traditional researchers state that time and space are not genuine, they have no consistency. So, instead of modernity, they focus on the eternal realities of religion, which enjoy internal, intrinsic unity and are beyond times and all spatial boundaries.

These issues are largely discussed and heard of also in the traditional culture of the ordinary people, and lead us to re-think our own speculative parameters, traditional paradigms and models of society and power, mankind and statehood. In the eyes of this new intellectual trend, through studying traditional sources, it appears that we have not lost (or eliminated) our spirituality and spiritual values, merging all forms in the material and economic dimension of life.

Within this global, traditional insight, today the anthropological impact has a role to play.

Following the science reasoning, and the ancestors' experience, the main principles of Religion never allow us to desist from, or ignore, the religious thinking and sincerity. In religious thought, one has to conform the religious precepts of rationality, human affairs, economics

and business, technology, science/sciences and learning, and other subjects, not at the cost of fencing the religious beliefs.

The peaceful coexistence and the growth of Man's knowledge are here, amongst and with us. Undoubtedly, to day we are facing a sharp confrontation between tradition and modernity. I have just very briefly mentioned some pathways to overcome this contradiction. However, any consistent pathway cannot disregard religious tenets. This is the social impact of the Doctrine of Mahdism *after the age of appearance*. The study of traditions testifies the need of essential reforms in such fields as social management, economics, business, social and human affairs, experimental sciences and some specific cultural fields.

Some Man's innate needs are common to all peoples, beyond the colour of the skin, beyond race and language, social status, etc. And religions cannot treat them with indifference. However, disregarding utopian solutions, and on a reduced scale, we must admit that, notwithstanding various schools of thought in both time and space, there are some ideals which are common to all human beings. *Hence, we are facing a global, anthropological approach, a domain without geographical borders, language, race, tribe and other conventions among nations, which can allow us to speculate about solutions for social and individual problems, representing a positive pathway out of conflict, towards social justice and peaceful coexistence.*

God is at the centre of the virtuous society, and only His righteous judgement and His norms can revive what has been sunk into oblivion.

This anthropological impact of the "Doctrine of Mahdism" after appearance, poses some common views, some common concepts such as deliverance, salvation, reformation, Divine dominion and perfection: a universal community, which goes beyond the narrow enclave of

boundaries, race, colour and language. We are confronted with a comprehensive order where common sense, pragmatic choices, religious feeling, higher idealism and altruistic concern for humanity's well-being constantly act and interact.

Within this dimension, there are some major features, such as Man's relationship with God, Man's relationship with his self, Man's relationship with society, Man's relationship with nature.

Viewed through an anthropological aspect and within this dimension, Man's relationship with Nature has a fundamental role to play.

Beyond the new technological and economic dimension, Man and the spiritual dimension of human existence are a critical factor that cannot be disregarded. Modernisation, progress, efficiency, growth, production do not clash with principles such as social justice and economic progress, or with Man's inherent need to transcend and reach out to the Creator. The global trend of the resurgence of Islam, observable all over the world, does not mean either an unhappy existence or militancy, which must renounce hope of peaceful process of coexistence. It is a orderly and harmonious universe in its nature and direction, regulated by one single Law which binds all its parts in harmonious and orderly sequence. The task of human beings is to receive, to respond to, to adapt and apply the immutable characteristics of Divine rules. The human intellect - although refined, ambitious, scientific, educated, learned - well, the human intellect has always to swim in the sea of the unknown. Nevertheless, these human activities do not conflict with development and technology; they constitute

progress and result in gradual improvement, within the harmony of the cosmic order. They must take place within pre-determined perimeters and on the basis of a fixed axis. Man religious instinct is a reflection of the organic structure of the cosmos and its interrelated components.

Nature surrounds us. Knowledge and the vision of the world and its order and perfection are translated into a Messianic philosophy of the Divine, a culture which becomes history, order and law. Rationality, historicity of scientific knowledge, nature and experience, nature and human *ratio*, science and ethics, science and its language, **dialogue** and mutual understanding, coexistence and love.

As a global insight and from this perspective, Nature and Landscapes are perceived by modern / contemporary Humanity with formal, stylistic and technical characteristics which strongly reflect the teachings of the Divine prophets and their efforts to direct Man to the right way and settle his life and affairs according to Divine laws and within Divine dominion.

Nature and Landscapes, the Environment in its entirety, pertain to the Divine dominion and its Divine Laws.

To study this issue, one must deal with the impact with a world which lives its life in close, intimate contact with nature, a world and a culture which observe nature and the cosmos and perceive them in every detail over the slow march of days and nights, the rhythmical march of the seasons and the lunar cycles.

And when human beings perceive Nature, Landscapes and the Environment as a science, they use knowledge - or the human ratio - through which Man comes nearer to God and to that infinite, spherical and perfect universe which He created, and of which Man feels himself to be an intimate harmonious part.

However, nowadays, we are confronted with a world and a humanity often at odds with nature for their very survival, or for their personal delight and satisfaction. We are confronted with a humanity whose ultimate goal is to reach the maximum control over nature and environment. We are confronted with a world which conditions, manipulates nature and its laws. And nature takes its own revenges conditioning Man and mankind in its turn. We are confronted with an environment often perceived in its tension with uncertainty and the blind recklessness of modern-contemporary times. It is a culture which - in the struggle to know, to understand the celestial cosmos and its rules, to grasp the secrets of the whole universe - grapples with this universe for its own life and survival in peace and at war.

Thus, this culture disregards Divine laws and order, and provokes environmental catastrophes which arise from ignorance and lead to dramatic ecological crises and environmental disasters.

Hence, the preservation of environment becomes one of the main human objectives in order to preserve homeland and environment beyond geographical boundaries and physiographic frontiers.

Superficiality has often brought to misunderstandings, which prevent us from the attainment of some ideals such as justice, freedom, human rights. This objective must go beyond and behind the present shortcomings of a modernity linked to one country and one society. This objective must be attained in a cosmic order after the age of appearance, with the growth of Man's knowledge, and within a new World and Order. Then a bright future can spring out, without allowing us to desist from the religious teachings and principles, surmounting all contradictions between

tradition and modernity. Likewise, environmental and ecological catastrophes can give way to a scientific, religious perception of Nature, which uses knowledge emerging from religious tenets, through which Man comes nearer to God and to that infinite, spherical and perfect universe which He created, and of which Man feels himself to be intrinsic and harmonious part.

The Governance of Imam Mahdi (pbuh) and Contemporary Models of Governments: A Comparative Analysis

By: Fatima Kanji Chagpar

Introduction

The modern world we live in today is changing in many ways. One of the areas in academia that has been constantly evolving is the area of governance, beginning with the thinking of Plato and Aristotle to contemporary approaches to political theory. Humankind has been in search of a perfect system of governance that will address the needs of the peoples governed in a perfect way.

The contemporary approaches to governance primarily seek to balance the interests of those governed with those governing. The interest of those governed is the satisfaction of their basic human needs and further to that, the fulfillment of their intellectual and spiritual needs. The interests of those governing should be to serve those governed and assist them achieving what is good for them.

The question that needs to be asked here is, “Are the needs of the governed met by those who govern? And if not, then what system of governance will meet the needs of those governed?” To analyse this statement, we will InshaAllah look at contemporary models of governance, analyse their shortcomings and compare them to the ideal mode of governance of the 12th Imam (AS).

Contemporary models of governance - Democracy and Dictatorship

The most advanced model of governance since the beginning of modern political theory is democracy¹. A democracy is both a form of government and a political philosophy. A common feature of democracy is competitive elections. The prerequisites of competitive elections are usually freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and some degree of rule of law.² Civilian control of the military is often seen as necessary to prevent military dictatorship and interference with political affairs.

“Majority rule” is a major principle of democracy, though many democratic systems do not adhere to this strictly – representative democracy is more common than direct democracy, and minority rights are often protected from what is sometimes called “the tyranny of the majority”.

No universally accepted definition of ‘democracy’ exists, especially with regard to the elements in a society which are required for it.³ Many people use the term “democracy” as shorthand for liberal democracy, which may include additional elements such as political pluralism, equality before the law, the right to petition elected officials for redress of grievances, due process, civil liberties, human rights, and elements of civil society outside the government.

Another form of government that exists in the world today is dictatorship. A dictatorship is an autocratic form of government in which the government is ruled by a dictator.⁴ In contemporary usage, dictatorship refers to an autocratic form of absolute rule by leadership unrestricted by law, constitutions, or other social and political factors within the state.

For some scholars, like Joseph C.W. Chan from the University of Hong Kong, dictatorship is a form of government that has the power to govern without consent of those being governed, while totalitarianism describes a state that regulates nearly every aspect of public and private behaviour of the people. In other words, dictatorship concerns the source of the governing power (where the power comes from) and totalitarianism concerns the scope of the governing power (what the government regulates). In this sense, dictatorship (government without people's consent) is a contrast to democracy (government whose power comes from people) and totalitarianism (government controls every aspect of people's life) corresponds to liberalism (government emphasizes individual right and liberty).

Problems with contemporary models of governance

The problem with these theories and the application of these models of governance is that the practice of it is far removed from its principles and secondly, in the case of a democracy, the majority rule does not necessarily conform to what is of real benefit to society. This means that the governed are devoid of intellectual and spiritual benefit, in most parts of the world, for humankind cannot on their own accord gravitate towards the absolute good, “the (human soul is) certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow

His Mercy.”⁵ On the other hand, we have a desperate situation in the third world where those governed do not have access to basic human needs. This is evident from the United Nations Human Development Index compiled annually since 1990⁶. For example, the 2006 Human Development Report studies the underlying causes and consequences of a crisis that leaves 1.2 billion people without access to safe water and 2.6 billion without access to sanitation⁷. Such a situation in the 21st century obviously leads us to the conclusion that mankind has not shown the ability yet of governing themselves in accordance to the Divine Will.

In fact, regardless of which form of governance we analyse, we see that the interest of those governed has not been achieved. Those in positions of leadership have time and time again overstepped the boundaries of their responsibilities by only satiating their selfish desires. This would explain the countless wars, indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians, voracious exploitation of the resources of others, amassing and hoarding wealth, and oppressive control over people that the world is witnessing today.

So the question that begs an answer is what system will bring pure justice and fairness and serve the interests of those governed. The answer lies in the belief of the followers of the Ahlul Bayt. This is the belief in the appearance of a divinely appointed leader commissioned to establish the law of the Creator on earth. This is the true form of government, the complete and most perfect, as it is designed by the Creator for the created and administered by an appointee of the Creator Himself.

The ideal model of governance vs. contemporary models

Abu Na'eem has narrated from the book Sefat-ul-Mahdi from Abu Sa'eed Khudri that the Messenger of Allah (Pbuh) said: "I give you glad-tidings about Mahdi. He will emerge amongst my nation at the time when they will be in discord and war with each other. Then, he will fill the earth with equity and justice just as it was fraught with tyranny and oppression. The Mahdi will fill the hearts of Muhammad's (Pbuh) nation with riches and make them free from want. His justice would embrace all of them.

This Hadith alludes to one important point – that the leadership of the Ummah, and mankind can only be successfully carried out by the 12th Imam. The fact that the 12th Imam will fill earth with equity and justice after it has been filled with tyranny and oppression indicates to us that the models of governance concocted by man, however 'advanced' and with whatever terminology they are called will amount to nothing but tyranny and oppression. We do not have to go far to prove this in the current political environment. Sufficed to say, that the Security Council of the United Nations is made up of a selected few and only imposes their will regardless of how their will adversely affect other peoples. If this is not the highest form of formalized oppression, then what is?

In the seventh chapter of the book Eqdud-Durar, the author narrates from Amir-ul-Mumineen Ali that the, "Mahdi will dispatch his chiefs to various cities for establishing justice amongst the people. The wolves and sheep shall graze together. The children will play with the snakes and scorpions without being harmed the least. Evil will vanish and goodness will remain. People will cultivate about 750 grams and will receive in return about 525 kilograms just as the same has been mentioned in the Holy

Quran. Adultery, wine-drinking and usury will be uprooted. People will have a relish for worship, divine laws and faith and a desire for mixing in the society. Life of man will lengthen, properties held in trust would be returned back, trees will bear fruits, blessings will double, the wicked will be destroyed, the virtuous ones will remain and those having grudge against the Ahlul Bayt will cease to exist.”

Imam Ali has eloquently described the model and characteristics of the government of the 12th Imam. Firstly 12th Imam will dispatch chiefs to establish justice under his command, and who can be a more just leader than one who is divinely appointed. The justice will be divine and as a natural consequence peace, tranquility and stability will be established. We pray that InshaAllah we can live to experience such earthly bliss. The blessing in the crop is the direct result of the leadership of the 12th Imam – Allah’s chosen representative. This is in stark contrast to the real or artificial food shortage that exists in the world today, and that is the cause of the rise in world food prices. If as a global community we practice and “advanced” model of governance, then why are there shortages of basic needs such as food, water and shelter for many in the world.

Another key aspect mentioned in the Hadith is the absence of evil – in the form of adultery, wine-drinking and usury – these vices which are detrimental to the soul will be abandoned as the 12th Imam will establish such a comprehensive government that people will know the harm of these practices in relation to their hereafter and as a result will despise such activities. The governance structure of the 12th Imam will consider the subject’s interests in this world and the hereafter, unlike the government’s today whose primary concern is material in nature. To add to this point, governments today propagate vice. Adultery, more

commonly known as “common-law” is part of the legislation in many of the so-called “civilised” countries making it a recognised form of vice. Promiscuity is licensed, alcohol is openly sold and usury is entrenched in the economy. Based on the Hadith of Imam Ali, such governments are far removed from the true reality of divine governance and there is no way they can establish justices in its perfect form.

The famous Du’a that we recite every Friday, lamenting the absence of the 12th Imam, has important elements of the government of the Imam. The antithesis of the Imam’s government can be derived from the statements mentioned. This means that a statement like, “Where is the awaited saviour who will set the have-nots and the depressed on their feet?” means that the have-nots and depressed are not on their feet and that they are being oppressed.

The following statements show what we want in the government of the 12th Imam that we do not have and will never have until he appears.

“Where is the The Hope who will put an end to tyranny and oppression?”

Where is the preserved guaranty who shall give new life to rule of law and refined way of life?

Where is the Chosen in preference good who shall raise the spirits of the people and give currency to justice and fairplay?

Where is the hope-giving confidante who shall make full use of the "Book" and define the sphere of action?

Where is he who shall blot out dogma in the matter of religion and his (Muhammad’s) children?

Where is he who shall break up meddling trouble and tampering?

Where is he who shall pull down the foundations of confusion (polytheists) and hypocrisy?

Where is he who shall stamp out corruption, vice, reaction and injustice?

Where is he who shall trim the outgrowth of despair, longing and hardships?

Where is he who shall erase the traces of unfairness and self-seeking conceit?

Where is he who shall untie the twisted knots of falsehood and disruption?

Where is he who shall separate senselessness and insolence from the people?

Where is he who shall tear up by the roots obstinacy, corruption and apostasy?

Where is he who shall love dearly the favourites of Allah and take pains to tame and train the transgressors?

Where is he who shall make people familiar with "words of wisdom"?

Where is the ultimate (Divine) source of plenty and prosperity?

Where is the "Divine aspect" the God-fearing may look up to?

Where is the link that connects the cosmic complex?

Where is the authority who shall communicate and make known the true point of view?

Where is the author of the conception of peace, fairplay and welfare?

Where is the defender of the traditions of the Prophets and their children?"⁸

And most importantly for our hearts that burn at the tragedy of Karbala:

“Where is the investigator of the blood of the Martyrs of Karbala?”

Where is he who shall get the upper hand over the perpetrators of crime and greed?

Where is he who shall not rest until he answers the cries of help when called upon?"

Judging by these statements that we recite, we are extremely far from the ideal model of governance and that is why we are asking about the whereabouts of the Imam (AS) who will come and establish these conditions.

Governance of the 12th Imam (AS) – Governance within Religion

The key aspect of the governance of the 12th Imam that is missing in contemporary governance is that his government will be based on the true Islam, the religion that Allah has ordained for mankind. Islam is not a religion confined to belief and worship. It is a complete system of belief, worship, ethics, politics and society. This is very different from the democracy or dictatorship of today.

The government of the 12th Imam will mark the final victory, of the forces of righteousness, peace and justice over those of evil, oppression and tyranny; of the world-wide spread of the Islamic faith; the complete and all-round establishment of high human values; the formation of a utopian and an ideal society and lastly the accomplishment of this ideal at the hands of a holy and eminent personality called the Mahdi (AS).

This final government under the Mahdi (AS) is a Qur'anic concept, which in very clear terms, predicts:

1. The final victory of Islam.

It is He who has sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over every other religion. However much the disbelievers may dislike it.

(Surah al-Tawbah, 9:33 and Surah As-Saff, 61:9)

2. The absolute supremacy of the good and the pious.

Indeed We have written in the Psalms after the Torah had been revealed: The righteous among My slaves shall inherit the earth.

(Surah al-Anbiya. 21:105)

3. The final collapse of the oppressors and the tyrants.

We willed to show favour to those who were persecuted in the earth and to make them leaders and masters. It was also Our will to give them power in the earth and to show Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts to experience from their victims what they feared most.

(Surah al-Qasas, 28:5-6)

4. A bright and happy future for humanity.

Moses told his people to seek help from Allah and exercise patience. The earth belongs to Him and He has made it the heritage of whichever of His servants He chooses. The Final Victory is for the pious.

(Surah al-A'raf 7:128)

Therefore this belief of the coming of the 12th Imam is not an outcome of any wishful thinking; it is grounded in the Holy Quran. It is a result of the working of the system of nature, the evolutionary process of history, man's confidence in the future and the total rejection by him of pessimism about the destiny of mankind.

The author of Yanabi-ul-Mawadda narrates from Shaikh Mohyiddin Arabi from his book Fotouhat-Makkiyah (chapter 366) about Mahdi and his ministers and says, "The Mahdi will emerge when religion would be on the decline. The one who would not accept will be killed and the one who would engage in debate with him will be defeated. He

will so reveal the realities of religion that had the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) been alive, he too would have judged in the same manner. He will eradicate the (false) religions from the face of the earth. Then, except for the pure religion, no other religion would remain over the earth.”

This Hadith clearly indicates the religion of Islam will be revived and that the basis of the rulership will be religion. This is because the truth of Islam will be made obvious by the 12th Imam and the only way to success will be through Islam – because that is the way that Allah has charted out for humankind.

The author of Yanabi-ul-Mawadda also narrates from the book “Manaqib” which narrate from Imam Ali-ibn-Musa Ar-Ridha who narrates from his father that the Messenger of Allah while mentioning the virtues of his household and his Mi’raj (ascension to heaven) said: I asked: “O my lord, who are my legatees?” I heard a call saying: “O Muhammad! Your legatees are those whose names have been written on the enclosure of my throne.”

“I looked and saw twelve lights. A green cover spread over each light and the names of my legatees were written on each of them where the first of them was Ali and the last of them Mahdi. I asked: “O lord, are they the legatees after me?” I heard a call saying: “After you, they are my friends, chosen ones and proofs upon my creatures. They are your legatees. I swear by my glory and majesty that I will cleanse the earth from its tyranny by the hands of the last of the one who is Mahdi. I will make him conquer the east and west. I will make the wind to conquer for him and make the clouds submissive to him. I will grant him power through some means and will help him by means of his own army. I will assist him through the angels until he gains power over my government and gathers the people towards my Tauheed

(monotheism). Thereafter, I will expand his and extend the days for my friends until the day of judgement.

This Hadith indicates that the Imam will rule the entire world and that Allah will support him in every way. Again, the notion of religion – whose basis is Tauheed, is identified as the key element on which the authority will revolve around.

The author of Eqdud-Durar narrates that Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali-ibn-Abi Talib while mentioning about Mahdi (AS) and his reforms said, "There is no heresy but that Mahdi will uproot it and there is no Sunnah (practice) but that Mahdi (AS) will enliven it."

In the same book, there is a narration from the book Fara'ed-us-Simtain, which narrates from Abu-Imamah Baheli that the Holy Prophet said, "The Mahdi will extract the treasures and will conquer the cities of the polytheists and infidels."

It suffices to reiterate at this point that the government of the 12th Imam under the religion of Islam will, without doubt, cater to both the physical and spiritual needs of the mankind. So for example, coupled with the establishment of religion on the earth, will be the best utilization of the earth's resources. And because the government will be the government of Allah, the Barakah and blessings of the resources of the earth will multiply so much so that there will be no poor to give charity to.

Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir (peace be upon both of them) said⁹: "When the Qa'im of the Ahlul Bayt makes his advent, he will divide (the riches) with equity and will show justice among the people. So whoever obeys him, has obeyed Allah; and whoever goes against him, has gone against Allah. Indeed al-Mahdi was named as such because he will guide to the hidden affairs."

Conclusion

The only system that will bring pure justice and fairness and serve the interests of those governed is the government of the 12th Imam. He will InshaAllah establish the law of the Creator on earth. This is the true form of government, the complete and most perfect, as it is designed by the Allah for the created and administered by an appointee of the Creator Himself.

The appearance of the Mahdi is Allah's favour for the oppressed and the weak and is a means of their coming to power and gaining the promised Divine succession in the whole world. The holy Qur'an says:

We have decided to grant favour to the suppressed ones by appointing them leaders and heirs of the earth.

The main difference between Imam Mahdi's government and the contemporary ones is that his source of the leadership is divine and therefore will undoubtedly serve the interests of the people. Whereas the purpose of contemporary models of governments are to satisfy selfish human desires, the purpose of the Imam's leadership is to gather people towards Tauheed.

In conclusion, the appearance and revolution of the Mahdi is an inspiring Islamic belief. Its culmination is perfection. The results of the Imam's leadership is that mankind will attain benefit for themselves like never seen before under any other government.

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1. This statement excludes the perfect government of the Holy Prophet (SAW), Imam Ali (AS) and Imam Hassan (AS) when they were the rulers of the Ummah.
2. Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy> (Accessed April, 2008)
3. Liberty and justice for some at Economist.com (http://www.economist.com/markets/rankings/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8908438)
4. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship>
5. Holy Quran: 12:52
6. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>
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8. Dua An-Nudbah
9. Biharul Anwar, Volume 97, Page 117