

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON SHI'ĪTE TAFSĪR OF THE QUR'AN 24: 55 AND THE BIBLE ISAIAH 11:1-9: THEOLOGY OF HOPE IN THE CONCEPT OF MAHDISM AND MESSIANISM

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Abstract: This paper engages with the theological discourse on the state of al-Mahdi in Shi'i tradition and the Peaceful Kingdom of Christianity. It focuses on two particular narratives, Quranic one focusing on Shi'i tafsir Qur'an 24:55 and Biblical one concerning on Isaiah 11:1-19. This study employs library research looking specifically at Qur'anic and Biblical commentaries. By comparing the texts, it is found out that the first insists on several requirements to realize the promise of God (the state of al-Mahdī) by performing active struggles i.e. possessing strong faith and doing righteous action. On the other hand, the latter provides the description of the ideal circumstance when Messiah comes to a region in which both the ruler and the ruled do active struggles. The first still emphasizes the importance of strong faith while the second doesn't. Yet, both narratives share that active struggles and righteous actions must be at stake.

Keywords: The state of al-Mahdi; peaceful kingdom; Quranic and Biblical narrative; theology of hope.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengulas tentang perbandingan diskursus teologis tentang posisi al-Mahdi antara doktrin Shi'ah dan teologi Kristen. Artikel ini difokuskan pada dua narasi khusus, yang tafsir Alquran Shi'ah 24:55 dan tafsir Alkitab tentang Yesaya 11: 1-19. Dengan membandingkan Alquran dan Alkitab, artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa doktrin Shi'ah bersikukuh pada beberapa persyaratan untuk mewujudkan janji Allah (kemunculan al-Mahdī) dengan melakukan perjuangan aktif, yaitu memiliki iman yang kuat dan melakukan tindakan yang benar. Di sisi lain, doktrin gereja memberikan gambaran tentang keadaan ideal ketika Mesias datang ke wilayah, di mana baik penguasa maupun yang diperintah melakukan perjuangan aktif. Yang pertama masih menekankan pentingnya iman yang kuat sedangkan yang kedua tidak. Namun, kedua narasi itu sama-sama menyatakan bahwa perjuangan aktif dan tindakan yang benar harus dipertaruhkan.

Kata Kunci: Keadaan al-Mahdī; kerajaan damai; narasi Alquran dan Alkitab; teologi harapan.

Introduction

The notion of al-Mahdî or the returning savior¹ had developed a vision in which many Shi'îtêtes (and to some extent, Sunnîs) shown a tight psychological attraction and established a theological framework by which influences future religious scholars. This vision regarded by Abdul Aziz Sachedina is "a chiliastic vision" that functions for social radical protest.² It follows that the concept of the Mahdî disappearance and his return to this world before the Day of Judgment plays some significant roles in the development of Shi'îtête thought.³ Given the fact that the Shi'îtêtes failed to bring about an ideal government in the time of Umayyad and Abbasids Caliphs, they are convinced that divine involvement must occur to cure their unhappy condition because of much merciless oppression and unfavorable circumstance.

Historically, the word Mahdî at first was used only for political and religious senses with respect to the early Imams—'Alî and Ḥusayn.⁴ Then, many scholars map that the first use of Mahdî in Shi'îte eschatological realm was in 665/685 by Mukhtâr. He was an Iraqi revolutionary who attributed the title of Mahdî to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyah, the son of 'Alî of a non-Fatimid line.⁵ Al-Ṭabarî asserts as cited by Sachedina that the first user of the term al-Mahdî was Sulaymân b. Surad, who referred to Ḥusayn as the Mahdî after his death.⁶ For the Twelver Shi'îtête, the son of the eleventh Shi'îte Imam, Ḥasan al-'Askarî, is expected to be the Mahdî and now believed to be in his concealment.⁷

In describing the era of al-Mahdî, there is a notion from Mahmoud Ayoub that it is like the peaceful kingdom envisioned by

¹The term which is most frequently used for the Mahdi's reappearance in the early works are *qiyâm* (rise), *zuhûr* (appearance), and *kburij* (coming forth). See Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, "Messianism and The Mahdi," in *Expectation of the Millenium: Shi'îtesm in History*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 24.

²Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: the idea of Mahdî in the twelver Shi'îsm* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 1.

³Mostafa Vaziri, *The Emergence of Islam: Prophecy, Imamate, and Messianism in Perspective* (New York: Paragon House, 1992), 141.

⁴Sachedina, *Islamic*, 9.

⁵Vaziri, *The Emergence*, 143.

⁶Sachedina, *Islamic*, 204.

⁷Vaziri, *The Emergence*, 144.

the ancient prophet of Israel. The Shi'ite vision of an era of absolute peace, prosperity and blessings go further than Isaianic vision.⁸ Since Islam is the youngest brother in Abrahamic religions, it is possible to inherit from the elders.

To trace, it is necessary to refer to what Mercedes Arsenal maintains the history of Messiah. It is stated that actually, the belief in the coming of a savior sent by God belongs to the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim tradition of the Messiah which made its first appearance in late Judaism and was fully developed by Christianity. Before the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E, the term "messiah" had a connotation closer to its etymological sense of the "anointed" and was an attribute of kings.⁹

Based on those data, it is interesting to investigate the scriptural basis of Shi'ite tafsir concerning with al-Mahdî and The Old Testament discussing Messianism. This paper will focus on Shi'ite exegesis based on Qur'anic verse (24:55) and Isaiah (11: 1-9) in Old Testament to figure out theological meanings between both traditions and to get better depiction in the understanding of Shi'ite tradition especially and of other religious tradition widely.

The State of al-Mahdî in The Qur'an

The term Mahdî does not occur in the Qur'an but the name is clearly derived from Arabic root *h-d-y* commonly used in the meaning of divine guidance.¹⁰ Mahdî literally means the rightly guided one. Mahdî terminologically is the awaited Imam who will fulfill the earth with justice since it was fulfilled with injustice (*jawr*). Ibn Athîr as quoted by Hasan Muhammad Sa'ad said that the name al-Mahdî

⁸Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islâm: a Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashûrâ' in Twelver Shî'ism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 227.

⁹Since its connection to Judaeo-Christian circle, it implies a whole series of non-Islamic doctrines and beliefs, but most scholars allow to employ these terms in an Islamic context so long as one is clear about the sense in which they are being used, i.e. to convey the important idea of an eschatological figure, the Mahdî, who will rise to launch a great social transformation in order to restore the purity of early times and place all aspects of human life under divine guidance for a period preceding the End of Time. Like "messiah", the term Mahdî moves in the same uncertainty definition over a kingdom of this world or the next over "a man sent from God" and a divinely guided or divine being. See Mercedes Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdîs of the Muslim West* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 5.

¹⁰W. Madelung, "al-Mahdî" in C. E. Bosworth, et.al., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition Volume V* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), 1231.

becomes very popular to address a person who was felicitated by the Prophet that the person will come to the end of time.¹¹

Related to the Prophet tradition about al-Mahdî, it is notable to see Muḥammad Jawâd Mughniya's work. He said that the belief in Mahdî was widespread during the time of the Prophet tradition. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) on more than one occasion had announced the future coming of the Mahdî. From time to time he would inform the people about the government of the Mahdî and the signs of his emergence, giving his name and patronymic (*kunyah*).¹²

There are numerous hadîth which report on this subject from Shi'ite sources which are also Sunni sources.¹³ Actually, some of these reports have been related so frequently, and without interruption in all ages, that nobody can doubt their authenticity. For instance, the hadîth reported from 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ûd, who heard the Prophet say: "The world will not come to an end until a man from my family (*Ahl al-Bayt*), who will be called al-Mahdî, emerges to rule upon my community." His role at that time will be to face with severe conflict and a violent quake. Then, he will fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with injustice and tyranny. He will fill the hearts of his followers with devotion and will spread justice everywhere."¹⁴

With regard to those prophetic traditions, Sachedine denotes that the belief in the Mahdîism of all the descendants of al-Ḥusayn after al-Şadiq proves that the idea of al-Mahdî, which evolved in the political turmoil of the Caliphate, was entrenched the never-relinquished Shi'ite demand for the fulfillment of a true Islamic justice under the command of the Ḥusaynid Imam.¹⁵

After giving such description of al-Mahdî from its definition and some basis from prophetic tradition, the next point is its appearance in the Qur'an. As it does not appear explicitly in it, the Shi'ite commentators affirm that it is indeed implied in some verses. Here will be exposed two Shi'ite commentators namely Shaykh al-Ṭabarsî and al-Ṭabâṭabâ'î in interpreting al-Nûr (24:55).

¹¹Sa'ad Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Mahdîyah fî al-Islâm* (Egypt: Dâr al-Kitâb, 1953), 48.

¹²Muḥammad Jawâd Mughniyah, *al-Shî'ah fî al-Mîzân* (Beirut: Dâr al-Shurûq, 1970), 89.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Sachedina, *Islamic*, 13.

Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion-the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me. 'If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked.'¹⁶

Shaykh Ṭabarsî explains the verse as: "God promised to those who sincerely have faith and are obedient that he will make them heirs of the ancients and that He will grant them all the Arab and non-Arab unbelievers' lands, and will make them inhabitants and governor of these lands, in the same way as he made the Banî Isrâ'il the heirs of the ancients and destroyed the tyrant of Egypt, and granted all his goods and lands to them."¹⁷

According to Ṭabâṭabâ'î, this verse remarks a beautiful promise from God to the believers who also worked virtuous deeds. He promised to make them virtuous society (*mujtama' ṣâlih*). He will put the earth at their disposal, to make their religion reign on earth, to replace their fear by safety so that they will be no longer frightened of hypocrites and their maneuvers or unbelievers. Consequently, they can be able to worship their God and never associate Him with anything.¹⁸ Faith and doing virtuous deeds here are, part and parcel, requirement for humans so that God will fulfill His promise. These two things must be done simultaneously and integrally.

Therefore, Ṭabâṭabâ'î states that the word "...*minkum*" is partitioning to only those who have strong faith and do virtuous deeds. The verse is oriented to Muslims generally whereas there are the hypocrites and the believers to address. The believers can be those who do virtuous deeds and who do not.¹⁹

¹⁶Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Lahore: the Ripon, 1938). This paper entirely uses his translations.

¹⁷Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsî, *Majma' al-Bayân*, Vol. IXX-XX (Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr, 1955), 67. He then reports several views concerning this verse: 1) Some commentators believe that it is the Prophet companions, 2) Some say it concerns the Umma generally, and 3) From the sayings of the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. It concerns the Mahdî from the Prophet's descendants.

¹⁸Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabâṭabâ'î, *al-Mizân fî Tafsîr al-Qur'ân*, Vol. 17 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamî, 1973), 153.

¹⁹Ibid.

Ṭabarsî asserts further by quoting the fourth Imam who interpreted this verse: “By God, these people are our Shi‘ites about whom God will accomplish all the promises he made in this verse by the hands of a man from among us, who is the Mahdî of this Community.” The Prophet said about him: “Even if there remains only one day on Earth, God will prolong it until He will bring forth a pious man from my progeny and who is named as I am, so that he will fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with oppression and tyranny.” The same tradition was reported by Imâm Bâqir and Imâm Şâdiq.²⁰ Ṭabâṭabâ’î also used this supporting hadith as his argument to address the coming of the Mahdî.²¹ The method of inter-textuality using Qur’an and Hadîth is strongly applied in dealing with the verse where Hadîth as *mufassir* interprets Qur’an as long as the latter remains unobvious. Additionally, the using of Imam’s declaration becomes very colorful as their method of Shi‘ite exegesis. However, it comes to my mind that the verse does not point any single person otherwise it announces about collective community.

Indeed Ṭabâṭabâ’î has anticipated such a point. He raised a question—by himself—this promise is clearly addressed to those who believe and conduct righteous deeds, how then it can be addressed to al-Mahdî?²² He then apologetically and reasonably answers: the verse is possibly addressed to both individuals and society as for society also consists of individuals. In dealing with it, there are two different manners: First, we can address people while taking into consideration their individual qualities and characteristics. On the other hand, we can speak to the same group without considering them as individuals but rather as a group with particular qualities. In this second case, designated individuals are not involved but those in general who possess the qualities mentioned in the verse, are addressed though they did not exist when the verse was revealed.²³

Adding to that, Shaykh Ṭabarsî expresses that this statement “*al-ladhîna âmanû minkum wa ‘amilû as-şâlihât*” (“those among

²⁰al-Ṭabarsî, 69.

²¹al-Ṭabâṭabâ’î, *al-Mîzân*, 159.

²²Ibid.

²³In this verse, the second case is applied as well as in most of the verses which address either the believers (*Mu‘minîn*) or the unbelievers, or in the verses which criticize the People of the Book, particularly the Jews, not speaking to them individually but only to those among them who committed such and such a fault.” Ibid., 156.

you who believe and work righteous deeds”) in that verse refers to the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt. He goes further in explaining that the verse gives them the good news of the coming of the Caliphs (governors) who will seize power in every land and that they will create safety during the revolution of the Mahdî. Moreover, he affirms that the meaning of “*kamâ istakhlafa al-ladhîna min qablihim*” (“as He granted it to those before them”) is that, before them also, God granted the governorship (*khilâfah*) and power to those who deserve it, such as Adam, Dawud and Sulayman, as we can see in the following verses: Al-Baqara (2: 30): Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: “I will create a vicegerent on earth,” al-Şâd (38: 26): “O David! We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth: so judge thou between men in truth (and justice): Nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of Allah: for those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account,” and al-Nisâ’ (4: 54): “Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of his bounty? But We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.” Seemingly, in this case, Ṭabâṭabâ’î follows Ṭabarsî in giving his interpretation to the verse in relation to those other verses.²⁴

In my opinion, it is noteworthy that those supporting verses indicate some points in relation to the verse: God has decided to provide vicegerents on earth. The task of a vicegerent is to become a judge for humans in defining truth and justice. Furthermore, he is responsible for guiding those who mislead and go astray from the path of Allah. The example figures are David and Abraham who brought God’s divine task in governing the earth. The responsibility of Mahdî, therefore, is a continuation of previous prophets not particularly the prophet Muhammad.

Ayoub indeed states that the Mahdî will complete not only the mission of the last prophet Muhammad and the Imams after him but also that of all prophets before him. His mission is strongly in relation to theirs. The Mahdî’s duty as a continuity with earlier prophets is carried further, identifying him with all the previous prophets.²⁵

Ṭabâṭabâ’î gives more theological explanation which one cannot find in Ṭabarsî’s: “What we understand from the verse, leaving aside

²⁴Ibid., 151.

²⁵Ayoub, “The Speaking Qur’an”, 226.

the many instances of negligence on the commentators' part, is that the verse is undoubtedly aimed at some of the people of the community (Umma) and neither at the community as a whole nor at some designated individuals from the community, and these people are the people who believe and work righteous deeds as mentioned in the verse.²⁶

The meaning is clear within the verse stating implicitly that there is no evidence, either in the words of the verse "the people who believe and work righteous deeds" principally indicate the companions of the Prophet, or the Prophet himself with the Imams from his family, or the community as a whole". God indeed gives His promise to certain community for glorifying and giving more help to them.²⁷

In addition, Ṭabāṭabā'ī thinks that the meaning of their inheritance of earth, like the inheritance of the communities of the past, is that God will make of them a virtuous society who will inherit the earth as He did for the communities of the past. This inheritance depends on their being a virtuous society and not on particular individuals.²⁸ This means a unity of society, not an individual which can be understood as nation, kingdom or state.

For Ṭabāṭabā'ī, it is unquestionable in the verse that God has promised those who believe and work righteous deeds to grant them a society that will be virtuous in all its meanings. The society will be purified from blasphemy, hypocrisy, and debauchery, and will inherit the earth and in which the true religion master the beliefs and deeds of its people, that will be in safety and will have no fear from enemies from inside or outside and that will be free from the oppressors, tyrants, and dictators.²⁹

Such a pure and perfect society has never existed in the world. Neither has such a society existed since the beginning of the Prophet's mission. But if a society such as this ever becomes a reality, it will inevitably be during the time of the Mahdī, because the traditions reported by numerous unbroken chains of transmitters (*al-akhbār al-mutawâtirah*) from the Prophet and the Imams of his family

²⁶In interpreting who are those people who can achieve such incredible circumstance, Ṭabāṭabā'ī does what Ṭabarsī did by elaborating different previous commentators. Then, he negates those previous commentators.

²⁷Ibid., 154.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 155.

concerning the characteristics of the Mahdî and his government mention the creation of such a society. Of course, the people the verse is addressing are virtuous people in general and not only the Mahdî in particular.” Ṭabâtabâ’î also state—with reference to a certain prophetic tradition—that appearance of Mahdî will enable human society to reach true perfection and the full realization of spiritual life.³⁰

Based on that exposition, it noticeably appears that the characteristic of their exegesis of the Qur’an is similar even Ṭabâtabâ’î sometimes quotes Ṭabarsî’s statement. Nonetheless, Ṭabâtabâ’î gives broader and deeper in his theological and philosophical elaboration related to this discourse. Based on their exegesis, for me, it is obvious that the verse is applied metaphorically to address al-Mahdî since the verse is not addressed to al-Mahdî explicitly but the Mahdî is exactly in it. This is part of principles in Shi’ite tafsîr implying that the Qur’an has its outward dimension and inward dimension.³¹ The outward meaning of that verse is shown by its literal meaning – the promise of God to give safety and peace to all those who believe and are righteous, while the inward one is indicated by pointing al-Mahdî and his peaceful and just reign. Additionally, it reminds me of *al-majāz al-mursal* (metaphorical statement) which explains about *totem pro parte* (*min dbiker al-kullî wa irâdat al-juẓ’î*).³² The verse talks about general community but it points out a certain person/community. Moreover, the verse also distinctively remarks a state, nation, and society in which al-Mahdî will reign for establishing justice and peace. Moreover, according to them, it is clear that the state of al-Mahdî is divine governorship in this world as it was given previously to the several prophets. The mission is to fill the earth with justice and truth. The way of exegesis both Ṭabâtabâ’î and Ṭabarsî used is based on intertextual method. This method views that other verses which have the same topic are indeed unified in revealing a meaning. Then, they

³⁰Muhammad Ḥusayn Ṭabâtabâ’î, *Shi’ite Islam*, 1st ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 212.

³¹Mahmoud Ayoub, “The Speaking Qur’an and the Silent Qur’an: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imami Shi’ite Tafsîr”, in Rippin A., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’an* (Oxford: Rippin, 1988), 187.

³²The example is like the verse *yaj’alûna aṣābi’abum fî âbânibim* (they put their fingers into their ears)...it is impossible to put the whole fingers so the implied meaning is part of them.

used the prophetic traditions and the imam sayings to support their interpretation.

Isaiah 11:1-9 – The Peaceful Kingdom: Jewish Messianism

This section is a space for defining Messianic concept within Judaism and exposing Isaiah³³ 11:1-9 interpretation through two commentators of Old Testament such as Joseph Blenkinsopp and Brevard S. Childs to help give the obvious depiction of Messianism.³⁴ The word “Messiah” first occurred in I Samuel (2:10) and the context suggested that the Messiah was the Lord’s anointed and that his role was political. The passage in II Samuel (7:13-16) did not refer to an individual messiah but was merely a promise to David that his kingdom and his house should last forever.³⁵ The verse of Isaiah 11:1-9 are as follows:

1. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots, a Branch will bear fruit.
2. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him
the spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the spirit of counsel and of might,
the spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord

³³He prophesied in Jerusalem from the death of Uzziah until the middle of Hezekiah's reign (741-701 BCE). Of noble family, he was closely connected with the royal court and, especially under Hezekiah, was prominent in public affairs. According to legend, he was put to death by Manasseh. The prophet protests strongly against moral laxity; kindness, pity, and justice to the poor and underprivileged are more significant to God than offering sacrifice. The hand of God is predominant in all historical events, even Assyria serving only as an instrument of Divine anger. He opposes all treaties with neighboring states; Israel as the people of God must trust solely in Him. The people of Israel will be punished for its sins but not exterminated; a remnant will return and renew the link between God and the Land of Israel. Isaiah is the seer of eternal peace at the end of days when the Lord's Anointed shall judge the nations. See Cecil Roth, *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), 971.

³⁴There are three types of Messianism in Israel. First, centering around the king and the nation, expressed hope for a glorious national future under the house of David. The second type has been apocalyptic and frequently catastrophic, implying a divine warrior who should overthrow the heathen and establish the kingdom of Israel. The third type of Messianism has been ethical, spiritual and universal, almost the antithesis of the first. It has portrayed an ideal state in which love and service actuate ruler and ruled, and the will of Jahweh is realized. See Wilson D. Wallis, *Messiahs: Their Role in Civilization* (Washington: American Council on Publ. Affairs, 1943), 5.

³⁵Ibid., 4.

3. And he will delight in the fear of the Lord
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
4. but with righteousness, he will judge the needy,
with justice, he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked.
5. Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
6. The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling[a] together;
and a little child will lead them.
7. The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
8. The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
9. They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.”

According to Childs, there is a description of the establishment of a righteous rule by a future messianic has been mentioned in Isaiah 9:1. Then, it is reiterated by means of intertextual references throughout 11:1-9. But actually, the promise of a coming messianic has been stated in ruler in chapter 7 and emerged in chapter 9 with the portrayal of a righteous messianic king upon the throne of David.³⁶

Childs states that naming of Jesse shows an exact continuity with Israel's past and choosing David's line emphasizes that there is a ruler by divine election.³⁷ Blenkinshopp clearly comments that the verse alludes to the emergence of a ruler from David's family line who is divinely endowed with formidable attributes. He will have a duty to fulfill the ideal of just order. This order makes the poor and powerless people able to enjoy equal rights with wealth and power. In this era,

³⁶Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 102.

³⁷*Ibid.*

war and all of the manifestations of violence will be abolished not only in human society but also in the animal world.³⁸

Childs regards that the wonderful gift from God will be given to Messiah. The Messiah is the one endowed by the spirit of God to be the deliverer of “the whole fullness of divine powers.” The endowment is formulated in three couplets: wisdom and insight, counsel and might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. In his commentaries, he asserts that wisdom is the gift of practical capability and skill derived from discernment. Counsel is the capacity necessary for sensible diplomacy among peoples and is linked with the required power to achieve a goal. This counsel is to establish order and the welfare of those governed. The coming ruler is equipped with the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. The knowledge of God is the essence of the relationship of a creature to its creator (Hos. 2:22 [20]; 4:1). It is based on love and devotion to recognizing the works of God in the world and the welfare of humanity. The fear of the Lord explains both the beginning and end life and issues in reverence and worship.³⁹

The coming ruler’s reign—as Childs further explains—possesses a dominant emphasis on righteousness (*sedeq*) and equity toward the weak and vulnerable of the world. In this sense, 11:1-9 continues a major theme that is introduced in 9:6 ff. One hears the implied contrast with Israel’s unrighteous behavior that resulted in oppression of the poor and senseless acts of violence (3:5, 14). Childs emphasizes that the coming of the messianic age is not interpreted as one of blissful harmony and light. Rather, the attributes of counsel and might in governing are exercised in vehemently coercing the wicked and dexterously discerning both the good and the evil of human society (3b).⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Blenkinsopp remarks that the word “wisdom and understanding” together expresses essential attributes for successful living. In addition, counsel and strength indicate both the skill to elaborate sensible plans and the ability to carry them through attributes essential for the successful rule.⁴¹ This comment elucidates

³⁸Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 264.

³⁹Childs, *Isaiah*, 103.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible*, 265.

that there are some noble characteristics not only for the ruler but also for the society which are regarded as the ideal society in the coming of Messiah. The attribute of wisdom and understanding is hopefully well-tied to society so they can live in peaceful condition.

The verses describe peaceful coexistence among man and human which elucidates a subtle parallel between 3-5 and 6-8 consisting in the contrast between the strong and the weak in both and zoological realms. Powerful, predatory animals like the wolf can also stand for the arbitrary and unjust exercise.⁴²

Childs formulates the universal peace—instead of using the peaceful coexistence employed by Blenkinshopp—that embraces both the human and animal world is an effect of the righteous rule of the Messiah. The portrayal of universal peace in this chapter is set within an eschatological context (Hos. 2:20[18]) and is an expansion of the picture of the future harmony among the people who flow to the holy mountain (Isa. 11:9). The prophetic picture is not a return to an ideal past, but the restoration of creation by a new act of God through the vehicle a righteous ruler. The description of vv. 6-9 is a massive extension of the promise in the chapter that focuses on the eschatological deliverance of God's people.⁴³

Theology of Hope within the State of al-Mahdî and Peaceful Kingdom⁴⁴

Mahdism called as Islamic messianism is Shi'ite concept—shared with Sunni some different features on it. It is notable that the concept of messianism is used by previous Abrahamic religions—and other religions. It can be stated that Islam as the youngest brother of Abrahamic religions inherits from previous Abrahamic religions i.e. Judaism and Christianity. Nevertheless, in Islam, it should be kept in mind that this concept is firmly rooted in prophetic tradition as God's Revelation to the prophet Muhammad. The existence of Mahdî is

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Childs, *Isaiah*, 104.

⁴⁴With an account of State of al-Mahdî within Shi'itesm and of the Peaceful Kingdom within Judaism from their revealed scriptural traditions, it is time to compare their particular theological meanings. This subtopic is reflective part of this paper. Based on those two interpretations on Shi'ite tafsîr and Old Testament commentaries, it is clear that almost the commentaries employ intra-textuality in reading both verses. This method will give an integral argument built from other verses which strongly supports the main verse.

exactly written in the prophetic traditions and it has to be truly believed. One will argue that belief in the Mahdî or Messiah is the only utopia. That statement probably comes up from someone who has a weak or even dying spirituality. But, if he or she knows and holds firmly onto the existence of God, he or she will be fully aware of the Mahdî and Messiah. Someone who embraces any religion possesses faith. In faith, not all things can be rationalized. There are certain things by only through God's guidance, someone will be able to understand them. It is due to the fact God will not disavow His promise for realizing just and peaceful society through his messengers in this universe entirely. In this case, Moltmann maintains that "God reveals himself in the form of promise and in the history that is marked by promise." Thus, promise as part of God revelation should be engaged with strong faith since "faith is called to live by promise and is therefore essentially hope, confidence, and trust in God who will not lie but remain faithful to His promise."⁴⁵ Surely, God will manifest His peace and justice because He is the source of justice and peace either now or future.

It comes to my mind that these eschatological matters marked by two different scriptural traditions that maintain a simultaneous relation between hope and faith. The relationship emphasizes that hope would be blind without faith. It would not be known who the hope was trusting and or what it was hoping for. However, faith without hope would not be fruitful since only through hope the faith would always be nourished in doing things useful for future. In this point, faith directs the way while hope drives people forward in an open horizon of trust.⁴⁶

Centralizing the figure of Mahdî and Messiah within both traditions implies a common thread and linking these two eschatological concepts gives a particular nuance in which the impact on human spirituality and on the wider society when piety and power politics are intermingled. Either Mahdîism or Messianism is a theology of hope from oppressed and defeated community since Shi'ite and Jewish had experienced such oppressive and unfavorable circumstances. Every religion absolutely has its own optimism to face better future moreover for those who experienced oppression or

⁴⁵Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope; on the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, 1st U.S. ed., (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 42.

⁴⁶Anthony Kelly, *Eschatology and Hope* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 17.

under tyranny. This optimism reflects a theology of hope by which someone will be zealous in embracing religious values for their better future and will not be pessimistic based on their bitter past, so to speak. The theology of hope is something important to make a better social order. If it disappears within humans, they will be hopeless in their life to build a strong civilization since they have no confidence to welcome their future. In Islam, the teaching of optimism is firmly rooted in the Qur'an 94:5-6: "So, verily, with every difficulty, there is the relief: Verily, with every difficulty there is the relief."

Mahdism and Messianism are similar in their pursuit of building future justice and peace since those embracing such belief experienced oppression and tyranny. The future justice and peace will be perceived universally by all creation based on those both verses. The particular word "al-ardh"⁴⁷ (the earth) covers its universality, while the universality of Isaiah's verse is alluded by mentioning the peaceful coexistence of humans and animals.

Furthermore, in my point of view, Mahdism and Messianism emphasizes on a world theology which shapes a spirit of Perennialism. This world theology claims that it is possible to discern a common underlying thread in all human religiosity, without denying that each major religious tradition is indeed different.⁴⁸ Peace and justice become standpoints why I argue on this matter. The history shows that every community of religion or faith represented particularly by Shi'ite and Jewish passionately pursue those two urgent things. Even though they outwardly have differences i.e. their rituals, belief systems, inwardly they struggle for and yearn for peace and justice as two vital encounters of religiosity and humanity.

The very difference of this eschatological concept between the Shi'ite tafsir based on the Qur'anic verse (24:55) and Isaiah (11:1-9) is that the first insists on several requirements to realize the promise of God (the state of al-Mahdi) by performing active struggles i.e. possessing strong faith and doing righteous action. On the other hand, the latter provides the description of the ideal circumstance when Messiah comes to a region in which both the ruler and the ruled do active struggles. The first still emphasizes on the importance of

⁴⁷As far as I'm concerned that the word "al-ardh" is always employed by using "al," in the Qur'an. In my point of view, the function is to cover all the species (*li istighraq al-jinsi*).

⁴⁸John Renard, *Islam and Christianity: Theological Themes in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 225.

strong faith while the second doesn't. The difference does make sense for the Mahdi in Shi'ite tradition is someone who was believed in his occultation period, the twelfth Imam in the Twelver Shia, while in Jewish tradition there is no clear mention of the one called as the Messiah, only someone who will be descended from his father through the line of King David. Yet, both narratives share that active struggles and righteous actions must be at stake. Hence, the active struggle between both traditions draws what so-called by Thomas "a positive peace,"⁴⁹ which implies true obedience, faithfulness, and worship of God. Its society horizontally concerns with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized and accordingly act with justice, righteousness and peace both at home and toward other neighboring societies.

Framing Hope in The Jewish and Muslim Scriptures

As the Bible narrates, the children of Israel, travelled from Canaan to Egypt to look for foods during a food crisis time. In time, they were caged in slavery since then, they became "a nation."⁵⁰ In the midst of such crisis, the children of Israel were pessimistic for a better life. However, as stated in the narrative, God did hear their mourning of pain, and remembered the godly assurance to set them free from domination in Egypt and to made them back to what so called-the Promised Land. Such promise alludes to an understanding that hope injected Jews for survival throughout the famine and human crisis due to oppression.

To give a linked understanding with the values of Qur'an, the spirit of Bible i.e., the Old Testament and the Qur'an actually promote social justice, equal rights and duties for humanity. The Qur'anic principle for the rise and collapse of nation depends on earthly justice, warrant of human rights and peace. Exploitation, persecution, and abuse of humanity lead to the devastation of the earthly nation. It is the narrative of Exodus, which describes the tyrannical Pharaoh and his army. They were indeed despotic and harsh who not only powerfully exploited people but also seized their rights. The sameness of Quranic narrative with the Biblical narrative

⁴⁹Scott M. Thomas, "Isaiah's Vision of Human Security" *Isaiah's Vision of Peace in Biblical and Modern International Relations: Swords into Plowshares*, Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 175.

⁵⁰Deuteronomy 26:5

depicts Pharaoh and his armies as haughty (*istakbaru*,10:75) who claimed that they are mightily powerful on earth and could benefit from their power to disproportionately exploit the people of Israel (10:83).

Some narratives on the rise and fall of nations are found in the Qur'an that refer to. Yet, unlike the Bible, the Qur'anic narratives are spread throughout the scripture, especially recorded in the story of Joseph. The aim of Qur'anic narrative is more likely to present an important and wise message in order to counsel people for resisting any human discrimination and oppression. It is indeed in line with the biblical story as the most noteworthy throughout the Qur'an. Both argue to promote social justice, to respect human rights and to maintain peaceful coexistence. At the same time, the Qur'an reminds harshly oppressors of calamitous penalties. Since the oppressors are arrogant, their arrogance brings them to misuse power excessively, to usurp human rights cruelly and to persecute people inhumanely. This is such a big calamity.

One of the rabbinic stories (*isra'iliyyat*) is that Pharaoh tremendously wanted to kill every newborn baby of Israelites since there had been a foretelling that a boy from the nation would assassinate him. The Biblical account in the Qur'an narrates the Israelites as those who were weak and who lived in slavery. Their lives were under persecution and human rights deprived while they remained faithful to God.

In the story, God was merciful upon them and passionate to set them free from such kind of circumstance. God's mercy was manifested through mandating Prophet Moses to liberate them from Pharaoh's despotic ruling. The Qur'an clearly states that "God asked Moses to go to Pharaoh because he had rebelled and transgressed all limits" (20:24). God encouraged "Moses to speak softly and mildly to him" (20:44). However, Pharaoh would never obey any advice of Moses propagation and kept performing his tyrannical rules, even threatened to slay Moses.

The Qur'an summons people to be alarmed with the history of nations to see what was in the history when they behave arrogantly, oppress people and do injustice: "Have they never journeyed about the earth and beheld what happened in the end to those [deniers of the truth] who lived before their time?"(35:44).

Such story sheds light on the message of hope, and makes us realize that when we think we are alone, God is always together with us. Our idea of God's attendance is not always as intense as we suppose. The next message encompasses the pivotal involvement of human action in changing hope into reality for God actively takes part in plotting such human stories recorded in either Bible or Quran i.e., mandating Moses to free people from slavery, inviting people to remain faithful and fighting against Pharaoh.

In Islam, the theology of hope is reflected in the hope of intercession from Prophet Muhammad, the prophet of peace and love. Adding to that, al-Mahdi is another main figure to intercede especially for Shi'ite.⁵¹ All people await such intercession on the Day of Resurrection. The intercession of the Prophet gives an idea that later on in the next life there will be prophetic assistance which depends on God's decree and permission. This conception of intercession shows that God through the apostles provides a vast space for people to have hope directed to God's mercy and love. In addition, that hope alludes to the good ideals of a servant.

These good ideals must be balanced with good deeds as well in the worldly life in terms of worshipping God, and benefiting the others and the environments. What is implied in QS.2: 255 is that God the Most high gives permission to whomever He wishes to intercede for later. Of course, God does not give permission to people who are not identical with God's divine characteristics, i.e., The Gracious, The Merciful, The Peace, The Granter of Security. The Prophet and al-Mahdi are the saviors who possess extraordinarily good characteristics. They are the peacemakers of the world and later in the hereafter, and from these two, Muslims hope for their intercession in giving salvation and liberation.

Closing Remarks

State of Al-Mahdi and Peaceful Kingdom represent theology of hope within the belief system of Shi'i and Jewish tradition. These two conceptions draw upon optimism of both religious traditions in dealing with the future. However, it does not merely draw that optimism but also, to some extent, teaches people to make the state and the kingdom happen from now on until the coming of the Mahdi

⁵¹However, such intercession is not limited to the prophet and al-mahdiy, it even covers the holy Qur'an which is believed to be able to intercede

and Messiah through performing positive peace, which entails true obedience, faithfulness, and worship of God. Besides, there should be society concerning with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized and accordingly act with justice, righteousness and peace both at home and toward other neighboring societies.

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