

Conclusion

In this study, we have seen that the idea of *Mahdawiyyah* (Mahdism) in Islam, in both Sunnite and Shi'ite creeds, is particularly strong, although this idea did not originate solely within the Islamic faith. Indeed, Islam only confirms the period of waiting and the belief in a Saviour at the End of Time in terms of the world religions.

As for the Shi'ites, they believe that this Saviour, who is also awaited by non-Muslims, is exclusively the twelfth Imam who is presently in Occultation. For these Muslims, the earth could not even last a day without the Occult presence of the Imam.

Also, the idea of Messianism is stronger in Shi'ism than in any other religion and has its place in day-to-day life, the greatest act of worship for Shi'ites being to wait for the Mahdi's reappearance and to be prepared at any time to help him.

The subject of our study was to explore the presence of the *Mahdi* in the Qur'an according to Shi'ite commentators. In order to assess these Shi'ite scholars' opinion concerning the idea of Messianism in the Qur'an, we have studied two *tafsir* works that according to us are the most representative and widely accepted among the Shi'ite works, and that are also praised by Sunnite scholars, especially the work of Shaykh Tabarsi, representing the classical works, and Allama Tabataba'i, representing more modern thought.

We also studied the *tafsir* work of Banu Amin as a modern work, because we found it interesting and important to introduce her to the Western world as the first woman in Islam to have written the entire *tafsir* of the Qur'an.

Their methods:

Concerning the method used in her commentary, Banu Amin follows Tabarsi's method in general terms. She first explains the words and grammar of the verse, then reports on the points of view of several commentators. It is possible to assert that her *tafsir* is a summary of the *Majma*, at least in the verses studied in this research.

Of course, a reliable comparison between the two works in their entirety can only be done by studying the gnostic verses, since Banu Amin's is known as a gnostic *tafsir* given that she is considered to be a disciple of Molla Sadra, however research such as this would need to be tackled as a separate study.

Concerning the *Mahdi*, Banu Amin follows Tabarsi as other Shi'ite and Sunnite *mufassirin* have done. However, she does not follow him in all the nine verses he interprets as referring to the *Mahdi*.

Indeed, she interprets four verses in common with Tabarsi in this respect while also discussing the *Mahdi* in the Qur'an 61: 9, and in the Qur'an 97: 5. Another difference between Banu Amin's work and that of the two other authors is the absence of Sunnite references in her *tafsir*. This may be the reason why her *tafsir* is less voluminous.

Tabataba'i makes the most use of the Sunnite references and being a modern *mufassir*, his independent view and non-imitation of the opinions of the classical *mufassirin*, plus the fact that his commentary is based on the principle of having one part of the Qur'an interpreting other parts, has earned him a major position among the Shi'ite commentators, as is the case for Tabarsi. Indeed, Tabataba'i, as we see in his debates, relies more on his own understanding of the verses than the others do.

If we compare the way the verses are interpreted, we get the following results:

In the Qur'an 21: 105, the *Majma'*, after having reported from other commentators that the verse concerns the *Mahdi* that he did not reject, reports the view of someone who denies the *Mahdi*, arguing his case through a demonstration of the weakness of the hadith while affirming that the *Mahdi's* appearance is certain and that the traditions concerning the *Mahdi* are *mutawatir*.

Banu Amin interprets the Qur'an 21:105 as concerning the *Mahdi*. As for Tabataba'i, where most of the Shi'ite *mufassirin* have followed the classical works, saying that according to this verse [21:105] the Companions of the *Mahdi* will inherit the earth, the author of *al-Mizan* (Tabataba'i) disagrees with this interpretation, stating that it carries a general meaning, although the belief in the *Mahdi* itself is certain and has been reported in *mutawatir* traditions by the Shi'ites and the Sunnites, and there is no need to interpret this verse as referring to the *Mahdi*.

In the Qur'an 24: 55, Tabarsi and Banu Amin share the same method of interpretation, both interpreting the verse explicitly as referring to the *Mahdi*. However, Tabataba'i, after having mentioned the views of other *mufassirin*, offers a broader interpretation of this verse and does not attribute it exclusively to the *Mahdi*.

In the *tafsir* of the Qur'an 2: 3, Tabarsi reports different opinions concerning the verse; one of them mentions the occultation of the *Mahdi*. His style of relating this seems to imply that he also believes in this interpretation. Banu Amin attributes this verse to the hereafter and all that we cannot perceive through our senses, but also to the occultation of the *Mahdi* that she explains in more weighty terms.

Tabataba'i gives a broad meaning to the verse, implicitly suggesting that the *Mahdi* may be one among many other meanings embedded within the verse.

In the *tafsir* of the Qur'an 34:51, the three authors report traditions from different sources concerning the rise of the Sufyani and his being swallowed up by the earth in Bayda at the time of the *Mahdi*. They thus agree that the verse concerns one of the signs of the time of the *Mahdi*.

Concerning the Qur'an 4: 159, *Majma'* discusses the faith of the People of the Book in *älsa*, suggesting that it concerns the time of the *Mahdi's* reappearance. *Al-Mizan* offers the same *tafsir* as *Majma'*. The author of *Makhzan* does not mention the *Mahdi* in her *tafsir*.

In the Qur'an 8: 39, Tabarsi and Tabataba'i confirm that the verse refers to the time of the *Mahdi*, and that the people of the time of the *Mahdi* will understand the *ta'wil* of this verse. Banu Amin does not offer an interpretation of this verse.

For the Qur'an 9: 33, Tabarsi sees the verse as a prediction of the Qur'an and interprets it as concerning the time of the reappearance of the *Mahdi*. Tabataba'i interprets it without doubt as the rise of the *al-Qa'im* and reports this *tafsir* from several commentators. The *Makhzan al-älrfa*n offers no interpretation for this verse.

For the Qur'an 11: 8, *Majma'* considers the verse as referring to the *Mahdi* and his Companions while *al-Mizan* confirms *Majma's* *tafsir* and those of other *mufassirin*. The *Makhzan* offers no interpretation concerning the *Mahdi*.

For the Qur'an 41: 53, *al-Mizan* reports two *tafsirs* concerning this verse and considers one of the two as concerning the *Mahdi* according to references gleaned from other commentators. The *Majma'* and the *Makhzan* have no *tafsir* for this verse.

In the Qur'an 48: 28, Tabarsi reports two interpretations for the verse, one of them concerning the time of the *Mahdi's* reappearance. *Al-Mizan* and *Makhzan* offer no *tafsir* concerning the verse.

The Qur'an 97: 5, and the Qur'an 61: 9, are only interpreted by Banu Amin as concerning the *Mahdi*. Neither *al-Mizan* nor *Majma'* offer an interpretation concerning the *Mahdi*.

What we can understand from the verses reported as implicitly concerning the *Mahdi* and their interpretation by three Shi'ite commentators is the future supremacy of Islam over the world and good tidings from God to the Muslims of the future Universal Reign of Islam. There are diverging opinions among the commentators concerning the above-mentioned victory of Islam over all the religions.

Some say that this victory can be understood in intellectual and rational terms, and that it has already occurred since Islam is the most logical and rational religion practised in the world today. [1](#)

But most of them agree, as do the authors studied here, that a more correct interpretation would

encompass a victory on all fronts, meaning that the day will come when Islam will be victorious over all the religions of the world, not only intellectually and spiritually, but also politically through the constitution of a new world government, and belief in the predictions of these verses and that such important and universal events can only be realised at the time of the *Mahdi*.

These commentators give as an argument for their opinion that these verses are unconditional and general, and that there is no reason to limit their meaning by affirming that the victory will be limited to a particular region demarcated at the time of the Prophet or at some time afterwards, or to a particular intellectual standpoint.

Moreover, they argue that the verses concerning the victory of Islam on a worldwide scale at the time of the *Mahdi* have been interpreted by numerous traditions explicitly announcing the appearance of the *Mahdi* who will enable Islam to triumph throughout the world. Apart from those reported by the Imams, the *Mahdi* traditions are also reported by a number of the Prophet's Companions; for example, 'Othman ibn 'Affan, Ali ibn Abi Talib (first Imam for the Shi'ites, but also considered as a Caliph and Companion by the Sunnites), Talha ibn 'Ubaydillah, 'Abdurrahman ibn 'Awf, 'Abdullah ibn Harith, Abu Hurayrah, Jaber ibn 'Abdullah, Abu Umamah, 'Abdullah ibn 'Omar, Anas ibn Malek and others, also Umm Salama or 'Aisha (the Prophet's wife).

These traditions concerning the rise of the Mahdi are accepted by most Muslim scholars because of the multiplicity of their sources allowing a certain certitude (*tawatur*), although a limited number of them² doubt their Prophetic origin, objecting that the content of such traditions is not rationally acceptable, even as *mutawatir* traditions.

¹. N. Makarem Shirazi: Tafsir-e Nemune, Vol 7, p.359

². like Ibn Khaldun or Ahmad Amin

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