

The Hope For The Final Victory

Thus, we can see that Mahdism and the beliefs surrounding it, the ardent expectation for the emergence of a 'World Saviour' and the final victory of truth over falsity and justice over oppression, is, in its various forms, a prominent feature in all religions. It is not, contrary to popular opinion, a coincidence; nor is it pure fancy. It is an extremely natural and acceptable thing. In addition, among all these Mahdis and Mashis, Messiahs and Ishnoos, we must realize that there is a common feature which links all of them.

Basically, we must take into consideration that no doctrinarian or inaugurator of religion is going to be devoid of faith and conviction in the ultimate triumph of his own particular school of thought. Likewise, it is absurd to think that he will have previously adopted defeatist attitudes and consider his own plans and ideas futile and inadequate, unless, of course, he has presented them as a limited, short-term remedy to immediate problems that might evolve.

Those intellectuals who are somewhat more realistic and far-sighted see the personification of all their theories and indoctrination in idealistic and perfect future societies. They consider the future as that of their making. Plato wrote of his ideal society. In the same way, nineteenth century socialists pinned their hopes on the heavenly state of Utopia as the typification of all their ideals and theories. Even materialist Karl Marx, irrespective of whether he believed in God or not, believed in some kind of Hereafter, at least as far as the final triumph of his own social class and theories, and the establishment of an ideal social system were concerned.

Marx, considering that history, in its natural course, would finally result in the spiritual awakening of the working class, looked ahead to the day when the proletariat would assume the ruling position and the world would become free of class-exploitation. economic crises and stagnation, and other social evils such as poverty and war. Obviously, he most seriously stipulated that his followers work enthusiastically with this aim in mind.

Therefore, it becomes much more necessary for a monotheistic religion (one extreme of which is concerned with pre-existence and perpetuality and the other with the Hereafter, and whose belief is in the existence of Divine Government and the Unity of God) to definitely and most earnestly strive for complete promulgation of its beliefs and teachings, with its ultimate use and implementation in mind.

There is, however, one basic difference between political and philosophical schools on the one hand and Divine religions on the other. The man who worships God, the Shi'ite for example, bases his endeavours and efforts on his belief in the Unity of God and the deep, inherent sense of brotherhood he feels for his fellow beings (be they close or distant, of the past, or of the future).

Furthermore, he realizes that he may never see the triumph towards which he is working, the triumph of Truth and Justice which will be that of his descendants. Nevertheless, he sees their victory as his also, and thus celebrates and congratulates those around him.

However, in the books and scriptures that have been handed down to us from monotheistic religions of the past, we only catch a brief glimpse of any allusions or glad tidings concerning any such future events. This may be due to the extreme remoteness of the time in question, or the general undeveloped and deficient nature of intellect among those who wrote such books. In fact, they give only a very brief mention of the subject and then pass on.

Thus, the question of government and social justice of even their own people does not concern them, let alone the idea of a Universal Government. It is only in Islam (and that, again, in the Shi'ite sect) that there is such complete awareness and consideration for the periods which will mark the "End of Time", the question of justice and security, and Divine Grace ('production'), all of which are explicitly connected with the idea of a 'Resurrector' and are incorporated in the essential beliefs and general religious ceremonies of the Shi'ite sect.

It is obvious in their litanies and prayers. Furthermore, the hope, aspiration and expectation in the eventual realization of such a state is considered a duty, and what is more, religiously meritorious.

An example is the Iftitah Prayer, which is recited by the very pious before dawn during the fasting month of Ramadhan. Half of it directly concerns the 12th Imam:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَرْغَبُ إِلَيْكَ فِي دَوْلَةٍ كَرِيمَةٍ، تُعِزُّ بِهَا الْإِسْلَامَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتُذِلُّ بِهَا النِّفَاقَ وَأَهْلَهُ، وَتَجْعَلُنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الدُّعَاةِ إِلَى طَاعَتِكَ، وَالْقَادَةِ إِلَى سَبِيلِكَ، وَتَرْزُقُنَا بِهَا كَرَامَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

O Allah: we ardently desire that You confer upon us a respectful government through which You may reactivate Islam and stimulate its followers, and humble and humiliate the imposters and their double-dealing shams, and include us among those who invite people to the obedience to You and lead them to Your approved path, and give us the good of this world and the world to come.

Thus, we can see that this great and long awaited Saviour is, in Shi'ite eyes, concealed yet very much alive. They look upon him as their helper and the solution to all their troubles. He is the one towards whom they direct all their pleas, prayers, wants and wishes.

In fact, as we have seen, all religions and schools of thought give such promises of a "final triumph" as a reward for the sacrifices and devotion of its followers. If, among these schools, the pure Islam, as taught by the Ahlul Bayt, is seen to lean more definitely and with greater explicitness on the necessity for man to arm himself with such beliefs, then it does so.

Having concerned itself more with general human and world society, the idea of eternity and the infinitely distant future of Hereafter, it has placed the heaviest and most exacting duty upon the shoulders of the pious members of its faith.

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