

The Promised Savior in Pre-Islamic Great Religions

Mahim Arab

Assistant Professor of Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch
e-mail: mhn.arab@gmail.com

Abstract:

Since the ancient times the belief in the rise of the Reformer has been a fundamental principle. Many of the holy prophets have announced the advent of new prophet. Moreover in the announcements and indications of predecessors there are always allusions to "the Last Promised" and "the Savior of Last Days" under such titles as "Kalki", "Fifth Buddha", "Soshyans", "Messiah", "The Son of Man" and so on and so forth. Of course there are different types of belief in the last reformer in religions. In one place the Savior is merely a social reformer while in another place he is only after the spiritual salvation of people and even sometimes he undertakes both tasks. On the other hand, the Last Promised is once nationalist and once seeks to save the whole world.

This essay seeks to assay the views of pre-Islamic great religions including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism as to the Promised Savior. This essay is an analytico-descriptive research which has based itself on the first hand works comprising the sacred scriptures of religions and proceeds through the typological analyses of idea of the Promised in religions.

Zoroastrianism: the idea of the Promised has been tied to the notion of Soshyant. Generally speaking, this notion alludes to a group of people who periodically emerge at the end of every millennium of the last three millennia of world's age so as to uproot evil and renew the world, the last one of these reformers is Soshyans. According to the aforementioned typology, Zoroastrian idea of Last Savior is among the Promised who saves the whole world. Moreover Zoroastrian Promised cannot be declared only a social savior as he is not wholly detached from people's spirituality too. From another point of view, Zoroastrian idea of the Promised represents a universal and not nationalist savior who is relatively a human and not divine entity who emerges in the last millennium of world's age.

Judaism: in the Old Testament Mashih (Messiah) means the anointed one by God and is the one who has been exposed to the spirit of Yahweh and this virtue has equipped him with all qualities which are necessary for an ideal king of Israel "the spirit of God will perch on that branch, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and power, the spirit of knowledge of Yahweh and fear of him." (Isaiah, 2: 11). Mashih recalls a Savior of political taste. According to Jews, when Messiah rises the kingdom of heaven becomes established on earth and all nations return to Jerusalem (Isaiah, 14: 45) and the golden age of Jewish rule over the world begins. Thus Jewish taking of the Promised is ethnically motivated whose main concern is reclaiming the dominance and prosperity of Jews and it is less concerned with spiritual salvation. Although this Savior is of a Jewish origin but since his personal qualities are not decided then it is impersonal and void of divinity.

Christianity: the idea of the Promised has revealed itself in Christianity in three forms: first in the form of Jesus of Nazareth who plays the role of Savior and fulfills the expectations; second, in the form of "Judge of worlds" who will reveal himself when Jesus returns to the earth at the Day of Judgment as he once left there (Acts, 1: 11). And third, in the form of a man whose advent is announced by Jesus Christ and is described as the "source of consolation" and "spirit of honesty" who will bless Jesus and approve him (John, 14: 17). Accordingly, Christianity contains three versions of the Promised idea.

According to the previously mentioned typology, the first countenance of the Savior in Christianity, i.e. Jesus as Messiah in the New Testament, not only does not indicate the occurrence of a social uprising for establishing a government or spiritual refinement of people but rather the Savior in this sense undergoes a severe agony to relieve humanity from the burden of original sin (Acts, 8: 32). This Christian taking of the Promised is unique in its kind and has no equivalent in other religions.

But in the second form which promises the return of Jesus to help people to reach their perfection (Mathew, 37: 24-27; Luke, 18: 69 & 22: 18). Then the Promised in this sense aims at universal spiritual flourishing and is a person but a divine person.

The third manifestation of the Promised which has been described as "the spirit of honesty" and the "source of consolation" is the Holy Spirit, according to the Christians, who leads the church in its quest for righteousness in the absence of Christ.

Typologically speaking, Christian taking of the Promised has a spiritual character. It is universal and pro-millennium.

Hinduism: Hindu taking of the Promised is built upon a figure called Kalki who emerges at the Last Day when darkness devours the whole universe and evil minds take the helm. By the end of this dark period the tenth and final incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu which is named Kalki, riding a white horse with a castrated sword and like a falling star rises to uproot the evil and wickedness and establish justice and virtue.

Bhagavata Purana indicates that: "his empire will be universal and his mission will be the resurrection of dharma (law) and justice and truth". Thus the Hindu promised Messiah is personal and divine and actually his mission is social and spiritual, so he is not ethnically motivated but is universal.

Buddhism: Promised Savior in Buddhism is explained by the concept of "Maitreya" which is a Sanskrit word meaning "loving-kindness". In Buddhist theology he is known as the fifth and the last ground Buddha who is yet to come but he will come to save all mankind. In Buddhism symbolism he is in shape of a sitting man who is ready to get up which is the symbol of his preparation to arise. In Mahavastu, a text book of sub sect Hinayana that is about history of Sri Lanka, chronology of events of Maitreya uprising is clearly mentioned. Based on the typology, the promised Buddhist Savior is spiritual saving and he does not have social purposes. He is a personal Savior and with human - divine characteristic. Since the mission of the fifth Buddha is not to rescue a specific nation it could be a universal mission. The result of this study is that although expressions and typology of belief in Savior in mentioned religions is deferent, however there is an important common belief among all them, which is faith and hope in uprising of Savior in apocalypse.

References

1. *The Holy Quran*
2. Avesta (Zoroastrianism divine letters), the report of Professor Ibrahim Poor Davoud. (1343). compiled by Jalil Doostkhah, Tehran, Morvaryd publications.
3. Barr, Kaj and others. (1348). *Diyānat-e Zartoštī: Majmūʿe-ye seh maqāle*, translated by Fraydoun Wahman, Tehran, Bonyad Farhang.
4. Boyce, Mary. (1376). *A History of Zoroastrianism*, translated by Homayoun Sanaatizadeh, Tehran, Toos Publications, second edition.

5. Boyce, Mary. (1381). *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Customs*, translated by Askar Bahrami, Tehran, Ghoghnoos Publications.
6. Danielou, Jean. (1383). *Les Manuscrits de la mer Morte et les origines du christianisme*, translated by Ali Mahdizadeh, Ghom, Adyan Publications.
7. Ebrahim, Alireza. (1381). *messianism in Islam and Zoroastrianism*, Tehran, Baaz Publications.
8. *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial of Movements*. (2000). edited by Landers, R., Routledge, New York.
9. *Encyclopedia of world religions*. (1998). edited by Doniger, W., 9th edition, Merrian-Webster, United States.
10. GATT, the poetry of Zarathustra. (1382). *translated by Firooz Azargoshasb Zoroastrian priest*, Tehran, Forouhar publications.
11. *Gita (Bhagwat Gita) or Hymn of the Gods*. (1374). translated by Mohammad Ali Movahed, Tehran, Kharazmy Publications, Second Edition.
12. Greenstone, Julius Hillel. (1377). *The Messiah Idea in Jewish History*, translated by Hossain Toafighi, Ghom, the Center for Religious Studies.
13. Hakimi, Mohammad Reza. (1376). *the Sun of the West*, Tehran, Daftar Nashre Farhang Islami, Tenth Edition.
14. Hardy, Friedhelm. (1376). *The religions of Asia*, translated by Abd Alkarim Govahi, Tehran, Dafatar Nashr Farhang Islami.
15. Hawks, James. (1377). *Dictionary of the Bible*, Tehran, Asatiir publications.
16. Ions, Veronica. (1373). *Indian mythology*, translated by Bajlan Farrokhi, Tehran, Asaatir.
17. Iranian Bundahishn. (1361). *translated by Farnabagh Dadehy*, Mehrdad Bahar report, Tehran, Toos publications.
18. Kerry, Wolfe. (1358). *about the Bible, the translation of Muhammad Ghazi*, Tehran.
19. Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. (1403). *Oceans of Light (Bihar al Anwar)*, Beirut, 3rd edition.
20. Mashkour, Mohammad Javad. (1380). *Summary of the Major Religions in the History of Religions*, Tehran, Shargh publications.
21. Movahedian Attar, Ali and others. (1388). *The Typology of the Doctrine of Expected Savior in Religions*, Qom, the University of Religions and Denominations Press.
22. Noss, John Boyer. (1380). *Man's Religions*, translated by Ali Askar Hekmat, Tehran, Elmi – Farhangi Publications (Cultural and Scientific Publications), 11th edition.
23. Pourdawood, Ebrahim. (1374). *Saoshyant*, Tehran, Forouhar Publications.
24. Sadeghi, Mohammad. (1362). *Besharat Ahdayn*, Tehran, Dar al-Kotob al-Islami.
25. Selections of Zadspram. (1366). translated by Mohammad Rashid Mohassel, Tehran, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies Publications.
26. Shattuck, Cybell. (1380). *Hinduism*, translated by Mohammad Reza Badiiee, Tehran, Amir Kabir Publications.
27. Shayegan, Dariush. (1346). *Religions and Philosophical Schools of India*, Tehran University Press.
28. The Bible (Old Testament and New Testament). (1987). *translated by the Bible Society*, Tehran.
29. The Four Canonical Gospels. (1375). *Translated by Mir Muhammad Baqir Ibn-Ismail Hassani Khatoon Abadi*, Compiled by Rasool Jafarian, Tehran, Daftar Nashr Miras Maktoob.
30. The world religions reader. (2000). edited by Becherlegge, G., 2nd edition, Routledge, Great Britain.
31. Upanishads. (1398). translated by Mohammad Darshokoh (from Sanskrit text vol. 2), Tehran.