



**Imam Al-Mahdi (as) and
opponents
The dialectic of
complementarily
and contradiction**

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Preface



" since ancient times, two forces have been struggling to gain control over the globe; the forces of good and evil. The struggle between these two poles will continue until the Day of Judgment. However, this point may appear controversial and should, therefore, be fully discussed and concretely established before delving into the details of the theoretical propositions of this paper.

The Establishment of Conflict and Complementarity

The conflict between evil and good may be traced back to ancient times. Some may presuppose that the struggle between these two poles cannot be tracked to the ancient epochs as it is based, for the main part, on the production tools of the industrial society, as espoused by the Marxist material dialectic;

however, it would be more reasonably realistic to accept that it certainly has existed since the earliest days of the human species on this earth and shall continue until the Day of Judgment.

It may assume different forms, represented by outwardly different figures, but what counts is the essence of these forces rather than their various external manifestations. Also, what we mean by evil is that party which opposes Divine will and the rightly guided party of Almighty God (swt). Some think this might be summarized in one characteristic, i.e. possession or otherwise of the fear of Allah.

The conflict between good and evil is established in the majority of sacred books, albeit with dissimilar references and terms. The Qur'an has emphasized the existence of this distinction as well as the fight in the story of Adam's sons after the first division took place between them when Abel, the potential victim, upon hearing his brother's pronouncement of intention to kill

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him, strongly despising such an act - and despite being fully aware of the risk of being killed for doing so - declared:

"لئن بسطت إلي يدك لتقتلني ما أنا بباسط يدي لأقتلك إني أخاف الله رب العالمين."

"Even if you stretch forth your hand towards me in order to kill me, I will never stretch out a hand towards you to kill you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe!" Qur'an 5:28

By the end of this paper we shall refer to the Qur'anic verse which is both linked to the Imam Al-Mahdi (as) and his opponents and to the status of fearing Allah.

The only difference is that the conflict was manifested here in individual representation, while our discussion topic goes beyond, extending the matter to communities, groups and, ultimately, various societies. However, the essence is contradiction between two totally different forces. This shall lead us to a thorough discussion of contradiction and its philosophical definition within the social arena.

Contradiction as a General Concept

One studies contradiction in Aristotelian formal logic in simple concepts, particularly in the propositional. The definition and the conditions are different compared to the social field and political philosophy. It is clearly obvious that the logical definition of contradiction - within Aristotelian frameworks - is not applicable to societies and the principles governing them, as both the concepts and compounds within the formal logic never claimed to apply such rules to the societal field. We, therefore, face two concepts with totally different connotations yet dissimilar meaning.

As this discussion necessitates the study of contradiction and dialectic throughout the latest philosophical discussions, we are forced to discuss the Marxist and the Hegelian models of contradiction, paving the way for analyzing the recent brainchild of Huntington and his clash of civilizations.

Contradiction within Marxism in the Social Field

In dialectical materialism, contradiction, as derived by Karl Marx from Hegelianism, usually refers

to an opposition of conflicting social forces. According to Marx, most prominent is the fact that capitalism promotes a social structure which has contradictions because the social classes have conflicting collective goals.

These contradictions stem from the lethargic social function of the society's structure and inherently lead to class conflict, economic crisis, and eventually revolution, the existing order's overthrow and the formerly oppressed classes' ascension to political power.

Thus for formal societal approaches, the main predication of 'dialectical opposition or contradiction' must be understood as 'some sense' opposition between the objects involved in a directly associated context. 'Dialectical contradiction' is not reducible to simple 'opposites' or 'negation'.

According to Marxist thinkers, dialectics is the science of the general and abstract laws of the development of nature and society. We are going to introduce their ideas based on Friedrich Engels. These principal features might be introduced as four, which are:

1. The universe, far from being a disconnected mixture of separate isolated entities, is an integral whole, with resultant universal interdependency. To sum it up: The law of unity and conflict of opposites.

The first of Engel's laws or expressions was seen by Hegel as the central feature of a dialectical understanding of things. Hegel wrote: "It is in this dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of oppositions in their unity, or of the positive in the negative, that speculative thought consists. It is the most important aspect of dialectic."

This principle may be easily acceptable as Muslim social philosophers have repeatedly emphasized this very point; however, astute thinkers may distinguish between various groups co-existing within a society, and reach different conclusions regarding each individual community. We cannot, therefore, accept this principle in its vague formulation.

2. Nature - the natural world or cosmos - is in a state of constant motion. Some have formulated these changes to occur either generally or in the particular form of quantitative into qualitative. Friedrich Engels, the German philosopher, wrote in his 'Dialectics of Nature':

"All nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the sun, from the protista to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change."

While the second principle is widely accepted within the milieu of Muslim philosophers - in

particular the Sadrian (Al-Harakah Al-Jawhariyyah), it is nevertheless unclear how this could be applied within the social field. The exception is where it could be used to prove the need for Divine power and guidance, something which the materialistic dialectic has rejected since its establishment. We find ourselves forced to discuss the other part of this principle as a separate issue.

3. Development is a process whereby insignificant and imperceptible quantitative changes lead to fundamental, qualitative changes. The latter occur not gradually, but rapidly and abruptly, in the form of a leap from one state to another. A simple example from the physical world might be the heating of water: a one degree increase in temperature is a quantitative change, but at 100 degrees there is a qualitative change - water to steam.

This principle is probably taken by Hegel from Aristotle, and is equated with what scientists call "phase transitions". In each case, the phase transition of water is one of the main expositions of quantity into quality and vice versa. Karl Marx has also emphasized this law in his Capital. "Merely quantitative differences, beyond a certain point, pass into qualitative changes."

As regards this principle, we may view the case from a specific angle as, within the social field, we found it difficult to adopt as a constant clear-cut rule where conditions supposedly bring about transformation from quantitative to qualitative, as societal factors are flexible and depend on many varying factors that can affect the destiny and future of the whole society. One is also able to defend an approach where contradiction may tend to affect the human societies within themselves, i.e. individuals whereby parts of the whole shall reach perfection towards elevated positive levels, and others may descend to ultimate lower levels.

4. All things contain within themselves internal dialectical contradictions, which are the primary cause of motion, change, and development in the world. This principle might be formulated as: The law of the negation of the negation.

The principle of the negation of the negation is Hegel's distinct expression. It was the expression through which, amongst others, Hegel's dialectic became fashionable during his life-time, notwithstanding his vague formulation; interpretation will be a difficult task. There is much related literature and many philosophical theories - amongst which one has, oneself, developed an innovative theory though we are not going to discuss it in this article.

However, speaking critically and briefly - and interpreting solely from a materialistic context - one can straightforwardly reject the need for internal contradiction in order to perpetuate motion and to keep things changing and moving towards different levels. Further explanations might be needed in the next few paragraphs to elaborate upon this idea and to strengthen its depth.

Before concluding, there is a need, at this point, to emphasise that dialectical materialism is often defined by reference to two claims by Marx:

first that he "put Hegel's dialectics back on its feet" and second, that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." See (The Communist Manifesto, 1848).

Dialectical materialism is essentially characterized by the belief that history is the product of class struggle obeying the general Hegelian principle of philosophy of history that is the development of thesis into its antithesis which is sublated by the "Aufhebung" (~synthesis, a word that Hegel was loathe to use) - which conserves thesis and antithesis while simultaneously abolishing it. Thus the conflict of society's classes is a necessity for history's development, and adheres to the Hegelian principles of history.

In conclusion, within this dialectic, the process of modification through the conflict of opposing forces, whereby a given contradiction is characterized by a primary and a secondary aspect, the secondary succumbing to the primary is then transformed into an aspect of new contradiction. Ayatollah S. M. B. As-Sadr differs from Marx regarding the origin of social contradiction.

Marx relates contradiction to the growth of means of production. Although As-Sadr pictured the rise of contradiction in social relations due to the changing economic conditions of society, he regarded the real cause behind it not as consisting of external-environmental conditions, but rather as resting within man, himself.

Man is not always the product of his environment, which itself is shaped by his mentality, thoughts and activities. The development of economic conditions is his doing, and social relationships are developed and organized to meet his needs. It was his intellectual and physical capabilities that made it possible for man to enhance his living conditions.

Without these faculties, the external conditions would have remained the same since the dawn of history. The reason behind the rise of the social contradiction is that man deviated from the way of God. Changes in the conditions surrounding man would only serve as instigators of man's mental capabilities. They act as 'raw material' for promoting and stimulating the appetite for the human brain to work. Change of environmental condition gives man the ability to develop new tools or means of production to counteract the effects of the changing conditions. He states:

'...the natural forces of production do not, by themselves, reach their [state of] perfection and growth, or quicken their development and maturation, but rather they only instigate the senses and the thinking of man. Their natural development, thus, is not [the result of a] dialectical process, and the positive effect [i.e., the emancipation of life] does not emerge from this development. Rather, the forces of production are governed by an historical factor that is superior

to them.'

That superior factor, according to Sadr, is the human ego of mankind, himself. Hence, the primary factor behind the contradictions that exist in society is, according to Sadr, not changing economical conditions (forces of productions) but rather the contradictions within man himself. The Holy Qur'an made it explicitly clear:

"كلا إن الإنسان ليطغى، أن رآه استغنى."

"However man acts so arrogant, for he considers he is self-sufficient." Qur'an 96:7

"إن الله لا يغير ما بقوم حتى يغيروا ما بأنفسهم"

"God does not change what any people may have until they change whatever they themselves have." Qur'an 13:11

Thus the historical process can be defined between two poles of political thinking; those who would like to protect their interests and retain the existing system of alienation indefinitely, and those who would like to revolt and replace the existing oppressive system of social relations with a just one.

The natural course of action for the deprived and weak has always been to lead a revolution against corrupt oppressive political regimes. The history of revolutions, according to Sadr, has taken two different routes to confront unjust social structures. The first is revolution that advocates the elimination of materialistic forms of societal oppression, considered as forms of alienation, encountered by the downtrodden on a daily basis.

These feelings of exploitation by the masses lead them first to silent opposition. When oppression continues, they organize their effort in vocal political movements that give voice to their demands upon the system. These groups eventually resort to violent actions when all else fails. Revolutions of this type of movement mobilize masses on the basis that a new system would distribute wealth and resources to all members of society and eliminate privilege for the upper dominate class.

However, such revolutions, while concerned about certain kinds of social needs, are short-sighted. The masses would continue to face other forms of alienation in the post-revolutionary system. The oppressed of yesterday would become the masters, and thus, the oppressor of today. The whole historical process would repeat itself with new players.

Thus, "the revolution would only change the position of exploitation, but would not accomplish its elimination." That is probably why Marx considered the existence of a historical dialectic process

whereby each rising class resorts to oppressive means and measures to protect its interests against other groups, i.e., every thesis gives rise to an antithesis.

The second type of revolutionary process is one that tries to eliminate the source of alienation rather than merely emphasizing elimination of its materialistic contradictions. It is a revolution that would resort to the creation of new social values that would see an end to all sources of exploitation.

The revolution that would advocate the values of justice, righteousness, and equality that stem from belief in God is the only revolution that would secure man from the domination and exploitation of other powers. It is the total surrender of man to God that would free him from surrendering to others. When the revolution advocates the equality of all people,

it must be on the basis that all are equal before God and no single group has special rights with respect to others. When such revolutionaries try to eliminate the means of control of the dominate group, it is not because of a belief that they have no right to reign, but because all people have equal right to govern before God and act as His representative on earth. Sadr called the latter type of revolution the '(Divine) real revolution' and the former the '(Taghuti) relative revolution.'

These few sentences have been an attempt to establish a correction of the theoretical Marxist approach, and while touching on the theoretical version of social contradiction, they should suffice to lead us to profoundly study and extensively examine the new approach, including its relation to Real Practiced Life.

Examining the Authenticity of Dialectical Marxism in Practice

The Role of Religion in Mobilizing the Masses towards Revolution

The last few decades of the last century witnessed a new phenomenon, namely the Islamic revolution of Iran, where religion demonstrably played a major role in mobilizing the masses for the purpose of a national cause, simultaneously inspiring aspirations of International proportions with regard to the oppressors happily hogging their way around the globe. However, there are some politically observant and strategic analysts who have tried to trivialise or belittle the role of religious ideology in forming and motivating the forces of the revolution.

In his book: 'Six theories of the Victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran', Haghghat edited an article entitled: 'The Role of Ideology, Leadership and People in the Islamic Revolution' by Manoochehr Mohammadi that states that religion was the main factor for the victory of the Islamic revolution. Analyzing the main ideologies that could and eventually did influence the destiny of the revolution, we read in the article by Mohammadi:

'In Iran, since long ago and from the early years of the present century, three different eastern and western ideologies have attracted different social groups. These are Nationalism, Marxism-Leninism, and Islam. Their advocates have endeavoured to gather a following by painting their own picture of ideal society. Nationalism, in the minds race, incorporates historical background,

language, culture and traditions of people, who have gathered inside a set of geographical boundaries as an undissociatable unit, and considering such, honour it as friendly and otherwise as alien and enemy. The Marxist movement, despite the extensive efforts made, was less successful than nationalism in Iran for two reasons:

The atheistic structure and materialistic nature of Marxism-Leninism contradicted the Iranian society's nature and their deep religious beliefs. Thus, it could not find popular acceptability.

The extensive affiliation of Marxists to Moscow resulted in their becoming regarded "as a result of the bitter experiences of Iranian-Russian relation",

or as a group of Russian puppets. However, Islam as a divine school of thought had historical roots in the minds of various classes of people. A society with 98% of its members being traditional Muslims, and most of them adhering to their divine book's commands, is well prepared to accept revolution.'

Many have rejected the idea that religion, and in particular Islam could have played a strong role in the people's motivation towards revolting against the Shah. Mohammadi writes:

'Among the main arguments against this ideology being used as the ideology of the revolution are:

Many years of western imperialist propaganda had inspired the notion that, "Religion should be separated from politics and have no relationship with socio-political problems". This program of insinuation had affected various classes of people and even some of the clergy and religious authorities. The ideal society that Islam intended to establish belonged to 14 centuries in the past and many believed it impossible to establish its orders in the modern era. Doubts existed whether it could answer the present epoch's conundrums.

Reliance on some of the Islamic principles, such as dissimulation and waiting for the advent of the 12th Imam in Shi'ah tradition and obeying the designated guardian among the Sunnis, had left no room, not even in the minds of some true Muslims, for the idea that Islam could be wielded as a revolutionary ideology for changing the prevailing values.'

After discussing many of the abovementioned points he insists:

'The evidence in all of these popular and mass movements proves that the essential accelerating factor in the revolution had a purely religious aspect and was related to the insulting article as follows:

From January 10, 1978 till the victory of the revolution, all of the demonstrations had a religious aspect and were performed using religious traditions, ceremonies and festivities, (like Ashura, the 40th day mourning ceremony, and religious festival), and had no other distinguishing traits.

The starting and ending points of the demonstrations were at mosques and the regime showed its enmity to religion by attacking the Great Mosque of Kerman, Habib Mosque in Shiraz, and Lonradeh Mosque in Tehran, trying to stop these gatherings.

Invitation for the gatherings for street marches and leadership of the demonstrations were accomplished by the scholars. Non-religious leaders never had any role in administering and leading the demonstrations. Even when the National Front, trying to test its power, declared a strike and street march on the 40th day of mourning for the martyrs of Black Friday, it was unsuccessful.

These initiatives had no relationship with the more open political atmosphere or Carter's human rights, policy, but they were brutally and ruthlessly answered. Even American so-called human rights supporters encouraged and supported the Shah in these acts of brutality.

People's slogans and requests were religious and political, and were based on two axes: Firstly the Shah's leaving and the fall of the Pahlavi regime, and secondly, establishing an Islamic state. Non-religious groups had no choice but to join the Muslim masses and were thus forced to abandon their own slogans so as not to face popular objection.

He concludes at the end of his article:

'The greatest role in the victory of the revolution in Iran was played by religion and the school of martyrdom. Any attempt to relate it to issues such as Carter's human rights policy, the coalition

of various forces, nationalistic movements, and so on, is distortion of reality and disagrees with documented historical facts.'

This fact is also shared and confirmed by sharp and astute Western writers, such as Fred Halliday who, in an article titled: The Contradictory Legacies of Ayatollah Khomeini: The Iranian Revolution at Twenty presented in a London International Conference in 1999, wrote describing the above mentioned elements as follows:

"Khomeini had built a regime that combined religious and ideological authority with strong security system....The Iranian revolution claimed to be a novel kind of revolution, and many outside Iran agreed with this: this was a revolution made in the name of religion, and led by the clergy. This has never happen before in the history of modern revolutions.

There were indeed other elements of novelty: this... Its ideological character was evident in the fact that it did not seek to invoke a long set of predecessors: Khomeini insisted.... The only model was that of the Prophet in the seventh century.

It is explicitly emphasizing that the Islamic revolution produced a new model for revolution in modern history that was both ideological and religious. Two factors combined to demonstrate in favour of Islam at the beginning of the third millennium.

The revolution faced many challenges and succeeded in stabilising and dynamically carrying out its functions. What was remarkable to observe was the domino effect collapse of the Communist states which had for so many years served as staunch rivals to the capitalist model. This has provided an extremely significant opportunity to revive the role of religion and the Divine values within the everyday life of the human being.

The transformation or the influence of Divine values on the International arena was witnessed by politicians and strategists. Referring to this remarkable change, Shirin Hunter wrote the following in an article entitled: "The Post-Soviet International System and the Dialogue of civilizations":

- "Between 1950s and 1970s, these efforts (referring to the United Nation Charter and the activities of other countries struggling to achieve independence within the International arena) were related mostly to issues of political and economic independence and to trying to [become part] of the International political system.

In the 1980s, however, cultural and value-related issues acquired greater importance, and this trend was strengthened in the 1990s, following the Soviet Union collapse. Today, cultural and civilisational issues are key elements of the International discourse and inter and intra-state relations."

While ideology and religion - especially Islam in the case of the Soviet failure in Afghanistan - provided an indispensable service in effecting the failure of communism, one could have possibly prognosticated the ideology, in general, and Islam in particular, to be central to the mind of strategists and theoreticians alike were it not for the number of remaining doctrinaires who were either not vigilantly engaged in scrutinizing the International arena, or who wilfully ignored this enormous ideological role, preferring to jettison the importance of religion.

Some leading political figures espoused the idea of a "New World Order" with the existence of a single world Mega Power. However, they felt less at home with the resulting un-confrontational vacuum; having an adversary served well for uniting inner fronts in the face of a (real or imagined) major external enemy.

In order to groom the everyday minds of leaders, minions and masses actively in the same direction, it was assumed that Islam could fill the void and become the perfect alternative bogeyman. Speaking about a '\New World Order\' was a politically motivated vague formulation and an attempt to present American Western hegemony over the rest of the world. It was not, however, shaped as an intellectual theory nor received as a well formulated theorem from a charismatic individual.

The reason should be intrinsically clear as simply highlighting a fact is not an exceptional accomplishment, nor a great task entrusted to a magnificently charismatic global leadership.

Again, it was left to an American thinker to produce a theory to serve as Trojan Horse, saving ship, and dynamic vehicle within the '\New World Order\''. The theory of the '\Clash of Civilizations\' was introduced in a book by Samuel Huntington. He, a US political scientist, was "the director of security-planning for the National Security Council" in the White House regime of Jimmy Carter. Huntington has had access to a lot of very interesting behind-the-scenes data denied to lesser mortals.

The ideas in this book were first presented in a lecture at the Washington "American Enterprise Institute." One of the crucial purposes and motivation for Huntington\'s brainchild lay in this factor, as, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some considered the world could finally be able to breathe a sigh of relief due to the death of the cold war.

According to the ideas in Huntington\'s book, however, one should not take that breath of relief as humanity\'s destiny has been ensnared, once again, by a huge, profound and wider global Clash. As he put it, paving the way for presenting his brainchild, namely 'The Clash of Civilization': true friends require true enemies:

"For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world\'s major civilizations." (p. 20)

Within and between these lines one is able to discern a crucial insidious factor, i.e. a shift from emphasis on ideology to something rarely, if ever, discussed within the circles of strategists, due to its fluid character the very nature of which escapes clear definition based on solid background: civilization.

The Shift of Importance from Ideology-Religion into Civilization-Strategy

This shift from emphasis on religion to civilization was lucrative, provided a wonderful opportunity and unleashed great energy for the masterminds behind the so-called \'New World Order\'. Otherwise, no one would ever have implemented the civilisational factor within International affairs of state, as this term was nonexistent in the lexicon of International affairs. According to Shirin Hunter in her article, entitled: The Post-Soviet International System and the Dialogue of civilizations\':

'Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 a new concept has been introduced into the lexicon of International affairs, namely that of 'civilizations' as actors on the International scene and, therefore, if not replacing, then competing with the nation state as the principal unit of the International system.

- The idea was first introduced by Samuel Huntington in the context of his 'Clash of civilizations' theory. According to this theory, civilisational incompatibility or affinity will be the main factor determining the nature of international and inter-state relations

Moreover, this theory implies that rather than individual states interacting with one another - albeit at different levels, bilateral, multilateral etc.- it will be a cluster of states bound together by certain common values within the framework of a particular civilization, that will become the main actor.'

Although she might be attempting to present his ideas, one has to state that, despite being a complex, learned and thought provoking work, his book introducing the Clash of Civilizations should in no way change the way one regards the international social and political order. It is

especially important to be wary of rushing into judgements while applying it to world events post-September 11th, 2001.

The idea was indeed invented several years before this tragic so-called wake-up event. And the course and history for its background was meant to elaborate, or substitute the '\New World Order\' in the academic milieu.

Huntington's book has been denounced by some Left-wings as being written by a right-winger and therefore, presumably, of no intellectual significance.

On the other hand S. Sayed, from the sociology department of the University of East London, despite admitting the complications of defining a '\civilization\'', enjoyed Huntington's analysis that Muslim Nations are being replaced by quasi-primordial constructs such as civilizations. He also shares the same idea that these entities are the manifestation of a national logic and likes the idea and recognition of the relationship between the nation and the form that the political entity has taken.

He refutes, however, the idea which has animated Huntington and upon which he bases his theory. After mentioning a couple of shared practices amongst Muslims he says:

'It is difficult to conclude from these examples that that which constitutes the unity of the Muslim Ummah is its uniform way of life. (Of course, it is precisely this idea of a Muslim/ Islamic civilization that animates people such as Huntington; nevertheless, like all attempts which conceptualise civilization as an unity, these flounder since they rest upon an eclectic collection of observable and generalized features.)'

The negative affects of this book (Clash of Civilisations), which seem to be frequently encountered in post 2001 readings, lies in its unmerciful ramification and pessimistic prognostication for the future of humanity.

One could probably link the thesis with the fact that America was in a period of increasing tension, particularly from confronting Muslims in various locations across the globe.

Huntington is neither a liberal nor a left winger. In his advice, he emphasises that the West must restrain the military power of Islamic and Sino countries in their attempt for technological/military superiority over other civilisations. Of course, his brainchild is not limited to the Islamic territories but rather extends to cover two civilizations: the Islamic and the Buddhist world (China and countries in close geographic orbit/influence). (p. 312)

During a London Conference on '\Muslims Identity in the 21st century\' organized in Oct. 1998,

Dale F. Eickelman, declared that Huntington's rhyming "West versus Rest" is of little use for the modern understanding of Muslim societies. He states:

'They obscure, or even distort, the immense spiritual and intellectual ferment that is taking place today among the world's nearly one billion Muslims, reducing this innovation, in most cases, to a fanatical rejection of everything modern, liberal or progressive.'

As Huntington has suggested, the core of the challenge and his absolute obsession lies in the fear of being inferior - both economically and militarily- to the two civilizations. Thus our main concern should be to confront the superiority complex, and to resolve it in finding ways to let others think of themselves as equal to others, and to recognize that the others are very much alike - regardless of their various differences - and that they, too, possess the ability to add something to the Mega Powers; knowledge and purification.

ولولا دفع الله الناس بعضهم ببعض لهدمت صوامع وبيع وصلوات ومساجد يذكر فيها اسم الله كثيرا.

"If it were not because God repels some men by means of others, cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques where God's name is mentioned frequently would have been demolished." Qur'an 22:40

قال الإمام علي (ع): الناس صنفان، أما أخ لك في الدين، وأما نظير لك في الخلق. "الإمام علي (ع)، نهج البلاغة، الكلمات القصار

Imam Ali (as) said: "People are of two categories: either brethren in faith, or peer in creation." Nahj ul-Blaghah, short sayings of Imam Ali (as).

Introduction of the Dialogue of Civilizations

Just as the pursuit of mono-cultural, single religion, territorial and oppositional states has proven problematic since the demise of the Middle Ages, so has the increasingly singular pursuit of the American example of democracy for the post-Cold War world in the twenty-first century.

The American type of democracy may function within certain societies with special conditions, but it is not the only or exemplary way to achieve a peaceful, productive, pluralistic and culturally dynamic society. After the refutation of the Clash of civilizations, there was the introduction of a wiser theory from the Muslims by Sayyed M. Khatami.

The call was made prominent by the Iranian President in his keynote address at the opening of the

United Nation in 1999. This call for a grand dialogue at the demise of the 20th and the inauguration of the 21st century was timely. Cultures have already encountered each other on religious journeys, modern holidays and vacations, military conquests, business transactions and intellectual exchanges and excursions.

The idea of the Dialogue of Civilizations cannot be rejected by a humble civilized human being, nor disapproved by an astutely religious individual. One should get beyond the various forms of contemporary fundamentalism and extremism wherever possible. Muslims today should operate with epistemological modesty, as no one can deny that great civilizations have been built by wise non-fundamentalist leaders like the Greeks, Chinese, Persian and Muslims.

The Qur'anic principle supports such a civilized approach, and we may quote the following Qur'aic verses:

" . إذ قال لصاحبه وهو يحاوره، أكفرت الآية "

"His companion said to him while disputing with him: Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a small seed, then He made you a perfect man?" Qur'an 18:37

" . أدع الى سبيل ربك بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة وجادلهم بالتتي هي أحسن "

"Invite to the Way of the Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching."

Qur'an 16:125

Also in a narration we read:

" . فحديث وجدها ألتقطها ، فهو أحق بها ، إن الحكمة ضالة المؤمن "

"Wisdom is the ultimate goal of the believer, and wherever he finds it, it is his prerogative to acquire it, as he deserves it more than anybody else."

Many Muslims among the religious minorities seem to have succeeded in dealing with cultural contradictions presented by others, and in conceiving themselves in tolerant, complex and realistic terms. Also, religious minorities, such as Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, live in a number of Islamic countries, and for instance in I. R.

Iran under the Wilayat Faqih regulations are a model of cosmopolitanism. Yet superiority is still not manifested in each and every different way. These religious minorities, for example, don't pay the jizyah (the religious taxation upon non-Muslims within an Islamic State), while maintaining

the application of the Islamic Shari\ah Law. Some of them are not so favoured in other Islamic countries.

On the other hand, some Muslim communities living in the Free-World do not share an elevated position within the society, and are deprived of certain rights in a smooth smart way.

Some of them have, consequently, remained on the hard shoulder of the main highway. The reasons are many and varied; some stemming from psychological seclusion, stigmatization of faith and humiliation of their holy figures during the last few decades.

Appropriateness of the society\'s popular faith, such as Christianity, is so excessively focused and extremely emphasized to possibly cause a number of civilisational conversions, despite being increasingly abhorrent to the Muslim community. These social limitations, which have caused a number of nominal conversions to Christianity or other faiths, have had a negative impact on the status of sociology of the Free-World, regardless and notwithstanding its positive attributes.

The exclusion, conversion and attempted elimination of Muslims sensibilities and devotion will not help any healthy society to flourish. Rather it contributes to the instability of free societies.

It is, therefore, wise to promote the Dialogue of Civilizations in order to minimize tensions and decrease elevated levels of confusion and misunderstanding. However, this peaceful idea, despite its many advantages, has not appeared to have been welcomed by arrogant individuals and atheistic Mega Powers.

An intellectual thinker marked the idea with a presentation designed to show that we are in a transitional phase from the "Rise and Fall" model to the "Dialogue" model. According to him:

"The implications are far reaching, not the least, a new understanding of civil society, cultural achievements by human beings of different nationalities and cultural manifestations."

He also rightfully insists that Gibbon's study on the Rise and Fall of Civilizations contributes to the topic of our discussion. He, therefore, advises a further study of the theory of 'Dialogue of Civilizations', as it lacks much sense without further investigation of the various technical terms implemented:

'We must, in a dialogue of civilizations, investigate exactly, if historical records and archaeological evidence permit, why and how civilizations constitute themselves and fall apart and transform themselves into another form of civilization, or simple drop dead and become another chapter in the book on world history....

'Much interdisciplinary research must be done in the Dialogue of Civilizations to achieve a kind of sense, so as to come to terms why and how any type of form of civilization emerges, flourishes, and ultimately dies.'

While analyzing the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire - despite the fact that it had adopted the Christian religion - Gazo quoted Gibbons to blame the very same adopted religion as the main cause for its decline. He writes:

'Gibbons, hitherto, is read for his literary style, for an example of the enlightenment attitude towards Rome and Christianity, and ultimately, for the Rise and Fall paradigm, inherent in his narrative. Of course, everyone somehow knowledgeable of a little historical reading knows Gibbons verdict: The basic reason for Rome's fall and decline was Christianity.'

It seems, as he, himself, realized, there is a fault in generalizing the cause to be a 'Religion' or any religion, and he could not help adding, therefore, that even Gibbons, the very same theoretician, cannot put Islam under the same category. However, he presented it in the form of a smart political manoeuvre:

Gibbons, as a figure from the enlightenment, needs no apology for his version of Rome and the Christian subversion. The enlightenment thinkers themselves were, as is well known, not positively inclined toward the Roman Catholic Church. Again it is no surprise that Gibbons and his friends should be benignly inclined toward Islam.'

By these quotes we find ourselves not entrapped into rejecting the role of ideology or religion, especially Islam, as some previous American thinkers have, but rather encouraged to further study our theory as the workable alternative to the Marxist Material Contradiction, the New World Order and to both the Clash of Civilizations and the Dialogue of Civilizations.

The Ultimate Holistic Theory

So far we have studied the Marxist theory of material dialectic and contradiction. Despite its intention to establish the laws of historical development, we have been unable to find them irrefutable. But the designers of the New World Order seem to highlight the conditions of the World only as they appear in their own eyes, without delving into theoretical principles.

While the theoretician of the Clash of Civilizations merely added a theoretical flavour to the previous Western political leader's idea, he, also, fails to present more than a prediction of the scenario of the World from his own eye.

We have been unable, however, to uncover more than conflicting evidence in his formulation to present 'the Clash' and 'civilization'. We consider that a reasonable and sensible thinker cannot tolerate or digest the image of a civilized individual initiating hostility and 'clash' with other so-called civilized individuals. Fighting and Clashes are not civilized phenomenon of human history.

Observing Khatami's idea from another angle, the Dialogue of Civilizations seems to introduce the best principle for a civilized individual; however, it lacks a holistic approach, as it is possibly detached from reality. A thorough all-inclusive theory needs to be introduced as a combination of the entire aforementioned discussion would have bitterly inevitable, albeit undesirable, consequences.

We, therefore, assume that regardless of the level of civilization, one develops a flavour of bitter conflict, despite the partly successful rounds of dialogue, which would ultimately be likely to succumb to clash and violence when one party seeks to enforce its agenda and claims through aggressive tactics.

This is the case when each and every party begins their distinctive path, when one ascends to an elevated position, while the second descends to its highest level of ambitions.

Islamic Traditions Supporting the Holistic Approach

At this stage we feel the need to elaborate on the meaning of the complementarity of the two forces. It seems to be assumed that forces of evil and good, devil and Divine can never interact nor react forcing each other into complementarity. Speaking laconic formulation one emphasizes that what is meant by complementarity is the Qur'anic, philosophical and mystical definition where both ways of complementarity are both possible and plausible.

The Holy Qur'an has described both forms of complementarity while distinguishing between two smart concepts: namely the ascending levels (Ad-Darajat) and descending steps (Ad-Darakat) where both parties would be qualified to reach their ultimate level of perfection, albeit in totally and completely opposite directions.

A historical record from the Prophetic era confirms these two examples. The first concerns the ascending levels (Ad-Darajat) which was confirmed when the Prophet (saws) relayed the news

about Ja'afar bin Abi Talib having been removed of both of his hands, through chopping, before he was martyred; the Prophet (saws) informed the Muslims before Ja'afar's death that the Divine Almighty God (swt) substituted his two hands with wings, both of which, would be used for his soul to ascend to Heaven.

The Holy Qur'an described the different levels for believers in paradise as follows:

"ولكل درجات مما عملوا"

"Each will have rank according to whatever they have done."

Qur'an 46:19

And the Hadeeth related to Ja'afar bin Abi Taleb we read in the historical account as follows:

عن علي بن أبي طالب قال : (بينما أنا مع النبي في خير أبي طالب التفت إلى جعفر فقال : أما أن الله قد وصلك بجناحين يطير بهما إلى الجنة كما وصلت بجناح ابن عمك)

The second - descending steps (Ad-Darakat) - is recorded by the fact that when the Prophet (saws) was present amongst a group of Muslims, they suddenly heard a voice emitted from very strong wind.

The Muslims were surprised and urged the Prophet (saws) to explain what was happening, based on his Divine knowledge. The Prophet (saws), being a Divinely enlightened messenger, informed them that a huge stone had been thrown into the Hell fire 70 years previously, and had now reached the fiery Hellish depth.

Another narration explains that the wind signalled the death of one of the most distinguished figures among the hypocrites. When the Muslims arrived at Madinah they heard loud mourning and lamentation from one of the hypocrites signifying that a member of the Muslim Madinan society had passed away. His name was Ben Zayd bin Tabut, who was an influential high-standing Jew who, despite being a hypocrite and a disbeliever had converted to Islam, at least in name.

فلما نزل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بقباء من طريق عمق سرح الناس ظهره ، وأخذتهم ريح شأن هذه الريح؟ فزعموا أنه قال " مات اليوم - شديدة حتى أشفق، وقال الناس : يا رسول الله ما منافق عظيم النفاق، ولذلك عصفت ، وليس عليكم منها بأس إن شاء الله " وكان موته غانظا قال جابر بن عبد الله رضي الله عنهما : فرجعنا إلى المدينة فوجدنا منافقا عظيما - للمنافقين " جمع الناس ظهره هوسكت الريح آخر النهار ف -النفاق مات يومئذ

The Qur'an has also made the position of hypocrites explicitly clear with regards to the Hell fire:

" إن المنافقين في الدرك الأسفل من النار، ولن تجد لهم نصيرا"

"The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the fire: no helper wilt thou find for them:" Qur'an 4:145

It reflects the very fact that this person, while being a member of the Muslim Society of Madinah, was able to reach his form of perfection, albeit in the totally negative and opposite direction. Both examples were confirmed and are the best proof of the fact that both forces were in conflict within the Muslim society of Madinah and that the contradiction and tussling between them reached ultimately complementarity, albeit in opposite direction.

Another Islamic tradition states the following:

قال الباقر (ع) : " يا إبراهيم ! إن الله تبارك وتعالى لم يزل عالما قديما خلق الأشياء لا من خلق الأشياء من شيء فقد كفر ، لأنه لو كان ذلك الشيء الذي خلق منه - عز وجل - شيئا . ومن زعم أن الله الأشياء كلها لا - عز وجل - بل خلق الله . الأشياء قديما معه في أزليته وهويته كان ذلك أزليا أرضا طيبة ، ثم فجر منها ماء عذبا زلالا ، فعرض عليها - عز وجل - من شيء ، فكان مما خلق الله ولايتنا أهل البيت ، فقبلتها . فأجرى ذلك الماء عليها سبعة أيام حتى طبقتها وعمها ، ثم نصب طينا ، فجعل طين الأئمة (عليهم السلام) ، ثم أخذ ثقل ذلك الماء عنها وأخذ من صفوة ذلك الطين لكتنم - كما ترك طينتنا - ذلك الطين فخلق منه شيعتنا ، ولو ترك طينتكم يا إبراهيم على حاله ونحن شيئا واحدا " . قلت : يا بن رسول الله ما فعل بطينتنا ؟ قال : " أخبرك يا إبراهيم ، خلق رضا سبخة خبيثة منتنة ، ثم فجر منها ماء أجاجا أسنا مالحا ، فعرض بعد ذلك أ - عز وجل - الله ، عليها ولايتنا أهل البيت ولم تقلها . فأجرى ذلك الماء عليها سبعة أيام حتى طبقتها وعمها ، ثم نصب ذلك الماء عنها ، ثم أخذ من ذلك الطين فخلق منه الطغاة وأئمتهم ، ثم مزجه بثقل طينتكم على حاله ولم يمزج بطينتكم لم يشهدوا الشهادتين ، ولا صلوا ولا صاموا ولا ولو ترك طينتهم . زكوا ولا حجوا ، ولا أدوا أمانة ولا أشبهوكم في الصور ، وليس شيء أكبر على المؤمن من أن يرى صورة عدوه مثل صورته " . قلت : يا بن رسول الله فما صنع بالطينتين ؟ قال : " مزج بينهما بالماء ل والماء الثاني ، ثم عركها عرك الأديم ، ثم أخذ من ذلك قبضة فقال : هذه إلى الجنة ولا الأو . أبالي ، وأخذ قبضة أخرى وقال : هذه إلى النار ولا أبالي "

'Summery: When Almighty God created human beings from clay, He mixed the pure with the impure and then declared that this one is going to the Hell fire, and I am not concerned, and this is going to Paradise, and I don't care. He then mixed them, without distinction, among creation.'

This tradition is likely to contribute to our discussion as it confirms that these two pieces - which in this context refer to two parties of humans, before they finally divide, were mixed and brought together after the primary distinction. It may metaphorically refer to the case that, despite the clear cut distinction between those two forces of good and evil, there will still be the overlapping

of both principles and actors.

It also confirms that, despite dialogue, mixture and interaction between the two parties, the final distinction between them was made in favour of total perfection, albeit towards completely opposite directions.

While both narrations support our holistic approach, there is one slight difference: The first was related to internal complementarity between conflicting parties manifesting a domestic peaceful and undeclared contradiction, while the second refers to the external complementarity occurring between two foreign parties manifesting contradiction in the International arena.

Although both parties, politically and socially, in the case of internal and external contradiction, totally despise and feign reciprocal contradictory and absolute exclusiveness against the other, the natural dialectic of this action-reaction process is, however, consciously or unwittingly, forcing them towards interacting within the contradiction then ultimately reaching complementarity.

After studying the theoretical aspects of our approach, it now becomes appropriate to examine Imam Al-Mahdi's (as) relationship to his opponents in the light of the abovementioned holistic method.

Imam Al-Mahdi (as) and Opponents

Adopting the Qur'anic principle of Imamah, one is naturally positioned to face criticism that one is inclined towards promoting a One-Party government. Imam Al-Mahdi (as) being the representative of good, his opponents may be defined as representing the evil forces. One of the most commonly observed features is the accusation levelled at the Divine party as being dictatorial and a one-party rule.

Conversely, the accusers indirectly manipulate the concept that the distinctive qualities of their party, i.e. the opponents of Imam Al-Mahdi's (as) Divine revolution are totally free, declaring the 'Free World'.

His opponents claim to protect - at least - elementary human rights such as extreme tolerance, opening the space for diversity, tolerance, and freedom of belief and expression. The logical accusation of human rights promoters to the Mahdis (as) would be negligence of basic rights of

peace, security, and freedom.

From the abovementioned elaboration and information, we understand that those opinions are not identical with the actual given facts, either theoretically, or practically. Also, the contradiction was not formed according to Marxist definition, nor is society expected to be formed following Hegelian principles.

The institution (Sunnan At-Ta'rikh) of this dialectical struggle between positive and evil forces reflects a totally different image and a completely different application. A closer realistic scenario to the abovementioned dialectic is that these accusations reflect a self-egoistic Eurocentric nature leading to contradiction followed by complementarity, but towards totally opposite directions.

" مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَنُصَبِّحَنَّكُمْ الظالمين، لنهلكن ربهم اليهم فارحى ملتنا في لتعودن او ارضنا من لنخرجنكم لرسلم كفروا الذين وقال
" وَعِيدِ وَخَافَ مَقَامِي خَافَ نَزَلَهُ ذَلِكَ بَعْدِهِمْ "

"Those who disbelieved told their messengers: "We'll run you out of our land unless you return to our sect!" Their Lord [however] inspired them [as follows]: "We shall wipe out wrongdoers and settle you on the land to succeed them." That is [in store] for anyone who fears My position and fears My threat." Qur'an 14:13-14

Conclusion

- Human history is overwhelmed with examples of the contradiction between the good and the evil forces; however this contradiction should be grasped in its natural and human context. The Marxist material dialectic is not irrefutable. Most of the Hegel-Engels concepts were studied and critically discussed. Contradictions within social fields are facts, while any attempt to reject them is detached from reality.

The main point is to try to grasp an all-inclusive and thorough model. The ideas of Muslim philosophers such as S. M. B. As-Sadr were analyzed as an alternative to the suggested Models and principles.

- The theoretical study was then supplemented by discussing reality using the most significant phenomenon of the last century, i.e. the Islamic Revolution of Iran, in the light of which, after studying different examples of both Western and Islamic thinkers, the prevailing opinion was presented.

- The effect of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the contemporary world was analyzed, and the

introduction of the New World Order, followed by both the Clash and the Dialogue of Civilizations were introduced with their positive and negative elements.

- The ultimate and final holistic solution to fill the vacuum within the intellectual milieu was then presented. A holistic approach capable of being applied to the stark reality of life, presenting a civilized and moral alternative was introduced.

The alternative to the abovementioned theories was established while paving the way for complementarity for each and every active party within the socio-political and economic spheres for both internal and external contradiction, when both parties - evil or good - consciously or unwittingly, will be forced towards interacting within the inevitable social contradiction, then ultimately reaching complementarity, albeit towards opposite directions.

- The holistic approach was presented along with supporting evidence from Qur'anic verses as well as narrations from the Sunnah, and in the light of this theory, we have attempted to understand the relationship between Imam Al-Mahdi (as) and his opponents.

Title of the article: Mahdism and Messianism utopia: believers attributes at "The Time of Appearance".

"Do not make haste for a matter which is to happen and is awaited, and do not wish for delay in what tomorrow is to bring for you." (1) There is an increasing interest in our society today concerning the appearance of the Messiah for Christians and the Mahdi (a.s.) for Muslims that will bring God kingdom to earth. Many religions and schools of thoughts have prophesized and predicted it.

The Mahdi (a.s.) is the main eschatological messianic figure in Islam that will bring peace and reconciliation to our suffering world before the "End of Time". His appearance will bring spiritual harmony and order and He will encourage people to live for the needs of "others". The strong believe of the Shi'a religious community in the appearance of the Mahdi (a.s.) has propitiated hope and inspiration to them to accept the responsibility of taking the necessary steps to accomplish all changes needed before his appearance.

"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops." (2)

The appearance of the Mahdi (a.s.) or Messiah is inevitable and sure, but those that believe in His appearance will have to be aware of the transcendental changes that will occur in their life at a personal and professional level. Is no doubt that this is the greatest task that a human being could

ever had in his/her life, but, still is a long journey to go and a lot of work to do before His appearance, but a bright future is awaiting us at the end of the "Journey".

Time is now for actions and courage!

Peace be upon al-Mahdi through whom Allah has promised to unite nations, put an end to disunion, and fill the earth with justice. I.- Three key principles of religious utopia o Our Soul is immortal.

"He first created man from clay, tem made his descendants from an extract of underrated fluid. Then he moulded him; He breathed from His Spirit into him". (3)

There is only one true God ,powerful, eternal, immense and infinite in His understanding and will as we are taught by the Sacred Scriptures. He created all creatures, among them men and women, and He made them capable of knowing and loving their Creator. Human beings acknowledge themselves as superior to all the other creatures created by God.

In the profound intimacy of his being as a man, is where he finds his Creator. And it is through this encounter with God that man knows and feels that he possesses a spiritual and immortal soul. There is no deception: by entering his deep interior world, man can attain the truth about his human reality.

Throughout the centuries, human beings have carried out great works with their ingeniousness and intelligence. They have achieved great successes in scientific research, in the empirical sciences, and above all in the domination of the material world. But the activity of human intelligence cannot be limited to phenomenological thought when it was created by God to be able to achieve, with real certainty, that other immaterial, intelligible reality.

The intellectual nature of human beings must perfect itself by means of wisdom, which acts like a gentle breeze attracting the mind of man and his thinking to the search for truth and the love of truth and goodness. Wisdom leads man to the sources of supreme knowledge; it leads him from visible and material knowledge to invisible and spiritual knowledge. However, this step requires the acknowledgement on man's part of his own insignificance in the face of the greatness of God.

Man has access to knowledge through his natural reason and by means of divine faith, because, apart from the things that natural reason can explain, there are the mysteries hidden in God that cannot be known by mere human reason without divine revelation.

When reason searches, illuminated by faith, acknowledging God as the supreme wisdom, it finds -

with the help of the gift of God - the intelligence that permits it, by analogy with what it knows through natural reason or through the connection of the self-same mysteries amongst themselves, that he is allowed to discover a part - not all - of God's mysteries. However, man will never understand all of God's mysteries, because their nature as divine mysteries surpasses man's understanding, "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (4)

Although faith is beyond reason, God Himself, who reveals the mysteries and inspires faith, put the light of reason in the human soul. In this way, righteous reason demonstrates the fundamentals of faith, and, through the light of faith, cultivates the sciences of the divine, while faith, on its side, delivers and defends reason from error and provides it with a diversity of knowledge.

Less scientifically and technologically advanced human communities in the world today are able to show great examples of wisdom and teach those more sophisticated and developed communities the true value of humanity, that value that is tempered by the heart and is filtered through love.

God has designed the soul to be happy

. God Blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (5)

The purpose of human life is an ideal which transcends the mundane goals of human existence, for it is based upon the vision of God.

The highest and best of human values, truth, love, joy and happiness are aspirations grounded in the original human nature. The word for "humankind", Adam, comes from the same root as does "earth" and is a generic term for the human species; humans, man and female, resemble the Creator. Humankind was created to share a unique relationship with God.

"God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good." (6)

Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created in the state of innocence, grace and happiness. They were adorned with the grace of God, which God communicated to their souls, making them beautiful and truly holy before him.

"Put on the new man, who according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth." (7)

The benefit they received it sanctified them, made them truly holy before God, it subjected all their senses, appetites, and passions to reason; it rendered their reason and their whole soul subject to the will of God. This original righteousness was a free gift of God.

"For God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of his own eternity." (8)

Being free from all state of sin, and adorned with the original justice, they were on that account free from all sufferings, and enjoyed a perfect happiness both in soul and body, suitable to their nature, and the state they were in. They were endowed with great knowledge of everything relating to their state and the rest of the creatures; they were created free from all passions and irregular desires and appetites, which so violently torment our souls. They enjoyed a perpetual peace and serenity of mind.

Their hearts were inclined to all good, and their will united to God by holy love. Their bodies were free of sickness and pain, and enjoyed a perpetual health, and they were not subject to death.

o God has appointed rewards for good and virtuous acts and punishment for vice acts.

"The believers will then pass over like the twinkling of an eye, like lightning, like wind, like a bird, like the finest horses and camels. Some will escape and be kept safe, some will be lacerated." (9)

Man, however, persuaded by the Fiend, has abused his freedom since the dawn of the ages, rising up against God and trying to attain his own purpose without God. While knowing God, he did not glorify Him as God, but rather, his heart dimmed, and he served the creature instead of the Creator.

Refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, he broke the rightful order with respect to his ultimate purpose, and with it the entire hierarchy in relation to himself, to other men and to all created things. Thus is man divided in his interior. Due to this division in man - whether individual or collective - a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness, appears in the world.

"but through the devils envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it." (10)

At the same time, man finds himself helpless and destitute in his struggle against the attacks of the Fiend; he feels chained to evil. But God, in His infinite mercy, without abandoning us, sent and continues to send, beings that come to this world with the purpose of teaching us the way to our

liberation, strengthening us with His presence and imparting His teachings amongst us for our inner renovation, and helping us cast out the prince of this world who held man in the slavery of sin.

"Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out." (11)

Sin diminishes man, impeding him from reaching his fullness, the divine fullness for which he was created.

Human progress, which is man's great treasure, brings with it the temptation for individuals and human groups to look out only for their own interests and not for the interests of others, lacking a coherent hierarchy of values and mixing good with evil. This is propitiated by the disease and the consumerism that the highly-industrialized societies suffer to a greater extent, which promote values that are directly contradictory to true human fraternity.

"what does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?" (12)

Power resides in having more, in consuming more, in an unbridled madness that will inevitably lead to the destruction of human beings themselves, if God does not put a remedy to this before. A hard battle against the powers of darkness runs throughout the entire history of man, which - already begun since the origins of the world - will continue until the last day, as the Lord says.

"But the one who endure to the end will be saved" (13)

Arrogance and an unbridled love of self endanger the activities of man. Man must - with austerity and freedom of spirit - come into possession of the things of this earth, like unto one who has nothing and who yet possesses everything.

Some conception of heaven and hell.

Among the religions of the world is found universally conceptions of heaven and hell. Are these realms objectively real? The Scriptures are unanimous in affirming they are.

Heaven and hell in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be interpreted either to describe the state of the soul upon death or what will be after the future resurrection. Some Koranic passages describe the opening of Paradise and hell, others refer to the Last Judgement. Most Muslims regard the dead to be sleeping in the grave awaiting that momentous event.

Do not say, "They are dead" about anyone who is killed for God's sake. Rather they living, even though you do not notice it" (14)

The biblical vision of heaven from the book of Revelation are visions of a future recompense after the tribulations of the Last Judgement. Those Christians who hold a literal interpretation of these verses concur with their Muslim brothers and sisters that the souls of the dead are asleep in the grave, awaiting the future opening of heaven and hell.

Another theory of the Christian tradition, supported by biblical descriptions of the Sheol (Job 3,17-19); the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12,22-24; and the story of Lazarus and the rich man in (Luke 16,19-31), teaches us that each person immediately after death enters his appointed place in heaven or hell. The visions in Revelation are often interpreted in this way.

II.- The believers' attributes at "The Time of Appearance".

o Prudence

People! God's promise is true, so do not let the present life deceive you. Do not let the Deceiver deceive you about God: "Satan is your enemy -treat him as an enemy-and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire." (15)

During the days of our youth we do not often remember God, nor do we think of the days to come when we will have to reflect upon our acts. The strength of youth makes us believe that that vitality will be with us for always, but this is not the case. Man needs to live prudently, giving priority to those higher values that bring him closer to God.

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." (16)

Being prudent means walking surely on the straight path, knowing that if we take the winding one, we will get lost; it means not enjoying trickery played upon others, but living in the exercise of good there wherever we get the chance to do so. "Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (17)

Being prudent means working honestly to gain our sustenance without exploiting anyone, without manipulating and using other people for our profit, because all that we earn at the expense of others will lead us inevitably to failure and dishonour.

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. (18)

Being prudent means not judging others. If your mind is busy seeing the faults of others, it will by

itself fall into the same errors that it sees in others. We see the mote in others' eyes and are incapable of seeing the beam in ours. Whoever listens to slander is himself a slanderer. "No one can withhold the blessing God opens up for people, nor can anyone but Him release whatever He withholds: He is the Almighty, the All Wise." (19)

Renunciation and Detachment

Plenty has been written about renunciation, not so much because it is hard to understand, but because its practice is truly difficult. The most important thing about renunciation is that nothing real is lost. Every renunciation of material things, of indiscriminate consumption, is an appropriation of that which is renounced on a higher level. It is a paradox, but the more a person can do without the world, the less the world can do without that person.

When desires dominate us, we are trapped in illusion and the only way out is through discernment or reflection. Try to see ourselves as automatons controlled and manipulated within a prison of unsatisfied desires. Because in effect, these are not our own desires, but rather, we are victims of a society that knows our dissatisfactions and manipulates them, creating one desire after another in a chain of desires that will produce great economic profits for a few, while it engulfs us in our own terrible personal and spiritual dissatisfaction.

Whoever loves God does not worry about the vanities of the world, because he respects himself above all else and respect for oneself implies scorn for the vanities of the world.

"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." (20)

The surfeit of desires and cravings is a source of spiritual disease. It overloads the soul. There are persons who renounce themselves and their uncontrolled cravings, albeit with reservations, since they do not place all their confidence in God. In the beginning they offer him everything, but afterwards, on being besieged by temptation, they return to their old ways, and this stops them from advancing on the road of virtue.

There are people who think that God should be given everything He is owed, provided that He lets them enjoy what is theirs without being bothered.

Their desire is to maintain their own privileges and imagine themselves free without having to obey any kind of divine mandate, given over to their own passions and desires.

"So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my

mouth." (21)

These are the lukewarm about whom the apostle John spoke in his Revelations. On one hand, they adore the world and its pleasures, and on the other they want to live in peace with themselves and with God, fulfilling one precept or another that adapts to their own needs and passions.

They practice a social kind of religiosity; they do not know what charity means and they comply with the minimum religious precepts, those that are socially well-regarded. Their piety plays to an audience.

Trust in God

God is the supreme goodness. He never abandons whoever trusts Him. Although the modern world, with its almost uncontrolled hyperactivity, puts obstacles and difficulties in our way to living and orienting our lives and aspirations to confidence in God, we should know that if we trust Him, everything is possible because it is not the external conditions that impede us from finding God in our lives, but our own mental state of absence of God.

"God will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, and will provide for them from an unexpected source; God will be enough for those who put their trust in Him. God achieves his purposes; God has set a due measure for everything."(22)

If we do not let God into our lives, if we close our mind to the experience of God, external difficulties will grow, putting ever-increasing obstacles every day to our possible spiritual self-realization and our confidence in God, although we call ourselves believers and count ourselves among those who "officially" comply with their faith in God, but do not really trust Him.

"Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (23)

On the other hand, a person who desires the fullness of God in his life above all will find his obstacles propitiating that divine fullness in his life, and these will be transformed into help received. God Himself sustains and comforts whoever accepts Him in his life with His infinite Love. "Whoever believes in His Lord need fear no loss nor injustice." (24)

Strength in the face of suffering

Suffering is a feeling of deprivation, and, as such, may become a stimulus that helps us advance in self-knowledge. It helps us by showing our limitations, our misery and our deficiencies which, up to that time, have remained hidden amongst our illusions and pleasures.

René Guènon, associates the concept of suffering with asceticism. He speaks of the asceticism that goes by the Sanskrit name of "tapas", meaning "heat". This heat is an inner fire that must burn and destroy everything that constitutes an obstacle to man's spiritual self-realization. "Asceticism" in its deepest sense is the sacrifice of the "ego" carried out for the attainment of superior consciousness.

The Prophet Isaiah also speaks to us of this fire when he says:

"But all of you are kindlers of fire, lighters of firebrands. Walk in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that you have kindled!" (25) Isaiah tells us that each one of us lights the flames of our own fire when we turn our back on God: when we sin. It is our own sins that stir up the inner fire that burns us and makes us suffer.

Saint Augustine tells us that any man who wants to enter Paradise must pass through fire and water, "whether he is Peter, to whom the keys of heaven were entrusted, or Paul, the chosen vessel of God, or John, to whom the secrets of God were revealed".

If we want to know with certainty whether our sufferings are noble and come from God, we only have to see whether this suffering is an unbearable burden for us. When we suffer knowing that we are suffering for God, that suffering comes from Him for our own good, we feel relief in pain, because we feel that God shares this pain with us and comforts us with his infinite Love.

"God does not burden any soul with more that it can bear: each gains whatever good it has done, and suffer its bad" (26)

Humble of Heart

The humble man who loves God above all else knows the reality that surrounds him and accepts it without being deceived by false appearances because he recognises them; he assigns each thing a place and a priority in his heart. He has the virtue of discernment and knows full well what can separate him from God. He yearns above all else for his purification in order to achieve full

closeness to Him. He knows that God is his strength and his consolation, in joy as well as in adversity.

For Saint Augustine, the summit of greatest knowledge for man is knowing that, by himself, he is nothing, and that anything whatsoever belongs to God and is for God. He tells us that it is not enough that we acknowledge that what we know and understand comes from God. In addition, we must avoid extolling ourselves above those who still do not have this knowledge, since they may yet leave us behind once they have received it.

"The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." (27) The moral pride that leads us to consider ourselves better than the rest and that constitutes a serious obstacle to spiritual self-realization must be extirpated completely from our hearts and minds.

This moral or spiritual pride is more difficult to detect in ourselves. It is only through prayer that the soul may arrive at this perception. The prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said on a certain occasion, "whoever has pride in his heart, though it be only equivalent to a grain of rice, cannot enter Paradise."

"Give good news to the humble whose hearts fill with awe whenever God is mentioned." (28)

When man invokes the name of God in prayer, his heart trembles with emotion and, if before he felt sad, he is filled with joy; if before he was ill, he is cured; for sincere prayer makes man humble and brings him closer to the contemplation of God.

Illumination

"God guides whoever He will to his Light". (29)

Illumination means dispelling the darkness of ignorance. The true self obscured by false habits of thinking and desires, is suddenly revealed. Nothing in the life of this person can be the same anymore. The illuminated person begins to live by the knowledge he acquires. "The wind blows where it choose, and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (30)

Illumination comes from God, it is a gift of God. It never has a human motive. Illumination, as St. John tells us, is like the wind that blows and goes where it pleases. Thus is divine light.

The Sufi masters tell us that the disciple, although an initiate, cannot do anything without the light that comes from God Himself, and that the spiritual states of illumination can never be the

product of any human technique of meditation, concentration or the like.

"The Spirit is part of my Lord's domain. You have only been given a little knowledge." (31)

This does not mean that man does not play an important part in the process of illumination. Of course he does, and that is, to eliminate all the obstacles that he finds in his life that are impeding him from desiring and achieving that divine illumination.

Those obstacles are, on one hand, his personal ego, which includes ambition for power, social recognition, the love of money and the luxury that money provides, living in a constant bid for social climbing, even at the expense of others; and, on another hand, indifference to the needs of those who are dependent upon him, whether economically, personally or emotionally, owing to the drive to fulfil himself professionally and socially.

Indifference for the problems of one's community, one's local social surroundings, and - of course - indifference for the problems of the world. These are the obstacles that impede the attainment of God in one's life, the obstacles to illumination.

"Believers, turn to God in sincere repentance. Your Lord will cancel your bad deeds for you and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams," (32)

God nourishes the desire to communicate with Him in the human heart and opens the doors to reflection and repentance through His call, so as to change and open the heart to divine illumination. Nonetheless, it is man himself who will respond to that call through the use of his free will. He will make the decision to live as he has been doing up to that moment, or listen to the call of God and turn to Him.

"Listen! I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you." (33) III. The convergence of world religions towards "The Time of Appearance", will require:

- o The elimination of all kind of religious intolerance or belief worldwide.

The implementation of the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religions or Belief is far from being a reality.

"Governments should redouble their efforts to uphold the provisions in their everyday work". The United Nations Special Representative considers that the principles contained in the 1981 Declaration need to be further disseminated among lawmakers, judges and civil servants. It is of the utmost importance to promote ideal of tolerance and understanding through education.

There is an urgent need to eliminate the roots causes of intolerance and discrimination and to remain vigilant with regard to freedom of religion or belief worldwide. Most of the situations of religious intolerance stem either from ignorance and from misleading information. Education, then, is a crucial issue for promoting religious harmony in the world.

Religious controversies are historical. They will continue to demand the international community attention and challenge societies to find creative ways of dealing with it. There are no classic or tested recipes for resolving such sensitive issues. In this regard, a continuing dialogue at all level is o To work for peace and reconciliation between all nations of the world.

Work hard to prepare the ground for a just lasting peace all over the world based on mutual respect and understanding through dialogue. Dedicate our efforts to solve our of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the highest spiritual principles of love and justice. To ensure that globalization, as a real challenge of today's society, becomes a positive force for all the world's people. At present its benefits and very unevenly shared.

To create a shared future, a peaceful future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity. This shared future principles are:

Freedom: Man and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger, free from fear of violence, oppression or injustice.

Equality: Every person and nation has the right to have the opportunity to benefit from development. **Solidarity:** Global changes must be managed in a way that its benefits should be distributed according with basic principles of equity and social justice.

Tolerance: Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity, religion or belief, culture, race, and knowledge. **Respect for nature:** Prudence in the management of all living species and natural resources.

Shared responsibility: For managing worldwide economic and social development. All threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally.

o To educate the human communities in every part of the world with values of tolerance and mutual understanding.

"The World Conference on Human Rights considers human rights education, training and public information essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations

among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.

Education, as agreed by the international community, can be defined as training and information aimed at building a universal culture through the sharing of knowledge directed to:

- The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity.
- The promotion of understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations.
- The building and maintenance of peace
- The promotion of people-centred sustainable development social justice all over the world.

A comprehensive education provides knowledge about the mechanisms that protect daily life and at the same time fosters the attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold rights for all members of society.

o A strong compromise from our States, national Governments and international Institutions towards justice and peace.

The world has become more globalize and the interaction between international actors is more rapid, so there are new challenges to be faced. The benefits and burdens of this globalization are not evenly distributed. The world needs a fairer distribution of the benefits. The duty of solidarity is an imperative prerequisite of globalization.

o International solidarity need to be more developed in international relations for the sake of humanity

Global responses to natural disasters, pandemic disease, such as avian influenza and agricultural pest, with the intention of supporting efforts on poverty eradication and fighting hunger, are tangible issues, which profoundly affect human life and need more "Surely Allah will raise for this community at the beginning of every century one who shall revive for it its faith." (34)

IV.- Final Comments

Humanity today is currently in a period of its history in which profound changes are occurring and these are extending progressively throughout the universe. These changes, provoked by human intelligence, incide on its way of thinking and acting with respect to things and other persons. We

stand before a true social and cultural transformation that also redounds to the spiritual and religious lives of people.

Mankind has never had such an abundance of riches, possibilities and economic power, and yet a great part of the world population experiences hunger and misery. Men have never had a more acute sense of freedom as they do today, yet new types of social and psychological slavery, such as consumerism and drugs - to cite only two of them - are appearing in society.

The world feels itself as interdependent: a necessary solidarity appears that is divided by the antagonistic forces dividing society into the political, the social, the economic, the racial and the ideological, without forgetting the danger of a war capable of destroying everything.

Man seeks to create a perfect order in this world using his own means, without worrying about progressing in the same way with his spiritual development. Spirits are perturbed: man fails to find himself, and it is beginning to dawn on him that he is incapable of seeing his own history through, and that this is overwhelming him.

These conditions are especially felt in the religious lives of people. Increasingly more persons are moving away from religion. They deny the existence of God or simply dispense with Him, particularly the youth, some of them in response to a new humanism, or due to the demands of the modern scientific world in which they put their blind faith.

The conviction is growing that man not only can and should increasingly strengthen his dominion over creation, but also that it exclusively falls upon him to establish Paradise on earth. The full and true liberation of humanity is expected solely through human effort, and it is believed that the future reign of man over the world will fulfil his heart's desires.

Say Prophet Muhammad, (p.b.u..h), "I cannot control any harm or benefit that come to me, except as God wills. There is an appointed term for every community, and when it is reached they can neither delay nor hasten it, even for a moment." (35)

May Almighty Allah Increase The Followers Of His True Path

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VI.- Notes

- (1) Imam Ali bn Abi-Talib's, Sermons, Nahjol-Balagha.
- (2) Matthew 10, 26-27
- (3) Sura 32, 7-9
- (4) Corinthians 5,6
- (5) Genesis 1, 27-28
- (6) Genesis 1,31
- (7) Ephesians 4,24
- (8) Wisdom of Solomon 2,23
- (9) Hadith of Bukhari and Muslim
- (10) Wisdom of Solomon 2,24
- (11) John 12,31
- (12) Luke 9, 25
- (13) Matthew 24,13
- (14) Qur?n Hadith 2154
- (15) Qur?n 35, 5-6
- (16) Luke 10,36
- (17) Matthew 19,19

- (18) Matthew 7,12
- (19) Qur'ân 35,2
- (20) Matthew 6,24
- (21) Revelation 3,16
- (22) Qur'ân 65, 2-3
- (23) John 11, 25-26
- (24) Qur'ân 72,13
- (25) Isaiah 50,11
- (26) Qur'ân 2, 286
- (27) Matthew 23, 11-12
- (28) Qur'ân 22, 34-35
- (29) Qur'ân 24,35
- (30) John 3,8
- (31) Qur'ân 17,85
- (32) Qur'ân 66,8
- (33) John 3,20
- (34) Hadith of Abu Dawud
- (35) Qur'ân 10

Title of the article: Mahdism and Messianism utopia: believers attributes at "The Time of Appearance".

"Do not make haste for a matter which is to happen and is awaited, and do not wish for delay in what tomorrow is to bring for you." (1) There is an increasing interest in our society today concerning the appearance of the Messiah for Christians and the Mahdi (a.s.) for Muslims that will bring God kingdom to earth. Many religions and schools of thoughts have prophesized and predicted it.

The Mahdi (a.s.) is the main eschatological messianic figure in Islam that will bring peace and reconciliation to our suffering world before the "End of Time". His appearance will bring spiritual harmony and order and He will encourage people to live for the needs of "others".

The strong believe of the Shi'a religious community in the appearance of the Mahdi (a.s.) has propitiated hope and inspiration to them to accept the responsibility of taking the necessary steps to accomplish all changes needed before his appearance.

"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops." (2)

The appearance of the Mahdi (a.s.) or Messiah is inevitable and sure, but those that believe in His appearance will have to be aware of the transcendental changes that will occur in their life at a personal and professional level. Is no doubt that this is the greatest task that a human being could ever had in his/her life, but, still is a long journey to go and a lot of work to do before His appearance, but a bright future is awaiting us at the end of the "Journey".

Time is now for actions and courage

Peace be upon al-Mahdi through whom Allah has promised to unite nations, put an end to disunion, and fill the earth with justice. I.- Three key principles of religious utopia o Our Soul is immortal.

"He first created man from clay, tem made his descendants from an extract of underrated fluid. Then he mounded him; He breathed from His Spirit into him". (3)

There is only one true God ,powerful, eternal, immense and infinite in His understanding and will as we are taught by the Sacred Scriptures. He created all creatures, among them men and women, and He made them capable of knowing and loving their Creator. Human beings acknowledge themselves as superior to all the other creatures created by God.

In the profound intimacy of his being as a man, is where he finds his Creator. And it is through this encounter with God that man knows and feels that he possesses a spiritual and immortal soul. There is no deception: by entering his deep interior world, man can attain the truth about his human reality.

Throughout the centuries, human beings have carried out great works with their ingeniousness and intelligence. They have achieved great successes in scientific research, in the empirical sciences, and above all in the domination of the material world. But the activity of human intelligence cannot be limited to phenomenological thought when it was created by God to be able to achieve, with real certainty, that other immaterial, intelligible reality.

The intellectual nature of human beings must perfect itself by means of wisdom, which acts like a gentle breeze attracting the mind of man and his thinking to the search for truth and the love of truth and goodness. Wisdom leads man to the sources of supreme knowledge; it leads him from visible and material knowledge to invisible and spiritual knowledge. However, this step requires

the acknowledgement on man's part of his own insignificance in the face of the greatness of God.

Man has access to knowledge through his natural reason and by means of divine faith, because, apart from the things that natural reason can explain, there are the mysteries hidden in God that cannot be known by mere human reason without divine revelation.

When reason searches, illuminated by faith, acknowledging God as the supreme wisdom, it finds - with the help of the gift of God - the intelligence that permits it, by analogy with what it knows through natural reason or through the connection of the self-same mysteries amongst themselves, that he is allowed to discover a part - not all - of God's mysteries. However, man will never understand all of God's mysteries, because their nature as divine mysteries surpasses man's understanding, "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (4)

Although faith is beyond reason, God Himself, who reveals the mysteries and inspires faith, put the light of reason in the human soul. In this way, righteous reason demonstrates the fundamentals of faith, and, through the light of faith, cultivates the sciences of the divine, while faith, on its side, delivers and defends reason from error and provides it with a diversity of knowledge.

Less scientifically and technologically advanced human communities in the world today are able to show great examples of wisdom and teach those more sophisticated and developed communities the true value of humanity, that value that is tempered by the heart and is filtered through love.

God has designed de soul to be happy

. God Blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (5)

The purpose of human life is an ideal which transcends the mundane goals of human existence, for it is based upon the vision of God. The highest and best of human values, truth, love, joy and happiness are aspirations grounded in the original human nature. The word for "humankind", Adam, comes from the same root as does "earth" and is a generic term for the human species; humans, man and female, resemble the Creator. Humankind was created to share a unique relationship with God.

"God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good." (6)

Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created in the state of innocence, grace and happiness. They

were adorned with the grace of God, which God communicated to their souls, making them beautiful and truly holy before him.

"Put on the new man, who according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth." (7)

The benefit they received it sanctified them, made them truly holy before God, it subjected all their senses, appetites, and passions to reason; it rendered their reason and their whole soul subject to the will of God. This original righteousness was a free gift of God. "For God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of his own eternity." (8)

Being free from all state of sin, and adorned with the original justice, they were on that account free from all sufferings, and enjoyed a perfect happiness both in soul and body, suitable to their nature, and the state they were in. They were endowed with great knowledge of everything relating to their state and the rest of the creatures; they were created free from all passions and irregular desires and appetites, which so violently torment our souls. They enjoyed a perpetual peace and serenity of mind.

Their hearts were inclined to all good, and their will united to God by holy love. Their bodies were free of sickness and pain, and enjoyed a perpetual health, and they were not subject to death.

o God has appointed rewards for good and virtuous acts and punishment for vice acts.

"The believers will then pass over like the twinkling of an eye, like lightning, like wind, like a bird, like the finest horses and camels. Some will escape and be kept safe, some will be lacerated." (9)

Man, however, persuaded by the Fiend, has abused his freedom since the dawn of the ages, rising up against God and trying to attain his own purpose without God. While knowing God, he did not glorify Him as God, but rather, his heart dimmed, and he served the creature instead of the Creator.

Refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, he broke the rightful order with respect to his ultimate purpose, and with it the entire hierarchy in relation to himself, to other men and to all created things. Thus is man divided in his interior. Due to this division in man - whether individual or collective - a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness, appears in the world.

"but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it." (10)

At the same time, man finds himself helpless and destitute in his struggle against the attacks of

the Fiend; he feels chained to evil. But God, in His infinite mercy, without abandoning us, sent and continues to send, beings that come to this world with the purpose of teaching us the way to our liberation, strengthening us with His presence and imparting His teachings amongst us for our inner renovation, and helping us cast out the prince of this world who held man in the slavery of sin.

"Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out." (11)

Sin diminishes man, impeding him from reaching his fullness, the divine fullness for which he was created.

Human progress, which is man's great treasure, brings with it the temptation for individuals and human groups to look out only for their own interests and not for the interests of others, lacking a coherent hierarchy of values and mixing good with evil. This is propitiated by the disease and the consumerism that the highly-industrialized societies suffer to a greater extent, which promote values that are directly contradictory to true human fraternity.

"what does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?" (12)

Power resides in having more, in consuming more, in an unbridled madness that will inevitably lead to the destruction of human beings themselves, if God does not put a remedy to this before. A hard battle against the powers of darkness runs throughout the entire history of man, which - already begun since the origins of the world - will continue until the last day, as the Lord says.

"But the one who endure to the end will be saved" (13)

Arrogance and an unbridled love of self endanger the activities of man. Man must - with austerity and freedom of spirit - come into possession of the things of this earth, like unto one who has nothing and who yet possesses everything.

Some conception of heaven and hell

Among the religions of the world is found universally conceptions of heaven and hell. Are these realms objectively real? The Scriptures are unanimous in affirming they are.

Heaven and hell in the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be interpreted either to describe the state of the soul upon death or what will be after the future resurrection. Some Koranic passages describe the opening of Paradise and hell, others refer to the Last Judgement. Most muslims regard the dead to be sleeping in the grave awaiting that momentous event.

Do not say, "They are dead" about anyone who is killed for God's sake. Rather they living, even though you do not notice it" (14)

The biblical vision of heaven from the book of Revelation are visions of a future recompense after the tribulations of the Last Judgement. Those christians who hold a literal interpretation of these verses concur with their muslim brothers and sisters that the souls of the dead are asleep in the grave, awaiting the future opening of heaven and hell.

Another theory of the christian tradition, supported by biblical descriptions of the Sheol (Job 3,17-19); the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12,22-24; and the story of Lazarus and the rich man in (Luke 16,19-31), teaches us that each person immediately after death enter his appointed place in heaven or hell. The visions in Revelation are often interpreted in this way.

II.- The believers attributes at "The Time of Appearance".

Prudence

People! God's promise is true, so do not let the present life deceive you. Do not let the Deceiver deceive you about God: "Satan is your enemy -treat him as an enemy-and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire." (15)

During the days of our youth we do not often remember God, nor do we think of the days to come when we will have to reflect upon our acts. The strength of youth makes us believe that that vitality will be with us for always, but this is not the case. Man needs to live prudently, giving priority to those higher values that bring him closer to God.

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." (16)

Being prudent means walking surely on the straight path, knowing that if we take the winding one, we will get lost; it means not enjoying trickery played upon others, but living in the exercise of good there wherever we get the chance to do so.

"Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (17)

Being prudent means working honestly to gain our sustenance without exploiting anyone, without manipulating and using other people for our profit, because all that we earn at the expense of others will lead us inevitably to failure and dishonour.

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

(18)

Being prudent means not judging others. If your mind is busy seeing the faults of others, it will by itself fall into the same errors that it sees in others. We see the mote in others' eyes and are incapable of seeing the beam in ours. Whoever listens to slander is himself a slanderer. "No one can withhold the blessing God opens up for people, nor can anyone but Him release whatever He withholds: He is the Almighty, the All Wise." (19)

Renunciation and Detachment

Plenty has been written about renunciation, not so much because it is hard to understand, but because its practice is truly difficult. The most important thing about renunciation is that nothing real is lost. Every renunciation of material things, of indiscriminate consumption, is an appropriation of that which is renounced on a higher level. It is a paradox, but the more a person can do without the world, the less the world can do without that person.

When desires dominate us, we are trapped in illusion and the only way out is through discernment or reflection. Try to see ourselves as automatons controlled and manipulated within a prison of unsatisfied desires. Because in effect, these are not our own desires, but rather, we are victims of a society that knows our dissatisfactions and manipulates them, creating one desire after another in a chain of desires that will produce great economic profits for a few, while it engulfs us in our own terrible personal and spiritual dissatisfaction.

Whoever loves God does not worry about the vanities of the world, because he respects himself above all else and respect for oneself implies scorn for the vanities of the world.

"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." (20)

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they do not know what charity means and they comply with the minimum religious precepts, those that are socially well-regarded. Their piety plays to an audience.

Trust in God

God is the supreme goodness. He never abandons whoever trusts Him. Although the modern world, with its almost uncontrolled hyperactivity, puts obstacles and difficulties in our way to living and orienting our lives and aspirations to confidence in God, we should know that if we trust Him, everything is possible because it is not the external conditions that impede us from finding God in our lives, but our own mental state of absence of God.

"God will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, and will provide for them from an unexpected source; God will be enough for those who put their trust in Him. God achieves his purposes; God has set a due measure for everything."(22)

If we do not let God into our lives, if we close our mind to the experience of God, external difficulties will grow, putting ever-increasing obstacles every day to our possible spiritual self-realization and our confidence in God, although we call ourselves believers and count ourselves among those who "officially" comply with their faith in God, but do not really trust Him.

"Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (23) On the other hand, a person who desires the fullness of God in his life above all will find his obstacles propitiating that divine fullness in his life, and these will be transformed into help received. God Himself sustains and comforts whoever accepts Him in his life with His infinite Love. "Whoever believes in His Lord need fear no loss nor injustice." (24)

Strength in the face of suffering

Suffering is a feeling of deprivation, and, as such, may become a stimulus that helps us advance in self-knowledge. It helps us by showing our limitations, our misery and our deficiencies which, up to that time, have remained hidden amongst our illusions and pleasures.

René Guènon, associates the concept of suffering with asceticism. He speaks of the asceticism that goes by the Sanskrit name of "tapas", meaning "heat". This heat is an inner fire that must burn and destroy everything that constitutes an obstacle to man's spiritual self-realization. "Asceticism" in its deepest sense is the sacrifice of the "ego" carried out for the attainment of superior consciousness.

The Prophet Isaiah also speaks to us of this fire when he says:

"But all of you are kindlers of fire, lighters of firebrands. Walk in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that you have kindled!" (25) Isaiah tells us that each one of us lights the flames of our own fire when we turn our back on God: when we sin. It is our own sins that stir up the inner fire that burns us and makes us suffer.

Saint Augustine tells us that any man who wants to enter Paradise must pass through fire and water, "whether he is Peter, to whom the keys of heaven were entrusted, or Paul, the chosen vessel of God, or John, to whom the secrets of God were revealed".

If we want to know with certainty whether our sufferings are noble and come from God, we only have to see whether this suffering is an unbearable burden for us. When we suffer knowing that we are suffering for God, that suffering comes from Him for our own good, we feel relief in pain, because we feel that God shares this pain with us and comforts us with his infinite Love.

"God does not burden any soul with more that it can bear: each gains whatever good it has done, and suffer its bad" (26) o Humble of Heart

The humble man who loves God above all else knows the reality that surrounds him and accepts it without being deceived by false appearances because he recognises them; he assigns each thing a place and a priority in his heart. He has the virtue of discernment and knows full well what can separate him from God. He yearns above all else for his purification in order to achieve full closeness to Him. He knows that God is his strength and his consolation, in joy as well as in adversity.

For Saint Augustine, the summit of greatest knowledge for man is knowing that, by himself, he is nothing, and that anything whatsoever belongs to God and is for God. He tells us that it is not

enough that we acknowledge that what we know and understand comes from God. In addition, we must avoid extolling ourselves above those who still do not have this knowledge, since they may yet leave us behind once they have received it.

"The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted." (27) The moral pride that leads us to consider ourselves better than the rest and that constitutes a serious obstacle to spiritual self-realization must be extirpated completely from our hearts and minds.

This moral or spiritual pride is more difficult to detect in ourselves. It is only through prayer that the soul may arrive at this perception. The prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said on a certain occasion, "whoever has pride in his heart, though it be only equivalent to a grain of rice, cannot enter Paradise."

"Give good news to the humble whose hearts fill with awe whenever God is mentioned." (28)

When man invokes the name of God in prayer, his heart trembles with emotion and, if before he felt sad, he is filled with joy; if before he was ill, he is cured; for sincere prayer makes man humble and brings him closer to the contemplation of God. o Illumination "God guides whoever He will to his Light". (29)

Illumination means dispelling the darkness of ignorance. The true self obscured by false habits of thinking and desires, is suddenly revealed. Nothing in the life of this person can be the same anymore. The illuminated person begins to live by the knowledge he acquires. "The wind blows where it choose, and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (30)

Illumination comes from God, it is a gift of God. It never has a human motive. Illumination, as St. John tells us, is like the wind that blows and goes where it pleases. Thus is divine light.

The Sufi masters tell us that the disciple, although an initiate, cannot do anything without the light that comes from God Himself, and that the spiritual states of illumination can never be the product of any human technique of meditation, concentration or the like. "The Spirit is part of my Lord's domaine. You have only been given a little knowledge." (31)

This does not mean that man does not play an important part in the process of illumination. Of course he does, and that is, to eliminate all the obstacles that he finds in his life that are impeding him from desiring and achieving that divine illumination.

Those obstacles are, on one hand, his personal ego, which includes ambition for power, social

recognition, the love of money and the luxury that money provides, living in a constant bid for social climbing, even at the expense of others; and, on another hand, indifference to the needs of those who are dependent upon him, whether economically,

personally or emotionally, owing to the drive to fulfil himself professionally and socially.

Indifference for the problems of one's community, one's local social surroundings, and - of course - indifference for the problems of the world. These are the obstacles that impede the attainment of God in one's life, the obstacles to illumination.

"Believers, turn to God in sincere repentance. Your Lord my well cancel your bad deeds for you and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams," (32)

God nourishes the desire to communicate with Him in the human heart and opens the doors to reflection and repentance through His call, so as to change and open the heart to divine illumination. Nonetheless, it is man himself who will respond to that call through the use of his free will. He will make the decision to live as he has been doing up to that moment, or listen to the call of God and turn to Him.

"Listen! I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you." (33) III. The convergence of world religions towards "The Time of Appearance", will require:

- o The elimination of all kind of religious intolerance or belief worldwide.

The implementation of the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religions or Belief is far from being a reality.

"Governments should redouble their efforts to uphold the provisions in their everyday work".The United Nations Special Representative considers that the principles contained in the 1981 Declaration need to be further disseminated among lawmakers, judges and civil servants. It is of the utmost importance to promote ideal of tolerance and understanding through education.

There is an urgent need to eliminate the roots causes of intolerance and discrimination and to remain vigilant with regard to freedom of religion or belief worldwide. Most of the situations of religious intolerance stem either from ignorance and from misleading information. Education, then, is a crucial issue for promoting religious harmony in the world.

Religious controversies are historical. They will continue to demand the international community attention and challenge societies to find creative ways of dealing with it. There are no classic or tested recipes for resolving such sensitive issues. In this regard, a continuing dialogue at all level is

o To work for peace and reconciliation between all nations of the world.

Work hard to prepare the ground for a just lasting peace all over the world based on mutual respect and understanding through dialogue. Dedicate our efforts to solve our of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the highest spiritual principles of love and justice. To ensure that globalization, as a real challenge of today's society, becomes a positive force for all the world's people. At present its benefits and very unevenly shared.

To create a shared future, a peaceful future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity. This shared future principles are:

Freedom: Man and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger, free from fear of violence, oppression or injustice.

Equality: Every person and nation has the right to have the opportunity to benefit from development. Solidarity: Global changes must be managed in a way that its benefits should be distributed according with basic principles of equity and social justice.

Tolerance: Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity, religion or belief, culture, race, and knowledge. Respect for nature: Prudence in the management of all living species and natural resources.

Shared responsibility: For managing worldwide economic and social development. All threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally.

o To educate the human communities in every part of the world with values of tolerance and mutual understanding.

"The World Conference on Human Rights considers human rights education, training and public information essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.

Education, as agreed by the international community, can be defined as training and information aimed at building a universal culture through the sharing of knowledge directed to:

- The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity.
- The promotion of understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations.
- The building and maintenance of peace
- The promotion of people-centred sustainable development social justice all over the world.

A comprehensive education provides knowledge about the mechanisms that protect daily life and at the same time fosters the attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold rights for all members of society.

o A strong compromise from our States, national Governments and international Institutions towards justice and peace. The world has become more globalize and the interaction between international actors is more rapid, so there are new challenges to be faced. The benefits and burdens of this globalization are not evenly distributed. The world needs a fairer distribution of the benefits. The duty of solidarity is an imperative prerequisite of globalization.

o International solidarity need to be more developed in international relations for the sake of humanity Global responses to natural disasters, pandemic disease, such as avian influenza and agricultural pest, with the intention of supporting efforts on poverty eradication and fighting hunger, are tangible issues, which profoundly affect human life and need more "Surely Allah will raise for this community at the beginning of every century one who shall revive for it its faith."

(34)