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An Analysis of the Evolutionary Trajectory of Exegetical Views on the Verse of Dharr

Reza Novin ⓘD∗ | PhD in Theoretical Foundations, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Saleh Hassanzadeh ⓘD | Professor, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Verse 172 of Surah *al-A'rāf*, known as the Verse of *Dharr*, expresses a covenant between God and humanity. The wisdom behind this covenant is the completion of God's argument against His servants on the Resurrection, countering the excuses of heedlessness or of having had polytheistic forefathers. This verse has been a focus for Qur'anic commentators since the era of the Imams, and due to disagreements regarding the modality by which the covenant was taken; it has led to numerous viewpoints. Accordingly, the present study, using a descriptive-analytical method, aims to answer the fundamental question: 'What is the evolutionary trajectory of the commentators' views regarding the Verse of *Dharr*?' The research findings indicate that throughout history, various views have been proposed concerning the "World of *Dharr*," including: the view based on narrations, the view of the covenant being taken through the prophets, the view of innate potentials, the view of the spiritual covenant, the view of the realm of dominion and sovereignty, and the view of innate disposition. Each of these proposed views is incomplete. The view of acknowledgment emerges as the most complete perspective regarding the World of *Dharr*.

Keywords: World of *Dharr*, Qur'an, Exegesis, Commentators.

Introduction

The Verse of *Dharr* is one of the most significant verses related to religious anthropology, expressing a covenant between God and humanity. This means that in a specific context with particular conditions, God sought humanity's acknowledgment of His Lordship, and humanity, in turn, acknowledged it. The wisdom behind this covenant is the completion of the argument on the Resurrection against the excuses of heedlessness and the inheritance of polytheism from one's ancestors. The verse states the covenant in general terms; while the phrase "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified!" conveys its substance, its modality remains unspecified. All commentators are in agreement on the principle of acknowledging God's Lordship, but most remain silent on its specific substance or suffice with the general meaning of Lordship. The divergence of views pertains to the modality by which this covenant was taken.

The completion of the divine argument against humanity by means of this covenant underscores its importance. A correct understanding and application of this concept—or the lack thereof—plays a significant role in human felicity. The existence of differing opinions indicates the lack of transparency regarding the World of *Dharr* and points to an evolutionary process in the views of thinkers.

The primary problem is that, according to the Qur'an's report, humanity has acknowledged God's Lordship based on a covenant and must therefore align its lifestyle with it, having no excuse for transgression on the Resurrection. However, with the existing interpretations, the argument is not truly completed for people on the Resurrection, which contradicts the purpose of the verse. Therefore, the central problem of the present article is: What is the course of development and evolution of the commentators' views regarding the Verse of *Dharr*? A secondary question is: What factors have led to the refinement of the commentators' views on the aforementioned verse?

1. Research Method

The present paper has been conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, specifically employing conceptual analysis and document analysis. Through this method and a library-based approach, the verses of the Holy Qur'an related to the World of *Dharr* have been extracted. Then, in consideration of the research question, the evolutionary trajectory of the commentators' views on the Verse of *Dharr* is analyzed.

2. Literature Review

The Verse of *Dharr* "And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware." (al-Aʿrāf: 172)—has been a subject of attention since the earliest period of commentators, who have offered, to varying degrees, research based on narrative and rational sources in their exegesis of the noble verse. Some have contributed by accepting previous opinions, some by supplementing them, and others by critiquing them and presenting new views on the matter, thereby innovating.

Narrations concerning the World of *Dharr* are present in Shi'i hadith sources such as

Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt (Ṣaffār, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 1, 157 and 181) and *al-Kāfī* (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 7, 10, 12, 13). In-depth investigations by Shi'i scholars like *Shaykh Ṣadūq* in *al-I'tiqādāt* (Ṣadūq, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 93), *Shaykh Mufīd* in *Taṣḥīḥ al-I'tiqādāt wa Masā'il al-'Ukbarīyya* (Mufīd, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 83), *Sayyid Murtaḍā 'Alam al-Hudā* in *Amālī* (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1998: 1, 28), *Shaykh Ṭabrisī* in *Tafsir Jawāmi' al-Jāmi'* (Ṭabrisī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 1, 719), *Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs* in *Sa'd al-Su'ūd lil Nufūs* (n.d.: 1, 201), *Allamah Majlisī* in *Biḥār al-Anwār* (Majlisī, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 5, 225-276), and others up to the contemporary era have been written in the form of books, articles, and notes in Arabic and Persian, across various disciplines such as exegesis, theology, and other religious fields. All of these demonstrate the dedication of Shi'i intellectuals to understanding the verse.

Among Sunni thinkers, narrations about the World of *Dharr* have also been examined in exegetical works such as *Jāmi' al-Bayān* (Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 9, 75-82), *al-Kashshāf* (Zamakhsharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 176), *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz* (Ibn 'Aṭīyyah al-Andalusī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 2, 474), *Zād al-Masīr* (Ibn al-Jawzī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 2, 167), and by other commentators. Sunni narrations are also found in books such as *a-Ibānah* (Ash'arī, n.d.: 67), *Mustadrak* (Ḥākim, 1990 AD/1411 AH: 1, 628; 2, 353), *al-Sunan* (Tirmidhī, 1974 AD/1395 AH: 5, 266), *al-Musnad* (Aḥmad, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 1, 297), *al-Istidhkārāt* (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 3, 107), and others.

In the contemporary era, research has continued. Individuals such as Allamah Amini, in his book "*al-Maqāṣid al-'Illīyyah fī al-Maṭālib al-Sanīyyah*," has examined nearly all narrations and verses related to the World of *Dharr*, its covenants, and the heedlessness of them, using a narrative-based approach. Sayyid Ali Razavi, in his book "*Sadd al-Mufirr 'alā Munkir 'Ālam al-Dharr*," has collected and published the lessons of his teacher, Muhammad Bāqir 'Alam al-Hudā. Muhammad Ali Ghafuri and Ahad Faramarz Gharamaleki, in an article titled "The Historical Evolution of the Interpretation of the Verse of the Covenant and the Innovation of Mulla Sadra," have examined the Verse of *Dharr* through three approaches—narrative, mystical, and theological exegesis—and ultimately explained Mulla Sadra's innovation, published in issue 62 of the journal *Kheradnameh*.

Ali Akbar Shayestehnejad's article, "Man in the Pre-Mortal World," first presents the verses and then the narrations related to human existence in the world before this one, followed by the views of concurring and opposing thinkers, which he then synthesizes; it was published in the journal *Afaq-e Din*, year 2, no. 7, Winter 1390 SH.

Ali Mohammad Sajedi and Maryam Soleimani, in their article "The Concept and Referent of the World of *Dharr* from the Perspective of Sadr al-Muta'allihin Shirazi and Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*," after presenting different theories, examine the views of these two thinkers on the ontological dimension of the World of *Dharr*, then delve into the epistemology of knowledge in the World of *Dharr*, compare their views, and present the results; published in the *Journal of Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, year 45, Spring-Summer 1391 SH.

"The Locus of the Taking of the Covenant of Lordship from the Viewpoint of Allamah Javadi Amoli" is an article by Ahmad Jamali published in the journal *Ma'arij*, year 1, no. 1, 1394 SH. The author, after stating the well-known views and their problems and explaining

the strengths of Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*'s view, expounds upon and reinforces the perspective of Ayatollah Javadi. Sayyid Ali Musavi, in the article "The Flourishing of Monotheistic Knowledge of the World of *Dharr* in This World Based on Narrations," published in the *Journal of Philosophical-Theological Researches*, year 29, no. 2, Summer 1396 SH, first discusses the World of *Dharr*, the manner of the covenant, its forgetting, and other related topics, and then examines how the monotheistic knowledge from the World of *Dharr* flourishes in states of both choice and compulsion. Other articles by various authors have also been published in different journals.

These works differ in subject matter from the present article, although they share some common ground in preliminary discussions. The present article aims to enumerate, categorize, and analyze, critique— in other words, to examine and analyze the evolutionary trajectory of the commentators' views. Extracting this evolutionary trajectory reveals the supplementary elements, the timing, and the manner of the views' development, and provides significant assistance in presenting a selected viewpoint. Herein lies the innovation of the present article. The research hypothesis is that despite the efforts of thinkers regarding the interpretation of the verse, a definitive and sound perspective has not yet been realized, although hints have been made. By synthesizing the views of the commentators, a new perspective can be reached on this matter.

3. Muslim Commentators' Perspectives in Historical Order

Row	Author	Religion	Year of Death	Name of Commentary	Approach	Theory	Source
1	Qummī, Ali ibn Ibrahim	Shi'a	307 AH	Tafsir al-Qummī	Narrative	View based on narrations	Vol. 1, p. 248
2	Ṭabarī, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir	Sunni	310 AH	Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an	Narrative-Theological	View based on narrations	Vol. 9, pp. 75-82
3	Furāt Kūfī, Furat ibn Ibrahim	Shi'a	First half of the 4th century AH	Tafsir Furat al-Kufi	Narrative	View based on narrations	pp. 146-149
4	'Ayyāshī, Muhammad ibn Mas'ud	Shi'a	320 AH	Kitab al-Tafsir	Narrative	View based on narrations	Vol. 2, pp. 37-42
5	Tha'labī Nishapuri, Abu Ishaq Ahmad ibn Ibrahim	Sunni	427 AH	Al-Kashf wal-Bayan	Narrative	View based on narrations	Vol. 4, p. 303
6	Sayyid Murtaḍā Alam al-Huda, Ali ibn Husayn	Shi'a	436 AH	Nafa'is al-Ta'wil	Collected	1. Attributing the view based on narrations to the ignorant; 2. Taking the covenant by the Prophet; 3. Theory	Vol. 2, p. 376

Row	Author	Religion	Year of Death	Name of Commentary	Approach	Theory	Source
						of confession	
7	Ṭūsī, Muhammad ibn Hasan	Shi'a	460 AH	Al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an	narrative-rational	weakening the theory based on narrations	vol. 5, pp. 28-30
8	Maybudī, Ahmad ibn Muhammad	Sunni	530 AH	Kashf al-Asrar wa 'Uddat al-Abrar	theological, jurisprudential, and mystical	viewpoint based on narrations	vol. 3, pp. 781-787
9	Zamakhsharī, Mahmud	Sunni	538 AH	Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Ghawamid al-Tanzil	Ijtihadi	theory of representation	vol. 2, p. 177
10	Ibn ʿAṭīyyah Andalusi, 'Abd al-Haqq ibn Ghalib,	Sunni	541 AH	Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz fi Tafsir al-Kitab al-'Aziz	narrative-rational	viewpoint based on narrations	vol. 2, p. 475
11	Ṭabarsī, Fadl ibn Hasan	Shi'a	548 AH	Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an	literary	viewpoint based on narrations and with expression on the theory of fitra (innate disposition)	vol. 4, pp. 764-767
12	Abul Futūḥ Rāzī, Hussein ibn Ali	Shi'a	556 AH	Rawd al-Jinan wa Ruh al-Jinan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an	narrative-theological	1. Taking the covenant by the prophets and the people's acknowledgment in the real world; 2. Theory of fitra, question and answer representation	vol. 9, pp. 6-11
13	Ibn al-Jawzī, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ali	Sunni	597 AH	Zad al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsir	transmitted-narrational	viewpoint based on narrations	vol. 2, pp. 167-168
14	Fakhr Rāzī, Muhammad ibn Umar	Sunni	606 AH	Mafatih al-Ghayb	rational and theological	1. Weakening the viewpoint based on narrations; 2. Strengthening the viewpoint of "akhraj" being the same as procreation, representation of acknowledgment; 3. Spiritual	vol. 15, pp. 397-400, p. 400, p. 403.

Row	Author	Religion	Year of Death	Name of Commentary	Approach	Theory	Source
						covenant	
15	Qurṭubī, Muhammad ibn Ahmad	Sunni	671 AH	Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an	jurisprudential	viewpoint based on narrations	vol. 7, p. 314
16	Bayḍāwī, Abdullah ibn Umar	Sunni	685 AH	Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil	theological	"akhraj" being the same as procreation, representation of acknowledgment	vol. 3, p. 41
17	Ibn Kathīr, Ismail ibn Umar	Sunni	774 AH	Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim	narrative	viewpoint based on narrations	vol. 3, pp. 451-456
18	Suyūṭī, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr	Sunni	911 AH	Al-Durr al-Manthur fi Tafsir al-Ma'thur	narrative	viewpoint based on narrations	vol. 3, pp. 141-145
19	Astarabadi, Ali	Shi'a	1028 AH	Ta'wil al-Ayat al-Zahirah fi Fada'il al-'Itrat al-Tahirah	narrative	viewpoint based on narrations	pp. 186-187
20	Baḥrānī, Hashim ibn Sulaiman	Shi'a	1107 AH	Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an	narrative	theory based on narrations	vol. 2, pp. 605-615
21	Fayḍ Kāshānī, Mulla Muhsin	Shi'a	1090 AH	Tafsir al-Safi	narrative	taking it in the form of the emergence of generations after generations; covenant: by expanding the matters of potential, Lordship, and rational matters and representational acknowledgment	vol. 2, pp. 250-253
22	ʿArūsī Ḥuwayzī Abd Ali ibn Juma`	Shi'i	1112 AH	Nur al-Thaqalayn	Narrative	Theory based on narrations	Vol. 2, pp. 92-101
23	Qummī Mashhadi Muhammad ibn Muhammad	Shi'i	1125 AH	Kanz al-Daqa'iq wa Bahr al-Ghara'ib	Narrative	He did not consider the theory of the kingdom of heaven far-fetched, he presented the	Vol. 5, pp. 228-240

Row	Author	Religion	Year of Death	Name of Commentary	Approach	Theory	Source
	Reza					theory based on narrations and nature with "it is said"	
24	Ālūsī Sayyid Mahmud .	Sunni	1270 AH	Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim	Rational and Ijtihadi	• Attributing the theory based on narration to the Muhaddithun and Sufis, • Lack of a specific theory, • Sensing the theory of nature and representation	Vol. 5, pp. 93-102
25	Qāsimī Muhammad Jamal al-Din	Sunni	1332 AH	Mahasin al-Ta'wil	Narrative - Rational	Theory of aptitude	Vol. 5, pp. 216-222
26	Marāghī Ahmad ibn Mustafa	Sunni	1371 AH	Tafsir al-Maraghi	Ijtihadi (independent reasoning), analytical, educational, social, and scientific	Theory of Fitra (innate nature)	Vol. 9, pp. 102-105
27	Sayyid Quṭb ibn Ibrahim Shazli	Sunni	1387 AH	Fi Zilal al-Qur'an	Literary - Social	Theory of Fitra	Vol. 3, pp. 1392-1396
28	Ibn 'Āshūr Muhammad ibn	Sunni	1393 AH	Tahir Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir	Narrative - Ijtihadi	Strengthening the theory based on narrations and representation	Vol. 8, p. 345
29	Khaṭīb 'Abd al-Karīm	Sunni	1406 AH	Al-Tafsir al-Qur'ani lil-Qur'an	Analytical, Ijtihadi, and Rational	Theory of Fitra	Vol. 5, p. 514
30	Gonabadi Sultan Muhammad	Shi'i	1327 AH	Bayan al-Sa'adah fi Maqamat al-'Ibadah	Mystical	Covenant from Adam Lahouti	Vol. 2, pp. 216-217
31	Mughnīyah, Muhammad Jawad	Shi'i	1400 AH	Al-Kashif	Educational and Approximationist	Theory of Fitra	Vol. 3, p. 419
32	Tabatabai, Muhammad Hussein	Shi'i	1401 AH/1360 SH	Al-Mizan	Quran to Quran	Theory of Kingdom and Dominion	Vol. 8, pp. 305-331

Row	Author	Religion	Year of Death	Name of Commentary	Approach	Theory	Source
33	Al-Darwīsh, Muḥyī al-Dīn	Sunni	1403 AH	I'rab al-Qur'an	Educational and Applied	Quoting two views: Early scholars: Based on hadiths. Later scholars: Representation	Vol. 3, p. 493
34	Faḍlullāh Sayyid Muhammad Hussein	Shi'i	1431 AH/1389 SH	Tafsir Min Wahi al-Qur'an	Narrative - Rational	Theory of Fitra, Gradual Covenant	Vol. 10, pp. 282-283
35	Sadeqi Tehrani, Muhammad	Shi'i	1432 AH/ 1390 SH	Al-Furqan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an	Quran to Quran	Theory of Fitra	Vol. 12, pp. 13-45
36	Qarashī Sayyid Ali Akbar	Shi'i	Contemporary	Ahsan al-Hadith		Theory based on narrations	Vol. 4, p. 40
37	Boroujerdi Sayyid Muhammad Ibrahim	Shi'i	Contemporary	Tafsir Jami'	Narrative	Theory based on narrations	Vol. 2, pp. 482-486
38	Subhani Tabrizi, Ja'far	Shi'i	Contemporary	Mafahim al-Qur'an	Analytical and Guidance-oriented	• Reviewing and criticizing different views • Abstaining from expressing a definitive opinion	Vol. 1, pp. 75-110
39	Makarem Shirazi, Naser	Shia	Contemporary	Tafsir Nemooneh	Ijtihadi-Analytical and Rational	Theory of Fitra	Vol. 7, p. 6
40	Javadi Amoli, Abdullah	Shia	Contemporary	Tasnim	Quranic, Traditional and Rational	Theory of Fitra, with a different explanation: God's conversation with man in three homelands of reason, fitra, and revelation, and showing Himself by removing the obstacles of fitra.	Vol. 41, p.

4. Categorization of Views and Their Critique

By categorizing the aforementioned views, we can arrive at eight general perspectives, which are, in order of discussion:

4.1. The View Based on Narrations

This view holds that after the creation of Adam, God extracted all of his progeny from his loin (*Ṣulb*), took from them a covenant regarding His own Lordship, the prophethood of the Prophet, and the imamate of the Imams. All the progeny acknowledged it, and then He returned them all to Adam's loin (Qummī, 1943 AD/1363 AH: 1, 248; Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 9, 75-82).

4.1.1. Critique of the View

• First, while this view is based on narrations and has many proponents, these two factors cannot be the reason for its acceptance. For a narration to be accepted, in addition to the authenticity of its chain of transmission (*Sanad*) and content (*Matn*), it is also conditional upon its non-contradiction with the verses of the Qur'an. The narrations that support this view conflict with the apparent meaning of the Verse of *Dharr* and other verses. The verse speaks of the extraction of progeny from the "Loins of the Children of Adam," whereas the narrations have changed it to the "Loin of Adam." The Qur'an is, at a minimum, silent about the initial creation of the Children of Adam in the World of Dharr, and for humanity's worldly creation, it describes the general method of women's pregnancy and childbirth: "It is He who created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then He brings you out as a child..." (al-Ghāfir: 67) Similarly, verse 72 of Surah *Ṣād* states that the breathing of the human spirit occurs after the completion of the stages of the physical, earthen form: "So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration."

  This view has no Qur'anic support, and the apparent meaning of the narrations conflicts with the apparent meaning of the verses.

• Second, it appears this hypothesis is based on an old, obsolete view that attributed human existence solely to the father, considering mothers merely as vessels for nurturing the child. In the modern era, the birth of a child from the father's sperm and the mother's ovum is a scientific certainty.

• Third, because humans have no recollection of such a covenant, the argument is not completed for them on the Resurrection, and this contradicts the purpose of the verse.

• Fourth, the particles extracted from Adam's loin in the World of *Dharr* were either rational or non-rational. If they were non-rational, they are outside the scope of a covenant, as reason is a condition for accountability. If they were rational, this conflicts with the fact that reason becomes potential in the mother's womb and during infancy and childhood, only becoming actualized according to individual capacities, and it also conflicts with the case of the insane, thus failing to establish universality.

• Fifth, accepting the covenant of the World of *Dharr* and its manifestation in this world would lead to the acceptance of determinism and the denial of human free will. This is while the Qur'an explicitly affirms human free will in relation to guidance and misguidance: "And say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve." (al-Kahf: 29) The factors of salvation and misguidance are also stated in numerous verses (cf. al-Nisā': 175; al-Māʾidah: 16; al-Mumtaḥinah: 1; Ibrāhīm: 3). In the

face of determinism and the lack of influence of human free will in this world, the futility of such verses is certain (Novin: 75-101).

• Sixth, another consequence of this view is the futility of the efforts of the prophets and saints of God in calling people to their Lord. This is because those who accepted the covenant will accept the divine call, and others will refuse it. This notion contradicts the apparent meaning of the Qur'anic verses and historical documents regarding the relentless efforts of the prophets, especially the final Prophet. The Almighty God, due to the Prophet's round-the-clock activities, reminds him in several places in the Qur'an, "Indeed, you do not guide whom you like," (al-Qaṣaṣ: 56) or the verse, "We have not sent down to you the Qur'an that you should be distressed." (Ṭāhā: 2) If such a covenant existed, the prophets should have known that not everyone would answer their call and would not have made such futile efforts (ibid.).

• Seventh, another consequence of accepting this view would be the pointlessness of reward and punishment for voluntary worldly actions, because in this world, no one would have free will, and the good and bad deeds of humans would stem from a single acceptance or non-acceptance for which they are judged (ibid.).

4.2. The View of the Covenant Through the Prophets

The aforementioned view holds that God took a covenant from people through His prophets, and those who accepted the prophets' call is loyal to the covenant. This view considers the prior creation of souls to be a baseless claim (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1984 AD/1405 AH: 4, 30).

4.2.1. Critique of the View

• First, this view contradicts the apparent meaning of the Verse of *Dharr* because it does not establish the universality of the covenant, the acknowledgment, and the completion of the argument. People in different eras have not seen a prophet, and the call has not reached them (cf. al-Qaṣaṣ: 46).

• Second, not all contemporaries of the prophets saw them, and most of those who did, instead of accepting the call, showed enmity towards them, their goals, and even their successors, and often killed the prophets. "And thus We have made for every prophet an enemy   -   devils   from   mankind   and   jinn."
(al-Anʿām, 112)

• Third, this view contradicts the apparent meaning of the existing narrations on this topic because the narrations are explicit that the covenant was taken in the World of *Dharr* and the people's answer of "Yes" (*Bala*) was given there, not in this world (cf. Kulaynī, 1992: 2, 14-15).

4.3. The Allegorical View

The allegorical view believes the covenant is figurative and not real. This means God has established proofs for His Lordship and Oneness, and human intellects have acknowledged them. This is similar to the noble verse: "...He said to it and to the earth, "Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion." They said, "We have come willingly." (Fuṣṣilat, 11) (Zamakhsharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 2, 177).

4.3.1. Critique of the View

• First, the apparent meaning of the Verse of *Dharr*, due to its use of words like "*Idh*" (when), "*Akhadha*" (He took), "*Dhurrīyyah*" (progeny), and "*Banī Ādam*" (Children of Adam), also refutes this view.

• Second, the "completion of the argument" on the Resurrection suggests reality rather than allegory. To claim it is allegorical, one must provide strong contextual evidence, whereas no such evidence has been presented.

• Third, this view ignores the numerous narrations that attest to the reality of the covenant (cf. Kulaynī, 1992: 2, 14-15; Sayyid Baḥrānī, 1995 AD/1416 AH: 37 narrations under the Verse of *Dharr*).

4.4. The View of Potentials

This view holds that after the birth of generations of humans, they are asked through the "Tongue of the potentiality of their substances" and their talents, "Am I not your Lord?" and they answer, "Yes." God establishes for them the proofs of Lordship and invites them to acknowledge it, and humans, in turn, acknowledge God's Lordship (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 2, 250-253).

4.4.1. Critique of the View

• First, one of the positive points of this view is the continuity of the question and acknowledgment in this world and across generations.

• Second, the status of individuals who were supposed to actualize their potentials over time but wasted them is not specified.

• Third, the verse speaks of an event that has already occurred, but its explanation in relation to the present time has not been clarified.

4.5. The Covenant from the Divine Adam

The proponent of this view believes that everything in the material world has a form in the higher realms, such as the realm of dominion, power, and divinity. The "Loin" of the Divine Adam is not like the loin of the material Adam mentioned in the verse and narrations. The Divine Adam is the same as the Muhammadan Reality, which has traversed many stages for creation (Gonabadi, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 2, 216-217). The covenant was taken in those higher realms.

4.5.1. Critique of the View

• First, the apparent meaning of the verse, with words like "*Akhadha*," "*Dhurrīyyah*," and "*Banī Ādam*," also refutes this view.

• Second, the objections raised against the allegorical view also apply to this one.

• Third, if the Muhammadan Reality made the covenant, it has no bearing on the material progeny.

• Fourth, God is speaking of an apparent covenant, not a divine one. The material human has no role in the Divine Adam.

• Fifth, accepting the realm of divine, etc. is a movement from the world of multiplicity to

the world of unity. Even if one accepts all the premises of this hypothesis, a divine covenant does not complete the argument for the material human, as they had no role in it.

• Sixth, this view is subjective and based on aesthetic preference. Proving the details of the realms before creation or after death is beyond the scope of reason, and the existence of disagreement on the matter indicates a lack of consensus on the content of the available textual evidence. Therefore, this view also fails to complete the argument for all humans.

4.6. The Spiritual Covenant

Some believe in the prior creation of souls and have attributed the taking of the covenant and the acknowledgment to the souls (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 15, 403).

4.6.1. Critique of the View

• First, the apparent meaning of the verse refutes this view because the concepts of "*Akhadha*" (taking), "*Dhurrīyyah*" (progeny), "*Ẓuhūr*" (loins), and "*Banī Ādam*" do not apply to a soul.

• Second, this view necessitates disregarding the apparent meaning of the verse and resorting to allegorical interpretation.

• Third, the absence of a cause and manner of differentiation among souls invalidates this view. Although the prior creation of souls has much support in religious sources and is even explicitly stated in some narrations (cf. Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 438), neither the narrations nor the proponents of this view have, in their justifications, alluded to the cause and manner of the differentiation of souls in the realm of souls.

• Fourth, on one hand, the prior creation of souls is attributed in some narrations to the general populace (Ibn Bābawayh, 1982 AD/1403 AH: 108), in others specifically to the Shi'a of Imam Ali (AS), and in yet others exclusively to the souls of the Infallibles (Kulaynī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 436). The proponents of this view have preferred the general over the specific and the more specific, whereas in such cases, the more specific is given preference. Therefore, this view also will not complete the argument for everyone.

4.7. The Realm of Dominion and Sovereignty

Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī created the view of the realm of *Mulk* and *Malakūt*. He says: "Man is a two-faceted being." One facet of him is oriented towards the temporal, material world with its material characteristics, including the actualization of potentials and its own specific natural limitations. The second facet of man is oriented towards the sublime; it is non-material and non-gradual. In this facet, actualization does not exist (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 8, 320). In the divine facet, absence is meaningless; humans are present to each other and to God, and God is present to humans, because that station is the station of the collective presence of humanity. Allamah calls that place the *Malakūt* (ibid.). In that station, humans witness the Lordship of God through their own selves and acknowledge it (ibid: 321). It must be noted that that station has precedence over the worldly realm, but its precedence is not temporal; rather, it is in the manner of the precedence of "Be, and it is" and it encompasses this material, worldly realm (ibid.: 322-323).

4.7.1. Critique of the View

• First, this view, according to Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, is scholarly, but it has the problem of the *Malakūt* not being exclusive to humans, based on the Qur'an (Javadi, 2015 AD/1394 SH: 31, 106). The Qur'an states that all things in the universe have a *Malakūt*: "So exalted is He in whose hand is the *Malakūt* of all things." (Yāsīn: 83) The covenant being related to the *Malakūti* facet brings the problem of its non-exclusivity to man. This non-exclusivity can be inferred with the help of verses on the existential guidance of other beings, such as: "Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it]." (Ṭāhā: 50) Therefore, all beings that have a *Malakūt* must have participated in the covenant and acknowledged it with a collective acknowledgment, and this contradicts the apparent meaning of the verse.

• Second, Allamah made every effort to solve the problem of collective presence and acknowledgment but overlooked the material facet's forgetting of the covenant.

• Third, accepting this theory does not yield the result of the covenant, which is the completion of the argument. The inability to recall the covenant of the *Malakūti* facet will have no benefit for the material human and does not complete God's argument.

4.8. The Theory of *Fitrah*

The proponents of this view hold that God created man with an innate disposition and perfect craftsmanship, and placed within his being a proof that He has a Creator who is Powerful, Knowing, Living, Existing, Wise, etc. Man, in his being, carries a confession to the existence of the Lord of the Worlds. Verses of the Qur'an concerning humans (cf. al-Tawbah: 17) and non-humans (cf. Fuṣṣilat: 11) have such an application. This usage is also common among poets and orators (cf. Abul Futūḥ Rāzī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 9, 9). Ayatollah Javadi also believes that this covenant was formed before the current time, in the station of inspiration and piety: "And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness." (al-Shams: 8) This realm is referred to as the realm of *fitrah*. He considers this interpretation to be the final solution (Javadi, 2016 AD/1396 SH: 5, 404).

4.8.1. Critique of the View

• First, upon examining and comparing the views, it is clearly understood that this is the most complete and least problematic view. That is, the problems of the previous theories do not apply to this one, and it does not conflict with the apparent meaning of the verse.

• Second, in the words of Ayatollah Javadi, matters of *fitrah* do not require a mediator or an ontological cause, although in proving them, they might require a cause due to their theoretical nature (cf. Javadi, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 37). Thus, the universality of the verse is also resolved by this point.

• Third, there is a problem with this view to which Mr. Javadi has not paid attention, although in another book, he has elaborated on this very matter extensively. The summary of his problem is this: knowledge, gnosis, and purification in the theoretical and practical intellect are factors for the flourishing of *Fiṭrah*, while theoretical and practical ignorance are impediments to its flourishing. The duty of every human is to recognize the impediments and remove them. According to the division of ignorance into theoretical and practical, the impediments to flourishing are also divided into theoretical and practical impediments (cf.

ibid: 390-402). He goes on to count the impediments as heedlessness, intellectual and satanic whispers, delusion, conventional reason, self-conceit and desire, worldliness, the ambushes of Satan, and the rust on the heart (ibid.). With this description, if such an impediment or impediments arise for someone, it prevents the *fitrah* from flourishing. When the *Fiṭrah* does not flourish, the argument is not completed for that person, and the goal of the verse, which is the completion of the argument with the servants, is not achieved. It seems that this view also does not achieve the goal of the verse, and to reach the correct view, one must seek to complete this view.

4.9. The View of Acknowledgment

A view that can be considered a completion of the *fitrah* view is called the view of acknowledgment. This means that every human is created upon the *Fiṭrah*: "The *Fiṭrah* of Allah upon which He has created all people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah." (al-Rūm: 30) By means of the *Fiṭrah*, man is familiar with God, religion, and eternity, and has intuitive knowledge of these matters (cf. Javadi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 23). The Qur'an introduces itself as a reminder: "No! Indeed, it is a reminder." (al-Muddaththir: 54) And "The spirit of the prophets' teachings about the principles of religion is precisely to draw attention to the human *Fiṭrah.*" (Javadi Amoli, 2000 AD/1379 SH: 73) This is supported by the noble Qur'anic verse about the Prophet of Islam, which states: "So remind, [O! Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller." (al-Ghāshīyah: 21-22) A reminder is used for something that was previously known and has been forgotten. The proof of the existence of *Fiṭrah* and its innate principles is discussed in its primary sources, especially in the exegeses of verse 30 of Surah al-Rūm, and there is no scope to prove them again in this writing.

So, the principles of *fitrah* exist within man, but due to internal and external factors such as self-forgetfulness—"They forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves" (al-Ḥashr: 19)—and the dominion of Satan—"Satan has overcome them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah" (al-Mujādila: 19)—they are consigned to oblivion. If a person in their life sets aside the factors of forgetfulness, or by being placed in a situation of reminder or danger—"And when they board a ship, they call upon Allah, sincere to Him in religion" (al-ʿAnkabūt: 65)—even once in their lifetime, for a moment, their heart turns towards the Origin, their own helplessness, and the infinite power, and the lamp of *Fiṭrah* is ignited, and even if in practice they become possessed of a reminder, they have in reality acknowledged the Lordship of God. After this acknowledgment of Lordship, the argument is completed for them. This reminder happens at least once and at most countless times during life and completes the argument. And if such a reminder does not occur for an insane person, a child, or someone living in conditions where a reminder is impossible, the argument is not completed for them, and on the Resurrection, they will be considered among the the oppressed. "Except for the oppressed among men, women, and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they directed to a way." (al-Nisāʾ: 98) This is supported by the narration from Imam Musa ibn Jaʿfar (AS), who says: "The weak and incapable one is he to whom the *Ḥujjah* has not reached and who has not understood the disagreement." (Kulaynī, 1992: 2,

403)

• First: In this view, the universality of the verse is complete, and there is no conflict with its apparent meaning. Generations of humans are born, this process takes shape, and it is recallable.

• Second: Returning to the human *fitrah* does not require meeting a prophet or his successors; every human has the potential for their *fitrah* to be awakened in any situation. Returning to the *fitrah* is a practical acknowledgment, and a practical acknowledgment is far more steadfast than a verbal one and is undeniable.

• Third: A practical acknowledgment of the existence of the Origin and the establishment of a two-way connection between man and God removes the excuse from man, and acting contrary to that acknowledgment, at any other time or place, will be without justification.

• Fourth: Regarding the narrations on this topic, *Sayyid Murtaḍā 'Alam al-Hudā*, in his exegesis *Nafā'is al-Ta'wīl*, has considered these narrations to be fabricated or their interpretation necessary (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 2010 AD/1431 AH: 2, 379).

It seems that this view is currently the most complete view regarding the Verse of *Dharr*, and the possibility of its further development by future generations exists.

It is worth mentioning, of course, that throughout history, there have been commentators who have alluded to this view, or from whose writings such a point can be inferred. *Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī* in *Maḥāsin al-Ta'wīl* and some others have explicitly mentioned God's request for acknowledgment from man, but the request for acknowledgment is different from the response of acknowledgment.

Conclusion

By studying the evolutionary trajectory of the views, two points become clear: First, most Sunni commentators have proposed the view based on narrations, but a slow trend exists among them, such as the allegorical view, the spiritual covenant, and the view of potentials. Second, among Shi'i commentators, the trend shows that they began with the view based on narrations and, with the emergence of problems, especially the conflict with the apparent meaning of the verse, they moved away from it and proposed the covenant through the prophets. With the problem of the non-acceptance of prophets, they arrived at the allegorical view. The natural suggestion of reality caused them to move past that and propose the view of potentials, which was also rejected due to the destruction of potentials and the lack of completion of the argument for some. The covenant of the divine man did not find much support due to the lack of clarity in its connection with the material man. In the spiritual covenant, the conflict with the apparent meaning of the verse arose again. The scholarly view of *Mulk* and *Malakūt* was proposed, along with the problem of the *Malakūt* not being exclusive to man. The view of *Fiṭrah* was proposed as a solution, and due to the existence of impediments to the flourishing of *fitrah* and the lack of completion of the argument for some, the theory of acknowledgment has been proposed. The trend indicates that Shi'i thinkers, with the development of reason, the advancement of sciences, and the emergence of gaps, have sought to complete the views and fill the gaps by relying on verses, narrations, and rational proofs, and have presented new views. It should be noted that the trend of views is not

absolute; it does not mean that all commentators accepted or rejected a view. There have always been commentators who accepted and substantiated a previous view or presented a new one.

ORCID

Reza Novin   https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7729-2999
Saleh Hassanzadeh   https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3874-469X

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