

## The Transmission of the Term Messiah in the Old Testament: A Survey on Scholarly Designation of Messianism

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DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2019.v07i10.005](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2019.v07i10.005)

| Received: 04.10.2019 | Accepted: 11.10.2019 | Published: 21.10.2019

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### Abstract

### Review Article

The term Messiah in the Old Testament had no one strict meaning. The meaning of the term was developed over a long period of time. Various designations of messianism are equally influenced by the historical situation of the biblical interpreters and their ability to interact with the text their social circumstances and their ability to engage other scholars. This paper is a survey of various scholars and their views as can be found in their books and publications. Scholars at a certain time in history focussed on certain layers of messianic characters as they deduced from the biblical text. The variance in meaning confirms that the messianic characterisation was equally rooted in the circumstances of interpreters of different world views. Their texts confirm to be social constructs of the interpreters' circumstances. This is confirmed in the variety of meaning related to the term.

**Keywords:** Old Testament, messianism, biblical interpreters, circumstances.

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## MESSIANISM INTRODUCTION

The term 'Messiah' has undergone various stages of definition. In the Bible it originated from the Hebrew verbal form מָשַׁח meaning 'he anointed' was originally not intended to depict the anointing of human priest, kings or prophets. The term find expression in the History of Ancient Israel. From anointing which was initially based on the consecration of temple equipment eventually referred to the setting apart of certain people for divine purpose. The term Messiah did not maintain a consistent meaning. It moved from portraying a historical figure to a spiritual apocalyptic figure. Despite the term having originated from Israel's history, it continued to develop new meanings in such a way that today it is more of a term relevant to signify the evidence of crisis in which the messianic expectations become a kind of pacifist expectation for deliverance in the midst of crisis.

This paper serves to explore various meanings of the term as it was used by people of varied experiences. Authors who defined the term Messiah could have been informed by their experience through which they hoped for a deliverer. This paper concluded that circumstances from which human consecration as divine deliverers was rooted in the crisis associated with imperial domination. Having failed to find rest from the

present age the term was further defined to portray an eschatological figure in which God would culminate all history.

### Various Meanings in Historical contexts

#### J. Bright

Bright [1] refers to Isaiah 9:6 as a messianic text from its use in birth narratives of Jesus in the New Testament. He considers messianic expectation as part of a wider Jewish eschatological hope. This is because the hope of Israel was the coming kingdom of God. Such hope was rooted in Israel's faith and history. Isaiah's hope for the Messiah Prince came as organic revelation to the people and advanced from tragic experiences. More strikingly, for Bright [1], Isaiah's use of denunciation and doom is placed on the flipside with the idea of a glorious hope. This idea can also be traced in Micah, Amos and Hosea. He claims that messianic expectations have been nurtured on the seedbed of Israel's faith. The revelation of Isaiah was given in the temple; therefore, his prophecy may be rooted in the covenant relationship with Yahweh. Messianic expectations were related to the Davidic lineage, Jerusalem and the temple.

Bright [1] contends that the postexilic community was based on law observance in which the prophets insisted on the righteous establishment of

covenant brotherhood. Exile was previously associated with failure to uphold the covenant. After the destruction of the Temple and the nation, what remained for the Jews was to keep the law to maintain their status. It was also believed that if at all the messiah would come the Sabbath had to be observed fully. On the flipside of law observance was the growing stress on keeping the law which resulted in the thirst for catastrophic divine intervention and to the development of apocalypticism. Apocalypse discredits individual works. It therefore led to the revival of the prophetic traditions. Though accompanied by traits of observance of the law, the book of Daniel was meant mainly for the days of Daniel when divine intervention was eminent. Daniel 2 depicts the image of Nebuchadnezzar's vision that typifies the succession of powers that governed the earth. This brought in the prophetic interpretation that God would establish an unshakable kingdom which will end all other powers. This is also followed by the vision of "one like the son of man" who will be given the kingdom over all humankind.

Bright have certain limitations in his view. He was not yet convinced by the later view that the book of Daniel is no longer counted by scholars among prophetic books but among the genre apocalypse of the post-exilic era.

#### H. Ringgren

Ringgren [2], in the introduction to his book *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, defends the idea that the Old Testament reference to the Messiah was based on the historical situation of Israel. The New Testament passages reflect the idea that some Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled at a later stage. However, modern biblical scholars have provided different interpretations of those passages. This has created a great gap between the historical-critical understanding and the interpretation of the biblical passages; that is, we have two interpretive contexts – the historical and the theological. Some scholars defend the messianic interpretation of the Old Testament texts in the New Testament. In this way, the historical exegesis would in a way support the traditional Christian interpretation.

Ringgren's book, in principle, outlines this understanding. Considering that the Psalms were hymns of ancient Israel, it would be made clear that its content is of pre-exilic origin. Some of these hymns portray Enthronement Festival, Covenant Festival or New Year Festival, for example, Psalms 24, 47, 96 and 99 which refer to God's enthronement and kingship. Also considering that similar festivals were held in ancient Near East, Israel could not be exempted from such festivals. These festivals were also found in Babylon as New Year festivals and equally dealt with victory over powers of darkness and death and the creation of a new order of life. In this regard, it is shown that the Babylonian New Year Festival was a reinterpretation of the former. This paves the way for the New Testament

reinterpretation of the theme of messianism considering the Old Testament.

#### E. Jenni

Jenni [3] believes Messianic hope dominates other eschatological hopes because of the New Testament use of the term in relation to Jesus. The Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern messianic expectations based on the kings should however not be translated to mean a present king but should focus at a king of eschatological character. While the picture of the Messiah is also found among Babylonians and Egyptians, they do not specifically project the culmination of history. Messianic expectations in Israel were based on the royal ideology of the Davidic dynasty but also follow the mythical ideology of the origin of man as king of paradise. This expectation is related to the expectation of Yahweh's full revelation. While messianic expectations are mentioned in the Old Testament, it is controversial whether they are truly messianic or not. Some examples are Isaiah 7:10-17; 9:1-7; 11:1-9, Micah 25:2-5a; Haggai 2:21 Zechariah 6:9-14 and Daniel 7. The list does not include Daniel 9:25 and 26. Isaiah 45:1 is not considered as messianic in character because Yahweh himself was king and Cyrus portrayed a political forerunner in the service of Yahweh. Even the "suffering servant" is only considered in the New Testament when integrated with the figure of "the son of man."

#### E. Rivkin

Rivkin [4] considers the emergence of messianic ideas to be understood by distinguishing various stages of the evolution of Israel's religion. He then discusses the four main stages of the development of this term. First and foremost, God was the leader of Israel. A military figure only surfaced when Israel faced threats from the Palestinians which led to Samuel's anointment of Saul and eventually David as king. The promise by Yahweh of an everlasting throne in Samuel 7:8-29 was Yahweh's commitment to uphold his promises which resulted in the messianic idea.

Second, the divine commitment developed a new meaning as prophets like Amos, Hosea, and Micah perceived a future righteous king that would reign in Israel. This new meaning was a response to grave internal and external crises. Internally there was disloyalty to Yahweh, socio-economic distress, political corruption and immorality. Externally was drastic opposition from the imperial powers which threatened to devastate the people and subject them to exile. A remedy to this was to have a perfect king, to institute a perfect society, creating perfect peace with other nations, resulting in perfect harmony throughout the whole creation.

Lastly, the eschatological idea developed when the prophetic dreams were shattered as a response to the social, economic and political reality that resulted from

Babylonian exile. The restoration hailed by Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1) did not fulfil the prophetic visions. Power struggle developed between the priests and the monarchy. This was the time when the Pentateuch was canonized, which mandated the priests to exercise hegemony, and negate the need for a king.

The story went on and on but for the sake of this discussion, it is better to consider at this point, the last development which led to alternative views. The authority of the priests was undermined by the decree by Antiochus Epiphanes who demanded the worship of Greek deities and scrambled the authority of the priests. In search for a constructive solution, four basic solutions emerged namely faith in God's power, revival of prophetic visions, armed uprising and shift from earthly rewards to heavenly ones. Daniel advanced the messianic ideas with his use of the terms "son of man" and "messiah" which were used even in other Jewish writings and the New Testament. The Pharisees also contributed to the trend by emphasizing individual faith and salvation which hoped for (spiritual) life after death.

#### W. Eichrodt

Eichrodt in his, *Theology of the Old Testament*, considers messianism as profoundly rooted in prophetic interpretation of the covenant in Deuteronomy-Isaiah. Although this point does not actually pertain to the covenant at Sinai, it speaks of the redemption from Egypt. Isaiah presents the ideal conditions of the time in which the divine plan of salvation would be realized. He links this to the faithfulness of God to Abraham as the background to accomplishing the work that began in earlier times. The covenant is embodied in a human being, i.e. the suffering Servant of God who becomes a messianic ruler in solidarity with the people of God. He fuses messianic hope with the concept of the covenant [5].

Eichrodt believes that eschatology is not simply an appendix to the prophetic thoughts in line with messianic prophecies. Otherwise, without considering messianic prophecies in light of eschatology, we are tempted to degrade them to merely nationalist popular expectations. He rejects the consideration of messianic texts as predominantly determined by their historical background but considers them as the portrayal of complete divine sovereignty. The eschatological features of the prophetic message are given to answer difficult questions concerning imperialism [5].

Isaiah's prophecy (11:1-9) pictures the royal judge endowed by the Spirit of Yahweh. Through the king, the operation of the Spirit was applied not to a sphere of purely miraculous, but to political social and ethical dimensions. The king became the incarnate judge who determined the hopes of the people for an ideal society. The prophets contrasted the idea of the

state, as they understood social righteousness as the divine universal prerogative to influence earthly affairs and to settle the destiny of the nation. The prophets were more critical of the military and political power, yet the purpose of divine providence is to morally rule with justice and righteousness. The prophets pictured the messianic future as transformation in understanding the purpose behind divine operations. The new age is therefore brought about by the destruction of the hostile nations in war, but in the building of the kingdom of God through conversion. The Messiah would become the deliverer who suffers for his people rather than a warrior [5].

Eichrodt describes messianic consummation as "... the ordinances laid down once for all and now affecting the whole of life; and it is in the irrevocability of these ordinances that faith is built up [5]". From the exilic period, the moods and elements of popular salvation forced their way into prophetic eschatology.

#### G. Von Rad

Von Rad uses the word "messianic" in the sense of the Old Testament's specific meaning with reference to the anointed which was associated with the anointment of David and his descendants to the dynastic throne of Israel. The message was prophesied along with David's plan to build a house for the Lord by Nathan who claimed that God was going to build the house for David. The promise alludes to the covenant plan of Yahweh with the house of David. The covenant relationship was woven within a wider historical context in which the point of view shifted to the question of how it transpired in a series of internal political struggles. The history of David is presented as culminating from the message of a prophet which reveals God acting in the life of a sinner in secret. The history of the Davidic dynasty reveals the messianic "problem" in which the one whom Yahweh loved would ascend the throne despite his sinfulness. The fulfilment of this promise was totally unexpected. If such a complex of events associated with David led to the realization of divine salvation, human offence could not have been the releasing factor, but could have come as divine initiative [6].

Von Rad further claims that Nathan's prophecy was developed in the Chronicler's messianic tradition in which the prophecy is extended to the post-exilic period. The one who was being awaited from the Davidic lineage would unite the two royal and the priestly offices [6].

#### G. Fohrer

According to Fohrer [7], messianism was based on the recognition of the Davidic dynasty of the Southern kingdom as a religious role player. Its legitimization by Yahweh was invoked by its intimate relationship with Yahweh. This resulted in the messianic expectation of the post-exilic period. The

Northern kingdom of Israel experienced a succession of various individual kings. The Davidic dynasty also played a priestly role by virtue of occasional cultic performance at the Jerusalem Temple.

Fohrer [7] further alludes to the postexilic prophecy regarding Zerubbabel as symbolically messianic referring to the Davidic king of the *eschaton*, whose dignity is divided between two representatives by including the high priest Joshua as the agent of spiritual affairs. Furthermore, Fohrer [7] takes this as being shared between Haggai and Zechariah yet with few differences. Haggai is depicted as considering the inauguration of the messianic age by the promise of blessing on the day when the cornerstone was laid. This was to be followed by the destruction of power among the nations this was going to happen before the installation of Zerubbabel to the messianic rule. Zachariah differs in the sequence of events. He starts with the destruction of the Gentile kings which was blamed for Jewish misfortunes. This would be followed by creation of wonderful circumstances for the community of Jerusalem among whom Yahweh made his dwelling for the sake of protecting them, as well as destroying the sinners in Judea and the removal of sin from the community. This would be also followed by the return of the exiles which would usher in the inauguration of the Messiah. Fohrer realizes the eschatological transformation in the pre-exilic prophetic proclamations.

Fohrer [7] considers messianic expectation as having developed around two theories upon who would exercise authority on the earth in the salvation age. One theory is that Yahweh will reside the earth in the salvation age. The other view is that Yahweh would not rule but would appoint someone as his representative and governor. This ruler would be named "Messiah" although the Old Testament does not use the term as is used today. He believes that today's designation was developed in the post Old Testament period. He also does not perceive that any Old Testament prophecies mentions the term "messiah" as being set apart for divine purpose as found in later texts of Isaiah 45:1. Therefore, the Messiah would be described as an eschatological figure standing in an intimate relationship with Yahweh like priests, prophets and kings set apart by the anointing with oil. Such a candidate was expected after the fall of Judah. The Messiah is just a mortal man and not a supernatural being and no individual Messiah was expected but a dynastic Davidic figure. There was no miracle around the figure of the Messiah. The miracle would rather be the age of salvation inaugurated by Yahweh and the establishment of the empire by him. Since the task of the Messiah was to sit on the throne of David, this presupposes that the Messiah did not bring salvation. The messiah of early Judaism was treated as a political and national leader of the earthly order and the

postexilic prophets reinterpreted the message of the pre-exilic messiah.

#### **M. Assimeng**

Messianic movements are rooted in the social context of a particular group of people. Messianism entails eminent expectation by a group of people of a hero who will usher them into a golden age. However, it is difficult to distinguish between distinctly religious messianic expectations and secular [8].

Messianic hope is therefore not limited to religious expectations. Messianism comes a movement stimulated by the circumstances of suffering. This understanding may be informed by the belief that when you have reached the climax, the end is near. There is a Shona proverb that says, Kana chingoma choririsa choda kuparuka (when the dram is playing too much it is about to break). The end is now relying on the fact that suffering has reached climax for the purpose of being ushered into eternal bliss.

#### **J. Neusner**

In other words, as Neusner [9] puts it in the preface of his book *Messiah in Context*, "the Messiah is an all blank screen unto which the given community would project its concerns". As a result, various points of divergence could be recognized.

Considering Messiah as a blank script on which anyone can write what he or she wants can give a more rational expectation. However, context here is also critical for visualisation of the Messiah. Also, some limitations would rely on the context.

#### **M. L. Daneel**

Daneel [10] rejects the negative judgment of messianic movements in Africa which Western scholars view as non-Christian or post-modern. Based on empirical facts relating to the Shona Independent Churches in Zimbabwe, Daneel contends that the black Messiah figures are concerned with a legitimate contextualization of the Christian message related to their own socio-cultural and religious backgrounds.

An individual's background informs how he or she perceive the Messiah. In times of trouble, the Messiah is the one who eradicate the predicament and make provision for what is highly desirable. The Messiah among independent Churches is figured in relation to ability to perform miracles and having signs that have followed after their death. They are also the founding fathers of the independent Churches.

#### **D. H. Wallace**

In the Inter-testament period, two kinds of messiahs were expected. One was the national messiah who would assume kingship over Judah to deliver the people from their political oppressors. There was also hope for a transcendent messiah descending from

heaven who would be both human and divine and who would establish the kingdom of God on earth [11].

The current figuration of messianic characters is based on the former oppressions. In postcolonial era, the colonisers are regarded as oppressors of the people. Those who fought for independence are then considered as redeemers. If the term is used for political ends then it is subject to manipulation even by those liberators when they put on the shoes of the oppressors.

### M. De Jonge

According to De Jonge [12], the use of the term messiah was not initially for an expected future agent of redemption, but it was developed in later Jewish writings of between 200 and 100 BCE. He claims that it could simply mean any figure that could bring eternal bliss. The terms “messianism” and “messianic” are generally used to denote change in history not necessarily brought about by a future redeemer. Historians and social anthropologists use these terms to discuss later development in western history and other cultural contexts mostly in relation to western colonial, missionary and modern influences. Messianic expectation becomes the expectation of a saviour called messiah. De Jonge further warns that the treatment of messianism in light of eschatology needs to be taken seriously. Eschatological expectation however is described as based on the conviction that God would inaugurate a new era using human or angelic mediators.

De Jonge [12] reiterates that reference to messiah in Daniel 9:25 is believed to refer to Zerubbabel during the time of Onias, and Daniel 9:26 to Joshua in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. He however warns that the absolute use of the term messiah without a definite article should also be taken into consideration. Isaiah 45:1 and Habakkuk 3:13 are the only Old Testament prophetic texts which prophesy about the future Davidic king. However, present inquiries confirm undeniable related elements in many prophetic books.

### W. Kaiser

The term “messianic” has a wider range of meaning than “Messiah”. It is usually used in the Old Testament with reference to a glorious hope of a glorious future. This suggests that the Messiah is the central figure to bring about this golden age [13].

Here, we note that Messianic figures are attributed to glorious moments which are futuristic. The Messiah is therefore associated with life in the future age after this one where suffering is rife. The future kingdom if centred on Christ’s coming, it would only be realised after his second coming. The term “messiah” would no longer concern any political leader or attained through any political struggle of human nature. If it be struggle, it is of divine essence.

### J. G. McConville

Messianic expectations refer to phenomena that arose in the late period of the Old Testament. These *Messianic expectations* were further fully developed about a century before or after the birth of Jesus Christ. The Jewish context of expectation hailed Jesus. Christ as the Messiah. The verbal form is widely used in the Old Testament for *anointing of kings, prophets and others* for a divine responsibility. Originally the term was generally a deliverer but eventually became the focus of hope for postexilic Jews [14].

The term Messiah continued to develop in the history of ancient Israel until focussed on hope of the postexilic Jews. The postexilic circumstances of domination and hegemony which was realised during the period of Antiochus Epiphanes influenced the postexilic Jews to anticipate a figure of the righteous sufferer or divine warrior which found expression in the rise of the Maccabees.

### D. Juel

Juel [15] defines the term messiah as an adjectival form with passive sense derived from the Hebrew verb meaning to anoint. This term is on some occasions used for prophets and priests but, in principle, it is used for kings. Its use in the New Testament presupposes that it underwent a period of interpretation which can be reconstructed from post-biblical literature. While the term is also used in the Old Testament, it should be considered as having developed within Israel. Without knowledge of biblical traditions, references to the Messiah make not much sense. The Messiah refers to a future royal figure that will have a crucial role during the last days. Old Testament traditions projected to a future Davidic ruler.

Juel [15] also distinguishes between the terms “messianic” and “eschatological”. He claims that messianic refers to a promised future. Jews hoped that a descendant of David would redeem Israel from her enemies and establish an ideal kingdom “characterized by justice and peace”. He is also of the opinion that the term “eschatological” embraces all future expectations for royal figures. Eschatological traditions reveal the existence of prophetic and priestly figures. The Christian tradition merges the royal, priestly and prophetic traits into a single individual.

Juel [15] concludes that:

....the interpretation of the biblical material was influenced by a variety of factors including social situations and historical events. “The Messiah” exists in particular contexts. The precise meaning of the term therefore depends upon those various contexts and can be determined only by attending to such particulars.

Social situations influence divergent forms of expectations. The use of the term Messiah does not

presuppose that the term was entirely intended for him. It obtained various meanings as rooted in the circumstances of those who made use of the Bible. The Jewish roots of the term inform any other use of the term. The fact that the term did not maintain its meaning, it is exposed to further changes depending on context.

#### **W. Rose**

Messianic expectations are defined by Rose [16] as, "expectations focusing on a future royal figure sent by God – someone who will bring salvation to God's people and the world and establish a kingdom characterized by features such as peace and justice".

The Messiah brings salvation not only to God's people but the world. His role is not to serve God's people in particular but God's people in general. In this way, salvation is not a nationalist aspect but a universal one. The world kingdom to be established is expected to be characterised by peace and justice. More interesting is that the kingdom is established on earth. Such hopes may be rare since there is always hope that each should be rewarded accordingly (Daniel 12:1ff).

#### **D. Bock**

According to Bock [17], the term "messiah" simply refers to "the anointed one", but in theology it refers to the "promised one" hoped for by the Jews, not necessarily the eschatological figure. It is rooted in the hope for an ideal king as in Psalms 2:2. Only in Daniel 9:26 is the term messiah used in a more technical way. While Jewish hopes were there during the time of Jesus, Judaism had four major portraits of a messiah as can be traced in other ancient records. These were 1) a David like figure; 2) a transcendent figure in the likeness of "the son of man", a priestly figure and, 4) a prophetic teacher. Most of Bock's discussion focuses on Jesus as the Messiah which seems to be his main point of reference.

Messiah obtained various meanings at various points in history. Messiah is a term within divine promises for deliverance. Initially hope among the Jews was based on a historical figure of the Davidic dynasty and eventually anticipated of a future kingdom that transcends the earthly ones. Jesus messianic role could not be comparable to what the disciples were anticipating (Acts 1:1-8). His messianic character was not based on his earthly role but his heavenly enthronement.

#### **S.T. Porter**

Firstly, the term messiah is defined by Porter as a future figure that has an authoritative role in the end of time, normally the eschatological king. Secondly, the term may also mean a present religious and political leader who is appointed by God, especially a king or a priest and sometimes a prophet. Lastly, a messiah could be a future royal figure sent by God to

bring salvation to the people of God and to establish the kingdom of peace and justice in the world [18].

Porter already acknowledges that the meaning of the term "Messiah" is not static. Hope for a future authoritative figure presupposes lack of sovereignty on the part of the existing authorities. Those current authorities are limited since true authority is realised at the end of the time.

When we relate the above with the biblical narrative, we may consider the competing powers of Aaron and Pharaoh as Pharaoh's magicians also performed miracles. If it were a game Pharaoh's magicians were beaten during penalty shoot-outs when Aaron's serpent devoured the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians (Exod. 7:8-13). The one who is sovereign is yet to be realised at the end of days.

Messianic characterisation of present leaders would imply that no one can assume a position of authority without being appointed by God. This would bring a question whether there would ever be a king or leader not appointed by God. However, the mention of a leader appointed by God presupposes that others can lead without having been appointed. True appointment would therefore be confirmed as the leader should usher salvation to the people of God. If salvation is also intended for the people of God, the question of true leadership is two pronged: 1) a leader appointed by God and 2) a leader for the people of God at the time of establishing a kingdom characterised by peace and justice. To a greater extent, this kingdom is not limited but rather the whole world. Meaning to say that it is not localised like that of human kingdoms.

#### **K. M. Heim**

Messianism may also be defined as a set of expectations which focus on a future royal figure that is sent by God to bring salvation to God's people [19]. Opting for a future royal figure can be based on the illegitimacy of the current imperial order in which those in authority set conditions of oppression on their subjects. Expectation of the future royal figure also implies that there is oppression which require divine intervention. Waiting for someone sent by God presupposes that those in power were not appointed by God. In political leadership, once the subjects expect the coming of a deliverer this becomes evidence that the current leadership is unjustifiable.

#### **J. J. Collins**

In a society like ancient Israel, the noun "messiah" referred to contemporary human kings, priests and prophets. The English word "messiah" is derived from the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ which means "the anointed one". The verbal form מָשַׁח (to anoint) appears more frequently than the noun. Anointing was imparted on kings, priests and sometimes prophets as a process of

setting them aside for a special task in ancient times [20].

The aspect of expecting divine intervention is based on human inability to cause the much-desired freedom. Divine intervention by anointing a priest, king and prophet is based on the understanding that human beings are weak. Being empowered by God through anointing would generate reliance on God more than on human. However, the demise of these officers in biblical history inform us that those who are set apart through anointing would eventually suffer the fate of their task of mediation. The aspect of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 would not expose the messianic character to persecution and suffering for the people. In a postcolonial situation, those who suffered during the colonial era would be regarded as messianic figures.

The aspect of the righteous sufferer is carried over into the New Testament where the suffering of Christ is associated with his role as a deliverer. But this should inform us on the need for commitment to confront the oppressive powers.

### J. Derrida

In an exploration of Derrida's work in the Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy Reynolds [21] observes the late Derrida as a well-known philosopher of the twentieth century. According to Derrida, the Messiah is the wholly other "to come", who is not a fixed or identifiable "other" of known characteristics. His "wholly other" cannot be determined and can never actually arrive. He claims that even when the Messiah is "there", he or she is still regarded as "yet to come". The *messianic* structure of existence is open to the coming of an entirely ungraspable and unknown other, but the concrete, historical messianic expectations are open to the coming of a specific other of known characteristics. The messianic refers predominantly to a structure of our existence that involves waiting in ceaseless openness for a future.

Most definitions of messianism have a thin allusion to a crisis which raises the expectation of salvation. Such human consciousness of a better future is triggered by a crisis which could be social, economic, political and religious in nature. This type of definition will be considered in this research.

The openness of the future to a powerful intervention may not presuppose the absence of the Messiah. Even in his presence, he is yet to come. If his presence is not realised through the much-desired deliverance, then messianic figuration would be subject to manipulation. The presence of the Messiah should rather be realised through his intervention so that no manipulation would be made possible or rather the term would imply pacifism.

### C. Auffarth

Auffarth [22] defines messianism from the perspective of the history of religions. The term messiah referred generally to an anointed one. The term derived a new meaning in the sixth century when Jews expected the Messiah who would deliver them from foreign rule and establish an eschatological age of salvation. The meaning of the word was further expanded in the thirteenth century when it was used as a technical term in Christian theology. During the twentieth century, the term messiah became applicable to all other religions. In this instance, a redeemer could be an expected political leader while political religion and cults of personality become the main subjects of messianism. Messianism is associated with a social movement within a specific historical situation which envisions the eschatological culmination of history. Such is the view of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, in a situation which colonial powers enforce social, economic, political and religious norms accepted by the elites, the social groups that do not benefit from the privileges respond by seeking an alternative to the existing leadership. In this instance, the messianic figure becomes a charismatic hero leader of a movement who is designated as the messiah. The concept messiah developed a new meaning as it portrayed movements which developed in the late colonial and post-colonial periods. The prophecy against the colonial masters would be "*the first shall be the last*".

The term Messiah became a meaningful term for not only Jewish people but a term for all religious backgrounds under which oppression is common. Shifting from expecting the change of the present suffering to the future is not a matter of not only hoping for solution, but also to find rest in anticipation of the establishment of a new age in which the present suffering would never be seen again.

If the present does not sound to bring the peace and justice that is much desired people would wish the establishment of a new age which would never be realised without an alternative power.

## CONCLUSION

The term Messiah has no constant definition but continues to develop as it is used in various circumstances which differ. The sources used above have been ordered in their historical order, but one may find that some later authors could for their good reasons relied on more ancient definitions. Their historical circumstances found the ancient definition more appealing than how the term is being used today. In one of my publication I made it clear that the messianic characterisation of political figures come out as rhetorical propaganda to legitimise the authority of those in power. This has been done to capitalise on the openness of the future as those who passively resist the imperial domination are manipulated. Manipulation is only possible as those in power characterise their

political leaders as the legitimate messianic figures who usher economic and political freedom.

Despite that Messiah is in a biblical sense a figure to culminate the divine plan with creation, those who suffer injustices would recast their expectation to the second coming of Christ as the period in which justice would prevail. Those people who do not find rest in messianic hope would always embrace armed resistance to realise peace and prosperity. Since such solutions may be costly, hope would never be completely thwarted but would expect the resurrection of the dead as that final determinant in which everyone would be rewarded accordingly.

The term Messiah has been developed more philosophical meaning in which the predicament of the people informs the nature of their expectations. Since messianic expectations are triggered by crisis it is imperative for those with military power to intervene and advocate for justice for the weak and poor whose lifetime is spent with hope of a future which may not be even realised.

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