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Charting the End Times: Imran N. Hosein and the Return of Islamic Eschatology

Gjergj Totozani¹

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Introduction

Eschatology, the study of the end times and final events in human history, holds a significant place in many of the world's major religions. Judaism and Christianity offer rich eschatological traditions that have shaped their theological frameworks and cultural narratives. Similarly, Hinduism and Buddhism provide unique perspectives on cosmic cycles and ultimate liberation. However, Islamic eschatology presents distinct themes, focusing on the role of divine justice and the coming of key prophetic figures. Among contemporary scholars, Imran Nazar Hosein has emerged as a pioneering voice, offering profound insights into Islamic end-time doctrines. His work bridges classical interpretations with modern geopolitical realities, making his contributions relevant today. This article explores the general eschatological concepts across these religions before delving deeply into Islamic eschatology.

A General Explanation of Eschatology

The aim of this article is to offer a general overview of the eschatological concepts, with a particular focus on Islamic eschatology. Eschatology is a branch of theology that deals with the interpretation of the signs of the Last Day, or what is otherwise referred to as the signs of the apocalypse. It seeks to illuminate the ultimate fate of humanity and the world we inhabit. Etymologically, the term derives from the Greek *eschatos*, meaning "last" or "final," and *logia*, meaning "discourse" or "study." This field of theological enquiry is not only unique and important, but also complex and challenging to comprehend.

To speak about the eschatology of any religion is by no means an easy task. This difficulty arises for two main reasons. The first has to do with the fact that the signs of the Last Day, in order to be understood more clearly, must be reflected in or fulfilled by specific historical events. These events may include a wide range of occurrences, such as political and economic developments, wars, epidemics, earthquakes, and other global phenomena.

The second reason relates especially to the intuition, spiritual sensitivity, and intellectual sharpness of the scholar, who must be able to correctly interpret the verses of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet. Moreover, theological knowledge must be interdisciplinary, interwoven with fields such as history, philosophy, global economics,

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international relations, and geopolitics. In some cases, it must even draw from the natural and exact sciences, including physics and biology.

Regarding Islamic eschatology, early interpretation owed much to figures like Ibn Abbas, who decoded the Qur'ānic imagery of the afterlife, while the eighth-century ascetic Hasan al-Basri shifted the focus towards moral accountability and spiritual readiness.

The classical period saw the systematisation of these beliefs. Al-Ṭabarī's monumental commentaries provided a textual anchor for eschatological traditions, which were later refined into orthodox Sunni creed by theologians such as al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī. By the eleventh century, al-Ghazālī infused the field with profound psychological depth, moving beyond mere dogma to explore the spiritual state of the soul at death.

This intellectual trajectory continued with Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, who offered rigorous analyses of divine justice, intercession, and the nature of Paradise. Meanwhile, Shia scholarship, led by thinkers like al-Mufīd, developed distinct doctrines surrounding the Mahdi and the restoration of justice. From the encyclopaedic works of Ibn Kathīr to the reformist insights of Shah Waliullah in South Asia, the tradition has remained remarkably adaptive. Today, scholars continue to revisit these themes, framing classical eschatology within the ethical and social complexities of the modern world.

In the Jewish tradition, the history of eschatological thought is relatively complex and appears in several different versions. More concrete and detailed information can be found through the study of medieval Jewish philosophy. (Hyman, 2010)

Furthermore, during a significant moment such as the Second Assembly of the Frankfurt Rabbis in 1845, it was emphatically declared that “we are now on the eve of the coming of the Messiah, and the atonement for sins is near.” (Reventlow, 1997, p. 14).

The prophets and writers of the Old Testament, at least in a direct and literal sense, do not foresee a second coming of Christ. In the New Testament, however, Jesus and the apostolic writers are clear that the First Coming of Christ will be followed by a Second Coming, accompanied by victory and glory (Christian eschatology).

Christian eschatology does not focus heavily on apocalyptic destruction or final catastrophes, because its central theme is not the end itself. As Ernst Bloch would say: “The end of Christ would ultimately be his true beginning” (Moltmann, 1996, p. 11). Most of the biblical writings relied largely on stories passed down through various traditions and on their own knowledge of the past (Corrigan, Denny, Eire & Jaffee, 2016). When it comes to Christianity, the oral tradition was closely tied to the personal relationships that people had with Christ's disciples and their immediate followers (Corrigan, Denny, Eire & Jaffee, 2016).

It would be an extremely challenging task to delve into the beliefs of Eastern religions, such as Hinduism or Buddhism, as doing so requires deep theological expertise. Ideally, such topics should be explored by scholars within those respective religious traditions. The same applies to the vast array of pagan beliefs from antiquity or even later periods, as it would be a monumental undertaking to examine the eschatological views of each one.

The Legacy of Imran Hosein: A Key Foundation in the Knowledge of Islamic Eschatology

Imran Nazar Hosein was born in 1942 in the small Latin American country of Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout his life, he attended several universities that gave him the opportunity to

delve into various fields of knowledge. He began his academic journey at al-Azhar University in Cairo and later continued at the Aleemiyah Institute in Karachi, Pakistan, where he graduated in Islamic theology. Imran also pursued studies at other institutions of higher education, including the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Institute of International Relations in Switzerland.

He worked for several years at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, but in 1985, he resigned to dedicate his life entirely to the study and propagation of Islam.

His monumental contribution to Islamic thought can be categorised into two main areas: books addressing general topics within the Islamic field of knowledge, and writings specifically focused on Islamic eschatology. In the first category, some notable titles include *Fasting and Power*, *Islam and Buddhism*, *A Community and an Emir*, *The Strategic Importance of the Journey of Isra and Mi'raj*, and *George Bernard Shaw and the Scholar of Islam*.

When it comes to eschatology, some of his most important works are *Jerusalem in the Qur'an*, *An Islamic View of Gog and Magog in the Modern World*, *Surah Al-Kahf and the Modern Age*, *Dajjal, the Qur'an and the Beginning of History*, *Constantinople in the Qur'an*, *The Gold Dinar and the Silver Dirham: Islam and the Future of Money*, *Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an*, *The Qur'an and the Moon*, *In Search of Khidr's Footsteps at the End of Time*, and *The Qur'an, the Great War, and the West*.

Imran Hosein follows a particular methodology in his study of the Qur'an, which he has outlined in several of his writings. He emphasises that before studying the Qur'an, one must first recite it. This recitation should be done on a monthly basis, following the lunar calendar which alternates between 29 and 30 days. A key principle of this practice is that during the monthly recitation, the divisions of the Qur'an (*juz*) should not be broken down or interrupted (Hosein, 2020; Al-Qur'an, 15:89, 93). Each surah should be read in full as intended, just like the stars that shine at night, helping the traveller find their way (Hosein, 2016; Al-Qur'an, 67:5; 6:97).

The above explanation is essential to understand the path that the scholar follows to delve into the knowledge of the End Times and, consequently, to lay the foundations of Islamic eschatology.

The author considers his book *Jerusalem in the Qur'an* as the cornerstone of his entire eschatological work. First published in 1999, the book masterfully unpacks, like never before, the theme of the False Messiah, the Antichrist, or as he is known in Islam, the Dajjal. According to Imran Hosein, the Dajjal is perhaps the most difficult sign to unravel, requiring deep knowledge across many fields, as well as spiritual intuition or *nūr* (Arabic for "light"). In Islam, the Dajjal is considered one of the ten signs of the Last Day or Qiyamah.

Among other topics, this book makes a serious attempt to decode the prophecy of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) concerning the Antichrist. The prophecy explicitly states: "The Dajjal will stay on Earth for forty days. The first day will be like a year, the second day like a month, and the third day like a week. After that, his days will be like our days" (Hosein, 1999, pp. 62, 70).

Imran Hosein seeks to analyse three main historical and civilisational stages, distinguishing them by their characteristics, to reach the conclusion that we are on the verge of the third and final stage of the Dajjal's emergence. According to the author, the primary mission of the False Messiah is to impersonate the True Messiah, namely Jesus Christ or 'Isa (peace be upon him), as he is known in Islam. The Dajjal will attempt this by appearing in Jerusalem and turning back the golden age for Israel. For this reason, Jerusalem, aside from its current

significance, is seen as a key and extremely important city for the events marking the End of History on Earth.

Another sign of the Last Times is the emergence of Gog and Magog, referred to in the Qur'an as Ya'juj and Ma'juj. The scholar explains this sign most thoroughly in a separate book. Leaving aside details, in broad terms, according to Imran Hosein, Gog and Magog are humans, descendants of Adam (peace be upon him), who have already appeared and are spreading throughout the world. Two key characteristics define them: their control over crucial centres of power and the destruction and evil they sow within human society.

They not only control the world. Their goal is to continue transforming society, reshaping it according to their will and breaking down all the barriers that for centuries have preserved the diversity of societies and cultures. They brought humanity globalisation and modernism as a political, economic, and cultural project. This project is built on foundations that are both secular and atheistic, declaring that there is no place for God in this world. (Hosein, 2009, pp. 186-187)

In conclusion, it is important to highlight the close connection between the Dajjal and Gog and Magog. The Dajjal, being a metaphysical entity acting beyond the material world, gives his instructions for implementation to people “transformed into Ya'juj and Ma'juj.”

The concept of knowledge and economic insights occupies a central and vital place in the work of Imran Hosein. According to him, the scientific revolutions that began in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as intellectual movements such as positivism in the 19th century, introduced a very rigid concept of “knowledge.” In this view, knowledge is limited solely to what can be attained through scientific experiments or sensory observation—essentially, only that which can be perceived and understood within the material world.

Imran Hosein contrasts this narrow conception with the holistic understanding embodied by the figure of Khidr in Surah al-Kahf in the Qur'an. Khidr represents the true scholar who harmonises the “external knowledge,” the empirical knowledge described above, with the “internal knowledge,” which comes as *nūr* (light) directly from God. This internal knowledge is conveyed through the holy scriptures, but has been largely excluded from modern secular conceptions of knowledge. On this topic, Hosein writes:

The lessons we learn from Surah Al-Kahf, which also protects us from the trial of the Antichrist, relate to the fact that the time of the Antichrist will be marked by an epistemology that recognises only knowledge derived from external observation. Those who accept the epistemology of secular knowledge will remain spiritually blind. When people accept only one source of knowledge, external knowledge, they are reduced to viewing the world with only one eye, that is, the external eye. (Hosein, 2007, pp. 156, 169)

In his works, Imran Hosein understandably addresses the issue of 'Īsā (peace be upon him), Jesus, or the True Messiah. The return of 'Īsā is regarded as the foremost sign among all the signs of the Day of Judgement. Drawing from the Qur'an, Imran presents five key arguments supporting the second coming of Jesus to this world. He notes:

For reasons that should be clear to our readers, we believe that humanity has not been given complete information about all the events that will unfold after the Messiah's return. Such knowledge is known only to God and to those whom He has chosen to share it with. Therefore, we must make every effort to derive information about this monumental event from the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. We find great comfort in the fact that history will conclude with the triumph of the Truth, embodied in the coming of the Messiah. (Hosein, 2021, p. 171).

This brief exploration into eschatological knowledge represents a humble attempt to bring to the reader's attention a topic that remains cloaked in mystery, complexity, and

uniqueness. It is equally challenging to encapsulate the vast and profound work of Imran Hosein in a concise and accessible manner for those readers who will patiently engage with this article.

Conclusion

Islamic eschatology, with its rich symbolic and prophetic elements, is distinguished by its meticulous focus on the end times and divine justice. The scholarship of Imran Nazar Hosein has significantly advanced this field by integrating traditional interpretations with contemporary challenges and geopolitical shifts. His work revitalises Islamic eschatological discourse, rendering it both accessible and profoundly relevant to modern audiences.

By emphasising the interplay between spiritual teachings and global events, Hosein offers a robust framework for interpreting current world dynamics through an eschatological lens. These pioneering contributions continue to inspire scholars and believers alike, encouraging a deeper reflection on the ultimate realities foretold in Islam. This study affirms Hosein's position as a pivotal figure in shaping contemporary Islamic eschatology; future research may build upon his insights to further explore the practical implications of these beliefs within the modern world.

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