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JESUS, THE QĀ'IM AND THE END OF THE WORLD¹

The goal of this paper is to address an intriguing aspect of Islamic religious development, which, to my knowledge, has thus far gone unmentioned by western scholars. Our task can be described quite succinctly: the Jesus of Sunnī Islam is a uniquely charismatic prophet, whose life is framed by two extraordinary events: his miraculous birth and his return in the end times to defeat evil and establish the universal rule of Islam. While the first event is equally true of the Jesus of Shī'ī Islam, the second event is less so. For through the furious theological development that followed the Twelfth Imām's occultation, this latter figure was given the eschatological role that Sunnīs assign to Jesus. Two questions, then, present themselves: why does the Hidden Imām, and not Jesus, play this role in Shi'ism? And, what role is thereby left for Jesus?

Our consideration of these questions will begin by looking at Jesus' place in the Qur'ān, especially in those passages which seem to assign to him eschatological importance. We will continue with an argument for the importance of Jesus to Sunnī eschatology, whether or not he is identified as the eschatological ruler (*Mahdī*). Thereafter, we will examine, briefly, the precipitous events that

¹ In order to designate the Shī'ī community under consideration, I have used the term *Imāmiyya* (and hence *Imāmī* as the adjective), over the term Twelver Shi'ism. Although the term *Ithna'ashariyya* is found in Arabic sources, and is helpful for distinguishing the community from the *Zaydiyya* and *Ismā'īliyya*, it is anachronistic for our purposes, since the *Imāmiyya* did not become «Twelvers» until the doctrine of 12 Imāms had become firmly established (no earlier than the late 4th/10th century). On this question, see S. A. ARJOMAND, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imām* (Chicago 1984), 43 and E. KOHLBERG, «From *Imāmiyya* to *Ithna-'Ashariyya*», *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976), 531ff.

I have chosen to avoid the term «apocalypse» and use the term «eschatology» as a subject label to connote our general topic; that is, the end times (coming from the Greek *εσχάτος* last or latest). Recent scholarship has differentiated between «apocalypse», the literary genre; «apocalypticism», the phenomenon; and «apocalyptic eschatology», the *Weltanschauung* (see J. COLLINS, «APOCALYPSE», *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Ed. Mircea Eliade (New York 1987), I: 334-36.). However, formal literary apocalypses are rare in Islamic literature and apocalypticism implies a transformation of the earth, a concept rather out of place in Islam. Moreover, other terms are also ill-fitting, for example «millennialism» which is properly a biblical term, and «messianism», which is not necessarily eschatological in Islam. Most importantly, the time under consideration is neither apocalyptic nor millennial, but belongs fully to the pre-apocalyptic realm of history no less than the present time. This is a crucial point to remember in order to keep the Islamic understanding of Jesus' descent clear of Christian categories.

struck Imāmī (Twelver) Shī'ism during the late 3rd (9th) – mid 4th (10th) centuries, and which forever separated it from Sunnism. This will lead into a discussion of the development, during this time, of the doctrine surrounding the Hidden Imām. In particular we will isolate references among key authors to his eschatological parousia (*ḡhūr*) and its relation to Jesus' eschatological descent (*nuzūl*). Finally, we will consider how the Qā'im of Shi'ism differs from the Mahdī of Sunnism, and why. In answering the above questions, I will emphasize the importance of the Hidden Imām's role as avenger of his community, a role not taken up by the Mahdī of Sunnism. It is a role which could not be fulfilled by Jesus, but only by that community's leader, a descendent of the Prophet, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his son Ḥusayn.

I. JESUS IN THE QUR'ĀN: A SIGN OF THE HOUR

Islamic doctrine on the nature of Jesus ('Īsā) is unequivocal: he is a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*), but no more². He was sent by God to his people, with the same message of divine law (*sharī'a*) and submission (*islām*), that other prophets brought to other peoples. More specifically, Jesus is one link in the chain made up of Abrahamic prophets, each of whom brought a written scripture. Abraham brought the *ṣuḥūf*; Moses the *tawrāt*; David the *zabūr*; Jesus the *injīl*; and Muḥammad the Qur'ān. The place of Jesus as prophet, and no more, is insisted upon by exegetes such as Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī (310/923): «Christ is not, O you heedless ones among the People of the Book, the son of God as you claim, but rather Jesus son of Mary...He is a prophet of God whom God sent in truth to those creatures to whom He sent him»³.

Yet the Qur'ānic picture of Jesus is much less clear. Jesus appears in the

² The precise meaning of these terms and their relationship to each other remains unclear. Traditional Muslim understanding holds that a *nabī* is one who receives a message from God, while a *rasūl* is one who is sent with that message to a specific people (hence the doctrine that a messenger has been sent to every people «*li kullī ummatin rasūlun*,» Qur'ān: 10:47). Thereby every messenger is a prophet, but every prophet is not a messenger. In fact, the Qur'ānic evidence is not that clear, as some figures, generally thought of as prophets, are called therein only messengers (e.g. Hud, Sālih) and others, who are considered to be also messengers, only prophets (e.g. Abraham). Other Muslim authors also identify prophet as the more inclusive category, but specify messengers as those prophets who bring a revealed law. This, of course, runs into the same conflict with Qur'ānic evidence. Therefore, western scholars have tended to see the two terms as interchangeable. See BIJLEFED, W. «A Prophet More than a Prophet? Some Observations on the Qur'ānic Use of the Terms Prophet and Apostle». *Muslim World* 59 (1969), 1-28.

³ His comments on Qur'ān 4:171. Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āyi l-qur'ān*. 12 Vols. (Cairo 1373/1954), IX:418.

Qur'ān through a miraculous virgin birth⁴, and disappears in a miraculous ascent to heaven⁵. In the meantime, his life on earth is marked by miracles unlike those of any other prophet, including Muḥammad, most notably his raising of the dead⁶. Moreover, a ḥadīth found in many important Qur'ānic commentaries explains that of all humanity, only Jesus and his mother have been born sinless: «Every son of Adam when newly born is touched by Satan, except for the Son of Mary and his mother; it is at this contact that the child utters his first cry»⁷. In light of all of this, certain western scholars have maintained that the Qur'ān affirms every Christian doctrine about Jesus, except his divinity⁸. Others have questioned whether even his divinity is rejected⁹. In addition, the Qur'ān accords titles unto Jesus that it ascribes to no other prophet, including Muḥammad, such as «Spirit of God» (*rūḥ Allāh*) and «Word of God» (*kalimat Allāh*) and, of course, Christ (*al-masīḥ*)¹⁰.

It is this last title, of course, which should attract our attention in this pa-

⁴ Qur'ān 21:91.

⁵ Qur'ān 4:157-8.

⁶ Qur'ān 3:143, 5: 110. The raising of the dead, it should be added, is always done with God's permission. Among Christ's other Qur'ānic miracles: speech as an infant (Qur'ān 3:46, 5:110, 19:29), creation of live birds from clay (3:49, 5:110), curing of a blind man and a leper (5:110), bringing down a table from the sky with a banquet (5:112-5). While later Muslim tradition asserts a number of miracles for Muḥammad, the Qur'ān is unequivocal that the scripture itself is his only miracle (cf. Qur'ān 34:50, 40:55, 47:19). For the relation of Christ's miracles to biblical and apocryphal accounts, see M. HAYEK, *Christ de l'Islam* (Paris 1959), H. MICHAUD, *Jesus selon le Coran, Cahiers théologiques* (Neuchâtel 1960), G. PARRINDER, *Jesus in the Qur'an* (London 1965), and ANAWATI, «'Isā», *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition* (Henceforth *EI*²), IV:82.

⁷ The genesis of this ḥadīth is related to Qur'ān 3:36, where Zakariyyā' places Mary, and her descendants, in the care of God to be protected from Satan. Tabarī quotes this ḥadīth, in several versions, when commenting on this verse (see VI:337ff.). It is also contained in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, although not in either of the *Saḥīḥ*'s of Bukhārī and Muslim. See A. WENSINCK, *Concordance de la tradition musulman*, 7 Vols. (Leiden 1967), VI:209. cf. G. ANAWATI, «Islam and the Immaculate Conception», *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (South Bend 1958), 447-61; and G. ANAWATI, «'Isā», *EI*², IV:82.

⁸ Michel Hayek argues that the Qur'an supports the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin Birth, the Ascension, and the Assumption. Hayek, 65.

⁹ The verses most often cited as rejecting Christ's divinity are Qur'ān 5:17, 72 and 4:171. It could be argued, however, that these verses do not actually reject Christ's divinity, but merely the identification of Allāh with him. Moreover, mention must be made of another intriguing verse, 9:31a, which Muslims scholars universally see as a condemnation of the divinity of Christ. In fact, it may be legitimately argued that it does the opposite. The verse reads as a condemnation of Jews and Christians: «They took their rabbis and monks and Christ the Son of Mary as Lords apart from God». However, the verse is more clearly read with *al-masīḥ* in the genitive (along with the preceding *Allāh*) «They took their rabbis and monks as Lords apart from God and Christ the Son of Mary». This is one of the arguments brought forward by I. di Matteo, who suggested that the Qur'ān nowhere explicitly denies divinity to Christ. His argument is neither poorly reasoned or without evidence in its favor, yet it has been quite thoroughly ignored by later scholarship. This, however, is more likely due to the fact that he wrote in Italian, than to any conspiracy of silence. See his *La divinità di Cristo e la dottrina della Trinità in Maometto e nei polemisti musulmani* (Rome 1938), ch. 1.

¹⁰ «Spirit of God» 4:171; «Word of God», 3:45, 4:171, «Christ», eleven times, all of which, notably, are Medinan. See ANAWATI, «'Isā», *EI*², IV:82.

per, as in other contexts it is unequivocally messianic. The Hebrew (*mashiah*) and Aramaic (*mashīa*) cognates of the word, whence it most likely derives¹¹, have decidedly eschatological significance. In the Qur'ān's case, however, Muslim exegetes have not found any such meaning, and indeed the Qur'ān itself seems to understand it simply as a proper name. al-Masīḥ is used therein only to refer to Jesus. Yet Muslim exegetes were certainly aware of the Christian understanding of Jesus' title, and they were accordingly anxious to prove its innocuous connotation. In doing so they suggest a number of possible explanations for the term, none of which are soteriological or eschatological¹². Ṭabarī writes:

The root of «*al-masīḥ*» is «*al-mamsūḥ* (the annointed)»...God named him so because He purified [Jesus] from sins...Some people have claimed that the root of this word is Aramaic or Syriac, «*mashīā*» which was Arabicized as «*al-masīḥ*», just as the rest of the prophets' names in the Qur'ān were Arabicized, such as *Ismā'īl*, *Ishāq*, *Mūsā* and *Isā*...but if «*al-masīḥ*» was not from Arabic speech and Arabs did not understand its meaning, it would not have been proclaimed¹³.

Yet while Sunnī Muslim exegetes see no eschatological importance in the name *al-masīḥ*, they see plenty such importance in the person so named. How exactly he came to be thus understood is a question that we will address shortly, because the Qur'ān itself gives no clear statement to that effect¹⁴. What we have, instead, are a couple of passages that give us some vague suggestions. Foremost is Qur'ān 4:157-9¹⁵:

... and for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God' – yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of

¹¹ This is the scholarly consensus, against the view of Horovitz, that it was borrowed from Ethiopic. Many Muslim exegetes, including Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī and Baydawī, allow the possibility that the word is foreign, coming from Hebrew or Syriac. See A. WENSINCK and C. BOSWORTH, «Masīḥ», *IE*², VI:726; and ANAWATI, «Isā», *IE*², IV:82.

¹² One exegete, al-Firūzabādī, remarks that there are fifty different explanations for this title. Most of them can be divided between those who associated the word with the verb *masaḥa* (to rub or anoint), and those who did so with the verb *sāba* (to travel or go on a pilgrimage). The former trend emphasizes either how Jesus was anointed (with blessings, by the wing of the angel Gabriel that protected him from sin, etc.) or was himself an anointer (when he anointed the eyes of the blind or he anointed the sick by rubbing them with his hand, etc.). See ANAWATI, «Isā», *IE*², 4:82.

¹³ His comments on Qur'ān IV:171. Ṭabarī, IX:417-18.

¹⁴ «Muslim tradition has long thought that Jesus will come again to restore all things and reign as a just king, and it seems that it was affected by early Christian hopes of a Second Advent. The Qur'an has none of this, though there are hints which suggest Jesus as an eschatological figure». PARRINDER, 123.

¹⁵ This passage and the following one are from Arberry's translation. Elsewhere the translation is mine.

that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge of him except the following of surmise; and they slew him not of a certainty.

No indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is All-mighty, All-wise.

There is not one of the People of the Book but will assuredly believe in him before *his* death (*mawtibi*), and on the Resurrection Day he will be a witness against them.

The beginning of this passage, the Qur'ānic version of the crucifixion, leaves plenty of room open for discussion about who (or what) exactly hung on the Cross that day. At the same time, it emphatically insists that it was not Jesus¹⁶. For he was «raised up to Him» and remains alive to this day in heaven. Thus we have the first Qur'ānic hint that Jesus will return at the end of time, for it is understood that he must die like all other prophets, and all other humans. God must have spared him death for the time being, but will send him back down later to finish his earthly life. Accordingly, tradition has it that an empty tomb waits for him next to that of Muḥammad at the Prophet's mosque in Medina¹⁷.

While the beginning of our first passage is open to interpretation, its end is no less so. The object of controversy among exegetes here is the small pronoun, «*hi*», at the end of the word «*mawt*» (death). The question surrounding it is, whose death are we talking about? If it is the death of a «person of the book»¹⁸,

¹⁶ Two positions came to the forefront in this debate. The first is that a mere form, a phantom, was put in the place of Christ, a doctrine also held by Christian Docetists, who likewise rejected the reality of Christ's crucifixion. The other position is represented, for example by 'Abd al-Jabbār (415/1025), who argues that another man was crucified in his place. This second position naturally led to the question of who that man was. Certain thinkers, such as the second century Christian Basilides, identify that man as Simon of Cyrene (who volunteered due to his love of Christ). Others, such as the Muslim al-Tha'labī (427/1036) identify him as Judas Iscariot (who was chosen unwillingly as a punishment). 'Abd al-Jabbār, on the other hand, concludes that the crucified man was chosen by a random mishap, when Judas kissed the wrong man. See S. STERN «Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in 'Abd al-Jabbār», *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (April 1967), 44-7. At the same time, other Muslim authors, such as the exegete al-Rāzī (605/1209, in his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* on this verse), also considered the view that Jesus indeed died on the Cross before being raised to heaven. See J. JOMIER, «Unité de Dieu, Chrétiens et Coran selon Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī», *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980), 149-177. A more complete consideration of these questions should also consider those verses that speak of the ascension of Christ, e.g. 3:55: «God said, O Jesus, I will make you pass away and raise you to myself and sanctify you from those who disbelieve» [cf. also Qur'ān 4:158].

¹⁷ When Sir Richard Burton made his remarkable journey to Mecca and Medina (see *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, 2 Vols. (New York 1964)), it was apparently commonly accepted that such a tomb existed. My Muslim friends who have visited the Prophet's mosque, however, have not heard of such a tomb.

¹⁸ *Ahl al-kitāb* is a designation for those non-Muslims who are monotheistic and hold a written scripture. According to Islamic Law they are protected from a ban that, ideally, would eliminate all others from an Islamic state. This status is given in the Qur'ān, to Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and the mysterious Šābi'ūn, and but has been extended to others. See e.g. Qur'ān 3:110-115; 5:51, 57, 65-66; and 33:26-27.

then the exegete is in the uncomfortable position of trying to explain (1) what belief in Jesus means and (2) what it means that the People of the Book have all believed in them before their death. Many people of the book (Jews, for example) have of course died without believing in Jesus. Alternatively, this pronoun could be seen as referring to Jesus, which makes the meaning of «belief in Jesus» more reasonable (since Jesus will not die before the eschaton). Either option, however, leaves the exegete with the uncomfortable task of explaining why the Qur'an singles out belief in Jesus at all. The exegete al-Bayḍawī, suggests how both of these options might be formulated, and opts for the first one:

The pronoun of «in him» refers to Jesus, but the pronoun of «his death» refers to one [of the People of the book], meaning that no one of the Jews and Christians will not believe that Jesus is a servant of God and His prophet before he dies, even if at the time when he gives up his ghost, but this belief will not benefit them.

Yet it is also said that both of the pronouns refer to Jesus, meaning that when he descends from the sky, all sects will believe in him. That is, when he descends from the sky...there will be no one of the People of the Book, except who believes in him, so that there will be one sect, and this is the sect of Islam¹⁹.

The second relevant passage, Qur'an 43:61, is an equally contentious one for Muslim scholars:

It (*innahu*) [Jesus? Qur'an?] is knowledge (*'ilm*) [sign (*'alam*)? warning (*dhikr*)?] of the Hour; doubt not concerning it, and follow me. This is a straight path.

Here the dispute is not simply over the interpretation of the words, but over the words themselves. For this is one of the rare cases where the different canonical readings (*qirā'āt*) vary not only in their vowelizing, but even in the consonantal text²⁰. The verse, according to the most popular reading (*Hafs 'an 'Āsim*), reads *wa-innahu la-'ilm^{un} li-l-sā'ati*, «He [Jesus] is truly a knowledge of

¹⁹ NAṢĪR AL-DĪN AL-BAYḌAWĪ, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* (Beirut 1304/1984), 130.

²⁰ From the precedent of Ibn Mujaḥhid (324/936), the *qirā'āt* are generally considered to be seven (each with two different recensions), although some Muslims have acknowledged the «three after the seven» and the «four after the ten» to come up with fourteen. Previously, scholars (most notably A. Jeffery) were vigilant in comparing the various versions (along with reports of pre-Uthmānic codices). More recently, J. WANSBOROUGH and J. BURTON have both cast grave doubts (although in very different ways) over the traditional account of Qur'anic collection and standardization. The relevant question, then, for our purposes (to which I do not know the answer), is whether or not the variations on Qur'an 43:61 return to an early stage of Islamic exegetical development or are a much later projection onto that development. See R. PARET, «Kīrā'a», *IE*², V:127-9; J. WANSBOROUGH, *Qur'anic Studies* (Oxford 1977), esp. 202ff.; and J. BURTON, *Collection of the Qur'an* (Cambridge 1977), esp. 203ff.

the Hour». This is usually interpreted as saying that the end times can be known by his descent. The second reading (*Warsh 'an Nāfi'*), and the only other one still is commonly used, reads *la-'alam^{un}* «He is truly a sign of the Hour»; while yet another reading reads *la-dhikr^{un}* «He is truly a warning of the Hour». Another common interpretation agrees with the text of *Ḥafṣ* but interprets the pronominal suffix (*hu*) as referring to the Qur'ān, not to Jesus²¹. Bayḍawī makes mention of this alternative interpretation, but opts for the first:

«'He' refers to Jesus...For his descent is one of the conditions of the Hour, by which its advent will be known. Yet it is also said that the pronoun [refers] to the Qur'ān, for in it are signs of [the Hour's] occurrence and indications about it»²².

It may be concluded, then, the Qur'ān can be read as saying that Jesus will have a role to play in the eschaton, but it is remarkably unclear about what that role will be. Its commentators, as well, were divided over the interpretation of crucial verses. We will see this uncertainty mirrored in later Islamic eschatological writings²³.

II: JESUS: THE SUNNĪ MAHDĪ?

In looking at Sunnī writings and ḥadīth on eschatology, I will not attempt to trace the historical development of doctrine concerning the Mahdī. This remains a question too unclear and controversial to be easily summarized. Nor is my goal in this section to give an exhaustive appraisal of Sunnī eschatology, but simply to provide a backdrop for the section on Shī'ī eschatology²⁴.

The term Mahdī, and any idea of such a figure (other than the references about Jesus that we have discussed), find no mention whatsoever in the Qur'ān. The question of its historical genesis, then, is intimately connected with the historical events and religious environment of early Islam; the traditions about the Mahdī that exist reflect the diverse elements of that setting. Many scholars

²¹ See ANAWATI, 84 and PARRINDER, 34, who argues that the second reading should be taken as the most correct.

²² BAYḌAWĪ, 253.

²³ «In spite of the support of the belief in the Mahdī by some prominent traditionists and Sūfīs, it never became an essential part of Sunnī religious doctrine. Sunnī creeds mention it but rarely. Many famous scholars like al-Ghazzālī avoided discussing the subject. This attitude was often probably less motivated by doubts concerning the truth of the belief than by fear of encouraging politically disruptive movements in the Muslim community. Open criticism of the belief like that of Ibn Khaldūn who, in his *Muqaddima* undertook to refute the authenticity of all ḥadīths concerning the Mahdī, was exceptional». W. MADELUNG, «Mahdī», *IEP*, V:1235.

²⁴ Thus I will rely heavily on secondary literature, particularly the scholarship of Madelung.

have argued, convincingly in my opinion, that the formation of this doctrine was heavily influenced by extra-Islamic sources, whether Zoroastrian, Christian or Jewish. In any case, the issues involved in this process lie beyond our scope, which for now will be directed simply at the conceptions that resulted from that process and the place of Jesus therein.

Sunnī traditions regarding the Mahdī can be roughly categorized into three separate views. The first and apparently earliest view, which need not concern us here, is represented by those traditions which identify the Mahdī as a political leader, whether a caliph (such as the ‘Umayyad ‘Umar II or the ‘Abbāsīd al-Saffāh) or a political insurgent (such as Muḥammad b. al-Hanifiyya or al-Nafs al-Zakiyya)²⁵. This figure is entitled the Mahdī by virtue of his restoring the righteousness of earliest Islam, defeating wrongdoers and establishing a just rule²⁶. Such an understanding of the Mahdī need not have any eschatological aspect whatsoever: «As an honorific epithet without messianic significance, the term was employed from the beginning of Islam»²⁷.

The second view, and the most widely accepted today, portrays the Mahdī as a messianic figure who will gather Muslims together under his rule before the descent of Jesus and, together with Jesus, lead them to ultimate victory in anticipation of the Day of Resurrection. The rise of the Mahdī into power will be preceded by a period of increasing lawlessness and debauchery, during which both the Sharī‘a and the natural order will be threatened. The protagonist of this dark age will be a figure known as al-Dajjāl: «when one sees many preachers and few healers appear; when the human order is disorganized, when men act like women and women like men; when men make couples among themselves and the women do the same, then it is that God will send the Dajjāl against them to dominate and oppress»²⁸. al-Dajjāl, a figure who does not appear in the Qur’ān but does appear in Syriac Christian literature²⁹, will seduce the world with his miracles and riches, but in the end is destined to be killed.

²⁵ See MADELUNG, «Mahdī», 1230ff.

²⁶ Several widespread hadīth reflect this understanding of the Mahdī as nothing more than a righteous ruler. Among them: «The Prophet said: There will be in my community the Mahdī for a short time, seven (years), otherwise nine. My community will then enjoy prosperity as they have never enjoyed. [The earth] will bring forth its fruit for them and will not hoard anything away from them. Money will at that time be in heaps, and whenever a man will get up and say ‘O Mahdī, give me’, he will say ‘Take.’» IBN MĀJA, *Bāb khurūj al-Mahdī*, 4172 (cf. al-Tirmidhī, *Bāb mā jā’a fī al-Mahdī*, 2268). Another tradition quotes the Prophet saying «among your chalīphs, there will be a caliph who will spread money around without counting it». Muslim, *Bāb lā taqūm al-sā’a*, 7266. See also MADELUNG, «Mahdī», 1231-2.

²⁷ MADELUNG, 1230. The word itself (coming from the root *h-d-y*) need not imply any eschatological significance, but rather suggests a meaning simply of «guide». Furthermore, the earliest applications of Mahdī, as far as we can tell, were divorced from any messianic connotations. Both Muḥammad and al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib were reportedly called «Mahdī» for their status as righteous leaders. See Madelung, 1230.

²⁸ HINDĪ, *Muntakhab*, VI, 56. Translated by Hayek, 256.

²⁹ A. Abel traces the characteristics of the Islamic al-Dajjāl back to the Biblical anti-Christ and to

What is most interesting, perhaps, is the inversion of natural order that will occur during under his reign (men acting like women, etc). al-Dajjāl himself carries signs of reversing nature, like the water he will bring that will be made of fire and the fire that will be made of water³⁰. All of this comes from the Muslim community's neglect of the divine law, the *sharī'a*. Just as the Israelites disobeyed the message of Moses³¹, as the 'Ādites disobeyed the message of Hud³², so too will the Muslims eventually turn away from Islamic law and find themselves heading for doom instead of salvation.

At this time, the Mahdī, who will come from the family of Muḥammad (through either the Ḥusaynids or the Ḥasanids), will rise up to power in opposition to al-Dajjāl, gathering Muslims together and, according to many traditions, conquer Constantinople (and sometimes Rome as well)³³. Under his rule, which is usually understood as either forty days or forty years, the *sharī'a* will be fully carried out and he will fill the world «with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and injustice»³⁴. During this time Jesus will descend and pray behind the Mahdī in the great communal prayer of all Muslims. Thereafter, the two figures, or Jesus alone³⁵, will together kill al-Dajjāl, break Crosses and kill Jews³⁶. Jesus will then live out his days peacefully under the Mahdī's rule and be buried in the tomb waiting for him in Medina. So it is that the role of the Mahdī is to set things right again. He is precisely the foil of al-Dajjāl, without whom there would be no need of a Mahdī.

Thus is Sunnī eschatology separated from both Christian and Shī'ī eschatology. The Mahdī does not usher in a new «millenium» or transform the world and its order. Rather, he re-establishes the divine law that Muhammad has already received and promulgated, the *sharī'a*, which is

the Christian *al-daggālā* who appears in the Syriac writings of St. Ephraem, Ps. Methodius and the *Apocalypse of al-Baḥīra*. See «*al-Dajjāl*», EI², II:75-7.

³⁰ Abel, 75. Here he is quoting a tradition from the *Bāb dhikr al-Dajjāl* of both Bukhārī and Muslim.

³¹ See Qur'an 7:138-140.

³² See Qur'an 11:50-60, 7:65-72.

³³ See MADELUNG, «Mahdī», 1234.

³⁴ This refrain appears repeatedly in eschatological traditions, e.g. from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: «The Mahdī will come from my community, whether his life is lengthened or shortened. He will live seven, eight or nine years. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and injustice». *Musnad*, 10982.

³⁵ According to Madelung, earlier traditions have Jesus alone killing al-Dajjāl, while only in later traditions does the Mahdī get involved in the action. He does not, however, offer any evidence for this conclusion. See MADELUNG, «Mahdī», 1234.

³⁶ Note the widespread ḥadīth: «...the earth cried out and there did not remain a rock, nor a tree, nor anything except that which said, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew behind me, so kill him!' except for the *ghurdaqā*, for it is a Jewish tree». Bukhārī, *Bāb qitāl al-yahūd*, 2858; Muslim *Bāb lā taqūm al-sā'a ḥatā...*, 7284.

both perfect and eternal. Under the Mahdī's reign, the *sharī'a* will be fully implemented, and the world will *return* to its natural order:

Tranquillity will be established and there will be peace; a man will encounter a lion without danger; he will pick up a snake without harm. The earth will provide vegetation as it did in the time of Adam. All of the inhabitants of the world will believe in Jesus and all will form one religious community³⁷.

Jesus, then, still has a central role in this second view, even though he is not identified with the Mahdī. For it is Jesus who will «will descend from the sky on the hill of 'Afiq³⁸, as a guiding *imām*, a just judge, dressed in a short, smooth *burnus* with a large front, carrying in his hand a lance with which he will kill Dajjāl³⁹. Moreover, while most of these traditions have the Mahdī leading the general prayer in Jerusalem, with Jesus behind him, others put Jesus in front. For some found it impossible that a prophet would pray behind the Mahdī, who is after all a regular human and therefore necessarily inferior to all prophets⁴⁰. Other traditions are still more focused on Jesus, relating that the Mahdī will ultimately hand over his rule to Jesus, who will reign in anticipation of the Day of Religion⁴¹.

Finally, we have a third view, most famously expressed by the prophetic ḥadīth passed down by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (110/728): «The affair will only get more distressful, and the world will be in flight; People will only get more greedy, and the Hour will come upon the evil ones of the people. There will be no Mahdī other than Jesus son of Mary⁴². According to this view, there is only one figure to rise up (or descend, as it were) in the end times: Jesus. It is he who leads the prayer and kills al-Dajjāl, and also Jesus who will rule at the eschaton.

This third view, however, later lost popularity, certainly weakened by its uncomfortably Christian tenor. Proponents of the second view attempted to interpret away al-Ḥasan's statement as meaning that no one but Jesus spoke in the cradle (*mahd*)⁴³, or that the Mahdī would rule only in submission to Jesus'

³⁷ HINDI, *Muntakhab*, translated HAYEK, 256.

³⁸ A place usually considered to be in Palestine. Other traditions have Jesus appearing in Damascus. See ANAWATI, 83.

³⁹ HINDI, *Muntakhab*, reference from Hayek, 256.

⁴⁰ Al-Taftazāni (792/1390) argued that it would only befit a prophet to be in front of the Mahdī. Suyūṭī, Haytamī and others argued that such homage paid to the Mahdī is a disrespect to Abū Bakr and 'Umar who are the two most excellent of men after the prophets. See MADELUNG, «Mahdī», 1235.

⁴¹ See MADELUNG, «Mahdī», 1233.

⁴² Preserved by Ibn Māja, in his *Bāb shiddat al-zamān* (4162). However, In the same book, Ibn Māja includes ḥadīth relating that the Mahdī will be from the offspring of Fāṭima (e.g. 4185).

⁴³ See Qur'ān 19:30.

guidance. Modern scholars, too, have criticized this ḥadīth, arguing that it was fabricated by Sunnīs to combat the Shī'ī notion of the Qā'im/Mahdī, which was based on the dictum that he would be a direct descendent of the prophet⁴⁴. Yet, as Massignon long ago argued, this third viewpoint is widely accepted in the earliest sources⁴⁵.

The later scholarly conflict over this ḥadīth is evident in the consideration given it by Ibn 'Asākir al-Dimashqī (571/1176). He begins by quoting those who have their doubts about its authenticity: «Ibn Shāhīn said, 'the only one to report this ḥadīth is al-Shāfi'ī and I do not know anyone who reports it from him other than Yūnis. This is a ḥadīth with a strange *isnād* and a famous *matn*, except for the statement, 'there is no Mahdī except for Jesus son of Mary'»⁴⁶. Yet Ibn al-'Asākir himself is not ready to cast the ḥadīth aside so quickly. He goes on to quote a similar ḥadīth, with the same *isnād*, that also includes the famous statement about Jesus⁴⁷. Thereafter he directly contests the statement of Ibn Shāhīn above, by stating that «[this ḥadīth] has indeed been transmitted by another path than Yūnis», and by quoting another *isnād*⁴⁸. Finally, he relates two accounts from the famous Successors, Mujāhid (ca. 102/720) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī himself, that explicitly affirm «the Mahdī is Jesus son of Mary»⁴⁹. The implication is clear: for Ibn al-'Asākir, there is no Mahdī except for Jesus.

His witness, and this third view, are strengthened by other strands of tradition that portray Jesus as the Mahdī, although less explicitly. Notice, for example, the ḥadīth recorded by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal:

Jesus the son of Mary will descend as a just imām, with a righteous decree. He

⁴⁴ The logic behind their argument relates to the Shī'ī insistence that the imāmate belongs to a direct descendent of the Prophet through his daughter Fātima, who will ultimately restore the prophet's family to its rightful place. By naming Jesus as the Mahdī and the restorer, Sunnīs cut out the heart of Shī'ī eschatology. See HAYEK, 243; A. SACHEDINA, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany 1981), 172. The validity of this theory rests on the question of whether the Shī'ī idea of the Qā'im/Mahdī had clearly developed before this ḥadīth was circulated (certainly by the time of Shāfi'ī, 204/820). Meanwhile, other scholars, including Modarressi, suggest that the influence also occurred the other way around, that the idea of the Shī'ī Qā'im was heavily influenced by that of the Sunnī Mahdī. While the idea seems circular, such mutual influence is not improbable, as the co-existing communities experienced parallel doctrinal development. See H. MODARRESSI, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam* (Princeton 1993), 89-91.

⁴⁵ See L. MASSIGNON, «L'Homme parfait en Islam», *Opera Minora*, 3 Vols. (Beirut 1963), I:114, note 3. Here he provides references to several authors who gave credence to this view, including al-Dhahabī, Ibn Khaldūn and al-Subkī. Later, however, Massignon concedes that the genesis of this ḥadīth is likely related to anti-Shī'ī sentiment. p. 118.

⁴⁶ IBN AL-'ASĀKIR, *Sīrat al-sayyid al-Masīh*, Ed. Suleiman Mourad (Beirut 1996), 273.

⁴⁷ This version adds the phrase, «and the era [or the world] will only increase in flight». IBN AL-'ASĀKIR, 275.

⁴⁸ IBN AL-'ASĀKIR, 275.

⁴⁹ IBN AL-'ASĀKIR, 277-278.

will break Crosses, kill swine, and bring back peace. He will make swords into sickles...The sky will let down its sustenance and the earth will send forth its blessing. A child will play harmlessly with a snake. The wolf will shepherd flocks and the lion cattle, without harming them⁵⁰.

Another, shorter version of the same ḥadīth gives us the clue that we are looking for, naming Jesus as «just imām and Mahdī»⁵¹. In this third view, then, Jesus takes center stage in the eschatological drama. Not only is he the one to lead the prayer, kill al-Dajjāl and rule in anticipation of the Resurrection, but certain traditions even portray him as the judge when the Hour arrives⁵².

Thus a significant strand of Sunnī tradition explicitly identifies Jesus as the Mahdī. Moreover, even the more prevalent view, which allows for the Mahdī and Jesus two different roles in the eschaton, makes Jesus a prominent, if not central, figure. Thus the Sunnī Islamic Jesus carries both the title (*al-Masīh*) and the role (as eschatological protagonist) of the Christian Jesus, only the association of that title with that role is missing.

Yet this only makes us ask, why is it Jesus that fulfills this role? According to strict Islamic doctrine, all prophets are created equal, although Muḥammad as the *khātam al-nabiyyīn* has a certain priority. Why then, would Jesus be God's instrument in the end times? Several reasons might be suggested. We have already had a glance at the first one, which is Jesus' high standing in the Qur'ān. A further point regarding this might be added. In Islam, like in Christianity, Jesus can be considered the new Adam, although not in the sense of Saint Paul (Rom. 5). The Islamic Jesus is the new Adam simply by being born without a father, directly through the divine decree «He merely says 'be' and it is»⁵³. Thus like Adam, with whom human history began, Jesus was created directly from the will of God, and it is fitting that human history should end with him.

Moreover, it should never be forgotten in the consideration of these questions that Islam was born with Christian neighbors all around her. From Syria to Palestine to Egypt; from Ethiopia to Yemen to Iraq, the Christian world formed a veritable circle around Muḥammad's Arabia. With the Islamic conque-

⁵⁰ *Musnad*, 10044.

⁵¹ See IBN HANBAL, *Musnad*, 9220.

⁵² It is generally accepted that Jesus will have a role on the Day of Religion as a witness against the Christians. Cf. Qur'ān 5:116 and 4:159. Note also the ḥadīth recorded by Bukhārī: «At the Last Judgment, the Christians will be told, 'What have you worshipped?' They will reply, 'We have worshipped al-Masīh, the Son of God.' For this they shall wallow in Hell». Bukhārī, *Bāb qawl Allāh ta'ālā wujūh...*, 7273. See also WENSINCK, «al-Masīh», *EP*, VI:726. What is more, certain Šūfis have given Jesus a still higher place, as the very judge over humanity. Note for example, Ibn 'Arabī's statement, «Know that without doubt Jesus will descend and will be our judge». See ANAWATI, 85.

⁵³ Qur'ān 3:48.

sts, Muslims plunged into the heart of that world and were in constant dialogue with it. Moreover, converts from Christianity gradually filled its ranks. It would be unreasonable to expect, then, that Christian influences would not infiltrate into the Islamic religious system, and into the area of eschatology. We have already seen the Syriac Christian origin of al-Dajjāl. In fact, we can trace other parallels with biblical (e.g. Daniel, Mark XIII and Revelation) and non-biblical (e.g. the Apocalypse of St. Ephraem) texts⁵⁴.

Related to this last point is the picture drawn of Jesus in early Islamic traditions as the epitome of piety and other-worldliness. In many of these accounts, Jesus appears as the model ascetic (*zāhid*) and mystic. His description centers on «poverty, on detachment from the life of this world, denunciation of false wisdom and of the specious sureties of this world»⁵⁵. This picture is painted in vivid colors by the Swedish bishop Tor Andrae, who, in his *Garden of Myrtles*, introduces the ascetic Christ as the model of righteousness for early Muslim mystics, even before the figure of Muḥammad⁵⁶. It is this aspect of Jesus' character that makes him perfectly suited to call the world into repentance and submission to God in the end times.

This reverence for Jesus also appears later, with several Šūfīs. We find both Hallāj (309/922) and Ibn al-'Arabī (638/1240), from opposite ends of the Islamic world, referring to Jesus as *khātām al-awliyā'* (the seal of the saints, in parallel to the designation of Muhammad as *khātām al-nabiyyīn*, seal of the prophets)⁵⁷. This phrase carried two parallel meanings. The first is qualitative, that Jesus epitomizes saintliness, particularly in his *zuhd* (asceticism) and his purity. Jesus was born with the mystical orientation, a simple and correct standing with God, for which others must constantly and arduously strive⁵⁸. The second meaning is temporal, that Jesus as the «seal» is the last of the saints, the one whose descent marks the arrival of the eschaton.

⁵⁴ In S.A. Arjomand's unpublished paper «Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period», he points out some intriguing connections between Daniel and Islamic eschatological notions, including the relation between the Hebrew «*milāma*» and the Arabic «*malāhim*», which is used in parallel to «*fi-tan*» (Cf. MARWAZI's *kitāb al-Fitan*). In his *ELP* article «al-Dajjāl», Longrigg traces a tradition of the Christ/anti-Christ drama from the New Testament (Mark XIII, Revelation) to Pseudo-apocalyptic literature (St. Ephraem, Pseudo-Methodius), and then to Ibn Ḥanbal and other Islamic writers. See *EL2*, III:76.

⁵⁵ HAYEK, 85.

⁵⁶ See T. ANDRAE, *In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism*, Trans. B. Sharpe (Albany 1987), esp. Ch. 1.

⁵⁷ In other places of course, Ibn al-'Arabī uses this term to refer to himself. See Ibn al-'Arabī's *Futūḥāt* and the chapter therein on Jesus.

⁵⁸ Entendez...que Jésus est le seul homme né absolument *pauvre de lui-même*, vis-à-vis de Dieu, puisque lui seul n'a jamais eu d'autre agent d'individuation que l'Esprit de Dieu; ce que les autres saints deviennent, avec la transformation et renaissance graduelles de leur *moi* (*nafs*) charnel en *moi* spirituel (*roūḥ*), à l'aide de l'Esprit qui les sanctifie – Jésus l'a été dès sa naissance même, du premier jet; un pur *kon!* (*be!*)» MASSIGNON, *La Passion d'al-Hallaj* (Paris 1922), II:687.

III. THE QĀ'IM: HIS BIRTH AND DISAPPEARANCE

The development of Shī'ī eschatological doctrine is at once more evident and equally obscure as that of the Sunnīs⁵⁹. For unlike Sunnī doctrine, its genesis can be traced directly to a series of historical events. These events, however, remain ultimately out of reach of the historian. Nevertheless, they led to a fundamental change in the character of Imāmī Shī'ism. As expressed by S. A. Arjomand, the result was «a basic transformation of the imāmate from a legitimist theory of authority of the descendants of 'Alī into a principle of salvation»⁶⁰. We will argue here that yet another transformation occurred thereby: Imāmī Shī'ism turned into a fundamentally eschatological religion.

In the year 260/874, the eleventh imām of the Imāmiyya, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (260/874), died, apparently without leaving any offspring to take over his role⁶¹. What in another context might mean internal dissension and struggle for power, entailed still graver consequences for the Imāmiyya. For they held both that the imāmate must be designated (*naṣṣ*) from father to son, and that the world could not exist, even for an instant, without an imām, who is the proof (*ḥujja*) of God, the very axis (*quṭb*) around which the world spins⁶².

The Shī'a had already been through grave crises over the succession of the Imāmate, most notably with the death of the sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Sādiq (148/765). Ja'far's son and designated successor (Ismā'īl) had pre-deceased him, yet also had left an infant son, Muḥammad, behind. Many questioned whether that designation was valid if the designated died before becoming imām, and whether an infant might be capable of receiving the imāmate. Thus, while a party of the Shī'a followed the imāmate of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b.

⁵⁹ In this section, as will be seen, I am heavily reliant on S. A. Arjomand, who has recently written a series of valuable articles on the formation of the theology of occultation. See ARJOMAND, «The Crisis of the Imāmate and the Institution of Occultation in Twelver Shī'ism: A Sociohistorical Perspective», *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28.3 (1996), 491-515; «The Consolation of Theology: The Shī'ite Doctrine of Occultation and the Transition from Chiliasm to Law», *Journal of Religion*, 76.4 (1996), 548-571; «Imām *Absconditus* and the Beginning of a Theology of Occultation», *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 117.1 (1997), 1-12. See also ARJOMAND, *The Shadow of God*, Introduction.

⁶⁰ ARJOMAND, «Consolation of Theology», 549.

⁶¹ «He died and no offspring was seen after him». Quoted by both Sa'd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qummī (*k. al-Maḡālāt wa al-firaq*) and Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (*k. Firaq al-Shī'a*). See ARJOMAND, «Imām *Absconditus*», 1.

⁶² The Imām «is a pillar of God's unity. The Imām is immune from sin and error. The Imāms are those from whom «God has removed all impurity and made them absolutely pure» [Qur'ān 33:33]; they are possessed of the power of miracles and of irrefutable arguments [*dalā'il*]; and they are for the protection of the people of the earth just as the stars are for the inhabitants of the heavens. They may be likened, in this community, to the ark of Noah: he who boards it obtains salvation and reaches the gate of repentance». S. JAFRI, *Origins and Early Development of Shī'ī Islam* (London 1979), 294. Quoted by ARJOMAND, *Shadow of God*, 35.

Ja'far (and eventually formed the Ismā'īliyya), the majority eventually turned to another of Ja'far's sons, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (183/799) (and eventually formed the Imāmiyya)⁶³. When Ḥasan al-'Askarī died, strife once again befell the Imāmī community. The resolution would once again come by acknowledging the imāmate of the deceased's son, only in this case he was a son that only a few even claimed to have seen.

al-'Askarī's death plunged the Shī'ī community into a state of confusion and division even greater than that which followed Ja'far's death. Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (305/917), the Shī'ī heresiographer *par excellence*, provides for us a list of fourteen different sects that arose at the time, each with a different conception of the imāmate⁶⁴. The group that ultimately prevailed maintained that a son by the name of Muḥammad had been born to the late Imām⁶⁵. The new Imām, they maintained, had disappeared into occultation (*ghayba*), a state where he was fully alive and still acting as God's *ḥujja*, yet invisible to humanity. The account of his birth and occultation, as related by Ḥakīma, the guardian of the Imām's mother⁶⁶, reveals the extraordinary nature of the new Imām:

I woke up with the sense of my Master, so I lifted up her [the Imām's mother] covering and he (peace be upon him) was prostrating...I held him (peace be upon him) close to me and he was entirely clean...[Ḥasan al-'Askarī] said to him, «speak my son!» And he said, «I bear witness that there is no god but God alone – He has no partner – and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God». Then he blessed the Commander of the Faithful ['Alī b. Abī Ṭālib], and all of the Imāms until he stopped with his father⁶⁷.

⁶³ These were not the only sects that formed. Others (the Faṭhiyya) followed the imāmate of another son, 'Abd Allāh, who died shortly after his father. The Nāwūsiyya, in contrast, maintained that Ja'far had not died, but rather went into occultation. See E. KOHLBERG, «Mūsā al-Kāẓim», *EL*², VII:645ff.

⁶⁴ Of these, some maintained that al-'Askarī himself was the Qā'im, others looked to 'Askarī's brother Ja'far as a new Imām or accepted the idea that al-'Askarī had a son in concealment. One of the groups, simply, «put off any statement until the matter became clear for them». See SACHEDINA, 42-56 for a full list of these groups.

⁶⁵ The choice of this name is not coincidental, as many traditions relate that the Mahdī will bear the same name of the prophet. The same name was borne by other Mahdī candidates, such as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya (81/700) and Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (145/763). The latter also bore the prophet's *kunya* «ibn 'Abd Allāh», which further supported his claim. See H. LAOUST, *Les Schismes dans l'Islam: introduction à une étude de la religion musulmane* (Paris 1983), 30ff. See also MODARRESSI, 90, n. 198, for references to traditions on the subject.

⁶⁶ The daughter of the ninth Imām (Muhammad al-Jawād) (220/835) and paternal aunt of the eleventh Imām, al-'Askarī. The Hidden Imām's mother, according to the sources, was a Byzantine slave girl by the name of Narjis. See SACHEDINA, 72.

⁶⁷ IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn wa tamām al-ni'ma*, 2 Vols. (Tehran 1378/1959), II:98, most likely the earliest version of the account. A more developed version can be seen in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Al-Ṭūsī, *Kitāb al-ghayba* (Qumm 1411), 237 and 239. Cf. SACHEDINA, 73-74.

The Imām's miraculous ability of speech as a child should immediately conjure up in us analogies to Jesus' miraculous speech in the cradle (Qur'ān 3:46, 19:29-30). Indeed, at least one Imāmī author, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (413/1022), made this comparison to justify the reasonableness of the birth account. He does not draw the analogy any further however, and he makes a similar comparison to John's (Yaḥyā b. Zakariyya) «authority when only a child» (Qur'ān 19:12)⁶⁸.

The above account is continued by Ṭūṣī, who relates that when Ḥakīma returned on the third day (or the seventh, in another version) to visit the child, al-'Askarī told her «O aunt!, The child is within the shelter and sanctuary of God, who has concealed him and hidden him (*ghayyabahu*) until the permission of God is given to him»⁶⁹. Thus the new Imām became the Hidden Imām, and will remain so until his *parousia* (*ḡubūr*), when he will return as the *Qā'im* (the Riser or Redresser) to rally his followers against their enemies.

The idea of a hidden Imām was not without precedent among the 'Alids. The idea that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib himself did not die, but rather was in some type of occultation, is often attributed to the obscure figure 'Abd Allāh b. Sabā' and his followers (sometimes referred to as the Sabā'iyya)⁷⁰. When 'Alī's son (not by Fāṭima) Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya died (81/700), a somewhat better known party, the Kaysaniyya, maintained that he had disappeared into *ghayba* in the mountains outside of Medina known as Radwa, and would return as the Mahdī. Similar claims were made on behalf of his son, Abū Hāshim (98/717), who died childless. Likewise, the Ḥasanid Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (the Pure Soul, 145/762) was thought to have disappeared into *ghayba* and his *parousia* as the Mahdī was imminently expected. Most relevant, perhaps, is the Shī'ī movement known as the Wāqifiyya, who argued that the historical imāmate had come to a stop (*wāqif*) with the seventh Imām, Mūsā al-Kāzim. al-Kāzim, they argued, would soon emerge from *ghayba* to lead his followers to triumph⁷¹. Thus, it has been argued, the pragmatic leadership of the Imāmiyya borrowed the notion of *ghayba* from «chiliastic extremists», but used it to consolidate their power and stabilize their community⁷².

The Hidden Imām's *ghayba* was different in at least one respect, however. Unlike his predecessors he continued to address the Imāmī community for

⁶⁸ See SACHEDINA, 58.

⁶⁹ Ṭūṣī, 238.

⁷⁰ See M. HODGSON, «'Abd Allāh b. Sabā'», *ET*, I:51.

⁷¹ Hence the genre of literature on the *ghayba* that appears in the early ninth century, well before al-'Askarī's death. This was the arena of debate between the Wāqifiyya and the mainstream Imāmī community, who recognized the imāmate of 'Alī al-Riḍā (203/818). Unfortunately, the vast majority of these books are not extant today. See the list compiled by MODARRESSI, 87, n. 184.

⁷² See ARJOMAND, «Consolation of Theology», 550.

some time. He communicated through the appointed leader of that community, alternatively referred to as the gate (*bāb*), mediator (*saṭir*) or agent (*wakīl* or *wasīyy*)⁷³. In 329/940, however, the fourth and final of these agents, 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samarī (329/941) announced that, «Indeed, the second occultation has occurred, and there will be no *parousia* save with God's permission»⁷⁴. With this, the twelfth and final Imām of the Shī'a went into complete occultation (*al-ghayba al-kubrā* or *al-tamma*)⁷⁵. He remains in the same state today, fully alive and waiting for the Hour to arrive when he will reveal himself as the Riser of Muḥammad's family (*Qā'im āl Muḥammad*), the Lord of Time (*Ṣāhib al-zamān*) and the Redresser by the Sword (*al-Qā'im bi l-sayf*)⁷⁶.

The Imāmiyya also added another title to their Hidden Imām, one likely borrowed from the type of Sunnī traditions that we have seen above: al-Mahdī, the one «to fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and injustice»⁷⁷. While at first there was some confusion over the identity of the Qā'im and Mahdī⁷⁸, eventually the Imāmiyya began to use the terms interchangeably. This is seen, for example, in the writings of al-Mufīd, who reports that they simply describe different aspects of his character: «The Qā'im is named

⁷³ The first of these was 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd al-'Amrī (304/917), who successfully rallied the support of the Imāmiyya in opposition to Ja'far al-'Askarī, the brother of the eleventh imām. al-'Amrī (along with his father) had run affairs for the tenth and eleventh imāms. Their decrees to the faithful appeared in 'Amrī's handwriting. After the death of Hasan al-'Askarī, the faithful continued to receive decrees in the same handwriting, which were now identified as coming from the twelfth Imām, identified as the *Ṣāhib al-bayt* or the *Ṣāhib al-zamān* or *al-Imām al-ghā'ib*. The next two *wakīls* were both from the powerful house of al-Nawbakhtī: Abū Sahl Ismā'il b. 'Alī (310/923) and Abū l-Qāsim ibn Rūh (326/938). The final *wakīl* is a little known figure, remembered only for announcing the onset of the major occultation: 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Samarī (329/941). See ARJOMAND, «Crisis of the Imamate», 502-508.

⁷⁴ A tradition quoted by both Ibn Bābūya and al-Tūsī. See ARJOMAND, «Crisis of the Imamate», 508.

⁷⁵ The earlier period was now seen as the Short Occultation (*al-ghayba al-qasīra*).

⁷⁶ Other titles include: *al-Qā'im bi-amr Allāh*, «The one to rise by the command of God », or «The one to carry out the command of God», and «*Ṣāhib hadha l-Amr*,» «The lord of this command». See MADELUNG, «Kā'im āl Muḥammad», EI2, IV:456. At the same time, another vein of tradition identifies all of the Imāms as «Qā'im», since they all «rose by the command of God». In a tradition preserved by al-Kulaynī, a man by the name of al-Ḥakam reports how he encountered the fifth Imām (Muḥammad al-Bāqir) in Medina, and declared «I will not leave Medina until I know whether or not you are the *Qā'im āl Muḥammad* [of Muḥammad's family]...so he said «O Ḥakam, each one of us is *Qā'im bi-amr Allāh*.» I said, «So you are the Mahdī?» He said, «Each one of us guide [*nahdī*] to God.» I said, «So you are the *Ṣāhib bi-l-sayf* [Lord by the Sword]?» He said, «Each one of us is *Ṣāhib bi-l-sayf* and the inheritor of the sword.» *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, *Bāb inna al-a'imma kullahum qā'imūn*, 1404. Cf. also 1405.

⁷⁷ This refrain appears among Shī'ī authors (e.g. Tūsī, 178ff., 261; Ibn Bābūya, *Kamāl al-dīn* I:369ff., 403-405) verbatim with the hadīth in Sunnī collections.

⁷⁸ On the historical process by which the Shī'a included the concept of Mahdī into that of Qā'im, see Modarressi, 89-91. Mentioned therein is a tradition where the ninth Imām, Muḥammad al-Jawād (220/835) is asked by one of his students whether the Qā'im and the Mahdī are two persons or one. He responds that they are, indeed, the same person. Ja'far al-Sādiq is reported to have given an explanatory answer to the same question, saying that he is named Mahdī, «because he guides to the secret things; and he is named Qā'im because he will rise after death. He will rise for an important task». See ARJOMAND, *Shadow of God*, 40.

Mahdī simply because he will guide (*yahdī*) to the matter that has been neglected. He is called Qā'im because for his rising (*qiyāma*) with the truth»⁷⁹.

In the same statement above, delivered by al-Samarī on behalf of the Hidden Imām, the Shī'a were also warned against following pretenders who claim to act on behalf of the Imām⁸⁰. The Shī'a were not to rise up before his *parousia*, but rather to wait patiently, practicing *taqiyya*⁸¹. While pretenders arose the great majority of the community was eventually unified under this new eschatological doctrine, which at once encouraged Shī'ī religious hopes and political quietism. In this way, the *de facto* de-politization of the Imāmate did not become *de jure*, yet the Imām continued to be acknowledged as the head of the community. In fact, Imāmi theologians such as Ibn Bābūya (381/991-2) postulated that the Imām, as the vehicle of God's grace (*luṭf*) and the proof of God (*ḥujja*) must still be the leader of the Shī'a, even if he is hidden:

The heart is hidden to the rest of the body parts. It is not seen with the eye, smelled with the nose, tasted with the mouth or touched with the hand. Yet it is the one that manages these body parts, and ensures their well-being, although it is hidden from them. If the heart was not there, the management of the body parts would fail and its functions would not be right. So the heart is needed to ensure the well-being of the body parts. Thus the world needs the Imām to ensure its well-being⁸².

Of particular interest to us here is the question of how this religious system, with its accompanying eschatological doctrine, coalesced out of the chaos that followed the death of the eleventh imām, al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (260/874)⁸³. For this period was not only one of doctrinal speculation, but also

⁷⁹ al-Mufid, *k. al-Irshād* (Beirut 1399/1979), 364.

⁸⁰ «There will soon be among my Shī'a those who claim to have seen me. Indeed whoever claims seeing me before the rising of the Sufyānī and the cosmic battle cry (*Ṣayḥa*) is a slanderous liar». See Arjomand, «Crisis of the Imāmate», 508.

⁸¹ *Taqiyya* is the Shī'ī doctrine that legitimates dissimulation. Thereby, if one is in hostile surroundings, one can deny being a Shī'ī. Its institution allowed for communal survival in the face of Sunni persecution. At the same time, the institution of *taqiyya* theoretically means the abrogation of *jihād*. Conversely, its abrogation will mean the institution of *jihād*. While early writers see *taqiyya* as optional, beginning with Ibn Bābūya (381/991-2), many writers describe it as obligatory. Al-Mufid (413/1032) built on the relation of *taqiyya* and *jihād* by subverting the traditional dichotomy of *dār al-islām* (the sphere of Islam, which all Muslims must fight to increase) and *dāral-ḥarb* (the sphere of war, where, collectively, the Islamic community must wage war). He adds the category of *dār al-imān* (the sphere of faith) which is constituted by the Shī'a who are within the *dār al-islām*. According to Mufid, Shī'īs are not called to fight in the *dār al-ḥarb*, but rather to transform the *dār al-islām* by converting those therein to Shī'ism. See S.A. ARJOMAND, *Shadow of God*, 61-62.

⁸² IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* I:317.

⁸³ Arjomand describes the doctrine surrounding the Hidden Imām as the outcome of «a desperate effort to resolve the immediate problems of the imāmate...». «Consolation of Theology», 548.

one of intense social struggle⁸⁴. As one interested party remarked: «We were wrangling over this matter like dogs over a corpse»⁸⁵.

Imāmī Shī'ism was indeed threatened with extinction by the confusion (*ḥayra*) set off first by al-'Askarī's death and then by *al-ghayba al-tamma*⁸⁶. Yet through this turbulent period a remarkably productive process of theological development occurred, so that by the time Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Tūsī (459/1067) sat down to write his *k. al-Ghayba*, he could say «We know therefore the soundness of the son of Ḥasan [al-'Askarī], peace be upon him, and the soundness of his *ghayba* and his birth. We need not be troubled with discourse on affirming his birth and the reason for his *ghayba*»⁸⁷.

This process can be witnessed in the work of a select group of Imāmī theologians who, aided by a conducive political climate⁸⁸, established the theological system that would endure permanently as orthodox Imāmī Shī'ism. They unified Shī'ī views about the reality of the al-'Askarī's son, his *ghayba* and his eschatological return as the Qā'im. At the same time these writers also built a coherent and enduring theological system upon that event: «The idea of occultation was deapocalypticized and transformed into a fixed component of the Shī'ī theodicy and theology»⁸⁹.

Ultimately, it is this experience, and its theological aftermath as seen with these writers, that would irrevocable separate Shī'ism from Sunnism. The crucial element in this separation, we will argue, is the nature and meaning of the eschatological event. Thus we will aim to show how, by examining the work of these writers, the understanding of the Qā'im's role in the eschaton was formed, and the resulting implications for the figure of Jesus.

⁸⁴ We have not here addressed the socio-political aspect of these events, which were unquestionably critical in the determination of the victorious party. Addressed from this perspective, the theological developments of *taqīyya*, the *ghayba* and the return (*ma'ād*) can be understood as inspired by the pragmatism and sobriety of the Imāmī leaders. For example, the two main factions that emerged after the death of al-'Askarī were those who supported the idea of a Hidden Imām (led by the first agent (*wakīl*) of that Imām, al-'Amrī), and those who had opposed it in favor of naming al-'Askarī's brother, Ja'far, the twelfth imām. The first party was «encouraged» in their beliefs, as Modarressi suggests, by their desire to keep al-'Askarī's estate out of the hands of his brother. See Modarressi, Ch. 3.

⁸⁵ This from Shalmaghani, who was initially the deputy of the third *wakīl*, Ibn Rūh. When the latter was imprisoned, however, Shalmaghani claimed himself to be the intermediary with the Hidden Imām, but apparently conceived the latter more in terms of a Persian/Zoroastrian «savior-king» than in Islamic terms. See ARJOMAND, «Crisis of the Imāmate», 507-8.

⁸⁶ Evidence for this is seen in the writings of Ibn Bābūya, who uses the word *ghayba* almost interchangeably with *ḥayra*, or confusion. This is seen frequently in his *al-Imāma wa-al-tabṣīra min al-ḥayra* (Beirut 1407/1987).

⁸⁷ ṬUṢṬ, 3.

⁸⁸ The period from the mid-ninth to the mid-tenth century is known as the «Shī'ī century», in part due to the rule of the Shī'ī Būyids in Baghdad and throughout Iran.

⁸⁹ ARJOMAND, «Crisis of the Imāmate», 509.

IV. THE QĀ'IM AND JESUS THROUGH SHĪ'Ī EYES

One of the earliest mentions that we have of the Hidden Imām's *ghayba* comes from the aforementioned Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī. Around the year 290/903, al-Nawbakhtī relates that al-'Askarī's son was expected to return from hiding, a concept he finds not unreasonable since he had been in hiding for only thirty years⁹⁰. In his *Firaq al-Shī'a*⁹¹, Nawbakhtī introduces the various Shī'ī sects that had appeared upon al-Ḥasan's death, fourteen in all, and argues in favor of the one that would become the Imāmiyya. Their position is the strongest, he argues, since «there can be no imāmate vested in two brothers, following one another, after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Therefore, the imāmate is not possible except among the descendants of al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī (al-'Askarī)». And there must be a living descendant since, «If the imāmate disappeared from the world even for a moment, the earth and its inhabitants would perish»⁹². Nawbakhtī, however, pays little attention to the parousia of the Qā'im, and none to the place of Jesus in the end times.

The Imāmī traditionist al-Kulaynī (329/940-1) includes a *Bāb fī l-ghayba* in his *Uṣūl al-kāfi*⁹³, yet like Nawbakhtī he gives attention only to the question of the Occultation and is less forthcoming on the question of the parousia. Moreover, the doctrines surrounding the lesser and greater occultation, along with the eschatological nature of the *parousia* (*khurūj*) are clearly not fully developed in his work⁹⁴. The following tradition preserved Kulaynī shows just how vague these remained:

⁹⁰ It comes clear from this statement by Nawbakhtī that the Imāmī community initially expected the Qā'im to emerge after only brief exile. Notice, to this effect, his comment that the Wāqifiyya were absurd for expecting the return of Mūsā al-Kāzim, whose death (or occultation as they claim) occurred over 105 years ago (This in his *k. al-Tanbih*. See MODARRESSI, 88-9). When the Qā'im failed to emerge and it became accepted that his return would be at the end times, Imāmī theologians explained the apparent change in divine will with a concept borrowed from the Mu'tazila: *badā'* (here meaning change, alteration). Ibn Bābūya had misgivings about the idea of *badā'*, as it seemed to imply that God changed His mind and thus to be a defect. Muḥd, however, refined the Shī'ī interpretation of *badā'*, presenting it as a parallel idea to *naskh* (abrogation), which was universally accepted as an active force in the divine authorship of the Qur'an. Tūsī describes *badā'* not as an alteration of the divine will, but rather as a new disclosure of a constant truth. He also maintained that certain fundamental truths are unalterable, e.g. the attributes of God and the promise of reward to the *ahl al-bayt*. See SACHEDINA, 153-156.

⁹¹ Ed. Helmut Ritter (Istanbul 1931).

⁹² ABŪ SAHL AL-NAWBAKHTĪ, *Firaq al-Shī'a*, quoted by SACHEDINA, 49-50.

⁹³ al-Kulaynī's reputation, initially, was not well established as his traditionalist approach was disparaged by rationalist, Mu'tazilī influenced Imāmī Shī'īs such as Sharīf al-Murtadā (436/1044). Yet Kulaynī's influence on the scholars that we will subsequently consider is unmistakable. Ibn Bābūya followed in his footsteps in Qūmm, while both al-Muḥd and al-Tūsī overtly praised his work. Ultimately, his *Uṣūl al-kāfi* became recognized as one of the canonical four books of Shī'ī tradition, and is generally regarded as the most authoritative. See MADELUNG, «al-Kulaynī», *ET*, V:362-3.

⁹⁴ Kulaynī reports a ḥadīth that shows the idea of the two *ghaybas* in the midst of development, «[Ja'far al-Sādiq] said, The Qā'im has two *ghaybas*. In one of them he will attend the [Hajj]. He will see people, but they will not see him». *Bāb fī l-ghayba*, 494.

I [al-Aṣḥab b. Nubāta] came to the *Amīr al-mu'minīn* ['Alī b. Abī Ṭālib] and found him pondering, as he was scratching the earth. So I said, 'O *Amīr al-mu'minīn*, why is that I see you pondering, scratching the earth, do you desire something from it?' He said, 'No, by God, I will never desire anything from it or from the world, but I was thinking about the birth that will appear from the eleventh of my descendants. He will be the Mahdī that will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and injustice. There will be [surrounding] him *ghayba* and confusion, during which some peoples will be led astray and others rightly guided.' So I said, 'O *Amīr al-mu'minīn*, how long will there be confusion and *ghayba*?' He said, «Six days or six months or six years»...So I said, 'What will there be after that?' He said, «Then God will do what He wishes. For He has beginnings and desires and goals and conclusions»⁹⁵.

These doctrinal developments are more evident in the writings of Ibn Abī Zaynab al-Nu'mānī (359/970-71), especially his *k. al-Ghayba*. Yet Nu'mānī, like his predecessors, was writing in an atmosphere where great doubt about the occultation pervaded the Shī'ī community. The details of the Qā'im's parousia, and his relation to Jesus, were of secondary importance. His primary goal was rather to establish proofs for the Imāmiyya's version of the *ghayba*⁹⁶. Nu'mānī's strategy in doing so was, firstly, to argue that *only* twelve Imāms could exist, and secondly to argue that the occultation and the parousia of the last Imām followed necessarily.

In accomplishing the first task, he records a large number ḥadīth to that effect. The most important one, perhaps, is a ḥadīth that was already present in orthodox Sunnī collections⁹⁷, wherein the Prophet Muḥammad declares that he will be followed by twelve caliphs (alternative versions have twelve *amīrs* – commanders or *qayyims* – guardians)⁹⁸. Nu'mānī argued, naturally, that the intent here was the twelve Imāms, the direct descendants of the Prophet. The last of these is the Hidden Imām, the Qā'im and the Mahdī, who Sunnīs admit must

⁹⁵ *Uṣūl al-kāfi, Bāb fī l-ghayba*, 889. On Kulaynī and the development of the *ghayba* doctrine, see SACHEDINA, 49-50, 83-4.

⁹⁶ «By the end of the fourth decade [i.e. 340/952] when Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nu'mānī wrote his work on the topic [*k. al-Ghayba*], the absolute majority of the Imāmites in the western parts of the Shī'ite homeland (in fact, the whole community with very few exceptions) were in a similar state of fierce doubt and one way or another rejected the existence of a vanished Imām». MODARRESSI, 97. Note also the remark of Arjomand, «Despite Abū Sahl Nawbakhtī's efforts, the period of «confusion» (*ḥayra*) for the Imāmiyya continued into the second half of the tenth/fourth century». *Shadow of God*, 43.

⁹⁷ The ḥadīth appears in both Bukhārī (as *amīrs Bāb al-istakhlāf*, 7062) and Muslim (as «caliphs», *Bāb al-nās tabā' l-Quraysh*, 4667). Similar traditions had already been recorded by Kulaynī and 'Alī b. Bābūya (328/940-1). See ARJOMAND, «Consolation of Theology», 552.

⁹⁸ AL-NU'MĀNĪ, *k. al-Ghayba* (Beirut 1983), 14. Another Shī'ī version of this ḥadīth exists, speaking of 12 *waṣīyyas* (agents). See, for example ṬŪṢĪ, 141.

come from his descendents⁹⁹. Yet the Sunnīs have instead attacked the Prophet's family, which is the reason why the Imām has gone into hiding¹⁰⁰. This adversarial aspect of the Qā'im doctrine is clearly reflected in the title of Nu'mānī's first chapter:

«What is told about the guarding of the secret of the family of Muhammad (peace be upon them) from those who are not of his family; about the training in the ways of the friends of God and the screening of them from those not of his family, the stubborn, and the refusers of his proclamation to them and of their knowledge¹⁰¹.

Nu'mānī later refers to the parousia of the Qā'im as the '*adbāb*'; that is, the chastisement, or the suffering (which will be received by the opponents of the *ahl al-bayt*, both Sunnīs and other 'Alid sects)¹⁰². With language like this, he rallies the Imamiyya community to continued dedication to the family of the Prophet (*āl Muḥammad*), trusting that they will be vindicated.

Nu'mānī's interest in writing about the *ghayba* and the *ḡubūr* is intimately connected with the state of that community. By insisting on the doctrine of the complete *ghayba*, he encourages political quietism, discouraging pretenders claiming to be the agent of the Qā'im, or the Qā'im himself. By describing the eschatological *ḡubūr* of the Hidden Imām, he provides motivation for that quietism, insuring the Shī'a that they will have the ultimate victory¹⁰³. This is most definitely an affair, then, of the Shī'ī community vs. its enemies, and Jesus, not surprisingly, finds no significant place therein. For he is not a uniquely Shī'ī character.

Yet the question of Jesus' place in the end times had to be ultimately confronted, in light of the weight of the Qur'ānic evidence and the Sunnī traditions that we have above examined. The unfolding of this process during the following century can be seen in the work of several authors who were the central players in establishing orthodox Imāmī doctrine. These three thinkers – Ibn Bābūya (381/991-2), al-Mufīd (413/1022) and Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī

⁹⁹ Note the Sunnī ḥadīths: «The Mahdī will come from my community...». IBN HANBAL, *Musnad*, 10982; «The Mahdī is from us, the people of the house [*ahl al-bayt*]». IBN MĀJĀ, *Bāb khurūj al-Mahdī*, 4174.

¹⁰⁰ A tradition from the sixth Imām, Ja'far al-Sādiq, relates, «There is no choice for the Qā'im but *ghayba*...he is afraid for himself». IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn*, II:157. Cf. IBN BĀBŪYA, *Ilal al-sharā'i* (Najaf 1963), 246; and KULAYNĪ, *Bāb fī l-ghayba*, 891. See also SACHEDINA, 103.

¹⁰¹ NU'MĀNĪ, 21.

¹⁰² NU'MĀNĪ, 160.

¹⁰³ «Know that God revives the earth after its death [Qur'ān 30:18]. Indeed God revives it by the justice of the Qā'im upon his *parousia*, after its death due to the injustice of the Imāms of error [i.e., illegitimate rulers]». NU'MĀNĪ, 14. Translation from ARJOMAND, «Consolation of Theology», 552.

(459/1067) – confronted questions such as ours in order to «allay the confusion of the Shī'ites»¹⁰⁴. In the process, they created a coherent theological system that would endure through the present day.

The first of them, Ibn Bābūya, wrote his *Kamāl al-dīn wa tamām al-ni'ma* for a community still divided over the reality of the Hidden Imām. The new Imāmī doctrine was still far from being universally accepted: «Ibn Bābawayh found most of the Shī'ites he met in Khurāsān, even respected scholars of the Imāmīte community, extremely doubtful about the vanished Imām»¹⁰⁵. His work, then, resembles that of Nu'mānī before him, as he sought therein primarily «to demonstrate that occultation did not mean nonexistence ('adam)»¹⁰⁶. This comes clear, from the tone of Ibn Bābūya's writing. He speaks of the *ghayba* as a divine test to see who is truly faithful, «It is simply a trial from God, by which He examines his creation»¹⁰⁷. To lend credibility to the twelfth Imām's occultation, Ibn Bābūya repeatedly draws analogies with the occultation (and return) of other figures, including Joseph, Khaḍīr and Dhu l-Qarnayn¹⁰⁸. And he insists that the designation of the twelfth Imām was no less sound than that of his forefathers: «They have conveyed [his imāmate] just like they conveyed the imāmate of his fathers, while the opposition opposed it. It is like how Muslims must convey the soundness of the acts of the Prophet (God's peace and blessing be upon him), except for the Qur'ān, while their enemies (from the People of the Book, the Zoroastrians, the Free Thinkers and the Materialists)¹⁰⁹ opposed them»¹¹⁰.

Ibn Bābūya relates numerous and repetitive ḥadīth, and comments on various Qur'ānic passages in order to prove three basic assertions¹¹¹: that the number of Imāms will be twelve, that the last of these will have a short and a long *ghayba*, and that he will finally emerge as both the Mahdī and the «Qā'im of my community, to fill the world with equity and justice as it was filled with oppres-

¹⁰⁴ ARJOMAND, *Shadow of God*, 43.

¹⁰⁵ MODARRESSI, 98.

¹⁰⁶ ARJOMAND, *Shadow of God*, 43.

¹⁰⁷ IBN BĀBŪYA, 'Ilal al-sharā'i', 244.

¹⁰⁸ On Khaḍīr see IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* II:57 and 'Ilal al-sharā'i', 246; on DHU L-QARNAYN, IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* II:63. Elsewhere, Ibn Bābūya seeks to draw analogies between the place of agents (*awṣiyā'*) during these various *ghaybas* and those during the *ghayba* of the twelfth Imām. See *al-Imāma wa-al-taḥṣīr*, 151ff.

¹⁰⁹ «al-majūs, wa-l-zanādiqa, wa-l-dabriyya».

¹¹⁰ IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* I:149.

¹¹¹ «Ibn Bābūya, the Imāmīte traditionist, ventured to demonstrate the Imāmate of the Hidden Imām by relying mainly on *al-dalīl al-sāmi'*, the so-called scriptural and traditional proof, proving every statement with the appropriate Qur'ānic quotations, ignoring in the process, at times, the context in which the verse appeared, and not giving any consideration to the historical circumstances under which it may have been revealed. Often these quotations were supplemented by the traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imāms». SACHEDINA, 109.

sion and injustice»¹¹². He does not go into detail about the events of the end times, even in his chapter dedicated to the signs that will anticipate the Qā'im's arrival¹¹³. Likewise, in his chapter on «al-Dajjāl», Ibn Bābūya does not discuss whether Jesus or the Qā'im will kill him. And when he relates a lengthy anecdote about Jesus, Ibn Bābūya makes no mention of his eschatological role¹¹⁴.

However, Ibn Bābūya has elsewhere left us one enticing clue about the end times, when he records that «the one *behind whom* Jesus the son of Mary will pray is the twelfth of the descendants and the ninth of the sons of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī»¹¹⁵. What is remarkable about this statement is not so much the affirmation that Jesus will be behind the Qā'im, but the fact that such is affirmed so easily. What was, as we have seen, the source of a theological quandary for Sunnīs causes no difficulty for Ibn Bābūya. For the Qā'im is an Imām, and the Imāms are no less worthy of priority than the prophets¹¹⁶.

By the time that al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (413/1032) addressed the question of the Qā'im, the situation of the Imāmiyya had clearly changed. Unlike, Nu'mānī and Ibn Bābūya, al-Mufīd is not fully preoccupied on establishing signs (*dalā'il*) that verify their version of the imāmate. Rather, he is concerned with developing a theological system which expresses the reasonability of Imāmī doctrine surrounding the Hidden Imām. This is the period of «the maximal Mu'tazilite impact on Imāmī Shī'ism»¹¹⁷, and Mufīd was heavily influenced by the Mu'tazila

¹¹² IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* I:370.

¹¹³ See his chapter on «Signs of the Appearance (*khurūf*) of the Qā'im», II:362ff.

¹¹⁴ Here Ibn Bābūya records a ḥadīth from 'Alī b. 'Alī Ṭālib, who, inspired by smelling the dung of a gazelle, relates the following account. One day, Jesus passed through the field in Karbalā' where Ḥusayn and his companions would be martyred over six hundred years later. As he was walking, a gazelle spoke to him about what would occur there. Distraught, Jesus sat down and wept, much to the confusion of the disciples (*Hawāriyyūn*), who asked him «O Spirit of God and His Word, what has made you weep?» After explaining, Jesus struck the dung of this gazelle with his hand, saying, «O God, make this stay eternally, so that [Ḥusayn's] father will smell it and it will be a consolation to him». Ibn Bābūya's interest in the story comes clear from 'Alī's concluding statement, «This dung has stayed for over five hundred years without changing from time or rain or wind that has passed over it, through days and nights and the sun upon it. Yet they will not believe that the Qā'im from *āl Muḥammad* (peace be upon him) will remain until he emerges with the sword to destroy the enemies of God!» IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* II:213-4.

¹¹⁵ IBN BĀBŪYA, *Kamāl al-dīn* II:208.

¹¹⁶ «Imāmī doctrine on the imāmate in its basic conceptions was formulated in the time of Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (d. 148/765). It founded the imāmate on the permanent need of mankind for a divinely guided, infallible leader and authoritative teacher in religion. The imāmate was thus raised to the level of prophecy. The only difference between the messenger prophet (*rasūl*) and the Imām was that the Imām did not transmit a divine scripture. To ignore or disobey the divinely invested Imām was infidelity equal to ignoring or disobeying the prophet. The conception that the Imām must be fully immune (*ma'sūm*) from sin and error was fundamental to Imāmī thought». W. MADELUNG, «Imāma», *EI*², III:1166.

¹¹⁷ ARJOMAND, «Crisis of the Imāmate», 509.

in constructing his system¹¹⁸. Thus his career marks a watershed in the history of Imāmī thought: «from Mufid onwards the Imāmites seem to contribute to the fundamentality of the reason in establishing the truth about the imāmate during the occultation»¹¹⁹.

Another important influence upon Mufid's thought, and one which has been less emphasized by scholars, was the environment of intense Sunnī/Shī'ī conflict in which he was writing. The competition between the caliph al-Qādir (r. 381/991-422-1031) and the ruling, Shī'ī, Būyids led to recurrent street violence in Mufid's Baghdad. Due to his prominence in the Shī'ī community, Mufid was three times banned from Baghdad in the midst of this violence¹²⁰. Likely due to this political and social atmosphere, Mufid has quite a different emphasis in his eschatological writing. He does not mention Jesus at all, and absent are the accounts of killing al-Dajāl and leading the general prayer. Instead, the emphasized role of the Qā'im is to exact revenge on those who have opposed his people: the Sunnīs. In fact, for Mufid this is the very quality that distinguishes the Twelfth Imām from his predecessors, and the cause for his *ghayba*. The twelfth Imām is the only Imām to go into occultation because he is the only Imām who will emerge with the sword and seek vengeance. The world was not yet ready for such a violent emergence, yet the Qā'im could not practice *taqiyya*, which is anathema to his martial nature. Thus *ghayba* was his only option¹²¹.

When the Hidden Imām finally does emerge, he will call «from the sky in the beginning of the day, that the truth is with 'Alī and his *Shī'a*. Then Iblīs will call from the earth at the end of the day that the truth is with Mu'āwiya...».¹²² Thus is the mythical conflict between good and evil, between the Shī'a and

¹¹⁸ al-Mufid utilized Mu'tazilī categories to more fully express Shī'ī doctrine. As expressed by Arjomand: «The pivotal concepts taken from the Mu'tazila for Mufid's ethicotheological rationalization of Imāmī Shi'ism were those of the divine Justice ('*adl*) and Grace (*lutf*). The first concept makes it unjust for God to command the impossible, while according to the second concept, Grace is *wājib* (necessary or incumbent) on God in that He is obliged to order the world and to provide mankind with guidance...Mufid integrates the idea of occultation into the Shī'ite rational theology by linking it to the fundamental Mu'tazilite tenet of Grace and to the Shī'ite principle of Infallibility (of the divinely appointed Prophet and Imāms)». Arjomand, «Consolation of Theology», 562. See also, M. McDERMOTT, S.J., *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid* (Beirut 1978), 2ff.

¹¹⁹ SACHEDINA, 112. Elsewhere, he describes this transformation as a move from reliance on *dalīl sām'ī* (revelatory evidence) to *dalīl 'aqlī* (intellectual evidence).

¹²⁰ See McDERMOTT, 17-21. Mufid was thoroughly intertwined with the politics of Baghdad through his close relationship the ruling Būyids, particularly the most powerful of their rulers: 'Aḍū al-Dawla. See W. MADELUNG, «Mufid», *EI*², VII:312.

¹²¹ Mufid came to emphasize the connection between the Twelfth Imām's *ghayba* and the his abrogation of *taqiyya* in the course of apologetics for the necessity of the *ghayba*. See McDERMOTT, 129.

¹²² MUFID, *al-Irshād*, 385. Cf. Mufid's other, less developed accounts of the end times: *Awā'il al-maqālāt fī l-madhāhib al-mukhtārāt*. (Tabriz 1371), 50; and *Khams rasā'il fī ithbāt al-ḥujja* (Najaf 1951), 1st letter, x, 29-31. See also McDERMOTT, 52.

their enemies, established. Mufīd's accounts of the Qā'im's *ḡubūr* reflect the adversarial mentality of the Imāmī community of his day. The Qā'im's victims will be first and foremost those who have attacked that community. Thus he will violently confront the Quraysh, the paradigmatic enemies of the *ahl al-bayt* for the opposition of Abū Sufyān to Muḥammad and his son Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān to 'Alī. «Five hundred of the Quraysh will rise [against him], then he will strike them down. Then five hundred of the Quraysh will rise and he will strike them down. Then five hundred more until he has done that six times»¹²³. Another account describes how the Qā'im will sever the hands of the Sunnī tribe that is entrusted with the keeping of the Ka'ba (b. Shayba), hanging those hands on the sacred *Ka'ba* in Mecca and writing, «these are the thieves of the *Ka'ba*»¹²⁴. Yet his vengeance will not stop there.

The Qā'im will also attack the city of Kūfa, which, although traditionally an 'Alid stronghold, is also the site of 'Alī b. Ṭālib's murder in the principle mosque. Accordingly, the Qā'im will raze the mosques of Kūfa, and kill the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) and the doubters of the city. He will «destroy its houses and kill its fighters so that God might be pleased»¹²⁵. More intriguing still is Mufīd's account that the Qā'im will conquer Constantinople, China and the mountains of Daylam¹²⁶. That the Mahdī will conquer Constantinople is frequently seen in Sunnī accounts, and the conquest of China might be easily explained as its extreme Eastern counterpart, and as an equally impregnable power. The «mountains of Daylam», however, is quite an unusual reference, even if this area was famously obstinate in the face of caliphal forces. Most likely the reference reflects the troubles that this traditionally Shī'ī region (Zaydī, however) was offering to Imāmī Būyid rule at this time. The Būyids, with whom al-Mufīd was well connected, were originally from Daylam., but now were facing rebellions from their very homeland¹²⁷. Here, then, is another site of 'Alid «*munāfiqūn*».

The most important insight here, for our purposes, is the portrait of the Qā'im that becomes increasingly clear with Mufīd. He is the eschatological warrior, and the Imāmiyya are his people. Mufīd even refers to them as the *Shī'at al-Mahdī*, in addition to the usual *Shī'at 'Alī*¹²⁸. Only the Qā'im could be the eschatological protagonist of the Imāmiyya, for only he has the right to carry out revenge on behalf of his people.

¹²³ MUFĪD, *al-Irshād*, 364

¹²⁴ MUFĪD, *al-Irshād*, 364.

¹²⁵ MUFĪD, *al-Irshād*, 364.

¹²⁶ MUFĪD, *al-Irshād*, 365.

¹²⁷ See V. MINORSKY, «Daylam», *EI*², II:192 and C. CAHEN, «Buwayhids», *EI*², I:1350.

¹²⁸ MUFĪD, *al-Irshād*, 362.

With al-Ṭūsī we meet still another approach to the end times¹²⁹. His *k. al-Ghayba* makes a contrast both to Mufīd and the work of the same title written by Nu'mānī over a century earlier. True, Ṭūsī repeats some of the tasks taken up by his predecessors, including a refutation of those groups who disagree with the Imāmī view on the *ghayba*¹³⁰, a presentation of those who agree with that view (including a curious anecdote about the famous Sūfī al-Ḥallāj)¹³¹, and a creative exegesis on a number of Qur'ānic verses¹³². Also like his predecessors, Ṭūsī portrays the coming of the Qā'im as the day of liberation and vengeance for the Shī'a. He quotes the Prophet saying, that by the Qā'im «God will obliterate falsehood and the time of the dogs will end. By him the humiliation of slavery will be removed from your necks»¹³³.

Unlike his predecessors, however, Ṭūsī was writing at a time (mid 5th/11th century) when the Imāmiyya had become overwhelmingly unified behind the Hidden Imām. By this time, as well, it was accepted doctrine that the Imām would only emerge at the eschaton, a time unknown and unpredictable¹³⁴. Likely due to his distance from the days of *ḥayra* and the triumph of the Hidden Imām doctrine, Ṭūsī is willing to include Jesus in his eschatological picture. He reports a ḥadīth seen in several Sunnī collections, where the Prophet Muḥammad says, «I am the first of this community (*umma*), the Mahdī is its middle, and Jesus is its end»¹³⁵. Ṭūsī thereby even allows some priority for Jesus, if his being the «end» of the community, might be seen as such. Other Shī'īs rejected or creatively interpreted this tradition, since it implies that Jesus will outlive the Mahdī. This would leave the world with no Imām in the end times, which as we have seen is quite impossible in the Imāmī theological system¹³⁶.

At the same time, Ṭūsī conspicuously places Jesus behind the Imām in the

¹²⁹ Ṭūsī was the student of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (436/1044, himself the student of Mufīd), who was also critical in this process of doctrinal development, but whose work is largely lost. Arjomand refers to Ṭūsī as the last of the «rationalist doctors». «Consolation of Theology», 564.

¹³⁰ Including Zaydis, Ismā'īlis, and those who proclaimed Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafīyyah, Ja'far al-Sādiq, or Muhammad al-'Askarī as Mahdī or Qā'im. al-Ṭūsī, 192-229.

¹³¹ Ṭūsī, 340-418. Here Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī meets al-Ḥallāj, who had heretically proclaimed himself the *Ṣāḥib al-zamān*. Nawbakhtī confronts Ḥallāj about the matter, and the latter «realized that he had been mistaken» 401-2.

¹³² Ṭūsī, 175, ff. In Ṭūsī's reading, both «*aya*» (sign) and «*rizq*» (sustenance) become names of the Qā'im, who thereby appears throughout the Qur'ān.

¹³³ Ṭūsī, 185.

¹³⁴ «The Mahdī will come out at the end of time», Ṭūsī, 178, cf. also 180. Ṭūsī also includes several traditions refuting those who would predict the time of the Qā'im's *zuhūr*, the «Waqqātūn». Among them is one where Muḥammad al-Bāqir is asked, «Does this event have an [appointed] time?» He responds, «The Waqqātūn have lied. The Waqqātūn have lied. The Waqqātūn have lied». Ṭūsī, 426.

¹³⁵ Ṭūsī, 185.

¹³⁶ Some Shī'a argued that Jesus would be the «end» only in the sense that he would be the last *dā'ī* (caller/missionary) of Islam, but he would not outlive the Imām. See MADELUNG, «MAHDĪ», 1237.

final prayer, something which has clearly become by now orthodox Imāmī teaching. Moreover, Ṭūsī's emphasis of this point in the following ḥadīth clearly shows that this has become a sort of Shī'ī slogan, for this particular tradition need not mention Jesus at all, except to emphasize his inferiority to the Qā'im. Here, Muḥammad speaks to his daughter Fāṭima (the wife of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib), saying, «From us are the two grandsons of this community, your sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. From us (by God and there is no god but He) is the Mahdī of this community, behind whom Jesus will pray»¹³⁷.

Before concluding this section, let us skip ahead some six centuries to see how this doctrine would endure. In his monumental work on Shī'ī doctrine, *Biḥār al-anwār* (which was most recently published in 114 volumes), Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (1110/1698) devotes 8 chapters exclusively to Jesus, one of which touches on his role in the end times¹³⁸. His account of the general prayer makes it clear, however, that the Qā'im receives priority above him:

There will come upon the people a time when they do not know what God and his oneness are so that there takes place the emergence of al-Dajjāl and so that Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon him) descends from the sky. And God kills al-Dajjāl with his hands. Then a man from among us, the people of the house [of the Prophet], will lead [the people] in prayer. Don't you see that Jesus (peace be upon him) prays behind him? *He is a prophet of God, but we are set above him*¹³⁹.

V. CONCLUSION

If Jesus is not God's eschatological protagonist in the Shī'ī sources, then who is he? The question might be most simply answered by saying that, with this one exception, Jesus is everything that he is to Sunnīs. He is the uniquely charismatic prophet of God, who spoke in the cradle, brought the dead to life, and ascended deathlessly into heaven. Moreover, he is also the model of piety and asceticism, whose holiness led both al-Ḥallāj and ibn al-'Arabī to call him the «seal of the saints»¹⁴⁰. It is this particular charism of Jesus which is especially emphasized in Shī'ī traditions.

¹³⁷ ṬUṢĪ, 191.

¹³⁸ MAJLISĪ records thirteen ḥadīth in reference to the role of Jesus after his ascension. Of these, the first nine deal with speculation on the duration of time between Jesus and Muhammad and only the last four treat the eschatological role of Jesus. In contrast Majlisī provides seventy-two ḥadīth on the moral exhortations of Jesus.

¹³⁹ MAJLISĪ, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Beirut 1983), 14:349.

¹⁴⁰ On this see LOUIS MASSIGNON, «L'Homme parfait en Islam», where he discusses other authors, such as al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Sabīn, who identify Jesus as «*kbātim al-awliyā'*». *Opera Minora*, I:114.

Several years ago, the English language Shī'ī journal *al-Tawhīd* published, in two parts, a collection of such traditions, gathered from a variety of sources¹⁴¹. Of the ninety-six different traditions gathered there, exactly zero deal with Jesus in the context of eschatology. Instead, Jesus appears in his prophetic role, delivering the message of 'adl (God's justice) and *tawhīd* (proclamation of God's oneness) and urging people towards *tawba* (repentance). Jesus' distinction from the rest of the prophets does not relate to his deathless ascension into heaven or to his return as God's protagonist in the end times. Rather, Jesus appears most distinctly here as a model ascetic and a preacher, who disdains this world out of devotion to the next:

... [Jesus] used a stone as his pillow, wore coarse clothing and ate rough food. His stew was hunger and his lamp in the night was the moon. His cover in the winter was the east of the earth and its west. His fruit and his basil that which grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to try him, and no son to grieve him. He had no wealth to distract him, nor greed to abase him. His mount was his feet and his servant was his hands¹⁴².

Jesus said, «This world and the next one are rivals. When you please one of them you displease the other!»¹⁴³.

The world took the form, for Jesus, of a woman whose eyes were blue. Then he said to her: 'How many have you married?' She said, 'Very many». He said, 'Then did they all divorce you?' She said, 'No, but I killed all of them.' He said, 'Then woe be to the rest of your husbands! How they fail to learn from the example of the predecessors!»¹⁴⁴.

Many of Jesus' proclamations in these traditions have the quality of wisdom literature. Jesus provides an esoteric and gnostic knowledge, revealing God's truth which is so often veiled to the average observer. In carrying out his prophetic role, Jesus plays the mystic:

It is reported...from Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq, Peace be upon him, in a long ḥa-dīth, that he said: «Jesus the son of Mary, Peace be upon our Prophet and upon

¹⁴¹ By far the most frequently cited source is Majlisī's aforementioned *Bihār al-anwār*. Also frequently quoted is *al-Kāfi* of al-Kulaynī. See M. QĀ'IM and M. LEGENHAUSEN, «Words of the Word of God: Jesus Christ Speaks through Shī'ī Narrations», *Tawhīd*. 13.3 (1996), 21-40. And 13.4 (1996), 45-56.

¹⁴² QĀ'IM and LEGENHAUSEN, 13.4, 47. This tradition is related by 'Alī b. Abī Tālib in the *Nahj al-balāgha*, the collection of 'Alī's sermons as recorded by Sharīf al-Raḍī (406/1016), which is revered by the Shī'a only slightly less than the Qur'ān.

¹⁴³ QĀ'IM and LEGENHAUSEN, 13.3, 29. From MAJLIS' *Bihār al-anwār*.

¹⁴⁴ QĀ'IM and LEGENHAUSEN, 13.3, 29. From MAJLIS' *Bihār al-anwār*.

him, used to spend some time with the disciples and advise them, and he used to say: 'He who does not know me knows not his soul, and he who does not know the soul between his two sides, does not know the soul between my two sides. And he who knows his soul which is between his sides, he knows me. And he who knows me knows He who sent me»¹⁴⁵.

The Shī'ī Jesus, then, can be quite dramatically contrasted to the figure of the Qā'im, who will come not to speak of enlightenment, but to speak with his sword. The Qā'im will emerge from his *ghayba* with fearsome violence, leading the *Āl Muḥammad* to revenge and deliverance.

Thus is the Qā'im also put in contrast with the Sunnī Mahdī. The latter, most distinctively, is a just ruler, who will restore the *sharī'a* after a period of lawlessness led by al-Dajjāl, and thereby fill the world «with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and injustice». Now we have seen that the concept of Mahdī was ultimately included within the identity of the Qā'im. Yet the key difference between the Sunnī Mahdī and the Shī'ī Mahdī/Qā'im remained: while the former restores the world to it was, the latter transforms the world into something new.

If the Mahdī leads an eschatological campaign from above, being a restorer of the *sharī'a* and correct order, then the Qā'im does so from below, destroying the perfidious rulers and exacting revenge for their victims. *al-Qā'im*, the standing one, contrasts with *al-Qā'id*, the sitting one; i.e. the passive one, the one who refuses to join battle. The distinctive meaning of the term is crucial to the cohesiveness of Shī'ī theology, for it contains the revolutionary hope that has reconciled the Shi'a to their misfortunes. The Qā'im is the one who will finally lead the Shi'a out of their political quietism and into battle; he is the one to abrogate the quietist policy of *taqiyya* and institute the Shī'ī *jihād*.

This combination of quietism and revolutionary hopes is most typically explained socio-historically, as a result of historical disenfranchisement of the Shi'a¹⁴⁶. The disenfranchisement, seen most vividly in the murders of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his son (through the prophet's daughter Fāṭima) Ḥusayn, lies at the very core of Shī'ī religious ideology. For the Shi'a, there is no such thing as realized messianism¹⁴⁷. The best of all possible

¹⁴⁵ QĀ'IM and LEGENHAUSEN, 13.3, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Many sociologists have attributed chiliastic movements to social dissatisfaction, as explained by «Relative Deprivation» theory. The Shī'ī experience, with its historical tragedies, would lend itself well to such an analysis. At the same time, other scholars have looked to external influences, particularly Zoroastrianism. Among them is H. Corbin who asserts that Shī'ī concepts of the Qā'im drew from the Zoroastrian doctrine of the *Sayoshant*. See *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, Trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton 1977), esp. Ch. 1-2. See also PHILIP KREYENBROOK, «On the Concept of Spiritual Authority in Zoroastrianism», *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 17 (1994), 1-15.

¹⁴⁷ Some scholars have suggested that Sunnī eschatological hopes were fulfilled in the success of

worlds is yet to come. Their Mahdī, the Qā'im, will assume the role of an avenger.

While Sunnī historiography is filled with triumphant stories of battles (*ghazwāt*) and conquests (*futūḥ*), Shī'ī historiography reads as a list of unjust tragedies: Saqīfat banī Sā'ida, where Abū Bakr wrongly took control of the Islamic community; the Battle of Šiffin, where 'Alī's army wrongly agreed to a mediation with the usurper Mu'āwiya; Karbalā', where Yazīd's army massacred the grandson of the prophet (Ḥusayn) and his companions; and finally the murders of Ḥusayn's descendents, the Imāms. Certain Shī'ī traditions, in fact, maintain that each of the imams, beginning with 'Alī, was murdered, with one exception: the twelfth imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī.

M. Hodgson has suggested that the doctrine of the Imāmate is the one irreconcilable difference between Shī'ism and Sunnism¹⁴⁸. Indeed, there are many groups who differ in their theology and law who have remained comfortably within the fold of Sunnism. However, Shī'ism's doctrine of the Imāms, particularly the last and Hidden Imām, has proved irreconcilable with Sunnism. We might add to Hodgson's observations by noting that the doctrine of the Hidden Imām *necessarily* separates Shi'ism from Sunnism. For when he arrives, it is foremost the Sunnīs upon whom he will exact revenge. The Shī'a are waiting for that moment with «la conviction que toutes les injustices et les souffrances subies par les croyants seront vengées et qu'il sera possible de prendre sa revanche à l'encontre de criminels ayant commis toutes sortes d'atrocités»¹⁴⁹. It is only the Hidden Imām, the unceasing leader of the Shi'a even in *ghayba*, and not Jesus, who can rightfully exact such vengeance for his oppressed people.

So it is that Jesus cannot play the role of the eschatological protagonist in Shi'ism. Instead, the Shī'ī Jesus retains the role of the pious ascetic, while the Qā'im is the avenger of the *ahl al-bayt*. The contrast between their characters is salient and unquestionable. We should not, then, be led astray by comparisons between the two in Imāmī sources, such as their ability to speak as infants or the portrayal of Jesus' deathless ascension to heaven as a precursor to the Qā'im's *ghayba*¹⁵⁰. These are nothing more than individual anecdotes about Jesus

Muḥammad and the rise of Islam. Thus, Muḥammad was already the Messiah of Islam and the battle against evil has already been won. Arjomand, for example, has supported this view, even naming the Battle of Badr as the apocalyptic battle against evil. S.A. ARJOMAND, «Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period», Unpublished paper Delivered at Yale University Spring 1998.

¹⁴⁸ MARSHALL HODGSON, «How did the early Shi'a become sectarian?» *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955), 158.

¹⁴⁹ MUHAMMAD BĀQIR AL-HAKīm, «L'Imām al-Mahdī et la formation du noyau vertueux», *Aux Sources de la Sagesse*, 10.3 (1996), 42.

¹⁵⁰ I have mentioned the first point above in the description of the Hidden Imām's birth. The lat-

put to use in defense of the doctrine surrounding the Qā'im. Indeed, elsewhere traditions surrounding other prophets or individuals are used in a similar fashion¹⁵¹.

Finally, we can conclude that the Shī'ī understanding of the end times is not only very different from that of Sunnīs, but it is also much more central to their conception of human history. Until the Qā'im shows himself to the world, it will remain in a dark state of dis-equilibrium and tension, as injustice will continue to reign and God's chosen family will continue to suffer. The Shī'a wait in hopeful expectation for this moment, proclaiming at the mention of the Hidden Imām's name: «*Ajjala Allahu farajahu* (May God hasten his appearance)». They long for his parousia when he will exact revenge for all of the wrongs that they have endured, and raise up the *ahl al-bayt* to their rightful station¹⁵². Thus do eschatological hopes lie at the very heart of the Imāmī Shi'ism¹⁵³.

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ter point is seen in Imāmī traditions that justify the concept of the *ghayba* and the possibility of the Qā'im living such a long time. Ṭūsī records an example: «As for the *ghayba* of Jesus (peace be upon him), the Jews and the Christians agree that he was killed, but God has shown them to be liars with [Qur'an 4:157]. Thus, too, the *ghayba* of the Qā'im, although the [Islamic] community will reject it because of its length». 170.

¹⁵¹ Note the tradition from MUḤAMMAD AL-BĀQIR: «The Lord of this Command has models in four prophets...His model from Moses (peace be upon him) is that he was afraid and on the watch. His model from Joseph (peace be upon him), is the *ghayba*. His model from Jesus is, as it is said 'he died and did not die'. His model from Muḥammad (God's blessing and peace be upon him and his family) is that he condones the sword». Ṭūsī, 424. Elsewhere the longevity of the Qā'im is justified by comparison with Noah, who lived 995 years (cf. Gen. 9:29, 950 years), or to that of Muhammad's companion Salman al-Fārisī, who had been around to meet Jesus some six hundred years earlier. See Ṭūsī, 113.

¹⁵² «Le temps, pour les pauvres et les abandonnés, est l'espérance en une apocalypse de justice terrible, régénératrice». L. MASSIGNON, «Elie et son rôle trans-historique, Khadiriya, en Islam», *Opera Minora*, I:160.

¹⁵³ This fact remains so today, although many developments have taken place in Shī'ī thought (most notably the idea of *wilāyat-i faqīh* that gave legitimacy to the political activism of the Iranian revolution). I recently saw, for example, a call-in television program (on the station run by the Lebanese Shī'ī militia and political party Hizballah, «al-Manār») that was entirely dedicated to a discussion of the emergence (*kburūj*) of «Imām al-Mahdī» and the accompanying events. Similar is the observation of T. Khalidi, that on the occasion of the Mahdī's birthday in Beirut huge banners were raised which «congratulated the expectant believers for the dawning of the light of salvation upon the appearance of the Mahdī and the Prophet Jesus son of Mary». *Muslim Jesus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2001), 229, n. 42.