

Roads to Paradise

Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam

VOLUME 1

Foundations and Formation of a Tradition
Reflections on the Hereafter
in the Quran and Islamic Religious Thought

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Introduction

Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson

Concepts of eschatology and the hereafter are among the most characteristic and fundamental elements of faith and spirituality in Islam. Next to the belief in God, the broad spectrum of ideas concerning paradise and hell, salvation and damnation, and eternal bliss and unending wretchedness are central to Islamic religion. Reward and punishment in the afterlife for deeds in this life have given form to religious and scholarly discourse and debate in the Muslim world throughout history. The same themes have also been critical points of encounter, both spiritual and practical, between the Muslim world and “the West.” This is perhaps one of the main reasons the wide range of Muslim deliberations on “life after death” and “the world to come” are significant not only from an intellectual but also from a cultural point of view. Indeed, these debates among Muslim scholars provide us with valuable insights into the thoughts and feelings of individuals and communities living “in” Islam, as they touch upon nearly every aspect of human life. And given the common themes and questions discerned in this discourse, such debates provide a mirror for an audience and culture with a shared Abrahamic tradition.

Since the rise of Islam, concepts of the end of human life and of the world as we know it, namely the last judgment, and eternal life in a hereafter, have deeply shaped the beliefs of Muslims from systematic theologians to the “average” believer. And this has been true whether such concepts of the end have been construed teleologically and historically or spiritually and existentially. The eschatological component of Islam lends dynamic and characteristic form and content to Islamic thought and Muslim life, whether religious, political or cultural, on both the individual and societal levels. Remarkably, this observation is true not only for the various sophisticated eschatological theories advanced by trained Muslim scholars but also for related ideas current in Muslim daily life and lived experience, something we might refer to (however problematically) as lay piety. It applies to Sunni communities as much as it does to Shi’i and other Muslim identities, past and present. Together with the unique oneness and omnipotence of God, concern with the afterlife is a – if not *the* – central religious preoccupation of Islam.

While there are a number of serious studies on the great diversity of eschatological views in Islam, it is frequently and unfortunately the popular (not to say vulgar) references to and preoccupation with “martyrs” and “suicide”

attacks which have made their way into the headlines of newspapers and the consciousness of the public when it comes to the “Muslim paradise” and the “roads” that lead to it. Such preconceptions are more dangerous than the dangers fantasized about. Islamic discourse on paradise and the afterlife is infinitely more complex, subtle, and sophisticated than such uneducated distortions would indicate. Ignoring this intellectual and philosophical depth becomes, in the current context of cross-cultural communication and interdependence, something comparable to a crime against humanity. Just one example of the kind of richness that awaits the unbiased and fair-minded observer of contemporary Islamic culture, in profound contrast to the negative notions mentioned above, is the fact that certain contemporary liberal Muslim thinkers use what may be thought of as the “metaphor of paradise” to express their visions of an Islam-oriented civil society. This instance of “Islamicate paradise discourse,” along with a rich variety of other interpretations, is explored in these collective studies.¹

1 Previous and Current Research

In line with Quranic eschatology, as indicated for example in the widely quoted and contemplated verse: “Soon will We show them Our signs in the external world (*fī l-āfāq*) and in their own souls (*fī anfusihim*) that they may know this is the Truth” (Q 41:53),² “last things” may be considered under two major categories: last things in the “external world” and on the plane of history (*fī l-āfāq*), and last things in the “internal world” within the soul (*fī anfusihim*) on the plane of the timeless (*lā zamān*) and the placeless (*lā makān*). In Islam these two categories are frequently found addressed simultaneously and sometimes with no clear indication of which we should choose or assign priority

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- 1 The term “Islamicate” may require some clarification. It was coined by the American historian and Islamic studies scholar Marshall Hodgson (*The venture of Islam*, Chicago 1974, i, 57–60) in an attempt to refine as much as possible the technical terminology of Islamic studies. Based on the double adjectival “Italianate,” Islamicate is meant to account for phenomena in the cultural sphere of “Islamic” dominance and, at the same time, distinguish between more purely Islamic religious elements, such as *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, prayer, religious practice in general, mosques, *madrāsas*, and so on, and, say, the writings of the Christian philosopher of Baghdad Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (d. 328/940), the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides of Cordoba (d. 601/1204), or the modernist Syrian poet Adonis (b. 1930), as well as non-religious architecture, some graphic and fine arts, carpet manufacture, fashion, literature, historiography, philosophy, medicine, science and many other areas of human intellectual and artistic expression, which are products from within an Islamicate – rather than a purely Islamic – milieu or context.
 - 2 Editors’ translation. (Abdel Haleem translation: “We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth.”)

to. Indeed, the message is clear: it is not a matter of “either/or” but of “both/and.”³ As a bridge between antiquity and the so-called middle ages, Islamic discourse – largely in Arabic but certainly not restricted to that language – may be thought to have harnessed much of the eschatological charge of previous “middle eastern” religious discourse – whether religious and scriptural, mystical or philosophical – in the reading, understanding, and performance of the new and distinctive Islamic religious call (*da‘wa*) and identity. Muslim scholars attempted to demonstrate that Islam, on the plane of history, represented an element of a logical and divinely ordained *eschaton* for previous religions and civilizations; they also believed that Islam provided a “guidebook” to a further *eschaton* in the timeless realm. The brief chronology of a few representative works mentioned below testifies to the remarkable and unique role of eschatology, of paradise and the roads leading to it, for Islamic religion and culture.

There is general scholarly agreement that Islam is a “religion of eschatology,” and that the topics of death and the afterlife feature more in its revealed scripture, the Quran, as well as in the prophetic tradition, *ḥadīth*, than comparable texts in other religious traditions. Such concerns inform the general élan of daily praxis and lived experience. They permeate arts and letters as much as theology, philosophy, and mysticism; moreover, they also permeate the natural sciences and related disciplines. Thus it is remarkable, to say the least, that there is still no comprehensive general study of eschatological concepts in Islam available for consultation by scholars and the educated public. William Chittick, in his recent substantial article on Muslim eschatology has stated the situation clearly and succinctly:

The Koran speaks of death, the end of the world, and resurrection more than any other major scripture. The Hadith, or corpus of prophetic sayings, follows suit, as does the tradition in general. The relevant primary literature is vast, and nothing like an adequate survey of important texts has been written.⁴

We might well ask how and why this most important feature of such a major and widely spread religion has been so ignored by generations of “post-enlightenment” scholars. True, there are numerous articles available for consultation, both general and specific. In addition to the excellent summary just mentioned, the late Marilyn Robinson Waldman’s “Islamic Eschatology” (1987) demonstrates the simultaneous richness of the topic and its remarkable

3 W.C. Chittick, Muslim eschatology, in J.L. Walls (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of eschatology*, Oxford 2008, 132–50, here 143.

4 Chittick, Muslim eschatology 132.

neglect.⁵ These articles also suggest the various ways in which the topic can be approached, and point out that eschatology permeates Islamic religious culture in a unique way, from scripture to law, from theology to mysticism, from practice to theory, from art to architecture. As for more specific studies, these may be found under the appropriate headings in such scholarly works as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, to name three of the most widely consulted reference works in professional Islamic Studies. Here the researcher may find – however inconsistently or variously transliterated from their original scripts – learned articles under the rubrics of such relevant technical terminology as: *maʿād* (return [to God, paradise]), *ṣirāṭ* (the path [stretching over hell]), *janna* (paradise, paradisaal garden), *jahannam* (hell), *sāʿa* (the hour, *eschaton*), *qiyāma* (resurrection), and the like. Indeed, if we were to compile a list of words from Islamic scripture susceptible of an eschatological reading or interpretation, it could be reasonably argued that every word, to a greater or lesser degree, refers to the *eschaton*, however construed. It is perhaps here that we can begin to find an answer to our question above: Why the neglect? Why is there still no comprehensive monograph on the themes of eschatology and concepts of the hereafter in Islam? Is the topic simply so vast, permeating so much of the cultural and religious discourse of Islam that it seems, simultaneously, an obvious and impossible desideratum? One example may help us focus more clearly on the problems, or cluster of problems, that bedevil the hope for a universal or comprehensive treatment of Islamic eschatology. Here we refer to the example given by Sufism. In the chronology of scholarship offered below we encounter numerous discrete studies on aspects of the thought of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) by a variety of scholars; his thought may be considered primarily eschatological to the extent that Sufis and like-minded Muslim philosophers and believers are inclined to view the “meeting with God” as an event to be realized in the pre-mortem state, not restricted to the hereafter. As Chittick says, “most Sufis and many philosophers . . . justify their approach by stressing the need to actualize the return to God here and now, before one is compelled to meet God.”⁶ As such, within Sufism and the related, more purely existential or mystical modes of Islam, eschatology is an ever-present concern and as such is implicated in – and pertains to – all aspects of life “in the world.” One may consider, therefore, the distinctively Islamic institution of the *sunna* of the Prophet, which also pertains to all aspects of life in the world, as simultaneously symbolic and iterative of this state of affairs in which law, theology, philosophy, and Sufism all find a

5 M. R. Waldman, Eschatology: Islamic eschatology, in L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of religion*, iv, Detroit 2005, 2836–40.

6 Chittick, Muslim eschatology 138.

common center for contemplation and action and are thus ready topics for eschatological research, as will be seen below. So, the scope of eschatological studies in Islam is wide indeed, too wide for a single author to approach, let alone hope to ever achieve anything even remotely resembling a complete and comprehensive study. It remains true that, even though it is the centerpiece of the Islamic religion, until now it has not attracted a thorough systematic treatment covering its vast and powerful lexicon and the way in which the scriptural passages touching “eschatology” have been digested, elaborated and embodied in the emerging dynamic and rich Islamic cultural and intellectual traditions.

Eschatology is the domesticated Greek word used today in theology and religious studies (since the middle of the nineteenth century) to refer to the scholarly investigation of the so-called “four last things”: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. As such, it is by analogy adapted here from its original Christian context; it provides a category for the concerns of the present work, a collection of nearly sixty scholarly investigations of aspects of what falls under the general Quranic Arabic word *ma‘ād*, “return.” The Quran teaches that humanity is on its way back to the presence of God whence it has journeyed throughout the long, painful history of its collective and individual sojourn on earth.



Before introducing and giving brief summaries of each chapter of our two volumes, we believe it is useful to present a short and necessarily incomplete historical account of eschatological studies in European languages so that we may better place the present work as both a culmination of previous work and an opening for future research. This summary should be seen as something of a preliminary sketch for a future critical and thorough history of the topic.

We begin with Edward Pocock’s (d. 1691) *Porta Mosis*, a translation of six sections of Maimonides’ commentary on the Mishnah (Arabic text in Hebrew characters, with Latin translation, 1655), to which this Oxford scholar added *Notae miscellaneae* (published as an independent book in 1705). These *Notae miscellaneae* (especially its seventh, 78–page chapter) represent probably the first notable scholarly treatment of the eschatology of Islam in Europe. Some time later, Theodor Arnold included a 33-page treatment of Islamic eschatology in his German translation (1746) of George Sale’s English translation of the Quran. In addition, there is Ignaz Goldziher’s discussion of the semi-eschatological role of the *mujaddid* (renewer) held by the tradition to appear at the turn of each century: “Zur Charakteristik Ġelāl ud-dīn us-Sujūtī’s und seiner literarischen Thätigkeit” (1871). In 1872, in his *Muhammedanische Eschatologie*, Moritz Wolff, through an edition and German translation of ‘Abd al-Rahīm

al-Qāḍī's *Daqā'iq al-akhbār fi dhikr al-janna wa-l-nār*, made accessible to a broader Western readership – for the first time – a key text of Muslim eschatological thought. Josef Bernhard Rüling's Leipzig dissertation, *Beiträge zur Eschatologie des Islam* (1895), deals extensively with three main topics: eschatology in the Quran, eschatology in the *sunna* and the Muslim dogmatists, and eschatology in philosophical and apologetic writings. Paul Casanova's radical and controversial interpretation of Quranic eschatology, *Mohammed et la fin du monde* (1911–1913) strongly argues that the birth of Islam was an apocalyptic movement that expected the imminent end of the world and “kingdom of heaven,” a theory taken up again in recent scholarship, as will be seen below. In the process, he also reviewed and critiqued numerous pertinent theories from other earlier European Orientalists, such as Aloys Sprenger, William Muir, Theodor Nöldeke, and Snouck Hurgronje among others. In 1922, the great French scholar Louis Massignon published his magisterial study of the life of Maṣū'ir al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), *La passion de Husayn ibn Mansūr Hallāj: Martyr mystique de l'Islam, exécuté à Bagdad le 26 Mars 922: Étude d'histoire religieuse* (republished 1975). Such a work is important for the history of eschatology because it orients the question toward the individual spiritual life, a life which, as Chittick observed in the above-mentioned study, is frequently concerned with a pre-mortem “eschaton.” Massignon's influence, as will be seen, has been decisive for eschatological discourse that focuses on the mystical or spiritual dimension in the study of Islam. At the same time, R.A. Nicholson, a British contemporary of Massignon (and teacher of the celebrated poet and philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl), began his profoundly influential work on Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273), which resulted in the magnificent and in some ways unparalleled translation of the *Masnavī* in 8 volumes (1925–1940). Again, the focus here is on the mystical or spiritual eschatology of a Sufism broadly construed. Ragnar Eklund's *Life Between Death and Resurrection According to Islam* (1941) concentrates on the “eschatological center” of Islam, especially the intermediate state in the grave, and with a focus on Ibn 'Arabī continues to keep the topic of “mystical eschatology” in the forefront while at the same time pointing to the invaluable contributions of other Scandinavian scholars such as Henrik S. Nyberg, Tor Andrae, and Frants Buhl. It is during this period as well that the prolific and influential student of Massignon, Henry Corbin, began producing a body of scholarship primarily focusing, whether in the language of philosophical studies, mystical studies or a combination of both, on the eschatological “field.” The entire *oeuvre* of Henry Corbin is principally concerned with Islamic eschatology, which he saw as offering an antidote to the Heideggerian “*Sein-zum-Tode*” (Being towards death) of mid-twentieth-century notoriety, in a form he derived from Mullā Ṣadrā (among others) and framed as “being towards resurrection.” The vastness of this field is indicated in his *opus*

magnum, *En Islam iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques* (4 vols. published in 1971), a scholarly testament to this hopeful eschatology, which contains a great deal of material first published in an earlier form from the late 1940s onward. Another important French study dating from this period and touching upon the eschatological dimension of Islam is that of Louis Gardet, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane: Essai de théologie comparée* (1948). In the mid-1950s another remarkable work from Scandinavia adjusted the focus of eschatological research once again: Geo Widengren's comparative study, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension* (1955) takes seriously the time and place of the Islamic sources and reads them for what might be thought a conversation with other contiguous religious traditions, in which eschatological motifs and symbols are seen to travel across confessional boundaries in the consolidation of a comparatively recent Islamic religious identity.

Concern with Islamic eschatology continued throughout the 1960s beginning with Corbin's *Terre céleste et corps de résurrection: De l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran shī'ite* (1960); Hermann Stieglecker's survey of eschatological concepts included in his *Die Glaubenslehren des Islam* (1962), which covers topics such as death, happenings in the grave, the signs of "the hour," resurrection, "reward and punishment," as well as various dogmatic teachings, in addition to images of eschatology, the so-called *visio beatifica* and, last but not least, apologetic eschatology. J.B. Taylor's comparative study "Some Aspects of Islamic Eschatology" (1968); L. Gardet's *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme* (1967); T. O'Shaughnessy's thematic study of the Quranic data, *Muhammad's Thoughts on Death* (1969), and Fritz Meier's brilliant and somewhat provocative (though badly translated) essay, "The Ultimate Origin and the Hereafter in Islam" (1971) all point to the continued recognition of the unequaled centrality of eschatology for the Islamic religion. Helmut Gätje's chapter on eschatology in his *Koran und Koranexegese* (1971) provides and discusses passages drawn from various classical Arabic exegetical sources, on "the hour," the last judgment, resurrection and judgment, as well as on paradise and hell. Annemarie Schimmel's classic *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975) and various other of her works, such as "Creation and Judgment in the Koran and in the Mystico-Poetical Interpretation" (1979), offer discussions of eschatological themes and preoccupations. Her work, along with that of Corbin, sought to refine and orient the methodological perspective frequently impeded by the unachievable ideal of a theoretical detached, "pure" objectivity toward something more realistic and sensible. It is interesting that both scholars have been criticized for avoiding or minimizing the importance of social and historical factors in their analyses of mystical and eschatological phenomena. We should also note the publications of A.T. Welch, "Death and Dying in the Qur'ān" (1977) and Walter Beltz who studied, from a comparative religious studies point of view, the human

'longing for paradise' in his *Sehnsucht nach dem Paradies: Mythologie des Korans* (1979), with lengthy chapters on the end of time, hell, paradise, and the beginning of new life. In addition, several specialized books appeared at this time on topics from a Shi'i worldview, such as Mahmoud Ayoub's *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of Ashura in Twelver Shi'ism* (1978) and Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri's *Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (1979).

A groundbreaking work by Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sūfi Sahl at-Tustarī* (d. 283/896) (1980) points to the existence of, and explores in depth, a vibrant and creative eschatological discourse in *tafsīr*, an area of research examined earlier by Gätje but here centered on the hermeneutics of one influential Sufi teacher. At the same time, the first monograph devoted to salient aspects of Islamic eschatology was given to the field by J.I. Smith and Y.Y. Haddad with *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (1981), an overdue and illuminating study of mainly Sunni eschatological discourse. Mystico-philosophical eschatology is explored in James Winston Morris' translation and introduction to *Mullā Ṣadrā: The Wisdom of the Throne* (1981) while Hamid Algar's translation and introduction to *Najm al-Dīn Rāzī: The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (1982) presents and explores the same theme from an earlier period of Islamic intellectual history. Abdulaziz Sachedina's *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mahdī in Twelver Shi'ism* (1981) offers the first scholarly exploration of the dogmatic eschatology of Twelver Shi'i messianism. Daniel Gimaret, Jean Jolivet, and Guy Monnot, in their meticulous translation and annotation of the remarkable "heresiography," the *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-nihāl* of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), published in two volumes as *Livre des religions et des sectes* (1986–93), draw attention to the importance of eschatology in the formation of religious identities in "medieval" Islamic religious culture. During this decade several other scholars publishing in French, especially those whose works deal with Sufism and Ibn 'Arabī, should be mentioned: Michel Chodkiewicz *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabī* (1986) and *Un Océan sans rivage: Ibn Arabī, le livre et la loi* (1992), which emphasize in different ways the centrality of eschatology for the spiritual life of Islam. In German, Angelika Neuwirth's "Symmetrie und Paarbildung in der Koranischen Eschatologie" (1984) sheds brilliant light on the characteristic and definitive structure of eschatological discourse in the Quran. In English, concern with mystical eschatology also bears the influence of Corbin. For example, William Chittick's numerous studies dating from the 1970s until today, of which we mention here his chapter "Eschatology," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations* (1987), the *Sufi Path of Knowledge* (1989), and

his later *Imaginal Worlds* (1994) as outstanding examples. Carl Ernst, the prolific student of Annemarie Schimmel, has also enriched the literature of mystical eschatology with his *Words of Ecstasy* (1985), to mention only one of his many important contributions. In addition, there is the above-mentioned excellent summary treatment of Islamic eschatology as a whole by Waldman (1987).

Corbin's influence lives on in other scholarship on eschatology undertaken during the 1990s. For example, two of his former students, Mohammad A. Amir-Moezzi and Christian Jambet, have published numerous works treating various aspects of this ubiquitous theme. We should take note of Amir-Moezzi's study of the early teachings of the Twelver Shi'i Imams, *Le Guide divin dans le shī'isme originel: Aux sources de l'ésotérisme en Islam* (1992), and of his later edited volume, *Le Voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam: Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels* (1996). Jambet's concern with a philosophical interpretation of the eschaton may be traced from his *La Grande résurrection d'Alamūt: Les formes de la liberté dans le shī'isme ismaélien* (1996) to his more recent study of the eschatological dimension in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, *L'Acte d'être: La philosophie de la révélation chez Mollâ Sadrâ* (2002). Indeed, the contribution to the present publication by Hermann Landolt may be considered to some degree a response to what might be called a vibrant and productive "French school" of studies in Islamic philosophical eschatology. Denis Gril's numerous studies of Ibn 'Arabī and the "akbarian" tradition also bespeak a concern with eschatology, for example his *Le Dévoilement des effets du voyage* (1994). Paul Ballanfat's studies of the important mystic Rūzbihān al-Baqlī (d. 606/1209), *Le Dévoilement des secrets et les apparitions des lumières: Journal spirituel du maître de Shīrāz* (1996), also deserve to be mentioned here.

Representative works of other eschatological scholarship in the 1990s include Kevin Reinhart's "The Here and the Hereafter in Islamic Religious Thought" (1991); Muhammad Abdel Haleem's "Life and Beyond in the Qur'an" (1995); and Josef van Ess's rich and comprehensive chapter on Islamic eschatology, in his *Theologie und Gesellschaft* (vol. iv, 1997; see also Professor van Ess's *Geleitwort* to the present publication). This chapter covers Muslim concepts of the earthly and heavenly paradise, along with its *Wirklichkeitsweite*, that is, the wide-ranging spectrum and relevance of the concepts of the hereafter, as one may understand this term. Two important works of Fred Donner focus on early Islamic history and the topic of eschatology and apocalypse: "Piety and Eschatology in Early Kharijite Poetry" (1997) and his forthcoming book, *Was Early Islam an Apocalyptic Movement?* (Cambridge). Several Russian academics have contributed to the contemporary study of Islamic eschatology. In this context, it is interesting to note that during the Soviet period there was basically no systematic research on Islamic eschatology by Russian scholars.

The sensitivity of the ideas developed by Muslims on the end of the world as we know it and on the hereafter apparently prevented the appearance of more detailed Russian language studies on these topics. Notwithstanding this situation, we may refer here to more recent thematically related encyclopedia articles by Michail B. Piotrovskiy, Director of the Hermitage (1991), and the Russian philologist and senior Islamic Studies scholar, Tawfiq Ibrahim (1991). Their countryman, Andrey Smirnov (Deputy Director of the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1993, 2014), a scholar of Ibn ‘Arabī, has also contributed numerous studies dealing with eschatology.

Ulrich Rebstock’s “Das Grabesleben” (2002) discusses the specifically Islamic concept of “the life in the grave” (*barzakh*), while Tilman Nagel’s “Der Prophet und die Weltgeschichte” in *Der Koran* (2002) deals with eschatological issues in the context of history and the history of revelation. Fred Donner’s student David Cook opened new lines of investigation in his pioneering *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (2002), while Willem Bijlefeld’s “Eschatology” (2004) studied pertinent Muslim and Christian data. Other important studies include Maria M. Dakake, “The Soul as *barzakh*: Substantial Motion and Mullā Ṣadrā’s Theory of Human Becoming” (2004), and Denis Gril’s *Saint et sainteté dans le christianisme et l’islam: Le regard des sciences de l’homme* (2007). Angelika Neuwirth, in her celebrated book *Der Koran: Frühmekkanische Suren* (2011), offers unique perspectives on eschatological issues in Islam’s revealed scripture by studying suras whose overall themes are eschatological.

A few contemporary scholars whose contributions to the present publication are important as perhaps *de facto* introductions to their preoccupation with eschatology, represent a recent and happy reversal of the above-mentioned neglect of the topic. Christian Lange’s relevant publications include the article “Where on Earth is Hell? State Punishment and Eschatology in the Islamic Middle Period” (2009), the monograph *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (2016) as well as the edited volume *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions* (2016). Nerina Rustomji has also recently published a monograph on the topic: *The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (2009). Mohammed Rustom studies the creative cross-fertilization of eschatological and hermeneutic themes in Mullā Ṣadrā with his timely book, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mulla Sadra* (2012), and Mohammad Khalil’s *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others* (2013) focuses on the increasingly crucial implications of Islamicate eschatological discourse for inter-religious dialogue.

The editors of the present offering have themselves published separate discrete examinations of various aspects of Islamic eschatological discourse: Sebastian Günther’s “«Gepriesen sei der, der seinen Diener bei Nacht

reisen ließ » (Koran 17:1): Paradiesvorstellungen und Himmelsreisen im Islam – Grundfesten des Glaubens und literarische Topoi” (2011), is a detailed contribution to the study of the “heavenly journey” in Islamic thought, while “Eschatology and the Qur’an” (Oxford, forthcoming) provides a systematic survey of the topic. Todd Lawson’s longstanding concern with the apocalyptic substrate of the Quran is reflected in several publications, “Duality, Opposition and Typology in the Qur’an: The Apocalyptic Substrate” (2008) and the more recent “Apocalypse” for the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought* (2012). His earlier “Le Coran et l’imaginaire apocalyptique,” translated by G. Rivier for *Religions et Histoire* 34 (2010) summarizes distinctive apocalyptic features of the Quran. Apocalyptic eschatology was further explored in two other publications: “Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in Islam: Their Reflection in the Qur’ān and Quranic Images of Water” (2008), and a book, *Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam: Qur’an, Exegesis, Messianism, and the Literary Origins of the Babi Religion* (2011). The combination of epic and apocalyptic literary themes and motifs in Quranic eschatology is explored in Lawson’s recent “The Qur’ān and Epic” (2014).

Studies in eschatology by scholars unfortunately not represented in this publication include, among others, the above-mentioned David Cook, Maria Dakake, and the recent radical interpretation of early Islamic history (heavily dependent upon the scholarship of Fred Donner and the earlier Paul Casanova) by Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad’s Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (2012). As this manuscript goes to press, we note with great pleasure the announcement of a new project and call for papers focusing on Islamic eschatology, sponsored by the Oriental Institute of the Czech Republic, published under the title *Death, Graves and the Hereafter in Islam: Muslim Perception of the Last Things in the Middle Ages and Today* as a special issue of the prestigious serial, *Archiv Orientální* (guest edited by B. Ostránský and M. Melčák).

The approach offered here – to bring together numerous studies employing a variety of methodologies, focusing on multiple time periods and various types of sources – is a natural result of the richness, the depth, and the singular importance of the eschatological nature and content of Islamic religious culture. By celebrating such richness, we hope to move beyond some of the various constraints and limitations of past studies, which were frequently restricted to the rather rarified and sometimes ponderous and seemingly impenetrable scholastic *kalām* discourse, to take account of philosophers and mystics, artists and poets from the entire history of Islam. But even within the *kalām* tradition, we may be led to understand the value of Meier’s observation that, if the basic structure of eschatological thought is not original with Islam, “in the scholastic reworking of

the problem of God's determination, . . . lies one of the most significant accomplishments of Islamic theology."⁷ Eschatology, one may well say, is the air which Islam breathes. The table of contents above demonstrates how pervasive and – perhaps paradoxically – life-giving this air remains. It deserves all our respect and interest as we strive to achieve a proper understanding of Islam through a willingness to explore and study it on its own terms. Of course, we have no doubt that in advancing this new approach we will come upon new, previously unforeseen, constraints and limitations. Yet, even so, the initiative is a natural if overdue response to the distinctive genius of Islam.

2 Thematic Scope and Critical Questions

Roads to Paradise focuses on two main, interrelated sets of themes. The first thematic complex concerns the explicit statements in the Quran and the prophetic tradition on the nature of human existence following death, and the discussions of these statements by medieval and modern Muslim scholars. Given the large array of relevant topics here, several research questions arise. One may ask, for example, what the Quran, the prophetic tradition, and Muslim scholarship actually say about events at the point of death. What happens, according to these views, to the body and to the soul after a person has passed away? Is the postulated postmortem resurrection purely spiritual? Or are there conceptions of a physical rebirth as well? How does the human soul reach paradise (or hell, for that matter), and what are the practical implications for the transition from this world to the next? What does existence in the hereafter actually look like? And in what way will an individual's or a community's actions and existence on earth be judged in the hereafter? Are there any points of intersection, or even encounter, between the present world and the world to come?

The second semantic complex relates to the end times, the *eschaton*, or *al-sā'a*, as “the hour” is called in Arabic in reference to the apocalyptic “end of the world” and the transition to a divinely created new world, the eternal “Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth” (Q 3:189, 42:49, 57:3, 6) which belong to God. Throughout the history of Islam, Muslims (and others) have contemplated and interrogated the powerful language and the explicit descriptions of the “end” so dramatically depicted in the Quran. An impressive example of this is Sura 81, “The Rolling Up” (*al-Takwīr*), verses 1–14, where it is stated:

7 F. Meier, The ultimate origin and the hereafter in Islam, in G.L. Tikku (ed.), *Islam and its cultural divergence: Studies in honor of Gustave E. von Grunebaum*, Urbana, Chicago, London 1971, 96–112, here 112.

When the sun is shrouded in darkness,
 when the stars are dimmed,
 when the mountains are set in motion,
 when pregnant camels are abandoned,
 when the wild beasts are herded together,
 when the seas boil over,
 when the souls are sorted into classes,
 when the baby girl buried alive is asked
 for what sin she was killed,
 when the records of deeds are spread open,
 when the sky is stripped away,
 when Hell is made to blaze
 and Paradise brought near:
*then every soul will know what it has brought about.*⁸

Likewise, there are the many reassuring Quranic visions of eternal joy and life in the hereafter, some of which have come to be seen as emblematic, if not definitive, of Muslim faith. These include verbal pictures of the dwellers of paradise inhabiting lush gardens: “They will have Gardens of lasting bliss graced with flowing streams. There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold. There they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade. There they will be comfortably seated on soft chairs. What a blessed reward! What a pleasant resting place!” (Q 18:31). But there is also hell, “a wretched destination” (e.g., Q 8:16), and place of dire recompense – “Is there not ample punishment for the arrogant in Hell?” (e.g., Q 39:60), for “the disbelievers” (Q 39:32), and “the wicked” (Q 82:14), who will be roasting therein and branded with hellfire “on their foreheads, sides and backs they will be told, “This is what you hoarded up for yourselves! Now feel the pain of what you hoarded!” (Q 9:35).

3 Eschatological Categories

To define the term “eschatology” as it is used here, we specify four categories as follows. (For a fuller treatment of these terminological issues, we refer the reader to F. Donner’s contribution in this collection.)

I. INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY: issues related to the “last things” with reference to the origin and ultimate destiny of the individual soul, and the meaning

⁸ In this introduction, all quotations from the Quran follow Abdel Haleem’s rendering of the Quran unless otherwise indicated; *italics added*.

of life and death. This includes questions about resurrection and the stages of postmortem existence, the hope for and quality of postmortem existence, the threat of perpetual suffering and the promise of everlasting happiness, the perception of the last days of humankind as a context for the production of knowledge especially for moral and ethical pedagogy, and the roles of suffering and martyrdom (individual or communal) in this world and the next. This would also include issues of the possibilities (and feasibility) of eternal life with reference to theological, philosophical, mystical, and natural scientific approaches to the “last things,” the states of body and soul after death, eternal life in the hereafter, and to Islamic cosmology, as well as religious, legal, and ethical considerations of the last judgment and their relevance for this world.

II. UNIVERSAL ESCHATOLOGY: eschatology in the sense of the “end of the world” and the function of the hereafter, including Quranic teachings on revelation and salvation; temporal and personal or existential closeness of “the hour”; the perception of God as the only savior of humankind; the negation of a permanent existence of this world and human life in it; the “eschatological wedding” between humanity – *insān/nās* – and the Divine, as well as humankind’s “return” to paradise. This set of questions also includes the liberal and secular approaches to issues concerning the “end of the world” and the hereafter.

III. TOPOGRAPHIC ESCHATOLOGY, that is, the Muslim views of the landscape of the hereafter. The ideas relevant here concern life in the grave, the *barzakh* (i.e., the “place” between death and resurrection, the commencement of eternal existence); the stages, hierarchical or otherwise, of existence after death; the events and locations of judgment day; cosmogony, as well as the geography and other specifics of paradise and hell.

IV. HISTORICAL ESCHATOLOGY: this relates to events and developments in Islamic history, including, for example, messianic movements (as disruptive or stabilizing, crises or response to crises, as formative and productive factors in Muslim society); predictions of armed conflicts and views of the “apocalypse” as the destruction of the world; postulated signs of the end of the world and their meaning for various religious-political movements; individual and collective martyrdom; eschatological ideas as a driving force of cultural efflorescence in Muslim society, as well as religious rules and regulations that are relevant to and echo eschatological concerns in various ways.

4 Sources and Approaches

Next to the Quran, important eschatological ideas are encountered in such texts and literary genres as the prophetic traditions, Quran commentaries, philosophical-theological treatises, historical writings, compilations on law, and

rhetorical and lexicographical works, as well as in manuals on mysticism, to mention just a few main sources. Interestingly, since the rise of Islam the structures of the heavens (and, for that matter, of paradise and hell) have not only occupied Muslim natural scientists, but have also found stunning expression in Islamic art and architecture, and in the incredibly rich (and universalizing) poetic traditions in Islamic lands, and in belles-lettres (the tradition associated with the category of *adab*), a symbol of civilized cultural and literary discourse.

As will be seen in the following pages, the studies presented here deliberately strive to go beyond traditional philological-historical and “*kalām*-based” analyses of Quranic and frequently extra-Quranic ideas in eschatological texts composed in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Indonesian or any other “Islamic” language. In fact, many of the chapters effectively combine approaches commonly associated with disciplines such as theology, philosophy, history, literature, law, anthropology, education, ethics, the fine arts, and other related fields of study.

Several contributions make skillful use of synchronous and diachronic comparative approaches, along with novel research strategies and tools offered by literary theory, gender studies, new historicism, structuralism, and deconstruction among other methodologies represented below. Our aim is obviously to be as un-dogmatic as possible with regard to approach and method. Such innovative ways of investigating the textual and artistic expressions of Islamic eschatology have significantly widened the horizons of scholarly assessment and interpretation offered in this publication. In addition, interdisciplinary approaches have proven useful. Likewise, evidence from the Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian history of ideas as well as elements of ancient Arabian and the wider Mediterranean cultural and intellectual history were made part of the discourse on the “roads to paradise” in order to help formulate deeper insights and generate a more accurate and contextualized knowledge of the multifarious aspects of Islamic eschatology.

Taking these few principal considerations as a basis, we set out below further details on the structure of this publication and the specific issues addressed in individual chapters to help the reader navigate the fascinating world of Muslim concepts and visions of eschatology and the hereafter.

5 Key Issues and Themes of Current Studies in Islamic Eschatology

Volume I: Foundations and Formation of a Tradition: Reflections on the Hereafter in the Quran and Islamic Religious Thought.

The introductory chapter, “Preparing for the Journey, the Paths to Reality are as Diverse as the Souls of Humanity,” begins with Professor Tilman Nagel’s

“Paradise Lost,” in which the author provides an overview of ways in which the border between this world and the world-to-come are blurred in Islam and the Muslim religious imagination. In particular, he examines the types of questions asked about paradise in Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī’s (d. 974/1567) collection of legal opinions, *al-Fatāwā al-ḥadīthiyya* (Rulings regarding prophetic traditions), the Quranic concepts of divine justice and inheriting the Promised Land, and the similarities and differences between the Quranic, Judeo-Christian, and Miltonic stories of Adam and the Garden. Mahmoud Zakzouk’s “The Path to Paradise from an Islamic Viewpoint” then outlines the basic tenets of Islam by describing the straight path leading to paradise as it may be read in the Quran. In centering his analysis on what may be thought a central controlling “sacred metaphor” of the path, Professor Zakzouk discloses valuable features of what has been referred to as “the mind of the Quran.”

Part 1, *Paradise, Hell and Afterlife in the Quran and Quranic Exegesis*, begins with Muhammad Abdel Haleem’s “Quranic Paradise: How to Get to Paradise and What to Expect There.” The author provides a meticulous linguistic analysis of the Quran that addresses three specific questions: “Who will get to paradise?”, “What qualifies them to do so?”, and “What can they expect when they get there?” Through a close reading of the Quranic text, he examines misinterpretations and mistranslations of Quranic descriptions and terminology, and shows how an attentive reading can clarify these issues and rectify misapprehensions.

Angelika Neuwirth’s “Paradise as a Quranic Discourse: Late Antique Foundations and Early Quranic Developments” presents a thorough intertextual study of the image of paradise in the Quran. She analyzes the literary shape of paradise to demonstrate how the Quran rearranged pagan imagery, and how the depiction of paradise evolved within the Quran itself. She looks at how the image of the banquet, the dual symmetry in Q 55, and the complex concept of *wahy* make use of pre-Islamic poetic presuppositions and tropes, and how the Quran creates a simultaneously new and familiar conceptualization of paradise from them.

In Todd Lawson’s “Paradise in the Quran and the Music of Apocalypse,” the apocalyptic character of the Quran is highlighted by focusing on three distinctive and definitive Quranic motifs or themes: the pre-creational Day of the Covenant (Q 7:172), divine presence (*sakīna*), and what is referred to in broader studies of apocalyptic texts as the “glory motif.” These three themes are seen to interact and resonate with one another during the act of reading, yielding a compelling music of ideas and religious images. The conclusion is that apocalypse as revelation is a major preoccupation, mode, and discourse

of the Quran, one that provides unity to the text by imparting and circulating an “electricity of apocalypse” through all of the various subthemes, histories, laws, and directives in the Quran. From this perspective, the Quran may be considered an apocalypse. Paradise is thus seen as an apocalyptic motif of the Quran.

In Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila’s “Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry,” the garden metaphor is seen as central to all Quranic descriptions of paradise. The author maps out the standard formula of the Quran’s constructs of *janna*. He then goes on to describe how, in Quranic depictions, rain and thunder occur only in earthly gardens, and that they signify eschatological calamity and destruction. Although this is markedly different from the use of rain and thunder in pre-Islamic poetry, there are still subtle similarities that suggest the possible influence of poetry on Quranic descriptions of nature.

Asma Afsaruddin’s “Dying in the Path of God: Reading Martyrdom and Moral Excellence in the Quran” explores how a Sunni concept of military martyrdom evolved out of the pre-modern exegeses of the phrase “slain on/in the path of God” in Q 2:154, 3:157–8 and 3:169. This chapter traces the way in which these verses were first understood as explanations of the paradisaic state of those slain at the battles of Badr (2/624) and Uḥud (3/625), and then later used to orient the believer toward the hereafter, which allowed the concept of military martyrdom to be read back into these verses.

Sebastian Günther’s “The Poetics of Islamic Eschatology: Narrative, Personification, and Colors in Muslim Discourse” discusses four different categories of medieval Arabic-Islamic literature: the Quran, the literature of prophetic traditions, the biography of the Prophet, and the classical eschatological literature. The author explores how Quranic eschatological visions were developed by Muslim scholars, and how the symbols, images, and structure of these works reinforce Islamic articles of faith. In the course of this analysis, the chapter pays special attention to paradise as depicted in the story of the Prophet Muḥammad’s *miʿrāj* (ascension to heaven) and the symbolic meaning of the relationship between eschatological events and colors in al-Ghazālī’s (d. 505/1111) popular book *al-Durrat al-fākhira fi kashf ʿulūm al-ākhirā* (The precious pearl disclosing knowledge of the hereafter).

Part 2, *The Pleasures of Paradise*, begins with Andrew J. Lane’s “‘Reclining upon Couches in the Shade’ (Q 35:56): Quranic Imagery in Rationalist Exegesis” which examines how the rationalist school of exegesis interpreted Quranic imagery of the hereafter and paradise. The chapter explores how al-Zamakhsharī and al-Ṭūsī interpreted the images of the throne of God, angels, couches, silk, and gardens, in comparison to the mystical interpretation of al-Sulamī

and al-Baqlī and the traditionalist interpretation of al-Bayḍāwī. This analysis argues that the commentaries all have a rationalist thread, differing only in degree.

Ailin Qian's "Delights in Paradise: A Comparative Survey of Heavenly Food and Drink in the Quran" looks at how the paradisaical food, wine, spices, and tableware mentioned in the Quran reflect pre-Islamic rituals, how these images function in Islamic eschatology and secular life, and how the spiritual is connected to the material. This is highlighted through a comparison with the ceremonial food and drink mentioned in ancient Chinese texts, in order to illustrate the broader assertion that both material and spiritual rewards are used to encourage moral action.

Maher Jarrar's "Strategies for Paradise: Paradise Virgins and Utopia" analyzes the rhetorical and allegorical portrayal of the Quranic *ḥūrīs* (traditionally understood as "paradise virgins") in relation to the longing for and vision of paradise in three different groups: circles of ascetics and early mystics, literalist Sunni and Shi'ī groups, and later mystics. The chapter looks at how in these groups *ḥūrīs* have been understood as transfigured earthly women, created by one's good works and appearing in visions or distracting from the vision of God, and as a reward for those at a lower level of paradise.

Nerina Rustomji's "Beauty in the Garden: Aesthetics and the *Wildān*, *Ghilmān*, and *Hūr*" addresses the complex nature of paradisaical aesthetics in connection to *ḥūr*, *wildān mukhalladūn* (eternal youths), and *ghilmān* (slave boys). These figures function both as beings that populate and as objects that fill the garden. An analysis of their descriptions in eschatological guidebooks and in poems illustrates how the nature of paradisaical beauty is transformative even though otherworldly rewards are described in terms of an earthly model.

Part 3, *The Afterlife in Sunni Tradition and Theology*, is introduced by Aisha Geissinger's "Are Men the Majority in Paradise, or Women? Constructing Gender and Communal Boundaries in Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj's (d. 261/875) *Kitāb al-Janna*." The author discusses the socio-political issues raised by descriptions of paradise in the highly esteemed and influential books of canonical *ḥadīth*. She demonstrates that the pre-modern conception of the body and gender in social hierarchies makes the presence of female human bodies in paradise problematic. Given that descriptions of female bodies were used to illustrate moral decay, she questions how a body that represents death and decay can exist in paradise.

Christian Lange's "The 'Eight Gates of Paradise' Tradition in Islam: A Genealogical and Structural Study" explores Muslim paradise as myth by analyzing

the tradition about the “eight gates of paradise.” It investigates the mythic symbolism of Muslim eschatology and its dialogue with the here and now. It explores the narrative beginnings of the “eight gates of paradise” in *ḥadīth*, then looks at explanations, and possible non-Islamic sources. It ends by using the tradition of eight gates to analyze the eight categories of people entering paradise, as outlined in the *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār fī dhikr al-janna wa-l-nār* (The meticulous accounts referring to paradise and hell) by the otherwise unknown ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad al-Qāḍī (fl. fifth or sixth/eleventh or twelfth century).

Feras Hamza’s “Temporary Hellfire Punishment and the Making of Sunni Orthodoxy” discusses the historical development of the Sunni concept of temporary hell and how the doctrine won acceptance by being associated with the concept of the intercession (*shafāʿa*) of the Prophet on the day of judgment. The chapter begins by looking at discussions of temporary hellfire in the works of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 149/767) and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827), then proceeds to trace its development in the classical exegesis of Q 5:37, 11:107, 19:68–72, 3:192, and 7:46, and discusses how it became consolidated as part of prevailing Sunni orthodoxy.

Niall Christie, in “Paradise and Hell in the *Kitāb al-Jihād* of ‘Alī b. Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 500/1106),” looks at how a particular book employed threats of punishment to urge a righteous Muslim response to and mobilization against the Crusaders. Christie shows how al-Sulamī used the structure of first elaborating and detailing the torments of hellfire, then giving descriptions of paradise, to emphasize that internal piety rather than a desire for the rewards of paradise should be the motivation for taking up *jihād*.

Wilferd Madelung’s “Al-Ghazālī on Resurrection and the Road to Paradise” analyzes views of the highly authoritative theologian and mystic al-Ghazālī on resurrection, expressed in his late work, the *Masāʾil al-maḍnūn* (Questions of the withheld science). In his early thought, al-Ghazālī had upheld a literal view of the resurrection of the body, but, as Madelung points out, in this later text he offers metaphorical interpretations of such concepts as the balance (*mīzān*) and the bridge (*ṣirāṭ*), as a result of which his conception of resurrection became compatible with the cosmology of the philosophers.

Dorothee Pielow, in “Sleepless in Paradise: Lying in State between This World and the Next,” discusses various aspects of the meaning of sleep in Islam; she provides examples from the Quran, popular books of dreams (*tafsīr al-aḥlām*), and folklore. The chapter explores the role sleep plays as a link between life and death, and focuses on it as an earthly phenomenon that will not exist in paradise, as a period of waiting, a religiously undesirable state, and as the state in which nightmares, but also visions and revelation occur.

Part 4, *A Wise Man's Paradise – Eschatology and Philosophy*, opens with Michael E. Marmura's "Paradise in Islamic Philosophy," the slightly revised version of a study which Professor Marmura had submitted a few days prior to the Göttingen conference, before it became clear that he would unfortunately not be able to attend. In this magisterial chapter, characteristic of the late scholar's numerous incisive and illuminating contributions to the study of Islamic philosophy, we are treated to a discussion of how eschatology figures in the works of four major medieval Islamic philosophers, each of whose approaches differs in characteristic ways. They are al-Kindī (d. ca. 256/870), al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), and Ibn Bājjā (d. 532/1138). As Professor Marmura himself says in the article, "the eschatology [of these] major philosophers is testimony to both the range and the ambiguity of some of their statements." Eschatology thus may be considered as occupying a central place in medieval Islamic philosophy.

Thomas Würtz's "The Orthodox Conception of the Hereafter: Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī's (d. 793/1390) Examination of some Mu'tazilī and Philosophical Objections" discusses Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī's Ash'arī understanding of the hereafter, and the influence Ibn Sīnā's philosophy had on it. This is accomplished by analyzing Ibn Sīnā's conception of "return" (*ma'ād*) alongside Taftāzānī's conception of "return" and bodily resurrection in the last section of his *Sharḥ al-maqāṣid* (Commentary on the main fields of [theological] investigation) and by also looking at how Ibn Sīnā influenced his thinking on resurrection, the creation of paradise and hell, and the value of repentance.

Hermann Landolt's "'Being-Towards-Resurrection': Mullā Ṣadrā's Critique of Suhrawardī's Eschatology" presents an analysis of Mullā Ṣadrā's eschatological metaphysics as 'being-towards-resurrection' in contrast to the Heideggerian formula of 'being-towards-death.' He acknowledges the importance of Henry Corbin's work on Ṣadrā, while at the same time addressing the problematic nature of Corbin's positioning of his philosophy in continuity with the *ishrāqī* or illuminationist school of Suhrawardī. This chapter argues that Ṣadrā's 'ascensional élan' aligns with the thought of the Brethren of Purity and the Isma'īlis, and demonstrates this by examining extensive passages of text.

In "A Philosopher's Itinerary for the Afterlife: Mullā Ṣadrā on Paths to Felicity," Mohammed Rustom studies Mullā Ṣadrā's seemingly contradictory positions that there is a cessation of punishment in hell and that the nature of hell is eternal. He shows how Ṣadrā reconciles a form of eternal punishment with God's all-encompassing mercy, and discusses how, since all the divergent paths lead back to God, hell can have a "pleasurable" nature for its eternal residents.

Part 5 is devoted to *The Path beyond this World – Vision and Spiritual Experience of the Hereafter*. Simon O'Meara's "Muslim Visuality and the Visibility of Paradise

and the World” looks at visuality in early and medieval Sunni Arab-Muslim urban culture and its historically and culturally constructed hermeneutic. From a reflection on photographs of the *madīna* of Fez, Morocco, he analyzes Quranic statements and *ḥadīths* on the present world and paradise to show how the religious command to lower the gaze is juxtaposed with paradise’s unrestricted visibility.

Maryam Moazzen’s “A Garden beyond the Garden: ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī’s Perspective on Paradise” explores ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī’s ontological system in his *Tamhīdāt* (Preambles), and discusses the symbolic nature of heaven and hell. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt’s articulation of the oneness of being is rooted in a symbolic dualism that is important for ontology and spiritual psychology. Heaven and hell are states of the soul, and Moazzen explores how the soul’s understanding of divine love leads the individual to the inner state of heaven.

Katja Föllmer, in “Beyond Paradise: The Mystical Path to God and the Conception of Martyrdom in ‘Aṭṭār’s *Conference of the Birds*,” draws attention to Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s (d. ca. 617/1220–1) eschatological vision in the *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*. She demonstrates how ‘Aṭṭār understood paradise as a station on the Sufi spiritual path and talks of the meanings that love, death, and martyrdom embody. She provides key social, religious, and literary context for understanding not only ‘Aṭṭār’s place in his own time, but also how contemporary Western and Iranian scholars have understood him.

Part 6, *Unity In Variety – Shi’ism and Other Muslim Identities*, commences with Omid Ghaemmaghami’s “‘And the Earth will Shine with the Light of its Lord’ (Q 39:69): *Qā’im* and *qiyāma* in Shi’i Islam.” The author analyzes the relationship between the Ariser/Savior and Resurrection (*qā’im* and *qiyāma*) in Shi’i *ḥadīth* collections and Quran commentaries that have previously received little attention. He provides a comprehensive list of phrases and Quranic verses that are glossed as signifiers of the *qā’im* and/or *qiyāma*, and through a discussion of specific images and *ḥadīth*, illustrates how the day of resurrection is the day on which the *qā’im* appears, and how this reveals a symbolic shift in time in Shi’i apocalyptic literature.

Elizabeth Alexandrin’s “Paradise as the Abode of Pure Knowledge: Reconsidering al-Mu’ayyad’s ‘Isma’ili Neoplatonism” discusses al-Mu’ayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī’s (d. 471/1078) view that the reward of paradise is intellectual, and how this interpretation is rooted in al-Sijistānī’s definition of paradise as the abode of pure knowledge. She explores al-Mu’ayyad’s descriptions of paradise in both literalist and allegorical terms in connection with the Isma’ili *da’wa* and heaven in *potentia* and heaven *in actu*. This discussion highlights the way al-Mu’ayyad integrated Islamic messianism and Quranic eschatology with Neoplatonist philosophy to formulate his Isma’ili soteriology.

S.J. Badakhchani's "Notions of Paradise in the Isma'ili Works of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī" highlights the symbolic and hermeneutical aspects of paradise in Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's (d. 672/1274) surviving Isma'ili eschatological texts. Ṭūsī's conception of paradise articulates a spiritual resurrection of the soul that relies on spiritual exegesis (*ta'wīl*). The rewards and punishments of heaven and hell can also be states of the soul, and thus the spiritual and imaginative state of the earthly soul shapes the nature of the otherworldly paradise and hell.

Jamel A. Velji's "Apocalyptic Rhetoric and the Construction of Authority in Medieval Isma'ism" investigates how the medieval Isma'ili texts, the *Kitāb al-Kashf* (Book of unveiling) and the *Haft bāb-i Bābā Sayyidnā* (Seven chapters of our master), use the language of apocalypse to identify objects and events in Isma'ili history from the early Fatimid period and the Nizārī period with symbols in the Quran. Through a discussion of Isma'ili hermeneutics pertaining to eschatology and typology, he shows how the symbol of paradise is re-signified within Isma'ili sacred history.

Alexey A. Khismatulin's "Just a Step away from Paradise: *Barzakh* in the Ahl-i Ḥaqq Teachings" scrutinizes the teachings of the community of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq concerning the eschatological doctrine of the *barzakh* as an intermediary place of experience between this world and the next. According to the teachings of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq, the *barzakh* designates a place in the human cycle of 1,000 lives that leads to perfection. The author provides an introduction to this little-studied tradition, and then focuses on the role of the *barzakh* in the teachings of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq. He analyzes the Quranic exegetical origins of the related doctrine and the main features of the *barzakh* world as described by Nūr 'Alī Ilāhī (d. 1394/1974).

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov's "'Paradise is at the Feet of Mothers': The Ḥurūfī Road" looks at the role played by the human bodily form in Ḥurūfī eschatology, and how the figure of Eve is the key to paradise in the *Jāwidān-nāma* by Faḍlallāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394), the founder of this community. He analyzes the Ḥurūfī metaphysical doctrine of language, the human form as the most complete locus of manifestation of the divine attributes, and then illustrates that Eve, the original form of all humans, provides the key to enlightenment and the return to paradise, which is the return to the original knowledge represented by the mother.

Mohammad Hassan Khalil's "Which Road to Paradise? The Controversy of Reincarnation in Islamic Thought" studies movements from Islamic history that have espoused *tanāsukh* (reincarnation). Based on his analysis of these philosophers, Shi'i so-called *ghulāt* (exaggerators) sects, Mu'tazilis, and Sufis, he discusses the function paradise serves for them and the ways in which Quranic passages are used to maintain their doctrines. He addresses the dif-

faculties in a position that states that the Quran supports reincarnation, while also focusing on the positive and contemporary reasons for supporting it.

Volume II, Continuity and Change: The Plurality of Eschatological Representations in the Islamic World, continues these various interrelated lines of thought in Part 7, with considerations of *Paradise and Eschatology in Comparative Perspective*.

Fred M. Donner, in his “A Typology of Eschatological Concepts,” offers a detailed catalog of concepts around which eschatological thought is structured in order to provide terminology to facilitate future comparative work. He defines the term ‘eschatology’ and highlights some of the difficulties of defining eschatological systems. In the process of outlining these categories, he draws examples from a wide array of ancient to contemporary eschatological systems.

Martin Tamcke, in “The ‘World’ in its Eschatological Dimension in East-Syrian Synodical Records,” investigates how the collection of East-Syrian synodical records from 410–775/76 CE reveals the way this Christian church made a distinction between the present world and the eternal world. Looking at passages from the records, Tamcke explores how the vision of the future world shaped life and societal interactions for this church.

Expanding on this theme of the connection between Oriental Christianity and Islam, Sidney H. Griffith’s “St. Ephraem the Syrian, the Quran, and the Grapevines of Paradise: An Essay in Comparative Eschatology” analyzes certain insights offered by modern scholarship on Syriac and the Quran, and points out the lack of attention given to the use of classical Syriac literary imagery by Arabic-speaking Christians in the Quranic milieu. He illustrates that the parallels between Ephraem the Syrian’s *madrāshê* or hymn ‘On Paradise’ and the Quran are due to a Quranic dialogical development of a narrative motif that is also present in the *madrāshê*.

Another contribution by Martin Tamcke, “Paradise? America! The Metaphor of Paradise in the Context of the Iraqi-Christian Migration” explores the meanings that the metaphor of paradise has for modern Iraqi-Christians by looking at the writings of Sargon Boulus and Jean Benjamin Sleiman. America is described as a paradise of hope and freedom, a refuge from the political and cultural problems in Iraq, while Iraq is described as the lost paradise of a nostalgic past. The chapter discusses the tension between these metaphors and the problems faced by those wishing to emigrate.

Part 8, *Eschatology and Literature*, begins with Waleed Ahmed’s contribution to the study of “The Characteristics of Paradise (*Ṣifat al-janna*): A Genre of

Eschatological Literature in Medieval Islam.” The author argues that a group of texts generally referred to as *ṣifat al-janna* (The characteristics of paradise) constitutes a distinct literary genre within the larger category of specifically Sunni Muslim eschatological literature. He looks at the historical development of the genre, outlining its formal characteristics and the unique way in which such texts utilize Quranic material and prophetic traditions. The author also points out differences between these eschatological works and some other examples of texts that are not part of the genre. He does so, above all, in order to demonstrate how Muslim scholars developed this distinct genre within the socio-cultural context of Sunni Islam.

Mahmoud Hegazi’s “‘Roads to Paradise’ in *Risālat al-ghufrān* [Epistle of forgiveness] of the Arab Thinker al-Ma’arrī” explores the theme of “roads to paradise” by scrutinizing how the conception of salvation in the writings of Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma’arrī (d. 449/1057) is based on *tuqā* (piety), and *tawba* (repentance). Hegazi describes the levels of paradise and hell in the text and the eschatological vision employed in it. Moreover, he shows how al-Ma’arrī’s text differs from those of other authors insofar as his paradise is inhabited mainly by *aṣḥāb qalam*, “men of letters and scholarship,” and his descriptions are based on poetry rather than religious texts.

Roberto Tottoli’s “Muslim Eschatology and the Ascension of the Prophet Muḥammad: Describing Paradise in *Mi’rāj* Traditions and Literature” draws our attention to the historical development of descriptions of paradise in the *mi’rāj* (ascension to heaven) literature. He looks at the controversial position of descriptions of paradise in early material, and then at the features of paradise mentioned in the Quran and eschatological literature, to show how the later medieval *mi’rāj* narratives elaborated on these brief descriptions and contributed lengthy, sustained depictions of the “architecture” and “habitat” of paradise.

Samar Attar’s “An Islamic *Paradiso* in a Medieval Christian Poem? Dante’s *Divine Comedy* Revisited” argues against the widely accepted view that Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is a uniquely “western” work, by looking at the historical contact between the Muslim and Christian worlds prior to and during Dante’s lifetime and examining the Islamic literary and philosophical material that was circulating in Europe at the time. A thematic comparison of Dante’s work with the philosophical novel *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* by the Spanish Arab scholar Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), and an exploration of the possible Muslim sources for Dante’s *Beatrice* offer the conclusion that Dante must be understood in a multi-cultural context.

Claudia Ott’s “Paradise, Alexander the Great and the *Arabian Nights*: Some New Insights Based on an Unpublished Manuscript” shows how an Arabic pseudo-Callisthenes manuscript of the Alexander romance may draw a parallel

between the mysterious location of paradise and the origin of the *Arabian Nights*. The chapter proceeds to trace a postulated transmission route of the *Arabian Nights* from pre-Islamic Persia to the pre-modern Arab-Muslim world, and illustrates that *janna* (paradise, or garden) is used in this text as a metaphor for love.

Walid A. Saleh in his “Paradise in an Islamic ‘*Ajā’ib* Work: *The Delight of Onlookers and the Signs for Investigators* of Marīb. Yūsuf al-Karmī (d. 1033/1624)” looks at the previously unstudied *Bahjat al-nāẓirīn wa-āyāt al-mustadillīn* (The delight of onlookers and the signs for the investigators), and the place of heaven in this author’s new formulation of the ‘*ajā’ib* or marvels of creation genre that includes the Islamic cosmological world. The chapter discusses the ‘*ajā’ib* genre, how Marī’s work continues and refutes the ‘*ajā’ib* work of al-Qazwīnī, and how the work reflects the changing understanding of history in the early Ottoman Empire. Of special value in this context is the Arabic edition of the introduction to *Bahjat al-nāẓirīn* in an appendix.

Suha Kudsieh’s “Expulsion from Paradise: Granada in Raḍwā ‘Āshūr’s *The Granada Trilogy* (1994–8) and Salman Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995)” explores how Raḍwā ‘Āshūr and Salman Rushdie move away from a restorative poetics of nostalgia that sees al-Andalus as a lost paradise, and engage instead in a reflective nostalgia that questions the religious and political turmoil in Eastern societies. Kudsieh looks at how ‘Āshūr (who views al-Andalus as a historical reality with a deeply hidden destructive side) and Rushdie understand Muslim Spain as an unreal society from the start and thus, together, subvert a rather romantic vision of the past.

Part 9, *Bringing Paradise Down to Earth – Aesthetic Representations of the Hereafter*, begins with Maribel Fierro’s “Madīnat al-Zahrā’, Paradise, and the Fatimids,” which examines the construction of the Madīnat al-Zahrā’ from 329/940–1 onwards and its architectural and ideological associations with paradise. The architectural ‘heavenly symbolism’ and its connection with paradise are explored through an analysis of scholarship on vegetal decoration, the description of the gardens of paradise in Q 55, and exegetical literature. She also discusses the political and religious motives behind ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III’s use of paradisaic allusions, and how these helped him to assert his authority as a Sunni caliph in opposition to the Fatimids.

Tehnyat Majeed, in “The *Chār Muḥammad* Inscription, *Shafā’a*, and the Mamluk Qubbat al-Manṣūriyya,” takes a close look at how the Mamluk-era Qubbat al-Manṣūriyya represents an intersection between the spiritual and material worlds that allowed Sultan al-Malik al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (d. 689/1290) to obtain *baraka* (blessing) while maintaining his earthly royal status. The chapter explores the architectural design of the mausoleum and the *chār*

Muḥammad inscriptions and their link to the eschatological role of the Dome of the Rock, and how these allusions also create a tie between the Prophet Muḥammad as intercessor (*shāfiʿ*) and Qalāwūn.

Karin Rührdanz's "Visualizing Encounters on the Road to Paradise" studies figurative representations of paradise and the "road to paradise" in fourteenth- to seventeenth-century book illustrations from Iran, Central Asia, and the Ottoman Empire. She analyzes these representations as a means of visualizing the imagined. The detail, or lack thereof, in the paradisaical depictions in illustrated manuscripts of texts such as *Majālis al-'ushshāq*, *Mi'rāḡ-nāmes*, and *Fālnāmes* illustrate how representations shifted over time and in changing political landscapes.

Ulrich Marzolph's "Images of Paradise in Popular Shi'ite Iconography" analyzes how paradise and martyrdom are visualized in depictions of the battle of Karbala (61/680) from the Qajar period and in modern murals in Tehran. He looks at the placement of paradise and the symbols representing paradise and martyrdom in examples from these two periods to show how images from the Qajar period form part of the visual memory of Shi'ite culture, and how they continue to influence contemporary visual depictions and public consciousness of martyrdom.

This section concludes with Silvia Naef's "Where is Paradise on Earth? Visual Arts in the Arab World and the Construction of a Mythic Past." Here the author examines pictorial representations in the Arab world that idealize past traditions and times and imbue them with a timeless "paradisaical" meaning. She first gives a brief overview of how art in the Arab world was affected by Western artistic trends and traditions, then looks at specific paintings that engender nostalgia for a fictional, idealized past, a paradise on earth sullied by modernization and secularization.

Part 10, *Heavens and the Hereafter in Scholarship and Natural Sciences*, opens with Ingrid Hehmeyer's "The Configuration of the Heavens in Islamic Astronomy," which explores the importance of the seven heavens in the Quran and in descriptions of the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey (*isrāʿ*) and subsequent ascension to heaven (*mi'rāḡ*). The author traces the roots of the symbolic significance of the seven heavens from ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome to the development of Muslim astronomy. She also demonstrates how Islamic astronomy, as a science concerned with the natural heavens, developed from religious motivations concerning the location of the direction of prayer, the prayer times, and the periods of fasting.

In "The Quadrants of *Shar'ā*: The Here and Hereafter as Constitutive of Islamic Law," Anver M. Emon posits a quadrant model of analysis (which takes into account concerns for both the here and the hereafter) as a useful

instrument for gaining a better understanding of Islamic legal reasoning. By applying it to a number of legal issues, the author demonstrates that this model might better explain the work of Muslim jurists than the modern legal/moral dichotomy. This highlights how shifting concerns for the here and now, as well as eschatological concerns, influenced the rationale of juristic rulings.

The late Ludmila Hanisch, in “Perceptions of Paradise in the Writings of Julius Wellhausen, Mark Lidzbarski, and Hans Heinrich Schaeder,” examined thematically relevant issues in modern scholarship. She addresses the specifics of the relationship between Orientalist studies and the study of Christian theology that existed in German universities until the mid-twentieth century. More specifically, she discussed the careers of the three German scholars of Semitic and Oriental philology mentioned in her title. By describing how their earlier religious and theological training inspired their scholarship, her chapter illustrates the subordinate role eschatological issues played in their research.

Part 11, *Paradise Meets Modernity – The Dynamics of Paradise Discourse in the Nineteenth, Twentieth, and Twenty-First Centuries*, is the final section of this book.

Edwin P. Wieringa’s “Islam and Paradise are Sheltered under the Shade of Swords: Phallogocentric Fantasies of Paradise in Nineteenth-Century Acehese War Propaganda and their Lasting Legacy” addresses the rhetorical use of the sensual rewards of paradise in nineteenth-century poems from the Aceh War in Indonesia as a tool for recruiting adolescent boys as *mujāhidīn*, “religiously motivated warriors.” The chapter illustrates that the intent of the poems was transformed to construct an Acehese identity as “defenders of Islam.” While the poems served to recruit young boys to fight, Wieringa argues that the promises of paradise in this literature, in a modern context, also serve as an incentive for resistance and peaceful protest.

In “Eschatology between Reason and Revelation: Death and Resurrection in Modern Islamic Theology,” Umar Ryad illustrates the multifaceted views on eschatological issues in modern Muslim thought. He presents an overview of selected Muslim scholars’ attempts to revitalize a new *kalām*, or discursive theology. He explores the unique ways in which each scholar, starting with Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) and ending with Ḥasan Ḥanafī (b. 1935), sought to address classical eschatological issues in terms of the scientific and philosophical theories of their day, thereby strengthening what they considered to be a vulnerable cluster of teachings in the modern world.

Martin Riexinger’s “Between Science Fiction and Sermon: Eschatological Writings Inspired by Said Nursi” portrays the life of the well-known and widely read twentieth-century Kurdish scholar, his eschatological teachings, and his influence on contemporary Turkish authors associated with the Nurcus, the followers of Said Nursi. Riexinger explores how other twentieth-century

religious leaders and writers such as Fethullah Gülen and Harun Yahya are influenced in their eschatological thought by Nursi's views on science and religion, and how they engage in current scientific debates in their religious teachings, interpret "eschatological signs," and utilize modern media to disseminate their work.

Liza M. Franke's chapter, "Notions of Paradise and Martyrdom in Contemporary Palestinian Thought," on the discourse surrounding female martyrs, the *istishhādiyyāt*, is based on interviews she collected in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. She looks at how female martyrdom is perceived as a "rite of passage," considers whether the *istishhādiyyāt* can be considered martyrs or enter the garden as "virgins," and how in popular encomiums the *istishhādiyyāt* are depicted as Palestinian brides that will nurture the land.

Ruth Mas' "Crisis and the Secular Rhetoric of Islamic Paradise" concludes this broad and deep spectrum of thought-provoking studies with an analysis of the contemporary Franco-Maghribi scholar Nadia Tazi and her discourse on *janna* as a rhetoric of crisis that pairs paradise with terror. The author scrutinizes the structure of this pairing, and the way Tazi situates Muslims in modernity. The author critiques Tazi's understanding and use of Lacoue-Labarthe's concept of "hyperbology" and her use of the Lacanian emphasis on the male subject. In addition, she discusses those Lacoue-Labarthe ideas that may offer a different reading of the crisis, taking special account of female subjectivity.

6 Appendices

Appendix I is a bibliography of both primary and secondary literature on the various topics connected with eschatology and the hereafter. It is a compilation of the most important research mentioned in the various articles in this publication, enriched by a large number of additional studies collected by the editors. This bibliography is intended to provide quick access to some of the most important primary texts in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish (unfortunately it was not possible to include work done in other Islamic languages such as Urdu and Indonesian), along with a number of related studies published in major European languages. Considering the vastness of the topic, it is clear that this bibliography is a preliminary effort. Yet, it is presented here in the hope that it may serve as a basis for future research on eschatology and concepts of the hereafter in Islam.

With these thoughts, the editors of *Roads to Paradise* wish the reader an inspiring and enjoyable intellectual journey perusing the highly varied yet deeply interrelated studies offered in these two volumes.