



# Ten Years' Captivation with the Mahdi's Camps: Essays on Muslim Eschatology, 2005-2015

By Timothy R. Furnish Phd.

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The world received a rude introduction to Islamic eschatology (“End of Time” beliefs) via the atrocities of ISIS—which are intended to hotwire the apocalypse and spark the coming of al-Mahdi, the “rightly-guided” primary messianic figure of Islam. But such beliefs long predate al-Baghdadi’s terrorist state, having deep historical and theological roots in Islam, among both Sunnis and Shi`is.

Movements led by a Muslim leader claiming to be the Mahdi are a staple of Islamic history, whether as bloody jihads alone (the Mahdist occupation of Mecca, 1979) or as revolutionary movements that created Mahdist states (as with Ibn Tumart of the medieval Maghrib, or the 19th century Sudanese Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad, of Khartoum movie fame). Mahdism has manifested from Morocco to Indonesia, from the 8th to the 21st centuries—and as a key belief of Islam, shows no signs of disappearing in the face of modernity. As the Islamic year 1500 (2076 AD) approaches, apocalyptic fervor in all branches of Islam will only increase—empowering Sunni groups like ISIS and, in particular, the Islamic Republic of Iran. This book should prove helpful to anyone wishing to explore these aspects of Islam, and why US policy makers are so woefully unprepared to deal with modern manifestations of apocalyptic Islam. This book is by an expert on Islamic history, who has been researching and writing on eschatological beliefs in the world’s second-largest religion since the 1990s—long before the mainstream media jumped on this bandwagon with ISIS. Dr. Timothy Furnish holds a PhD in Islamic history from Ohio State University, and his doctoral dissertation was on Sunni Mahdist movements (using Arabic sources). He is a former US Army Arabic linguist, a recovering college history professor and a sometime media commentator. He has consulted on Islamic world issues to US Special Operations Command, and to the intelligence community. His other books are *Holiest Wars: Islamic Mahdis, their Jihads, and Osama bin Laden* (2005) and *Sects, Lies, and the Caliphate: Ten Years of Observations on Islam* (2015).

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