

will be in constant struggle till the Day of Judgement.” This effectively puts the Palestinian question beyond normal politics; it isn’t as simple as a question of national sovereignty or statehood—it is about Jerusalem as the axis mundi. Article 11 of the Hamas charter declares all of Palestine to be consecrated ground, and says that no politician has the right to give any of it up. It says, in other words, exactly what Jewish settlers and Christian Zionists are saying.

Article 7 quotes Muslim scripture in a way that contradicts any effort by moderates to resist the terrorist-jihadist call. “The last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him...”

This is a favorite prophecy of militant jihadists, the sentiment of which—death to the Jews—finds its way into a great many Muslim sermons and prayers, and not just in the Middle East.

Following the July 2017 incident that enflamed Turkey’s Erdoğan, two prominent California imams called for the destruction of the Jewish people citing this hadith. At the Islamic Center of Riverside, Mahmoud Harmoush preached that Israel was plotting against the holy sites of Mecca and Medina and told the faithful that to thwart Israel’s plots, they must “wake up” for “prayer is not the only thing.” What else could there be? He left it to their imaginations, then prayed, “Oh Allah, liberate the al-Aqsa mosque and all the Muslim lands...destroy them...and rend them asunder...turn them into booty in the lands of the Muslims.” Harmoush prayed further for God to “destroy them...disperse them and rend them asunder.”

Meanwhile in the university town of Davis (noted for its liberal concerns: a toad tunnel to protect amphibious passage across the I-80 freeway, municipal fruit trees to allow foraging for the homeless), local imam Ammar Shahin prayed that God would “liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque from the filth of the Jews” and “annihilate them down to the very last one. Do not spare any of them.” This is hardly in the spirit of Davis, a sanctuary city whose “Principles of One Community” hails diversity and affirms “our shared responsibility to promote and sustain a united community that acknowledges and celebrates differences.... An accepting and sensitive community...without regard to race...religion, political beliefs...or

other differences.” The Islamic Center presumably thrives happily in this embracing culture.

I’ve listened to both of these sermons, and there is no doubt about the language used. It is awful, because the language of the source, the original hadith, is awful. What can we make of this ubiquitous, poisonous text? It is certainly not unorthodox, it is *sahih*, meaning it is of the highest order of reliability and authority. Put in the most flattering light, it might be interpreted as a prediction of something evil—as are many other signs of the end; ‘in the End Time Muslims will kill Jews and the rocks will not hide them.’ But of course, most read it as prescriptive; ‘before the end can come, you must kill the Jews.’

By coincidence, I saw an article today from a Turkish Islamist news site close to the ruling party: “The Final War Between Jews and Muslims.” It quotes the same hadith, stating that Jesus will only come when this last battle-to-end-all-battles over Jerusalem takes place. It is the war “that will finish off the Jews.”

A number of verses in the Quran can also be understood to urge their slaughter. Moderates argue that these must be considered in context, and that under Islamic dominion Jews were historically protected. They can point to Hebrew passages that have similar calls to kill worshipers of Baal, and they may say correctly that the Jewish Temple Mount terrorists and settlers use a similar logic—the idea that they must settle the Land and rebuild the Temple before the Messiah can come.

All true. Christians and Jews, however, are more easily rid of the problem, since there are no Baal worshippers today, whereas there are a great many Jews. Sure, we can find Christian and Jewish preachers sputtering hate, likening Muslims to the Moabites, for example. But those preachers are quickly recognized and condemned. Moreover, Christians and Jews are very comfortable with textual criticism. To read a scripture about Baal and equate it with a living community requires considerable argumentation—for Muslims there is an easy and direct identification. That is why it is so ubiquitous and why it goes mostly unchallenged.

That leaves us with this problem: millions of Muslims simply don’t read these passages in a benignly historical setting. It will take more than mealy-mouthed statements to the effect of ‘oh, it doesn’t really mean that’ to adequately deal with this. If Christians and Jews still have this problem in spite of rigorous policing of political correctness and the theological

tools of textual criticism (not to mention Jesus' disavowal of all violence), then Muslim leaders should understand that they have a worse problem in so far as they embrace literalism and believe in a prophet who endorsed violence as a ready means to extend the rule of God. Muslims should not be exempt from the same criticism that their Abrahamic brethren apply to themselves—and especially not in a place like Davis, California where no measure of hate speech is normally allowed. Not even towards toads.

Considering now the black hole as a total phenomenon, a picture of jarring paradoxes materializes. As it stands, pragmatic moderates like the late Prime Minister Rabin or Jordan's King Hussein have more in common with one another than they do with their own millenarian constituents; while Hizbullah, Hamas or Islamic Jihad agree entirely with Israel's messianists and Christian millenarians in denouncing any compromise over Jerusalem. As James Walsh noted for *Time* shortly after Rabin's assassination, "the crowning irony now is that Palestinian bus bombers and Jewish extremists have unwittingly found common cause in trying to destroy any workable peace."

### *Muslim Crusade*

RABIN WASN'T THE ONLY ONE ASSASSINATED FOR STANDING IN GOD'S way. Fourteen years earlier, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt—Nasser's successor—was gunned down by members of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Sadat's crime was signing a peace treaty with Israel. Why that was anathema to Islamic Jihad follows a now familiar logic.

We've seen how Islam began; it was a millenarian idea, arising from Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad was personally eschatological, "the seal of the prophets." His message was God's rule and an imminent exit from history, not through a doorway but by an escape ladder, the *Mi'raj* of Jerusalem. Whether or not he thought that would happen with his own conquest of Jerusalem is unproven, but as he died without the Day of Judgment coming to pass, the mantle was passed on to a succession of caliphs.

The word *khalīfah*—caliph, means deputy or envoy, and came to mean both the representative of Allah and the successor to Muhammad. The Islamic caliphate conveyed the authority of God's rule on earth; a concept

that respects no separation of secular and sacred within society. The separation of spheres in Islam was totalitarian, between God's rule and the ignorant rebellion of infidels, the realms of *islam*—إسلام—surrender, and *ḥarb*—حرب—war.

How should we translate the word *Islam* then? There is no definite answer, but all of these are accurate: *capitulate*, *surrender*, *submit* or *be reconciled*. The idea is consistent in all those choices; the only escape from the domain of war, the only place of *peace*, is to surrender to Allah's will. Indeed, *Islam* is a form of the root *slm*—سَلِمَ, a cognate of Hebrew, *šālōm*—שָׁלוֹם—meaning peace; but peace is a broad-spectrum word in any language, and never lies far from the common reality of pacification. In other words, it is never far from war, and in the Muslim world, peace does not shy away from its philosophical twin.

As for *ḥarb*, it is related to Hebrew *kherev*—כֶּרֶב, a word for "sword" and "destruction." As in the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, the sword will bring final peace. In Islam, all who remain outside of *Dar al-Islam*, "the house of Islam" are in the *Dar al-Harb* "the house of war." This is the kingdom of God in eschatological extremis; it is Christ on a war horse with "a sharp sword...to strike down the nations."

Islam thus emerged mobilized for the apocalypse, in a default state of military readiness. There is a name for the process of achieving the total dominion of peace; it is *Jihad*, the exertion of the believer to convert more and more of the realm of war into the domain of peaceful submission. It is akin to the evangelism of the Crusades, and there should be no doubt about the original concept: Jihad can be a private battle, the struggle to bring one's own thoughts and actions under heaven's peaceful aegis, but in Islam, Muhammad's example supersedes all interpretation, and he exemplified Jihad by military conquest.

Over the course of history, within the ebb and flow of the first conquests of the Middle East, followed by Crusader aggression and then their own deep infiltration into Christendom, the ideal of Islam's steady progress remained intact. As we might expect then, the events of the twentieth century that so excited Christian and Jewish passions also appeared to Muslims as laden with eschatological significance. In Muslim eyes, these events also appeared to fulfill prophecy.

The signs were all there. Islamic tradition delineates a number of indications that the Day of Judgment is near: open sexual immorality and

proliferation of sexual diseases; corrupt and exploited Muslim rulers; prolific consumption of alcohol; a vast increase in trade and illicit wealth; a growing disparity between rich and poor; Christian nations attacking Muslims; and war with the Jews.

Islam predicts hard times of tribulation and apostasy in the Last Days. For example, an often cited and authentic hadith of Ahmad b. Hanbal preserves a prophecy of Muhammad's about the course of history. Muhammad says that prophethood (his own life) would last as long as God wills, then would be replaced by the age of the caliphs, modeled on his own example. After that will come a period of harsh rule by tyrannical kingdoms until God once again raises up a righteous caliphate like his own.

This and other signs, it has been argued, came to pass during World War One when the Crusading powers corrupted the direct linear descendants of Muhammad in a bid to defeat the Ottoman Empire. This was Lawrence of Arabia's project, which was to make allies of the rulers of northwestern Arabia. Adding enormous gravity to the situation, the Christians' Arab allies were none other than princes of the family responsible for protecting the House of Allah, the Kaaba in Mecca. It was they who fought alongside the English with the end result that the caliphate itself was abolished.

The prophet Muhammad's cloak, battle standard, personal seal, and swords—along with the swords of his first four successors—had been protected and passed along by the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman Caliphs as emblems of caliphal authority; they now came into the possession of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, an unbelieving, Westernized alcoholic who disavowed the Islamic past and turned these symbols of sacred authority into museum curiosities.

The Arab world was summarily divided between French and English spheres of influence, with the newly appointed Arab leaders entirely beholden to them. (Under Lawrence's guidance, Meccan Prince Faisal even made a deal with the head of the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann.) Just twenty years later, the Jews declared a state, making war on Muslims with the support of Western Christian powers.

For Hassan al-Banna, an Egyptian school teacher, these developments were a call to action that rapidly grew into the largest Islamic revival movement of the 20th century: the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brothers

advocated pan-Islamic unity and a government based firmly on Islamic law. Still today, the Brothers explain their religious duty in terms of the war that ended the caliphate:

“A century has passed since the secret agreement signed on May 17, 1916 by the French diplomat François Georges-Picot with Britain’s representative Mark Sykes,” wrote the Muslim Brotherhood’s spokesman in an official statement released in 2016. The Brotherhood described the treaty as an agreement “to partition and share Ottoman Empire areas, the last Islamic Caliphate, with the help of local allies who lusted after power, traitors who betrayed their Arab identity and Islam—their faith.” The French and British “cut and occupied our homeland, and set Arab against Arab, Muslim against Muslim;” and, he adds, Arab rulers today continue to be “slaves to foreign influence.”

The same anniversary statement focuses on how the occupiers “broke the Islamic Caliphate” and then describes their revival movement as a quest to “restore the soul of the Islamic homelands” and free them from “a secular Westernizing plot that still works its way among us.”

Obviously the ruling Arab elite, villains in the Brotherhood’s story, regarded the group’s explosive growth as an imminent threat. They were banned in Egypt in 1948 and al-Banna was assassinated in 1949. This was regarded by the Brothers as proving their case, and fortunately for them, al-Banna’s successor was a prolific writer, a brilliant, innovative intellect and man of truly extraordinary conviction and integrity.

Sayyid Qutb’s diagnoses of the world’s ills and his prescribed cure impacted the lives of hundreds of millions. World history from 1970 would not be recognizable to us if this man had not written what he did; and his influence has only grown with each successive decade since Egypt executed him 1966.

Qutb lived for a time in the United States, leading him to judge the condition of global humanity to be at a breaking point. Humans lived in abject alienation from their natural, God-given state; all lived in bestial degeneracy, as evidenced by unbounded sexual licentiousness, alcoholism and drug addiction. All were symptomatic of existential bankruptcy, and in his view, it was this rot that the Western powers sought to impose on the Islamic heartland. As it blazed the trail on this headlong drive into depraved ignorance, the Christian West’s “treacherous orientalist” utilized the “evil designs” of “world Jewry” to suck the Muslim world into

its folly. Two aspects of this “trickery” are worth our notice, as they shed light on the logic of militant Islam.

First, Qutb deplored the West’s idea that religion is a set of optional personal convictions, “merely a name for ‘belief’ in the heart,” he scoffed. Muslim scholars living in the West, the cherished moderates, “with their defeated mentality,” bore Qutb’s judgment for having adopted this shopping cart style “Western concept of ‘religion’.”

No, he said. The truth is not a matter of opinion or personal conviction. “Islam is not merely a belief... Islam is the way of life ordained by Allah Almighty for all mankind, and this way establishes the Lordship of Allah alone.” For Qutb and his millions of followers, religion is not a choice but a detailed system for living, handed to us from God as a finished corpus *in toto*, which applies to everyone whether they believe in God or not. This is particularly prickly with Islam, because this true religion, as Qutb writes, is the “*Haakimiyah* (sovereignty or kingdom) of Allah—and orders practical life in all its daily details.”

Moreover, argues Qutb, this head-to-toe monopoly on belief “throws a completely new light on the Islamic Jihad.” Westernized Muslim scholars wrongly “conceive of religious war as a war to impose belief on peoples’ hearts.” Not so. Since it has nothing to do with beliefs, “Jihad in Islam is simply a name for striving to make this system of life dominant in the world.”

There is no choice; no option—jihad is not a moral argument writes Qutb, it is law enforcement. In the early days of Islam, “*Jihad bis-Saif* (striving through fighting with the sword)...was a movement to wipe out tyranny and to introduce true freedom to mankind.” Qutb thus taught that jihad’s aim to make Islam the “dominant system in the world,” was an act of liberation. “Only in this manner can the way of life be wholly dedicated to Allah, so that neither any human authority nor the question of servitude remains.” In other words, true freedom only occurs in total submission to Islam; everything else is subjection to mere human ideas.

For Qutb and the Muslim Brothers, the first order of business was to rid themselves of the Westernized Arab elites. They would replace them with genuine Islamic states based on Islamic law. Then the overarching universality of God’s sovereignty would supersede local secular nationalism. Because it is transnational, this superseding authority also applies to all Muslims wherever they live, even if they are citizens of the Western

nations: “Other societies do not give it [Islam] any opportunity to organize its followers according to its own method, and hence it is the duty of Islam to annihilate all such systems, as they are obstacles in the way of universal freedom.”

This then is why President Anwar Sadat was assassinated. He was an obstacle to Islam’s greatest eschatological promise, a totalitarian universal Islamic utopia. His making peace with Israel under the watchful eye of well-known Born Again Christian Jimmy Carter was the last straw, showing him to be the steward of Crusader wishes. Islamic Jihad, the group that assassinated him, emerged directly from the Muslim Brotherhood and Qutb’s teaching in particular, as did al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, Hamas and the myriad other Sunni Muslim revivalist movements that appeared after the Six-Day War.

Over the years, I’ve known many of their constituents, and they certainly present their support of violence in Qutbian terms: it is a benevolent act of liberation; done in my best interests, they assure me. From my first cloak-and-dagger meetings with exiled Muslim Brothers in Athens in the 1980’s, to ISIS supporters I’ve encountered in the 2010’s, all have described to me their militancy as an act of grace that promises to free me from idolatry and subjugation to limited human ideas. They want me to know the peace of the House of Islam, to surrender to Allah and thus remove myself from the House of War that I’ve imprisoned myself in.

And if I remain captive in the *Dar al-Harb*? As long as I’m in it, I am subject to jihad but it is my fault. Their deepest wish for me is that I might know the true liberty of obedience to God as presented untainted in Islam. I have no reason to doubt their sincerity, as deadly as it is.

### *Islamic Armageddon*

IT IS NOT JUST THE ASSASSINS WHO ARE ENRAPPED BY THIS FALSE Paradise—their acts of violence are buoyed by a larger society. Rabin’s murderer was the tip of a spear composed from elements of Jewish and Christian millenarians—the great many Jews and Christians who denounced and vilified Rabin for standing in the way of prophecy. Sadat’s assassins drew inspiration from a comparable Muslim community. We’ve seen plenty of the Christians and Jews. What does millenarian populism



look like in the modern Muslim world? Unfortunately, it looks a lot like Syria and Iraq.

In 2012, the Pew Research Center sampled opinions across the Middle East, North Africa and Muslim South Asia; it was not biased towards particularly pious Muslims or activists, just a cross-section of the population in Muslim majority nations. They found that more than half believe they will live to see the appearance of the Mahdi, the prophesied leader who will appear with Jesus in the Last Days to combat *Al-Masīḥ ad-Dajjāl*, the “False Messiah” or Antichrist. The figures for those expecting to see this glorious day were especially high in Afghanistan, at 83 percent; Iraq, at 72 percent; and Turkey, at 68 percent. (The poll was not conducted in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen—all of which presumably match or exceed the higher percentages.)

As in the West, modernity has not mitigated these beliefs, if anything, it’s made them more urgent. Owing to the ubiquity of mass media in the Information Age, specific End Times theories have taken on the authority of religious canon. Television imams mimic the phenomenon of Christian television evangelists in the West, and high literacy rates have, as they did in Enlightenment Europe, enabled ordinary Muslims to choose from a broad spectrum of eschatological interpretations. On both sides, higher literacy has meant the rise of a majority that is just educated enough to get into serious trouble. There is little intellectual rigor or discipline.

The template was cut by Egyptian author Said Ayyub, who wrote his book *Al-Dajjal* (The Antichrist) in 1987. Echoed by countless copy-cat books and TV imams, it was to the Islamic world what the bestseller *The Late Great Planet Earth* was for Christians—a runaway bestseller that rabidly interpreted traditional prophecies through modern geopolitical realities.

Barbara Stowasser summarized the genre for The Yale Center for International and Area Studies: “This contemporary apocalyptic literature, then, is anti-Western in that it sees the West (often equated with Christianity) as the main breeding ground of immorality.” She adds that in the Islamic apocalyptic context, the Arab-Israeli conflict was drawn into “popular sermons, pulp-fiction narratives, on Websites” to “set the tone for an apocalyptic millenarian mind-frame in their mass audiences and readers.” Invariably, “Israel is seen either as an embodiment of the [Antichrist] Dajjal’s power, or as his agent and instrument in accomplishing his goals.”

Stowasser noticed that the information was passed along in “an Islamist-fundamentalist information loop of oral communication, video and audio cassettes of sermons delivered by Islamist preachers, popular pulp fiction narratives, and the new electronic media including Web sites and Home pages.” Writing in 2002, she could not have known how awfully effective this would be in the hands of global jihadists a decade later. The way the Internet would circumvent state censorship to create large bodies of virtually connected brothers in arms was entirely unforeseen by scholars and a total surprise to our spy masters.

The most glaring example was ISIS, whose propaganda relied heavily on Last Days interpretations popularized by Ayyub—something obvious right from their first publication. I’ll leave it to you for further reading, beginning with a highly regarded article by Graeme Wood in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The subheading tells us enough for now: “The Islamic State is no mere collection of psychopaths. It is a religious group with carefully considered beliefs, among them that it is a key agent of the coming apocalypse.”

ISIS is just one example. All the Sunni Muslim fighters in Syria and Iraq—some affiliated with al-Qaeda and some bizarrely supported directly by the USA—also believe that they are waging the last war. As a Syrian Islamist rebel told Reuters, “If you think all these mujahideen came from across the world to fight Assad, you’re mistaken. They are all here as promised by the Prophet. This is the war he promised—it is the Grand Battle.”

This young warrior reflects the thinking of Abu Musab al-Suri, a Syrian Muslim Brotherhood member who joined Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan as part of al-Qaeda’s inner circle; he gets credit from numerous sources for “radicalizing” a hitherto moderate bin Laden (who was, of course, originally fighting America’s war against the Soviets, with American supplied weapons).

After 9/11, al-Suri took the opportunity afforded by a lengthy period in hiding to write his 1,600-page book, *A Call to Global Islamic Resistance*. Published on the Internet in 2004, it had an enormous impact on the development of the Syrian Civil War and the global recruitment of jihadists. It is at once a rationale for jihad, an explicit justification for terrorism (“terrorizing the enemies is a religious duty”) and a practical training manual for how to do it. To that end, al-Suri relies on the Quran:

“And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.”

French scholar Jean-Pierre Filiu analyzed the material for his award-winning research on Islamic apocalypticism, concluding that al-Suri’s work should not be misunderstood: “There is nothing in the least theoretical about this exercise in apocalyptic exegesis.... It is meant as a guide for action.” That’s exactly what we’ve seen in the Middle East from 1990 until now—it is End Time action, not a conventional war over resources or power.

So why are Sunni fighters mainly fighting Shiite Muslims? It’s the house of mirrors again. Listen to the young Shiite fighters, and you’ll hear the same motivations recited by the Sunnis above—the only difference is that the role of apostate is reversed. Prophecy predicted Muslim apostates in the End Time. Each sees that role fulfilled by their brothers, based like Cain and Abel on differences in cultural practice.

Abbas, an Iraqi Shiite fighter in his mid-twenties, is representative of the young Shiites who joined the war by the tens of thousands. He told Reuters that he knew he was living in the era of the Mahdi’s return when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. “That was the first sign and then everything else followed.” It didn’t matter that the USA was there to oust Saddam Hussein, a vicious enemy of Shiites, or that the result was a Shiite-dominated government. All that matters is the millenarian significance of it. As of this writing, he is on his fourth tour of duty in Syria—assuming he’s still alive.

Messianism among Shiites is not new. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* introduces the topic by stating that “Messianism is one of the most powerful, diverse and enduring expressions of Islam in Iran throughout its long history. Messianic speculations are evident especially in Shi‘ite literature ranging from Hadith, theology, and philosophy to occult sciences, and folklore.” These speculations have real consequences. “Messianic yearnings also motivated a number of epoch-making popular movements with political ambitions and lasting influence on Iranian cultural identity.”

The 1979 Iranian revolution is the leading example. In essence a Shiite version of Qutb’s rejection of Western contamination, but a more

successful application of what the Muslim Brotherhood aspired to—in Iran it resulted in a true Islamic state.

We could illustrate Shiite views further by quoting from dozens of established clerics and mainstream politicians in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, but one example is sufficient: former Iranian president Ahmed Ahmadinejad. He speaks as a genuine populist voice of the End Time enraptured masses. All we have to do is read his Paradise-themed speeches to the United Nations General Assembly to understand what at least seventeen million Iranian voters believe.

On one occasion he calls on humanity to tread “the path of the divine prophets and the righteous under the leadership of Imam al-Mahdi, the Ultimate Savior of mankind.” At another session, he announced, “I am here to voice the divine and humanitarian message of learned men and women of my country to you and to the whole world; God Almighty has promised us...a man who is a perfect human being and is named Imam Al-Mahdi, a man who will come in the company of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and the righteous...he will lead humanity into achieving its glorious and eternal ideals.”

All this by way of explaining Iran’s foreign policy, which rests largely upon supplying militias to fight in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and ultimately against Israel’s existence. Israel’s annihilation is the objective celebrated every year on Jerusalem Day. According to Mr. Ahmadinejad the goal of Iranian policy is, “The arrival of the Ultimate Savior” who will “mark a new beginning, a rebirth and a resurrection. It will be the beginning of peace, lasting security and genuine life.... He will establish a world brimful of prudence and he will prepare the ground for the collective, active and constructive participation of all in the global management.” Presumably Jesus and Company’s global management will have a place for folks like Ahmadinejad in the top echelons.

We can almost see Paradise’s verdant gardens when the Iranian president concludes with this evocative image of the Mahdi’s nearness—it is so close we can smell it: “Now we can sense the sweet scent and the soulful breeze of the spring, a spring that has just begun and doesn't belong to a specific race, ethnicity, nation or a region.... He will be the spring of all the justice-seekers, freedom-lovers and the followers of heavenly prophets. He will be the spring of humanity and the greenery of all ages.” Spring, we

should remember, begins with Newroz Day, the Zoroastrian idea that started it all, and which is still celebrated in Iran.

As the war in Syria concludes with the collapse of ISIS it will be important to remember who won: not the West, but Iran. Iranian militias now dominate Iraq and Syria, building missile bases that target Israel. ISIS fighters have not vanished either: they've regrouped, many joining other Sunni militias including al-Qaeda and others going home to plot another insurrection. They will work to infiltrate and undermine Arab governments and regimes across the region. Could it be that this awful civil war was only the prelude? Certainly possible given the stated ambition of all the actors—the Muslim warriors and Israeli and Christian messianists won't be happy with anything but the battle of Armageddon. Can nothing stop them?

### *Born Again*

AN EXPLICIT MILLENARIAN NARRATIVE FOUND ITS WAY INTO AMERICAN politics when presidential candidate Jimmy Carter proclaimed himself a born-again Christian. This was the culmination of Scofield's influence on American churches and Bible colleges, and a reaction to an age of anxiety and moral degeneration. Being a born-again Christian in the 1970's was akin to belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood or the Iranian Revolution. All were characteristically revivalistic and concerned with the culture shock of the twentieth century.

When Carter ran for office in 1976, Billy Graham was at his peak. The most influential proponent of the born-again experience, Graham preached the signs of the times while calling for the masses to remove themselves from the disintegrating world through spiritual rebirth. Now with Carter's candidacy, a new thought developed: we can change the world instead of merely shunning it. The kingdom of God can come through political action. Here too, the born-again movement would parallel Muslim and Jewish revivalism.

Carter's declaration, made during the March 1976 North Carolina primaries, marked the beginning of a new epoch. For decades premillennialists had kept their heads down, slightly embarrassed among their tweedy Protestant brethren who dominated the eastern elites. With Carter's

General Boykin made clear on many occasions that he viewed Islam as demonic, a religion inspired by Satan, and that “there is no greater threat to America than Islam.” The United States was a “Christian nation” he said, waging a “spiritual battle.” As for his confrontation with a Muslim Somali militia leader while fighting there with the Delta Force, Boykin said, “I knew that my God was bigger than his.”

General Boykin was an original member of the Delta Force and later part of the Joint Special Operations Command. He is unquestionably one of the most experienced ground operatives alive, having served in Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia. He was also just the kind of Christian I was raised to be in the South: a believer in the End Time, committed to the transformation of the world through evangelism, and sure of America’s special place in that regard.

During the Bush years, Boykin was appointed to the critical position of Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence. Along with General Stanley A. McChrystal, he was tasked with nothing less than hunting down Osama bin Laden and finding and eliminating al-Qaeda’s leadership. One officer close to the scene described the generals in charge of the Joint Special Operations Command as “fellow travelers in the great crusade against Islam” who “presided over this black world where any actions were justified against Muslims because you were fighting against the Caliphate.”

On the frontline we might consider “American Sniper” Chris Kyle, known best as one of America’s most lethal snipers, with a hundred and sixty confirmed kills. When jihadist insurgents put out a bounty on Kyle, whom they dubbed “the Satan of Ramadi,” he rejoiced, saying that he “hated the damn savages.” Award-winning journalist of the GWT, Nicholas Schmidle, whose work is notably steeped in long experience on the battlefield, wrote sympathetically of Kyle for *The New Yorker* in 2013. “Like many soldiers,” Schmidle reported, “Kyle was deeply religious and saw the Iraq War through that prism. He tattooed one of his arms with a red crusader’s cross, wanting ‘everyone to know I was a Christian.’”

The new-wave jihadists must have approved of Kyle’s honesty. We can deduce this because the Islamic State reported favorably on President Bush’s gut response to 9/11 in a 2015 article that appeared in *Dabiq*, the organization’s flagship magazine. “As Shaykh Usāmah Ibn Lādīn (rahimahullāh) said, ‘The world today is divided into two camps. Bush

spoke the truth when he said, *Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists*. Meaning, either you are with the crusade or you are with Islam.”

The same edition assailed the spin the White House tried to put on the GWT and denounced Muslims who painted Islam as “a religion of peace.” In other words, ISIS agreed wholeheartedly with Colson and Graham. “So how can the heretics or even those who blindly follow them—Bush, Obama, and Kerry – obstinately claim that ‘Islam is a religion of peace,’ meaning pacifism? One of the biggest false arguments propagated by the heretics is the linguistic root for the word Islam. They claim it comes from the word *salām* (peace), when in actuality it comes from words meaning submission and sincerity sharing the same consonant root.”

Muslim resistance to political correctness is not limited to the fringes of the Islamic State. Islamic revivalists of all kinds believe that the West’s insistence upon ‘peaceful’ Islam is an attempt to trick Muslims into passivity. Why should they be the only peaceful religion while Christians and Jews bomb the Middle East, killing millions?

What should we say then? It is wrong to accept the inevitability of this clash of religions, but it is untrue to deny that the condition of it exists today and has done, hot and cold for a thousand years. Obfuscation is not helpful, which brings us to our next page, the false Paradise of progressive liberalism, the last empty hope before turning to what I hope will be more helpful and happier thoughts.

### *Black Jesus*

“I CAME TO SEE FAITH AS MORE THAN JUST A COMFORT TO THE WEARY... but rather as an active, palpable agent in the world and in my own life. I was finally able to walk down the aisle of Trinity one day and affirm my Christian faith. Kneeling beneath that cross on the South Side, I felt I heard God’s spirit beckoning me. I submitted myself to His will, and dedicated myself to discovering His truth and carrying out His works.”

That’s how candidate Obama came out as a born-again Christian. For some “birthers” who questioned the candidate’s eligibility as a natural-born US citizen, this phrase, “I submitted myself to His will,” was a tell-tale admission to being a Muslim—raising doubts about the second prerequisite to the presidency: being born-again. I took it as subliminal