The End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity

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> Muslim activists, mainstream Islamic political parties, civil societies etc. …; and American diplomacy is committed to involve American Muslim community's activist organization in promoting the message of Muslim audiences, and communicating with other Muslims. (pp.120–23)

The author concludes 'that America's low standing in Muslim countries can be turned around', for public opinion polls in the Islamic world had shown that the United States has been viewed as a threat to world peace (p. 140). The author stresses that 'the United States should attempt to reverse this trend and re-establish American moral leadership and rekindle in other nations, faith in this country's deep-rooted commitment to justice, fairness, the rule of law, civil rights, and international norms of behaviour' (p.140).

It is evident that this book's past, present and future visions were based to a great extent on American foreign policies in the past, especially during President George W. Bush's administration, 2001–2008. President Barak Hussein Obama's decisive victory in the November 2008 elections and his assuming constitutional power in January 2009 clearly has opened many windows of opportunities in American foreign policy toward the Muslim World. I hope that the author in the revised edition of his book in the near future will take these great developments in American politics into account. I have no doubt that these developments will be, to a great extent, in harmony with the book's thesis.

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Bethlehem University, Bethlehem, PNA, Palestine

Karolyn Kinane and Michael A. Ryan (eds.), *The End of Days: Essays on the Apocalypse from Antiquity to Modernity*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc, 2009. pp. 385, ISBN 978-0-7864-4204-1

This is a collection of articles – some of them, published elsewhere before – dealing with the apocalypse and related issues, such as millennialism. After an Introduction by the editors and an article in which Brett Edward Whalen talks about the rewarding experience of teaching about the apocalypse in the classroom, the book is made up of two parts: the first, "Development and Dissemination", is a historical overview that covers from the origins of the Judeo-Christian apocalypse to the Third Reich; part two, "Political and Popular", analyses the role of the apocalypse in contemporary political thought and popular culture.

Casey Starnes provides the context with "The Roots of Judeo-Christian Apocalypse". The author traces back Jewish apocalyptic ideas to the influence of Persian Zoroastrism (adopted during the Jews' period of enslavement in Babylon) and to Greek theology (during the Hellenistic age). Starnes points out that the main elements of the Jewish apocalypse – 'Messianism, Millennialism, resurrection, final judgment, fiery underworld for sinners, and eternal reward for the true' (p. 37) – would later be assimilated by Christianity, and, we could add, also by Islam.

This introductory chapter is followed by case studies looking at different aspects of millennialism. Kevin Poole discusses how a doctrinal difference within the Church in mediaeval Spain led the parties involved to accuse each other of

being the Antichrist – or, at least, his close collaborator. However, the Moors'
rapid conquest of the Iberian Peninsula directed the authors' attention to this,
more pressing, issue, and the prophet Mohammed, and even Islam itself, were
identified with the Antichrist.

Tessa Morrison's contribution focuses on mediaeval representations of the New
Jerusalem based on the succinct information provided by the Book of Revelation.
Next, Lisa LeBlanc writes about the mystery plays performed during the Feast of
Corpus Christi in mediaeval England. It being a time of plague, war, revolts, even
an earthquake, it is not strange that the plays contained an important apocalyptic
element.

Carmen Gómez-Galisteo discusses the case of the Puritans who emigrated to
America in the seventeenth century. They felt they were leaving behind corrupt
England, whose Church they deemed the Antichrist, in search of salvation.
However, even in their new home they were still uncertain of being saved, and
lived in a state of constant fear.

Richard Smith traces the life of Jamaica-born Edmestone Barnes, a campaigner
who criticised discrimination against black people and questioned the alleged
superiority of the white man. Barnes was also an eschatologist who read the Bible
scientifically, without searching for what he called 'supernatural revelation'
(p.123). Thus, he compared black people to the Israelites, and saw in the unification
of Italy the fall of the Catholic Church, which he considered the Whore of Babylon.

Eric Michael Reisenauer writes that the Great War provoked an unprece-
dented wave of millennialism. The signs were many: the Holy Land becoming
fought-over territory, Turkey's entry into the war on the side of Germany, the
Zionist movement convincing Jews to 'return' to Palestine. As Reisenauer
reminds us, the people who believed the prophecies were wrong, but not crazy;
all they were doing was trying to give a meaning to the carnage that was the
First World War.

David Redles writes about Third Reich Millennialism, which preceded the rise
of Nazism. Already in the early 1920s, Moeller van den Bruck dreamt of a power-
ful empire that would bring about the regeneration of German society, which
would thus fulfil its destiny. On the other hand, '[i]f the Third Reich were not
achieved, Germany would be annihilated in a glorious final battle of eschatologi-
cal consequences' (p. 178). Redles adds that many Germans believed that only a
strong leader could bring salvation. Once the enemy had been identified as the
Jewish-Bolshevik menace, the stage was set for National Socialism.

Coming up to the present, Husam Mohamad speaks of another millennial
vision: that of Protestant Evangelicals. Understanding the Bible literally, they are
convinced that the return of the Jews to the land of Israel will bring about the
Second Coming, to be followed by the defeat of the Antichrist and the consequent
reign of Jesus on Earth for a thousand years. Such vision preceded the establish-
ment of the State of Israel and is not confined to the United States; according to
Mohammad, similar beliefs led Winston Churchill and James Balfour to support
the Zionist project.

Lorenzo DiTommaso discusses contemporary apocalyptic ideas and how they
have influenced science fiction. He argues that the twentieth century, with all its
man-made calamities, resulted in the end of the faith in progress. In addition,
signs which had been interpreted as the fulfilment of God's plan became the
secularised symbols of humanity's desecration of natural law. Unsurprisingly,
the terminology and scenario of apocalypticism has often been secularised and

adopted in works of fiction such as in the film *The Matrix* or in the novels of Philip K. Dick.

The next two essays look at the influence of the apocalypse on popular culture. Therese Marie Meyer analyses *Good Omens*, by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett, which she describes as 'combin[ing] the formal features of a fantasy thriller with an homage to the apocalypse in its structure and content' (p.243). For his part, Johann Pautz writes about the American far-right and claims that '[f]or much of American history, post-millennial thought informed the periodic religious and civil campaigns which were intended to cleanse American culture and elevate the nation as a beacon of morality' (p.267), e.g. the movements in favour of abolitionism or temperance.

In two separate chapters, Nancy A. Schaefer and Evelyn Stiller look more closely at a series mentioned by Pautz, the *Left Behind* books, which despite their latent racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism, have moved from the fringes into the mainstream and become a publishing and a video game phenomenon. In the final essay, Benjamin E. Zeller explores the apocalyptic thought in UFO-based religions like Heaven's Gate, 39 of whose members committed suicide in 1997 hoping to board the Hale-Bopp comet. For many of such groups, the apocalyptic texts in the Bible describe technological events related to the coming of aliens.

End of Days makes for an interesting read. Its main limitation – particularly given its all-embracing title – is its excessive focus on the Anglo-Saxon world to the detriment of other geographical areas. In addition, some of its contents – notably those about the *Left Behind* series – overlap. In any case, *End of Days* explores a topical issue from different points of view and will help the reader understand better the enduring importance of those ancient religious books for many of their fellow citizens.

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Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe*. London: Routledge, 2008. pp. 311, ISBN 978-0-415-43781-3

For decades now, Bassam Tibi has been a vocal critic of Islamism, i.e. political Islam or politicised Islam, which he considers a totalitarian ideology that threatens both the Muslim world and the West. In fact, Tibi's books are, to a great extent, a response to the western scholars who take the Islamists' words (in English) at face value, and depict them as a democratic alternative to the dictatorial regimes that rule much of the Muslim world. Tibi's *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe* is a passionate plea for westerners to realise the danger facing their democracies.

A Muslim born in Syria but who has been living in Germany for four decades, Tibi is in a perfect position to warn against the Islamists' double-speak. He asserts that, although most Muslims living in Europe are law-abiding citizens, a sizable minority despises the society they live in, whose way of life is so different to the norms dictated by Islam. As a result, they are liable to be seduced by a religious discourse that dictates violence against that society. Obvious examples include the targeting of commuter trains in Madrid and the assassination of Theo van