

A Feeble Folk to whom No Concern is Accorded: “Apocalyptic Responses” to ISIS and their Contextualization

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Abstract:

Apocalyptic rhetoric has become a symptomatic expression of the so called Islamic State (hereinafter ISIS). This article provides the reader with a quite different perspective on the apocalyptic visions of ISIS than usual. “A Feeble Folk to whom no Concern is Accorded” (this title is a borrowed quotation from an apocalyptic prophecy recorded by Nu‘aym ibn Hammad in his *Kitāb al-Fitan*) discusses, above all, how the activities of ISIS are placed into an apocalyptic context by their Muslim opponents. Perhaps it is not surprising that such opposing perceptions can be found mainly within the contributions belonging to those Muslim groups and strands that currently feel mortally threatened by the ISIS inspired terror, namely Shiites, Sufis, liberals, etc. This paper elaborates pivotal Sunni patterns as well as specific examples of such a fighting against ISIS “in eschatological terms.”

Keywords: ISIS; apocalypse; millennialism; jihadists; Sufis

Abstrakt:

Apokalyptická rétorika se stala příznačným projevem tzv. Islámského státu (dále jen ISIS). Tento článek však nabízí čtenáři především poněkud jiný pohled na apokalyptické vize ISIS, než je obvyklé. „Ubohý lid, jenž nikoho nezajímá“ (tento titul je výpůjčkou z jedné apokalyptické předpovědi zaznamenané Nu‘ajmem ibn Hammád v jeho *Kitāb al-fitan*) rozebírá zejména to, jak jsou aktivity ISIS „apokalypticky kontextualizovány“ jeho odpůrci. Není divu, že takovéto odmítavé vnímání můžeme nalézt především u příspěvků náležejících k těm muslimským skupinám a proudům, které se v současnosti samy cítí smrtelně ohroženy terorem inspirovaným ISIS; konkrétně jde o šíity, súfije, liberály atd. Tento článek rozebírá stěžejní sunnitské vzory, jakož i konkrétní příklady, které lze „eschatologickými prostředky“ bojovat proti ISIS.

Klíčová slova: ISIS; apokalypsa; milenialismus; džihádisté; súfijské

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Motto:

As the Hour approaches, it becomes important to reflect upon the fabricated accounts of future events, as they will undoubtedly play a role in actions taken up by various deviant sects. Of these accounts is that of the ‘Mahdī’ of the Rāfidah who wages war against Islam and the Muslims, contrary to the just and rightly guided Mahdī of the future described in the Sunnah. The closer the Hour approaches, the more the Rāfidah fall in line with the Jews in preparation for the appearance of this awaited evil leader.

The *Dabiq* magazine¹

Perhaps not surprisingly, the ISIS’ explosive apocalypticism² has already triggered countless responses all over the “Muslim world”. Based on a broader consideration related to the very phenomenon of the “apocalyptic response”, this article primarily focuses on the specific Sunni reactions to ISIS End-time agenda and propaganda.³ In fact, diverse approaches of Muslims towards End-time issues can be hardly generalized into one single pattern and the same comment should be made about Muslim reactions to the ISIS apocalyptic rhetoric and visions. There is definitely no single “Islamic response” but, at the same time, the very existence of more general shifts of attitudes towards the millennial agenda, traceable throughout the current Islamic discourse, cannot be simply denied.

Apocalyptic responses and their context

The chief point to be made here is that the very act of questioning the ISIS apocalyptic message does not automatically mean the questioning of apocalypticism as a way of thinking. In fact, most opponents of ISIS have no ambition to contest the relevance of the supposedly approaching End itself, but only the way of its alleged abuse by the group’s propaganda. This fundamental point should be emphasized again and again. When discussing various reactions to the ISIS End-time presentations, it is necessary to first summarize certain broader overlaps of the Muslim apocalypse itself: On one hand, when Muslim apocalyptic authors strive to include other religions in their own

¹ “The ‘Mahdī’ of the Rāfidah: The Dajjāl”, *Dabiq* (11), p. 16, September 2015, accessed November 2017, available online at <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/the-islamic-state-e2809cd-c481biq-magazine-11e280b3.pdf>.

² For introduction to Islamic apocalypticism, see, for example, DAVID COOK, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Princeton: The Darwin Press 2002; DAVID COOK, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, New York: Syracuse University Press 2008; JEAN-PIERRE FILIU, *Apocalypse in Islam* (transl. M. B. DeBevoise), Berkeley: University of California Press 2011; RICHARD LANDES, “Enraged Millennialism”, in RICHARD LANDES (ed.), *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 421–466. In Czech, see also BRONISLAV OSTRĀNSKÝ (ed.), *Konec tohoto světa: Milenialismus a jeho místo v judaismu, křesťanství a islámu* [The End of this World: Millennialism and its Place in Judaism, Christianity and Islam], Prague: Dingir 2012, p. 115–151.

³ For the ISIS apocalypticism, see WILLIAM McCANTS, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Domsday Vision of the Islamic State*, New York: Picador 2016, p. 99–120.

visions of the End-time, on the other hand, when their own “scenarios” related to apocalyptic events become part of other, non-Islamic narratives.

In the former case, Muslim apocalyptic authors, in general, include all of humanity into their End-time visions, not only Muslims. Non-Muslims are mostly relegated into the role of enemies within the final battles leading to their defeat and subsequent conversion to Islam. However, there is another remarkable approach, to which Abbas Amanat aptly refers: The resemblance between Islamic (more Shiite) messianic prophecies and the Jewish and Christian traditions seemingly posed a theological challenge to the Shiite apocalyptists; a problem that is tackled in this messianic output by empowering the Mahdī beyond the Islamic space and as the saviour whose Advent is anticipated in all religions.⁴

With regard to the latter case, Islamic visions of the End-time have become a part of wider eschatological fictions of some non-Muslim authors, among them Christian fundamentalist opponents of Islam, for whom eschatology is an appropriate arena where the real nature of this “religion of evil” can be truly unveiled. An illustrative example of such a view can be found in the book by Joel Richardson, eloquently entitled *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast*, skilfully presenting Islam as the fulfilment of a Biblical prophecy and advocating the thesis that Islam’s saviour, the Mahdī, and the Antichrist, as described in the Bible, “are actually one and the same.”⁵ As can be easily observed on the Internet, a plethora of apocalyptic and Islamophobic agenda is currently combining within works by numerous authors, for instance Walid Shoebat, an US-based Islamophobic activist. This can be interpreted also as a trend of instrumentalization of apocalypse within the framework of the contemporary anti-Islamic discourse in West.

Nonetheless this challenging subject is far beyond the limits of this study. An apocalypse as a continuation of a worldly struggle by “other means” can actually be found not only within the “Jihadists versus anti-Jihadists framework.” The nature of the problem has been accurately expressed by Richard Landes as follows: “The normal dynamic of apocalyptic thinking is a zero-sum game, i.e., ‘I win, you lose’. One person’s messiah is another’s Anti-Christ. In normal time, this translates into theocratic imperialism – my religion is right because it has replaced yours, and the proof lies in my religion’s political dominion.”⁶

As we already know, the final days’ perspective can offer a meaningful approach not only for those who are going to fight with their earthly opponents against the backdrop of the end of days but, especially, for those who fail in such a real conflict. In any case, the idea of using millennial ammunition against its own promoters can be,

⁴ ABBAS AMANAT, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi’ism*, London: I. B. Tauris 2009, p. 234.

⁵ JOEL RICHARDSON, *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast*, Los Angeles: WND Books 2009, book cover.

⁶ RICHARD LANDES and MANFRED GERSTENFELD, “Jihad, Apocalypse, and Anti-Semitism: An Interview with Richard Landes” (online), *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, September 2004, accessed November 2017, available online at <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-24.htm>.

in fact, a very understandable method for common Muslims to effectively face ISIS ideological supporters, especially within the cyberspace.

Unlike the struggles of this world, success or defeat within an apocalyptic realm is never a result of real power and strategy, but – primarily, but not exclusively – of the media appeal of ideas and interpretations. Moreover, various apocalyptic expectations – or, at least, loud declarations – as creative renditions of quite earthly wishes can be found not only among Muslim responses to the atrocities committed by ISIS, but also within a more universal framework of modern Muslim apocalyptic creativity.

Essentially, an attempt to depict one's own enemy as being on the side of metaphysical evil within the apocalyptic battlefield is nothing new, as we can follow on the pages of countless pamphlets written by modern Muslim apocalyptic authors, some of which are introduced in the following interpretation.

Apocalyptic expectations, either allegedly fulfilled or declared as just approaching, can ultimately serve as a mighty tool to justify one's own ambitions and the soundness of one's own conduct. This remark applies not only for Muslim radicals but, in general, for the belief in one's own allegiance to the powers of good within the expected final day clashes can, in a surprisingly easy way, transform any "scholarly" apocalyptic scenario into a potential spiritual battlefield. The expected role in an apocalyptic drama can be also supported by identifying current enemies with supposed eschatological adversaries.

Speaking about the persuasiveness of apocalyptic rhetoric, we should mention that its most effective manifestations usually contain three core components: its diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational features. This point fully applies for the ISIS millennial message but also for the group's opponents. Essentially, the diagnostic frame defines the problem and who is to be held responsible for it. In our context, it could be identifying the foretold phenomena of medieval prophecies with the contemporary Middle-Eastern geopolitics and the unflattering state of Muslim societies. Then, the prognostic frame can offer a solution which means, in apocalyptic terms, whom the reader (listener, spectator, etc.) can trust and whose advice and recommendations he is to follow. Finally, the motivational frame provides incentives to inspire action, in our case either to support ISIS or to reject it. Thus, framing this as a process serves to convince the target audiences by using well-rehearsed arguments that appeal to the scripture, authoritative interpretation, and prioritisation of action to elicit support and participation.⁷

Convincing the audience about their own role in final days' agenda is definitely not a privilege of ISIS. The following interpretation provides the reader with a completely different perspective, depicting how the activities of ISIS can be placed into an apocalyptic context by their opponents. Nevertheless, the tool to attract Muslim audiences, either opponents of ISIS or its supporters, remains, in both cases, the same. In the words of Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf and Lisa Franke: "Through the ex-

⁷ SADEK HAMID, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: The Contested Ground of British Islamic Activism*, London: I. B. Tauris 2016, p. 94.

PLICIT identification of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ as well as dualistic friend and foe concepts, these narratives provide a simple orientation scheme that supports the call to action. They call for a moral-ethically defined individual reorientation on the part of Muslims, reminding them of their transnational unity or asking them directly to take up arms against the perceived enemy. Political conflicts are being declared sacral in such narratives and thus the use of force is legitimized in the binary-termed holy action.”⁸

No wonder that such opposing perceptions can be found mainly among the apocalyptic outputs of those Muslim groups and strands that currently feel mortally threatened by ISIS, among whom Shiites and Sufis should be mentioned in the first place. The apocalyptic imagination always reveals, at least to a certain degree, the nature of the thinkers and the millennial content can often reflect their worldly worries and concerns. An effort to support one’s own argumentation on an apocalyptic level often results in the use of means that are usually considered absolutely inappropriate, for example weak *ahādīth*⁹ or even forgeries. In principle, if a doubtful narration depicts a future event and the event plays out exactly as recorded in the narration, then the narration can be strengthened. Whether this narration is sound according to the Islamic standards or not can be left for scholars to discuss. In modern apocalyptists’ views, everything that can support argumentation is simply welcome.

Key themes and notions

Regarding the “apocalyptic responses” to ISIS, the group’s very deployment on the side of evil in apocalyptic drama has been facilitated by the possibility of identifying the group’s followers (as well as all Jihadi-Salafists) as Kharijites (*Khawārij*), since this designation often appears among the apocalyptic portents. The main reasons for such an accusation are their violent rebellion against Muslim rulers and their application of *takfīr* on the basis of ‘mere’ major sins without verbal confirmation of sinful intention, thereby – in effect – excommunicating people on the basis of minor unbelief, just like the Khawarij did.¹⁰ This *takfirism* has enormous apocalyptic potential. Zarqāwī’s ideological legacy enabled ISIS to achieve great territorial gains, but it has also prevented the group from achieving global domination. Nonetheless, as Brian Fishman has aptly noted, the ‘Zarqawism’ that limits the group’s broad appeal will help it remain resilient.¹¹ And from the perspective of ISIS opponents, precisely this schismatic nature of ISIS can be easily put into End-time narratives as fulfilling foretold *fitnas*.¹²

⁸ SABINE DAMIR-GEILSDORF and LISA M. FRANKE, “Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs: The Portents of the ‘Hour’ in Grey Literature and on the Internet”, *Archiv Orientalní* (3/2015), p. 433.

⁹ I.e. unreliable.

¹⁰ JOAS WAGEMAKERS, *Salafism in Jordan: Political Islam in a Quietist Community*, Cambridge University Press 2016, p. 196.

¹¹ BRIAN FISHMAN, *The Master Plan: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory*, New Haven: Yale University Press 2016, p. 248.

¹² I.e. schism, dissension, apocalyptic trials and tribulations.

Among obvious apocalyptic arguments against ISIS, references to *ahādīth*, mentioning black banners, can be found in numerous sermons and lectures on YouTube or in statements made by laymen in other social media, but they also appear in newspapers, and even in the writings of prominent religious scholars. In any case, the spectrum of the eschatological forces and representatives of evil with whom the ISIS can be identified is actually manifold and the Internet mirrors these opinions online.¹³ With regards to the black banners, the same sign can play different roles while seen from a completely opposite perspective than the ISIS propagandists employ. It can mean not a justification of the group's claims but a proof of it belonging to the side of evil. Essentially, the *ahādīth* referring to black flags coming from the East are considered as being fabricated in order to support Abbasids' claims to power and despite all doubts regarding their authenticity, they are often quoted throughout Internet discussions, mostly associated with the Mahdī or the introduction of inter-Muslim warfare.¹⁴

As can be seen on the Internet, some opponents also consider ISIS either *jaysh al-khasf* (the army that should, according to the classical traditions, disappear or be swallowed by the ground in the desert of the Arabian Peninsula)¹⁵ or even the Dajjāl's partisans. In both cases the group's supporters are on the side of evil in apocalyptic drama. In such a context, the Dajjāl is often presented as a depersonalized force and is projected onto anything un-Islamic. The irrevocable apocalyptic dualism thus manifests itself through a discussion between 'Islamic' and '*dajjālistic*,' whereas the 'Dajjāl-system' is portrayed not necessarily as one incorporating social and moral decay, but rather as one that contains the connotation of an adversary political force that is setting out to control the world.¹⁶

General patterns

In search for the portents of the Hour¹⁷ that could be easily incorporated into any apocalyptic offensive against ISIS, a long list of suitable items appears (mentioned here in the wording used by the renowned Egyptian preacher Muḥammad al-Sha'rāwī):¹⁸ the appearance of the *khawārij* (*zuhūr al-khawārij*), the authority of fools (*imārat al-sufahā'*), the arbitrary treatment of the Koran (*ittikhādh al-qur'ān mazāmīr*), a lot of

¹³ DAMIR-GEILSDORF and FRANKE, "Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs", pp. 423–425.

¹⁴ DAMIR-GEILSDORF and FRANKE, "Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs", p. 423.

¹⁵ See NU'AYM IBN HAMMAD AL-MARWAZI, *The Book of Tribulations: The Syrian Muslim Apocalyptic Tradition: An Annotated Translation*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2017, pp. 378–388.

¹⁶ DAMIR-GEILSDORF and FRANKE, "Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs", pp. 415–416.

¹⁷ I.e. the End.

¹⁸ See MUḤAMMAD AL-SHA'RĀWĪ, *Aḥdāth nihāyat al-'ālam* [The Events of the End of the World], Cairo: Dār al-tawfiqiya li-l-turāth 2011, *passim*.

killing (*kathrat al-qatl*), a lot of writing (*kathrat al-kitāba*), knowledge will be taken away and ignorance will spread (*raf‘ al-‘ilm wa intishār al-jahl*), ignorant leaders (*al-ru‘ūs al-juhhāl*), demanding knowledge from the little ones (*iltimās al-‘ilm ‘inda al-asāghir*), for instance. Despite different expressions, most of them refer to three fundamental directions: The increase of violence; the decline of genuine Islamic knowledge and the extension of splits (*fitan*).

(1) The staggering increase of violence, as a common denominator of many signs of the Hour, fits into the conditions of the Last Days when everything shall be taken to extreme. For apocalyptic opponents of ISIS, precisely this group is the embodiment of the given characteristic. Apocalyptic authors often mention the related spike in cruelty. In this respect, Hisham Kabbani explains that “leaders will be engaged in widespread torture and human rights abuses to keep themselves in power. (...) People will be tyrants in order to hold onto their positions. (...) They will find any way and use any method or system to maintain their hold on power.”¹⁹ Classical sources actually contain a lot of signs pointing in this direction, including beheadings as a certain “hallmark” of ISIS: “The Messenger of God said during the Farewell Pilgrimage: ‘After me, do not return to being unbelievers, cutting each other’s heads off.’”²⁰

(2) The second symptomatic point, the decline of genuine Islamic scholarship belongs to the most favourite subjects of Muslim apocalyptists, including the opponents of ISIS whose task is made even easier by the fact that ignorance and arbitrariness of the ISIS leaders in religious affairs have been repeatedly documented and criticized by Muslim scholars. In this respect, medieval apocalyptic prophecies speak a clear language that needs no commentary, since the Prophet Muḥammad said: “The Hour will not arise until the most felicitous of the people is an idiot son of an idiot.”²¹

(3) The third item, the extension of the *fitan* (singular *fitna*) as a recurring segment of all apocalyptic scenarios belongs to the most convincing arguments in the hands of ISIS’s critics. According to medieval traditions, the Last-days *fitan* should not juxtapose only Muslims and non-Muslims but, above all, rightly led Muslims and Muslims led astray. These final *fitan*, overwhelming military encounters between Muslims and Western powers as well as various inter-Muslim clashes (including also the so called Arab Spring), shall culminate, as viewed by both supporters and opponents of ISIS, by the emergence of this sinister group. In predominantly general ways of formulations, Muḥammad Ḥisān, an Egyptian apocalyptic writer, dared to be specific when he identified the appearance of Abū Bakr al-Baghḏādī with *fitnat al-iḥlās wa al-duhay-mā’*, two particular forms of *fitna*. In their critical perspectives to the ISIS self-presentation, Muslim opponents of this group often note that even Antichrist can quote God’s Scripture to suit his own purposes.

¹⁹ MUHAMMAD HISHAM KABBANI, *The Approach of Armageddon? An Islamic Perspective*, Washington, DC: Islamic Supreme Council of America 2003, p. 119–120.

²⁰ NU‘AYM IBN HAMMAD, *The Book of Tribulations*, p. 89.

²¹ NU‘AYM IBN HAMMAD, *The Book of Tribulations*, p. 102.

Scholarly responses of Muslim authorities

After outlining the thematic compositions of apocalyptic responses to ISIS, a brief overview of main critical voices can be suggested. They can be, essentially, divided into three imaginary branches: (1) responses of authoritative institutions or scholars; (2) traditionalist Muslims' responses; and (3) Sufi responses. Aside of them, millennial speculations of Harun Yahya are briefly introduced here to indicate the diversity of the current Muslim End-time disputes.

Starting with the first "category", al-Azhar University, as the Sunni authority number one, has repeatedly criticized ISIS, discussing various non-Islamic items in the group's statements and activities. At the same time, al-Azhar was not able to denounce ISIS as un-Islamic, even if the group committed so many atrocities, which is the point that has been denounced by a long list of other Muslim scholars and authorities.²² The theological polemics related to such a vigilant approach to the practice of *takfīr* are beyond the scope of this paper. However, as far as the End-time agenda of ISIS is concerned, the situation is considerably clearer. The group's apocalyptic self-presentation, as a separate topic, has been criticized by Aḥmad Ma'bad 'Abd al-Karīm, a member of the scientific board of the university, who stated that the ISIS End-time narratives are based on lies since there is no reliable *ḥadīth* appointing what time remains to this world or what the date of the Day of Resurrection is. His speech, in which 'Abd al-Karīm designated ISIS as 'one of the signs of the Hour' was delivered within a framework of a congress organized by al-Azhar for its foreign scholarship holders, eloquently entitled *Tafnīd awhām dā'ish fī qaḍīyat nihāyat al-'ālam* (Refusal of the delusive imagination of ISIS related to the matters of the end of the world); a fact that needs no comment.²³

Another illustrative example of using the apocalyptic weapon against ISIS has been offered by authors of *Open Letter*, signed by many prominent Muslim authorities and addressed to the leader of ISIS, Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī. This text has been reproduced on numerous websites and can be found in many languages. Following a long account of the supposedly non-Islamic activities of ISIS, this document, as an appendix, contains also an exegesis of the *ḥadīth* recorded by Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād,²⁴ considered by the authors of the letter as an insightful prediction of ISIS's emergence. This prophecy has already inspired and encouraged a lot of the group's Muslim critics; among them, for example, Abdul Aziz Suraqah, an American convert and translator from Arabic, well-versed in Islamic traditions.²⁵ The following translation of the related

²² MAHER GABRA, "The Ideological Extremism of al-Azhar" (online), *The Washington Institute*, March 2016, accessed November 2017, available online at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-ideological-extremism-of-al-azhar>.

²³ 'ALĪ, LU'AY, "Lā yūjad ḥadīth yuḥaddidu nihāyat al-'ālam" (online), *al-Yawm al-sābi'*, May 2015, accessed November 2017, available online at <http://www.youm7.com/2181801>.

²⁴ NU'AYM IBN HAMMAD, *The Book of Tribulations*, p. 107.

²⁵ USTADH ABDUL AZIZ SURAQAH, "ISIS and the End of Times" (online), *Splendid Pearls*, July 2014, accessed on November 2017, available at <https://splendidpearls.org/2014/07/04/isis-and-the-end-of-times/>.

ḥadīth comes from the official English version of the *Open Letter*: “When you see the black flags, remain where you are and do not move your hands or your feet. Thereafter there shall appear a feeble insignificant folk. Their hearts will be like fragments of iron. They will have the state. They will fulfil neither covenant nor agreement. They will call to the truth, but they will not be people of the truth. Their names will be parental attributions, and their aliases will be derived from towns. Their hair will be free-flowing like that of women. This situation will remain until they differ among themselves. Thereafter, God will bring forth the Truth through whomever He wills.”²⁶

The interpretation of this prophecy shows an almost unbelievable conformity in several apparent details and that is why precisely this argument emerges so often in Muslim on-line debates concerning ISIS. Suraqah explains, point by point, how the mentioned references apply to ISIS.²⁷ Not to mention the already discussed black flags, the feeble folk to whom no concern is given (from whom the title of this paper has been borrowed) refer to the newcomers to the fight in Syria who were, in fact, nobodies until they became famous by their military success and, above all, by their violence and cruelty. The third point, the hearts like fragments of iron, refers to the same utmost brutality. “The State” might have been unclear in the Middle Ages when the Arabic term *dawla* referred primarily to “dynasty”; however, in the present, this item looks different since the official name of ISIS is “al-Dawla al-islāmiya” (the Islamic State). Nonetheless, such an updated reading should always be compared with scholarly translations where *dawla* does not necessarily mean state, as for example in the version of David Cook: “... their hearts like iron anvils, they are the soldiers of the turn (*dawla*)...”²⁸

The predicted breaking of agreements should also be read literally because ISIS refused Sharia arbitration; a fact that was repeatedly contested by Sunni scholars.²⁹ The sentence “They will call to the truth, but they will not be people of the truth” then refers to the above-discussed perception of ISIS as the *Khawārij* of today, as well as to the group’s alleged ownership of truth. “The parental attributions” together with “aliases derived from towns” point to the forms of names preferred by ISIS leaders and fighters, generally following traditional premodern patterns, starting with ‘Abū’ (Father) and concluding with local, ethnic or religious adjectives (*nisba*). “Towns”, in this case, should be read as toponyms, in general (e.g. al-Miṣrī, al-Zarqāwī, al-Bagh-dādī). The last item, “free-flowing hair like that of women” so favourite among the ISIS fighters, can be easily verified by a glimpse at the group’s visual propaganda, for example at the *Dabiq* magazine.

²⁶ “Open Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, alias ‘Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi” (online), p. 17, September 2014, accessed November 2017, available online at <http://lettertobaghdadi.com/14/english-v14.pdf>.

²⁷ SURAQAH, “ISIS and the End of Times”, <https://splendidpearls.org/2014/07/04/isis-and-the-end-of-times/>.

²⁸ NU’AYM IBN HAMMAD, *The Book of Tribulations*, p. 107.

²⁹ For example, through the “Open Letter” of Muslim authorities addressed to Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī.

In any case, the idea that the emergence of ISIS on the apocalyptic side of evil was already prophesied 1,400 years ago has been supported not only by anonymous debaters on the Internet but also by official Muslim authorities, for example by Sheikh ‘Alī Jum‘a, the former Egyptian Grand Muftī, who, in his *khutba* delivered on 19 September 2014, has cited the above-discussed apocalyptic *ḥadīth* as evidence that the emergence of ISIS has been foretold by the fourth Caliph ‘Alī. In his sermon, Jum‘a criticized the group’s arbitrary selective approach to the Islamic heritage, supposedly documenting the bankruptcy of religious knowledge. He has concluded that “they and those of their kind are the *khawārij* of today.”³⁰

Responses of ‘Traditionalists’

Within the spiritual framework of the contemporary tendency with the working title “traditional Islam,”³¹ the voice of Hamza Yusuf, an influential author, originally an American Muslim convert, belongs to the most respected ones.³² Among other occasions, Yusuf expressed his irreconcilable attitudes towards ISIS in his *khutba* entitled *The Crisis of ISIS – A Prophetic Prediction*,³³ in which he warned of ISIS and its fans. On YouTube, this sermon has more than half million views³⁴ and its author has been enlisted by ISIS among those “imāms of the *kufr*” who deserve to be killed,³⁵ which was also the case of another influential Western Muslim authority of the “traditionalist profile,” Suhaib Webb.

Yusuf directly calls the supporters of ISIS “Satan” or “people of the Devil.”³⁶ In his texts and speeches, this group is clearly identified with *khawārij*, whose appearance has been foretold as a portent of the End. Relying on the above-mentioned apocalyptic *ḥadīth*, Yusuf adduces that these people recite the Koran, but they do not understand it, because they do not have the proper tools, meaning the real religious education. This ultimately refers to the expected End-time regress of knowledge, so

³⁰ “‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib hadhdhara min ‘Dā’ish’ mundhu 1,400 ‘ām” (online), *al-Miṣrīyūn*, September 2014, accessed November 2017, available online at <https://www.almesryoon.com/story/559453>.

³¹ By “traditional Islam”, I mean mainly various contemporary responses to the reductionist and purist tendencies in Islam, represented mostly by the Salafists, promoting a return to the pluralism and spiritual multiplicity of classical Islamic heritage. Besides traditional Muslim scholars, Hamza Yusuf is an excellent example of a contemporary influential voice of Western convert defending traditional Muslim values.

³² For more information about Hamza Yusuf, see HAMID, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists*, p. 78–81.

³³ HAMZA YUSUF, “Transcript for Crisis of ISIS” (online), October 2014, accessed November 2017, available online at <http://shaykhhamza.com/transcript/Crisis-of-ISIS>.

³⁴ “The Crisis of ISIS: A Prophetic Prediction – Sermon by Hamza Yusuf” (online), *YouTube.com*, September 2014, accessed November 2017, available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJo4B-yaxfk>.

³⁵ “Kill the imams of kufr in the west”, *Dabiq* (14), pp. 8–17, April 2016, accessed November 2017, available online at <https://clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf>, pp. 13–14.

³⁶ HAMZA YUSUF, “Transcript for Crisis of ISIS”, <http://shaykhhamza.com/transcript/Crisis-of-ISIS>.

often employed as a decisive argument for the rejection of ISIS claims.³⁷ Mentioning once again all the details in the given tradition (concerning their names and long hair etc.) to illustrate that this, once so mysterious, prophecy has been fulfilled by the emergence of ISIS.

In order to put current affairs into an appropriate apocalyptic framework, Hamza Yusuf also refers to the bloody suppression of the civic protests that took place in the south Syrian city of Dar‘ā in March 2011,³⁸ generally considered as the unofficial beginning of the Syrian civil war that quickly became internationalized. In this regard, Yusuf discusses the tradition related to the *fitna* which shall be introduced by the black flags: “Satakūnu fitna fī al-Shām, awwaluhā la‘ibu šibyān,”³⁹ which – in David Cook’s translation – means: “There will be a tribulation in Syria, of which the first will be child’s play.”⁴⁰ The authenticity of this *hadith* is highly disputed and, moreover, Yusuf translates it slightly differently: “It begins with children playing in Dar‘a.” In doing so, he ultimately stresses the reference to the particular tragedy when local teenagers were tortured and executed for having written “The people want the regime to fall” as graffiti on walls.⁴¹ To summarize, the rise of ISIS – as seen by Hamza Yusuf – should be undisputedly understood as a great *fitna* preceding the End.

Sufi “apocalypses light”

Within our brief survey of the apocalyptic responses to ISIS, the Sufi “apocalypses lite” would form the last imaginary category. For Sufi authors, the very idea of waging their ideological battle in eschatological terms is by no means new. The rivalry between Sufi and Salafi authorities belongs, within the broadest Islamic discourse, to the most acrimonious examples. The tireless resistance of Hisham Kabbani, an influential U.S. based Sufi author, against Salafism, seen as a distorted form of Islam and – as such – projected into his visions of an approaching End, is just one example of many. This case of multilateral usage of the apocalyptic theme can be found in the Ḥaqqānīya spiritual environment, one of the many branches of the important Sufi *tariqa* (order, brotherhood) *Naqshabandīya*, whose inclination towards Mahdism can be, at least in part, a reaction to Salafism.⁴² The coming of the Mahdī, as well as apocalyptic issues belong to the favourite subjects of its sheikhs’ speeches and, fur-

³⁷ See DAMIR-GEILSDORF and FRANKE, “Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs”, p. 426.

³⁸ CHRISTIAN CLANET, “Inside Syria’s Slaughter: A Journalist Sneaks into Dara’a, the ‘Ghetto of Death’” (online), *Time*, June 2011, accessed November 2017, available online at <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2076778,00.html>.

³⁹ YUSUF, “The Crisis of ISIS – A Prophetic Prediction”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N05w3I5oU9U>.

⁴⁰ NU‘AYM IBN HAMMAD, *The Book of Tribulations*, p. 191.

⁴¹ DAMIR-GEILSDORF and FRANKE, “Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs”, p. 426.

⁴² TIMOTHY R. FURNISH, *Ten Years’ Captivation with the Mahdī’s Camps: Essays on Muslim Eschatology, 2005–2015*, Timothy R. Furnish 2015, p. 203.

thermore, this branch can serve us as a good example of a successful connection of the traditional message with a modern context and means of communication.⁴³

The chief point to be made here is that this order is, within the contemporary Sunni framework, exceptional by its consistent emphasis on the Mahdī, the Signs of the Hour and the End of this world.⁴⁴ Of course, the apocalyptic message can have various functions. Through a broader context of such a discourse, the collective identity of *tariqa*'s members can be strengthened. This is done primarily by constructing borders between "us" who are on the right path and "them", including the condemned *salafiya*, for instance. Finally, the visions of the End may serve as a kind of mental support for followers, trapped in bad living conditions or disagreeing with the actual state of society.⁴⁵ The *Naqshbandī-Ḥaqqānī* apocalyptic message has been successfully promoted by the two most important representatives of this order; sheikhs Hisham Kabbani and Muḥammad Nāzīm 'Ādil al-Ḥaqqānī al-Naqshbandī.

Both had authored their below-discussed books before ISIS has appeared. Nonetheless, both of them were mentioned in the *Dabiq* in an article entitled *Kill Imams of Kufr in the West*⁴⁶ where the deceased sheikh Nāzīm is depicted as "an extreme Jahmī Murji'ī" but, primarily, as the master of Kabbani who was considered, together with a number of other Muslim leaders, as an apostate that should be killed. This call for killing was broadly medialized. Being known as an ardent opponent of Salafism (in his own words "Wahhabi sect"),⁴⁷ Hisham Kabbani ranked this sort of Islamic purism and revivalism among those portents of the Hour that are being fulfilled now as part of a broader spiritual decline, manifested by the destruction of Islamic pluralism. In his opinion, today's Salafists are the fulfilment of a prophecy about the appearance of the *khawārij*, whose most distinguishing mark, as seen by Kabbani, is their *takfirism*.

Undoubtedly, the comparison of Wahhabites to Kharijites has a long tradition within the Sunni discourse of the last two centuries and Hisham Kabbani was definitely not the first one able to utilize it. His original contribution, however, was the "deployment" of his attacks against the Wahhabites in an updated apocalyptic framework: "The Khawārij of today are the followers of the Wahhabi/ 'Salafi' sect. They are actively promoting the falsehood of their cult with massive propaganda campaign whether by speakers in mosques, via the Internet, on television, or through the massive distribution of videos, newspapers, books, magazines, and

⁴³ DANIEL KŘÍŽEK, "Millennialism in Sufi Perspective: The Case of Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya", in ZDENĚK VOJTÍŠEK (ed.), *Millennialism: Expecting the End of the World in the Past and present*, Prague: Dingir 2013, p. 184.

⁴⁴ DAVID DAMREL, "A Sufi Apocalypse" (online), *SIM (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World) Newsletter* (4/1999): p. 1, December 1999, accessed November 2017, available online at https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17326/ISIM_4_A_Sufi_Apocalypse.pdf?sequence=1.

⁴⁵ KŘÍŽEK, "Millennialism in Sufi Perspective", p. 192.

⁴⁶ "Kill the imams of kufr in the west", <https://clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf>.

⁴⁷ For example MUHAMMAD HISHAM KABBANI, *The Approach of Armageddon? An Islamic Perspective*, Washington, DC: Islamic Supreme Council of America 2003, p. 160–161.

pamphlets. All the while they are suppressing and concealing the truths of mainstream classical Islamic teaching, conspiring to silence anyone who speaks against their extremism.”⁴⁸

In terms of his teaching, the Prophet Muḥammad has accordingly described the final period of history when those firmly adhering to the Tradition will be condemned because of alleged undesirable innovation and, vice versa, the real innovators will be praised as the protectors of the genuine tradition. Such a time, according to Kabbani, has already come.⁴⁹ In any case, the Wahhabites also can be found in other Signs of the Hour, for example in the prophecy about the destruction of Medina. In Kabbani’s innovative interpretation, this destruction should be read as a hasty and devastating modernisation of the city recently conducted by Saudi authorities irrespective of the traditional values.⁵⁰ However, Islam, as Kabbani adduces, was perfect at a time when it was revealed and that is why there is no reason for any “improvement” of this religion. The purification of the original spirit of Islam, so loudly declared by the Wahhabites, actually means total destruction of centuries of Islamic scholarship that has been replaced by a reduced misinterpretation of the genuine Prophet’s legacy.

The devastating impact of the Wahhabites has been, once again, addressed in Kabbani’s exegesis devoted to the “spiritual dismantlement of Kaaba.” The related traditions narrate about soldiers of the apocalyptic warrior al-Ḥabashī that will grasp the Ka’ba and take them apart stone by stone and throw them into the Red Sea. Kabbani suggests the following interpretation: “The Ka’ba is the focal point from whence Islam originated. Unfortunately, the physical structure of the building is all that remains today from that time. All the relics of the Ka’ba from the time of the Companions and their Successors have been removed by the followers of the Wahhabi ideology. There was even an attempt to remove *Maqam Ibrahim*. The Wahhabi sect has also dismantled the ideological foundations of Islam and destroyed the Ka’ba’s essence, which is the authentic understanding and teaching of Islam.”⁵¹

Previously unthinkable visions of a war in Syria were foretold, in 1985, by Sheikh Muḥammad Nāzim ‘Ādil al-Ḥaqqānī al-Naqshbandī (1922–2014), the spiritual teacher of Hisham Kabbani. In his collected lectures published under the promising title *Mystical Secrets of the Last Days*, Nāzim primarily discusses the Armageddon, the Antichrist and, above all, the coming of the Mahdī and Jesus. By the Armageddon, Nāzim understands a devastating global war between the East and the West in which the East will be crushed. With regards to the Antichrist, he is, in the sheikh’s opinion, already physically present on Earth, although he is still chained and imprisoned on an unknown island. The alleged purpose of the Armageddon, therefore, is “to separate the chaff from the wheat, since those denying existence of the Creator and cruel

⁴⁸ KABBANI, *The Approach of Armageddon?*, p. 163–164.

⁴⁹ KABBANI, *The Approach of Armageddon?*, p. 168.

⁵⁰ KABBANI, *The Approach of Armageddon?*, p. 171.

⁵¹ KABBANI, *The Approach of Armageddon?*, p. 249.

or envious people will pass away, meanwhile genuine believers and good-doers will survive.”⁵²

Being a genuine Sufi author, sheikh Nāzim does not omit the general parallelism between eschatological notions and various modes of human psyche since Sufis usually believe that the Last Things and the Hereafter, instead of their original ontological status, are already present here on Earth, primarily as an inner experience which is actually very personal and should be tasted by sincere believers during their earthly existence. Nevertheless, what makes Nāzim’s considerations related to the final war truly beneficial for our context, are the particular geopolitical settings explicitly depicted in his apocalyptic visions:

“The Mahdi is going to appear after 101 hindrances. (...) Now only two of them are remaining. When these have appeared, the third will be the coming of the Saviour, peace be upon him. One of them was that the red-coloured people came to Afghanistan. They will then go to Pakistan and then to Turkey. They must come to Turkey. They will come up to Amuq near Aleppo at the west of Aleppo. The plain of Amuq will be the place of the great slaughter. So that is the first sign, Russians coming to Turkey. (...) After this, World War III will come. It is impossible for the end of the world to come until the whole world will be in two big camps. It will be eastern and western military camps and there will be the greatest fighting between them.”⁵³ Paradoxically, this last point could be signed by ISIS propagandists as well.

Although sheikh Nāzim foretold the coming of the Mahdī to the range of two year after 1990⁵⁴ and his speculations thus might appear as an illustrative example of a failed prophecy, his main contribution to the Sufi apocalypticism is actually his engagement of the particular geopolitical facts into his End-time visions. In this regard, Sufis have contributed to the creation of what may be, by words of David Demrel, called an “ecumenical apocalypticism,” since they “employ this shared apocalyptic vocabulary to poignantly emphasize how Islam and Islamic spirituality are vital to the lives of even their non-Muslim listeners.”⁵⁵

Another noteworthy approach of a respected Islamic scholar, sympathetic with Sufism and opposing ISIS, is that of Muḥammad al-Ya’qūbī (born 1963). His book *Refuting ISIS* contains a lot of apocalyptic references. Its fundamental thesis, considering ISIS as *khawārij*, cannot be, as we have already seen, fully understood without the knowledge of its End-time connotations. In his own words, “although the historical sect of the *Khawarij* does not exist today, we have clear proofs in the Prophetic Traditions that it would re-emerge at various times throughout the centuries of Islam.”⁵⁶ No

⁵² MUHAMMAD ADIL AL-HAQQANI NAQSHBANDI NAZIM, *Mystical Secrets of the Last Days*, Chicago: Kazi Publications 1994, p. 53.

⁵³ NAZIM, *Mystical Secrets of the Last Days*, p. 126–127.

⁵⁴ NAZIM, *Mystical Secrets of the Last Days*, p. 127.

⁵⁵ DAMREL, “A Sufi Apocalypse”, p. 1.

⁵⁶ SHAYKH MUHAMMAD AL-YAQOUBI, *Refuting ISIS*, Herndon (Virginia): Sacred Knowledge 2016, p. 4.

wonder that Ya‘qūbī’s name can also be found on the list of the recommended targets to be killed, published in the fourteenth issue of the *Dabiq* magazine.⁵⁷

Variable apocalypse of Harun Yahya

A separate section in our overview should be devoted to Harun Yahya⁵⁸ and his limitless millennial creativity.⁵⁹ To introduce him, Harun Yahya is the pen-name of Adnan Oktar (born 1956), a prominent Turkish thinker and author, well-known, above all, for his promotion of Islamic creationism. The Apocalypse, essentially, belongs to his very favourite subjects, to which he devoted a number of texts.⁶⁰ As well as other modern Muslim apocalyptists, Yahya does not hesitate to utilize the End-time backdrop for occasional coping with his worldly enemies, in his specific case the Darwinists, atheists, communists and so on.

The Mahdī, in Yahya’s opinion, has several distinctive features and warfare settings, so symptomatic to other Muslim eschatological surveys, are almost missing, replaced by mostly ideological rivalry. The Mahdī supposedly has three other fundamental tasks to fulfil: 1) elimination of philosophical systems denying the existence of God and promoting atheism; 2) intellectual struggle with superstition and hypocrites who have corrupted Islam and introduction of genuine morals based on the Koran; 3) social and political strengthening of the whole world of Islam and establishment of peace, safety and prosperity.⁶¹

In his work, the Mahdī is depicted as a leader of all Muslims. However, main stress is placed on economic welfare as well as the most advanced technological conveniences that are, for Yahya, a never-ending source of fascination.⁶² In his predictions concerning the Mahdī, Yahya initially followed his spiritual inspiration, an influential Turkish Sufi thinker Said Nursi (1877–1960) who foretold the Saviour’s coming to hundred years after his own death, meaning 2060. By the way, numbers and dates frequently occur in Yahya’s works, based mainly on Nursi’s numerological speculations.⁶³ The idea of establishing an “Islamic union” containing all the world and justly governed by the Mahdī himself is nothing new. However, what seems to be rather

⁵⁷ “Kill the imams of kufr in the west”, <https://clarionproject.org/docs/Dabiq-Issue-14.pdf>.

⁵⁸ For Harun Yahya’s apocalyptic teaching, see ANNE ROSS SOLBERG, *The Mahdi Wears Armani: An Analysis of the Harun Yahya Enterprise*, Stockholm: Södertörn University 2013, pp. 145–184.

⁵⁹ For modern Turkish Mahdism, see FURNISH, *Ten Years’ Captivation with the Mahdi’s Camps*, pp. 235–242.

⁶⁰ For an account of his apocalyptic works, see SOLBERG, *The Mahdi Wears Armani*, pp. 152–153.

⁶¹ HARUN YAHYA, *The End Times and Hazrat Mahdi (as)*, Istanbul: Global Publishing 2012, pp. 35–36.

⁶² HARUN YAHYA, *The Golden Age*, Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen 2003, pp. 28–45.

⁶³ HARUN YAHYA, *The Prophet Jesus (as), Hazrat Mahdi (as) and the Islamic Union*, Istanbul: Global Publishing 2012, pp. 92–125.

original are Yahya's expectations related to the dominion of Islam based on the "Turkish-Islamic union."⁶⁴

This remarkable idea has been developed by degrees. At the very beginning, Yahya decisively rejected the principles of Turkish nationalism. He even, according to some of his followers, considered Kemal Atatürk himself the Antichrist. Later, he adopted the ideology of the so-called Turkish-Islamic synthesis associated with Prime Minister Turgut Özal who was able to promote a vital interconnection of Islam and the Kemalist doctrine. President Atatürk, the former archenemy, suddenly became the hero and an alleged opponent of Darwinism which is, from Yahya's perspective, the highest praise. In his modified conviction, Turkey should be the centre of an eschatological "golden age" and Turks should become the decisive Muslim vanguard leading other nations of Islam.⁶⁵

To summarize, Yahya's considerations devoted to the Mahdī have undergone contradictory development; from the abovementioned belief in his coming in a distant future (2060) up to the assumption that he has already appeared on Earth, specifically in Istanbul, the last seat of the Caliphate. The date of his coming, settled by Yahya, was the first year of the fifteenth century of Hijra (1979). Looking carefully at the portrayal of the Mahdī depicted in Yahya's texts, a lot of similarities with their author are undisputed. The fundamental question of why he, on one hand, was loudly refusing to be the deemed Saviour, while, on the other hand, doing everything to support such an assumption, remains unsolved. Nonetheless, this point has ultimately lost its relevance since the rise of ISIS has brought another shift to Yahya's innovative apocalypticism.

The merciless stage of the Syrian war provided Yahya with a lot of impulses that can be contextualized within an apocalyptic framework. For example, the Sufyānī, as an apocalyptic predecessor of the Antichrist, has been identified with President Bashār al-Asad, while the Dajjāl himself has been, according to Yahya's interpretation, embodied by the international freemasonry, having as its distinctive symbol the one eye in the triangle, which fact, again according to Yahya, clearly refers to "the one-eyed master of evil" as traditionally depicted in Muslim medieval sources.⁶⁶ Although Yahya also points in his apocalyptic speculations to violent events across the Middle East, the ultimate confrontation between good and evil shall be an ideological one, not a military one.

From a geographical perspective, inappropriately limited attention in Yahya's work is paid to Palestine and most importantly to Jerusalem, as a focus of attention of almost all apocalyptic authors. On the other hand, Istanbul and Turkey figure in his

⁶⁴ For Turkish-Islamic union as an important theme of Harun Yahya's apocalypticism, see SOLBERG, *The Mahdi Wears Armani*, pp. 164–168.

⁶⁵ YAHYA, *The Prophet Jesus (as), Hazrat Mahdi (as) and the Islamic Union*, pp. 35–38.

⁶⁶ HARUN YAHYA, "Our Prophet (saas) Foretold the Current Events in Iraq and Foretold ISIS 1,400 Years Ago" (online), *Harun Yahya*, December 2014, accessed November 2017, available online at [http://www.harunyahya.com/en/Articles/195270/our-prophet-\(saas\)-foretold-the](http://www.harunyahya.com/en/Articles/195270/our-prophet-(saas)-foretold-the).

End-time scenario, as key apocalyptic places.⁶⁷ In fact, Yahya was able to incorporate many events into his apocalyptic narratives; for instance the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Keban Dam (the halting of the river Euphrates) or even an episode of a Romanian oil tanker burning in the Bosphorus in 1979 (as a sign of a flare in the east). Being so charged with historical points, they undoubtedly look more credible.

Yahya's apocalyptic teaching is still evolving. According to his current opinions (i.e. 2016), ISIS is now so strong that the only power that can defeat this sinister force is the Mahdī.⁶⁸ His eschatological reading of the current affairs in Iraq and Syria, thus, does not reflect only his resistance to ISIS but also his belief in the geopolitical sense of the Mahdī's coming.

Conclusion

Perhaps not surprisingly, among speculations devoted to the real motives and objectives of the ISIS apocalyptic rhetoric, a set of certainties is rather limited. However, nobody can deny that ISIS has pushed the discursive employment of the Muslim apocalypticism to a completely new level. The method for dealing with the group's own enemies within the imaginary framework of eschatological battlefields is definitely not an innovative one (the leaders of the Abbasid revolution from the eighth century could be one example of many), but what is actually new is the massive public utilization of such an approach.

Being a pioneer of unbound *takfirism*, ISIS was not restrained in using this effective ammunition within the End-time context as well. Responses to the ISIS apocalyptic delusions had to be inventive as well. This paper introduced their diversity and offered also some specific examples from several completely different spiritual environments (official Muslim authorities, followers of the so called traditional Islam; Sufis and, last but not least, the hard-to-classify contemporary Turkish thinker and author Hārūn Yahya).

This approach, using Muslim apocalyptic ammunition against its instigators, can also be applied in much broader terms of a general Muslim resistance against ISIS. As Abdel Bari Atwan has aptly suggested, "any effective counterbalance to ISIS and radical Islam in general would have to be rallied behind another powerful Islamic figure or popular movement."⁶⁹ The proper answer to defeating this group rests not in denying the Islam in "Islamic State", but rather rejecting the interpretation of Islam promoted by them.

⁶⁷ See also *Interview With Harun Yahya (January 10, 2009)* in JOEL RICHARDSON, *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast*, Los Angeles: WND Books 2009, pp. 252–254.

⁶⁸ DAMIR-GEILSDORF and FRANKE, "Narrative Reconfigurations of Islamic Eschatological Signs: The Portents of the 'Hour' in Grey Literature and on the Internet," p. 422.

⁶⁹ ABDEL BARI ATWAN, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate*, London: Saqi Books 2015, p. 221.

The ISIS apocalypse, in particular, cannot be counterbalanced by a mere rejection of the Muslim apocalypticism as such. In the current restless atmosphere all over the Muslim world, such step would be, furthermore, hardly conceivable. The ISIS way of the Final-days episodes should be overcome by another, “friendlier” or “softer”, manifestation (“counter-apocalypse”) for which we have already used a metaphorical designation “apocalypse lite.” In doing so, the apocalypticism of ISIS would not be denounced for being “apocalyptic” but would rather be targeted – “in apocalyptic terms” – for being a misleading interpretation within a generally respected Muslim apocalyptic framework. The specific above-mentioned “apocalyptic responses” to ISIS might show us some viable patterns.

A convincing and generally acceptable “Last days’ scenario(s)”, lacking anti-Western or anti-Jewish ethos and conspiracies, that can ultimately offer hope to Muslims otherwise than through exhausted sectarianism and expected retaliation full of bloodshed would be the mightiest possible weapon against the frightening End-time nightmares of ISIS.

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