

WAR AS WORSHIP, WORSHIP AS WAR

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So this land of the Middle East is unlike what the Summit for the Peacemakers and the New World Order says [sic] is going to be a land of peace. It's not. It's going to be—it will be a land of tribulation, and warfare, and bloodshed until the Day of Judgment. Because only when the Christians and Jews are eradicated from the face of the earth, will the blessings of Allah come and there will be no more war on the earth.

Ali al-Timimi, a Virginia-based American speaker and activist, set forth the above scenario in a 1996 speech delivered in English at an Islamic center in London. Timimi's speech, like his other teachings, is available only in audio form through Internet web sites. His life story, the history and location of his study of Islam, and the major themes of his 1996 speech, entitled "The Islamic World: Where Is It Heading," open a window onto key factors in the emergence of one form of contemporary militancy within Sunni Islam. Those factors include a major teaching institution within Saudi Arabia, a group of powerful Saudi religious scholars, the interaction of Christian and Islamic visions of apocalyptic warfare, and a particular method of interpreting and translating the Qur'an to fit contemporary geopolitics within a vision of divinely-ordained and irremediable conflict. They also include Timimi's personal journey from immersion in a liberal and pluralistic American environment to his adoption of an identity that viewed war among Christians, Jews, and Muslims as the duty of all true Muslims.

On March 13, 1996, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and American President Bill Clinton convened a “Global Summit of Peacemakers” at the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Sheikh in response to a series of terrorist attacks in Israel. The participants in the summit, including twenty-nine of the world’s government leaders and heads of state, committed themselves “to enhance the peace process, to promote security and to combat terror.” Timimi objected to Clinton’s desire to persuade potential Muslim suicide-bombers that Jews are not their enemies. Such persuasion, he argued, constituted an attack on Islam even more dangerous than Western military and economic occupation of Muslim lands. Such persuasion was nothing less than an attempt to “annihilate Islam from the face of the earth,” insofar as it enticed Muslims to abandon what Timimi expounds as God’s clear command to treat Jews and Christians—always and everywhere—with enmity. Timimi argues that this divine command can be heard in the first chapter of the Qur’an, “The Opening” (*Al-Fatiha*, pronounced Fá-ti-hah). Each time they recite the Fatiha, Timimi explains, believers “refute” the Jews and the Christians. Lest anyone misunderstand what he means by “refutation,” Timimi proceeds to link it to his vision of unending warfare until the final extermination at the Day of Judgment.

The Fatiha, in addition to being the first chapter of the Qur’an, also serves a central role in the ritual prayer: five times per day, observant believers recite the Fatiha during their observances. If, as Timimi maintains, the Fatiha serves as “a refutation of Jews and Christians,” then five times a day—as they stand, then bow, then kneel, then touch their head to the ground in worship—worshippers turn their entire being—body, heart, and soul—against their fellow children of Abraham. Performance of the ritual prayer, which includes proper recitation of the Fatiha, stands as the necessary prerequisite

to bring the human being into divine favor and compassion. Timimi emphasizes that any prayer not performed without a sincere refutation is invalid; the peace process, therefore, by its very nature, threatens the very existence of Islam by undermining the religious identity and possible salvation of the believer.¹

Timimi's Qur'an

The Fatiha constitutes the seven most repeated verses within Islam and stands as one of the most influential prayers in recorded human history. Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* renders it in the following manner:

1. In the Name of Allah
Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
2. Praise be to Allah,
The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;
3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful
4. Master of the Day of Judgment
5. Thee we do worship,
And Thine aid we seek.
6. Show us the straight way.
7. The way of those on whom
Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,
Those whose (portion)
Is not wrath
And who do not go astray.

The Fatiha resembles Christianity's the Lord's Prayer both in its themes and in its place in religious life. Each stands forth as the most widely known, memorized, and recited prayer in its tradition. Each begins with an invocation and praise of God: *Praise be to Allah, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds / Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name*. Each affirms God's role in determining the end of history:

Master of the Day of Judgment / Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. Each then petitions God for support and guidance: *Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom Thou has bestowed thy Grace / Give us this day our daily bread . . . and deliver us from evil.* Each includes a negative petition, with the worshippers asking God not to show them the way of those who have earned wrath or gone astray, not to lead them into temptation.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali entitled his English version *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* in accord with the Muslim belief that the Qur'an is, strictly speaking, untranslatable; God revealed it in Arabic and refers to it (in the Qur'an) as an "Arabic Qur'an." Renditions from Arabic into other languages are not Qur'ans or translations of the Qur'an, but approximations, translations of the "meaning" or "meanings" of the sacred text, without the full power and beauty of the Arabic. Even though they may lose the cadence, the nuances, and the deeper intimations and allusions of the original, however, non-Arabic renditions do attempt to reflect the original Arabic vocabulary. Yet we look in vain—in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of the Fatiha or the vast majority of non-Arabic renditions—for any reference to Jews and Christians. And when we consult the Arabic text, we find that the Arabic words for Jews and Christians do not exist within the Fatiha at all.

One recent English version, however, does bring Jews and Christians directly into the Fatiha, and it is that unusual version which Timimi recommends to those wishing to learn about Islam: *The Interpretation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* by M. Khan and T. Hilali.² Khan and Hilali render the last two verses of the Fatiha as follows: "*Guide us to the Straight Way. The Way of those on whom You have*

bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians).”³ The Qur’an recounts the numerous stories of those who earned divine wrath or went astray: Adam; Cain; the people of Noah; the people of the ancient civilizations of Madyan, `Ad, and Thamud; the Banu Isra`il (sons of Israel, Israelites), groups of Jews and Christians contemporary to Muhammad; polytheists; hypocrites; those who attempt to lure believers from the true faith; believers who abandon their faith unless under compulsion; and more generally anyone who willfully rejects God’s guidance and command. Through the insertion of the phrases “such as the Jews” and “such as the Christians,” the new rendition fixes the meaning of the expressions “those with anger upon them” and “those who are astray.”

In reciting these words of prayer, the worshipper may no longer ask himself if he has caused or merited anger or has gone astray, or if he might do so in the future, but is concerned only with the error of Jews and Christians; or, in Timimi’s words, with “refuting” Jews and Christians. The Timimi-favored version assumes the need to clarify what the divine author could have said but did not (an assumption that is strange, if not presumptuous, given most Islamic understandings of the perfection and inimitability of the Qur’an). Although the worshipper recites the Fatiha in Arabic during the prayers, not in translation, translations still matter, especially for young Muslims coming of age in the West without the training in Qur’anic Arabic that is common in traditional societies. The Khan and Hilali edition trains the ears and minds of those who consult them to hear “Jews” and “Christians” beneath the more general Arabic words for “angered with” and “astray” even as they go about the task of learning the elements of classical Arabic. It thus serves as a form of linguistic and ideological inoculation against less militant

understandings of Islam for those who will be reciting the Fatiha each day for the rest of their lives.

Khan and Hilali were scholars at the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia. Their work bears the official seal of the Saudi Commission of Senior Scholars, the highest authority of Saudi state religion. That seal was signed by Saudi Grand Mufti Abdullah bin Baz, who chaired the Commission until his death in 1999.⁴ Saudi Arabia adopted Khan and Hilali's *The Noble Qur'an* as its official English translation and, through the King Fahd Center for the Printing of the Qur'an, sponsored its distribution in both printed and electronic format within Saudi Arabia and throughout the world at no cost. The Saudi-based Haramain Foundation also distributed tens of thousands of copies of their English version of the Qur'an to American prisons.⁵

In a footnote, Khan and Hilali reveal the basis of their emendation of the apparently plain Qur'anic language of the Fatiha. There they cite a *hadith*, a tradition relating the words or deeds of the prophet Muhammad, originating with Adi bin Hatim, a companion of Muhammad. Adi relates that he once asked the Prophet Muhammad: "Who are those with anger upon them?" and "Who are those who have gone astray?" To those two questions, Adi relates that Muhammad answered "the Jews," and "the Christians," respectively.

Hadith constitute the second most authoritative source for Islam. Most hadith record words attributed to Muhammad, not, as in the case of the Qur'an, to God. For more than two centuries after the death of Muhammad in 632 CE, hadith were passed down orally from one generation to another. By the time of the most famous hadith scholar, al-Bukhari (d. 870 CE), thousands of hadith were in circulation. Early Muslim

scholars found some to be clearly authentic, some to be of less certain authenticity, and some to have been forged. Some hadith seemed to contradict others. Some seemed to contradict the Qur'an. In response to the confusion, scholars formed the Islamic science of hadith studies. They gathered various reports, recorded them, and examined both the substance of the words attributed to Muhammad and the reputation of those who had passed them on orally. The Sunni tradition has canonized six major collections as containing the most trustworthy hadith reports (without, however, declaring those collections to be infallible), while the Shi'ite tradition has produced its own collections.

It is one thing to accept the validity of a particular hadith. It is quite another to interpolate it into the Qur'anic text. Muhammad's prophetic career passed through widely varying relationships with different groups of Jews and Christians. Even if Adi's report were reliable (it is viewed as a relatively weak report and does not occur in the two most widely accepted Sunni hadith compilations), it would not tell us the context in which Adi posed his question to Muhammad. Would Muhammad have meant that, at a particular moment in time, the Jews had earned divine wrath and the Christians were astray? Or did he mean that the Fatiha applied, as Khan and Hilali claim, to all Jews and all Christians at all times? If so, why did the divine author, the consummate master of expression and precision, fail to specify the intended meaning within the Fatiha itself?

Through the selective citation of this one hadith report and through the interpolation of words based on that hadith into the Qur'anic text, Khan and Hilali work to eternalize Jews and Christians as monotonic, homogenous groups in opposition to the followers of the true faith. The two scholars employ the same method throughout their English rendition of the Qur'an. In numerous instances, for example, they insert the

phrase “the Jews” into references to unspecified groups or individuals that have incurred God’s wrath. Note how the following verse (7:167) reads with or without the Khan and Hilali parenthesis, for example: *“Your Lord declared that He would certainly keep on sending against them (i.e. the Jews), till the Day of Resurrection, those who would afflict them with a humiliating torment.”*¹

The verse appears within a long passage recounting the punishments that befell those who rejected God’s word or abused his prophets, including the peoples of the pre-Islamic Arab civilizations of `Ad and Thamud, the people of Noah, the inhabitants of Madyan, and all those who disobeyed or opposed Moses, including the Pharaoh and his followers and groups of Israelites (the Bani Isra’il). As is often the case in the Qur’anic passages, the identity of the “them” singled out as examples of divine retribution can be ambiguous, as various verses continue one after another without a specification of the specific group; indeed, sometimes the identity of the group can seem to shift. The two translators thus direct the varied set of condemnations and threats against “the Jews” as a fixed, homogenous entity. In addition, by interpolating “the Jews” into 7:167 in reference to the prediction of humiliating torment until the day of Resurrection, the two translators also insinuate that “the Jews” (as an homogenous entirety) are targeted in the previous verse (7:166), commonly read as a reference to one particular group of Israelites who had neglected to observe the Sabbath: *“So when they exceeded the limits of what they were permitted, We said to them: ‘Be you monkeys, despised and rejected.’”*⁶

While Khan, Hilali, and Bin Baz work to establish a Qur’anic reading that rules out any respect for Jews or any peace with them, they do not neglect to target Christians as well. Take, for example, Khan and Hilali’s interpolated rendition of a Qur’anic verse

depicting the Day of Judgment (88:2): “*Some faces that Day will be humiliated (in the Hell fire, i.e., the faces of all disbelievers, Jews and Christians).*”⁷ The two translators and Shaykh Bin Baz, their mentor, read the Qur’an through the assumption that Jews and Christians, although entitled to certain forms of physical toleration as Peoples of the Book, are indistinguishable from other infidels as eternal enemies of the true faith, and damned along with polytheists to eternal torment. The two translators use interpolations to strengthen each of their two alleged Qur’anic doctrines concerning Christians and Jews (divinely commanded hostility toward them in this life and eternal damnation of them in the next) by weaving each doctrine into the other.

To establish such a reading of the Qur’an requires effort. Verse 2:62 of the Qur’an might seem to offer a more generous view of God’s compassion: “*Verily, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.*” Unable to change the evident meaning of this verse through a simple interpolation, the two translators supply a footnote stating that the verse has been abrogated by another verse, 3:85: “*And whosoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter, he will be one of the losers.*” The two authors employ here a theory of abrogation that has roots in the medieval tradition and which reads less conflict-centered passages through those that seem more conflict-centered or those that can be interpreted more easily as conflict-centered. The term “Islam” in verse 3:85 refers to groups before the time of Muhammad and is therefore not identifiable with the historical Islam as a bounded religion in self-conscious rivalry with Judaism and Christianity, but the conflict-centered theory of

abrogation employed by Khan and Halili reads the word “Islam” in 3:85 exclusively and, once having read it in that manner, uses verse 3:85 to abrogate the more openly inclusive verse 2:82.⁸

Khan employs the same strategy in his translation of one of the two major hadith collections, the *Sahih Bukhari* (the “Sound” collection of Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, d. 878). He renders as follows the famous hadith instructing worshippers to recite the word “Amin” at the end of the Fatiha prayer: “Abu Hurayra said: ‘God’s Messenger said, “Say ‘Amin’ when the Imam says ‘*not the path of those who earn Your Anger (such as Jews) nor of those who go astray (such as Christians)*’; all the past sins of the person whose saying (of Amin) coincides with that of the angels, will be forgiven.’””⁹

Why would the Khan use such interpolation in translating the hadith as well as the Qur’an? Timimi himself alludes to the reason in his speech when he recognizes the difference in authority between weak and strong hadith. The report of Adi bin Hatim, which claimed that Muhammad specified Jews and Christians as those who have earned anger and gone astray, respectively, does not appear in the two most prestigious hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim, and is viewed by many as of weaker authority than that of the “Amin” hadith, which appears in both. By slipping the Jews and Christians as mentioned in Adi’s weaker hadith into his translated text of the stronger Amin hadith and into the Qur’anic phrase quoted within the Amin hadith, Khan further naturalized his and Hilali’s interpretation of the Fatiha, making it seem less like an interpretation and more like the words of both God in the Qur’an and Muhammad in the hadith.

Timimi's Islam

How do we name or locate the version of Islam represented by Timimi, Khan, and Hilali? Timimi identifies himself as an exponent of the Salafi creed. Modern Salafism dates to an eighteenth-century movement to return Islam to the purity of the *salaf* or “select,” the first three generations of Muslims: Muhammad’s contemporaries, known as the *companions*, and the two generations that followed them, known as the *followers*. Salafis view the scholar and jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) as a guiding authority; many refer to Ibn Taymiyya not by name but simply by the honorific title of “Shaykh al-Islam” (Master of Islam).

Yet we cannot take Timimi’s claim to represent Salafism at face value. Salafism constitutes a wide, diverse, and evolving movement. Some Salafis devote themselves to recreating the day-to-day specificities of early Islam, the precise physical postures to assume during prayers, the proper carrying out of ablutions, the hair, beard, and clothing style of the companions and followers, down to the particular kind of twig they use to clean the teeth. Others view the salaf period as a model of social justice to be applied within today’s world. Still others view the period as a key to a renewed vitality of Islam, freed from what they view as damaging accretions and borrowings from other traditions. As in a moving kaleidoscope, these and other basic tendencies within Salafism continually merge into new combinations and shapes.

Timimi’s talk reflects more precisely the teachings of a version of Salafism taught within Saudi Arabia and known by its critics as Wahhabism, after Ibn `abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), the Arabian revivalist who allied himself with the powerful Saud clan and established what became the official Saudi state creed. Its adherents, however,

vehemently reject the term “Wahhabism,” insisting rather that they represent simply and only the true Islam. If pressed to offer a more specific identification, they might agree at most to call themselves Salafis. Although the Saudi monarchy may be attempting to move toward a less bellicose understanding of interreligious relations, Timimi’s 1996 speech did reflect faithfully what had been, over several decades, a dominant understanding of the Islam that is taught within Saudi Arabia.

It is Bin Baz’s understanding of Islam, in fact, that flows through Khan and Hilali’s English rendition of the Qur’anic text and guides central assumptions within Timimi’s speeches. Jews and Christians are universally damned, Bin Baz wrote in one famous epistle and it is the duty of Muslims to “despise” them, to consider them enemies until they affirm the one God (as it is affirmed in Bin Baz’s version of Islam), and to be ever mindful of their tricks and deceit.¹⁰ In interpolating the phrases “such as the Jews” and “such as the Christians” into the Fatiha, Khan and Hilali took phrases, verbatim, from Bin Baz’s interpretive writings on the Fatiha and then pasted them into their English version of the Qur’anic text, making Bin Baz’s interpretations appear, for those still learning Arabic and relying on the translation, as if they flowed from the revelatory utterances of God.

Through the latter part of the twentieth century, Bin Baz stood as the most important religious authority within the borders of Saudi Arabia and beyond, holding down an impressive set of high positions: Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia; President of the Senior Scholars Committee of Saudi Arabia; President of the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Fatawa (*fatwas*); Chair of the Founding Committee of the Muslim World League; Chair of the World Supreme Council for Mosques; President of the

Islamic Jurisprudence Assembly of Mecca; Chancellor and member of the Supreme Council of the Islamic University of Medina; and member of the Supreme Committee for Islamic Propagation (*Da`wa*).

Khan and Hilali came to Saudi Arabia by different routes. Khan, a Pakistani-born surgeon with medical degrees from Pakistan and Britain, moved to Medina to work in the medical field. There he advanced to the position of director of the Islamic University's medical clinic. Hilali, Moroccan-born and educated in religious sciences in Morocco, received a doctorate in Berlin, and then migrated by way of Baghdad to Medina where he received a professorial appointment at the Islamic University.¹¹ Both had traveled widely. Both had studied in the West and one of them had advanced training in science and medicine.

Khan, Hilali, and Timimi congregated around the Islamic University of Medina at the time that Bin Baz and the views he represented dominated the teaching of Islam within the Saudi Kingdom. Bin Baz did not, of course, invent the conflict-identity version of Islam he espoused. Polemical positions that treated Jews, Christians, and Muslims as three contending homogenous entities, only one of which would be accepted by God, appeared in the writings of classical Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thinkers from Judah Halevi to Thomas Aquinas to Ibn Taymiyya. Khan and Hilali followed Bin Baz in a method of selecting, sequencing, and combining sacred texts and the medieval interpretations of them in order to create a hardened form of conflict-identity. They then developed their mode of interpolation as a way of inserting back into the Qur'an (as they presented its meaning in English) the results of this method of interpretation, thus creating a contemporary version of conflict-identity and naturalizing it as a given.

To this end, they *chose* interpretations that reflected the most radical division of Muslims, Christians, and Jews into mutually exclusive, eternally hostile camps; they *sequenced* their interpretation by using those parts of the Qur'an and hadith most conducive to eternalized conflict as keys by which other verses are made subservient; they *combined* those keys in ways that further enhanced and condensed a conflict-centered understanding of belief; and then, finally, Khan and Hilali *interpolated* the results of such methods directly back into what are presented as authoritative English renditions of the Qur'an and hadith.

Such an understanding of the Qur'an poses a problem from the perspective of a central doctrine of Salafism, that of *ijtihad* or dynamic engagement with the sources of Islam. Ijtihad, as it was developed by earlier writers such as Ibn Taymiyya and by some influential twentieth-century Saudi scholars, obligates the believer continually to ponder the Qur'an and critically to scrutinize the hadith in order to regain the vision of the salaf (the companions and followers of Muhammad) and actively to engage in the intellectual effort needed to sift through the tradition in order to verify what the salaf actually said, did, and thought. Yet the Khan and Hilali translations of the Qur'an and hadith systematically close off engagement by supplying fixed interpretations of every matter and presenting seemingly unquestionable pre-packaged versions of the vision of the salaf. It is not clear what ijtihad could amount to for the reader of the Khan and Hilali versions of the Qur'an and hadith, in which all questions are presented as resolved and the only engagement needed would seem to be one of Da`wa, the effort to persuade others to adopt the Islamic vision espoused by the two translators and their mentor.

The Khan and Hilali interpretation of the Qur'an offers the Muslim reader little hope of peace with believers of other religions or with Muslims who read the Qur'an differently, beyond converting them to the same interpretation. Nor does it offer any hope for peace in the geopolitical conflicts of the modern world. It negates any need on the part of the believer to engage the roots of the tradition in an attempt to think of non-violent solutions to resolve injustice. It renders absurd the effort to understand the other, be it someone of another religion or a Muslim with a different interpretation of Islam. The other is pre-defined within fixed homogenous categories ("the Jews," "the Christians," "the polytheists"), without interior diversity. The Khan and Hilali interpolations preclude the possibility of common values between the true Muslim believer and others in the world, even as they preclude the need for deeper meditation upon the Qur'an and hadith in a manner that could lead believers to a constructive, or at least non-antagonist, relationship with those of other traditions. Instead, they urge their readers not to expect to learn anything from others about their own beliefs; such beliefs are frozen and pre-judged, and the followers of other traditions have nothing to teach about themselves.

In such a context, *ijtihad* seems reduced to a mechanistic application of conflict-oriented interpretations from the past, selected and fixed by the Bin Baz circle of scholars, to the conflicts of today, in order to enable believers both to recognize the irresolvable nature of such conflicts and to act upon their duty to wage them. If someone outside of Islam were to come forward to seek a solution to a particular conflict, the Khan and Hilali interpolations would suggest that the proposed solution was no more than a trick by those (that is, Jews and Christians) who have been categorized within the two

translators' eternalizing parentheses as inherently deceitful. In like manner, Khan, Hilali, and Bin Baz emphasize a strain of earlier polemics that portrays any Muslim tempted to view Jews or Christians with respect as a hypocrite, that is, as an infidel masquerading as a Muslim. Thus, those who advocate mutual respect among religions are doubly damned as conspiring to destroy Islam through deceit: they are practicing the alleged eternal deceit of Christians, Jews, and other infidels, or the eternal deceit of the hypocrites, the enemies within.

Whether or not the Saudi monarchy has the will or the ability to change such teachings emanating from the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia depends in part upon a resolution (by both Saudi and American societies) of the symbiotic paradox of mutual security and mutual antipathy lying at the heart of that alliance,¹² that makes American oil-consumers the financiers for the production and dissemination of such teachings within Saudi Arabia and worldwide, and brings American-led globalized consumer culture into Saudi Arabia in a particularly jarring fashion.

We return to the enigma of naming militant formations of religious belief. Timimi might consider himself an exponent of "the Salafi creed" in much the same way that an American religious militant like Pat Robertson claims to represent evangelical Christians or Southern Baptists. Just as many evangelicals or Southern Baptists might dispute Robertson's claim to represent them, so many Salafis and many Saudis might dispute Timimi's claim to speak for them. But how many? If we could conduct an adequate poll concerning evangelical and Salafi opinions on Robertson and Timimi's claim to represent each category, the number of people who might agree or disagree could change quickly, depending upon individual and collective sentiment.

Were we to name the militant interpretation of the Fatiha found in Timimi's speech, then, we might call it Bin Bazism. But even then we would encounter a problem. After U.S. troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, Bin Baz issued a fatwa justifying their presence and composed the treatise "On how Peace (*sulh*) with Jews and Christians does not constitute Affection toward Them or taking Them as Clients." Influential Saudi Salafi clerics (as well as the Saudi exile Osama bin Laden) broke with Bin Baz on the issue, accusing the Grand Mufti of altering his long established position because of pressure from the Saudi and American governments. Many in the Saudi religious establishment (and many of them Bin Baz's former students) denounced Bin Baz and championed what they viewed as his original and correct view.

Similarly, the Timimi of today may or may not agree with the sentiments of the Timimi of the 1996 speech, but such speeches, like the earlier writings of Bin Baz, take on a life of their own, and "Timimi" will remain as the author of the 1996 speech as long as that speech continues to be reproduced, circulated, and read. And were Timimi to change or qualify his 1996 statements, others might come along to champion the 1996 Timimi over the contemporary Timimi. In this sense, militant formations of belief are both mobile and fixed. When we name them by reference to a particular tradition, school, or even individual we risk freezing, and thus missing, their location. We risk attacking the tradition, school, or individual involved, and, by doing so, backing the group or individual so categorized into a corner in which the obvious response is to accept and champion the militant expression all the more vehemently. The militant expressions, while dynamic in their location, are fixed in their understanding of conflict and as long as

the factors that produce them continue in place, they will exacerbate those factors even as they explain them as part of God's eternal, timeless command.

Which version of Qur'anic interpretation will dominate future teaching at institutions such as the Islamic University in Medina remains to be seen. It depends not only upon a solution to interior conflicts within Saudi Arabia and the Saudi-American paradox, but also upon the conflict-identities within the United States that help lead young men like Timimi to embrace the Khan and Hilali interpretation of the Qur'an.

Timimi's America

Ali al-Timimi was born in 1963, one year after his parents immigrated to the U.S. His father worked as a lawyer. His mother, who had obtained a Ph.D. in psychology, pursued a career in mental-health education. "Back in the late seventies Ali al-Timimi used to hang around our house with my son Nick," recalls Milton Viorst, a writer for *The New Yorker* magazine, who knows Timimi well enough to refer to him by his first name, Ali. "They were twelve or thirteen, classmates at a very liberal, heavily Jewish private day school." Viorst also recalls the incident that dramatically challenged Timimi's sense of belonging. Ali had attended Nick's bar mitzvah. In the midst of the occasion, the rabbi delivered what Viorst describes as an "anti-Arab diatribe."¹³ In 2003, Timimi recalled this incident that marked his adolescence: "We entered the synagogue and all the boys, Jewish and non-Jewish, placed yarmulkes on their heads in accordance with Jewish rituals. After the rituals, the rabbi began to address the audience. He began to attack the Arabs by saying they sought to kill young Jewish boys. I was offended that I would be associated with seeking to murder my Jewish classmates and one of my closest friends."

A year after the bar mitzvah experience, Timimi's family moved to Saudi Arabia, where his parents had secured professional positions. Like many others from Western Muslim backgrounds, Timimi enrolled in a school that offered education in Arabic and Islam as well as courses common in Western schools. He views his meeting with his instructor Bilal Philips, a recent graduate of the Islamic University in Medina, as a turning point in his life. After studying with Philips, who has since become an internationally influential figure in Salafi circles, he returned briefly to the U.S. to complete his biology degree at George Washington University. He then decided to devote himself to further studies in Medina at the Islamic University and to participate in informal study groups at Medina's Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad, taking advantage of the open Saudi offer to provide full scholarships and stipends for any qualified young man, from anywhere in the world, to study at Islamic institutions within the Kingdom. Shaykh Abdullah Bin Baz, who as Grand Mufti would later sign the authorization for the Khan and Hilali translation, was serving as chancellor at the Islamic University. Bin Baz took a special interest in Timimi, the sincere and gifted young American, fostered a direct mentor-student relationship with him, and offered him an ideology that affirmed what the rabbi had said (that Arabs were enemies of Jews), and explained why Timimi's humiliation at the bar mitzvah was inevitable.

After returning to the U.S. from Medina, he took an advanced degree in computer science from the University of Maryland, worked for the U.S. Department of Transportation, and served as a manager for a technology company. Intrigued by the human genome project, he enrolled in a doctoral program at George Mason University. "In a very short time," according to the biography on his internet support site, "he

published and co-authored more than 12 scientific papers in the fields of computer science, genetics and cancer. He also made several presentations at major scientific conferences, coauthored a chapter in a scientific book, and was invited to speak at national and international research events. Finally, in 2004 he received his PhD from George Mason University in computational biology.” Timimi’s studies did not limit themselves to biology, however. He was also studying a major religious and social phenomenon in the United States, one that has long been ignored or underestimated within American intellectual circles and among Islamic militant writers.

While Timimi’s reading of the Fatiha as a perpetual refutation of Jews and Christians grounds itself in the Saudi Salafi vision exemplified by Abdullah Bin Baz, his vision of the Middle East as “a land of tribulation, and warfare, and bloodshed until the Day of Judgment” and his prediction that the bloodshed will end only with the eradication of Jews and Christians from the face of the earth reveals some influences from a very different source.

The “Day of Judgment” stands as a central theme within the Qur’an, and depictions of what the Qur’an refers to simply as “the day” or “the hour” tie together all periods of Qur’anic revelation. But, unlike the Christian Bible, the Qur’an provides little discussion of events preceding the Day of Judgment: the role of the Messiah or anti-Messiah at the end of time; the catastrophic battles, calamities, plagues, and bloodshed surrounding it; the return of the Messiah; the millennial kingdoms of peace that precede or follow that return; or the signs that show its imminent coming. The Biblical book of *Revelation* for example, devotes more than twelve thousand words to such matters, while the Qur’an focuses instead upon the suddenness of the day, the virtually instantaneous

cosmic transformation in which the solidity of the earth and heaven are rent, torn, melted, or otherwise annihilated and each human soul stands to hear the judgment upon its eternal destiny. Although the Qur'an does allude to future, cosmic struggles against champions of disbelief such as Gog and Magog, such allusions are rare and indirect.

The hadith reports, however, offer more details on the topic. Some present Muhammad as returning as the Mahdi (the rightly guided one) who vanquishes tyranny and unbelief and establishes a rule of justice on earth that will usher in the final hour. Others present Jesus, the Massih (Messiah), returning to vindicate his true reality as depicted in the Qur'an (as the non-divine but divinely anointed messenger of God), to announce that the Muslims are his true followers, and to vanquish Dajjal, the anti-Messiah, along with his armies. Of the two most popular hadith collections, that known as *Sahih Muslim* (The Sound Collection of Muslim) offers the most detail. Chapter 41 of the *Sahih Muslim*, "The Book of Turmoil and Portents of the Last Hour," consists of more than one hundred reports devoted to the topic.

In developing his vision, Timimi mentions only two hadiths regarding Jesus. In the first, the companion Abu Hurayra relates that he heard Muhammad say that "the son of Mary will shortly descend among you and will judge mankind justly by the Law of the Qur'an." After Jesus descends, the hadith continues, "He will break the cross, kill the swine, and abolish the poll tax." Many read the reference to the breaking of the cross as an end-time validation by Jesus that he was not crucified and thus that Muslims, not Christians, are his true followers; read the killing of the swine as the elimination of animals that are ritually unclean; and read the abolition of the poll tax (*jizya*) levied on Jews and Christians as the end-time abolition of the divine law or sharia. Khan and Halili

refer frequently to the “breaking-of-the-cross” hadith in their translation of the Qur’an. There they interpret the abolition of the jizya to mean that “all mankind will be required to embrace Islam with no other alternative.”

Khan and Hilali then insert this hadith and their interpretation of it into footnotes of their Qur’an. Here they offer us a remarkable lesson in the creation of absolute conflict-identity as they use the breaking-of-the-cross hadith and related interpolations to turn a Qur’anic reference to a particular battle into a divine command to wage war against all non-Muslims everywhere until the end of time. In a reference to the Battle of Badr, fought between the early Muslims and their Meccan opponents in the second year of Islam, a Qur’anic verse (8:39) reads: “*fight them until there is no more discord and the entire religion is God’s.*” Khan and Hilali use interpolations to negate any reading of the verse as pertaining exclusively or primarily to the early Muslim followers in their struggle with the Meccans. Instead, they universalize the verse as a command of eternal combat, not only against Meccan polytheists, but against all non-Muslims: “*And fight them . . . until the religion (worship) will all be for Allah Alone [in the whole of the world].*” They support their interpolations to 8:39 with footnotes referring to the breaking-of-the-cross hadith and to their interpretation of that hadith, thereby demonstrating the power of sacred texts to collapse past events, present realities, and apocalyptic futures into a single command, as well as the role played by scholars in shaping that command, which is capable of multiple interpretations, into an unambiguous call for unending, universal, religious war.¹⁴

Timimi follows up on their interpretation of the hadith and links it with another hadith reported by the same companion:

Abu Hurayra reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: "he 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. The tree would say: ' Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him! but the tree Gharqad would not speak, for it is the tree of the Jews.'"¹⁵

Timimi does not actually quote the hadith but refers to it in passing as "the hadith of the rock and the trees which you all know." Indeed, the hadith of the rock and the tree, also known as "the hadith of gharqad," has emerged as a centerpiece of anti-Jewish polemics surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, particularly among militant Salafi circles. In alluding to the hadith, without quoting it, Timimi demonstrates not only that he found it to be an interpretive key, but that he assumed that his audience had it in mind to such an extent that he needed only to mention it in order to evoke its entire message. The hadith collections contain dozens of other speculations on Dajjal or the Anti-Messiah: his followers would be Turks, or people with small eyes and red faces, or with flat noses with faces that will look like shields coated with leather or people whose shoes are made of hair (Bukhari 4:52: 179 and 180); that Dajjal would be blind in one eye; or that he would have only one eye. None of these other possibilities are mentioned by Timimi. Timimi's speech offers us a vivid demonstration of the role of contemporary conflicts in guiding a person's selection of texts used to fashion his doctrines, even as that choice then makes the conflicts more intractable.

While the materials for Timimi's 1996 speech existed within the schools and circles in which he traveled, what personal reasons might have led him to embrace those particular materials and to tie them together in the way that he did? Timimi offers an intriguing clue in his 1996 attack on the "Summit of the Peacekeepers" and the attempts of then-President Bill Clinton to persuade would-be Palestinian terrorists that Jews are

not their enemy. Timimi recalls that Clinton appeared in Israel “wearing the Jewish yarmulke on his head,” reading Jewish prayers, and praying at the graves of Jewish victims of terrorist attacks. He goes on to denounce what he considers the blandishments of Jews and Christians who try to convince Muslims that “we are neighbors, we drink beer together, what’s the big deal.”

The Timimi of 1996 seems to be attacking the Timimi of 1977, the young Timimi who as a Muslim Arab American considered himself a neighbor and friend of Jews and Christians, and who, according to Viorst, drank beer with them, and who, in both his own and Viorst’s account, attended a bar mitzvah and wore a yarmulke—only to encounter a militant rabbi denouncing Arabs as killers of Jews. The humiliation and rejection experienced by Timimi at the bar mitzvah might have led to different reactions. He might have devoted his life to explaining that Arabs are not by nature antagonistic toward Jews. Instead he came to champion the rabbi’s view that he, as a Muslim Arab, was indeed, by definition, an enemy of Jews, affirming his new sense of identity through a symbiotic reaction.

The personal incident may constitute one factor in Timimi’s conversion to a militant version of Islam. His studies in Saudi Arabia, where a conflict-identity version of Islam was taught as Qur’an, would constitute another. At some point, human choice, environmental factors, and global interpretive contexts intersected in a fateful encounter, no single factor of which may be the dominant cause, but each of which is significant.

Timimi cited five works on his list of recommended reading for those wishing to learn about Islam: Khan and Hilali’s *The Noble Qur’an* and treatises by Bilal Phillips, al-Uthaymeen, Bin Baz, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (for which Bin Baz

was the guiding intellectual force). Along with Bin Baz, `Uthaymeen (d. 2001) was one of the two most important authorities in Saudi Islam over the last decades of the twentieth century. `Uthaymeen's teachings on the alleged obligation of enmity toward Jews exceeded in intensity even those of Khan and Hilali. While Khan and Hilali used their interpolation method to insinuate that "the Jews" as a homogenous entity were and are the enemies of Islam, were condemned by God to be humiliated to the end of time, and were turned by God into pigs and monkeys, `Uthaymeen asserts such charges directly and hardens them further.

One of `Uthaymeen's treatises includes chapters with titles such as "The Emnity of the Jews towards the Muslims and their Evil Characteristics"; "The Trend of the Jews in Murdering Prophets and their Antagonism towards the Religion of Islam and the Messenger of Allah, Blessings and Peace upon Him"; and "The Necessity of Preparing to Fight the Jews and All Other Enemies of Islam." `Uthaymeen provides the following summary of his argument: "O Muslims! The Jews are notorious for their betrayal and treachery. They incurred Allah's curse and are deserving of His wrath. They made lawful what Allah prohibited through stratagem and cunning. This is why Allah cursed them and transmuted them into monkeys and pigs. Shame is pitched over them like a tent wherever they are found, except when under a covenant of protection from Allah and from men." In `Uthaymeen's epistle, we witness the selection and combination of anti-Jewish traditions present in polemics by classical Muslim writers and stereotypes borrowed from Western Christian anti-Semitic writings. Both sets of anti-Judaic polemics have increased in tandem with the Israel-Palestine conflict, even as such polemics seriously exacerbate that conflict.

Yet neither the interpretations of the Qur'an on which Timimi draws, as militant as they are, nor the hadiths he selects, however disturbing they might be, refer explicitly to a full-scale global battle leading to the eradication of all Christians and Jews. Although Islamic messianic traditions contain a range of speculations about the final days and the return of two champions of Islam—Jesus the Messiah and the Mahdi—it is not from them that Timimi's speech draws the language “tribulation, and warfare, and bloodshed until the Day of Judgment.” Their source is outside of the Islamic tradition entirely.

In the prelude to his depiction of the final battle contained in his 1996 speech, Timimi offers a short history of the Christian Zionist movements. He begins by reviewing the story of how British officials, such Lord Balfour and Lloyd George, grounded their declaration of British support for a modern state of Israel in their readings of the Christian Bible, events known well by Arabs and Muslims concerned with the Israeli-Palestine dispute. He moves past this well known story to discuss American Christian Zionism, a subject ignored or underestimated by many Arab, Muslim, and secular American critics of American policies in the Middle East who, baffled by the strength of the Israel lobby in an electoral democracy with a tiny percentage of Jewish population, have slipped into the fallacy of attributing all of that strength to the alleged domination of Jews over American media and politics.

By contrast, Timimi recounts that William Eugene Blackstone, whose 1878 book *Jesus Is Coming* became a major best-seller and was translated into 48 languages, also authored the 1891 petition to President Benjamin Harrison, known as “The Blackstone Memorial” that urged American support of a Jewish state in Palestine. Timimi offers a mini-lesson in the teachings of American evangelist Jimmy Swaggart: that a “spiritual

umbilical cord” connects America to Israel; that this umbilical cord is formed from the “Judeo-Christian concept”; that God had commanded America to support Israel; and that God has rewarded America for that support with unprecedented power and prosperity. Then, following the principle of negative symbiosis, Timimi elaborates his own theory that every nation that has supported “the Jews” has in fact not prospered, but declined. Britain had been a great empire until the time of Balfour and Lloyd George, he tells his London audience, after which it sank into the chaos, squalor, and misery they see around them every day.

Timimi then proceeds to introduce his listeners to the teachings of Jerry Falwell, a figure with more political clout and lasting influence than Swaggart. Falwell, Timimi explains, has declared that America is a “Judeo-Christian republic”; that opposition to Israel is opposition to God; that Arabs bear the curse of the Canaanites; and that the divinely-mandated modern Israel should extend from the Euphrates to the Nile. Next, Timimi surveys the media empire of American televangelist Pat Robertson and reviews Robertson’s declarations that Arabs are “God’s enemies” and that Palestinians have no place on “God’s land” in the Middle East. Finally he details the effort of American evangelists to extend their propagation or Da`wa throughout the world of Islam through—by Timimi’s count—38 TV stations, 66 cable networks, 1480 radio stations, 4 telesatellites, and the distribution of what he calls “The Jesus Movie” on more than one hundred million video tapes, in fifty languages, throughout the world.

Timimi’s speech highlights a front of a contemporary war often obscured under the graphic scenes of physical combat: the non-violent, but gravely serious, competition between Western Christianity and Sunni Islam for converts. The competition shows itself

most clearly along the central regions of Africa, where the two groups compete in a fervent race to convert what is left of traditionalist followers of African religions, but it also extends across every continent. As with all wars, each side seizes the weapons and goods of the rival. Thus Timimi, on behalf of what he calls the Salafi Da`wa, seizes, appropriates, incorporates, and reverses the Christian version of the final days advanced by the American evangelists he names. That competition for converts guides him in selecting the Islamic sources he will use as interpretive keys and in linking those interpretive keys to his own understandings of conflict.

In warning his Muslim audience of the influence of such preachers within the U.S., Timimi not only shows familiarity with their teachings but creates an Islamic counter-vision to them. In refuting certain Christian visions of Armageddon, Timimi imitates them with care and detail, down to vocabulary items such as “tribulation.” Yes, Jesus will lead the climactic battle, exterminate the enemies of God and kill the anti-Christ; in Timimi’s version, only the identity of the people who will be saved at the time of the final battle, and whom Jesus will recognize as his true followers, has been changed. At one point in his speech, Timimi refers to the books that dominate airport bookstores, alluding to the works of Hal Lindsay, Tim LaHaye, and Jerry Jenkins, the three best-selling American authors of the past thirty-five years. Here, Timimi points to a phenomenon that is widely unknown internationally and commonly dismissed within both intellectual and political circles in the U.S.

Chapter 2: Two Hundred Miles of Blood

“Messiah Jesus will first strike those who have ravaged His city, Jerusalem. Then he will strike the armies amassed in the valley of Megiddo. No wonder blood will stand to the horses’ bridles for a distance of two hundred miles from Jerusalem!”

So writes the popular American author Hal Lindsey of Armageddon . . .¹⁶

¹ Ali al-Timimi, “The Muslim World: Where Is It Heading?” Part 4. Audio version of an undated speech in London. Downloaded the last time on July 17, 2006. Transcriptions from audio prepared by Michael Sells, July 17, 2006, from <http://www.uponsunnah.com/tamimi.php>.

Because audio- and text-files migrate frequently from site to site, all web-based bibliographical information in this essay is subject to change. As of November 4, 2006, the four audio-files for Ali al-Timimi, “The Islamic World: Where Is It Heading?” were available at:

http://www.sunnahonline.com/ilm/audio/altimimi_index.htm. They were also available at <http://nadeem.lightuponlight.com/indexaudios1.html>, under the title “The Muslim World: Where Is It Heading?” In the spring of 2005, I downloaded the same audio-files of Timimi’s from <http://www.islamicawakening.com/authors.php?authorlist=22&>, but they are no longer on this site, although many other Timimi pieces were still posted. As of July 17, 2006, the audio-files of the speech were available at <http://www.uponsunnah.com/lectures.php>, but as of September 16, 2006, the site “uponsunna” has been offline. Audio-files of sixteen of Timimi’s addresses can be found at: http://is.aswatalislam.net/DisplayFilesP.aspx?TitleID=2081&TitleName=Ali_at-Timimi.

² See his <http://www.islam-guide.com/>, specifically, <http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-further-reading.htm>

³ *Interpretation of the Noble Qur’an in the English Language* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Salam, 1972), translated by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, Professor of Islamic Faith and Teachings, Islamic University, Al-Madinah al-Munawwarah, Saudi Arabia. In the discussions below, I used the pagination of the Fifteenth Revised Edition, December, 1996.

⁴ Shaykh Abudlazīz bin Abdullah bin Baz. Bin Baz was Grand Mufti (President of Islamic research, Ifta, Call and Propagation) in Riyadh and Shaikh Umar Fullata, General Secretary of Islam University, al-Madinah al-Munawwarah. The Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and *Fataawa* (in Arabic, *al-Lajnah ad-Daa’imah lil-Buhooth al-’Ilmiyyah wal-Iftaa*), otherwise known as the Council of Senior Scholars.

⁵ That version included an appendix by former Saudi chief justice Abdullah bin Humaid extolling the virtues of armed jihad, but, although the Bin Humaid preface drew protests for its call to jihad, the Khan and Hilali text itself offers a more comprehensive and comprehensively militant version of religion than the brief comments in Bin Humaid’s treatise. The Khan and Hilali version can be found at the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an website at <http://www.qurancomplex.org/>. Note that in the recent electronic version the interpolation of Jews and Christians has been removed from the Fatiha, but not from the many other verses in the Qur’an in which Khan and Hilali inserted it. I do not have information on the date the King Fahd center amended the Fatiha translation. The emendation likely represents an increased Saudi sensitivity to the more obvious displays of militancy in its publications, but without any commitment to revise the overall tone or substance of the Khan or Hilali text as a whole or replace it with another authorized translation.

⁶ Khan and Hilali reinforce their identification of Jews with those who are punished with transformation into monkeys through their interpolation-based translation of 5:60: “*Shall I inform you of something worse than that, regarding the recompense from Allah: those (Jews) who incurred the Curse of Allah and His Wrath, and those whom (some) He transformed into monkeys and swines.*” By fixing the meaning of what the author of the Qur’an left open and by directing the wrath passages onto Jews, the two translators create

an implacable conflict identity. A case has been made for interpreting the polemic of 7:166 regarding the monkeys and pigs as referring back to the story recounted only three verses earlier, in 7:163. In that verse, God tested his people on their loyalty to the divine command to observe the Sabbath ban on work, by bringing about a situation where fish appeared in the river only on the Sabbath, a situation that led some to violate the Sabbath by catching the fish for food. Classical commentators interpret the identity of those tested as the ancient Israelites and the identity of those transformed into monkeys and pigs as those who failed that test. The Qur'anic verse 2:65 reinforces such a reading when it recalls God's chastisement of a group that transgressed the Sabbath rule by saying to them: "Be monkeys, brought low." Qur'anic interpreters differ over whether such statements should be read literally, as indicating the actual physical transformation of the Sabbath-breakers, or more figuratively, implying judgment.

⁷ In 60:13, the two translators once again emend the text to include a specific reference to Jews: "O you who believe. Take not as friends the people who have incurred the Wrath of Allah (i.e. the Jews).

⁸ I am indebted to al-Husein al-Madhany for his discussions of the controversies over verse 2:82 within the classical and modern Islamic traditions.

⁹ See *The Sahih Bukhari*, translated by M. Muhsin Khan, available at:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/>.

See Volume 1, Book 12, Number 749, available at:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/012.sbt.html>.

"Narrated Abu Huraira: 'Allah's Apostle said, "Say 'Amen' when the Imam says 'Ghair-il-maghdubi `alaihima wala-ddal-lin; not the path of those who earn Your Anger (such as Jews) nor of those who go astray (such as Christians);' all the past sins of the person whose saying (of Amin) coincides with that of the angels, will be forgiven.'" A similar hadith attributed to Abu Hurayra occurs in Bukhari's chapter 60 given over to "Prophetic Commentary on the Qur'an): Sahih Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 2, available at: http://www.masmn.org/documents/Hadith/Sahih_Bukhari/060.htm. There Khan refrains from interpolating "The Jews" and "The Christians" into the words from the Fatiha. See

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/052.sbt.html>.

Narrated Abu Huraira: 'Allah's Apostle said, "When the Imam says: 'Ghair-il-Maghdubi `Alaihim Walad-Dallin (i.e. not the path of those who earn Your Anger, nor the path of those who went astray (1.7)),' then you must say, 'Ameen,' for if one's utterance of 'Ameen' coincides with that of the angels, then his past sins will be forgiven'" (interpolation by M. Muhsin Khan).

¹⁰ See Shaykh Abdullah Ibn Baz, "The Obligation to Hold as Enemies the Jews, the Polytheists, and Other Infidels" (*wujūbu `adāwati al-yahūd wa l-mushrikīn wa ghayrihim min al-kuffār*), see:

<http://www.binbaz.org.sa/index.php?pg=mat&type=article&id=312>. Although "the Christians" do not

appear in the title of the epistle, they appear throughout the text along with the Jews and other infidels.

One key passage reads as follows: "They [various Qur'anic verses cited by Bin Baz and others he suggested could be cited] provide a clear demonstration of the obligation to despise the infidels—Christians, Jews, and other Polytheists—and the obligation to hold them as enemies until they believe in Allah only, and the [these verses] also indicate the prohibition against friendship (*mawadda*) toward them or holding them as patrons. This entails despising them and being wary of their tricks (*makā'idim*). This is solely because of their disbelief in Allah and their enmity toward his religion and their enmity toward his intimates and the deceit they wage against Islam and its people.

A key technique of Bin Baz, Khan, and Halili is to read the Arabic term "min" in a particular fashion. The phrase "*min al-yahūd wa al-nasāra*" (from/of the Jews and Christians) can mean "those from among the Jews or Christians" or it can mean "all of the Jews and Christians," depending how it is interpreted. In condemnation of disbelief, the Qur'anic verses can be read as condemning those among the Jews and Christians who are disbelievers and other infidels, or condemning the Jews, Christians, and other disbelievers. Thus "the Jews" and "the Christians" can be viewed in Qur'anic language as open to interior distinction (some believing in Allah or the one God, others not, some hostile to Islam and its prophet, others not) or they constitute homogenous qualities. Thus, how an interpreter interprets the partitive "min" can make the difference in which of the two possibilities is chosen. Throughout his epistle, Bin Baz makes it clear he reads the "min" as meaning that Jews and Christians, by nature, as categories, are among the groups of disbelievers and that the duty to despise them, be wary of their deceptions, and hold them as enemies until they believe in Allah alone, means that as long as they remain Jews and Christians, it is the obligation of every Muslim to consider them enemies.

For the later fatwa arguing that one kind of peace (“sulh”) with Jews and infidels does not require holding them in friendship (*mawadda*) or taking them as *awliya*’ (patrons in a patron-client relationship), see Abdullah ibn Baz, “Peace with Jews or Other Infidels does not entail taking them as Friends or holding them as Patrons,” (*al-sulh ma`a l-yahūdi aw ghayrihim min al-kuffār lā yalzimu minhu mawaddatuhum wa lā mawlātuhum*). Date 8/19/1415 Hijri (1994) [1/21/1995 AD]. See:

<http://www.binbaz.org.sa/index.php?pg=mat&type=fatawa&id=1948>

¹¹ For a discussion of Hilali’s activities within the Moroccan context, see Malika Zeghal, *Les Islamiste Marocains: La Défi à la Monarchie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006): 287-289.

¹² This paradox will be examined in a later chapter of the forthcoming book from which this essay is drawn.

¹³ Milton Viorst, “The Education of Ali al-Timimi,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 2006: 68-78.

¹⁴ Lest there be any doubts about the message of the Khan and Hilali version of the Qur’an, the two translators offer the following interpolation-based version of the divine command for the Muslims to prepare their war-horses for the conflict: And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy (8:60; Khan and Hilali, 235, available at: <http://www.qurancomplex.org/>).

¹⁵ Book 041, Number 6985: translation of Siddiqi, available at:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/041.smt.html>. cf. the translation from the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an website at: <http://www.qurancomplex.org/>. Surah Nine: see <http://www.qurancomplex.org/Quran/Targama/Targama.asp?nSora=9&l=arb&nAya=29>.

¹⁶ Editor’s note: the essay’s argument will continue in subsequent chapters of the book, currently in progress. Part I will examine religious militancy and conflict identity through the writings and speeches of major figures. Part II will focus on the geopolitical role of American power in the world and the religious militancies that have formed around that power. In so doing, the author does not intend to take a position on metaphysical issues, such as whether any religion or religions in general are peaceful or violent, the correct reading of any particular tradition, or whether material conflicts give rise to religious militancies or vice-versa.

N.B.: Arabic script in the notes has been removed to facilitate web display.