

SYNOPSIS OF THE ATLANTIC ARTICLE 'WHAT ISIS REALLY WANTS' (by Graeme Wood)

- ISIS looks back to “the Prophetic Methodology”, to return civilization to a 7th-century legal environment
 - ISIS follows Salafists (“*pious forefathers*”, including the Prophet himself and his earliest adherents)
 - The Salafists are the models for all behavior, including warfare, couture, family life, even dentistry
 - ISIS believes there will be only 12 legitimate caliphs, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the eighth
 - ISIS uses terror (beheadings, crucifixions, enslavement) “*to hasten victory and avoid prolonged conflict*”
 - ISIS believes Islamic law permits only temporary peace treaties, no borders, & jihad at least once a year
 - ISIS refuses to accept the UN, and any form of democracy is considered by them ‘*Shirk*’
 - ISIS seeks immediate Islamization of all lands, vs. al-Qaeda, which wants a gradual Islamization
 - Takfir*, a doctrine from the 7th c. that says which Muslims are declared unbelievers, who can be killed
 - ISIS’s *takfir* includes: Using alcohol, drugs, Western clothes, laws, shaving, voting, apostasy, and Shiites
 - Abu Musa’b al Zarqawi, the brutal head of al-Qaeda was ISIS’s immediate progenitor
 - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is its present leader (since May 2010), with a PHD in Islam
 - ISIS rejects peace as a matter of principle; and hungers for genocide
 - ISIS is committed to purifying the world by killing vast numbers of people
 - Individual executions happen continually, and mass executions every few weeks
 - Muslim “apostates” are the most common victims
 - Christians are spared if they accept ISIS, pay the Jizya tax, and allow subjugation
 - ISIS awaits the army of “Rome” (the West) whose defeat will be at Dabiq, Syria (north of Aleppo)
 - This eventual defeat will initiate the countdown to the apocalypse, and be Rome’s Waterloo or Antietam¹
 - Westerners who accuse Muslims of following the Qur’an were ostracized by Western academics
 - The leading expert on the group’s theology, Bernard Haykel, says, Muslims who call the Islamic State un-Islamic are,
“Embarrassed and politically correct, with a cotton-candy view of their own religion, that neglects what their religion has historically and legally required. Denials of the Islamic State’s religious nature, he said, are rooted in an “interfaith-Christian-nonsense tradition.” ... “the fighters of the Islamic State are authentic throwbacks to early Islam and are faithfully reproducing its norms of war” ... “What’s striking about them is not just the literalism, but also the seriousness with which they read these texts. There is an assiduous, obsessive seriousness that Muslims don’t normally have.”
 - Many foreign Muslims have come to fight, and many intend to die due to this seriousness
 - London Salafis are “unstoppable”. They speak with an academic precision which wins arguments
 - Anjem Choudary, Abu Baraa, and Abdul Muhid (from London) all desire to emigrate to the Islamic State
 - They regard the ISIS caliphate as the only righteous government on Earth
 - Choudary: “*Sharia was absent from our lives..in abeyance until we have khilafa...and now we have one.*”
 - Simply denouncing ISIS as un-Islamic is counterproductive, if one knows the Qur’an & Muhammad
 - One cannot condemn slavery or crucifixion without contradicting the Qur’an and Muhammad
- Solution 1:** Use air strikes and a proxy war to keep ISIS from expanding
- The rise of ISIS happened because the US occupation created space for Zarqawi and his followers
 - The West must use Kurdish and Iraqi proxy on the battlefield, coupled with regular air assaults
 - Those strategies haven’t dislodged ISIS from any of its territorial possessions
 - Yet they’ve kept ISIS from assaulting Baghdad and Erbil and slaughtering Shia and Kurds
 - ISIS is dependent on gaining and keeping territory
 - ISIS is also dependent on an American invasion, helping its propaganda that the US is the real evil
 - The West should not invade but continue to bleed ISIS through air strikes and a proxy warfare
 - The Kurds and the Shia can keep the Islamic State from fulfilling its duty to expand
 - When ISIS fails to expand, or conquer it proves to other Muslims that it can’t govern or prosper
 - The land ISIS owns is mostly uninhabited and poor, with much misery
- Solution 2:** Support ‘Quietist Salafis’ as alternate radicals
- ‘Quietist Salafis’ believe Muslims should perfect their personal life, including prayer, ritual, and hygiene
 - Yet, Breton Pocius, a Quietist Salafi Imam only has 150 or so worshipers in his Friday congregation...
- Conclusion:** Wood believes that the allure of ISIS is that, “*They believe they are personally involved in struggles beyond their own lives, and that merely to be swept up in the drama, on the side of righteousness, is a privilege and a pleasure—especially when it is also a burden...That ISIS holds the imminent fulfilment of prophecy as a matter of dogma at least tells us the mettle of our opponent. It is ready to cheer its own near-obliteration, and to remain confident, even when surrounded, that it will receive divine succor if it stays true to the Prophetic model*”

¹ This prophecy can be found at: “The Book Pertaining to the Turmoil and the Portents of the last hour (Kitab Al-Fitan wa Ashrat As-Sa’ah),” Book 041, number 6924, University of Southern California Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, available online at: <http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/muslim/041-smt.php>.