

Gog and Magog in Modern Garb

Remke Kruk

Leiden University

Since the late nineteen eighties, a stream of religious books and pamphlets has started to flood bookshops and bookstalls all over the Islamic world. They all focus on aspects of Islamic belief and practice, with the aim of providing guidelines for being a “good Muslim” according to strict orthodox belief.¹ Their method usually consists of quoting relevant passages from the Quran, the *ḥadīth* (not necessarily restricted to canonical *ḥadīth*) and occasionally also from the works of prominent religious authorities from medieval and modern times, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya and, for current day traditional scholarship, al-Albānī. To this, any stray material that may serve to strengthen the argument may be added.

In a recent volume of *Oriente Moderno* devoted to the role of *ḥadīth* in modern Islam,² Roberto Tottoli (2002: 55-75) and David Cook (2002: 115-126), both discussing aspects of modern Muslim apocalyptic literature, have highlighted some of the noteworthy characteristics of this kind of literature: the exclusive focus on the contents of the *ḥadīth*, the omission of any but the first transmitter, and little or no discussion of its authenticity; also the indiscriminate use of early, canonical, and later *ḥadīth* works (Tottoli 2002: 58-61, 72). To this may be added that many of these books consist of little more than topically arranged quotations from religious works: the connecting text provided by their “authors” is often very minimal. The angle mostly taken is that they focus on a specific current day phenomenon, either in politics or in everyday life and practice, and try to appreciate or interpret it from an orthodox religious point of view. This usually results in moral admonitions.

Many of these authors clearly are not trained religious scholars at all, but have all kinds of backgrounds, occasionally even in things such as engineering. They have taken up dabbling in religious matters, using the classical texts without proper scholarly training in traditional Islamic scholarship. This leads to an indiscriminate use of sources,

1 See, for instance, my “Harry Potter in the Gulf; Contemporary Islam and the occult,” in *BJMES* 32, 1, pp. 47-73.

2 Roberto Tottoli (ed.), *Hadith in Modern Islam*. Thematic volume of *Oriente Moderno*, XXI (LXXXII), 1-2002.

analysed by Cook (2002: 39-53) on the basis of some modern apocalyptic texts: without any qualms, they mix material from the Bible or the Dead Sea scrolls with Islamic sources whenever it fits their argument, and quote all manner of modern Western thinkers whenever they see fit, sometimes not hesitating to twist their words in order to fit their own particular agendas.

Tottoli and Cook, in the articles just cited, focus on apocalyptic texts, the role of the Dajjāl in Tottoli's case and the general approach of modern apocalyptic authors in Cook's article. Books that deal with the Last Things and the hereafter (the *ukhrāwīyāt*) take a predominant place among the books and pamphlets that nowadays abound in Muslim bookshops. The punishment in the grave, the Portents of the Hour (*fitan*), the Day of Judgment, Paradise and Hell, they are all there, described in colourful booklets with vivid and horrible covers, and contents that largely consist of passages from the *ḥadīth* and related literature. Among this literature, the apocalyptic treatises, dealing with the Portents of the Hour and the historical events that will precede the Last Day, form an interesting and very substantial sub-genre. The Dajjāl is a very prominent topic. His appearance is one of "major signs," the Portents of the Hour announcing the end of times. These "signs," the '*alamāt al-sā'a*', are a favourite topic in this literature, and are dealt with *in extenso*, the "major" as well as the "minor" signs. Many of the signs invite attempts at modern identification, as Tottoli and Cook have demonstrated. Such use of apocalyptic material is well established in the Islamic tradition, in which apocalyptic arguments have been used from the very beginning to support particular moral or political agendas.³

To remind the reader of what these signs entail, we may briefly summarize them on the basis of Uri Rubin's article "Sā'a" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition, vol. VIII, 656-7), where the "major signs" as given in the *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) are summed up. They are the following: three different instances of people being swallowed up by the earth; the appearance of the Dajjāl,

³ See especially the many publications of Wilferd Madelung on the subject; a full overview can be found in F. Daftari and J.W.Meri (eds.), *Culture and memory in Medieval Islam. Essays in honour of Wilferd Madelung*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris. 2003. An example from the 13th century is described in my "History and Apocalypse: Ibn an-Nafīs' justification of Mamluk rule," in *Der Islam*, 72, 2, 1995, pp. 324-37. David Cook's *Studies in Muslim apocalyptic*, Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002, gives a full overview and analysis of the genre. The use of apocalyptic threats for political manipulation has even become a motif in traditional Arabic popular fiction: there is an episode in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* in which an evil ruler keeps a hold over people by means of the statue of a jewelled bird which announces the nearness of the Hour and so urges the people to follow its commands. See M.C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic*, Cambridge 1993, III: 448, 452.

the Antichrist; the descent of ʿĪsā, Jesus; the emergence of the Beast; of smoke rising from the South obscuring the sky; the appearance of Gog and Magog; the rising of a chilly wind, taking away the souls of the believers; and the rising of the sun from the West. This is by no means a complete list of all the apocalyptic phenomena that one may come across in Muslim sources, for authors are at variance about the signs, and also about the order in which they will occur. Political agendas play an important role there, as in the case of the capture of Constantinople and such apocalyptic figures as the Sufyānī and the Qaḥṭānī, which are not mentioned in the *Muṣannaf*.

The “lesser signs,” which include all kinds of religious and moral degeneration, offer ample opportunity for modern authors to utter dire warnings against un-islamic behaviour. Most of these signs can be identified in our day, indicating the nearness of the Hour. As an illustration, we may cite what Shaykh Muḥammad Abu l-ʿĀrif’s treatise *Al-Mahdī; bayyināt wa-ʿalāmāt* (The Mahdi; indications and signs, Jeddah 1413/1992) has to say on the subject (pp. 83-100). It dwells on the taking of usury, widespread in our day in modern banking; women shedding all modesty and showing themselves naked in public, a practice widely manifest in our day, as is another un-islamic phenomenon, listening to music. What can also be observed is the adoration of idols, for instance in the case of Atatürk’s statues. It has been foretold that, at the end of times, wild animals will start speaking to man, and this is bound to occur within the near future: already it is possible in many ways to hear the voices of people that we cannot see, and it will not be long before understanding the speech of animals will also be a fact.

The tribes of Gog and Magog and their apocalyptic onslaught do not make an appearance in Abu l-ʿĀrif’s book. This is not exceptional. Not all apocalyptic phenomena and figures that are announced in traditional sources have received equal attention in the modern religious literature under review. Moral decay, the Jews gaining global power, the return of the Jews to Israel, these are prominent points of discussion, and so are the Dajjāl and the Mahdī, both of which lend themselves to identification with contemporary figures. Signs such as the appearance of the Beast (*dābba*) and the Smoke (*dukhān*) have far less attraction for modern apocalyptic writers. As to Gog and Magog, the approach varies: this article will take a closer look at some of the approaches taken.

The names of Gog and Magog do turn up on the covers of many modern apocalyptic treatises, as can be seen from the bibliography to

this article. The interesting question is how the various authors handle the onslaught of these ferocious tribes, which is announced in Biblical and Muslim apocalyptic literature, and which has often been connected, from the 13th century onwards, with the attacks of the Mongols, Huns and Tatars. Do the modern authors go along with this, presenting the appearance of Gog and Magog as something that has already taken place, or do they make an attempt to place it in the future, even the near future? If so, in what guise and manner will they appear?

Perusal of a number of these booklets shows that the authors were not always comfortable with these mysterious tribes, who – given their vast numbers – could in these days of airplanes and satellites hardly have gone unnoticed till the time of their sudden apocalyptic onslaught. Accordingly, some authors leave them out altogether in their survey of the events preceding the onset of the Last Things, concentrating instead on the Mahdī and the Dajjāl, or on the moral decay that is seen as an indication of the end of times. Others mention them briefly, quoting the relevant Quranic passages and an occasional *ḥadīth*, making no attempt to fit them into the modern picture. Examples can be found for instance in Ayyūb 1999/1420: 291-2, Maṣṣūr 1998: 220-1, Murād 1418/1997: 54-5 and Salāma 1419/1999: 63-7.

We will take a closer look at some of the books and see what they have to say on the subject, starting with Majdī Muḥammad Shahāwī's *Al-masīḥ al-dajjāl wa-Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj*, "The false Messiah and Gog and Magog," Cairo 1993.

From what will be said about this book, the reader may have the impression that Shahāwī is somewhat out of touch with the modern world, but this is not so. Another of his many booklet titles is *Al-Aṭbāq al-ṭā'ira wa-muthallath Barmūdā: bayna al-ḥaqīqā wa-l-khurāfā*, "Flying saucers and the Bermuda Triangle: between truth and fable." For the diligent amateur of this type of literature, there is nothing remarkable in this: flying saucers and the Bermuda Triangle are a favourite topic in modern Muslim apocalyptic literature. The Bermuda Triangle is seen as an excellent hideout for the creatures that have to disappear and bide their time till the moment has arrived to make their apocalyptic appearance. The Dajjāl (the Antichrist), Gog and Magog, and various demonic creatures are all seen as likely candidates for a prolonged stay in the Triangle; we will hear more of this later in this article.

In *Al-masīh al-dajjāl wa-Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj*, Shahāwī's approach consists of summarizing, by no means exhaustively, what traditional literature has to say about these mysterious tribes. Much of the information provided there has already come up elsewhere in this volume, in some form or other. Shahāwī's little work gives us an idea of what the *ḥadīth* literature has to offer in this respect to the modern pious Muslim, but disregards its contradictions and puzzling aspects in connection with the modern world.

The booklet consists of two parts, the first describing the appearance of the Dajjāl, the second the emergence of Gog and Magog (pp. 57-74). Successively, we hear about their predicted onslaught during the Last Days; about the etymology of their names, the number of tribes belonging to them and about their progeny. As to the latter: several *ḥadīths* (one of them qualified as weak, *ḍa'īf*) say that they will have abundant progeny, all of them bearing arms. Another question, discussed at length, is whether they belong to the human race or not. Are they descended from Adam and Eve, or from only one of them? Different views circulate on this matter according to various religious authorities, but the majority of the *ḥadīths* cited here agree that they are descendants of Adam and Eve. Some say that Japheth, son of Noah, is their ancestor, for he is said to be the ancestor of the Turks, and it is to this tribe that Gog and Magog belong according to many authorities. There is, for instance, the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra, found in al-Bukhārī, which says that according to the Prophet "the Hour will not arrive before you have to battle with the Turks, small of eyes, ruddy of faces, with finely ciselled (*dhulaf*) noses, and faces like shields covered with leather" (p. 64).

Ibn al-Kathīr, in his *al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, is quoted to the effect that although most people agree on their descent from Adam and Eve, there is one scholar (according to our author this is al-Nawawī in his commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*) who denies this and says that they descend from Adam only and not from Eve: they are the result of Adam's night ejaculation in which his semen mixed with earth, from which God created Gog and Magog. Ibn al-Kathīr considers this "weak" (*ḍa'īf*), and warns against belief in the unfounded talk of the Jews and Christians, explicitly mentioning Ka'b al-Aḥbār, the famous transmitter of tales of Jewish origin (*isrā'īlīyāt*).

The *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra which describes Gog and Magog's outward appearance is by no means the only one to do so. Other *ḥadīths*, not considered very trustworthy, have other details to offer: Ibn Mundhir informs us that there are three different types among Gog

and Magog: one that has the stature of an *urz*, a tree that is a hundred and twenty cubits high, one that is just as broad as it is tall, and one that has ears so big that when they go to sleep they use one as a mattress and the other as a blanket. There is an interesting connection here to the Plinian races, described by Ṭabarī in his Quran commentary and later on by Qazwīnī (13th century A.D.) in his *‘Ajā‘ib al-Makhlūqāt*, a passage that is often beautifully illustrated in the Qazwīnī MSS.

To this description, Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān, in a tradition going back to the Prophet, is reported to add that they devour every animal that they come across, be it an elephant, camel or pig, and that they also eat the dead bodies of their own kind. Another source, al-Qurṭubī, elaborates on this by explaining (pp. 66) that they eat all the “creeping things” (*hasharāt*) that they find, even snakes and scorpions, and in general anything that has “spirit” (*rūḥ*), i.e. that is alive. They grow exceptionally fast, only needing one year to grow up. They make sounds like pigeons and dogs, and mate like animals whenever they run into each other.

Wahb ibn Munabbih is reported to say (p. 67) that they have claws and fangs, and palates like those of camels, so that they make a lot of noise when they eat. Their bodies are covered with coarse hair and they have huge ears. One ear has thick fur on the inside and the outside, the other has light fuzz on both sides. Thus they offer maximum comfort when used for sleeping purposes in different seasons. Ibn Kathīr, reacting to this, says that this is nonsense. The truth is that they descend from Adam and Eve and look like them. As to their exceptional height: that is not unique in humankind, for Adam is reported to have been sixty cubits tall. Only later did humans gradually become shorter.

Subsequently, attention is paid to the Wall and its being built by Dhū ‘l-Qarnayn. Reports to the Prophet about the Wall are mentioned, as is the story of Salām, who was sent by the caliph al-Wāthiq to investigate it. Of course this has to lead up to the question: does the Wall still exist in our day? (p. 70). Certainly it does. It is to be found in a narrow mountain pass between two high and steep mountain ranges; the pass is called “Dariyāl” and is, he says, marked on every map of Russia and Georgia. Iron and copper have been used in the construction of the Wall, which looks like a stupendous hill. Here Shahāwī refers to another book, unknown to me, namely Prof. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s *Al-Ṣīn – Ya’jūj wa-Ma’jūj*, “China – Gog and Magog.”

More *ḥadīth* are quoted about the daily attempts of Gog and Magog to scratch a hole in the wall, a hole that miraculously fills up again during the night. And then: will they actually appear near the end of times? Of course they will, as is implied by a series of *ḥadīths* to that effect, quoted without any comment. This brings us to the final question: how will they be annihilated in the end? Another series of *ḥadīths*, also simply presented without comment, offers a range of possibilities as to the method of their destruction and how the earth will be cleansed of their dead bodies. Here are some of the views that are quoted in the *ḥadīth*: Abū Saʿīd al-Khidrī says that one of them will cast his lance towards the sky, and it will fall down tainted with blood, causing strife and misery. Al-Nuwās ibn Samʿān reports that God will send down worms that dig into their necks and destroy them. Not worms, but locust larvae, says the aforementioned Abū Saʿīd. The earth will be covered by their bodies, on which the beasts will fatten themselves. And then, says Al-Nuwās, God will send birds looking like the necks of camels, and these will pick them up and throw them wherever God wills. According to Ibn Masʿūd, however, God will send down rain that washes their bodies into the sea. And after all is done, their bows, arrows and shields will serve the Muslims as firewood for seven years, according to al-Nuwās.

A line from the author's own hand concludes the book: "This last *ḥadīth* indicates that Gog and Magog will have ample weaponry and equipment, of which the Muslims will make good use, if God wills."

The above may serve to illustrate Shahāwī's approach. His book consists almost exclusively of passages from the *ḥadīth*, and could easily have been computer-generated. Occasionally he mentions the qualifications given by *ḥadīth* authorities to certain *ḥadīths*: weak, for instance. The author does not make any attempt to harmonize the contents of mutually contradictory *ḥadīths* and does not add any views of his own. Nor does he give any indication that he is aware of the problems that the existence of the Wall and these huge ferocious tribes creates in these days of global observation. It is just one more example of the way in which orthodox belief (and not only Muslim belief) insists on a two-tracked approach to reality, that of the texts and that of modern science.

The approach is not basically different in 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Salām Ṭuwayla (sometimes spelled Ṭawīla)'s *Al-Masīḥ al-muntazar wa-nihāyat al-ālam*, "The expected Messiah and the end of the world," Cairo 1419/1999, a substantial book of 365 pages. Gog and Magog are treated on pp. 225-40, in the usual manner already seen

above. In addition to Quran and *ḥadīth*, fairly extensive use is made of Biblical material, and a source such as Flavius Josephus (quoted as “the Jewish historian Būsīfūs”) is also mentioned (p. 229). For a modern angle, the commentary on *Sūrat al-Kahf* by the famous modern Pakistani scholar Abu l-A‘lā al-Mawdūdī is cited (p. 229) to the effect that Gog and Magog must be the Northern Russian tribes known as the Tatars, Mongols, Huns, Scythians etcetera, who have attacked the civilized world from time immemorial. No attempt, however, is made to fit them into a modern context, although it is just these attacks that have been used by some authors as a means to solve the problem of Gog and Magog’s existence, and their still-awaited onslaught, for current day believers.

The central argument here is that for a sound understanding of what is said in the Quran and the *ḥadīth*, the texts have to be interpreted as referring not to a single event, but to various events taking place in different periods. There is the breaking of the Wall, and the subsequent onslaught on Islamic lands: this has already taken place in the shape of the various Mongol (etc.) attacks. Then there is the apocalyptic onslaught of ferocious tribes named Gog and Magog, which is still in the future. It should not, however, be connected directly to the destruction of the Wall.

Another example of this approach, with an interesting fresh angle, is found in Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Ḥākīm’s *Ya’jūj wa-Ma’jūj min al-wujūd ḥattā al-fanā’*, “Gog and Magog, from Existence to Annihilation,” Cairo 2004. He says that the larger part of Gog and Magog, who streamed out when the wall of Alexander broke down, participated in the Mongol attacks and later retreated to the area of the Baikal sea. However some of Gog and Magog were buried beneath the rubble of the wall, and have continued to live there in holes under the ground, waiting the time for their final outbreak. People might express their doubts about this solution but, he argues, it has been shown that life under such conditions is possible: in 1992 a boy was discovered in a cave in France who had kept himself alive in the dark by eating insects and such, just like Gog and Magog (2004: 249).

Another booklet, also exclusively devoted to Gog and Magog, has yet another solution for the continuing existence of Gog and Magog and their still imminent appearance. This is Hishām Kamāl ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd’s *Gog and Magog are coming! Who are Gog and Magog? Where do they stem from? Has the Wall of Dhū l-Qarnayn been destroyed? What have the holy book and the historical works to say about them? (Yājūj wa-Mājūj qādimūna: Man hum Yājūj wa-Mājūj?*

Wa-mā hiya judhūruhum? Wa-hal hudima sadd Dhī l-Qarnayn? Wa-mādhā qālat al-kutub al-samāwiyya wa-t-ta'rīkhīya ʿanhum? (Cairo 1997). All of its 160 pages deal with Gog and Magog, which gives the author ample room to present all the information he has been able to dig up about them from a variety of sources. The list of sources found at the end of the book is indeed impressive: thirty-six Muslim Arabic sources, ranging from *ḥadīth* works and a number of old and modern Quran commentaries to historical works such as Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* and Ibn al-Athīr's *Kamil*. Remarkably, the title of Tabarī's historical work is given as *Ta'rīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk* instead of *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*. Ibn al-Kathīr, with the *Bidāya*, and a minor work of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighātha al-lahfān min maṣayid al-shayṭān*, are also present. There are also modern historical studies, for instance about the Mongols. It is noteworthy that a number of modern booklets of the type discussed in this article are also included.

There is a separate, not very long, list of Christian sources, including various Bible editions, commentaries on specific Bible books such as Ezekiel and the Revelation of John, and connected reference works.

This indicates that the author really has attempted a modern scholarly approach, even though this has not extended to including source references or providing his list of (exclusively Arabic) titles with year and place of publication. Yet this book is quite different from that of, for instance, Shahāwī, presented above. Instead of simply putting a number of *ḥadīths* into a certain order, the author tells his own story. He starts with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, whom he tries to identify: was he the Persian Cyrus or a king of Yemen? The latter seems more likely. The where and how of the building of the Wall is discussed, and then a chapter is devoted to the place where Gog and Magog can be located on the old Arab maps such as those of Ibn Ḥawqal, Qazwīnī, Idrīsī, Jayhānī (an author who is the subject of considerable scholarly discussion, but that is overlooked here), Mustawfī and al-Ṣfāqṣī. Pictures of the maps are shown, and the itinerary followed by al-Wāthiq's envoy, Salām, is also sketched.

We get the usual discussion about the question whether Gog and Magog are to be identified as the Mongols and Tatars: Mawdūdī's Quran commentary is again cited. Physical descriptions of Gog and Magog are given. None of this is different from what we have already learnt from the books mentioned earlier, since the source material is the same, but the presentation aims at a higher level of sophistication.

However the account becomes interesting when it comes to the question of what the identification of Gog and Magog with the Mongols and Tatars implies for the predicted arrival of Gog and Magog after the apocalyptic event of Jesus' appearance and killing of the Dajjāl, the Antichrist. Is this not one of the ten major apocalyptic signs? Instead of simply quoting the relevant *ḥadīths* without any comment, the author makes a serious effort to fit Gog and Magog into the modern scheme of things, along with other apocalyptic developments. These are sketched in the last chapter of the book, and the description shows that we are already well under way towards the final judgment.

The final chapter of the book is about the political events leading up to the Last Judgment. Ample use is made of Biblical sources, entirely in line with what Cook, in the article cited earlier, has observed. The appearance of Gog and Magog is the third of the "major signs," by which time 95% of the "minor signs" must already have occurred. The following events, all modern interpretations of what has been foretold in the texts, are to be expected or have already taken place:

The Jews have returned to Palestine, and gained world power through control of international and financial organizations and of the media, such as the press and the film industry.

Three great empires have fallen: the German, the British, and the Russian.

The United States has emerged as a world power; the Zionists will gain power over it; an earthquake will divide it into three parts; epidemics will occur.

Europe will become a power independent from America. Muslim states in the East, including the former Soviet states, will form an alliance.

The Mahdī will appear and unite the Muslims.

The great battle (*malḥama*) between Europe and the Muslims in the Middle East will take place (The author has written a separate book about this event).

The Dajjāl will appear with flying saucers from the Bermuda Triangle and attack the Mahdī. The Beast (*dābba*) and the donkey of the Dajjāl are among the demons that will perform strange events on the Dajjāl's behalf.

ʿĪsā will descend to help the Mahdī.

Gog and Magog will appear and attack ʿĪsā and his armies. God will destroy them, and together ʿĪsā and the Mahdī will conquer the world.

Meanwhile, the remaining lesser signs will appear, starting with the destruction of the Ka'ba, followed by increasing moral and religious decay.

But let us return to the explanation given in Chapter 4 about the actual manner of Gog and Magog's appearance. Here (p. 124) the author cites another book of the same type, namely pp. 79-80 of 'Āshūr's *Thalātha yantaḏiruhum al-'ālam*, "Three are awaited by the world." This is a rare instance of source referencing as well as of cross-reference between these booklets (cf. Tottoli 2002: 57, who remarks on the absence of such references). 'Āshūr is cited as observing that in these days of advanced observation technology, the existence of two huge and dangerous tribes such as Gog and Magog could not have remained unnoticed. He suggests the following explanation. In the Sūrat al-Kahf, Gog and Magog are tribes shut in behind the wall of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, which will be destroyed to let out these destructive tribes. As to Gog and Magog who are the people referred to in the surat al-Anbiyā' and the prophetic *ḥadīth*, they are *another* dangerous tribe, that will appear in the days of 'Īsā, and their appearance is one of the signs of the Hour.

Our author agrees with this, and has new insights to add. His analysis of the problem of Gog and Magog's appearance in modern times centres on two elements. The first is that it can be deduced from the texts that a certain time will elapse between the breaking of the Wall and the apocalyptic onslaught of Gog and Magog. The basis of this lies in what is said about Gog and Magog in Sūrat al-Kahf, where there is first talk of the Wall, and then verse 98 continues: "He said: This is a blessing from my Lord. But when my Lord's promise has been fulfilled, He will level it to dust. The promise of my Lord is ever true." and, verse 99: (translation N.J. Dawood): "On that day We will let them come in tumultuous throngs. The Trumpet shall be sounded and We will gather them all together." This, says our author, implies that there will be a lapse of time between the "levelling to dust" of the Wall and the subsequent onslaught of Gog and Magog and the arrival of the Final Hour. In Sūrat al-Anbiyā', verse 96-97, Gog and Magog are also mentioned, but there is no talk of the Wall. The Quran just says "But when Gog and Magog are let loose and rush headlong down every hill." The conclusion must be that there are in fact two onslaughts, at different times. The first one has already taken place: this was the attack of the Mongols, which took place about 600 years after the days of the Prophet. It is this attack that the *ḥadīths* describing the physical characteristics of Gog and Magog allude to. It should be

noted, he explains, that the Prophet does not speak about the Wall in the *ḥadīth* which says that they will come in the days of ‘Īsā, using the Qur’anic words: “and they will rush headlong down every hill.”

The second point is the interpretation of two words used in the relevant passage in *Sūrat al-Anbiyā’* 96, namely *ḥadab* and *yansilūna*. *Ḥadab* means “a hill, a place elevated above the ground.” From such a place Gog and Magog will descend upon ‘Īsā. Since we are now in the days of airplanes, balloons and zeppelins, maybe we should not think of hills, but look for another interpretation of *ḥadab*. One of the meanings of the verb *ḥadiba* is “to be convex,” and *ḥaddaba* means “to vault, to make convex.” We should thus look for a “convex place”, keeping in mind that it has to be a place from which one could rush headlong down. Aeroplanes come to mind, and the author adds an explanatory picture indicating distinctly convex (*muḥaddab*) parts of the aeroplane.

As to *yansilūna*, which Dawood translates as “rushing headlong,” it has the general connotation of “descending.” In connection with the aeroplanes, the solution is obvious: Gog and Magog will be parachuted down from aeroplanes. This leaves the question of their identity, but that is not a real problem. They must be people belonging to the same tribes as those of the Mongol and Hun invasions, the first Gog and Magog onslaught. These tribes now form part of the Soviet Union: Mongolia, Korea (sic), Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, North China, all of them inhabitants of the North that later converted to Islam. We can safely say that Gog and Magog will come from those countries among them that have not converted to Islam. They will descend on ‘Īsā and his Muslim, Christian and Jewish armies after they have defeated the Dajjāl.

As to how this new Gog and Magog will meet their end, our author follows a well-known *ḥadīth*, which he had mentioned earlier (p. 129-30): when Gog and Magog have almost killed ‘Īsā and his army by cutting off their food supplies and their water, by drinking and emptying the Sea of Galilee, God will send down worms that eat into the necks of the Gog and Magog warriors, killing them all. Is this, says our author, not a perfect metaphor for what we today know as viruses and virulent diseases?

Christians have slightly different views on all this, we hear in the next chapter. In their view, the Russians and the states of North-East Asia are the most likely candidates for being Gog and Magog. Plunder is the main purpose of their attack on ‘Īsā, and the American fundamentalist preacher Jerry Falwell is cited with a suggestion as to

the nature of this plunder: a slight abbreviation of the word for plunder, “spoil,” gives us the answer: oil! (p. 142). The reference to Falwell is taken from what is apparently an Arabic translation of Grace Halsell’s study of modern American fundamentalist preachers, *Prophecy and Politics; Militant evangelists on the road to nuclear war* (1986).⁴

So far Hishām Kamāl ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd. He presents himself as a clear example of what has been said earlier in this article about the background of many of those modern pamphleteers, namely that they are not professional religious scholars educated at one of the Islamic institutions of higher learning, but are amateurs who have taken up studying Muslim religious literature. This, in itself, is interesting. It demonstrates the deep-felt need among modern Muslims to return to what they consider as the Muslim basic texts and tradition, and to find ways in which their contents can be made to fit a modern worldview.

It also demonstrates how all kinds of people have appropriated the right to interpret what they take to be “the sources,” without feeling the need to first get thoroughly acquainted with the methods of traditional Muslim scholarship, and possibly without even being aware of the fact that such a scholarly tradition exists, as is the case with many “born-again” Muslims living in the West.

4 My sincere thanks to Sen McGlinn for identifying this study.

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