

A Genealogy of Evil

On the basis of extensive scrutiny of primary sources from Nazi and Jihadist ideologues, David Patterson argues that Jihadist anti-Semitism stems from Nazi ideology. This book challenges the idea that Jihadist anti-Semitism has medieval roots, identifying its distinctively modern characteristics and tracing interconnections that link the Nazis to the Muslim Brotherhood, to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, the Sudan, the Iranian Islamic Republic, and other groups with an anti-Semitic worldview. Through close readings of numerous Jihadist texts, Patterson critiques their anti-Semitic teachings and affirms the importance of Jewish teaching, concluding that humanity needs the very Jewish teaching and testimony that the Jihadists advocate destroying.

David Patterson is Hillel Feinberg Chair in Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas. He also has taught at the University of Memphis, Oklahoma State University, and the University of Oregon. He is the author of numerous books, including, most recently, *Sounding the Depths of the Soul* (2009), *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Drawing Honey from the Rock* (with Alan L. Berger, 2008), and *Overcoming Alienation: A Kabbalistic Reflection on the Five Levels of the Soul* (2008). His writings have also appeared in many journals and anthologies on philosophy, literature, Judaism, the Holocaust, and education.

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A Genealogy of Evil

Anti-Semitism from Nazism to Islamic Jihad

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*For Elliot Chodoff,
whose brilliant mind and incisive inquiries provided
the inspiration for this book.*

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Preface

This volume is intended to bring some clarity to a crisis that confronts the entire world. It is more than a social, political, or economic crisis. It is a metaphysical crisis in which humanity is confronted with a pervasive and relentless evil. And it is an *evil*. In the postmodern intellectual world – where truth, meaning, and value have been so relativized as to become meaningless – there is a reluctance to use terms such as *evil* that may imply some higher absolute at work in our lives. A historian once told me, for example, that when speaking of the Holocaust, we must not use the word *evil* because of its “religious baggage.” If we refrain from using the term, however, we shall become blind to it and, in the end, overwhelmed by it.

Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, stated that “our mission is one described most comprehensively by the term ‘Islamic,’”¹ and that the “call to [Islam] cannot survive without Jihad.”² Thus, we have the term *Islamic Jihadism* to name this evil. I use the expression to distinguish this insidious “-ism” from other outlooks in Islam, such as that espoused by two former heads of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo: Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut (1893–1963) and Shaykh Jad al-Haqq Ali Jad al-Haqq (d. 1996). Citing the Quran,

¹ Hasan al-Banna, “Our Message”: http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/our_message.

² Hasan al-Banna, “The Message and the Teachings”: http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/tmott.

Mahmud Shaltut argued that Islam cannot be spread by force: “Had Allah wanted, all people of earth would have believed in Him, would you then dare force faith upon them?” (10:99). Jad al-Haqq Ali Jad al-Haqq took a similar position.³ Still, both insist on the spread of Islam, and such an insistence has the potential of playing into the hands of the Jihadists. Indeed, like Christianity, Islam is a supersessionist religion and is inclined toward a theological hostility toward the Judaism (and Christianity) it supposedly supersedes. Nevertheless, the refusal to use force in the expansion of Islam is a significant difference between the Jihadists and other Muslims.

Although, as we shall see, certain elements of traditional Islamic teaching may be selectively cited to justify Jihadist murder, such a selective exploitation of isolated teachings amounts to a betrayal of the very tradition that Islamic Jihadists invoke. From my work in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue, I can attest to the fact that there are courageous Muslims whose voices run counter to the fanatic cry for jihad against the unbelievers, particularly against Christians and Jews – above all, against Jews. My use of the term *Islamic Jihadism*, then, is intended to distinguish the modern Jihadist evil from other currents of Islam; we shall find, in fact, that Islamic Jihadism is a kind of reform movement significantly influenced by National Socialism and pitted against Islam itself – or so one may hope. I also use the term to distinguish Islamic Jihadism from terrorism. Islamic Jihadism is not merely terrorism – it is ideologically sanctified murder. Unlike terrorism in most of its historical manifestations, the aims of Islamic Jihadism are as much metaphysical as they are political. That is the key to the genealogy of this evil: the merging of the metaphysical with the political, of Allah’s word with the Jihadist agenda.

In the academic and political world, there reigns a certain complicity of silence surrounding the genealogy of the evil that confronts us and that betrays those brave Muslims who would confront it. In his foreword to Andrew Bostom’s *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims*, Ibn Warraq lists some reasons for this

³ See Bassam Tibi, “War and Peace in Islam,” in Andrew G. Bostom, ed., *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 333–34.

intellectual evasion that typifies the current engagement with Islam and Islamic Jihadism:

- political correctness leading to Islamic correctness,
- the fear of playing into the hands of racists or reactionaries to the detriment of the West's Muslim minorities,
- commercial or economic motives,
- feelings of postcolonial guilt (wherein the entire planet's problems are attributed to the West's wicked ways and intentions),
- plain physical fear, and
- the intellectual terrorism of writers such as Edward Said.⁴

In this book, I make an effort not to succumb to these feelings and fears. Striving to recognize the danger for what it is, this book is intended not only for the intellectual audience that shies away from such a confrontation but also for a general public that is concerned with the real threat we face. And face it we must: it is a matter of life and death, of how we understand the dearness and the meaning of life and death. If at times the urgency of my language seems extreme, it is because the situation we confront could not be more extreme.

The aim of this volume, then, is to introduce to its readers a greater awareness of the Jihadist evil that now besets the world, exploring where it comes from and where it is going and explaining exactly what the Jihadists set out to exterminate in their determination to exterminate the Jews. The stake in our understanding of this evil is not merely Western civilization or the state of Israel. Far more than that, our sense of the sanctity of human life, our sense of meaning in life, and the presence of something holy in this world hang in the balance.

⁴ Ibid., Ibn Warraq, Foreword, 22.

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