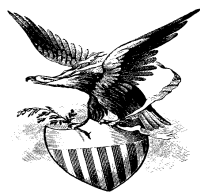


# Light Brings Salt

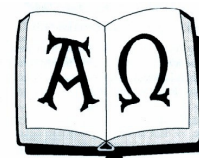
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## Iron Range Bible Church

*Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God*



### **MEDIA SWOONING UNDER AHMADINEJAD'S SPELL**

**Joel Rosenberg**

**Why have Time, NBC and others refused to examine the Iranian leader's dangerous but deeply held religious beliefs?**



(WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 20, 2006) -- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has launched a charm offensive through the American media. First was his "exclusive" interview with Mike Wallace on CBS's "60

Minutes." Now the Iranian leader is on the cover of Time magazine this week. Yesterday, he did a lengthy interview with NBC's Brian Williams, the only network interview he agreed to on this trip. And, of course, Ahmadinejad's speech yesterday blasting the United States (while on American soil) made headlines around the world.

Yet something has been curiously absent from all this media coverage. American journalists aren't asking Ahmadinejad about his Shiite religious beliefs, his fascination with the coming of the Islamic Messiah known as the "Twelfth Imam" or the "Mahdi," his critique of President Bush's faith in Jesus Christ and encouragement of President Bush to convert to Islam, and how such beliefs are driving Iranian foreign policy.

Time's cover story and exclusive print interview with Ahmadinejad never broached

the subject of his eschatology (end times theology). Nor did Williams. Nor did Wallace. Nor does a just-released book, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy And the Next Great Crisis in the Middle East*, by British Iran expert Ali M. Ansari. Nor does almost any of the saturation coverage Ahmadinejad is receiving.

Journalists aren't typically shy about asking tough, probing questions about the religious views of world leaders. President Bush has been grilled at length about being an evangelical Christian and how this informs his foreign policy, particularly with regards to Israel and the Middle East. Clearly the Pope's views of Christianity and Islam are now under fire. Why such hesitancy when it comes to the religious beliefs of a leader who has called for the Jewish State to be wiped off the planet and urges fellow Muslims to envision a world without the United States?

I think Ahmadinejad is waiting to be asked. He wants to talk about what he believes and why he believes it. His religion shapes who he is and what is driving him.

When he addressed the United Nations General Assembly last year, he concluded his speech by praying for Allah to hasten the coming of "the Promised One," the Islamic Messiah also known as the "Twelfth Imam" or the "Mahdi." When he got back to Tehran, the Iranian leader told colleagues that during his speech he was surrounded by a halo of light, and that for 27 or 28 minutes as he spoke, delegates were so mesmerized by the words Allah was

speaking through him that no one blinked. Not once.

In the months that followed, Ahmadinejad made his Islamic eschatology even more clear. He told followers that he believed the end of the world was rapidly approaching, and that the way to hasten the coming of the Messiah was to launch a global jihad to annihilate Israel and the United States. He also told followers that the "Mahdi" is already on the planet, but has not yet chosen to reveal himself. What's more, Ahmadinejad has said that he has personally been in contact with the "Mahdi" and received instructions from him, instructions that are apparently leading Iran to prepare for an apocalyptic war to annihilate Judeo-Christian civilization as we know it.

In Epicenter, I detail these statements -- when and where they were made, and how they illuminate Ahmadinejad's world view -- and cite numerous Iranians who understand their leader better than many in the West. One source I found particularly instructive in helping Americans better understand the Shiite view of the end of the world. Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini is a professor at the Religious Learning Center in Qom, Iran, and one of the country's most respected Shiite scholars. In his book, *Al-Imam al-Mahdi*, Amini describes the signs of the coming of the Mahdi in great detail. Chief among them: a massive earthquake and the launching of a global war to kill and/or subjugate Jews, Christians, and other "infidels" under Islamic rule.

Key excerpts from the Ayatollah's book: "When the world has become psychologically ready to accept the government of God and when general conditions have become favorable to the idea of the rulership of the truth, God will permit the Mahdi to launch his final revolution....A few selected individuals...will be the first ones to respond to his call, and will be drawn to him like iron to a magnet in that first hour of his appearance.....On

seeing the fulfillment of many of the signs promised in the traditions, a large number of unbelievers will turn towards Islam. Those who persist in their disbelief and wickedness shall be killed by soldiers of the Mahdi. The only victorious government in the entire world will be that of Islam....Islam will be the religion of everyone....The Mahdi will offer the religion of Islam to the Jews and the Christians; if they accept it they will be spared, otherwise, they will be killed....It seems unlikely that this catastrophe can be avoided....Warfare and bloodshed [are] inevitable." (see p. 122-123 of Epicenter)

Such beliefs are most certainly a legitimate area for American journalists to explore. Indeed, they are vital to truly understanding Ahmadinejad's aspirations and intentions. It is time for the media to shake off Ahmadinejad's charms -- it's as though he has cast some sort of spell on them -- and begin to ask the kind of serious questions that serious times require.

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#### Things to think about!

Often in the frantic search for happiness people deceptively look to people, things, and circumstances to fulfill their needs. Ultimately none of these can fully satisfy them. Yet many believers frequently fall into this same trap, sometimes applying a Christian veneer over the same futile process used by non-Christians and do so by a process of rationalizing their situation. God has set eternity in our heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and he alone can fill the void. This is not to say that it is wrong to be concerned about our appearance, our possessions, or our accomplishments. Whatever we do as "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20) should be characterized by excellence, because it is to be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:23). But if our joy and peace depend upon how we look, what we own, some relationship we're seeking or how well we perform, we are looking not to the Creator and His grace provision but rather to the creation in some way to meet our needs.