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Sookhdeo's "Unmasking Islamic State: Revealing Their Motivation, Theology and End Time Predictions" (Book Review)

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**Unmasking Islamic State: Revealing Their Motivation, Theology
and End Time Predictions,**

by Patrick Sookhdeo. McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing, 2015.

190 pp. \$16.00. ISBN 9780996724500

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Patrick Sookhdeo, a world-renowned expert on Islam and advisor to the American and British militaries, has written an invaluable book for those seeking greater insight into the history and ideology of Islamic State (hereafter, IS; sometimes referred to as ISIS or ISIL). In just 120 pages (plus appendices), Sookhdeo addresses the origins and rise of IS, its organization, recruitment strategy, strategic goals, and theological vision, and offers his own assessment of how the world must deal with this ever-increasing threat to global security and peace.

Sookhdeo begins by noting that IS leaders see the current struggle as a long-term battle for the world, couching their own role in eschatological terms. Their self-perception is that IS plays a key role in the unfolding of Allah's plan for history by toppling (what they view as) apostate Muslim regimes and installing *sharia* across the Middle East, eventually establishing the kingdom of God on Earth. This belief gives IS resiliency, even in the face of what would otherwise be crushing defeats, and serves as justification for its brutal tactics and political activism. However, it also places expectations upon the movement if it is to claim legitimacy and be accepted by Muslims of all nations and backgrounds. For example, IS must appear to be constantly expanding by holding the lands it has gained while advancing in new directions against apostate governments. Such advancement stands as "proof" of Allah's approval and support. Similarly, IS has to argue from the Islamic holy writings (primarily the Qur'an and Hadith) that its tactics and goals are consistent with Islamic history and tradition. Both of these obligations stand as significant areas of vulnerability.

The book is particularly useful for its explanation of how IS fits within the larger cultural milieu of jihadist groups, including Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood, and for its prescriptions for overcoming IS by exploiting its vulnerabilities. The key to defeating IS, according to Sookhdeo, is to stop its military advance in the short-term, and to challenge its broader theological and political claims in the long-term. This dual task can only be accomplished if Islamic leaders and scholars engage the IS interpretation head-on. Dismissing IS out of hand as a violation of true Islam accomplishes nothing, for it feeds into the IS ideology (which simply claims that these scholars are not true Muslims); rather, the self-perception of IS leaders must be proven wrong and the caliphate shown to be illegitimate by appeal to Islamic sources. Sookhdeo calls upon modern nations to encourage this type of

scholarship for the sake of global security. Already, he maintains, a virtual “holocaust” of Middle Eastern Christianity has taken place; the world cannot sit idly by.

This book is recommended for anyone interested in current global politics, especially those with a stake in the theological/religious issues at the center of IS’s advance. Thus, Christian universities and seminaries with political science, military science, and even missions departments will benefit from Sookhdeo’s contribution.

Vatican II: The Complete History,

by Alberto Melloni, translated by Sean O’Neill and Bret Thoman. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2015. 280 pp. \$79.95. ISBN 9780809106240

*Reviewed by Yvonne Wilber, Manager of Collection Development,
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The world reeled when Pope John XXIII announced the formulation of the Second Vatican Council in 1969. Nearly 100 years had passed since Vatican I had convened, at which full authority to define Church doctrine had been handed over to the pope. Why then, another council? Yet much had taken place in what had certainly been the most violent and distressing century in history. Following decades of doctrinal totalitarianism, two World Wars, the atrocities of the Holocaust, and a multitude of social changes, the pope decided it was necessary to reevaluate life as it is practiced in the Church, from ecumenical relations to the use of vernacular language in the Mass. Four sessions met between 1962 and 1965, which resulted in 16 documents focused upon reconciliation. Vatican II shaped the Catholic Church into its form which it holds today, but not without controversy.

Italian historian Alberto Melloni provides the text for this lavishly produced volume. Almost every page is adorned in some way: full-color illustrations from the storehouse of art in church history, black and white and color photographs of participants and locations, hand-written notes and letters, as well as charts and maps. The author begins by discussing the difficulties and idiosyncrasies of such a monumental undertaking as this Council turned out to be. The historical narrative brings the reader from the history of the church councils and synods through to the chronologies of Vatican II and the events that led up to its convening. Every session and intersession is covered with enough detail to provide a good history without overwhelming the reader in minutiae. Unique to this text is a confirmed and authoritative lists of participants at the Council and the different roles they played. Of particular interest is the chapter of excerpts from participants who later became popes: Albino Luciani (John Paul I), Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II), Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), and Jorge Mario Bergoglio (Francis).