



# Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience

*Richard Landes*

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Millennialists through the ages have looked forward to the apocalyptic moment that will radically transform society into heaven on earth. They have delivered withering critiques of their own civilizations and promised both the impending annihilation of the forces of evil and the advent of a perfect society. And all their promises have invariably failed. We tend, therefore, to dismiss these prophets of doom and salvation as crackpots and madmen, and not surprisingly historians of our secular era have tended to underestimate their impact on our modern world. Now, Richard Landes offers a lucid and ground-breaking analysis of this widely misunderstood phenomenon.

This long-awaited study shows that many events typically regarded as secular--including the French Revolution, Marxism, Bolshevism, Nazism--not only contain key millennialist elements, but follow the apocalyptic curve of enthusiastic launch, disappointment and (often catastrophic) re-entry into "normal time." Indeed, as Landes examines the explicit millennialism behind such recent events as the emergence of Global Jihad since 1979, he challenges the common notion that modern history is largely driven by secular interests. By focusing on ten widely different case studies, none of which come from Judaism or Christianity, he shows that millennialism is not only a cultural universal, but also an extremely adaptive social phenomenon that persists across the modern and post-modern divides. At the same time, he also offers valuable insight into the social and psychological factors that drive such beliefs.

Ranging from ancient Egypt to modern-day UFO cults and global Jihad, *Heaven on Earth* both delivers an eye-opening revisionist argument for the significance of millennialism throughout history and alerts the reader to the alarming spread of these ideologies in our world today.

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