Philosophers and kings

Susan Buck-Morss

Caption: "Jonah and the Whale", folio from *Jami al-Tavarikh* (*Compendium of chronicles*) by Rashid al-Din. Date of manuscript: ca. 1400CE/802AH. Medium: Ink, opaque watercolor, gold, and silver on paper (online catalogue, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC). Jonah, Jonas or Younis (Hebrew יוֹנָה; Modern Hebrew Yona; Arabic: يونسYūnus, Yūnis or يونانYūnān; Greek/Latin: Ionas) is the name given in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh/Old Testament) to a prophet of Israel in about the 8th century BCE, central character in the *Book of Jonah*.

i

Versions of the story of Jonah and the Whale exist in the Hebrew Bible (*Book of Jonah*), the Christian New Testament (Luke 11: 29-30; Matthew 12: 39-41), and the Holy Qur'an (Surah 37, p. 139-44). While details vary, the story is one of responsibility to warn people even if it is overwhelmingly difficult (according to Jews, Jonah fled this mission), punishment for those who fail to do so (Jonah is cast into the stormy sea), and God's mercy for those who repent: Jonah is swallowed by a whale, or big fish, but after three nights is spewed forth on dry land and sheltered from the sun by a tree because he believes, and receives God's mercy, after which he resumes his task.[1]

These days we need a thousand Jonahs. But the overwhelming difficulty for us, whatever our beliefs, is that truth, which is our responsibility, is extremely difficult to ascertain. Even when truth is written in a text, how it corresponds to the conditions of our contentious present is not self-evident. Intellectual work today is humble in its goals. Our warnings lack prophetic insight. Methods of knowledge production concede our inability to see the whole, much less to predict the future. Let us review some popu-

1. The most detailed account is in the Old Testament *Book of Jonah*. In the *Book of Matthew*, Jonah's three days in the belly of the whale anticipate the three days the resurrection of Christ, a prophet "greater than Jonas". The Qur'an stresses Jonah's faith in Allah. Entire theological arguments have issued from the story, having to do with free will, the arbitrariness of punishment, determinism and its limits, faith v. unbelief, and the power to act.

lar alternatives. (I speak from the West, about methods not confined to the West.)

First there are the new technocrats, the computer-fluent scientists for whom truth is codified in massive data banks that measure and classify information, cluster and tag the results, and spew forth correlations, comparisons, and percentages to any questions posed. These experts have replaced engineers as the prized professionals. They are sought after by knowledge-based economies in nations around the world. Philosophers are superfluous in comparison. Social scientists today do not have an easy hearing for their work in the absence of such legitimizing data. Still, it is their skill at qualitative interpretation and theoretical inference that matters.

Then there are the secular theorists that dominate in Western academies, those who, following Kant, bracket all metaphysical questions (the ones, as Kant says, that really matter to human beings), declaring them inaccessible to reason, hence off-limits to philosophical speculation—or, following Hegel or Marx, invert the transcendent realm, in order to rescue its utopian contents as a future project. There are those who provide comparative analyses of religions by treating them as anthropological manifestations across cultural differences. And then there are the followers of Nietzsche who, with great consequence as heirs to the Enlightenment, declare that the only Absolute is absolute relativism, thereby vitiating any claim to speak the truth.

There are infinite varieties of such secular approaches. But they share a rigid commitment to immanence as

the cure for all forms of political imbalance. This postmodern premise is, however, not a panacea. Theodor W. Adorno, teaching in Germany after the experiences of Nazism, Stalinism, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, warned his students that no philosophical position is immune from political abuse. It is "something we can learn from dialectics, namely that there is no category, no concept, no theory even, however true, that is immune to the danger of becoming false and even ideological in the constellation that it enters into in practice".[2]

And what of theology? There are Departments of Comparative Religion in most US universities, where experts on Islam are increasingly in demand. Theological schools focus on secular scholarship concerning religious themes. As for studies in Humanities Departments, despite the vigorous debates around Carl Schmitt's notions of political theology, despite cautiously postsecular approaches of philosophers like Derrida, and renewed interest in religious thinkers such as Simone Weil and Emmanuel Levinas, the division of knowledge that separates religion from the humanities is still dominant in the Western academy, with a hefty prejudice against the religious side of this divide.

However, the turn-of-the-century Renaissance in Islamic thought has weakened that divide significantly. Partly this is the consequence of official programs of dialogue, and I have been privileged to take part in some of best of

2. Theodor W. Adorno, *History and freedom: lectures 1964-1965*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone, Cambridge, Mass., Polity, 2006, p. 57.

them, thanks to Candido Mendes and the Académie de la latinité. But perhaps the most significant aspect of intellectual exchange has been the result of a new generation of scholars from Muslim countries who are studying in the West to become Doctors of Philosophy, and who come to critical inquiry without the secular prejudice. This has been especially productive in the field of political theory, where religion has been quite consistently quarantined by the traditional canon, that begins with Plato and Aristotle, and after considering Augustine as the Christian philosopher who sets apart the City of God and the City of Man, continues to the present with hardly a mention of theology as a positive contribution to politics since that time.

But a new generation of scholars is changing that. Last summer two students who completed their Ph.D. degrees with me wrote dissertations illustrative of the new possibilities. Pinar Kemerli is Turkish. She came to Cornell University from Boğazici University in Istanbul—a public Turkish institution, the best in the country, English-speaking, and secular. Hisseine Faradj, from Libya, has been teaching political theory as an adjunct professor in New York City while studying for his Ph.D. at CUNY Graduate Center. Dr. Kemerli is among my last students at Cornell; Dr. Faradj is among my first students at CUNY Graduate Center. They are diverse and independent in their approaches. But they share a refusal to presume the isolation of Islamic and Western experience. Their work demonstrates that such division is irrelevant to the salient issues of political theory in our time. Both are fully trained in the Western canon of politi-

cal philosophy. They know it well, so well that they are able to see its relationship to Islamic political thought not as one of exclusionary differences that require an understanding of the Other. Rather, they consider problems of political rule across this so-called great divide, transforming the way we think these problems themselves.

Hisseine Faradj's aim is to articulate a philosophical description of Islamic political theory around the issue of legitimate sovereignty that, he argues, cannot be appropriated by any system of temporal rule.[3] Contrary to what many in the West perceive to be Islamic fundamentalism, precisely a close reading of the Qur'an makes it evident that all sovereignty belongs to God, not to temporal power of whatever nature. Hence, an unapologetic affirmation of the divine origin of the Qur'an has the effect of freeing the Islamic polity to take multiple forms—nation state, federation, kingship, caliphate, etc.—as well as content—democratic, authoritarian, legal-elitist, etc.—because political form remains external to the law. Dr. Faradj concludes that in Islam there can be no temporal sovereign in Carl Schmitt's sense, that is, a sovereign who has the legitimacy to decide the state of exception that suspends the law. Schmitt demonstrated that this idea of sovereignty, inherited from Christian history, has been sustained within so-called secular nation states. Indeed, Schmitt argues that all political concepts in Western modernity are secu-

3. Hisseine Faradj, *Ulu al Amr & Authority: the central pillars of Sunni political thought*, Ph.D Dissertation, CUNY Graduate Center, 2014. This position is embraced generally among Sunni political thinkers.

larized theological concepts, including, as constitutive of the collective, the power of the sovereign to name the enemy, the political act *par excellence*. In contrast, Dr. Faradj observes that because the interpretation of divine law by the *Ulu al Amr* (those in authority) is the source of the legitimacy of temporal power, only the *Ulu al Amr* can decide on the state of exception, and in the Sunni tradition they do this through *ijma*, a hermeneutics of consensus, that acquires the agreement of the community. Yet precisely who constitutes "those" (plural) in authority, and how consensus is achieved, is not a constant in history. The process by which these are determined can take many forms, one of which is to open a path to democracy distinct from that of the nation-state form.

Dr. Faradj demonstrates how legal interpretations of sovereign legitimacy have evolved historically as the outcome of political struggles that engage all three sources of power, legal experts, temporal rulers, and Muslim subjects themselves, as they endeavor to answer a moral question fundamental to political life—a question for which the writings of Islam give no clear (hence no possible dogmatic) answer: "Why and when should one obey authority?" It is this question, Dr. Faradj argues, that concerns not only Muslims but human beings universally. Note that all those who ask it must perceive themselves as free subjects—otherwise the question has no meaning. At the same time, the question acknowledges obedience as necessary for collective, social life. But when does obedience become oppression? The answer requires specific, local judgments that

emerge within historically changing contexts, and it is this process that is now the source of intellectual debate and political struggle within the Muslim world.[4]

This formulation allows us to conceive of the questions of political theory, not in comparative terms, not as problems of cultural differences, but in a philosophical sense that they *really are questions*, to which no timeless, universal answer exists. And it could be argued that temporal power is guilty of a metaphysical usurpation when it presumes unchecked authority to provide this judgment on its own. The fundamental tension between freedom and obedience is the very essence of political life, not a one-time-only problem to be resolved. It requires living judgment. But notice that describing this tension as one between the individual subject and a national collective, or in terms of a neoliberal understanding of human rights within a global system of sovereign states, is a specific formulation of the problem of obedience and authority, a Western formulation, perhaps Protestant in origin, that emerged from the history of Europe, and that has a contingent future. It is not an *a priori* form of social life. Moreover, because no timeless, universal answer exists, such real questions cannot be

4. "Yet, while authority and obedience transcend time and space, obedience has particular characteristics that unfold in local geographies and specific moments in history. Identities, cultures, and nations develop around these local characteristics and produce the mosaic of subjectivities and identities that are a testament to the creativity and malleability of the human of the human subject"—but also the inevitability of disagreements; hence struggle is inevitable within any political community (Faradj, *Ulu al-Amr & Authority*, p. 2).

divorced from political struggle. Popular struggles, not the nation state, are the content of democracy, aided, but not guaranteed by democratic political forms.

Dr. Faradj does not argue that Islam is inherently democratic. He *is* saying that democracy is not inherently Western. One can imagine, then, a discourse of democratic theory—books written, academic courses taught—that does not privilege one particular time or place, but sharpens our comprehension of the concept by identifying democracy's appearance whenever and wherever it becomes manifest. Rather than subsuming these appearances under known categories, contemporary struggles to bring democracy to life can teach us something new. Changing historical conjunctures affect the content of concepts. It is an error to limit their meaning in advance of these moments of creative possibility. But democracy's appearance requires human action, and this is where the relation between moral principles and political practice moves to center-stage.

Hisseine Faradj's work enters deeply into Muslim history and political theory, as well as recent debates among Muslim thinkers that span a wide variety of positions, in order to correct misreadings that do not consider the centrality of the *Ulu al Amr* in limiting Islamic temporal power, its function as a means of checks and balances, as well as its plurality of forms, that have shaped the political history of Islam. His insights are not limited to implications for democratic theory. But they do lead me to ask, from another perspective, whether we are in the midst of a change in the very structure of political life. We could describe it this way: Political theology,

the conceptual underpinnings of sovereign power that endow it with transcendent legitimacy, is being challenged by instances of theological politics, whereby precisely the unspoken, transcendent underpinnings are being activated as a means of political transformation.

One recalls here Gandhi's famous response to the question: "What do you think of Western civilization?" He answered: "I think it would be a good idea." This exchange occurred in the context of British colonialism that his movement of non-violent resistance did so much to undermine. Hence the marshaling of transcendent principles is not merely an intellectual enterprise. It demands practice. Precisely within theological discourse, Martin Luther King acted to challenge sovereign power, in order to realize the principles to which that so-called secular power appealed. Liberation Theology did the same with regard to the official order of the Catholic Church. While these instances of political action do not share a "religion", they share a deep, theological sensibility, connecting political life to transcendent ideals—universal and eternal—while recognizing the illegitimacy of any earthly, political order that presumes to appropriate these ideals as its own possession. And in each case, Dr. Faradj's statement of the universal question applies: "Why and when should one obey authority?"

It is this same capacity to articulate the real and abiding questions of political theory that impresses me in the writings of Pinar Kemerli. Her method is very different, but the effect is, similarly, to expand the questions of political theory beyond the boundaries of the West, without re-inscrib-

ing logics of Otherness. Dr. Kemerli, too, focuses on temporal sovereignty and the political theology that such sovereignty presumes. Her argument moves in a coherent trajectory from Hobbes to Rousseau, to Atatürk, to Islamic conscientious objectors in Turkey. It is the latter category of political actors who expose the theological claims of the modern state, and practice their politics of critique by undermining this theological basis.

Dr. Kemerli's dissertation deals with a contradiction at the heart of the modern, liberal state, one that she calls "the sacrificial paradox of sovereignty". She argues that, contrary to claims of secularization, the sovereignty of modern nation states cannot do without the support that religious belief supplies. Dr. Kemerli shows us that modern citizenship is forced to rely on traditions of religious martyrdom, in order to legitimate killing and being killed, because these practices, crucial for national defense, fundamentally contradict the tenets of self-interest and individualism that undergird neoliberal politics in other domains. Moreover, this paradox of sovereignty was one of which Hobbes and Rousseau, as secular theorists, were fully aware, and which they tried, with trouble, to resolve.

If indeed, as Hobbes claims, individual self-preservation justifies submission to state authority, then how is it possible for states to require of their citizens the ultimate sacrifice of life itself? Hobbes proposed a contract theory of military service between the soldier and the state. Still he acknowledged, "faith makes better soldiers". Hence the paradox remained, which Hobbes struggles to resolve through a "sup-

plement", a reconstitution of Christianity as a pedagogic tool for unifying religious and political authority, and instilling loyalty to the secular sovereign state.[5] Rousseau's communitarian approach grapples with the problem in a direct and serious way. His solution, which had practical effects in the French Revolution, was a new civic religion of the state that initiates modern nationalism, whereby loyalty to the collective of the nation supersedes all other forms.

In this light, we are not surprised to find that Atatürk, the secular founder of the Turkish modern state, omitted one realm—the military, based on universal male conscription—from his policy of forced de-Islamization. In the military handbooks of the new Turkish nation, the language of *jihad* and religious martyrdom was maintained, in stark contrast to the secular discourse of the public sphere. Dr. Kemerli demonstrates that this omission was not a case of incomplete modernization. On the contrary, it was fully in accord with the requirement of modern, national sovereignty to appeal to transcendent ideals in order to protect the state, even at the expense of the individuals of which it is composed. And finally, we can see how it happens that Islamic conscientious objectors protest against serving in the national military, due to its instrumental use of appeals to Islam to justify defense of a sovereign state that was founded in opposition to the public practice of religion.

5. Pinar Kemerli, "The sacrificial paradox of sovereignty: martyrdom and Islamist conscientious objection", Ph.D. Dissertation (defended, August 2014), Chapter 1.

Secular liberalism is based on the principle of self-interest and individual freedom. Yet modern states cannot ask for sacrifice from the citizenry without theological support. And the consequence of this sacrificial paradox is that modern states make of the nation itself a transcendent value, and of its sovereign, as Hobbes wrote, a "mortal God". One can see how Dr. Kemerli's argument resonates with that of Dr. Faradj. Reading their work suggests to me that the power of theological legitimation needs to be not only separate from the state *(laïcité),* but also (*contra* Westphalia) *superior to it,* in order for the sacrificial paradox to be confronted, and perhaps resolved. Without it, international law rests merely on norms of Western state sovereignty that are imposed on the rest of the world. Moreover, the sacrificial paradox is repeated on this level. Western powers, as the source of the legitimating norms, are compelled to suspend those norms in order to preserve the global system of nation states that they have instituted. The practice of sustaining that system, which demands the sacrifice of human beings globally, has become, tragically, synonymous with global order itself. It is the very definition of peace.

ii

It will be necessary at this point to ask: How does the political form of the caliphate, which has come into recent prominence, speak to these issues? First, it will be clear

that as a political form, caliphate ("succession"[6]) has no institutional standing in the Qur'an. It refers historically to the multiple relations between temporal and theological power that were established by the Prophet's successors. Second, if we are to sustain the spirit of the argument so far, what will interest us in posing the question of the caliphate is how it informs issues of universal relevance. Let us proceed with that in mind.

Well before Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi asked Muslims for an oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*[7]) to establish an Islamic State of Iraq and Syia (ISIS) the idea of reviving the caliphate was being discussed in multiple venues. Among academics, specifically in Great Britain, the United States and Latin America, there has been renewed interest in the caliphate as an alternative political form. The discussion occurs as an outgrowth of postcolonial theory, referred to as Critical Muslim Studies. It is concerned with what Latin American theorists describe as "epistemic decolonialization", and the way theological traditions can inform and inspire movements for social justice and political liberation.[8]

6. The title of khalifa, or caliph, means deputy, or successor of the Prophet. But who this should be, or what powers the title should entail, was not determined.

7. Interestingly, the word *bay'ah* means, literally, contract transaction, a written pact that resonates with the Hobbes-Lockean idea of the social contract, and the Hobbsean idea of the military contract.

8. Discussions between Muslim and Latin American postcolonial theorists have taken place at an international Summer School, the faculty and affiliated faculty of which include well-known figures in postcolonial

Salim Sayyid has published a book within the context of Critical Muslim Studies entitled *Recalling the caliphate* (2014). It is a troubling account, but not because of its endorsement of a caliphate political form. Rather, the argument is so thoroughly Western in its postmodern cynicism and instrumentalist approach to power that every appeal to transcendence is barred. Theology is reduced to a means of achieving Islamic world power, thereby qualifying as a new Islamic Caliphate. The power desired by Sayyid appears to be purely political. No moral threshold is required. Not surprisingly, the theoretical understanding of sovereignty in his study is taken uncritically from Carl Schmitt. The problematic status of Sayyid's argument, its recourse to political realism, occurs at the expense of a transcendent principle that would embrace the struggles of others in the world (such as Latin American Liberation Theology). The argument does imply a challenge to the postcolonial thinking of those who oppose the imperial Western episteme by positing an idealized alternative discourse, one rooted in the traditions of the colonized Other that grants to the periphery a status of virtue denied to the center. But it ac-

studies, several of whom(*) have been with us at meetings of *L'Académie de la Latinité*: *Tariq Ramadan, Salman Sayyid, Asma Lamrabet, Hatem Bazian, Ramon Grosfoguel, Arzu Merali, Asma Barlas, Houria Bouteldja, Santiago Slabodsky, Farid Esack, *Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Ella Shohat, Samia Bano, Nadia Fadil, Abdennur Prado, Sirin Adlbi Sibai, Muhktar Ali, Talip Küçükcan, Munir Jiwa, Thomas Reifer, Enrique Dussel, Zahra Alí. In 2015 the summer school will be held in Cordoba, with the title "Decolonial Struggles and Liberation Theologies".

complishes this merely by extending the existing logic of Western political theology that conflates belief and power, onto Islam. "The answer to the Muslim question is the caliphate", writes Sayyid, that can "build a new world", not as an ethical force ("the caliphate does not have to be ethical") but as an Islamic political identity that can wield power "as an actor on the world stage".[9]

However, if the caliphate is understood in a different sense, neither as a state (the ISIS model), nor as a great power (Sayyid), but rather as a way of establishing political legitimacy beyond the state, then the alternative imagined community might encourage a different kind of solidarity, one based on allegiance to certain instances of moral practice rather than specific forms of temporal rule. This caliphate would share an ethics of action rather than a religiously circumscribed doctrine of power. It would be free to criticize the particular practices and policies of nation states (Muslim or otherwise), and would look across nations and religions to find allies in this task. And it would manifest the syncretism and cultural borrowing that mark all great moments in the history of humanity, finding a precedent in the era of the Abbasid Caliphate, when moving the capital from Damascus to Baghdad exposed the Arabic dynasty to the rich traditions of Persian civilization, and when the Abbasid dynasty of Arab rulers shared Islamic power with Umayyads in Mozarabic Spain, the Shi'ite Fatamids in Egypt, the Idrisi dynasty in Morocco, and Ibad-

9. Salim Sayyid, *Recalling the caliphate*, p. 182.

is in Oman, and connected the Islamic world to cultural cross-currents in Africa, India, China, Southeast Asia, and Japan. Sayyid's idea of an Islamic great power does not exclude multiple "experiments" within Islamic practice.[10] But his insistence that the division between insider and outsider only becomes political when it is articulated in the Schmittian distinction of friend and enemy denies the cosmopolitan fundament that accounts for the greatness of any civilizational power.

How very different from Sayyid's conception is the vision of Muhammad Asad (1900-1992)! As a Jew, he converted to Islam, translated the Qur'an into English, and wrote on Islamic state and government, advising the writers of the Constitution of Pakistan. Here is the way his relation to Islam is described by his son, my colleague at the CUNY Graduate Center, Talal Asad: "In the 'real Islamic tradition', he [Talal's father] would say, there is no simple distinction between friend and enemy, no single divide that categorizes whole peoples of the world into good and evil."[11] Muhammad Asad did, however, believe that divine law must converge with that of the state. And it is this political conclusion that raises such troubling questions for his son.

Talal Asad observes that the modern state is unique in its demand for complete loyalty from its citizens, and that

10. Sayyid, *Recalling the caliphate*, p. 182.

11. Talal Asad, "Muhammad Asad, between religion and politics", *Islam & Science*, Summer 2011, v. 10, n. 1, p. 77-88 (p. 80). Muhammad Asad considered certain texts of the Qur'an to be responses to specific historical circumstances during the Prophet's lifetime.

"nothing in the past (including the Muslim past), corresponds to it".[12] The friend/enemy distinction of the modern state constrains the ethical freedom of the individual uniquely. "Precisely because the modern state's fundamental rationale is fear of external and internal enemies, it uses its power to demand obedience."[13] Granted, he notes, conscientious objection is allowed, so long as it is a matter of subjective, individual conscience. But as soon as this objection becomes collective, articulated as an ethical claim against the state, it is classified as civil disobedience, the limits to which are strongly circumscribed. We can elaborate: if civil disobedience threatens to break the social contract, the sovereign can legitimately proclaim an extralegal state of emergency that suspends the law, in order, as the highest value, to protect the state itself. Talal Asad continues:

> Given this feature of the modern state, it is not surprising that some Muslims consider that total loyalty to the state contradicts the absolute loyalty they are expected to give to the one and only God, and that they refer to [the modern state] as "the real idol of society" (…).[14]

Asad provides a brilliant analysis:

> Advocates [of an Islamic nation state] have suggested that non-Muslims cannot provide absolute loyalty to the Islamic state in which they happen to live, and I have argued not that they can [the liberal view], but that the very idea of such loy-

12. Asad, "Muhammad Asad", p. 82.
13. *Idem*, p. 82.
14. *Idem*, p. 82.

> alty derives from the fact that it is modern and not from its civil or legal ideology.[15]

The issue of singular loyalty is thus a *real political problem* of modern nation states, whether secular, Islamic, or Jewish.[16] Claiming that "Islamic reform is dependent on simultaneous reform in the West", Talal Asad suggests a possible Islamic politics that, "without invoking the powers of the state and without presupposing 'national unity'", builds relationships and friendships among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, "in a continuous struggle through 'civil disobedience' against the commoditization of the environment, the economy, and human relations", with awe and thanks to "the divine giver for his bounty to humankind (…)".[17]

You can see where my argument leads. Modernity *needs* transcendent power. Precisely in a world system of sovereign states, an ethics that claims legitimacy beyond temporal sovereignty is required.

---

15. Asad, "Muhammad Asad", p. 83. He continues: "If the moral authority of the state is truly essential for individual morality, non-Muslims cannot be regarded as living ethically in a state that is not theirs—and one might argue therefore, that the modern Islamic state prevents them from doing so" (p. 84).

16. "The Islamic state may have an obligation to protect non-Muslims and allow them total freedom in matters of speech and belief (…). [However, non-Muslims] have no *right* to participate fully in the life of the state (…) just as the non-Jewish citizens of Israel (whether Muslim or Christian) are excluded by the *Jewish* state—and therefore cannot enter critically into its life" (Asad, "Muhammad Asad", p. 84).

17. Asad, "Muhammad Asad", p. 87.

Caption: Folio from *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (*Compendium of chronicles—A world history*) by Rashid al Din, who served as vizier of the Ilkahn Mahmud Ghazan (Mongol Empire). He was from a Jewish, Persian family and converted to Islam. Ghazan was raised a Buddhist, but converted to Islam in 1295 when he took the throne. This manuscript, from the Khalili collection, was produced in the Tabriz scriptorium and dated "finished in the months of the year 714 [1314-1315CE]". It is now held in the Edinburgh University Library (Or.Ms.20).

> "And, verily, Jonah was one of the Messengers. When he ran to the laden ship, he agreed to cast lots and he was among the losers, Then a big fish swallowed him and he had done an act worthy of blame. Had he not been of them who glorify Allah, he would have indeed remained inside its belly (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection. But We cast him forth on the naked shore while he was sick and We caused a plant of gourd to grow over him. And We sent him to a hundred thousand people or even more, and they believed; so We gave them enjoyment for a while." (Ch 37:139-148 *Quran.*)

iii (coda)

Nineveh, to the city to which God sent the prophet Jonah to warn the people of its imminent destruction, is on the Euphrates River just over one hundred kilometers from the

city of Mosel. Jonah is alleged to have been buried there. A Nestorian Christian church was built on the site, later transformed into the Mosque of the Prophet Younis. In the middle of the Mosque was Jonah's sepulcher, covered with a Persian carpet of silk and silver. Four great copper candlesticks stood at the corners, while lamps and ostrich shells hung down from the roof. A whale's tooth was said to be preserved there. At some point the tooth disappeared.

On November 30 2008, the US Army presented to the Mosque a "museum quality" replica of the tooth of a whale. Four years later, on July 24, 2014, militants of ISIS, that claims the status of a sovereign state and asks for pledges of allegiance from Muslims everywhere, called for all worshippers to leave the Mosque. They placed explosives in the building, and as city residents looked on, turned the 14th century Mosque into rubble.