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Ben Jones: *Apocalypse without God: Apocalyptic Thought, Ideal Politics, and the Limits of Utopian Hope*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xiv, 225.)

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After a first glance at the title, the reader would expect a book in the tradition of Eric Voegelin's *Political Religions* (in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. 5 [University of Missouri Press, 2000], 23–73) or Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History* (University of Chicago Press, 1949)—in other words, a book researching the transformation of apocalyptic thought into modern secular ideologies. But this is not what *Apocalypse without God* is about. Instead, Ben Jones's study looks at secular political thinkers who are uncomfortable with apocalyptic thought and, at the same time, adopt elements of it into their own conception of politics. For this purpose, the book provides three historical case studies, on Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Friedrich Engels. As the authors states: "None of these thinkers stand out as likely suspects to embrace apocalyptic thought" (2). Jones begins his book with an experimental but fitting parable of the "Kingdom of Acadia," in which all three thinkers live synchronously and each exemplifies a peculiar reaction to apocalyptic preaching: "rejecting it, tempering it, and embracing it" (4).

Jones regrets that the catastrophic element has been overstated in many modern representations of apocalyptic thought, while his study focuses on "cataclysmic apocalyptic thought," which "sees crisis as a key force to wipe away corruption and make way for a utopian society, in what will be a radical break from the past" (7). "Utopia" may not be the best terminological choice, but Jones rightly emphasizes that apocalypses typically imply a political vision of the beyond, in which the ills of earthly society (war, poverty, injustice, inequality, idolatry) are remedied forever. In response to Alison McQueen's much discussed *Political Realism in Apocalyptic Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), Jones states that thinkers like Machiavelli and Hobbes react to apocalypticism not only with oppositional political realism, but also with elements of "ideal theory," meaning positive adoptions from their apocalyptic counterparts (11–12, 28–29, 33–35).

It is a somewhat problematic aspect of the book, however, that Jones also wishes to contribute to the debate around Rawlsian "ideal theory." As he writes, cataclysmic apocalyptic thought offers a narrative which overcomes the feasibility argument held against ideal theory: "a coming crisis will open a path that links the present to utopia" (55). One could easily make the opposite claim: since apocalyptic thought sees a future transformation of reality on a global scale as a precondition for justice and equality, it rather confirms feasibility concerns. Admittedly, other reviewers might be better qualified for evaluating this "Rawlsian" aspect of the book. The focus here is on Jones's three case studies and their contribution to the history of political thought. All share common merits. First, they are based on a broad knowledge of primary sources and often refer to the less canonical

works of the three authors under consideration. Second, at the beginning of each study, the author shows that he is widely read in secondary literature; however, he engages critically only with a small number of well-chosen alternative interpretations. Therefore, the line of argument is always easy to follow and often anticipates the reader's possible objections.

The first historical case study is of Niccolò Machiavelli, who encounters apocalyptic thought primarily in the person of the Dominican preacher Savonarola. Accordingly, Jones offers a concise account of Savonarola's apocalyptic thought, as found in his writings and sermons. He then shows that the famous line from *The Prince* about the "prophet without arms" does not at all capture Machiavelli's complex assessment of Savonarola. Elsewhere, Machiavelli portrayed the Dominican preacher as an initially promising reformer and constitutional founder, who then failed because he could not live up to his own standards (78–79). Jones is right in saying that Machiavelli, especially in the *Discourses*, praises the value of religion for political stability. He also points to the often-overlooked chapter 3.1 of the *Discourses*, where Machiavelli praises Francis and Dominic, the founders of the mendicant orders, as renovators of Christianity in times of crisis (81–82). However, one may have serious doubts whether Machiavelli would have seen apocalyptic Christianity as a suitable civil religion. As Jones admits, Savonarola is not sufficiently described as an apocalyptic thinker, as he drew heavily on Roman republican thought (73–74). It seems that most parallels between Savonarola and Machiavelli are due to a shared reception of Roman political thought. This includes Machiavelli's occasional speculation about a perpetual republic, which is balanced by Machiavelli's rather cyclical view of history and his disbelief in lasting political stability. As Jones aptly concludes: "Machiavelli shares Savonarola's hope for renewal in the midst of crisis, but not the totality of his apocalyptic vision, which culminates in an eternal and perfect kingdom" (88).

The second and most compelling historical study looks at Thomas Hobbes. With reference to the *Behemoth*, Jones shows that Hobbes considered the Fifth Monarchy Men as the most radical contemporary expression of apocalypticism (92). Jones again succeeds in providing a convincing, concise, and source-based account of the apocalyptic hopes for a future Fifth Monarchy of Christ, which was to replace all other kingdoms. He also shows that Hobbes writes against the apocalyptic understandings of the kingdom of God, without, however, dismissing the concept. Hobbes delegitimizes any contemporary claims to a prophetic kingdom of God, while promoting his own theory of a "natural kingdom of God," uniquely interpreted as God's "reign over human beings who understand his commands, as well as the rewards and punishments tied to them" (106–9). Consequently, in this natural kingdom, which is to last until Christ's return, "subjects obey God by obeying the civil sovereign" (111). Hobbes, Jones concludes, teaches "idealism without perfection," by redirecting apocalyptic hopes for an everlasting kingdom of God toward hopes for political stability. The natural kingdom

may not save humans from mortality but nonetheless may save them from the hell of sectarian warfare and the fear of violent death (114–17).

The last case study explores the thought of Friedrich Engels, with a focus on his writings on Thomas Müntzer and early Christianity. Jones shows that Engels, unlike Karl Marx, showed “a genuine interest in apocalyptic belief” (127) and appreciated the early Christians’ faith in a victorious global struggle against ruling powers, while criticizing their concern with otherworldly bliss. In *The Peasant War in Germany*, Engels provides an interpretation of the apocalyptic preacher and radical reformer Thomas Müntzer. Jones shows that Engels takes great effort to explain away Müntzer’s theological argumentation and that he overstates Müntzer’s concern with socioeconomic realities. He “transforms Müntzer from a religious zealot . . . into a Marxist hero guided by reason in his fight against irrationality and economic exploitation” (130). This third case study is quite accurate, but the least original of the three. It also overlooks that Engel’s interpretation has been largely prepared by the radical democrat and Hegelian historian Wilhelm Zimmermann.

In conclusion, one might say that Alison McQueen’s argument about political realism as a response to apocalypticism still holds; but Ben Jones’s work contributes to a more nuanced perspective on Machiavelli and Hobbes and the way in which these thinkers react to the apocalyptic challenge.

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Rochelle DuFord: *Solidarity in Conflict: A Democratic Theory*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022. Pp. viii, 203.)

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Solidarity is a notoriously elastic idea. Within social movements it simultaneously connotes a virtue or value that informs action, the relation between actors, the group that is formed to act collectively, and the organizing effort to maintain the momentum of the movement. In addition, though, social-movement solidarity is a mere “tip of the iceberg” of meaningful instances of solidarity practices. The term inspires fear and hope, love and hatred, energy and malaise. Rich and varied philosophical accounts of the concept and various conceptions of solidarity abound.

*Solidarity in Conflict* identifies its contribution to the philosophical literature as articulating the importance of conflict within a particular conception of solidarity organizing as a practice of world-making or creating sociality for democracy. Radical democracy is both the purpose of solidarity organizing