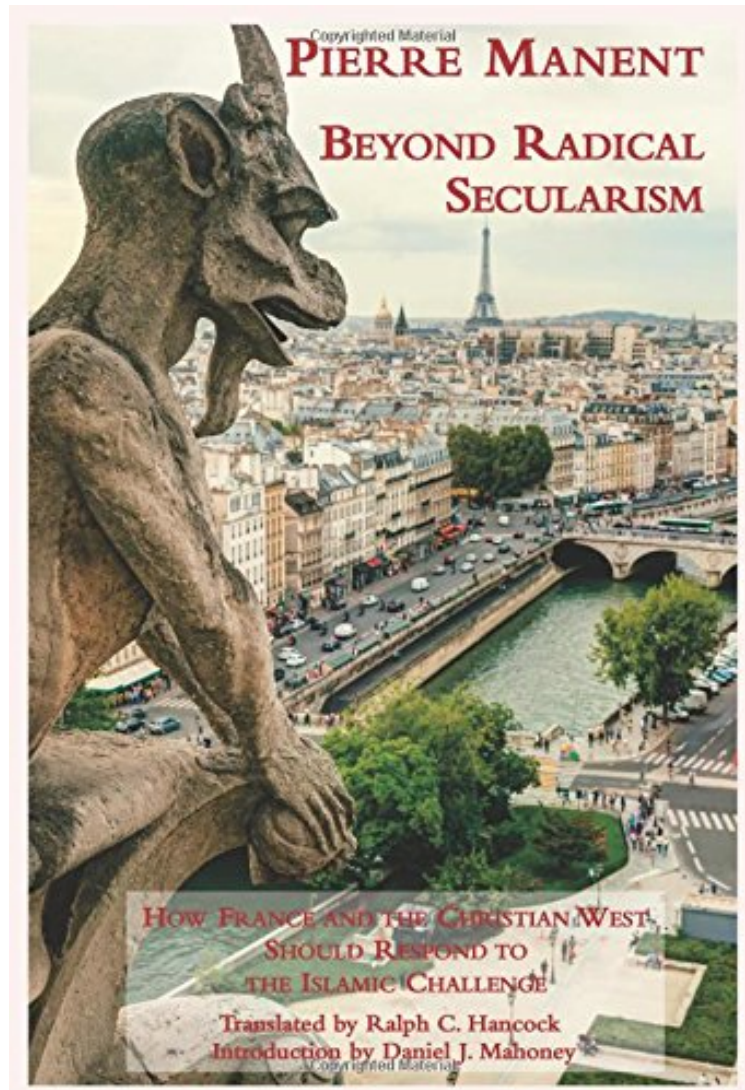


[Pdf free] Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge

Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge

Pierre Manent

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Pierre Manent : Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge:

28 of 28 people found the following review helpful. Good Book, Good Questions By GDPManent's 'Beyond Radical Secularism' is a profound book. In its own powerful way it asks the question: What values are at the core of modern

France? By extension, that same question should be asked of all modern Western nations. For Manent the question is framed within the reality of France's encounter with radical Islamic terrorism. His book was first published there after the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack, but before the terrorist carnage in Paris that took place during November 2015. This English translation (by Ralph C. Hancock) was published in July 2016. Manent contrasts the cultural views of "an average Western and the average Muslim" (p. 13). For Westerners, Manent claims that "we" view the primary role of society to be the guarantor of individual rights, while Muslim society "is first of all the whole set of morals and customs" (p. 13). The central problem is, of course, how peaceful reconciliation can be achieved. How can the individual rights of Muslims be respected in a nation that has effectively banished religion and spirituality from the public sphere? How can we reconcile the West's respect for basic human rights, especially basic women's rights, with a culture that holds contrary values? How far can the bounds of multiculturalism be stretched while retaining meaningful social cohesion? One suspects that the prototypical Western nation has been hollowed out of any objective moral standards or spirituality ("spiritual evisceration" is Manent's term - p. 68), and therefore lacks the community-forming mechanisms necessary for the retention of core beliefs, common convictions, and, ultimately, true social cohesion. In a world where the overwhelming emphasis is upon our subjective rights, materialism, and personal well-being, "we" have become what Tocqueville feared. "We" are held together by the most tenuous bonds, having largely shunted aside the "common beliefs" the culture, convictions, customs, and morality ... of our ancestors. Tocqueville wrote, "without such common belief no society can prosper; say, rather, no society can exist; for without such ideas there still may be men, but there is no social body" (DA). One thing should appear obvious: Smugly assuming "we" are "on the right side of history" is not working. Manent characterizes a current prevalent and naive viewpoint: "Humanity is irresistibly carried along by the movement of modernization, and modern humanity, humanity understood as having finally reached adulthood, is a humanity that has left religion behind" (p. 10). He writes of "modern humanity" as incredulous that any religion could be the source of personal animation in the enlightened 21st Century. This secular posture leaves modern humanity smugly "waiting only for the slower ones to kindly join him" (p. 61). Sometimes the greatest measure of a book's worthiness is the quality of the questions it forces us to ask ourselves, the humility that comes with the realization that good answers are very hard to come by, but also the sense of urgency it creates for the crucial undertaking. In the Preface Manent writes, "Eventually, as Machiavelli said, some 'extrinsic accident' such as war or revolution forces the members of a nation to 'recognize themselves' and to take up again the frayed reins of common life" (p. 3). Now should be one of those times.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Broad And Unique Vision By propertius This book or essay, in the French sense, while directed specifically to the trends, history and problems of France, has many applications to the problems of Western countries of today. Typically French in its style and methodology, this book takes out the faux indignation of the left and dares to address historically grounded concerns in a passionless, rational manner. If you wish to challenge your views regardless of where they are, this brief essay is for you.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Philosophical approach to Muslims in France By Gderf Manent applies a combination of thoughtful philosophy, politics and religion to the Muslim threat to Europe. Based mainly on the French example he convincingly illustrates a very basic incompatibility between life in a secular state and Muslim religion, morality, politics and social relationships. An ornate erudite writing style camouflages some of Manent's profound ideas, but he's well worth the effort to read and reread. Each of the 20 chapters can be treated as a short essay on a separate philosophical issue covering roles of politics, social relationships, economics, Catholics, and Jews as well as contrasting Muslim ideals with the secular state. Saying that the West has lost the initiative in the struggle against Islam, he cites three influences facilitating the forward thrust of Islamic advance into Europe: Muslim immigration, financial influence of the Gulf states with their unlimited capitalism and Islamic terrorism. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile Western emphasis on individual and human rights with Muslim incorporation of religion and moral principles into the sociology of a way of life. Social cohesion is failing and may not be achievable. Until Western secularists understand Muslim religion, there is little chance of defending themselves against Islamic terrorism or adequately welcoming Muslims into their societies. Socialism adherents claim that minority rights are denied whereas social claims of Muslims are ill defined and not understood. What does equality for Muslims mean? Reform of Islam is not an option. Islam will not adopt human rights or adapt to European culture. Westerners consider that society protects individual rights, while Muslims incorporate their morality and religion into their politics, law and social interaction. Can peaceful coexistence be achieved with such a contrast of values? Can individual rights of Muslims be respected in a nation that has effectively banished religion and spirituality from the public sphere? Can we reconcile the West's respect for basic human rights, especially basic women's rights, with a culture that holds contrary values? Can multicultural equality be achieved with social cohesion? There's a strong current of negativism to these questions. Manent courageously confronts the reality of France's encounter with radical Islamic terrorism. France has suffered from the Charlie Hebdo attack, and radical Islamic terrorism in Paris and Nice. (He doesn't stress the no go neighborhoods that separate Muslims from their prospective countrymen.) In the US we are sanguine about motivation, taking false comfort in no ISIS ties by lone wolf terrorists. Dissent to immigration policy is termed 'Islamophobia' subject to censorship and closure of debate. Considering old concepts of nationality is considered an attack on Islam. The state is not strong enough for separation

of church and state. French policy has been indeterminacy and dissipation, gradually, but methodically, stripping itself of resources for defense. Each letting go of defenses justifies more. There is no secular solution. Invocation of secularism is at odds with the Muslim community. Manent asserts that a radical secularist society is incapable of inviting outsiders to join it. France is a secular country that takes no position on religious doctrine or moral code. It seems a bit inconsistent to say that such a state should be able to incorporate multiple ways of life. He advocates an exit from the EU, which has made national borders obsolete and caused a transition, abdicating responsibility of governance to a trans-national organization, not recognizing French nationhood and disabling ability to cope with national problems like immigration. He thinks that French Muslims should stop accepting money from foreign powers, which would establish French Muslims as French. He suggests that it's a disservice to be asking nothing of them and therefore not inviting them into national life. (It will be interesting to see whether Brexit enables GB to manage its immigration and terrorism issues any better.) The conclusion is that Islam has sprung up in a Europe that has let down, or let crumble, its defensive parapets to the point where they are not daring to be home in their own countries. In place of the more usual wishful thinking suggestions, Manent comes to the realistic conclusion that it's too late for France to reverse course. Much of what he writes is applicable to the USA, where citation of Islamic terrorism is politically incorrect and authors must bypass the issue to attain print. Until that changes, no American writer can attain the cogency and profound common sense inherent in 'Beyond Radical Secularism.' In the meantime American readers must content ourselves with Manent as a warning that it is happening here as well.

Translation of: *Situation de la France*; published in France in 2015 by Groupe Artaege, Editions Desclae de Brouwer.