



Reviews: *De-Radicalizing Islam*, in *Culture Wars*, JANUARY 2019, VOL. 38, N° 2, p.42-44.

by Anne B. Gardiner

CANEVAS DE METHODE DE DERADICALISATION: DANS UN CADRE LAIC QUI TIENNE COMPTE DE LA CROYANCE ELLE-MEME. BY FOI.TERRAIN.MEDIATION. 2018

The following review is essentially a summary of this excellent booklet published in France under the pseudonym “Foi.Terrain.Mediation.”

Canevas de Methode de Deradicalisation [Sketch of a Method of Deradicalization] begins by asserting that all the attempts made by the French government to deradicalize Muslims have failed completely. The reason for this failure is that they have treated radical Islamic belief as a psychological or sociological phenomenon, reducing it to violence exalted for its own sake. They haven’t engaged with the underlying hopes and desires of the Islamists, especially the most fanatic. They haven’t taken Islamic belief seriously enough to understand the real mechanism that animates their actions.

First of all, what animates them is a certain worldview where evil can, and therefore must, be eradicated. At the root, the problem isn’t just the means taken by Islamists (i.e., propaganda, terrorism) but also the goal: the dream of a better world beyond the horizon, and it is for this dream that many are ready to sacrifice their lives and those of others. If the imposition of Sharia on mankind will lead swiftly to a better world, then those who oppose that objective must submit or be eliminated. This thinking can be called messianism, and Islamism is not the only form of it. Communism also had such a dream, and it led to 100 million deaths in the 20th century.

To deradicalize we must enter into Islamist thought where belief linked to emotion holds a dominant place. We must conduct the dialogue with respect and conviction. To begin, the thread to be followed is the Fatihah, a prayer consisting of seven verses which all Muslims know by heart and recite daily. It stands at the head of the Qur’an. Deradicalization means necessarily working together. Living together as neighbors is not enough to unite us. We need to have common goals and means of acting for our common interests. We must work together for the good of civil society, the good of families, and the good of our children. Being realistic means seeing what will bring about a civil entente and opposing what menaces that goal.

To deradicalize we must enter into Islamist thought where belief linked to emotion holds a dominant place.

The first verse of the Fatihah is an invocation Allah-God as the Merciful. From time immemorial the name of God in Arabic has been Allah, especially among Christian Arabs, who were given names like Abdallah (servant of Allah) long before Islam. In Hebrew and Aramean, the words Elohim and Alaha mean God. All these names are in the plural, the Most High Ones, and designate the one Creator God.

The opening verse uses two forms of the merciful: Rahman and Rahim. The first means One Who gives mercy, and the second means One Who is merciful in Himself. The question is, does God want the good of all men across time, or only the good for some and evil for others? This is an important question that must be raised, but we need not answer it now. If we cannot raise such a question, then deradicalization is impossible. Each must take the time to look honestly into this matter. When the media systematically characterize terrorists as mentally ill, are they not evading this very question? Sending terrorists to psychiatrists won’t help them escape this key dilemma De-Radicalizing Islam.

[p.43] In the second verse of the Fatihah, Allah-God is praised as “Lord of the Universe.” This verse is an invitation to know, love, desire, and praise Him. In the dominant culture of the West, the values are sex, money, and power, and Islamism is opposed to this culture. However, things are not so neatly defined. Does not Daesh (Isis) promise sex, money, and power to its militants? Are these promises not based on certain traditions and on passages in the Qur’an? The basic question is, how does one place God above other desires?

In this second verse God is called the Lord of the Ages as well as God of the Worlds. Since He has time to punish wrongdoers, why would he delegate men to punish and kill them in His place? Can anyone know ahead of time exactly whom God has destined to Hell? A miscreant could still turn to God at some moment in life, perhaps his last. By killing him, then, does one not risk arrogating the prerogative of Judgment that belongs to God alone? If one wants to eradicate evil from the world, should he not start by reorienting his own desires? How can one dream of satisfying his desires to sex, money, and power, and at the same time place Allah above all such desires? These questions must be raised and faced together in the most rational way possible, but not yet answered.

The third verse of the Fatihah returns to the first, and once again invokes God as Rahmân and Rahîm. The root of the word mercy in Arabic and other Semitic tongues designates the womb of a woman, the uterus. To have mercy means to carry the life of someone and want a lifetime of good for him. This is the God of life who maintains life and wants it to grow in each person and community. The vital question is this: If *Rahîm* means that God is merciful in Himself, can He be so for some and the opposite for others? The Life of the Prophet by Ibn Hisam, published two centuries after the birth of Islam, does not correspond to this idea of mercy. Nor do the Hadiths. See the list of murders attributed to Muhammad. But did these really happen? Or did the caliphs create out of self-interest a model that justified their oppressive system?

The fourth verse of the Fatihah invokes God as “Master of the Day of Judgment.” That Day has a collective sense, for it is not the particular Judgment that every man faces at his death, but the Judgment that all men alive on that Day will face. This Day of Judgment is foretold in the Gospels and in Semitic texts before Islam as the time when the earth will be cleansed of all those people vowed to evil. Islamic traditions speak of a re-descent of the Messiah Jesus-Issa from Heaven to lead exterminating armies against Antichrist and his followers on that Day. Daesh (Isis) cites an ancient tradition that has the final conflict between Good and Evil taking place in Dabiq, in the north of Syria. The better world that will emerge after that Day will not be the result of Jihad, but of God’s radical intervention. So what point is there in playing the universal judge in the present time? Is God not the only One Who is pure and just enough to have the right to Judge on that Day?

The fifth verse of the Fatihah addresses God thus: “It’s You we adore, You from Whom we implore assistance.” Does “we” refer only to Muslims? Is there room here for personal responsibility? When I do evil, is it God’s fault? “It is not you who killed them, but God who killed them” Qur’an 8.17. Am I pure and innocent by the fact that I’m a Muslim, even if I do all the evil possible? In Heaven, will I find plenty of people who committed atrocities but who are Muslims, while non-Muslims who were good will be in Hell?

The sixth verse of the Fatihah asks God to “Guide us on the right path.” This is close to Psalm 27, which states: “Teach me, Lord, your way, guide me on the right path.” Here it’s not humanity itself that is divided between the good and the evil, but each person, community, and nation must choose between two paths, one right, one wrong. The right path means pursuing a good goal by good means.

[p.44] The question is, may one use evil means to reach the goal of the right path? The actual military doctrine of the U.S. is that it is acceptable to kill up to ten civilians to eliminate one jihadist. The

Wahhabites preach the famous Taqqiya, that it is permissible to lie for the cause of Islam. As for the goal of a better world, it is the teaching of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Taliban that imposing Sharia will lead to it, but strange to say, the first were organized a century ago by M15, the British Secret Service, in order to use Arabic Islam against the Turks, and the second were organized in Afghanistan by the CIA, the U.S. secret service. Can an ideal world emerge from such manipulations? Is it the right path for Jihadists to fight in Syria, a conflict that has caused around 200,000 deaths and millions of refugees? Vast sums of money have been invested by those who want the Syrian state to disappear. Do those who push the young to go get killed in Syria realize they are working for global projects beyond their ken, projects sometimes called “controlled/planned chaos.” This is not how God acts, but rather how the Antichrist of Christian and Islamic tradition acts, whose project is global domination.

It is completely irrational to ignore that Muslims have an eschatology.

The right path is to wait for the Day of Judgment that no man can anticipate. A better world is coming, but only after that Day, not before. To preempt that collective Judgment is madness. It is to start an eschatological war. The seventh and last verse of the Fatihah is in apposition to the word path. It states: “the path of those that You have filled with favors, not that of those who have deserved your wrath, nor those who have strayed.” The commentators on this verse are unanimous in naming the three peoples designated here as Muslims, Jews, and Christians. In Sura 5, the Jews are said to have deserved God’s wrath and Christians to have strayed. This apposition is unique in the Qur’an and is much longer than the other verses of the Fatihah. A number of exegetes have thought it was added by a caliph’s authority. Now this verse cuts humanity apart, not just the paths they choose. Recited every day by Muslims, it causes them to repeatedly condemn Jews and Christians.

All the necessary questions having been raised, now in the short Part II of this booklet, they are seen with regard to the future, especially with regard to Antichrist, who must close the present Age and be eliminated at the Day of Judgment. On that Day two camps will really exist in the human race, though they are not discernible now. All the adults on earth will have taken a position for or against God. Antichrist will bring about this separation of humanity and thereby cause the Day of Judgment to arrive. This is why God will allow him to manifest himself globally. Those who divide mankind now are foolishly trying to anticipate the Day when God will use angels, not men, as His Harvesters. They will be the ones casting Antichrist and his followers into Hell. Mere men cannot do it, and certainly not now.

It is completely irrational to ignore that Muslims have an eschatology. But this is what has been done in all the failed attempts at deradicalization. Many Muslims in Europe divide mankind into two camps: the dar al-islam (their ideal society) and the dar al-harb (the Christian world to be conquered). The first camp is believed to be destined to Paradise, and the second to Hell. Psychiatry cannot deal with such a worldview and the rigid religious logic behind it. The only way to shake it is to show that this is the worldview held by those preparing the way of the Antichrist.

Christians and Muslims can share a sense of menace with regard to Antichrist and a hope for a better world after the Day of Judgment. But we also need to get rid of two mental blockages: “suprematism” and “victimization.” Suprematism means dividing society because one considers his own group superior to the rest of humanity. But the “one who divides” in Greek is “diabolos,” or Satan-Iblis. Victimization means using an accusatory discourse, such as Islamophobia, to stir up desires for revenge. Both terms have a religious dimension, as is discussed at the end of this ground-breaking booklet.

ANNE GARDINER