

# The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World.

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THAT TRADITIONAL religion has been giving secularism a run for its money is widely acknowledged. That this resurgence is not simply an American phenomenon but is to be found throughout the world is also increasingly recognized. How all this is to be understood and explained is not as certain, however, nor are the social, cultural, political and religious circumstances from which this resurgence draws. Gilles Kepel, who teaches at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, offers a provocative, compelling thesis.

In brief, the catalyst for religious resurgence is a deep moral and spiritual disquietude with modernity. The social upheavals and cultural innovations of the 1960s and 1970s were too radical and sweeping to be easily accommodated. In addition, they offered insufficient spiritual nurture. Religious movements are functioning as powerful social critics, underscoring "the undeniable evidence of a deep malaise in society that can no longer be interpreted in terms of our traditional categories of thought." In some instances, as under fundamentalist sponsorship, traditional religious belief and practice are being restored with a vengeance. In other instances, the efforts are less combative. But the intention is much the same everywhere: to help re-establish the spiritual conditions upon which traditional societies rest, conditions that have been challenged or supplanted during the time of pervasive social and cultural change.

In this excellent book, it is almost as if Kepel had seized upon the spirit of Stephen Carter's argument in *The Culture of Disbelief* and applied it to the three dominant religious traditions of the Western world. His achievement includes approaching resurgent fundamentalism as a subject that belongs with other examples of religious revitalization and can be analyzed within the framework of comparative studies of religion. Finally, Kepel has provided powerful evidence that societies cannot forever move away from their inherent religious and cultural roots.

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