



WHY THE REST HATES THE WEST

MEIC PEARSE

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"Why do they hate us so much?" Many in the U.S. are baffled at the hatred and anti-Western sentiment they see on the international news. Why are people around the world so resentful of Western cultural values and ideals? Historian Meic Pearse unpacks the deep divides between the West and the rest of the world. He shows how many of the underlying assumptions of Western civilization directly oppose and contradict the cultural and religious values of significant people groups. Those in the Third World, Pearse says, "have the sensation that everything they hold dear and sacred is being rolled over by an economic and cultural juggernaut that doesn't even know it's doing it . . . and wouldn't understand why what it's destroying is important or of value." Pearse's keen analysis offers insight into perspectives not often understood in the West, and provides a starting point for intercultural dialogue and rapprochement.

Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage Details

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From Reader Review Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage for online ebook

Heidi says

An enjoyable read that challenges preconceived notions...

I cannot describe how much I enjoyed this book, far more than I anticipated. Pearse succinctly examines the underlying motivations, thought processes and principles that divide Western and non-Western cultures.

Pearse writes with a fluid, highly accessible style and presents a fascinating perspective on the challenges that we are facing. Though I didn't agree with every single theory Pearse presents, I found his work stimulating and definitely thought-provoking...

Very, very good...

Jennifer Steinhoff says

This was probably not the best book to pick up during a really stressful week at work. However, when I did find the time to sit down and read and process it, I thought it was really good. You can see so much of how Dr. Pearse talks in how he writes (especially in the parenthetical side comments :-)). The last three chapters were my favorite as Pearse begins to talk about marriage and the family culture (or lack thereof) in the West. This is a topic that I have been reading more about and becoming more aware of as I see more of the world. I think Pearse really has it right in his observations.

Mike Blyth says

Despite the title, the book says much about how Western culture developed into modernity and post-modernity, and how that impacts Westerners on many levels, and little about how all this explains "the roots of global rage." Pearse also does a good job explaining how traditional (pre-modern) cultural values make sense in their context and are in many cases more stabilizing than Western ones.

The title topic is certainly touched on, but no more. Even where the cultural differences are cited as the cause of this rage, there is little exploration of alternative hypotheses such as competition for resources, perceptions of exploitation, jealousy, and, in the case of political Islam at least, a specific goal of defeating Western culture and bringing a different one into play even in "Western" countries.

Despite this, the book is a brief, well-written, well-structured look at the development of Western values and modes of thinking that we now take for granted. It raises many questions about whether some of these values promote our survival or are ultimately self-destructive.

An example of a Western cultural value Pearse discusses is that of progress. He shows how, until roughly the 18th century at least, social and political legitimacy depended on tradition, links to the past, so that change

was either rejected or justified as a way of getting back to a past golden age. This pattern still is the common one in traditional societies. Since that time, though, progress has become a underlying assumption -- everything is getting better over time. One result of this is a devaluation of tradition, ancestors, and our history, which are all now seen as simple, unenlightened, oppressive, and so on. This attitude is so at odds with all the rest of the world that it contributes to the rest's dismay over what it sees as the West's anti-value stance.

Good reading, at a popular level. The ideas are quite important for all Westerners (especially since the survival of Western culture is one of the questions in doubt) and particularly for anyone working in a cross-cultural situation. It is written from a Christian perspective but in such a way that it neither evangelizes for that perspective nor makes it necessary for the sense of the book.

Diane says

This book deals with the relationship between the developed world and the developing world from a Christian perspective. The author seeks to understand why people in the developing world, particularly Muslims, hate the West. He is very fair to the folks he deems "the rest", and he advances many interesting hypotheses. Unfortunately, I felt the book was a bit too polemical, and it didn't give adequate consideration to some plausible alternative hypotheses, but it was still very readable and interesting.

Joe says

Intersting perspective. Not mine, but very informative. I take this book as evidence that you should always be open to the opinions of people whose outlooks vary drastically from your own. You may not agree with everything they say, but that does not mean you cannot learn a lot from them.

What we see in this book is a very interesting analysis of why many members of non-western cultures hate and mistrust us so very much. Too vastly over simplyfy the authors argument for the sake of keeping this review down to a readable length, it is a matter of a clash of very basic cultural values that hit people at a gut level. With some very good analysis, the author suggests that in cultures too close to the edge of chaos, and short on some of the economic advantages we take for granted, extreme social conservatism makes all sorts of sense. So do certain government practices that we would call corruption in our political system, but which are more practical in a culture too poor to pay its necessary public officials. We have the luxury of paying our officials to be honest and impartial, while some countries cannot pay their officials at all, except by turning a blind eye toward their finding a way to make their office pay for itself.

The author offers a lot of comments about the west thar I find objectionable. He's obviously a religious and social conservative, and a Brit of Anglican persuasion. I stand a tad to the left by Chicago standards, which makes me blue as the sky compared to him. This should tell you something about how valuable I found some of his insights, despite our differences, that I should praise his book.

It may be his conservatism that allows him to understand third world cultures so well. Unlike more than a few demagogues I can think of, who are stuck on preaching their own culture's versions of the straight and narrow, he seems to be able to recognize similar moral values in contexts other than his own.

Eric says

I'm quite behind on book reviews. It's been too long since I've read this book to write a decent summary or review. Over time, our memories of content and reactions to events fade, while we tend to retain our memories of our emotions during the events.

The emotion from reading this book that I remember is "guh."

I was hoping to be educated on foreign policy issues. I was hoping that perhaps the author was going to take a look at the policies and actions of America and other western nations which have led to the continued impoverishment of developing countries.

Instead, I got a lecture about how America has lost its morals, and that our loose value system is causing all of our problems today. The answer to "Why the Rest Hates the West" is that, apparently, we are scumbags who have no morals. It was better when we hypocritically professed to be upright, while sneaking around behind closed doors; but now we have no shame about our indiscretions, and therefore the world (read: the Islamic block) hates us.

I remember being shocked on page 60 when the author comes out with his first usage of the word "we," referring to Christians. Until then I had let the book take on an academic tone, though I suspected the author's conservative leanings. But it was very strange to be switched into a conservative Christian audience halfway through the book without warning. The book jacket, endorsements, subtitle, none of it pointed in that direction.

The author introduced me to the conservative position of trying to return to a "society of responsibility" instead of living in a "society of rights." According to the author, civilization's downfall started when we started emphasizing human rights instead of our responsibility to be good and humble citizens. I understand the author's frustrations, somewhat, and I appreciate him laying out his positions. But I don't think I can call myself a Christian and abandon the concept of human rights. If I am to see Christ in everyone, if I am to love my enemies, then I must remember to treat them with dignity. Maybe human rights isn't the best phrase. Perhaps everyone is in urgent need of divine grace, and it is my responsibility to provide everyone with as much grace as I have been given.

I don't normally stop a reading book in the middle. I feel bothered if I leave it unread, as if I don't deserve to actually put that book on my bookshelf. But halfway through I felt I just couldn't take too much more of this book. I skimmed through the end and felt comfortable knowing that the author didn't have too much else to say. Any book I can't finish gets the rare one star rating.

Review originally published on my blog:
<http://mrsundquist.blogspot.com/2011/...>

Ron says

Unpacks the deep divides between the West and the rest of the world. Shows how many of the underlying

assumptions of Western civilization directly oppose and contradict the cultural and religious values of significant people groups. Those in the Third World, "have the sensation that everything they hold dear and sacred is being rolled over by an economic and cultural juggernaut that doesn't even know it's doing it...and wouldn't understand why what it's destroying is important or of value." Reasons that unless the west returns to a greater display of dignity, courage, chastity, honor, duty and Bible believers live out their convictions more noticeably and consistently we will continue to unravel globally. Poorly written, discontinuous writing style makes it difficult to follow.

Tim Burden says

A pretty balanced example from the "clash of civilizations" school of thought. Pearse does a good job of pointing out how we Westerners are actually the odd ones when compared to most cultures in past history. But he avoids the extremes of making everything the fault of materialistic, hyper-individualistic Americans (though we certainly bear much of the blame), or on the other hand blaming everything on bloodthirsty foreigners (though there are clearly some drawbacks to many Muslim cultures). Very insightful. I learned a lot.

leighcia says

Even if I did not agree with everything in the book, I found it extremely thought-provoking. It revealed many assumptions I have that I have held as universally true as being assumptions of my culture. The book examines Western culture, explaining why the rest of the world often seems to bear so much animosity (and yet also envy) of our way of life. Pearse questions values that Westerners hold as universally good (human rights, democracy, freedom), showing the cultural context in which they arose, as well as illustrating the costs for other cultures to become more like ours. Pearse shows us our own intolerance and the continuation of our cultural imperialism. (He generally does this, without revering or idealizing other cultures. He criticizes the West really hard, because we're so used to accepting the way that we think as true.)

Pearse's last chapter is perhaps the most peculiar. He argues that our declining birthrate is the ultimate indicator of the unsustainability of our current cultural climate, because our focus on consumption and individual "freedom" has greatly reduced our desire to have children. (In fact, when it comes to caring for the environment, we advocate less children rather than cut consumption - <http://www.slate.com/id/2173458/fr/fl...>). If survival of the fittest applies, our Western culture will not last for that many more generations, in which case from both a practical and moral perspective, we can infer that perhaps something is awry with our culture, if it can't reproduce itself sustainably.

Danielle says

This is a noble book. The author writes from a Christian perspective to a presumably Christian audience, challenging them to embrace their own history and its values as a means of entering into any meaningful dialogue with other cultures who hold opposing values. He incisively points to the West's redefinition of "tolerance" as a breaking point with its own history as well as with that of non-Westerners. Whereas the rest of humanity has viewed tolerance as the ability of groups who share opposing viewpoints to negotiate a peaceful co-existence, the modern West has redefined tolerance as "a dogmatic abdication of truth-claims

and a moralistic adherence to moral relativism." Moreover, the modern West uses its cultural influence and military might to impose this anti-values system on the world. Pearse goes on to chronicle the manner in which this way of thinking threatens to unravel traditional culture. He concludes with a call back to traditional morality, asking Christians to engage the non-West from a staunchly Christian perspective rather than abdicating Christianity's truth claims to the relativistic culture of the West. His point is that the non-West will be more inclined to enter into a dialogue with an honest, self-embracing religious culture than with an a-historical, self-consciously morally relativistic culture.

Pearse also takes the reader on a historical journey, discussing the manner in which pre-Modern Western society once adhered to a common set of values which was maintained through personal relationships imbued with loyalty (think: Western Civ. 101/ feudal relationships). The past was also marked by a commingling of personal and private life, free from the stark division between these spheres which has come to characterize modern existence. He carefully examines the way in which his pre-modern culture was maintained, even discussing some of its reinforcing elements as mythical. Yet he holds up this constructed reality as starkly contrasting our present, constructed reality, as a better example of how to exist. His call to Christians to return to traditional values is a call to an older social reality that he readily admits is as much a construct as the present day.

Pearse's premise seems right that the Modern West is very much out of step with its own past and with the rest of present-day humanity in its turning away from traditional values and in radically redefining tolerance. But he fails to address what is inherently right about the perspective of all of history and the rest of modern humanity. What is it about their constructed reality that is inherently better? Other than that to agree with them (and to "rejoin humanity," as he urges) will alleviate conflict and at least appear less brash?

Mike Bularz says

This book offers an interesting background of how western societies developed, tracing back to the industrial revolution, and it's consequences on the world.

The book sets the stage in a historical context, and through this it helps us understand Third World societies' mentalities, in the end, we realize we were not all that different at one point, and that we are endangering our way of life with our reckless self-indulgence and arrogance. Meic Pearse doesn't waste time speculating (except in the end, but even that's good), he knows what he's talking about, his sources range from the most reliable to somewhat absurd (i.e. studying the necklines of old french paintings as proof of shortness, malnutrition, and going through puberty ~age 18-20, thus saying that is why marriage happened so late), but it makes sense.

Basically, it explains the conflict of ideologies between liberal-minded industrial countries and morally grounded, traditional countries, and can give insight into any history 1500s-2000s.

David Mark says

This book caused a profound change in my perspective on contemporary Western culture and instilled in me several surprising truths about how this culture, which is my culture, significantly differs from the other cultures throughout the world and throughout history. One particularly important chapter makes a compelling argument for moving away from human rights-based discourse in favour of human

responsibilities-based discourse. Highly readable and enlightening, "Why the Rest Hates the West" is a book that is well worth reading and rereading.

Alice says

This book is very hard to review. I found the Introduction to be very insightful and full of intelligent comparisons of life in the west vs non-west. I was really looking forward to more. But the middle chapters, while providing some insights, were to a large extent a curmudgeonly screed about how awful the west has become since 1600. The author was pining for the good old days of witch burnings, wife beatings, and forced Christianity. I tried my best to look past the constant petty insults of anything not ultra-conservative/traditional Christian and soldiered through. The one chapter near the end about population almost made me throw the book across the room, it was so racist and ignorant.

But somehow, unbelievably, the conclusions matched pretty well with what I hear from liberal sources. I agree with them, though with different details: 1. Foster a culture of responsibility (this is shared between liberals and conservatives though there is disagreement about whether it should apply foremost to the public or private spheres), 2. Become more trustworthy and expect/demand trustworthiness from others, 3. Ignore/reject TV, movies, and advertisements - and their constant demand for more, bigger, better, sexier, 4. Become informed about the world (the latest sexual activities of the celebrity-of-the-day does not count!), 5. Have contact with and get to know non-westerners. Visit places with a desire to learn and act like a guest, not a conqueror.

But, then the last paragraph. He pays lip service to cooperating and bringing in all communities of faith and non-faith. He says he's even willing to cooperate with Muslims (his qualification, not mine). Then he states (I'll put the whole quote, because I almost choked on my tea when I read the second sentence): "In myriad ways we can - and must - work for the renewal of a moral vision in the West that is rooted not in a culture of rights but of duties, not of aggressive egalitarianism and brazen sexuality but of respect and decorum. Religious believers will know the real origin of that ethic and will be motivated by it." The author appears to believe that he can treat non-believers (actually, anyone who disagrees with his version of Christianity) with extreme contempt, and still place himself on the moral high ground!

I'm glad I read it, but I'm not sure if this book made me more hopeful about the future, or less. I'm giving the book three stars, not because I "liked it", but because it has made me think - which is a good thing for a book like this!

Glen Stripling says

Though it is now 8 years since Meic Pearse released Why the Rest Hates the West, I know this book is useful information today and I am sure it will continue to be for quite some time.

This work helps people in the Western world understand why people in the Middle East are resisting American influence in their world, to fanatical and even violent proportions. Early in the book he makes effort to show that he does not agree with a lot of their behavior but he knows that it is important we understand the roots of their anger.

Early in the book he tells the story of a terrorist driving a truck of explosives in 1983 into the marine barracks in Lebanon. Just before he blew himself up the guard reported he was smiling! Why would he be so eager to kill?

We are next given some insight when he tells us a story of young Western mission workers in Algeria. One evening they were sitting around a fire reverently singing. An elderly man walked up to them and asked why they were acting in a way that struck him as odd. He explained he expected westerners to be playing loud music, dumping litter and showing lots of skin. This is a clue of why there is so much resentment to the West in the Middle East.

To them, American comforts are a sign of undermining the traditions and moral principles they treasure.

Mr. Pearse shows this attitude appears odd to us because we have arrived at our relaxed moral codes only after centuries of developing thought patterns. He takes us from Europe's Reformation in the 1500's, through the rigid world of Victorian England, the era of romanticism of the 19th century until we have arrived at a time when the common belief was the hypocrisy of the old Victorians was the ultimate evil. Pearse turns this idea on its head and declares the only way for a land to be moral is have an environment where hypocrisy is possible. A culture that labels few things as wrong can eventually decay into a land where nothing is seen as wrong. It is in this manner that non-westerners see us.

As you read his chapters it is clear he understands how these people think. He willingly shares with us the objections we should have against them but shows us why their bad behavior exists. In many nations of the Middle East, for example, it is common for law enforcement to expect bribes. But it is nevertheless tolerated because to them, corruption is the cheapest form of taxation. And so they claim, we have the virtues we claim, only because we in our excessive wealth can afford to have them.

Thus he encourages us to interact with these people, visit their countries and dialogue with them on an individual level. It is only by gaining insight into their world, that any discussion will be possible.

In light of that, I consider this work a book of hope.

Nicola says

FANTASTIC book that explores why non-Western cultures view the West with so much hatred. The author believes that this hatred can be attributed primarily to our cultural values or "anti-values" of so-called tolerance and openness that have deceived us into thinking that we speak on behalf of everybody. This cultural imperialistic mindset has the effect of undermining the cultural and religious values of other countries and possibly doesn't even know it's doing it.

The author tracks the history of the human rights culture vs traditional values of obligation, duty and honour (showing that human rights haven't exactly given us freedom and a moral vantage point on the world's problems), the changing nature of authority - tradition vs innovation, the personal rule of pre-modern society vs impersonal rule of modern society, the changing nature of the family unit and the way we think of ourselves in relation to our environment.

The book concludes with a rather sobering prediction that western societies will eventually internally collapse due to their own anti-values and be taken over by other civilisations. The final chapter encourages

the westerner to generate greater awareness of their own cultural attitudes that are leading to the West's downfall and to turn the tide.

This book has generated so much discussion and a serious re-thinking of my own values as well as an awareness and sensitivity towards other cultural values. Although I agree generally with the arguments in the book, I'm not entirely sure I agree with each point the author makes in creating those arguments. The book is incredibly dense so I would encourage a reading and re-reading to be sure of what the author is and more importantly is not saying.
