



September, 2016

Dear Friends,

Pierre Manent is the recently retired Director of *L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*, in Paris. His comments on the present condition of France and the European Union are illuminating (Much of what follows comes from his article, *Repurposing Europe*, found in *First Things*, April 2016).

In his view the inability of France to find a way forward these days, which explains its incapacity to contain violent Islamism, is connected with its recent history. For the generation immediately after World War II, Charles de Gaulle's grand vision was for a great and purposeful nation. But for the next generation, inhibited by his authoritarian ways, it was the "revolution" of May, 1968, which shaped French identity. In effect, these "events" fostered a relaxation of almost everything, combined with the justification of almost anything in the name of human rights.

Manent goes on to say that for a while, what French people could not find in their own government, they looked for in the European Union. But soon that became not only empty but frustrating (the recent "Brexit" is a more extreme form of the frustration from their neighbor to the North). Today, short-term technical fixes and hollow platitudes are all we can find. But where, he asks, is the leadership, deeply committed to French heritage? And where is the Christian church, which used to affirm the better parts of that heritage? That voice has been powerless, silenced by a misguided notion of human rights.

Our Seminary in Aix is about to open for its forty-second academic year. We are expecting around 100 students. The faculty is at full strength. The library is fully functional. But what does this matter, compared to the size of the problem and the inertia of the cultural moment? It matters a great deal. If Pierre Manent is right, then refurbishing old churches and planting new ones should make the difference between the lax culture of May '68 and a commitment to true human rights, based on biblical principles. And, difficult as it may appear, the church could inspire the French government to find the best way of handling the increasing presence of Islam. Please pray for such a true revolution to occur within our own generation.

Very Truly Yours,

William Edgar
President