Who is Charlie? Xenophobia and the new middle class. By Emmanuel Todd. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015, pp. 218, ISBN: 978-1-5095-05 807 (Kindle version).

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On January 11, 2015, 4,394,000 people took to the streets of France to support Charlie Hebdo (hereafter "The March"). The March showed the world a France united in defence of free speech. Journalists ransacked the Big Book of Superlatives to find words to describe the spectacle. Emmanuel Todd, a famed French sociologist, is that rare intellectual who knew that adjectives and adverbs weaken prose; so, he focused on the concrete nouns and verbs of The March, while his countrymen gazed agape at it. *Who is Charlie? Xenophobia and the New Middle Class*, translated into English from French by Andrew Brown, is Todd's analysis of what happened on that day.

Todd describes The March as "an attack of hysteria" (p. 1), as a flash of "totalitarianism" (p. 2), as an event that is "repetitive, obsessive, incantatory…religious" (p. 3), as an "ideological hangover" (p. 8), as France "lying to itself" (p. 10), and as "an illusion that has left nothing in its wake" (p. 11). Reading these descriptions, it is easy for us to claim that Todd is a crank. This easiness shows that social causes, not only biological ones, trigger gag reflexes. Had Todd described a Muslim march in Pakistan as he described The March, it would have been less easy to call him a crank; he may be called an expert instead. Todd knows that people's reaction to events is formed, in part, by social forces. He wants to "dig deeper" into the events of January 11 and see the "sociological factors" underlying The March (p. 9). He wants to move past the gag reflex and try to give an "objective interpretation of the facts" (p. 7).

Todd's analysis uses the "anthropology of family structures and the sociology of religions" (p. x). His argument is heavily based on cartographical analysis; hence, the many maps found in his book. Technology has eroded the map reading skills of the general public; so, it would not be surprising if most readers of Todd's book find the maps

cryptic. Todd, however, is an acclaimed academic and need not worry if the likes of Marine Le Pen and Nicolas Sarkozy fail to decipher his maps.

Todd says that The March can only be understood by reference to "zombie Catholicism". He defines it as "the anthropological and social force that emerged from the final disintegration of the Church in its traditional bastion" (p. 39). The Catholics of France rejected the belief in God, but kept their cultural heritage. Having discarded their old God, the zombie Catholics fashioned a new God: the Euro currency (p. 104). The Church lived on, as a metaphysical enemy that helped define the French Judas (p. 43). Later on, the Church, after being secularised, lost its ability to act as an enemy, metaphysical or otherwise. The zombification of Catholicism led French society to search for a new enemy – Islam (p. 48). The roots of The March do not end on January 7, the day of the attack; instead, they extend deep into France's religious history. Todd makes sure his argument is grounded in empirical findings. He does not rely solely on theoretical musings, which should satisfy readers on the other side of the English Chanel. He notes that the "proportion of demonstrators coincided with the old map of Catholicism" (p. 84). Thus, Todd placates the doubts harboured by those who adore the verifiability principle and detest Camembert.

Todd argues that The March did not show the unity of French society, but showed the hegemony of one social bloc over French *société* (p. 63). He calls this bloc the MEZ and defines it, tongue in cheek, as "the Middle Classes, the Elderly, and Zombie Catholics" (p. 70). The MEZ bloc is 19% of the French population, with a 1% above it, and an 80% below it (p. 76). The low number of working class marchers and the banning of the National Front from The March show, according to Todd, that the MEZ want to exclude, not only Muslims, but also the working class from French society (p. 80). No doubt some readers may feel that such a socio-economic analysis of The March is sacrilegious.

The March, according to Todd, was anti-Semitic. In March 2012, Mohammad Merah murdered three Jewish children and a teacher in the Otzar Hatorah school in Toulouse. In May 2014, Mehdi Nemmouche murdered four people in a Jewish Museum in Brussels. French society did not march on those occasions and make a united stand against anti-Semitism. Todd says:

> For it is clear that assassinating children, or adults, simply because they are Jewish, is even more vile than massacring an editorial board that is engaged in a political struggle…the demonstrators (on 11th of January) did not come together to denounce the most serious problem, namely anti-Semitism and the growing danger that one minority religion, Judaism, has to face, but to sacralise the ideological violence inflicted on another minority religion, Islam (p. 85).

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia go hand in hand. Since Todd is Jewish, he cannot be accused of being insensitive to the plight of French Jews. He says France has helped anti-Semitism rise, by demonising French Muslims (pp. 183–184). It is "common sense" (what volumes this phrase speaks!) that Islamophobia is an attempt to eradicate anti-Semitism. Todd turns this head over toes. For him, Islamophobia is a cause of anti-Semitism. The March showed that French society cared more for caricaturing Muhammad than for helping French Jews.

Most commentators of The March focused their camera lenses on The March, while Todd zooms out and lets us see the surrounding social scenery of January 11. The fourth chapter of his book deals with the French far right, while the fifth, and last, chapter deals with the state of Muslims in France.

His conclusion is refreshingly pessimistic; refreshing, I say, because of its honesty. We can only have a party of optimism if we have a party of opium. "[E]very step forward", Todd writes, "in the building of Europe will in the final analysis turn out to be a step forward in Islamophobia" (p. 163). "[W]e have to admit", he writes, "that French society has today embarked on a road to confrontation [with Islam]" (p. 199). But Todd warns French society that "Yes, the end of France is a not [*sic*] unthinkable prospect. And this will not be the fault of Islam, but of Islamophobes" (p. 195). His warning has fallen on deaf ears, as evident from the critical reviews of his book.

Jeremy Harding, in the *London Review of Books*, claims that *Who is Charlie?* is a "brilliant piece of wishful thinking". Harding says that Todd gave an "unequivocal defence of France's Muslim population and Islam". Todd, in fact, criticises France's Muslim population for being anti-Semitic (p. 88), and criticises Islam for being anti-woman (p. 178). Harding does not take equality seriously. Since Todd's argument is

based on equality, Harding easily dismisses Todd's conclusion. Even if equality is hogwash, Todd's argument is still valid. An immanent contradiction, like a *reducio ad absurdum*, can be reached even if the person who reaches it does not accept some or all of the premises involved.

Mark Lilla, in the *New York Review of Books*, calls Todd's book a "rant of a dishevelled man buttonholing pedestrians at a busy intersection". Lilla says that Todd's analysis is flawed, because the notion of "zombie Catholics" cannot explain why thousands of Jews and Muslims joined The March. Todd argued that The March was made up, mostly, of the MEZ. There *are* middle class Jews and Muslims. Todd has many pages, with many maps, and detailed statistical analysis, showing that the demonstrators mostly came from "zombie Catholic" areas (p. 50–63). Lilla responds to this by claiming that Todd's work is a product of "narcissism".

An "unhinged polemic", that is what Michael Moynihan calls *Who is Charlie?* in the *Wall Street Journal*. He asserts that Todd called the dead staff of Charlie Hebdo "fascists". The only time Todd uses the word "fascist" is when he quotes J.B.S. Haldane's praise of French tolerance (pp. 186–187). Moynihan says that The March showed a France "united behind the principles of Voltaire". Todd asks us to look into Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*. In it we find that Voltaire has little to say of Islam, and nothing to say of Muhammad. "Voltaire", Todd writes, "did not denounce the religion of others. He blasphemed against his own religion" (p. 68). The March was not France denouncing its own religion, but the religion of a minority. Todd claims that secularism has become a "new religion" (p. 192). Moynihan is ready, unwittingly of course, to support this claim, when he accuses Todd of "blasphemy" for writing *Who is Charlie?*.

Even masterpieces have flaws. *Who is Charlie?* is definitely not a masterpiece, but somewhere not far below. Todd argues that Islamophobia is rampant in France. He then says that France is "potentially Islamophobic" (p. 70). He claims that in 2005 Islamophobia was not found in French middle classes (p. 43). He later says that January 7 allowed "repressed instinctive tendencies" to be freed, including the tendency to scapegoat Islam (p. 78). No doubt these contradictions are due to Todd writing his 220 page book in 30 days. In the book he

says that "apartheid is the true horizon of multiculturalism" (p. 141). He applauds the banning of the headscarf in French schools (p. 196). Apartheid is, by definition, not multicultural. Since women have the right to wear what they want, just as men have the right to wear what they want, where does Todd find the authority to allow one 18 year old girl to show her cleavage, and disallow another 18 year old girl from covering her hair?

Emmanuel Todd has provided one of the most in-depth analyses of The March. His real sin, in the establishment's opinion, is in rekindling the contrarian spark, in a time where conformism has doused the candles of critical thought.

History and sciences of the Qur'ān. By Thameem Ushama. Kuala Lumpur. IIUM Press, 2013, pp. 421, ISBN: 978-967-418-292-2.

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It is a very significant development that more books in English on the history and sciences of the Qur'an (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*) are being written by specialists with indisputable pedigree in the field. One such authority is Thameem Ushama, whose book, *History and Sciences of the Qur'ān* is reviewed here.

The book comprises an introduction, transliteration table, glossary, bibliography, index, and seventeen chapters. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–16) encapsulates the birth, growth, and development of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* from the Prophetic era up to the contemporary time. The author explains in detail the codification of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* and the great role played by eminent scholars, including al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110AH), 'Āsim al-Jahdah (d.128AH), and Muhammad Ibn al-Sa'ib al-Kalbī (d.146AH) in this process. Other topics also briefly touched upon are efforts made for the development of *al-tafsīr, 'ulūm al-Qur'ān, asbāb al-nuzūl*, and *al-muḥkam* and *al-mutashābih*. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the contributions of contemporary Muslim scholars to the discipline of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*.