

Documenting Distress

April 12, 2008

Commenting on last week's „Eleison Comments” which were highly critical of the modern Revolutionary art movement known as Dadaism, a Catholic friend wrote to me, „I love Dadaism.” I am not sure of my friend's reasons, but there is one lovable aspect to many a modern Revolutionary movement, even for Catholics, in fact primarily for Catholics!

This is because Catholics are best able to grasp how the key to the last 500 (or 700) years of the history of mankind has been its apostasy, its slow but steady turning away from God, in particular from his divine Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. This eliminating of the true Messiah has left in men's lives an enormous gap to be filled, a gap unknown before the Incarnation. Hence a variety of false messianisms in modern times.

Communism is an outstanding example. It is the messianism of materialism. For it may be just as materialistic as the bourgeois society it seeks to destroy, even more so; and it certainly has nothing better with which to replace the residual human values of that society. Yet Communists are driven by a quasi-messianic urge to create their horrible new world. It is as though they are saying, „Better no god than your false hypocritical »God«!” And to the extent that the God of the bourgeoisie is a false god, the Communist messianism rejecting it is not false. In this respect Communists may at least be credited with a messianic dimension. Similarly in the scream of protest of Rock musicians there is something just, however negative their protest proves finally to be.

Now Art, Literature, History, Culture, Music, each of them with a capital letter, are all worshipped as substitute religions by modern devotees who, because they have no present religion, pump up these by-products of true religion in the

past to take its place. Hence the Dadaists' refusal of „Art,” and their „re-definition” of art. „What is your Art?” they ask. „It is our godless god,” say the Art-worshippers. „Your godless god is a urinal!” snorts Dada.

Alas! How many Dadaists or Art-worshippers, or Rockers, or Communists, show any signs of looking for the real solution to that problem which they all share?

Kyrie eleison.