

“Post-Modernity” ? – I

August 24, 2019

One comes across the words “post-modern,” “post-modernity,” and one wonders what they mean, or what they are referring to. A reasonable guess is that “modernity” is taken to refer to the period in world history which began with the end of the Second World War in 1945, when civilisation had to climb out of the ruins and set out on a new course. But 1945 is now nearly three quarters of a century ago, and 74 years is too long a time for the world to have been moving on without evolving into something different – at all times the world is spinning around, “Volvitur orbis,” but never has the world seemed to be spinning faster than in our own 21st century. Therefore whatever it has moved into, that is “post-modern.”

Of course the question then becomes, what has it moved into? And here the very heart of “post-modernity” may happen to have been pinned down in a book entitled *Culture as religion; the post-modern interpretation of the relationship between culture and religion*, by Wojcieck Niemczewski. Here follows a two-paragraph summary of Niemczewski’s thesis:–

We are living in an age of changes of all kinds, but the old religious and philosophical principles put brakes on progress and no longer fit the reality around us, which is changing faster than ever. Henceforth we are experiencing the “culture of choice,” involving all those cultural elements that we can mix up to put together our own vision of the world. The possibility we have of choosing then becomes a sign of freedom at the price of the old element of truth, allowing us to remain adaptable to modern life.

As a result this post-modern culture imposes no norms, no obligations, no application to all of life. Nor does it transcend this life because God may exist, but only within ourselves, only inside us, in fact He depends on us! Post-

modern man wants to be in tune with his time, in other words with movement and change. But never-ending movement and change towards what? He has no idea, because he has made himself unable to define where he is heading. Thus even if men hold to Tradition, it is liable to be absorbed within this new culture.

In the time of Noah – see Genesis, VI-IX, especially VI, 1–13 – mankind was so corrupt that to save still any significant number of souls, Almighty God had to inflict a worldwide punishment which would give to at least a minority of them motivation and time to make a good act of contrition. And given original sin, it is logical that only interventions of God could from then on slow down or reverse mankind's inclination to fall. Of course the greatest of these interventions was God's own Incarnation, but "the higher they are, the harder they fall," and so after nigh on 2000 years it was foreseeable that the condition of mankind would be worse than ever, if God chose to allow that. Clearly (Lk XVIII, 8) He has chosen from eternity to allow the almost complete disappearance of His Son's Church before world's end. What form will this disappearance take? We see it today in Niemczewski's description of the "new culture."

His description invites us to distinguish between "modern" and "post-modern" as follows. "Modern" would be the all-embracing culture of nihilism, following especially on the Second World War – hearts and minds empty of all conviction, belief, hope or trust, but the hearts and minds have not yet themselves disintegrated, and there is still a painful sense of what has been lost. On the contrary "post-modern" would be the logical consequence of that pain, namely the self-destruction of the remains of heart and mind by the will so that the pain will no longer be felt. I deliberately renounce truth so that my mind floats in a lotus-land of lovely lies of which I make myself no longer conscious that they are lies, and my heart drifts in a dreamland of deluded desire where everything is soft and

sweet and will always be so.

But "A fact is stronger than the Lord Mayor," says the proverb. True, a mass of modern minds and hearts have cast off all moorings, and refuse all bearings, but wind and tide remain wind and tide, as at least the unchanging enemies of the unchanging God never forget. They want all real souls in the real Hell. If only God's friends had as much sense of reality as they have!

Kyrie eleison.