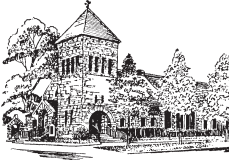


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# TIDINGS

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## *The Rector's Reflections*

*by The Rev. Dr. Gregory A. Tournoux, Rector*

In previous Rector's Reflections, I have written briefly summarizing Premodernism, Modernism, and Postmodernism. In the next several Tidings, I will develop these world-views in a deeper manner. More specifically, as we continue the process of re-building Christ Church, understanding Postmodernism is of the essence.

### **POSTMODERNISM**

American society has evolved into a Postmodern pre-Christian existence. This worldview did not occur, however, in a vacuum. In other words, to gain a grasp of Postmodernism, it is wise to comprehend a few major features of Premodernism and Modernism. Leonard Sweet notes:

"The relationship between premodern, modern, and postmodern is not sequential, but simultaneous. The tsunami of postmodernity did not wash away all outcroppings of premodern or modern. . . . But the primary cultural formation out of which we must operate is now postmodern."

### Premodernism

Premodern culture was ruled by a system of governance known as Feudalism. Heath White describes Feudalism in this manner:

"To begin with, the political structure placed power with kings and nobles, their authority bolstered by longstanding tradition. Before the modern period in Europe, feudalism was the near-universal form of government. People were subjects of a lord, not citizens of a republic. Lesser lords owed allegiance to greater lords, and a hereditary prince or monarch sat at the top of the feudal food chain. Social position was largely fixed at birth: the son of a peasant was a peasant, and the son of a lord was a lord. In many cases, the son of a shoemaker was a shoemaker. The laws that regulated the rights and duties of each order of citizen were given by ancient tradition or established by a local lord. The central concept of democracy – that government derives its

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legitimacy from the consent of the governed – was virtually unknown."

Interestingly, Christianity, like the state, was unified by a hierarchal unbending structure which conformed "to feudalism in its organization and thought." The church and state shared a close relationship, in fact.

Truth, for Premoderns, was generally understood to be objective. This absolutism was based on the literal meaning of words. Thus, documents were interpreted primarily in adherence to the letter. Premodernism was a period absent of the scientific method; the criteria of truth were void of "critical reasoning or empirical experimentation." The secular king and religious intelligentsia propagated matters of faith and morals to an uneducated laity. The people, in turn, received this authoritative proclamation without question.

Premodernism, moreover, "affirmed a fixed, unchanging, eternal order that was reflected in all human life, including the structures of society. Life had meaning precisely as a re-

flection of this unchanging order; however that order was specifically conceived . . . History reflected the verities of the eternal." This era acknowledged, in other words, a unique Divine design and ultimate purpose for humanity and the world. Heath White explains:

"The Premodern mind looked at history through a religious lens. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, part of that religious worldview was a vision of history as an arc beginning with humanity's creation in fellowship with God, continuing through a fall away from God and the experience of suffering and redemption, and finally, in the future, culminating in a judgment and restoration to fellowship with God for the righteous."

Join us next month as we begin the discussion on Modernism.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

*Greg +*