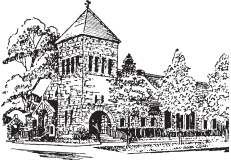


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TIDINGS

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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*. Last month, I began to 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.

MODERNISM

A gradual transition occurred in Western Civilization from Premodernity to Modernity. The Modern period includes, interestingly, diverse movements of creativity. Further, these developments brought fresh ideas manifested in influential change. Basically, "the modern worldview was grounded in Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment."

First, the southern Renaissance (French for Rebirth) was a complex intellectual and artistic movement which "made every effort to promote a rebirth of ancient civilization [and a] revival of antiquity." This awakening to the classical period produced new interests and learning. For instance, subjects such as

painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, philosophy, nature, government, anatomy, and humanity were enthusiastically embraced and willfully studied.

The northern Renaissance, on the other hand, was marked by "a direct engagement with the text of Scripture and the writings of the patristic period." The textual and philological methods used by researchers gleaned several new learnings. These insights, moreover, questioned a number of matters regarding church authority and teaching. In his *Utopia*, John Colet "considered confession to a priest unnecessary, and celibacy on the part of priests nothing essential or desirable." Erasmus completed a Greek edition of the New Testament. This work undermined, in several respects, the credibility of the Latin version of Holy Scripture (The Vulgate) and "the clericalism, the ignorance and a blatantly antiquarian authority in matters of doctrine and morals so brashly executed by the papacy." Alister McGrath, more specifically, shares this poignant example:

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“The Vulgate translated the opening words of Jesus’ ministry (Matthew 4:17) as ‘*do penance* for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ This translation suggested that the coming of the kingdom of heaven had a direct connection with the sacrament of penance. Erasmus, again following Valla, pointed out that the Greek should be translated as “*repent*, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In other words, where the Vulgate seemed to refer to an outward practice (the sacrament of penance), Erasmus insisted that the reference was to an inward psychological attitude – that of “being repentant.” Once more, an important justification of the sacramental system of the medieval church was challenged.”

Bearing in mind that such men as John Wycliffe and Jon Hus had previously questioned the magisterial teaching of the Roman Church, the intellectual support and insight from the Renaissance clearly was an impetus that led to the major disturbance of the medieval order, namely, the Protestant Reformation.

Space disallows an adequate analysis of the forces and figures which influenced the Reformation era. Suffice it to say, however, that universally the Reformers affirmed Holy

Scripture, not the Roman Magisterium, as the main authoritative voice for Christian doctrine and practice. Further, Protestant Reformers taught that salvation was solely dependent upon grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Doing good works did not earn an individual justification before the holy righteous God. Wayne Grudem writes, “The Reformers from Martin Luther on were so firm in their insistence that justification comes not through faith plus some merit or good work on our part but only *through faith alone*.”

As time elapsed, the interests and discoveries of the Renaissance pertaining to humanity grew. This led to an unbridled confidence in human potential. Further, this unbending optimism meant that humankind could harness the natural innate capacity of being human and create the good society. With humanity possessing all the inner virtues and intellectual capacity to pursue ultimate reality, Renaissance supporters became more secular. Fundamentally, what did this mean?

Join us next month as we answer this question, and conclude our discussion on Modernism.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

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