

MODERNISM: TWO KINDS

MODERNISM AS WE KNOW IT

Modernism, in religion, a general movement in the late 19th and 20th cent. that tried to reconcile historical Christianity with the findings of modern science and philosophy. Modernism arose mainly from the application of modern critical methods to the study of the Bible and the history of dogma and resulted in less emphasis on historic dogma and creeds and in greater stress on the humanistic aspects of religion. Importance was placed upon the immanent rather than the transcendent nature of God. The movement as a whole was profoundly influenced by the pragmatism of William James, the intuitionism of Henri Bergson, and the philosophy of action of Maurice Blondel. Modernist ideas were accepted in all or in part by many of the Protestant denominations, but there was also a reaction against them in the movement called **fundamentalism**. In reformed Judaism, especially among Americans, there developed a modernist movement resembling Protestant modernism. Within the Roman Catholic Church there was a movement specifically referred to as Modernism; it was condemned as the "synthesis of all heresies" by Pius X in his encyclical *Pascendi* (1907). Among the leaders of Catholic Modernism were A. F. **Loisy** in France and George Tyrrell in England. Vital to the Catholic movement were the adoption of the critical approach to the Bible, which was by that time accepted by most Protestant churches, and the rejection of the intellectualism of scholastic theology, with the corresponding subordination of doctrine to practice. Many modernists applied the pragmatic method to the sacraments, to dogma, and to prayer. They considered the sacraments to have no reality as a divinely ordained means of grace, but valuable only for their psychological effect. These tendencies led them naturally to deny the authority of the church and the traditional Christian conception of God; a decree declared the beliefs heretical, ending Roman Catholic Modernism.

See M. Rancheti, *The Catholic Modernists* (tr. 1969); B. M. Reardon, comp., *Roman Catholic Modernism* (1970); A. R. Vidler, *A Variety of Catholic Modernists* (1970); W. R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (1976); G. Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (1980).

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(<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/society/A0833541.html>)

The first facet or definition of modernism comes from the aesthetic movement broadly labeled "modernism." This movement is roughly coterminous with twentieth century Western ideas about art (though traces of it in emergent forms can be found in the nineteenth century as well). Modernism, as you probably know, is the movement in visual arts, music, literature, and drama which rejected the old Victorian standards of how art should be made, consumed, and what it should mean. In the period of "high modernism," from around 1910 to 1930, the major figures of modernism literature helped radically to redefine what poetry and fiction could be and do: figures like Woolf, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Proust, Mallarme, Kafka, and Rilke are considered the founders of twentieth-century modernism.

From a literary perspective, the main characteristics of modernism include:

1. an emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity in writing (and in visual arts as well); an emphasis on HOW seeing (or reading or perception itself) takes place, rather than on WHAT is perceived. An example of this would be stream-of-consciousness writing.
 2. a movement away from the apparent objectivity provided by omniscient third-person narrators, fixed narrative points of view, and clear-cut moral positions. Faulkner's multiply-narrated stories are an example of this aspect of modernism.
 3. a blurring of distinctions between genres, so that poetry seems more documentary (as in T.S. Eliot or ee cummings) and prose seems more poetic (as in Woolf or Joyce).
 4. an emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, and random-seeming collages of different materials.
 5. a tendency toward reflexivity, or self-consciousness, about the production of the work of art, so that each piece calls attention to its own status as a production, as something constructed and consumed in particular ways.
 6. a rejection of elaborate formal aesthetics in favor of minimalist designs (as in the poetry of William Carlos Williams) and a rejection, in large part, of formal aesthetic theories, in favor of spontaneity and discovery in creation.
 7. A rejection of the distinction between "high" and "low" or popular culture, both in choice of materials used to produce art and in methods of displaying, distributing, and consuming art.
- <http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html>

Modernism in the cultural historical sense is generally defined as the new artistic and literary styles that emerged in the decades before 1914 as artists rebelled against the late 19th century norms of depiction and literary form, in an attempt to present what they regarded as an emotionally truer picture of how people really feel and think.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism>

Etymologically, *modernism* means an exaggerated love of what is modern, an infatuation for modern ideas, "the abuse of what is modern", as the Abbé Gaudaud explains (*La Foi catholique*, I, 1908, p. 248). The modern ideas of which we speak are not as old as the period called "modern times". Though Protestantism has generated them little by little, it did not understand from the beginning that such would be its sequel. There even exists a conservative Protestant party which is one with the Church in combating modernism. In general we may say that modernism aims at that radical transformation of human thought in relation to God, man, the world, and life, here and hereafter, which was prepared by Humanism and eighteenth-century philosophy, and solemnly promulgated at the French Revolution. J.J. Rousseau, who treated an atheistical philosopher of his time as a modernist, seems to have been the first to use the word in this sense ("Correspondance à M. D.", 15 Jan. 1769). Littré (*Dictionnaire*), who cites the passage; explains: "Modernist, one who esteems modern times above antiquity". After that, the word seems to have been forgotten, till the time of the Catholic publicist Périn (1815-1905), professor at the University of Louvain, 1844-1889. This writer, while apologizing for the coinage, describes "the humanitarian tendencies of contemporary society" as modernism. The term itself he defines as "the ambition to eliminate God from all social life". With this absolute modernism he associates a more temperate form, which he declares to be nothing less than "liberalism of every degree and shade" ("*Le Modernisme dans l'Eglise d'après les lettres inédites de Lamennais*", Paris, 1881).

During the early years of the present century, especially about 1905 and 1906, the tendency to innovation which troubled the Italian dioceses, and especially the ranks of the young clergy, was taxed with modernism. Thus at Christmas, 1905, the bishops of the ecclesiastical provinces of Turin and Vercelli, in a circular letter of that date, uttered grave warnings against what they called "Modernismo nel clero" (Modernism among the clergy). Several pastoral letters of the year 1906 made use of the same term; among others we may mention the Lenten charge of Cardinal Nava, Archbishop of Catania, to his clergy, a letter of Cardinal Bacilieri, Bishop of Verona, dated 22 July, 1906 and a letter of Mgr Rossi, Archbishop of Acerenza and Matera. "Modernismo e Modernisti", a work by Abbate Cavallanti which was published towards the end of 1906, gives long extracts from these letters. The name "modernism" was not to the liking of the reformers. The propriety of the new term was discussed even amongst good Catholics. When the Decree "Lamentabili" appeared, Mgr Baudrillart expressed his pleasure at not finding the word "modernism" mentioned in it (*Revue pratique d'apologetique*, IV, p. 578). He considered the term "too vague". Besides it seemed to insinuate "that the Church condemns everything modern". The Encyclical "Pascendi" (8 Sept., 1907) put an end to the discussion. It bore the official title, "De Modernistarum doctrinis". The introduction declared that the name commonly given to the upholders of the new errors was not inapt. Since then the modernists themselves have acquiesced in the use of the name, though they have not admitted its propriety (Loisy, "Simples réflexions sur le decret 'Lamentabili' et sur l'encyclique 'Pascendi' du 8 Sept., 1907", p. 14; "Il programma dei modernisti": note at the beginning).

THEORY OF THEOLOGICAL MODERNISM

The essential error of Modernism

A full definition of modernism would be rather difficult. First it stands for certain tendencies, and secondly for a body of doctrine which, if it has not given birth to these tendencies (practice often precedes theory), serves at any rate as their explanation and support. Such tendencies manifest themselves in different domains. They are not united in each individual, nor are they always and everywhere found together. Modernist doctrine, too, may be more or less radical, and it is swallowed in doses that vary with each one's likes and dislikes. In the Encyclical "Pascendi", Pius X says that modernism embraces every heresy. M. Loisy makes practically the same statement when he writes that "in reality all Catholic theology, even in its fundamental principles the general philosophy of religion, Divine law, and the laws that govern our knowledge of God, come up for judgment before this new court of assize" (*Simples réflexions*, p. 24). Modernism is a composite system: its assertions and claims lack that principle which unites the natural faculties in a living being. The Encyclical "Pascendi" was the first Catholic synthesis of the subject. Out of scattered materials it built up what looked like a logical system. Indeed friends and foes alike could not but admire the patient skill that must have been needed to fashion something like a coordinated whole. In their answer to the Encyclical, "Il programma dei Modernisti", the Modernists tried to retouch this synthesis. Previous to all this, some of the Italian bishops, in their pastoral letters, had attempted such a synthesis. We would particularly mention that of Mgr Rossi, Bishop of Acerenza and Matera. In this respect, too, Abbate Cavallanti's book, already referred to, deserves mention. Even earlier still, German and French Protestants had done some synthetical work in the same direction. Prominent among them are Kant, "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der reinen Vernunft" (1803); Schleiermacher, "Der christliche Glaube" (1821-1822); and A. Sabatier, "Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion d'après la psychologie et l'histoire" (1897).

The general idea of modernism may be best expressed in the words of Abbate Cavallanti, though even here there is a little vagueness: "Modernism is modern in a false sense of the word; it is a morbid state of conscience among Catholics, and especially young Catholics, that professes manifold ideals, opinions, and tendencies. From time to time these tendencies work out into systems, that are to renew the basis and superstructure of society, politics, philosophy, theology, of the Church herself and of the Christian religion". A remodelling, a renewal according to the ideas of the twentieth century -- such is the longing that possesses

the modernists. "The avowed modernists", says M. Loisy, "form a fairly definite group of thinking men united in the common desire to adapt Catholicism to the intellectual, moral and social needs of today" (op. cit., p. 13). "Our religious attitude", as "Il programma dei modernisti" states (p. 5, note I), "is ruled by the single wish to be one with Christians and Catholics who live in harmony with the spirit of the age". The spirit of this plan of reform may be summarized under the following heads:

- A spirit of complete emancipation, tending to weaken ecclesiastical authority; the emancipation of science, which must traverse every field of investigation without fear of conflict with the Church; the emancipation of the State, which should never be hampered by religious authority; the emancipation of the private conscience whose inspirations must not be overridden by papal definitions or anathemas; the emancipation of the universal conscience, with which the Church should be ever in agreement;
- A spirit of movement and change, with an inclination to a sweeping form of evolution such as abhors anything fixed and stationary;
- A spirit of reconciliation among all men through the feelings of the heart. Many and varied also are the modernist dreams of an understanding between the different Christian religions, nay, even between religion and a species of atheism, and all on a basis of agreement that must be superior to mere doctrinal differences.

Such are the fundamental tendencies. As such, they seek to explain, justify, and strengthen themselves in an error, to which therefore one might give the name of "essential" modernism. What is this error? It is nothing less than the perversion of dogma. Manifold are the degrees and shades of modernist doctrine on the question of our relations with God. But no real modernist keeps the Catholic notions of dogma intact. Are you doubtful as to whether a writer or a book is modernist in the formal sense of the word? Verify every statement about dogma; examine his treatment of its origin, its nature, its sense, its authority. You will know whether you are dealing with a veritable modernist or not, according to the way in which the Catholic conception of dogma is travestied or respected. Dogma and supernatural knowledge are correlative terms; one implies the other as the action implies its object. In this way then we may define modernism as "the critique of our supernatural knowledge according to the false postulates of contemporary philosophy".

It will be advisable for us to quote a full critique of such supernatural knowledge as an example of the mode of procedure. (In the meantime however we must not forget that there are partial and less advanced modernists who do not go so far). For them external intuition furnishes man with but phenomenal contingent, sensible knowledge. He sees, he feels, he hears, he tastes, he touches this something, this phenomenon that comes and goes without telling him aught of the existence of a suprasensible, absolute and unchanging reality outside all envioning space and time. But deep within himself man feels the need of a higher hope. He aspires to perfection in a being on whom he feels his destiny depends. And so he has an instinctive, an affective yearning for God. This necessary impulse is at first obscure and hidden in the subconsciousness. Once consciously understood, it reveals to the soul the intimate presence of God. This manifestation, in which God and man collaborate, is nothing else than revelation. Under the influence of its yearning, that is of its religious feelings, the soul tries to reach God, to adopt towards Him an attitude that will satisfy its yearning. It gropes, it searches. These gropings form the soul's religious experience. They are more easy, successful and far-reaching, or less so, according as it is now one, now another individual soul that sets out in quest of God. Anon there are privileged ones who reach extraordinary results. They communicate their discoveries to their fellow men, and forthwith become founders of a new religion, which is more or less true in the proportion in which it gives peace to the religious feelings.

The attitude Christ adopted, reaching up to God as to a father and then returning to men as to brothers -- such is the meaning of the precept, "Love God and thy neighbour" -- brings full rest to the soul. It makes the religion of Christ the religion *par excellence*, the true and definitive religion. The act by which the soul adopts this attitude and abandons itself to God as a father and then to men as to brothers, constitutes the Christian Faith. Plainly such an act is an act of the will rather than of the intellect. But religious sentiment tries to express itself in intellectual concepts, which in their turn serve to preserve this sentiment. Hence the origin of those formulae concerning God and Divine things, of those theoretical propositions that are the outcome of the successive religious experiences of souls gifted with the same faith. These formulae become dogmas, when religious authority approves of them for the life of the community. For community life is a spontaneous growth among persons of the same faith, and with it comes authority. Dogmas promulgated in this way teach us nothing of the unknowable, but only symbolize it. They contain no truth. Their usefulness in preserving the faith is their only *raison d'être*. They survive as long as they exert their influence. Being the work of man in time, and adapted to his varying needs, they are at best but contingent and transient. Religious authority too, naturally conservative, may lag behind the times. It may mistake the best methods of meeting needs of the community, and try to keep up worn-out formulae. Through respect for the community, the individual Christian who sees the mistake continues in an attitude of outward submission. But he does not feel himself inwardly bound by the decisions of higher powers; rather he makes praiseworthy efforts to bring his Church into harmony with the times. He may confine himself, too, if he cares, to the older and simpler religious forms; he may live his life in conformity with the dogmas accepted from the beginning. Such is Tyrrell's advice in his letter to Fogazzaro, and such was his own private practice.

Catholic and Modernist Notions of Dogma Compared

The tradition of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, considers dogmas as in part supernatural and mysterious, proposed to our faith by a Divinely instituted authority on the ground that they are part of the general revelation which the Apostles preached in the name of Jesus Christ. This faith is an act of the intellect made under the sway of the will. By it we hold firmly what God has revealed and what the Church proposes to us to believe. For believing is holding something firmly on the authority of God's word, when such authority may be recognized by signs that are sufficient, at least with the help of grace, to create certitude.

Comparing these notions, the Catholic and the modernist, we shall see that modernism alters the source, the manner of promulgation, the object, the stability, and the truth of dogma. For the modernist, the only and the necessary source is the private consciousness. And logically so, since he rejects miracles and prophecy as signs of God's word (Il programma, p. 96). For the Catholic, dogma is a free communication of God to the believer made through the preaching of the Word. Of course the truth from without, which is above and beyond any natural want, is preceded by a certain interior finality or perfectibility which enables the believer to assimilate and live the truth revealed. It enters a soul well-disposed to receive it, as a principle of happiness which, though an unmerited gift to which we have no right, is still such as the soul can enjoy with unmeasured gratitude. In the modernist conception, the Church can no longer define dogma in God's name and with His infallible help; the ecclesiastical authority is now but a secondary interpreter, subject to the collective consciousness which she has to express. To this collective consciousness the individual need conform only externally; as for the rest he may embark on any private religious adventures he cares for. The modernist proportions dogma to his intellect or rather to his heart. Mysteries like the Trinity or the Incarnation are either unthinkable (a modernist Kantian tendency), or are within the reach of the unaided reason (a modernist Hegelian tendency). "The truth of religion is in him (man) implicitly, as surely as the truth of the whole physical universe, is involved in every part of it. Could he read the needs of his own spirit and conscience, he would need no teacher" (Tyrrell, "Scylla and Charybdis", p. 277).

Assuredly Catholic truth is not a lifeless thing. Rather is it a living tree that breaks forth into green leaves, flowers, and fruits. There is a development, or gradual unfolding, and a clearer statement of its dogmas. Besides the primary truths, such as the Divinity of Christ and His mission as Messiah, there are others which, one by one, become better understood and defined, eg. the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and that of the Infallibility of the Pope. Such unfolding takes place not only in the study of the tradition of the dogma but also in showing its origin in Jesus Christ and the Apostles, in the understanding of the terms expressing it and in the historical or rational proofs adduced in support of it. Thus the historical proof of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception has certainly been strengthened since the definition in 1854. The rational conception of the dogma of Divine Providence is a continual object of study the dogma of the Sacrifice of the Mass allows the reason to inquire into the idea of sacrifice. It has always been believed that there is no salvation outside the Church, but as this belief has gradually come to be better understood, many are now considered within the soul of the Church who would have been placed without, in a day when the distinction between the soul and the body of the Church had not generally obtained. In another sense, too dogma is instinct with life. For its truth is not sterile, but always serves to nourish devotion. But while holding with life, progress and development, the Church rejects transitory dogmas that in the modernist theory would be forgotten unless replaced by contrary formulae. She cannot admit that "thought, hierarchy, cult, in a word, everything has changed in the history of Christianity", nor can she be content with "the identity of religious spirit" which is the only permanency that modernism admits (Il programma dei Modernisti).

Truth consists in the conformity of the idea with its object. Now, in the Catholic concept, a dogmatic formula supplies us with at least an analogical knowledge of a given object. For the modernist, the essential nature of dogma consists in its correspondence with and its capacity to satisfy a certain momentary need of the religious feeling. It is an arbitrary symbol that tells nothing of the object it represents. At most, as M. Leroy, one of the least radical of modernists, suggests, it is a positive prescription of a practical order (Leroy, "Dogme et critique", p. 25). Thus the dogma of the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist means: "Act as if Christ had the local presence, the idea of which is so familiar to you". But, to avoid exaggeration, we add this other statement of the same writer (loc. cit.), "This however does not mean that dogma bears no relation to thought; for (1) there are duties concerning the action of thinking; (2) dogma itself implicitly affirms that reality contains in one form or another the justification of such prescriptions as are either reasonable or salutary".

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10415a.htm>

modern / Modernism / modernity

The most basic meaning of the term modern is that which is contemporary or characteristic of the present moment in time. In traditional literary discussions of twentieth-century literature, the term modern has frequently been (miss)used more or less synonymously with the terms modernist and modernism, and even then in a rather narrow range of meanings of what might count as modernist thought and writing. We see this, for example, in Harmon and Holman's *A Handbook to Literature*, where they define modern according to the negative connotations passed down by some of the canonical writers of the period:

For much of its history, "*modern*" has meant something bad. . . . It is not so much a chronological designation as one suggestive of a loosely defined congeries of characteristics. Much twentieth-century literature is not "*modern*" in the common sense, as much that is contemporary is not. . . . In a broad sense *modern* is applied to writing marked by a strong and conscious break with tradition. It employs a distinctive kind of imagination that insists on having its general frame of reference within itself. It thus practices the solipsism of which Allen Tate accused the modern mind: It believes that we create the world in the act of

perceiving it. *Modern* implies a historical discontinuity, a sense of alienation, loss, and despair. It rejects not only history but also the society of whose fabrication history is a record. It rejects traditional values and assumptions, and it rejects equally the rhetoric by which they were sanctioned and communicated. It elevates the individual and the inward over the social and the outward, and it prefers the unconscious to the self-conscious. The psychologies of Freud and Jung have been seminal in the *modern* movement in literature. In many respects it is a reaction against REALISM and NATURALISM and the scientific postulates on which they rest. Although by no means can all *modern* writers be termed philosophical existentialists, EXISTENTIALISM has created a schema within which much of the *modern* temper can see a reflection of its attitudes and assumptions. The *modern* revels in a dense and often unordered actuality as opposed to the practical and systematic, and in exploring that actuality as it exists in the mind of the writer it has been richly experimental. (325-26)

This definition of modern/modernism stems in part from a traditional (and I think limited) reading of T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*. By that, I don't mean to suggest that this definition isn't helpful, or that I don't find *The Waste Land* a richly compelling modernist text. (First published in 1922 and edited by Ezra Pound, Eliot's *The Waste Land* is perhaps the most famous modernist poem—a long, fragmentary poem which, according to Cary Nelson, should be read as both a "revolutionary, code-shattering text, the poem primarily responsible for making disjunctive collage central to the modern literary sensibility," and as a "conservative, even reactionary, [formalist] text, one that evokes the multiplicity of modern life only to condemn it and urge on us some reformulation of an earlier faith" (*Repression and Recovery* 239-240).) Rather, my objection to the narrow sense of modernism as defined by Harmon and Holman is against the way that that definition was disseminated by academic critics and teachers from the 1940s through the 1960s, who took this generally conservative reading of a very few modernist texts and proceeded to delineate a modernist canon around those terms, defining retrospectively the whole modernist period as a brief flowering of philosophical angst and formal experimentalism between the end of World War I and the Great Depression.

With the rise of literary theory and revisionist literary history in the 1980s, new generations of literary critics have been rethinking the terms modern and modernism. They have sought to rethink the negative, disparaging tone and cultural conservatism adopted towards modernity and mass culture in canonical modernist literature and literary criticism. And this has largely been achieved by revisiting much of the literature from 1910 to 1945 which had previously been excluded from the traditional modernist canon—works by "New Negro" or "Harlem Renaissance" novelists such as Jean Toomer, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes, as well as works by women and working class novelists such as Anzia Yezierska, Fielding Burke, Mike Gold, and Jack Conroy, just to name a few. Not all modernist works (that is, works engaging the conditions of twentieth-century modern life) were written in radically disjunctive experimental styles, and not all modernist works express a personal, moral alienation towards the state of modern, urban industrial existence. In fact, much of the work produced from the 1910s through the 1930s that is socially or aesthetically revolutionary expressed a conflicted ambivalence towards modern mass society and its failure to live up to the promises of the American Dream, and many works expressed the opposite of alienation: a utopian belief that it is the world of modern technology and mass culture that will make possible the ushering in of new societies capable of achieving unimaginable social, cultural and philosophical heights.

The term **modernity**, more recent critics now suggest, should be used to distinguish between the historical, cultural, economic and political conditions of the time and **modernism**, which signifies the literary and aesthetic representations of (or responses to) those historical conditions. Modernity defined in this way becomes the historical and cultural conditions of possibility that make modernism both necessary and possible in the first place. One way to think about it would be to say that the mass availability and rising popularity of the automobile from the 1910s through the 1920s is a condition of modernity, whereas car metaphors and the use of the automobile as a symbol of mechanical reproduction frequently appear as tropes in

modernist writing. If, however, you allow that authors and artists (like everyone else) must to some degree be the product of the historical and cultural conditions of their own times, then you can see that this distinction between modernity and modernism is partly a rhetorical abstraction full of inevitable slippages and gray areas.

Nevertheless, distinguishing between modernity and modernism can be a productive starting place. Take the character of Brett in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Critics tend to agree that Brett is Hemingway's representation of a "modern woman." But what specifically is it in the text that signifies her as such? To what conditions of "new woman" modernity does the text explicitly allude through her character? Or are some of those conditions only present as narrative subtexts unconsciously reflected through her outward character traits? And finally, what attitude towards those conditions of modernity does the text (not necessarily Jake the narrator) express through its treatment of Brett? If these questions sound too complicated or obscure, wait till we get to the opening scenes of the novel and we'll work to clarify them when we look at the textual details describing Brett's entrance as a character. If these questions sound too obvious and straightforward, I would suggest that they are not. The way *The Sun Also Rises* represents modernity is symbolically complex and what this text ultimately says about the various modernities it invokes may turn out to be quite contradictory. But that can also be a good thing. For, in deciding how we as readers respond to Hemingway's modernist narratives, we may become more self-conscious regarding our own value judgments about *our* times and *our* modernity—which, if Richard Powers is correct, is very much the grandchild (or perhaps the time-warped twin) of *their* modernities in the Futurist moment of 1914.

<http://www2.english.uiuc.edu/finnegan/English%20251/modernis.htm>

Modernity in the Hegelian, Marxian and Schumpeterian worlds reflects the nature of continuous evolution from an infinite sequence of primal forms towards a creative order. The prospects sought are liberation and freedom -- not from the grips of subjectivity that random evolution brings along with it. Instead, the concept of freedom here means openness in the flight of rationalism. This makes the mind alone as the supreme formulator of destinies and the mover of change. Thus, only cogent thoughts that can be protected by powerful survival conditions, which Nietzsche and Darwin considered to be the dominant reality of existence, emerge as acceptable ones.

The process of change is then described in the historicity of this dominance. Marx saw this in capitalism, but could not explain it in a functionalist way by means of the socialist transformation, for the epistemological roots of Marxist thinking is dimmed by its empiricist content. Hegel lost it in his misconstrued idea of Freedom when this was equated with Germanic civilization. Everything that happened to history after that was a convergence to the Germanic world in Hegel's view, just as capitalism, power, productivity and progress were equated with Protestant Ethics by Weber. In Schumpeter we find the continuous destruction of the present, as markets and technologies combine to evolve newer states of nature. This too is a Darwinian concept of economic evolution used here to explain the open-ended feature of embedded individualism, randomness, dominance and movement in capitalist transformation.

Modernity is then a philosophy that takes a Rostowian stages perspective to change and growth, but underlines these with the evolutionary philosophy of the entire order. The consequence is then a convergence of individuals, groups, markets, institutions and the global order to the conditions of power and perceptions, pluralism and differentiations that capitalism enforces.

<http://islamic-finance.net/islamic-economy/chap15/chap15index.html>

The Party of Modernity

by David Kelley

As Henry Steele Commager noted in *The Empire of Reason*: "It was Americans who not only embraced the body of Enlightenment principles, but wrote them into law, crystallized them into institutions, and put them to work. That, as much as the winning of independence and the creation of the nation, was the American Revolution."

What were those Enlightenment principles? A short list would have to include reason, the pursuit of happiness, individualism, progress, and freedom. The culture of the Enlightenment prized reason and its products, including science and technology; it regarded happiness in this life as the natural goal of human action; it held that individuals are the locus of moral value, with the moral right to live their own lives and choose their own convictions, mode of life, personal relationships, and occupations; it expected and welcomed continuous progress in meeting human needs, both spiritual and material; and it regarded freedom, including the economic freedom to produce and exchange, as a core political value.

"Modernity" is the term that historians use to describe this individualist and rationalist culture. Modernity accompanied the growth of science, the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of capitalism and constitutional democracy. As a culture, however, it was an intellectual, not a material or political, phenomenon. It was the underlying constellation of beliefs, values, aspirations, and demands that led people in the West to alter their way of life profoundly.

Modernity and 9/11

America today is still the country that most fully embodies and symbolizes modernity. That fact is the deepest source of our tensions with Europe and our clash with political Islam. If there were any doubt about this, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, should have removed it. "Nothing is more telling about the recent terrorist attacks in the United States than the nature of their targets," observed Luis Rubio, general director of Mexico's Center for Research for Development. "The Twin Towers in New York City represented the future, modernity, America's optimistic outlook of the world and, more recently, of globalization. The terrorist attacks constitute a direct hit against those values, which is the main reason why the whole Western world immediately rallied in support."

It was obvious to virtually everyone that the World Trade Center was targeted because it represented freedom, secularism, tolerance, innovation, commercial enterprise, and the pursuit of happiness in this life. Our modernist values were thrown into sharp relief by the hatred they provoked in our enemies.

Yet our enemies are wrong if they think American culture is consistently modernist. Indeed, in our domestic culture wars, modernity has hardly had a voice. Battles over issues like family values, the role of religion in society, sex and violence on TV, and political correctness have been fought between conservatives on the cultural Right and progressives on the cultural Left. Neither camp advocates the values of modernity. On the contrary, both are descendants of the counter-Enlightenment that rose up among intellectuals, artists, and social activists who opposed the values of modernity.

The Premodern Culture

Nineteenth-century conservatives such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge in England and Joseph de Maistre in France feared that the Enlightenment's enthusiasm for individualism and progress would destroy the stable society of the past. As reason and science called into question the mysteries of revealed religion, conservatives bemoaned the loss of "enchantment" and the increasingly secular focus of life. They sought a restoration of premodern values: faith, tradition, social stability, and hierarchy.

Their greatest fear was that modernity would undermine morals. The intellectuals of the Enlightenment, notes the eminent historian of the period Isaac Kramnick, "believed that unassisted human reason, not faith or tradition, was the principal guide to human conduct." Edmund Burke, the father of modern conservative thought, warned that the result would be social chaos. Believing that "the private stock of reason . . . in each man is small," Burke argued that reason could never replace religion, custom, and authority as guides to conduct.

That view is echoed today by cultural conservatives such as Irving Kristol. "Secular rationalism has been unable to produce a compelling, self-justifying moral code," he declares. "And with this failure, the whole enterprise of secular rationalism—the idea that man can define his humanity and shape the human future by reason and will alone—begins to lose its legitimacy."

Such conservatives' skepticism about the possibility of a secular moral code results not only from their lack of confidence in reason but also from their view of morality itself. Enlightenment thinkers tended to see morality as a means of pursuing happiness and success in this life. The famous list of virtues in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, for example, includes frugality and industry in personal affairs, in order to keep our long-term interests in view against the temptations of short-term pleasures. It includes fairness and sincerity toward others as means of enjoying peaceful and productive relationships with them. The point of morality was not self-denial and self-sacrifice but self-discipline.

The conservative tradition, by contrast, has always held the older view that our worldly interests reflect the animal side of our nature, which leads us to seek wealth, sexual gratification, and power over others. The function of morality, in this view, is to bridle those desires through self-denial and self-sacrifice. The point of morality is not the pursuit of happiness but the acquisition of virtue; happiness is a blessing that comes and goes but is not what life is about. Thus, Peggy Noonan complains, "I think we have lost the old knowledge that happiness is overrated—that, in a way, life is overrated. . . . We are the first generation of man that actually expected to find happiness here on earth." The virtue ethic is the primary source of concerns about the loss of "family values," from sexual liberation to homosexual marriage to working mothers to sex- and violence-drenched entertainment, a trend that conservatives blame on hedonism.

Most conservatives see religion as the source of moral standards. An increasingly secular society is therefore bound to be increasingly self-indulgent, as William Bennett warned in a lecture to the Heritage Foundation: "In modernity, nothing has been more consequential, or more public in its consequences, than large segments of American society privately turning away from God, or considering Him irrelevant, or declaring Him dead." That's why the public role of religion has been a major front in the culture wars. Many conservatives today favor state-sponsored prayer in public schools. Some have supported the creationists' effort to counter the teaching of evolution. Many have welcomed what they see as a religious revival in America, specifically the growth of fundamentalist and evangelical denominations.

The belief in a religious basis for morality is not unique to conservatives, however. Their more distinctive theme is that morality needs the backing of tradition, custom, and authority. Like Burke, the conservative tradition has always held that we learn the rules of virtue through social sanctions, which also provide the main incentive to obey the rules. Customs, manners, and mores lose their grip on people who are encouraged to follow their own judgment or offered options among lifestyles. Along with the decline in religious faith, therefore, conservatives lament the weakening grip of tradition and conventional standards of behavior. "Our society now places less value than before," observes Bennett, "on social conformity, respectability, observing the rules; and less value on correctness and restraint in matters of physical pleasure and sexuality. Higher value is now placed on things like self-expression, individualism, self-realization, and personal choice." Thus, while conservatives, in America at least, generally value independence and innovation and accept individualism in the economic sphere, they seek conformity in regard to the moral sphere of life.

Preserving a morally healthy social environment, in the view of most conservatives, is a function chiefly of civil society rather than government. Coercion is the least effective instrument for encouraging virtue, which is better left to families, churches, professions, mutual-aid societies, and other voluntary institutions. Nevertheless, conservatism is open to the possibility of government action as well, of "statecraft as soulcraft," as George Will has put it. Bennett, for example, has said, "We need to make marriage the institution through which all rights and all obligations are exercised." Kristol insists that government must take "a degree of responsibility for helping to shape the preferences that the people exercise in a free market—to 'elevate' them if you will." Pat Buchanan argues that government should use its power to regulate economic affairs to protect social stability against the dissolving forces of global trade and innovation.

Conservatives, in short, have been critics of the Enlightenment's confidence in reason and progress, as well as its moral and political individualism. But conservatism was only one wing—the premodern wing—of the counter-Enlightenment. On the cultural Left, thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx rejected modernity from a different standpoint.

The Postmodern Culture

Rousseau hated the cosmopolitanism and refinement of Enlightenment life and vehemently criticized inequality, which he thought was an inescapable consequence of civilization. He offered an idealized image of primitive man not yet corrupted by civilization and of life in a nature not yet polluted by cities or machines. The source of those primitivist views was Rousseau's antipathy to reason. He felt that emotion and instinct should be our guides to action. In this respect, he was the father of the nineteenth-century Romantic poets and of the counterculture of the 1960s, with its demand for sexual liberation, its contempt for "bourgeois morality," its emphasis on self-expression rather than self-discipline. The Age of Aquarius sought release from the constraints of reason through drugs and New Age religions. Like Rousseau, it rejected the cosmopolitan modernism of the Enlightenment and praised the authenticity of primitive modes of life.

Rousseau and other thinkers in the postmodern tradition also hated the Enlightenment's individualism and were repelled by capitalism. Like conservatives, they wanted to reassert the primacy of society over the individual, but they realized that there was no going back. They argued instead that we must leap forward to a new society in which community, stability, and social control of change were reintroduced in a non-religious, non-traditional form, as in Marx's vision of a communist utopia "in which the free development of all is the condition for the free development of each." Unlike conservatives, postmoderns have generally favored equality as the chief social value, and many were prepared to seek this value through violent revolutionary means.

On the cultural Left today, postmodern intellectuals have been vociferous foes of reason, attempting to undermine and expunge the very concepts of truth, objectivity, logic, and fact. The followers of Jacques Derrida claim there is no reality beyond language: we can never see past the assumptions and preconceptions embedded in the way we speak; different societies live in different worlds, have different outlooks, use different methods of thinking, none better than others. Richard Rorty, perhaps the most eminent living philosopher in America, tells us "that the world does not provide us with any criterion of choice between alternative metaphors, that we can only compare languages or metaphors with one another, not with something beyond language called 'fact.'" For many postmoderns, the use of reason is an exercise in power, a stratagem on the part of white Eurocentric males to dominate women and suppress other cultures.

Few people outside university departments of humanities and social science can swallow such corrosive nihilism at full strength, but it is available in countless diluted forms. Postmodernism has influenced law schools, for example, through the "critical legal theory" movement. And its

central themes now dominate schools of education, from which legions of primary- and secondary-school teachers have learned that respecting other cultures is more important than learning facts or acquiring the methods of thought that enable one to decide which point of view is correct.

Marx's doctrine of class conflict remains a central article of faith on the cultural left. Multiculturalists have expanded the doctrine to include racial, ethnic, and sexual classes, in addition to the economic divisions that Marx emphasized, but they draw the same distinction between victims and oppressors. In academia, this worldview has led to knee-jerk acceptance of racial and other preferences. Humanities courses have dropped the works of "dead white European males"—the oppressor class—in favor of works by women, blacks, and other minorities. Postmoderns have created new disciplines of victimology such as "queer studies" and postcolonialism. And they have imposed speech codes, "diversity training" workshops, and other means of enforcing political correctness.

Though postmoderns subscribe to cultural relativism and deny the possibility of objective knowledge or values, the very term "political correctness" reveals an underlying ethic that they take as an absolute. Indeed, as for conservatives, it is a virtue ethic whose essence is self-denial. Like conservatives, postmoderns tend to see the pursuit of happiness as sinful. The standard of sin is different—exploiting minorities and degrading the environment rather than disobedience to God—but sin still entails guilt, atonement, and renunciation. Thus, to take one minor example, many people recycle garbage with all the piety of a daily sacrament. Not one in a hundred could cite evidence that recycling, on net, saves resources, but that's not the real point; the real point is that recycling is a pain in the neck and thus serves the purpose of atoning for the joys of consumption.

Despite the differences between the cultural Right and Left, in other words, there are deep similarities based on their common rejection of modernity. Despite their mutual hostility, they sometimes join hands against their common enemy. A few years ago, Dave Foreman, founder of the radical left environmental group Earth First!, wrote that Dan Quayle and William Bennett might be on to something in talking about virtue: "There really is a crisis of values in this country, and it really is incumbent on the conservation community to talk about it, to talk about restraint instead of excess, to talk about humility instead of arrogance." More recently, we have had the spectacle of the "What would Jesus drive?" campaign against gas-guzzling SUVs. Patrick Buchanan on the Right and Jeremy Rifkin on the Left have united to oppose free trade, immigration, and high-tech innovation. Fundamentalists and radical feminists joined forces in an effort to outlaw pornography. And some conservative intellectuals, like Richard John Neuhaus, editor of the conservative *First Things*, have welcomed the postmodern critique of objectivity: "[Relativists'] rebellion against the pretentious certitudes of Enlightenment rationalism, often defined as modernity, is in large part warranted, and that is the kernel of truth in 'postmodernism.'"

Who Speaks for Modernity?

The values of modernity still animate much of American life. A commitment to reason is still the operating principle of many intellectuals, especially in the sciences. It is the operating principle in engineering, medicine, and other professions. It is the source of the extraordinary technological advances in computers, telecommunications, and pharmaceuticals, among many other fields. It is the source of new business techniques for financial management and streamlining production. In most areas of our working lives, faith has no voice and tradition is continually overturned.

In the realm of personal life and aspirations, the anti-modern cultures have more sway. Over a third of the populace, to judge by various surveys, look to religious faith as their main source of moral guidance; they believe in the literal truth of the Bible, the immediate presence of God in their lives, and the conservative ethic of duty and virtue. A smaller but more prominent

and vocal segment seeks salvation in postmodern values: New Age spirituality, environmental activism, anti-globalization protests. But that leaves a sizable portion whose main concern is personal happiness. Those are the people whose demand for secular moral guidance has fueled a booming industry of self-help books and seminars. In many of the best-selling works, like those of Philip McGraw and Nathaniel Branden, the message is neither hedonism nor duty but rather a discipline for pursuing happiness through achievement, commitment, rationality, integrity, and courage.

Who speaks for those values? Who provides the intellectual defense? Who carries the banner of modernity in the culture wars? Among popular writers, Ayn Rand was far and away the most articulate advocate. At the center of her Objectivist philosophy, which she explicitly aligned with the Enlightenment, was a morality of rational individualism. Milton Friedman and other free-market economists who, with Rand, inspired the rebirth of classical liberalism also spoke from the standpoint of modernity. In academia, organizations such as the National Association of Scholars and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education have organized to defend objective research and academic freedom against the oppressive regime of postmodernism. Individual scholars such as philosopher John Searle and historian Alan Kors have been prominent defenders of what postmoderns dismiss as "the Enlightenment project." Scientists such as Richard Dawkins, Edward O. Wilson, and the Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg have spoken out for the integrity of science against its detractors on the premodern Right and postmodern Left.

What is still missing, however, is the awareness of modernity itself as a cause that needs an organized defense, a public identity in cultural debates. Among conservatives, a network of organizations, alliances, and publications has created a shared sense of mission among advocates, a kind of party of the cultural right. Whatever specific issues they are concerned with, conservatives know who their allies are. Their cause has a public name and face. The same is true on the left. But as yet there is no party of modernity.

We had a fleeting glimpse of such a party in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, when the terrorist threat to the values of modernity was denounced by commentators across the political spectrum, from Aryeh Neier to Charles Krauthammer, from *The New Republic* to *The Weekly Standard*. An enduring version of that consensus is possible. And it is vital for the future of our civilization.

It is especially important for those who have committed themselves to the political cause of liberty, individual rights, limited government, and capitalism. We are more likely to find allies and converts among those who value reason, happiness, individualism, and progress than among those of premodern or postmodern values. It was the Enlightenment that gave us liberty as a moral ideal and a practical system. The culture of modernity is still liberty's natural home.

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http://www.objectivistcenter.org/articles/dkelley_party-modernity.asp

SHOGHI EFFENDI ON MODERNISM

Shoghi Effendi, "The Unfoldment of World Civilization," 11 March 1936, in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah," Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1955, pp. 179-186:

Deterioration of Christian Institutions

1

So much for Islám and the crippling blows its leaders and institutions have received--and may yet receive--in this, the first century of the Bahá'í Era. If I have dwelt too long on this theme, if I have, to a disproportionate degree, quoted from the sacred writings in support of my argument, it is solely because of my firm conviction that these retributive calamities that have rained down upon the foremost oppressor of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh should rank not only among the stirring occurrences of this Age of Transition, but as some of the most startling and significant events of contemporary history.

2

Both SunnÍ and Shí'ih Islám had, through the convulsions that had seized them, contributed to the acceleration of the disruptive process to which I have previously referred--a process which, by its very nature, is to pave the way for that complete reorganization and unification which the world, in every aspect of its life, must achieve. What of Christianity and of the denominations with which it stands identified? Can it be said that this process of deterioration that has attacked the fabric of the Religion of Muhammad has failed to exert its baneful influence on the institutions associated with the Faith of Jesus Christ? Have these institutions already experienced the impact of these menacing forces? Are their foundations so secure and their vitality so great as to enable them to resist this onslaught? Will they, as the confusion of a chaotic world spreads and deepens, fall in turn a prey to their violence? Have the more orthodox among them already arisen, and, if not, will they arise, to repel the onset of a Cause which, having pulled down the barriers of Muslim orthodoxy, is now advancing into the heart of Christendom, in both the European and American continents? Would such a resistance sow the seeds of further dissension and confusion, and consequently serve indirectly to hasten the advent of the promised Day?

3

To these queries we can but partly answer. Time alone can reveal the nature of the rôle which the institutions directly associated with the Christian Faith are destined to assume in this, the Formative Period of the Bahá'í Era, this dark age of transition through which humanity as a whole is passing. Such events as have already transpired, however, are of such a nature as can indicate the direction in which these institutions are moving. We can, in some degree, appraise the probable effect which the forces operating both within the Bahá'í Faith and outside it will exert upon them.

4

That the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy, of unconcealed paganism have been unloosed, are now spreading, and, by consolidating themselves, are beginning to invade some of the most powerful Christian institutions of the western world, no unbiased observer can fail to admit.

That these institutions are becoming increasingly restive, that a few among them are already dimly aware of the pervasive influence of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, that they will, as their inherent strength deteriorates and their discipline relaxes, regard with deepening dismay the rise of His New World Order, and will gradually determine to assail it, that such an opposition will in turn accelerate their decline, few, if any, among those who are attentively watching the progress of His Faith would be inclined to question.

5

"The vitality of men's belief in God," Bahá'u'lláh has testified, "is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?" "The world is in travail," He has further written, "and its agitation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly."

6

This menace of secularism that has attacked Islám and is undermining its remaining institutions, that has invaded Persia, has penetrated into India, and raised its triumphant head in Turkey, has already manifested itself in both Europe and America, and is, in varying degrees, and under various forms and designations, challenging the basis of every established religion, and in particular the institutions and communities identified with the Faith of Jesus Christ. It would be no exaggeration to say that we are moving into a period which the future historian will regard as one of the most critical in the history of Christianity.

7

Already a few among the protagonists of the Christian Religion admit the gravity of the situation that confronts them. "A wave of materialism is sweeping round the world"; is the testimony of its missionaries, as witnessed by the text of their official reports, "the drive and pressure of modern industrialism, which are penetrating even the forests of Central Africa and the plains of Central Asia, make men everywhere dependent on, and preoccupied with, material things. At home the Church has talked, perhaps too glibly, in pulpit or on platform of the menace of secularism; though even in England we can catch more than a glimpse of its meaning. But to the Church overseas these things are grim realities, enemies with which it is at grips... The Church has a new danger to face in land after land--determined and hostile attack. From Soviet Russia a definitely anti-religious Communism is pushing west into Europe and America, East into Persia, India, China and Japan. It is an economic theory, definitely harnessed to disbelief in God. It is a religious irreligion... It has a passionate sense of mission, and is carrying on its anti-God campaign at the Church's base at home, as well as launching its offensive against its front-line in non-Christian lands. Such a conscious, avowed, organized attack against religion in general and Christianity in particular is something new in history. Equally deliberate in some lands in its determined hostility to Christianity is another form of social and political faith--nationalism. But the nationalist attack on Christianity, unlike Communism, is often bound up with some form of national religion--with Islám in Persia and Egypt, with Buddhism in Ceylon, while the struggle for communal rights in India is allied with a revival both of Hinduism and Islám."

8

I need not attempt in this connection an exposition of the origin and character of those economic theories and political philosophies of the post-war period, that have directly and indirectly exerted, and are still exerting, their pernicious influence on the institutions and beliefs connected with one of the most widely-spread and best organized religious systems of the world. It is with their influence rather than with their origin that I am chiefly concerned. The excessive growth of industrialism and its attendant evils--as the aforementioned quotation bears witness--the aggressive policies initiated and the persistent efforts exerted by the inspirers and organizers of the Communist movement; the intensification of a militant nationalism, associated in certain countries with a systematized work of defamation against all forms of ecclesiastical influence, have no doubt contributed to the de-Christianization of the masses, and been responsible for a notable decline in the authority, the prestige and power of the Church. "The whole conception of God," the persecutors of the Christian Religion have insistently proclaimed, "is a conception derived from the ancient oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men." "Religion," one of their leaders has asserted, "is an opiate of the people." "Religion," declares the text of their official publications, "is a brutalization of the people. Education must be so directed as to efface from the people's minds this humiliation and this idiocy."

9

The Hegelian philosophy which, in other countries, has, in the form of an intolerant and militant nationalism, insisted on deifying the state, has inculcated the war-spirit, and incited to racial animosity, has, likewise, led to a marked weakening of the Church and to a grave diminution of its spiritual influence. Unlike the bold offensive which an avowedly atheistic movement had chosen to launch against it, both within the Soviet union and beyond its confines, this nationalistic philosophy, which Christian rulers and governments have upheld, is an attack directed against the Church by those who were previously its professed adherents, a betrayal of its cause by its own kith and kin. It was being stabbed by an alien and militant atheism from without, and by the preachers of a heretical doctrine from within. Both of these forces, each operating in its own sphere and using its own weapons and methods, **have moreover been greatly assisted and encouraged by the prevailing spirit of modernism, with its emphasis on a purely materialistic philosophy, which, as it diffuses itself, tends increasingly to divorce religion from man's daily life.**

10

The combined effect of these strange and corrupt doctrines, these dangerous and treacherous philosophies, has, as was natural, been severely felt by those whose tenets inculcated an opposite and wholly irreconcilable spirit and principle. The consequences of the clash that inevitably ensued between these contending interests, were, in some cases, disastrous, and the damage that has been wrought irreparable. The disestablishment and dismemberment of the Greek Orthodox Church in Russia, following upon the blow which the Church of Rome had sustained as a result of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; the commotion that subsequently seized the Catholic Church and culminated in its separation

from the State in Spain; the persecution of the same Church in Mexico; the perquisitions, arrests, intimidation and terrorization to which Catholics and Lutherans alike are being subjected in the heart of Europe; the turmoil into which another branch of the Church has been thrown as a result of the military campaign in Africa; the decline that has set in the fortunes of Christian Missions, both Anglican and Presbyterian, in Persia, Turkey, and the Far East; the ominous signs that foreshadow serious complications in the equivocal and precarious relationships now existing between the Holy See and certain nations in the continent of Europe--these stand out as the most striking features of the reverses which, in almost every part of the world, the members and leaders of Christian ecclesiastical institutions have suffered.

11

That the solidarity of some of these institutions has been irretrievably shattered is too apparent for any intelligent observer to mistake or deny. The cleavage between the fundamentalists and the liberals among their adherents is continually widening. Their creeds and dogmas have been watered down, and in certain instances ignored and discarded. Their hold upon human conduct is loosening, and the personnel of their ministries is dwindling in number and in influence. The timidity and insincerity of their preachers are, in several instances, being exposed. Their endowments have, in some countries, disappeared, and the force of their religious training has declined. Their temples have been partly deserted and destroyed, and an oblivion of God, of His teachings and of His Purpose, has enfeebled and heaped humiliation upon them.

12

Might not this disintegrating tendency, from which Sunnī and Shī'ih Islām have so conspicuously suffered, unloose, as it reaches its climax, still further calamities upon the various denominations of the Christian Church? In what manner and how rapidly this process, which has already set in, will develop the future alone can reveal. Nor can it, at the present time, be estimated to what extent will the attacks which a still powerful clergy may yet launch against the strongholds of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West accentuate this decline and widen the range of inescapable disasters.

13

If Christianity wishes and expects to serve the world in the present crisis, writes a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America, it must "cut back through Christianity to Christ, back through the centuries-old religion about Jesus to the original religion of Jesus." Otherwise, he significantly adds, "the spirit of Christ will live in institutions other than our own."

14

So marked a decline in the strength and cohesion of the elements constituting Christian society has led, in its turn, as we might well anticipate, to the emergence of an increasing number of obscure cults, of strange and new worships, of ineffective philosophies, whose sophisticated doctrines have intensified the confusion of a troubled age. In their tenets and pursuits they may be said to reflect and bear witness to the revolt, the discontent, and the confused aspirations of the disillusioned masses that have deserted the cause of the Christian churches and seceded from their membership.

15

A parallel might almost be drawn between these confused and confusing systems of thought that are the direct outcome of the helplessness and confusion afflicting the Christian Faith and the great variety of popular cults, of fashionable and evasive philosophies which flourished in the opening centuries of the Christian Era, and which attempted to absorb and pervert the state religion of that Roman people. The pagan worshipers who constituted, at that time, the bulk of the population of the Western Roman Empire, found themselves surrounded, and in certain instances menaced, by the prevailing sect of the Neo-Platonists, by the followers of nature religions, by Gnostic philosophers, by Philonism, Mithraism, the adherents of the Alexandrian cult, and a multitude of kindred sects and beliefs, **in much the same way as the defenders of the Christian Faith, the preponderating religion of the western world, are realizing, in the first century of the Bahá'í Era, how their influence is being undermined by a flood of conflicting beliefs, practices and tendencies which their own bankruptcy had helped to create.** It was, however, this same Christian Religion, which has now fallen into such a state of impotence, that eventually proved itself capable of sweeping away the institutions of paganism and of swamping and suppressing the cults that had flourished in that age.

16

Such institutions as have strayed far from the spirit and teachings of Jesus Christ must of necessity, as the embryonic World Order of Bahá'u'lláh takes shape and unfolds, recede into the background, and make way for the progress of the divinely-ordained institutions that stand inextricably interwoven with His teachings. The indwelling Spirit of God which, in the Apostolic Age of the Church, animated its members, the pristine

purity of its teachings, the primitive brilliancy of its light, will, no doubt, be reborn and revived as the inevitable consequence of this redefinition of its fundamental verities, and the clarification of its original purpose.

17

For the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh--if we would faithfully appraise it--can never, and in no aspect of its teachings, be at variance, much less conflict, with the purpose animating, or the authority invested in, the Faith of Jesus Christ. This glowing tribute which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has been moved to pay to the Author of the Christian Religion stands as sufficient testimony to the truth of this central principle of Bahá'í belief:-- "Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive and resplendent Spirit. We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things. Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance. Through Him the unchaste and wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened, and the soul of the sinner sanctified... He it is Who purified the world. Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him."

MODERNISM REDEFINED

**'Abdu'l-Baha, "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," Wilmette:
Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982, PP. 400-402:**

7 November 1912

**Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Parsons
1700 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, D. C.**

Notes by Joseph H. Hannen

1

In the world of nature we behold the living organisms in a ceaseless struggle for existence. Everywhere we are confronted by evidences of the physical survival of the fittest. This is the very source of error and misapprehension in the opinions and theories of men who fail to realize that the world of nature is inherently defective in cause and outcome and that the defects therein must be removed by education. For example, consider man himself. If we study human beings such as the aboriginal tribes of central Africa, who have been reared in complete subjection to nature's rule, we will find them deficient indeed. They are without religious education; neither do they give evidences of any advance whatever toward civilization. They have simply grown and developed in the natural plane of barbarism. We find them bloodthirsty, immoral and animalistic in type to such an extent that they even kill and devour each other. It is evident, therefore, that the world of nature unassisted is imperfect because it is a plane upon which the struggle for physical existence expresses itself.

2

If a piece of ground is left in its natural state, wild weeds, thorns and trees of the jungle will grow upon it. But if we cultivate that same piece of ground, the result will be that it will rid itself of natural imperfections and become transformed into a beautiful rose garden or an orchard of fruitful trees. This is proof that the world of nature is defective. The founding of schools and establishing of educational systems in the world are intended to replace the defects of nature with virtues and perfections. If there were no defects, there would be no need of training, culture and education, but inasmuch as we find that children need training and schooling, it is a conclusive proof that the world of nature must be developed. Many things show this clearly. One of the basic evidences is the survival of the fittest in the animal kingdom, their ignorance,

sensuality and unbridled instincts and passions. Therefore, in the natural world there is need of an Educator and Teacher for mankind. He must be universal in his powers and accomplishments. Teachers are of two kinds: universal and special. The universal Instructors are the Prophets of God, and the special teachers are the philosophers. The philosophers are capable of educating and training a limited circle of human souls, whereas the holy, divine Manifestations of God confer general education upon humanity. They arise to bestow universal moral training. For example, Moses was a universal Teacher. He trained and disciplined the people of Israel, enabled them to rescue themselves from the lowest abyss of despair and ignorance and caused them to attain an advanced degree of knowledge and development. They were captives and in the bondage of slavery; through Him they became free. He led them out of Egypt into the Holy Land and opened the doors of their advancement into higher civilization. Through His training this oppressed and downtrodden people, slaves and captives of the Pharaohs, established the splendor of the Solomonic sovereignty. This is an example of a universal Teacher, a universal Educator. Again, consider Christ: how that marvelous expression of unity bestowed education and ethical training upon the Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Syrian and Assyrian nations and welded together a people from them in a permanent and indissoluble bond. These nations were formerly at enmity and in a state of continual hostility and strife. He cemented them together, caused them to agree, conferred tranquillity upon humanity and established the foundations of human welfare throughout the world. Therefore, He was a real Educator, the Instructor of reality.

3

When we review the conditions existing in the East prior to the rise of the Prophet of Arabia, we find that throughout the Arabian peninsula intense mental darkness and the utmost ignorance prevailed among its inhabitants. Those tribal peoples were constantly engaged in war, killing and shedding blood, burning and pillaging the homes of each other and living in conditions of the utmost debasement and immorality. They were lower and more brutal than the animals. Muhammad appeared as a Prophet among such a people. He educated these barbarous tribes, lifted them out of their ignorance and savagery and put an end to the continuous strife and hatred which had existed among them. He established agreement and reconciliation among them, unified them and taught them to look upon each other as brothers. Through His training they advanced rapidly in prestige and civilization. They were formerly ignorant; they became wise. They were barbarous; they attained refinement and culture. They were debased and brutal; He uplifted and elevated them. They were humiliated and despised; their civilization and renown spread throughout the world. This is perfect proof that Muhammad was an Educator and Teacher.

4

In the nineteenth century strife and hostility prevailed among the people of the Orient. Apathy and ignorance characterized the nations. They were indeed gloomy and dark, negligent of God and under the subjection of the baser instincts and passions of mankind. The struggle for existence was intense and universal. At such a time as this Bahá'u'lláh appeared among them like a luminary in the heavens. He flooded the East with light. He proclaimed new principles and teachings. He laid a basis for new institutions which are the very spirit of **modernism**, the light of the world, the development of the body politic and eternal honor. The souls who hearkened to these teachings among the various oriental nations immediately renounced the spirit of strife and hostility and began to associate in goodwill and fellowship. From extremes of animosity they attained the acme of love and brotherhood. They had been warring and quarreling; now they became loving and lived together in complete unity and agreement. Among them today you will find no religious, political or patriotic prejudice; they are friendly, loving and associate in the greatest happiness. They have no part in the war and strife which take place in the East; their attitude toward all men is that of goodwill and loving-kindness. A standard of universal peace has been unfurled among them. The light of guidance has flooded their souls. It is light upon light, love upon love. This is the education and training of Bahá'u'lláh. He has led these souls to this standard and given them teachings which ensure eternal illumination. Anyone who becomes well versed in His teachings will say, "Verily, I declare that these words constitute the illumination of humanity, that this is the everlasting honor, that these are heavenly precepts and the cause of never-ending life among men."

**'Abdu'l-Baha, "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," Wilmette:
Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982, PP. 437-440:**

17 November 1912
Talk at Genealogical Hall
252 West Fifty-eighth Street, New York

Notes by Edna McKinney

1

This is a blessed meeting, for these revered souls have come together in complete unity and with an intelligent purpose. It is an occasion of great joy to me. Before me are faces radiant with the glad tidings of God, hearts aglow with the fire of the love of God, ears attuned to the melodies of the Kingdom and eyes illumined by the signs and evidences of Divinity.

2

All created things have their degree, or stage, of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the time of its fruit bearing. The maturity of a plant is the time of its blossoming and flower. The animal attains a stage of full growth and completeness, and in the human kingdom man reaches his maturity when the lights of intelligence have their greatest power and development.

3

From the beginning to the end of his life man passes through certain periods, or stages, each of which is marked by certain conditions peculiar to itself. For instance, during the period of childhood his conditions and requirements are characteristic of that degree of intelligence and capacity. After a time he enters the period of youth, in which his former conditions and needs are superseded by new requirements applicable to the advance in his degree. His faculties of observation are broadened and deepened; his intelligent capacities are trained and awakened; the limitations and environment of childhood no longer restrict his energies and accomplishments. At last he passes out of the period of youth and enters the stage, or station, of maturity, which necessitates another transformation and corresponding advance in his sphere of life activity. New powers and perceptions clothe him, teaching and training commensurate with his progression occupy his mind, special bounties and bestowals descend in proportion to his increased capacities, and his former period of youth and its conditions will no longer satisfy his matured view and vision.

4

Similarly, there are periods and stages in the life of the aggregate world of humanity, which at one time was passing through its degree of childhood, at another its time of youth but now has entered its long presaged period of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere visible and apparent. Therefore, the requirements and conditions of former periods have changed and merged into exigencies which distinctly characterize the present age of the world of mankind. That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race could neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day and period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former degrees of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moralities, new capacities. New bounties, bestowals and perfections are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and graces of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of the world of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity. The playthings of childhood and infancy no longer satisfy or interest the adult mind.

5

From every standpoint the world of humanity is undergoing a reformation. The laws of former governments and civilizations are in process of revision; scientific ideas and theories are developing and advancing to meet a new range of phenomena; invention and discovery are penetrating hitherto unknown fields, revealing new wonders and hidden secrets of the material universe; industries have vastly wider scope and production; everywhere the world of mankind is in the throes of evolutionary activity indicating the passing of the old conditions and advent of the new age of reformation. Old trees yield no fruitage; old ideas and methods are obsolete and worthless now. Old standards of ethics, moral codes and methods of living in the past will not suffice for the present age of advancement and progress.

6

This is the cycle of maturity and reformation in religion as well. Dogmatic imitations of ancestral beliefs are passing. They have been the axis around which religion revolved but now are no longer fruitful; on the contrary, in this day they have become the cause of human degradation and hindrance. Bigotry and dogmatic adherence to ancient beliefs have become the central and fundamental source of animosity among

men, the obstacle to human progress, the cause of warfare and strife, the destroyer of peace, composure and welfare in the world. Consider conditions in the Balkans today: fathers, mothers, children in grief and lamentation, the foundations of life overturned, cities laid waste and fertile lands made desolate by the ravages of war. These conditions are the outcome of hostility and hatred between nations and peoples of religion who imitate and adhere to the forms and violate the spirit and reality of the divine teachings.

7

While this is true and apparent, it is, likewise, evident that the Lord of mankind has bestowed infinite bounties upon the world in this century of maturity and consummation. The ocean of divine mercy is surging, the vernal showers are descending, the Sun of Reality is shining gloriously. Heavenly teachings applicable to the advancement in human conditions have been revealed in this merciful age. This reformation and renewal of the fundamental reality of religion constitute the true and outworking spirit of **modernism**, the unmistakable light of the world, the manifest effulgence of the Word of God, the divine remedy for all human ailment and the bounty of eternal life to all mankind.

8

Bahá'u'lláh, the Sun of Truth, has dawned from the horizon of the Orient, flooding all regions with the light and life which will never pass away. His teachings, which embody the divine spirit of the age and are applicable to this period of maturity in the life of the human world, are:

9

The oneness of the world of humanity

10 The protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit

The foundation of all religion is one

11 Religion must be the cause of unity

Religion must accord with science and reason

12 Independent investigation of truth

Equality between men and women

13 The abandoning of all prejudices among mankind

Universal peace

14 Universal education

A universal language

15 Solution of the economic problem

An international tribunal.

16

Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that the teachings of the present day emanating from mere human sources and authority are the cause of difficulty and disagreement amongst mankind, the very destroyers of humanity, whereas the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found the realization of every desire and aspiration, the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, the stimulus and illumination of mentality, the impulse for advancement and uplift, the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, the center of agreement, the means of peace and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West.