

First a word of clarification from last week's article. One reader was asking about the statement: "material things are *allowed* to be more important than God." I think the reader took this to mean something like: the *truth* is that material things *are* more important than God, that that is ok. The intended meaning, however, is that the person has allowed material things, *in their mind*, to become more important than God, which leads them away from God. The wording of "allowed" was used intentionally so as to emphasize that the person *can* (and needs to) choose against that; it most certainly did *not* mean that it's ok for that to be the case!

This is the last Sunday of Advent, the last Sunday right before Christmas. In some ways we might say that it is unfortunate that we are on this topic, rather than a direct focus on Advent or Christmas. Yet at the same time the truths of the faith all form a single whole – which is called The Analogy of the Faith. The isms we've presented are by no means unrelated to the first *or* second comings of Christ; in fact, they are very much related. Why did our Lord come? You could state the answer to that question in a variety of equivalent ways. For our purposes here, let us say it in this way: He came to engage the spiritual combat of this life and this world and to enable us to win in that struggle. He came in His first coming (Christmas) to *teach* us how to engage in spiritual combat, and to *enable* us to do so, so that, for those who do, they can stand with Him in His glorious and everlasting Kingdom at His second coming (the focus of Advent). This is a reality. Our Lord said: "the violent are taking Heaven by force," which is one of the Advent readings. Aquinas points out that by "the violent" our Lord means those who engage in the real struggle for Heaven; Heaven is not cheap, easy, and automatic. The struggle has to be engaged. As was mentioned at the very beginning of this series on the isms the world is now at a point where spiritual combat is at the most level basic – the struggle for true belief, right thinking. The spiritual combat of our times is the struggle against these false beliefs, and only "the violent" will take the Kingdom of Heaven. We continue now with a summary of the isms that have been covered.

As a prelude for continuing, I recently saw a billboard that said something like: Retirement, that is the long term. I'm sure the people who put this together didn't have any explicit underlying agenda of promoting materialism in direct opposition to God. But at the same time, just as a matter of fact, it does. Implicit in this statement is that this world and this life is the focus, that's all there is. It is just one example of how we are surrounded by this mentality, how it is drummed (subtly) into our minds. So someone sees this sign, lets it settle into their mind – oh yes, retirement is the long term – and they start to tend towards materialism. "And the serpent was the most subtle of the creatures the Lord God had made."

6. Careerism

The American Heritage dictionary describes it well:

- Pursuit of professional advancement *as one's chief or sole aim*.
- The practice of advancing one's career *at the expense of one's personal integrity*.
- The overwhelming desire or urge to advance one's own career or social status, usually at the expense of other personal interests or social growth.

Note that this dictionary definition makes it sound like it's a personal choice. For some people, that might be the case. For others, it might be expected by their employer. Don't underestimate the prevalence of this one or the pressure to conform to it. Be ready to recognize it and hold firm to the way of the Lord.

7. Relativism & Subjectivism

Recall Pope Benedict's words: we now live in a dictatorship of relativism; it is prevalent and destructive to eternal life. Usually people just speak of relativism without mentioning subjectivism, which is ok. However, a distinction can be made between these and sometimes it can be helpful to do so.

Relativism (*per se*) makes a claim about truth, like most of the isms. It says that what's true is just whatever is true to a particular group of people (a "culture") in a particular place and a particular time – "truth" is not absolute, it is relative to a time and place. There is no universal truth; things like: killing the innocent is always and everywhere wrong; it's just whatever is popularly held by the people of a given time and place. Aztecs practiced human sacrifice in what is today Mexico City. You can't say that was wrong, it was right and good

and true to them at that time and place and that's all the truth there is. And of course truth can change over time. Maybe it's not true to them now that human sacrifice is ok, well that's also true. Some groups of people consider the cow sacred; that's true, it's true to them. Who are you to judge – a mantra of relativism. If another culture doesn't hold the cow sacred, that's also true – it's true to them. So, says relativism, what does truth mean? *All* it means is: whatever is commonly accepted at some particular time and place.

Subjectivism is just relativism reduced to the individual person. It's no longer the group (some culture) that truth is particular to but the individual person. Have you ever heard the expression: “*your* truth” or “that's *your* truth?” It's an expression of relativism/subjectivism. Abortion is wrong. No, that's just your truth. There's no such thing as truth that applies to everybody. There are only 2 genders – same thing, that's just your truth, it's not true to everybody because there's nothing that's true for everybody, truth is just whatever the individual person chooses to accept as true. Notice that relativism is immediately self-contradictory. Saying there is no universal truth (something that's true for everyone, always and everywhere), *is* a universal truth claim!

Remember that subjective reality is real. But so is objective reality. Subjective reality pertains to things that are true about a particular person – the subject. I have a headache. That is a real subjective truth – a truth about that particular subject (person). Objective truth (or reality) are things that are outside of a subject (an individual person) and don't depend on the subject. The sun is hot regardless of how I feel about it or what I believe about it. There are 2 genders. There is a God. These are objective realities. Relativism/subjectivism deny objective truth/reality. Since God *is* absolute, objective truth, relativism is necessarily atheistic. Abortion is wrong, period. That's an objective, universal reality/truth that applies to everyone always and everywhere.

I don't really know how relativists deal with the obvious problems of relativism. For example, a relativist must say that the Nazi concentration camps and Communist gulags were fine because that's what was right and good and true to those people at that time. I heard one guy try to deal with this by saying something like: well, nobody is really an absolute relativist. But then he went on to say how his own times have progressed and they are right! So I'm not an absolute relativist, I just say that my truths now are what's right! You have to be a mental acrobat to accept relativism. Although relativism may sound absurd here, start to pay attention to how often you encounter this in everyday life. We are drenched in relativism.

8. The New Humanism

The New Humanism could be called the supreme achievement of the rise of the spirit of the antichrist that came out of the so-called enlightenment, more properly called the endarkment period of history (1700-1900), and has now become the prevailing mindset of our time. What is it?

The New Humanism = The glorification of the effects of original sin (especially the disordered passions) = the exaltation of self-interest (my feelings, wants, desires) = glorification of satisfaction of immediate desires and appetites = scorn and denunciation of self-sacrifice (love) = anti-Christ = anti-love = Man is the supreme being, the supreme decider of what is right and good and true = the fulfillment of the original temptation = an alignment with the Prince of Darkness = Man is a god unto himself = pride = The New Atheism => hell, a terrible, inescapable, never-ending suffering.

Perhaps, though, the new humanism is not so much atheism per se – a simple lack of belief in the existence of God – but rather more of a hatred of God, which is far worse. It is a big step in the buildup of the supreme religious deception that will culminate in the coming of the Antichrist and then the 2nd coming of Christ.

Is this gloom and doom? For those who accept the contemporary beliefs, the isms, yes – I'm sorry to say, yes. There is no hope for those who proudly go along with the times, no hope *except* repentance and conversion – which our Lord always stands not only ready but eager to grant. For the very small remnant of the humble and truly faithful, however, this is no age of gloom and doom. It is a tremendous opportunity to rise up and love our Lord with the fullness of your being. A time to say thank you, Lord, for allowing me this chance to participate in Your life, this chance to love You. Please Lord, don't let me fail, help me to engage. Maybe we will give just a few reminders next time of how to engage. In the meantime...

God bless you and Merry Christmas! Fr Kuhn.