

Fr. Perozich comments —

This article requires more comment for those who did not study theology formally.

Firstly, here is a definition of terms used in the article.

- *immanent: inherent, indwelling*
- *imminent: about to happen*
- *currentism: political ideology which insists that it is rapidly progressing toward some vision of a human paradise. It recognizes only “now,” repudiating the lessons of yesterday and the Divine Judgment of tomorrow. Because **Currentist** leaders arrogantly believe they have the keys to the perfect society, they regard as evil only those thoughts or things which impede their will.*
- *eschaton: final event in the divine plan; the end of the world*
- *concupiscence: strong desire such as lust*
- *immiscible: incapable of mixing and forming one substance all the same and all the same kind (homogeneity)*
- *neologism: newly coined phrase*


Secondly, this is an article regarding a movement in secular politics foremost.

*Thirdly, as a priest I see an application of “**currentism**” by members of the church at all levels, clerical and lay, to doctrine, morality, governance, scripture, catechism, sacraments in God’s Holy Catholic Church. The author defines “**currentism**” as a political ideology. Politics exist in the church as well as secular governments. Most of the lay faithful have not been exposed to these church politics until recently.*

In both state and church are agents seeking power through election or appointment in order to advance against a constitution or scripture/catechism a new idea from their own thoughts and deliberations, to impose that on others with controls, and “canceling” those who disagree, taking away others’ power, voice, freedom.

As a Catholic of 69 years, I know that no one can create utopia on earth by substituting social policies and human definitions of equality, fairness, rights and justice for the inner working of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament which transform my thoughts into the thoughts of Jesus, my desires into the desire of the Lord for my conversion, my will to conform to His so that He can work through me, albeit imperfectly, to announce His name, His charity, His offer of salvation to believers who will accept Him as Lord, be baptized, reform their lives, eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, seek Him and His will in all things so that Jesus speak, act, and love through all who believe until He comes to take us home.

Currentism: The Perennial Lie

 onepeterfive.com/currentism-the-perennial-lie

Deacon James Toner

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“Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies?”

—St. Augustine, *The City of God*

Precis: **Currentism** is any political ideology which insists that it is rapidly progressing toward some vision of a human paradise. It recognizes only “now,” repudiating the lessons of yesterday and the Divine Judgment of tomorrow. Because **Currentist** leaders arrogantly believe they have the keys to the perfect society, they regard as evil only those thoughts or things

which impede their will. Such leaders are, they think, gods; but they are, in fact, mountebanks who, directly or indirectly, mutilate and murder, paying homage to the ubiquitous idols of the day (cf. Is 5:20-21).

Catholics understand—or should understand—that idolatry is a major threat to the faith which comes to us from the Apostles (Wisdom 14:27, 1 John 5:21). There is a reason, after all, that the First Commandment is, in fact, first. Get that Commandment wrong (as has happened repeatedly in history), and there will be hell to pay—literally and figuratively. This is as the prophet Isaiah taught (14:14-15)—but we too often neglect that admonition, do we not? The principal form of idolatry in the United States is worship of the metastasized government, viewed by too many as the great dispenser of truth and justice. But justice, we know, has been taken away.

Throughout history, we fallen human beings have frequently sought to substitute *someone* (a messianic political leader or ourselves when we choose to sin and thus disobey God) or *something* (power, profit, or pleasure) for God (see CCC #1723). We seem at times to be pathologically given over to a disordered desire to control everything, trying to manage or manipulate matters best left in God’s hands. We are, after all, limited in all that we are and in all that we do. We are not gods. We are mortal, and everything in life is subject to the law of radical contingency, meaning, in short, that everything will die.

We frequently forget that, in our “pursuit of happiness,” we are subject to sorrows, struggles, and sufferings, and that there is no full and final relief from these burdens until the beginning of God’s time at the end of ours. Basic to the Catholic faith—“Thy will be done”—is the deep conviction that there is a divine purpose, or plan, or providence which belong, finally, not to man but to God. The perennial temptation is self-deification (cf. Gn 3:5), meaning that we try to choose our way and not His way.

That kind of concupiscence is found both in our political and in our personal lives (Jer 17:9, Judith 8:14, Ps 36:1-4, Gal 5:19-21).

It is both unfair and misleading to try to condense the teaching of philosopher Eric Voegelin (1901-1985) into a sentence, but he is remembered for the idea that we must never try to “immanentize the eschaton,” a phrase by which he warned us against efforts to create heaven on earth. Any political ideology which promises paradise, but ignores concupiscent human nature, leads to the gas chambers. God is perfect; man is not—and suggestions that utopia is on the horizon are pernicious and perilous. “Power,” as Lord Acton (1834-1902) trenchantly observed, “tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This simple statement feeds the writing of many Catholic novelists, including the inestimable J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973). Thus we have the important teaching—*which we must now retrieve and resolutely preach*—of Pope Pius XI:

“If Socialism, like all errors, contains some truth (which, moreover, the Supreme Pontiffs have never denied), it is based nevertheless on a theory of human society peculiar to itself and irreconcilable with true Christianity. Religious socialism, Christian socialism, are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist” (*Quadragesimo Anno* [1931]: #120).

Fraudulent are the ideologies which assure us that political, economic, and social justice are imminent (*and* immanent) if we just trust and support the ostensibly omniscient leaders; such lies lead to moral and political calamity (Is 10:1, 59:14-15). The best slogan, therefore, for any political party is, “**Don’t Expect Too Much.**” Because such a slogan, however true, hardly ensures broad appeal and wide support, political sloganeering is invariably morally compromised. Politics is, essentially, war by means other than applied military might. Therefore, we can quote (without approval) Winston Churchill: “In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of

lies.” But Catholic truth and political lies are—or, again, should be—immiscible.

Deceit, deception, and distortion—these are the “stuff” of politics. Herod-like politicians are the rule, not the exception. There have been, *Deo gratias*, rulers of great virtue and vision, but they are rare principally because gaining and keeping political power and squaring that power with genuine moral authority (see CCC #1902, #1923) is a demonstrably demanding task, something we have been taught, regrettably, since Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, championed tyranny and the perverted idea that the end always justifies the means.

Of duplicitous leaders, Psalms teaches: “Not a word from their lips can be trusted, deep within them lies ruin, their throats are yawning graves; they make their tongues so smooth” (5:9 JB; cf. Prv 29:2 and Psalms 118:8-9, 146:3).

Running like a scarlet thread through all these themes is a vital admonition: Beware of **Currentism**, which is my neologism referring to the entire range of secular chiliastic ideologies. These are utopian or millennialist movements (see CCC #675-677) promising ideal, or even perfect, societies, by political means, in the near future. **Liberalism, socialism, and communism are varieties of Currentism, as are Fascism, Nazism, and Peronism (and other such dictatorships).**

Currentism has two hallmarks: First, with **Currentism**, of whatever variety, never permissible is any attempt to judge the policies of today against a timeless moral horizon, or eternity (cf. 2 Pt 3:8; Ps 90:4). The divine eschaton will be effected, not by God in His time, but by “the great leader,” and that achievement is coming “soon”—be patient and believe in the idolatrous political bosses. The government controls time.

Second, with **Currentism**, of whatever variety, never permissible is any attempt to judge the regime’s policies against a sacred place (Joel 3:12), or destiny (Heb 13:14), or *Logos* (John

1:1). There is no worry about supernatural judgment, for Currentist leaders are self-referential, meaning that they seek wisdom on the basis of what immediately works to advance their personal power. The government controls providence.

Belief in any of the forms of progressive **Currentism** permits—no: demands—results regardless of rules. It’s all right to avert your eyes, or to “look the other way,” in order not to see the horrors produced by a monster government pretending it is divine. (This is a reason, of course, pictures of abortion are banned.) “You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs,” wrote Walter Duranty (1884-1957), the American journalist who helped to cover up the mass starvation—estimates are about 3.9 million dead (the Holodomor)—in the Ukraine in 1932-1933. Duranty received a Pulitzer Prize in 1932 for his reports from the new Soviet Union, with which he was so enamored.

A **Currentist** political ideology is its own judge, here and now, in this moment only. Such ideology is triumphant, all-consuming secularism. The limitations of concupiscent human nature are peremptorily dismissed; the vagaries of history are distorted or warped; the Second Coming and the Judgment of the Living and the Dead is discounted or denied. Currentist political ideologies are closed on themselves, for they cannot tolerate the appraisals or verdicts of Right Reason, of the Moral Law, or of Supernatural Commandments.

Everything, as Professor Voegelin said, is immanent in a **Currentist** or totalitarian regime. Everything is relative to that state, and there are no political or moral assessments wanted, or allowed, from the perspectives of where we have been and where we are going. The trappings of the sacred may be permitted (such as attendance at churches with regime-sympathetic clergy), but “examinations of conscience” proceed from and are based upon what advances the “noble” cause of the regime. The sacred and the profane have become one. The good, the true, and the beautiful are whatever please the Orwellian **Currentists**, for they have,

indeed, sought to immanentize the eschaton. Of course, they are not God's (note the apostrophe); but they are political gods (cf. 2 Thess 2:4), beyond question, criticism, and censure.

Currentist ideologies accept the love of power but not the power of love. An arrogance, a hubris, contaminates what their leaders say and do, for they tolerate nothing that diminishes or derogates from their mounting control over anything and everything in their sight.

As Pope John Paul explained:

“Man tends towards good, but he is also capable of evil. He can transcend his immediate interest and still remain bound to it. The social order will be all the more stable, the more it takes this fact into account and does not place in opposition personal interest and the interests of society as a whole, but rather seeks ways to bring them into fruitful harmony. In fact, where self-interest is violently suppressed, it is replaced by a burdensome system of bureaucratic control [as in Socialism] which dries up the wellsprings of initiative and creativity. When people think they possess the secret of a perfect social organization which makes evil impossible, they also think that they can use any means, including violence and deceit, in order to bring that organization into being. Politics then becomes a ‘secular religion’ which operates under the illusion of creating paradise in this world [my emphasis]. But no political society—which possesses its own autonomy and laws—can ever be confused with the Kingdom of God” (Centesimus Annus [1991]: #25).

Currentism, whatever its variety, eventually permits, encourages, or requires the isolation or the imprisonment of those

whose “limited vision” or lack of “camaraderie” or “team spirit” will make them enemies of the state. Does this resemble any *current* political party you may know?

Is all this, then, to be regarded as a matter of concern and interest for, say, political science students—but hardly of interest to others?

No: “**Currentism**” is, indeed, here and now. It is the political coin of the realm—our realm. It is in its time, now—in 2021. And it has taken its place—in the District of Columbia and in fifty state capitol buildings. *You may not now be interested in it. But it is now interested in you.*

As the Thomist philosopher Etienne Gilson (1884-1978) tried to teach us:

“There still remains only God to protect Man against Man. Either we will serve Him in spirit and truth or we shall enslave ourselves ceaselessly, more and more, to the monstrous idol which we have made with our own hands to our own image and likeness.”

The **Currentists** tell us that we are gods. Can we, in our pulpits, in our publications, and in our personal witness (Mk 1:14-15) instead proclaim that we are God’s?



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