



By: *Catriona M. Munro, TA Editor in Chief*

Woke: The new religion?



Have you been to Church recently - apart from to attend weddings or funerals? If not, you are not alone: Average Church attendance was 509,000 in the UK in 2021.

Our continental neighbours are more devout with a reportedly hefty 50% in Romania. And 40% in Belgium. Supposedly.

So what do we do without God?

In 1974, American professor of philosophy, Robert M Pirsig, published his magnum opus, *Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

Not an easy read, it is in part autobiography, in part philosophical tract, and ultimately led him to have a Force 10 nervous breakdown when he was tormented by his consequent inquiry into values and the question of how to define "quality".

In a hubristic attempt to summarise Pirsig's arguments, my understanding is that he concluded that since Nietzsche announced the death of God, European thought had abandoned the doctrines of organised Christianity and had muddled through, consciously or not, on a dualistic method on dealing with life: with most people taking a scientific, rational approach (classical) and an instinctive, creative approach (romantic).

You might tend to one or the other, but most of us use both approaches.

But this was not enough. We need spiritual satisfaction too. And following his brief descent into madness, Pirsig travelled to the Far East and studied Zen Buddhism, which he was subsequently convinced was the answer.

The book was a huge best seller. After all, religion at its basic level, is a simple belief

system, with which you engage or not.

But, as Pirsig commented 20 years later, he really believed that this was the way society would evolve. But it didn't.

No Zen, more Woke

The Woke revolution burst into fame in recent years. Not originating in Churches or novels, but on University campuses.

For a religion, it has many moral precepts, but few concrete commandments, apart from, "Be Kind". And it is leaderless so far.

This new Woke ideology or religion has learned from the techniques of the reinforcement of Christianity.

The militant tendency know well how to root out heretics à la Spanish Inquisition, and severely punish them by them as "cancelled", preventing them through loud, threatening protests, removing any public voice and hurling abuse at them on social media. Not very kind, frankly.

As ever, it's not just a carbon copy of the techniques of Roman Catholicism, it repeats similar techniques of any diversion from Protestantism. It's like fascism and communism: extremism has the same effects on everyday lives.

Institutions and the debanking of Nigel Farage

Woke has unfurled itself in British institutions, not only in schools and universities, but in the Civil Service and, astonishingly, banks.

Coutts bank, as far as any Brit knew, was a respected scion of the British establishment, suddenly contacted one of its clients, the notorious Brexiteer Nigel Farage, to explain why he was no longer suitable to be its client.

There were comings and goings in the press. Farage, no shrinking violet, ensured it was all public and in the press.

First, Coutts allegedly informed him he did not earn enough to merit the services it provided.

Farage subsequently obtained a "secret" document originating from Coutts, describing him as a "racist", a "xenophobe" and a "grifter".

I had to look up the word "grifter" as I'd only heard it used against Prince Harry by his former employer. It means "swindler" or "con artist" apparently.

Apart from the fact this does not sound like the vocabulary of a bank, and also apart from the fact I am no champion of Farage, have we seriously got to the point where unless you slavishly follow the questionable politically correct precepts of the Woke religion, you could actually be "debanked"?

None of the later wishy washy official responses from Coutts seemed to make this entirely clear, and there has been nothing from the real head of Coutts, who must have approved all this?

Guess who are the worst victims of this?

Whether Woke is a fad or a seriously fundamental belief system which must be obeyed, as usual, it is women who bear the brunt of any perceived non-compliance with correct thinking.

I'm amazed the Internet has not broken with the misogyny and loathing - including death threats - against women who have dared to question the new orthodoxy.

Straight women are referred to as "cis" - nothing new here, it just means you maintain the gender your parents gave you when you were born, but it is tinged with contempt.

Most of the most despised women are called "terfs" - "transsexual exclusionary radical feminist", which is used to describe any woman who rejects the idea that the militant wing of the trans lobby is as plentiful and correct when someone like JK Rowling dared to write on social media that "someone with a cervix could actually be called a 'woman'".

A strange phenomenon: everyone knows what a misogynist (women hater) and a misanthrope (people hater) is, but what do you call a man hater? The word is misandrist. And its usage is as rare as hens' teeth.

I have no idea how this will pan out. Possibly, I'm an antediluvian fuddy duddy clinging on to my simple values like free speech, freedom of thought, and even freedom to qualify for a bank account.