

## Once Upon A Post Modern Story

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In my February 19 E-Letter I talked about Post Modernism. I wish I had waited 2 more weeks! Because since then I had the opportunity to read "**The Sacred Romance**" by Brent Curtis & John Eldredge. It is an excellent book that I heartily recommend. It isn't possible in this brief space to fully discuss this book and its relevance to our witness to Christ in our Post Modern culture. But on page 40 of that book the authors give one of the best summaries of Post Modernism that I have yet encountered. So, I am reproducing it their description below in the hope that it will help you in your understanding of where we are in our Post Modern culture.

*"Once upon a time the Western world had a story. Imagine you lived in the High Middle Ages. Your world was permeated with Christian imagery. You marked the days by the sound of church bells and the weeks and months according to the liturgical calendar. You lived in anno domini, the year of our Lord. It wasn't football season, it was Advent. Your role models were the saints, whose feast days were regular reminders of a drama greater than yourself. The architecture of the cathedral, the music, literature, and sculpture all gave you a vision of transcendence, reminding you of the central elements of that great story. Even the everyday language reflected the Christian understanding of life's story, expressions like "god be with you," "upon my soul," and "by Christ's blood." Birth and death, love and loss - all of your personal experiences would be shaped and interpreted by that larger story.*

*"But you don't live in the Middle Ages, you live in the Post-modern Era. For hundreds of years, our culture has been losing its story. The Enlightenment dismissed the idea that there is an Author but tried to hang on to the idea that we could still have a larger story, life could still make sense, and everything was headed in a good direction. Western culture rejected the mystery and transcendence of the Middle Ages and placed its confidence in pragmatism and progress, the pillars of the Modern Era, the Age of Reason. But once we had rid ourselves of the Author, it didn't take long to lose the larger story. In the Post-modern Era, all we have left is our small stories. It's not Pentecost, it's time for spring training. Our role models are movie stars, and the biggest taste of transcendence is the opening of the ski season. Our best expressions are on the level of "Have a nice day." The only reminder we have of a story beyond our own is the evening news, an arbitrary collection of scenes and images without any bigger picture into which they fit. The central belief of our times is that there is no story, nothing hangs together, all we have are bits and pieces, the random days of our lives. Tragedy still brings us to tears and heroism still lifts our hearts, but there is no context for any of it. Life is just a sequence of images and emotions without rhyme or reason." (Curtis & Eldredge, **The Sacred Romance**, pp. 40-41.)*

In light of this understanding of Post Modernism you should better understand the following article from **The Atlantic Monthly** magazine on the decline of secularism as a worldview. This is an insightful article that should not be confused or construed as advocating Christianity per se. The author is not saying that the world is abandoning Post Modernism or embracing Christianity. Rather, he is acknowledging that life is essentially "religious" or "spiritual" (as opposed to "secular") in nature and that "secularism" (the denial of the spiritual realm and its importance) is a failed worldview. This is a Post Modern confession (of sorts) of man's inherent religious/spiritual need, but devoid of any ability to meet that need by declaring which of the world's religious world views is the right one. But it does set the intellectual stage for some aggressive Post Modern evangelism on the part of the Church.

### **Kicking the Secularist Habit: A Six-Step Program**

by David Brooks

*Like a lot of people these days, I'm a recovering secularist. Until September 11 I accepted the notion that as the world becomes richer and better educated, it becomes less religious. Extrapolating from a tiny and unrepresentative sample of humanity (in Western Europe and parts of North America), this theory holds that as history moves forward, science displaces dogma and reason replaces unthinking obedience. A region that has not yet had a reformation and an enlightenment, such as the Arab world, sooner or later*

*will.*

*It's now clear that the secularization theory is untrue. The human race does not necessarily get less religious as it grows richer and better educated. We are living through one of the great periods of scientific progress and the creation of wealth. At the same time, we are in the midst of a religious boom.*

To read this article in it's entirety go to: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/03/brooks.htm>