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## Christianity and Communism -An Ideological Comparison

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# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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An Ideological Comparison  
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**Communism and Religion in Russia and China  
WALTER W. OETTING**

**August Hermann Francke, 1663—1963  
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**Homiletics**

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**VOL. XXXIV**

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# Christianity and Communism — An Ideological Comparison

By RALPH L. MOELLERING

In his book *Communism and Christ*, Charles W. Lowry contends that we are living in a new religious age. As evidence he points to the post-World War II popular religious revival, to what he calls "a new priesthood" set up by psychiatry, to the influence of existential thought in philosophy and theology (consider Paul Tillich), and to the "collective neurosis" brought on by the crisis and anxieties of our hydrogen-missile age. "The final and conclusive proof" that we have entered into a new religious era Lowry perceived in the expansion and menace of the "new universal salvation religion — Communism." His summary statement:

Communism . . . can only be understood if it is seen as a world religion, not lacking in a Semitic tinge, in many respects paralleling or caricaturing Christianity, of a strongly dogmatic, authoritarian, and intolerant type.<sup>1</sup>

That the Communist ideology includes "creedal statements" is obvious to anyone who is familiar with its basic concepts such as dialectical materialism, the theory of surplus value, or the "withering of the state." Whether or not it may properly be described as a faith is a matter of dispute. In a symposium published in 1937, Ernest Barker insisted that "faith demands some affirmation of belief in things apprehended but invisible." Viewing the Communists as devotees of a mech-

anistic materialism that makes no allowance for the supernatural, he sees them as placing all forms of faith under an interdict. In his retort, Hamilton Fyfe accuses Barker of limiting "unduly the meaning of 'faith.'" "Communists," he reminds us, "have faith in human nature, faith that Right will triumph over Might . . . faith in the emergence of justice and comradeship from the welter of struggling and selfish cut-throat competitors, faith that equality of chances in life will give better results than the harsh and undeserved social distinctions of our present system."<sup>2</sup>

Despite varying interpretations of some aspects of Marxism and Leninism, it is clear that we are confronted with the strange paradox of an avowed antireligious movement assuming many of the features and characteristics usually associated with religion.

That it is antireligious is beyond dispute. As early as 1844, Marx coined the phrase: "The criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism." "Religion is the opiate of the people," became a favorite expression when referring to the faith of the workers. In the *Manifesto* of 1848, he and Engels called upon the proletariat to strip themselves of all bourgeois prejudices, including religion. They viewed religion as dust thrown into the eyes of

<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Lowry, *Communism and Christ* (New York: Morehouse-Gorham, 1952), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> H. Wilson Harris, ed., *Christianity and Communism* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1937), pp. 4, 5, 10, 11.



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the workers, distracting their attention from emancipation and material goals. Religion, they said, teaches the toiling masses to submit to capitalist oppression, assuaging their grievances with the promise of a better future life in heaven. Therefore, Engels advised that the atheist literature of the 18th century be spread among the masses. He criticized Dühring severely because his acceptance of materialism did not go far enough and still left loopholes by which religion might regain a footing.

Lenin reiterated almost the identical expressions used by Marx and Engels, summoning men to the "assault of heaven." Religion had been ingrained in him as part of his childhood discipline. In reply to a Bolshevik Party questionnaire asking when he ceased to believe in God, his answer was: "At the age of sixteen." One of his companions during his early revolutionary days described Lenin's emancipation from religious fantasies:

When he perceived clearly that there was no God, he tore the Cross violently from his neck, spat upon it contemptuously, and threw it away. In short he freed himself from religious prejudices in typical revolutionary Leninist fashion, without prolonged hesitation or timid consideration, without mental struggle with the spirit of doubt.<sup>3</sup>

In letters written to A. M. Gorky in 1913, Lenin defined God as "a complex of ideas engendered by the ignorance of mankind" which "blunt the class struggle." Objecting to any concession to religion, he asserted that "all god-building is the *adoring* self-contemplation of a dull, frail

philistinism." Even the most refined and well-intentioned mention of God becomes a justification for reaction. "It has always bound the oppressed *classes* by faith in the divinity to submission to their oppressors."<sup>4</sup> (Emphases are his.) Discouraging the use of the term "God" in any connection, Lenin proposed that a journal be published for the systematic propagation of atheism.

As the Communist ideology was being shaped by Marx and Engels, there was a scientific awakening throughout the Western world. An epoch-making date was 1859, when Charles Darwin published his *Origin of Species*. As far as many churchmen were concerned, the evolutionary theory and atheistic Communism were twin evils spawned by the same devil. In the ensuing conflict between science and religion, Marxists claimed to be in the vanguard of those seeking human progress through scientific discoveries, while the churches were caricatured as the citadels of obscurantism and ignorance. Communism, in the minds of its proponents, was equated with scientific enlightenment. The finds of modern science supposedly eliminated all reliance on supernatural factors and would eventually dissolve all mysteries.

A pamphlet circulated by opponents of the church in East Berlin averred that Communism and religion are "as irreconcilable as freedom and slavery, truth and lies, light and darkness." From Vienna came the disclosure that the Communist-controlled Czechoslovakian film industry intended to make antireligious "science" movies about the Roman Catholic shrines at Lourdes and Fatima. Atheistic pictures

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by David Shub, *Lenin* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Lenin, *Religion* (New York: Little Lenin Library, International Publishers), pp. 41—46.

were projected to assist Czech school children in ridding themselves of "the remnants of capitalistic conceptions of the supernatural." The 1953 edition of the dictionary of the Russian language published in Moscow contained new definitions which called the expression "for God's sake" obsolete, and commented on "Second Coming" as a jocular colloquialism referring to "an event which will never take place."<sup>5</sup>

Part of the preparation for *Jugendweihe* (Youth Dedication) in East Germany has been the insinuation that Christianity is scientifically outmoded. Accompanying the barrage of threats against the church late in 1957 was the asseveration of the state secretary for education: "There can't be any peaceful coexistence between science and faith." Atheism and scientific superiority were presented as inseparable ingredients of the new order. Salvation through science was proclaimed as a substitute for traditional faiths which are no longer tenable.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding, after 45 years of anti-religious propaganda in Russia ancient beliefs have not become extinct. Even "scientifically trained" individuals have not always been impressed by the "irresistible" logic of a secularistic world view. V. G. Yeliseyev expresses his annoyance over this lingering religiosity among the intellectuals in an article entitled "The Physician's Role in Scientific Atheism":

The problem of the atheistic and . . . the philosophical training of the future doctor is today particularly important. For even in some of the institutions in our capital city there are among our medical

personnel persons belonging to religious organizations. This means that the propagation of atheism must be reinforced in every way.<sup>7</sup>

The present leadership in the Soviet Union has not deviated from the Leninist-Stalinist line that argues the incompatibility of scientific enlightenment with religious ignorance. During a visit of French notables to Moscow in 1955, Nikita Khrushchev was quoted as saying:

Communism has not changed its attitude of opposition to religion. We are doing everything we can to eliminate the bewitching power of the opium of religion.<sup>8</sup>

On another occasion the boss of the Kremlin expressed his personal views:

I think there is no God. I freed myself long ago from such a concept. I am a partisan of a scientific point of view, and science and faith in supernatural forces are irreconcilable opinions which exclude one another necessarily. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Someone has said that Communism is "religion turned inside out." Despite its blatant atheism, Communism as a total way of life demanding the absolute commitment of the individual to the cause it represents, appeals to the religious instincts of mankind. To counteract the influence of the Lutheran Church in East Germany, the Communist regime has devised substitute ceremonies for the Christian rites of Baptism, confirmation, mar-

<sup>7</sup> *The Soviet Review*, November 1961, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by George W. Cronyn, *A Primer on Communism* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1961), p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> *A Christian's Handbook on Communism* (New York: published for the Committee on Literacy and Christian Literature of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., 1962), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Newsweek*, November 30, 1953.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, November 18, 1957.

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riage and burial. With such stress on godless propaganda we are confronted with the amazing spectacle of what sounds like a contradiction in terms—a "theology of atheism."

From its inception, modern Communism has been consistent in its repudiation of the Christian faith. American Communists, too, frequently exhibited their disdain for religion in any form. William Z. Foster once admitted that workers who retained some religious scruples were not barred from membership in the party, but he explained that this was only a temporary concession, and that every Communist "must necessarily be in the process of liquidating his religious beliefs."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Earl Browder, for many years general secretary of the Communist party of the United States, sometimes gave the impression of being "soft" in his critique of the churches. During the thirties and early forties when it became a part of Communist strategy to conceal their aims behind respectable-appearing "united fronts" and to "bore from within," Browder seemed to offer churchgoers the hand of fellowship and cooperation and suggested that there was nothing intrinsic in Communism which would be contrary to Christian teachings. These were the years when some clergymen and theological professors were tempted to find affinities between Communist aspirations and Christian ideals, and minimize or ignore the Communist conspiracy.

One of the most startling examples of this effort to fuse the Communist and Christian ideologies is found in the career

<sup>10</sup> Cf. testimony given before the Fish Committee, House Report No. 2, Seventy-ninth Congress, First session.

of the erratic Claude Williams, who, in revolt against his Fundamentalist background, embraced extremely radical political and religious concepts. Eventually he became the notorious leader of The People's Institute for Applied Religion in Detroit. His doctrinal aberrations and persistent nonconformity brought him into disrepute and led to his deposition from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Williams apparently looked upon Karl Marx as the Messiah of the 19th Century—as a latter-day incarnation of God's purposes for a new industrial age. How did he attempt to reconcile Biblical religion with Marxist thought? In accordance with classical Marxism, he contended that institutionalized religion was controlled by the dominant economic system. Roman Catholicism came into existence to buttress medieval feudalism. His explanation for the emergence of Protestantism:

Protestant church religion came into being to enhance the rise of capitalism. It proclaimed the divine right of property. It deified the kings of finance, the lords of commerce and the captains of industry. Today this church religion is directed by remote control from the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and the offices of cartel imperialists.

Williams attributed the failure of Protestantism to the "Christ-centered theology of Paul," who is to be blamed for corrupting the original "people's movement" launched by Jesus:

[This corrupter of Christianity] hatched out a "gospel" all his own (Rom. 2:16), through which he destroyed labor unions (Acts 19:24-41) and dished out the opiate of contentment (1 Tim. 6:6-15); returned slaves to their masters (Phile-

mon) commanding them to obey (Eph. 6:5; Titus 2:9, 10); said the fascist powers of Rome were ordained of God, demanding that the people be subjected unto them (Rom. 13:1-5); preached male chauvinism (Eph. 5:22, 23), permitting women neither to teach nor even to speak in public (1 Tim. 2:11, 12; 1 Cor. 14:34, 35).

All of Protestantism, said Williams, was bogged down by Pauline doctrine except for "a sprinkling of Unitarian liberalism and ethical culture." According to his view, common sense denied the supernatural, which he dismissed as an "unscriptural invention of theology." With his definition, God became "a Symbol of Struggle for Freedom, Security, Brotherhood." Sin was equated with ultra-individualism; salvation with "a collective effort of the workers and other victims of this world system to save themselves from the oppressors."

Williams visualized Jesus as an heroic figure, "a class-conscious leader" who headed a revolutionary movement aimed at "fascist Rome." The final events in the life of Jesus were summarized by Williams in this manner:

The Galilean began to organize the oppressed of the whole world against Rome (Matt. 11:28-30). He was shadowed and framed by the stooges of the Roman Empire (Luke 20:20). On the night before he was lynched, he called his disciples together in an underground meeting (Luke 22:1-12). Here he expounded the nature of the people's movement (Luke 22:25-27), the danger of traitors (John 13:38), the nature of the opposition (John 15:12-20). . . . He warned against individualism or shooting forth as a branch lest they be plucked off. He stressed the power of unity (John 15:

4-7). Early the next morning he was condemned by religious Quislings and crucified by a Gentile Gestapo (Matt. 20:18, 19).<sup>11</sup>

Are the Communist and Christian ideologies compatible? Only if one can be induced to subscribe to the bizarre distortions of a Claude Williams, which few Christians are likely to do; or, if present-day Communists would be prepared to revise their dogmas and take a fresh look at the claims of Christianity—a disposition of mind which neither Mao Tse-tung nor Khrushchev seems to possess.

On the contrary, Communism and Christianity appear to be pitted against each other as rival faiths bidding for the allegiance of humanity. Christian commentators have often sought to explain Communism as a Judaeo-Christian heresy. This approach may not be entirely adequate, but it does help in grasping the inner dynamic of the Communist movement. A brief comparison of the two "religions" may be helpful.

Both Christianity and Communism maintain that there is an ultimate purpose in history, that this final goal will indubitably be realized, that man has an important role to perform in bringing everything to a victorious consummation, that all occurrences and all exertions of effort, insofar as they move history towards the irresistible termination, "work together for good." Marxist theory perceives the movement of history not as an endless cycle, but as an upward spiral, from simple to complex and from lower to higher forms of life. The elementary

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1960), pp. 274, 275.

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courses in Marxian schools of Communist China today trace the development of society through the four epochs of primitive Communism, slavery, feudalism, and industrial capitalism towards socialism, the threshold of authentic Communism.

The concept of God is replaced for the Communists by the dialectic. The creating, sustaining, and ordering process is represented by the tension which persists between all extant forces and ideas in the universe. The all-encompassing, all-absorbing dialectic has the "divine attributes" of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

But as man increases his scientific knowledge, he participates in the dialectical process and becomes his own and the universe's "God." The perfect Communist man of the future might be described as the incarnation of abstract science and natural law. This is the "Christ" whose advent the Communists eagerly await. The abstractions of Communist theory can be understood concretely in terms of a "trinity." The creative power, clash and conflict embedded in the dialectic ("God, the Father"), erupts in revolution; Marx or Lenin or some type of successor is the Messianic figure; and the Communist party is the "Holy Spirit"—the "divine Presence" to be held in awe and to prompt the obedience of the "believers."

The Communist movement might be said to be controlled by an "ecclesiastical hierarchy." The revered "prophets" are those whose special insights have grasped the real significance of the economic and social changes of the last two centuries and who have passed piercing judgments on the foibles of a decadent society. Foreseeing the "effects" of all possible courses

of action, these perceptive seers are capable of prescribing the best solutions to all economic and political problems. Among them must be included Marx, Engels, the Bolsheviks, the Communist party, and Lenin. The top man and his associates in the Kremlin are comparable to an "infallible" pope surrounded by his advisers. (In 1963, Mao Tse-tung with his unbending authoritarianism might fit this description better than Khrushchev, who has denounced "the cult of personality" and who seems to find it necessary to respond to the pressures of the military, the demands of the populace for more consumer goods, or the plea of the intellectuals for more freedom of expression.) Regardless of how one may evaluate the current power structures in the Communist countries, it is no exaggeration to say that dictatorial authority is wielded. To the number one leader and his "college of cardinals"—the political elite, the secret police, the Red army chieftains, the teachers and technicians—belong the prerogative of reinterpreting Marxism-Leninism, defining truth, and pronouncing new dogmas.

Other parallels between the Christian religion and the Communist "religion" are immediately implied. Those men highly esteemed, yes, even apotheosized, for their illustrious accomplishments and self-sacrifice, like Marx and Lenin, become saints if not demigods. The eulogies spoken in 1927 at the funeral of Charles E. Ruthenberg, general secretary of the American Communist party, were almost equivalent to the canonizing of a saint in the Roman Church. Even his dying words, apocryphal as they may have been, were quoted to heal the factionalism and strife

which had inhibited the growth and influence of Communism in the United States: "Tell the Comrades to close the ranks and build the Party."<sup>12</sup> Special rites and processions are conducted regularly at shrines erected in honor of even some of the lesser figures who have died in valorous activity. Communist flags and wreaths are placed around pictures (ikons) or statues of Communist "saints."

Communists have always had criteria for determining the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy. Among the "heretics" must be included the Mensheviks, Trotskyites, Socialists, Titoists—anyone within the Communist ranks who has deviated from the officially approved interpretation. The medieval church used the tortures of the Inquisition and had condemned heretics burned at the stake. Communists have devised new techniques for effective interrogation and "brainwashing." Trials, excommunications, exile, and execution are the penalties meted out to "impenitent" deviationists.

Communists who ridicule Christian worship have their own group "worship" in theaters or public squares where they listen to the "sermons" and exhortations of their leaders. Their antiphonal slogans, cheers and hymns may be construed as their "liturgies."

New converts are expected to "repent" of their past attachment to the sins of capitalism or their affiliation with "reactionary" churches. To demonstrate his sincerity, a new recruit must publicly repudiate the false faith from whose delusions he has been emancipated by Com-

munist "truth." He must vow to surrender his life without any reservations to the Communist cause. After initiatory rites he must learn the Communist "catechism." Regular confession is required in the local cell group, where a sort of "group counseling" aids him in enhancing his Communist stature.

Every means of mass communication is used to proclaim the "gospel" according to Marx and Lenin. In a day when inflation has skyrocketed the cost of printing, Communist literature is sold at almost giveaway prices. In areas that are deemed ripe for revolution, radio, press, cinema, and colportage are all employed to preach the doctrines of Communism. Strange as it may seem, atheists become "evangelists" motivated by a keen sense of mission for bringing peace and prosperity to mankind. Sadly enough, Communist fanaticism seems to be outdoing the Christian missionary enterprise in many parts of the world.

Another striking similarity between Communism and Christianity comes in their understanding of man's fall and man's recovery. In liberal Protestantism's kingdom of God on earth and in some sectarian versions of a millennium there seems to be almost an identification with the Communist Utopia, except that some Christians attribute its implementation to God's activity through men or even His direct intervention in cataclysmic events, while Communists ascribe the transformation to the inevitable outcome of the dialectic of history accelerated by Communist agitation.

Originally, Marx and Engels seem to have devoted little attention to thoughts of a primitive paradise. Gradually, however, they began to imagine a sort of

<sup>12</sup> Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party, A Critical History (1919 to 1957)* (Boston: Beacon, 1957), p. 144.

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Garden of Eden from which man had fallen through the intrusion of private property and to which man would return when the forbidden fruit had been abolished. Between the innocence of the past and the perfection of the future, mankind was enmeshed in malevolent avarice and the clash of opposing interests. The irrepressible dialectic of history is moving towards the emancipation of the wage slaves, as it has already resulted in the elimination of slavery and serfdom. In the fullness of time the dictatorship of the proletariat will arise and initiate the dissolution of the old order and prepare the way for the formation of the classless commonwealth, the negation of all negations. Rejecting any suggestion of divine teleology, the Marxists appear to be saying that through all the ages the unconscious material world has been progressing towards a perfect consummation!

Little more than a hint is provided by the *Manifesto* as to what will replace the old bourgeois society when Communism becomes a reality. Class antagonisms, it is mentioned, will be superseded by "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." In his critique of the Gotha Program, Marx forecasts that in the "higher phase of Communism" everyone will voluntarily work according to his ability, that there will be a tremendous increase in social productivity and income, that there will be no discrimination between manual and intellectual workers, and that everyone will share in the abundance according to his needs. The similarity between these prognostications and the wishful conjectures of utopian Socialists and Christian sectarians is obvious.

To probe more deeply into the Communist ideology and understand it in relation to Christianity, it may be helpful to focus attention on other specific aspects of the Christian and the Marxist view of man.

The original Protestantism of the 16th century, as Paul Tillich points out, was disdainful of any explicit anthropology because of its disavowal of speculative problems in theology generally. As the problem relates to contemporary theology: "Barth's protest against the remnants of the old church anthropology in Bultmann is probably the sharpest expression of radical Protestantism's hostility to anthropology."<sup>13</sup> The underlying cause of the Lutheran-Calvinistic-Barthian repudiation of anthropology is found in the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith without any allowance for a *donum superadditum* as a possession of man.

Therefore, it may be asserted that there is in both Marxism and classical Protestantism a fundamental protest against an elaborated anthropology. In both instances, the reason is a radically negative evaluation of present existence, which in Protestantism is derived from the antithesis between God and man, and in Marxism from the gap between the prevailing conditions in an inept society and the ideal society which must be demanded. To tolerate or expound some form of anthropology would be to mediate and offer relative justification for an existence which is contrary to the true essence of man.

Nevertheless, one can speak of a Communist anthropology, especially as found

<sup>13</sup> A mimeographed study prepared for the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work in 1935, 2d ed. (Harvard University, 1959), p. 3.

in the early writings of Karl Marx, and one can sketch the parallels or distinctions from the Christian understanding of man. Both Christianity and Marxism presuppose an original perfection of human nature. Genesis describes the goodness of creation and the innocence of life in the Garden of Eden. While denying that any divine operation is involved, Marxism assumes a primeval prehistoric undividedness of society. The Genesis account asserts that man has been assigned a predominant role among all the creatures of the earth, but man's distinctive quality is God-consciousness and God-relatedness. For Marxism, man's distinguishing features which determine his freedom, as contrasted with nonhuman nature, are found in his acts of self-production through intelligence and physical working power. "The only nature with which man is concerned is appropriated nature, humanized by labor."<sup>14</sup>

Both Christianity and Marxism project the thought of a transition from an original state of perfection to one of contradiction. In the Genesis account the Fall of Man was precipitated by a rash act of deliberate disobedience in defiance of the sovereignty of God. In Marxism, the Fall is explained as the consequence of social bifurcation. The exploitation of the lower classes by the upper classes becomes the fundamental transgression that ruined the original order.

Again, there is a similarity between Christianity and Marxism in that both believe that they are presently engaged in overcoming man's estrangement — the state of contradiction in which he finds himself — even though the victorious culmination has not yet been reached. In the

Old Testament the hope for the realization of God's purposes and the redemption of a disrupted world was closely attached to the destiny of Israel, portrayed as God's Chosen People. In the New Testament, the Christian community of faith has God's instrument for the rectification of wrong and the bearer of the good tidings of salvation. In Marxism the proletariat must perform their historic mission by arising in revolutionary fervor to reconstruct society and rescue man from his disturbing condition of alienation. Christian trust in the promises of God proclaims the invincibility of the church of Jesus Christ ("The gates of hell shall not prevail against it"). Yet the faithful are called upon to exert themselves in extending the influence and scope of the kingdom of God. Within the Communist camp, despite the conviction that the dissolution of capitalist society is inevitable, the comrades are mobilized for battle and engage in sabotage and intrigue to accelerate the collapse of their enemy. Hence there is a certain "vacillation between believing passivity and critical activity in Christianity as in the Marxist movement."<sup>15</sup>

Both the Christian and the Communist look ahead towards the future fulfillment of their hopes. The ultimate expectation is that man's true nature will be restored in a state of perfection and contentment. The aim in both is the restoration of the original undividedness which is believed to be indispensable for the attainment of man's ideal condition. In Christianity as well as in Marxism the actualization of the individual's rightful destiny is intimately bound up with the salvation of other people. In the New Testament, there

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.



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are apocalyptic allusions to a final catastrophe (e.g., ". . . the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10 RSV) that will precede the parousia and the formation of a new heaven and a new earth. Communism, especially in its Leninist-Stalinist form, predicates the necessity for bloody uprisings and earth-shaking proletarian revolutions as preliminary to the implementation of Marxist theories about the good society. (Nikita Khrushchev sometimes indicates that he has modified this aspect of Leninism.)

So much for the affinities between Marxist and Christian anthropology. There are also contradictions.

As for conceptions of the primal state, Communist writings view it as prehistorical and empirical. In the Biblical portrayal of creation, God acts prior to and independent of the existence of man. For Marx, creation is synonymous with human history, in which man produces himself and his nature. The Christian conceives of himself as being made in the image of God. As far as the Communist is concerned, man creates God in his image.

A sharp difference between Communism and Christianity becomes apparent when we consider man's final goal. In Christianity even the church of Jesus Christ on earth provides for only a partial realization of man's potential. Complete fulfillment is beyond spatio-temporal existence, and death becomes the gateway to unending life with God. Marxists must deceive themselves psychologically about the significance of death. They cannot probe into any profound reality beyond the grave. All of man's hope, for them, is wrapped

up in his earthly life, and death supposedly terminates everything for the individual. Christianity can affirm triumph in the midst of adversity for both the individual and the community of believers. Often Communism must sacrifice the individual in a ruthless and cruel manner, to expedite the advent of the new age. By clinging to tragic illusions about the nature of man and human destiny, Communism is likely to yield the bitter fruits of class hatred, the wholesale liquidation of dissenting elements, and the enforcement of a police-state type of regimentation that cripples the possibilities for personal freedom.

We may conclude this comparison of two ideologies by quoting the perceptive analysis of Reinhold Niebuhr:

That evil is a pretentious scheme of world salvation, a secularized religious apocalypse, which foolishly divided the world between good and evil classes and nations, predicts the final triumph of the hosts of justice against those of injustice, and destines one class, the "proletariat," to become the masters of the whole historic process, by taking "the leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom." If this absurd religious apocalypse should ever be implemented on a large scale, and should master the destinies of all the nations, mankind would face not only totalitarian government, but a dangerous effort to press all the vitalities and forces, the hopes and aspirations of many nations, the cultural and ethical aspirations of sensitive individuals into the restrictive and confining pattern of its scheme of world salvation. The Communist danger is, in short, much more grievous and perilous than we assume it to be if we define it merely as despotism.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Reprinted from the *Wall Street Journal in Dateline*, October 1961.

Berkeley, California