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Communism: A Christian Critique

By SAMUEL W. WILLIAMS

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE that Christianity should not take critical notice of Communism today. There are at least two reasons for this. The first is to be found in the fact that communism is now a serious and very real threat to the continued existence of Christianity. The second reason may be found in the nature of Christianity itself. At the center of Christian doctrine is the conception of a living, righteous God who makes demands upon his children in terms of his own nature. He has made known and does make known his will to men. Hence those who believe in such a God and what he wills for men must find themselves passing judgment upon all existing systems or orders of mankind which do not fit the pattern of the will of God, who is a living, righteous being. In a word, the will of God is always normative. All human behavior is to be judged by the will of God and of course communism comes under this judgment.

There can be no questioning of the fact that with the increased and increasing political strength of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics due mainly to the conditions and circumstances resulting from the second world war, communism is gaining mightily in influence in the minds of men all over the world. To those who regard communism as anti-Christ this fact must be frightening. Well might it be, for communism is a distinctly live option in our world today, possessing a moral strength which the Christian community will find it increasingly difficult to reckon with unless there is a hurried cleaning of house on the part of the Christian community itself. This point is made despite the fact that in this paper I shall try to criticize communism as theory and shall do so from the point of view of theoretical Christianity. Even this, however, can hardly be done effectively without reference to the practice of communism and of Christianity. I believe that men lose faith in a way of life when it fails them in practice or they discover that the believers do not

themselves believe enough in the faith to practice it. It is then that men seek a new faith.

I see therefore this growing moral strength of communism developing out of two conditions, one being the promise of communism. This would not be effective in our world today were it not for the great failures of Christianity in the areas of Communist promise. Like the religion of Christianity, communism promises to save men from insecurity to security, from injustice to justice and peace. In short, it promises men a better world. Communism claims to be in all respects the only truly "working man's philosophy." This claim was made by the founder, Marx. Ninety per cent of the world's peoples have all their lives known suffering and injustice even until now and at the hands of their brothers! Marx proclaimed that the purpose of his philosophy was to change the world. "The task of philosophy is not to contemplate the world but to change it." He placed for the first time in the hands of the exploited an instrument with which they might forge the techniques of their own liberation from bondage. There is, then, first this great ethical promise of communism which gives it its tremendous appeal. In the second instance, communism is the logical and necessary out-growth of the failures of Christianity. Christianity itself arose in history as a movement calculated to free men from bondage. It came forth with the good news of the Kingdom of God at a time of confusion and crisis in the life of man. Somewhere along the line of her development she has faltered in fulfilling her mission. When men discover failure in the practice of faith, they begin to analyze the faith, seeking to find, if possible, reason for this failure to live the faith. In so doing they very often come forth with a new faith. My own judgment is that we are dealing with a new religion when we deal with communism. That it is a new religion I hope will become clearer as this paper progresses. One can hardly say that Jacques Maritain is friendly to Marx and his teaching, and yet he admits that the failure of Christianity is responsible for the growing resentment toward the Christian world.

But the essential and typical point is that communist thought, as it was built up in the latter half of the nineteenth century and as it is to-day, has turned these energies of Christian origin to the service of an atheist ideology whose whole

structure is turned against Christian beliefs. What is the cause of this? It is, I hold, because it originates, chiefly through the fault of a Christian world unfaithful to its own principles, in a profound sense of resentment, not only against the Christian world, but—and here lies the tragedy—against Christianity itself, which transcends the Christian world and should not be confounded with it¹

II

It has been denied by some that Marxism has any world-view. It is regarded therefore as being primarily a social philosophy. This, however, is an incorrect view. It is a metaphysical philosophy. The world-view of Marxism is dialectical and historical materialism. Failure to comprehend the world-view of Marxism is to fail to understand the present workings of communism. It is to fail to comprehend the tremendous influence it is having upon contemporary history.

Communism is called dialectical because it seeks to interpret nature dialectically. The method of the dialectic is extended to the study of society and its history. In a word, the dialectic method is an attempt to apply the law of motion to human social institutions. Marx and Engels took this method from Hegel who, working with the implications of a theory of evolution (not with what Darwin gave us in 1859), came to the view that the development of thought and things is occasioned by and through a conflict of opposites. For Hegel this did two things. In the first place, it described the manner in which things came into being, develop, and behave. Secondly, it was descriptive of the way in which we learn the truth about things. In Hegel's thinking these two were not separated. The development of things and the truth about them were all one process, with the second being given preeminence by Hegel. Marx, however, stressed more the development of things.² This is what Marx meant no doubt when he said he was taking only the "rational kernel," dismissing the idealistic shell. Marx endeavored to develop this "rational kernel" to such an extent that it took on scientific form. The dialectic is the "science of the general laws of motion both of the external world and of human thinking." Engels was quite sure that he found in nature sufficient proof of the law of the dialectic. For him nature was the test of the dialectic.

¹Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism* (New York, 1938), p. 33.

²C. E. M. Joad, *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics* (New York, 1938), pp. 664-665.

I think it is clear that we have here the Hegelian synthesis. Nothing can be understood when it is considered in isolation. So considered it is meaningless. All things are interconnected, dependent upon and determined by one another. Thus, understanding requires knowledge of these facts. It means, as well, seeing things whole. It means also recognizing that, although all things are related and dependent upon and determined by one another change is a basic characteristic. Thus, nature and human social institutions must likewise be studied from the point of view of their "coming into being and passing out of being." This process is governed by these laws—laws Marx and Engels regarded as scientific. They are (1) the law of transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa, (2) the law of strife, interpenetration, and unity of opposites, and (3) the law of the negation of the negation. Proper understanding of these laws should make possible predictions regarding the development of human social institutions.

It is not an accident that communism is called materialistic. One must not, however, confuse this materialism with nineteenth century mechanistic materialism nor with modern positivism. Communism views the phenomena of nature materialistically and therefore is called materialistic. This means that for communism matter is the primary reality. It is opposed to the doctrine which teaches that the world is the embodiment of some "Absolute Spirit," "Idea" or some "universal consciousness." The world by its very nature is material and the manifold manifestations which we observe are but the different forms of matter in motion. Motion, of course, is established by the dialectical laws of motion. Nature and human social institutions develop, then, only in accordance with the laws of the movement of matter.

Matter exists independent of mind or sense perception. Mind is secondary and is a reflection of matter. Physical events set the mind in motion. They determine the action (thought) of the mind. It is thus obvious why Communists look to things as the determiners of the course of history.

The theory of history in communism follows logically from its theory of the dialectics and of materialism. Events occur because of the conflict of opposites. The truth about history

can be possible only upon understanding the opposing tendencies. This includes the two tendencies and the result of the conflict of the two. It therefore follows that all that exists—ideas, events, institutions, social systems—has a history. That is to say, they have all developed out of and by means of some historical conditions and circumstances. Every existing thing contains its opposite. Any notion whatsoever is occasioned by the confrontation of its opposite. The new which emerges from the conflict of the confrontation of opposites has in it the previous stage of development, yet it goes beyond the opposite of which it is the fruit. The correct theory of history is then a theory of movement, of the development of society.

Communism cannot accept the thesis that events in history are accidental or that they are the result of some outside force or divine, supernatural power. Events in history are the internal laws of development at work which, when known, will explain all historical development and change. The central fact in historical development is the class struggle. The class struggle is itself the result of change in the methods of production. This is the condition which produces classes in the first place. The present chaotic circumstance in which the world finds itself, and especially in America, is easily reducible to the condition of the modes of production of the material life. This fact of the history of man, being that of class struggle, introduces the *Manifesto*.

The antagonisms in society result from the struggle to live. Men in the process of trying to make a living have to work. To labor, men have to have tools with which to exploit nature. The men who can manage to get control of these tools are the men who will become the masters of other men—their exploiters. In modern capitalist society the tools of production are in the hands of a few people and are increasingly coming to be controlled by fewer. Hence, in modern society, there is created actually just two opposing classes—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The goal of history for the Communist is, then, the abolition of class. This means that all exploitation of man by man will be eliminated from human society. History is therefore moving toward freedom. Freedom means simply man's ability to control and manage the conditions of his life to the end that his needs

and desires shall be satisfied. Since history is seen as being in motion and the motion is from the lower to the higher, progress literally becomes "the growth of freedom."

I am of the opinion that here is the ground for the messianic hope in communism. Here we see the belief that history has a goal and is moving toward the fulfillment of that goal according to the inexorable laws of nature (the dialectic). Hence Communists must have no fear for their day is surely coming. This I think is just as strong a basis for hope as is the Christian's for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Psychologically, the basis for the hope is just as sound. On metaphysical and logical grounds, the basis may not be so sound. All I am seeking to point out is that the Communists have a basis for the great religious zeal or passion which characterizes them in their devotion to the faith of communism.

An examination of the Communist world-view is not complete without some attention being given to its epistemology. I am confident that here, too, we find reason for the passion for the faith held by the devotees. I regard their epistemology as a logical development of their world-view, of the basic theoretical assumptions about the nature of matter and the theory of motion. Theory of knowledge is essential to social theory. The conclusion to which the British empiricists came, including Kant, caused Marx to find them all objectionable. The net result of the empiricist position is this: while all of our knowledge comes by means of the senses, it is not possible to trust the senses to convey to us reliable knowledge even of the sensations themselves, not to mention their inability to inform us of the nature of reality itself. The external world was in fact thought to be unknowable. Men can make no contact with it. Kant informed us that the thing-in-itself cannot be known except perhaps by inference.

Marx, of course, refused to accept such conclusions. He was strong in his conviction that the external world is prior to our thought about it; that thinking, perceiving, is only a part of the action of nature and that therefore our senses do report reality to us. There are good reasons for Marx's taking the position he did take. He was attempting to be scientific in his approach to

society. Only in such a way did he think that men could make for themselves a better world. If they discovered the laws which govern society and followed them, men *could* build a decent social order. Consequently, if what the empiricists had taught was correct about knowing, there could not in fact be any science of society because scientific laws have a reality which go deeper than mere impressions. They are more than mental states. Not to be able to have reliable and valid knowledge of the social development of human institutions would mean that the exploited classes would then be deprived of their most useful and effective weapon. Knowledge for Marx was a revolutionary tool. It is still such a tool for a Communist. If it is not valid, deception becomes inevitable and men seeking freedom are helpless in their fight for it. The oppressor could by deception continue to delude the oppressed. This would make possible supernaturalistic theories of history—theories in which history is said to be fulfilled in some other world and at some later time, thereby permitting even the contention that all efforts to create a better world here and now are unnecessary.

Our senses do give us actual knowledge of the external world—of external reality. It is no mere sensation or faint impression that the oppressed receive just enough wages to subsist on. Poor homes are not just mental impressions with no reality beyond the series of association of impressions. The bread which is an idea in my mind is not the same bread which abates my hunger. That I cannot get my education in the best schools in my State because of segregation is more than a series of impressions. That is real and reality does not escape the senses.

One can hardly fail to appreciate Marx's theory that knowing is no mere act of contemplation, the human mind being itself a product of nature is a part of nature. What is more significant, the mind has become a potent factor in nature. Mind becomes co-determinant with nature in the process of making men. It is not incorrect to say that in the theory of knowledge of Marx and his interpretation of its place in nature we have evolution made conscious.

Marx emphasized another side of knowledge which must be

mentioned here. That is the ideological character of knowledge. Knowledge is subjective in the sense that it represents our class position, our thinking, as the product of historical events which have conspired to locate us where we are in the social order in relation to our fellowmen. The existential character of knowledge is produced by or because of the existence of class society. So long as there exists class (a social order in which it is possible for men to exploit other men), just so long will knowledge possess its ideological character. This is one of the lasting contributions of Marx to our thinking. It is still not uncommon to find those who regard knowledge as something absolute, eternal, and beyond history. Marx helped us to see that knowledge belongs where men as knowing subjects are—in history. This view establishes the dynamic character of knowledge which was so important to Marx and which is still very significant for modern communism.

Marx's treatment of knowledge gave it a double character. It does two things at the same time. It both communicates and conceals. Here again the emphasis is placed on the determinative character of the class system. Knowledge is conditioned and determined by the conditions of social existence at any given period in history. The conflict arises in society when those ideas become useful no longer because the social relations which made them possible are no longer functionally useful. It seems clear also that Marx is saying that ideology of any given historical epoch is such as will serve the class in power. Hence, in a capitalistic economy men's thinking is conditioned and their conduct is shaped by a bourgeois morality, which is slanted toward the preservation of the existing social arrangements.

One should raise at least one question at this point. If all knowledge is conditioned, is such knowledge ever to be trusted? If all knowledge is relative in this sense to historical circumstances and conditions, can there be any knowledge which is sufficiently free from this bias to provide man the knowledge even that Marx claimed to have about knowledge? Obviously, there must be some truths which transcend the dialectics of historical circumstances sufficiently to make possible valid knowledge about the historical situation itself.

III

A revolutionary philosophy has developed from this world-view of Marxism. It has been embraced with great passion by those who follow Marx. There remain now to be examined some of the deductions communism makes from its metaphysical views. I shall discuss first their view of human nature.

Man is interpreted as a product of nature just as all other organic life. Man, like all other life, must engage in necessary activity to make a living. As man goes about the business of making his living, he invariably and necessarily effects some kind of relationship with his fellows. Human life and living is fundamentally social life and living. Men live by means of society. This that is called human nature is something which is produced in the process of social relationships. There is no such thing as fixed human nature. The only constants human organisms may be said to have are such features as sex and hunger. The kind of human nature men have at any given time in history is a nature which has been made by the social relations in which he has been living.

At this point, it seems good to point out that Marx was not an economic determinist as so many seem to regard him. It is incorrect to say that Marx considered the getting of material necessities the foundation upon which all social orders are built, but this is not to say that economics only determine social change. The problem existed in Marx' and Engels' own time. Engels sought to define his position in the following words:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation forms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle etc.—forms of law—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form* . . .³

Marx more correctly may be called a social determinist. The central factor in social determinism is the "mode of production

³Quoted in Wm. Ebenstein's *Man and The State* (New York, 1947), p. 383.

of the material life of society." A quick glance at what Marx means by labor may help in appreciating the view taken by Marx. Labor was unquestionably a social factor. In *Wage, Labor and Capital* we are told:

In production men not only act on nature but also on one another. They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production, take place.⁴

The forces of production are not merely tools, nature, and men who labor, but an important factor is the relationships into which men enter in the process of production. Human nature is produced in this process. It is this fact that makes Marx place so much stress upon the element of relationship into which men enter as they go about the task of making a living. Hence production is at all times social production and human nature is likewise a social product which is changed as the relationships entering into the process of production are changed.

This view of human nature and its relation to the forces of production gives rise to the theory of value in the Communist theory—a theory which is of tremendous importance in an evaluation of communism. If all labor is social labor, it follows that value is social as well. This is to say, the value which an object of production possesses will depend upon the amount of "socially necessary labor time which has been employed in its production." This is a theory of value contrary to that of the classical economist. The classical theory of value follows logically from the epistemological considerations of the British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, Mill, and Bentham. Such epistemological considerations led men to regard reality as being nothing but the association successively of individual sense data and the pain, pleasure, and wants associated with them. As the determinant of value: the value of a thing depends not upon its use or upon its exchange necessarily, but solely upon its being wanted. Value becomes, then, psychological. This view of value throws light upon the theory of demand. It means that there is nothing very predictive about such a view of value. Marx wanted a

⁴Quoted in J. Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (New York, 1940), p. 29.

theory of value which had predictive significance. Marx thus gives us a theory of the nature of value and does not go into theorizing about the measure of value.

Marx's theory of value is significant in that it represents society as a unity, as being interdependent, and not as an aggregation of discrete, atomic individuals each seeking his own individual wish. On Marx's view, the welfare of one is tied to the welfare of the whole. The individual himself is not a discrete plurality but a unity, a oneness himself. Here is a meaning which those who have been nurtured on the epistemological views of empiricism can hardly appreciate. It is a view which those of us who have grown up on capitalistic intellectual food find it hard to understand. Our total approach to life is on the discrete, individual basis. It is on this foundation that we would accept the thesis which holds that anything one does is right so long as what he does does not infringe upon the rights of others. Hence, if I by virtue of being born first can manage to get hold of most that is available, the rights of one born later can hardly extend very far! It is on his analysis of value in the light of such considerations that Marx set forth his theory of surplus value. It follows logically from his general theory of value. It is this "surplus" in value which provides for the accumulation of capital and the consequent exploitation of man by man.⁵

Communism looks upon the existing state as an evil thing. It is nothing but an instrument of exploitation used by the class in power. The state as presently constituted must be destroyed. The state is the police power of the ruling class. The "State" is indeed, the product of the antagonisms which now exist in society. Such conflicting interests will not be done away until the proletariat comes into power and the instruments of production have become common property of the people. In such time the "state" will "wither away." It will wither away because it will no longer be needed. The condition necessary for this depends also upon the utmost development of the modes of production, which have also changed hands. When the conditions are ripe for the transformation, the proletariat will seize power and transform the modes of

⁵For the point of view expressed in this section on value, I have been guided in my thinking by the excellent treatment of F. S. C. Northrop's in his *Meeting of the East and West* (New York, 1947), Chapter VI.

production into the property of the people. In this act the proletariat will not only put an end to themselves but will also put an end to all class differences.

One needs to indicate here that this view of the "withering away of the state," which Lenin believed to be the inevitable course of Communist development, is one about which Stalin does not seem to be optimistic. He says:

Those comrades have failed to understand the essential meaning of this doctrine . . . what is more they do not understand present-day international conditions, have overlooked the capitalist encirclement and the dangers it entails for the socialist country . . . They likewise betray an under-estimation of the role and significance of our socialist state and of its military, punitive and intelligence organs, which are essential for the defense of the socialist land from attack.⁶

It is clear that Stalin plans to use the state for a long time as an instrument. He wants it to prevent attacks upon the Socialist state and to prevent any possible counter-revolution from occurring in the Socialist state itself.

IV

There is much more that could be said, and which perhaps should be said, in setting forth the theory of communism, but I think I have stated the essential thesis of the system and there remains now the task of evaluating the system from the point of view of Christian theory. In doing this, I shall (1) indicate areas of agreement which I believe to exist between the two systems, (2) show what Christianity might take over from communism, and (3) point out the areas of disagreement and objection.

With regard to agreement, I find that communism and Christianity have essentially the same goal. Both promise mankind deliverance from oppression and suffering in this life, especially that oppression and suffering occasioned by the injustices of man to man. Both are driven by great passions for social justice and each promises people that it will free man from the oppression which hurts most. It is not merely salvation from economic injustice that communism promises. It, too, promises a better world. A world order in which men will live as brothers is the hope and promise of both systems. I should

⁶Quoted from C. J. Friedrich, *Inevitable Peace* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p. 217.

think that it should be admitted by Christians that in this area the goals of the religion of Jesus and that of Karl Marx are essentially the same. This admission would, it seems to me, strengthen the Christian in his efforts to convince mankind of the weaknesses in communism.

There is a decisiveness in history that both agree on also. History is meaningful and all events take their meaning from the future. Thus, Christianity and communism look to the future. There is a reason for this and this reason indicates a difference in the views of history the two take. History is progressive and events take their meaning from the future, of course, but the center of history is where the difference comes. Communism regards the revolution of 1917 as the center of history and all time—before and future—take meaning from this fact. One must therefore interpret all history in the light of the revolution. For the future, all events must be interpreted in the light of this revolution. This single event in time now becomes the norm for all historic judgment. Christianity regards Jesus as the center of history. All historic events must be interpreted in the light of that single event—the birth and death of a man of Nazareth. History is the arena in which the struggle between justice and injustice, security and insecurity, freedom and slavery is fought to the finish. Unrighteousness, of course, is destined to lose in the battle.

In this connection, both world-views consider a class as the bearer of historical destiny. It is the proletariat for communism and for Christianity it is the redeemed, the church. The present state of man by both views is interpreted as not being man's real state of existence. Present man is "fallen" man. Salvation from this present state is possible. It will take place in history. Of course there is disagreement as to how and when this will come about. Historic Christianity leaves most of the responsibility for this to God, while communism believes that united efforts of all the exploited of the world will accomplish the task. The Communist would employ violence if the situation seems to call for it. Christianity or, better, Jesus would insist on the use of nonviolence.

When it comes to the unity of theory and practice there is essential agreement. Truth cannot be divorced from action.

Truth is that which is done. It must be acted. The New Testament is full of admonitions on this point. "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." "By their fruits ye shall know them," etc. Perhaps one should not say it, but at this point Christians are weakest and Communists strongest. It is on this point that any social movement designed to bring salvation to people must succeed first if it hopes to do well in other respects. Communists have seen the wisdom of trying to succeed at this point first for they know that world peace or any other kind of peace will depend greatly on the success of this factor. I refer mainly now to the problem of the relation of the races of mankind. In fairness to communism, I think it must be said that in practice it has done better than Christianity. This I consider to be one of the very strong moral considerations favoring communism in its appeal for the minds of men.

The person is said to be valuable by both systems. He is a social being and his good or evil depends on his social existence. I have here some misgivings about the sincerity of Communists on this point. The theory is there, but I am doubtful that it works out. Doubt arises at the point of the treatment opponents of communism receive at the hands of professed believers in the doctrine of Marx.

What may Christianity learn from Marxism? It may learn the value of "existential thinking," but must not debase it into an easy-going relativism. Christians have not given enough thought to the fact that material production is the basis of historical development and that knowledge of this fact provides additional insights into the nature of man! Use could be made of the dialectical method in the interpretation of history by the Christian. There will no doubt be disagreement here. Yet, I believe that use of the dialectic would free Christianity from some of its idealistic idealism which, in my judgment, divorced it from the historic scene and thus prevents existential thinking so essential if thorough comprehension of social development is desired.

On the objectionable side in communism, one cannot read the doctrines of communism nor observe the behavior of its devotees throughout our world without seeing the fanatical desire to dictate the total cultural life. In fact, communism has apparently become a "static system of dogma." There is really

no room for what Christians regard so highly—freedom of conscience. The principle of the liberty of conscience is interpreted by Christians as one safeguard against tyranny and oppression, against the stagnation of society. This doctrine follows logically from the Christian theory of the worth and dignity of the individual person—of his right to be a person, to think, and to assume responsibility. In communism this is denied. It operates on the thesis that "the rules must be made by those who know"; that only a few, therefore, are competent to do correct thinking, which all others are to follow.

The Classless Society is thought by Communists to be realizable in history. This is possible on their view once the necessary alterations are made in the relations of men to the production of material life. All else will automatically fall into order. Christianity regards this as utopian. It teaches that even when these changes will have been accomplished, there will yet exist in men the tendency to vanity, pride, love of power for its own sake, selfishness, etc., which will express themselves in other forms and must be eradicated.

The Kingdom of God as interpreted by Christianity is normative. This is not true of the Classless Society. The Kingdom of God will not be realized in history, but beyond history. This, however, does not mean that the creation of a good society in this earth is impossible. Quite the contrary. It is to recognize that human growth toward goodness can never be completed in history. The Kingdom is beyond history and can therefore be normative for all historic events. Events are particular. A good society in history will be a particular society and thus impermanent. It will be time-controlled. It will pass away; it ought to pass away. Particularity that becomes static becomes an evil. Only the normative and the universal can enjoy the status of permanence. It is not controlled by time for it is eternal. Such is the nature of the Christian doctrine of the Kingdom of God. The universal serves as a guide, a goal toward which particulars may strive. I therefore look upon this theory of the Christian idea of the Kingdom as being sounder, ethically and philosophically, than the Communist idea of its fulfillment in history.

Finally, Christianity finds objectionable the dictatorship principle in communism, even though it is theoretically an *ad interim* dictatorship. For it presents the problem of power for power's sake, and the idealism of communism has been transformed into justification for the oppression of those who differ ideologically with it. The desire for the good must never become a reason to do wrong. Christianity explicitly teaches that the only way to treat an opponent is to love him. He is not to be liquidated, exterminated, or annihilated, but loved! Communism has no healthy record of dealing with its political enemies. Christianity does not find that the end justifies the means and communism does. An immoral means can destroy a moral end. The moral end must control the means, that is, must keep the means equally moral.⁷

In our time two great ideologies, two world views, two religions compete for the minds and hearts of men. The great question that will decide the issue between them is not going to be which system is the true one. The issue will be decided on the basis of the answer to another question: What difference does either make? If Christianity is different and is said to be better than communism, what practical differences does it make? No longer do men consider it too important to speculate as to whether a doctrine is metaphysically sound. They will ask, and are asking, for the practical difference. Which will meet the test? History will tell.

⁷Two books have been especially helpful in guiding my thinking in the final section of this paper: John C. Bennett, *Christianity and Communism* (New York, 1948), and Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago, 1948).