

Christianity and Marxism . . .

In view of the structures and concerns of organized religion in the West today, an interesting anomaly is immediately presented by the title of this article.

Many churches, the Roman Catholic Church in particular, are organized into almost corporate entities, embodying a large 'bureaucracy' and handling large sums of money.

Thus, even the suggestion that Marxism's atheistic base and anti-corporate philosophy holds some parallels to what we know as 'Christianity', is strange, if not repugnant, at first glance.

However, in reading the following article, it must be remembered that the convergence and divergence of the two is based on the 'base' tenets and philosophies of both, rather than their applications in modern society.

The writings of Marx, Engels, and other socialist thinkers tend to serve today only as a basis for a socialist society. For socialism, too, despite its broadly humanitarian concepts, must still succumb to the shroud of bureaucracy that tends to dehumanize the entire structure.

The organized Christian religion also suffers from the dehumanization of vast organization. No longer is the basic 'grass-roots goodness' of Biblical concern a major concern of all too many churches and theologians.

This leads us to a pervasive characteristic of both socialist and Christian organizations in modern society. The maintenance of stability in such large structures as a socialist government or a universal Christian church necessitates the maintenance of strongly upheld tenets and the restrictions imposed by such. Which is an extended definition of 'dogma'.

It is unfortunate that in both cases there is a great deal of repression of dissenters and ideas, all for the sake of stability.

Thus neither Marxism in a socialist state nor Christianity in an organized church hold closely to the basic philosophies underlying each.

(Just as added food for thought, incidentally, while reading this article think of the interpretation of True Christianity as is purveyed by such 'Evangelists of The Word' as Carl McIntyre.

Nothing could be farther from the original teachings of Christ. Amen.)

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By DR. JAN M. LOCHMAN

A significant convergence between Marxism and the Christian message has first become clear for some Christians and Marxists in practical matters.

I am referring to the practical experience we have gathered in our society in the past decades. Christians and Marxists have been brought closer together in the decisive moments of our recent history in spite of the ideological tensions and distance separating one from the other.

It was no accident that the intensive contacts of some theologians (J. L. Hromdka was foremost among them) had begun with Marxist leaders during the 1930's in a co-operative action to strengthen Spanish democracy.

Similarly, Christians and Marxists stood in common resistance to Fascism, and they also participated in the common task of social re-construction and the democratization of the socialist society.

This advance was intentionally impelled by practical and political motives. Both sides understood that there was no ideological identity. On the contrary, the ideological front remained unmoved. Yet practical co-operation precipitated a look into a certain convergence between the Christian message and Marxism.

It was evidently not an accident that Christians and Marxists found themselves aligned in many practical decisions. They did not reach their analogous decisions haphazardly but on the basis of their faith and thought. This implied that they, at least, were deployed and motivated in a similar direction.

Thus it seemed very natural that they should

clarify in a kind of mutual dialogue what this convergence (and what the persistent divergence) is all about.

In recent times there has emerged from both sides the concept of "humanization" to characterize this shared concern of Christians and Marxists. This is certainly justified; humanizing social conditions is clearly our common concern. Still this concept is very general.

If we are not able to fill this general idea with a more concrete content, then the concept of convergence would be too narrow. Indeed, when we consider the exact meaning of humanization, especially when dealing with the question of what belongs to the authentic "dimensions of the humane," the consensus between Marxism and the Christian message is much broader.

Society, History and the Future

If I were to express this convergence in a very fragmentary and abbreviated way using three major topics, I would select the concepts of *society*, *history* and the *future*.

The Marxist and Christian view of what man is emphatically states, to start with, that man is a social creature. Man is not an abstract, isolated creature content in himself. He lives in association with others. He is a social being. This is the fundamental qualification of his existence and the delimitation of his being as a man.

He has to be in an actual solidarity with other men, not bound up in concern for his own individuality only. This is the way of human fulfillment in a personal and social sense.

Above all, that solidarity means fellowship with the poor and oppressed, the weary and heavy laden—including the concern for a more just society. This stance of solidarity, this "socialistic impulse," distinguishes Christianity and Marxism from other orientations that place more emphasis on individual possibilities.

There is another shared attitude: we both take history seriously as a significant dimension of human existence.

Man is not an abstract, general, metaphysically prefabricated substance. He is an historical creature. By that I do not mean that he is an abstract individual, possessing "historicity," but rather that he exists and participates within the concretely given historical conditions and relations.

Living in this historical context he is no mere object in history; he is also history's subject and agent. History is his sphere of responsibility. History is the forum where his business is transacted.

In this connection we come to the third shared concept, the future. Christian and Marxist thought is thinking directed to the future. Man is homo viator, man on the way. He is on his way to a future destination. He is not tied down to a once-for-all-time-given status quo.

On the contrary, his heart belongs to that which will come. He knows he has been called. What is at hand is not enough for him. He must think about the promises of a greater justice. And in the light of that greater justice, he must not only interpret but change his world.

Authentic Dialogue

None of these converging motifs shared by Christians and Marxists can be simply stated without some qualification. None of these motifs excludes rather divergent aspects of these conceptions.

What Marxism and the Christian message have in common under the topics of society, history and the future is not simply identical. Therefore, when we think of the dialogue between the two, we must always consider the serious tensions between them.

Nevertheless, what I have indicated about the convergence between them is not an illusion. Their concentration upon these dimensions of man's existence clearly differentiates them from many other possible philosophical, religious and political analyses of man, for example, the existentialist and



MAN IS A SOCIAL ANIMAL

. . . be he Marxist or Christian