

SUPER - POWER ATHEISM—

ENDTIME DRAMA Of The Western World

**(What does Biblical Prophecy Say about Modern Communism?) Carsten Johnsen:
"The Bottomless Pit"**

(ABYSSOS) In Prophetic Language

Could it be the term par excellence for militant atheism and dogmatic materialism as a world power (Marxism)? And could it at the same time stand for the most tragic Bottomlessness in your life and mine in view of the concrete situation God finds us in today?

1. INTRODUCTION

My sense of intellectual fairness was somewhat troubled at the moment when I concluded my booklet Omega II, The Satanic Dynamics of Modern Philosophies Infiltrating the Endtime Church. Had I been unfair to that very Realism which I tried to defend? There seemed to be some serious lack of balance in my writing, and that is far from realistic. I had spoken too onesidedly about certain mysterious trends of Spiritualism now endeavoring to disrupt the minds and the hearts of our people, particularly the would-be intellectual elite among us. But what about the opposite extreme of humanistic perversion, namely simple materialism? How could I neglect to make a deeper inquiry into the phenomenon closest of all, that of materialism? This ought to be primordial, the more so as just my Omega I (The Mystic Omega Of Endtime Crisis), points out a most curious and most significant fact: it is only at the moment when spiritualism proper goes to the strange perversion of entering into illicit matrimony with downright materialism, that a particularly fascinating hybrid phenomenon suddenly emerges, namely pantheism:

It will certainly incumb on me now to consider, in the sensational light of Biblical knowledge, placed side by side with historical fact, one great topic of the present day: Communism, that is, the Marxist phenomenon of dogmatic materialism. The entire world is affected by this today. In what particular way does it affect you and me? In a terrible way which you may not have thought of!

2. WAS COMMUNISM NOT SEEN WORTHY OF MENTION IN HOLY WRIT?

I am speaking about communism, not only as a modern anti-religious theory of world-wide historic turmoils in the disrupted hearts of philosophizing men, but about Communism as a literal super-power in the drama of the endtime, both politically and spiritually speaking. Simple silence about such a "kingdom", in fact a savagely persecuting world-power, that would seem incredible to me. For never did a more openly boastful or notoriously aggressive form of godlessness happen to the human race.

Eschatology (the dramatic theme of the last things) is an element pervading the Bible from cover to cover. And visibly the most audacious and plainly conspicuous unfolding of outrageous materialism was reserved for the time of the end.

But make no mistake here. This is not going to be a book of the ordinary kind, just criticizing communism and communists, finding fault with their irrationalism in thought and their wickedness in action. No, my main aim at present is rather to criticize you and me, finding fault with our irrationalism in thought, and our wickedness in action.

Therefore, I want to start with a question that is rarely asked:

What do communists say about Christians?

Here you may perhaps feel more like answering with a spiteful gesture: "It does not matter one bit what they say."

You are wrong. It matters, and infinitely more so than Christians are inclined to think. So let us get to know what they do say about us anyway. They may have more arguments in their favor -- and in

our definite disfavor -- than you and I would like to admit.

In the so-called Christian West one has little reason to be ignorant of what Christians say about Communists. From the Roman Catholic Church, through midstream Protestantism, to the fulminations of the religious Far Right the word is "Nyet!" Our main charge against Communists is that religious freedom is denied, at least as that freedom is defined in the West.

But what do Communists say about Christians? Do they, too, have a bill of particulars? Even just a few pictures from the anti-religious museum in Leningrad -- officially called the

Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism -- might convince you that Communists do have something to say, and they say it with force and bitter scorn.

Do Communists and Christians speak together -- back and forth -- about these things? Otherwise dialogue has become almost a cliché within Christian ranks. It even extends to milieus far beyond any Christendom. There are dialogues of the most enthusiastic kind taking place between Christians and notorious pagans. I am speaking about deeply religious non-Christians. But tell me now, if you please -- what effort has been expended to dialogue with hardcore Communists?

It is only very recently, and on a limited scale, that Communist dialecticians and Christian theologians have sat down together to explore their "respective theologies". And on both sides are people who criticize the very fact that one is having even limited encounters without brushing one's feet after the ceremony. This attitude of doubt and denunciation reminds us of the fact that Christ was attacked very strongly by the "righteous" ones for eating with tax collectors and sinners.

Christians ought not to forget that Marxism, as a view of life, has more than proved its ability to capture the allegiance of millions of minds. Its idealism is so humanly engaging that nothing but religion is known to have produced effects of similar magnitude. The achievement is all the more amazing, when one recalls that this allegiance was gained in the face of the entrenched institutional Church.

3. ARE COMMUNISTS SOMETIMES MORE WHOLEHEARTED THAN CHRISTIANS?

An impressive number of communists rival Christians in their commitment to the cause. Both share the vision of a universal mission. In the Communist party the Marxist finds something to believe in, something to hope for. He finds nothing less than a religion, a meaning in life. He finds something worthy of his fight. The wholeheartedness of some Marxists, their zeal, their sacrifice, should cause many a Christian to review his discipleship.

4. WHAT CHARGES DO COMMUNISTS RAISE AGAINST CHRISTIANS?

1) The Church, they say, is always on the side of established authorities. It defends invariably the "status quo", no matter how "un-Christian" that "status quo" might be. Russian Orthodoxy sustained the cause, corruption, and oppression of the Czar. Catholicism supported Franco's regime, and, as a general rule, all regimes of the Far Right are supported by both the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant Churches. They favor the bourgeois, and form alliances with them.

2) The Church lulls the poor with lullabies of future recompense in the "beyond", and "prayers for the dead", with sentimental hymns -- briefly, with all those mechanisms of a cheap escape from present reality, which Prudhomme called "opium for the people."

3) Christianity is reactionary in principle. It projects all battles between right and wrong into a distant heaven. Thus the concrete injustice of a concrete earth is beyond human reach. Unjust actions of kingdoms of this world are quietly countenanced, because their punishment is relegated to God, the invisible King, the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent One. Even in Heaven there is said to be a Hierarchy. And the celestial inequality gives license to a terrestrial one. God is supposed to grant every right to those who have usurped the power at a given moment. They are authorized to carry the sword of justice, whereas the poor are refused every right to defend themselves.

4) The Church is reactionary in that it turns a person from his real future, circumscribing him within the bounds of an alleged sinful nature. The symbol under which this resignation is preached is eloquent; it is that of the cross. This idea is the patience of the oppressed.

5) The Church is reactionary because it proclaims a gospel of charity. But charity is an invention of the strong, by which they pose as just and gracious men, while, in reality, they remain unjust and without pity. The employer who has enriched himself, thanks to the sweat of his employees, may permit himself the luxury of generosity. He supports the programs of charity organized by the Church, and basks in the flattering approval of priests and prelates. In reality he is returning an infinitesimal portion of what he has stolen from the workers. Such gracious gifts have one effect and one purpose: They perpetuate servile souls.

These accusations are something we should know, every one of them. And whatever there may be of a bitter truth in them ought to penetrate our complacency. We are being hit hard. And we ought to feel it. Is there a sincere Christian who would deny his chagrin at the truth that permeates this polemic?

5. OPEN CONFESSION OUR BEST DEFENSE

Of course, there is also something Communists should know. First this: Every accusation hits us hard, not in the degree we are consistent Christians, but rather in the degree we are not. In fact, we find much the same charges hurled against us in Holy Writ. The message of the Bible is not resignation but liberation. It does not justify the Pharisee, but calls him to account.

Here are three samples, as the forceful Phillips translation renders them:

"And now, you plutocrats, is the time for you to weep and moan because of, the miseries in store for you... You have made a fine pile in these last days, haven't you? But look, here is the pay of the reaper you hired and whom you cheated, and it is shouting out against you. And the cries of the other laborers you swindled are heard by the Lord of Hosts Himself." James 5:1-4.

To the rich young ruler who said that he had kept all the commandments from his youth Christ said: "If you want to be perfect, go now and sell your property and give the money away to the poor - you will have riches in heaven ... "A camel could more easily squeeze through the eye of a needle than a rich man get into the kingdom of God." Matthew 19:20-24. Of unjust religious leaders Christ said something we should all note down very carefully, whatever religious confession or political ideals we boast of: "You must not imitate their lives. For they preach, but do not practice. They pile up back-breaking burdens and lay them on other men's shoulders - yet they themselves will not raise a finger to move them ... Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you utter frauds, for you pay your tithes on mint and aniseed and cumin, and neglect the things which carry far more weight in the law - justice, mercy and good faith." Matthew 23:3, 4, 23. Is this indictment from Christ's mouth less severe than that from the Marxists? Certainly not. The main difference is the objects of the respective indictments. Whereas that of Christ is directed against non-Christlike disciples, that of the Marxists is directed against Christianity itself. When hearing the Communist attack "against Christianity," one feels like crying out, But this is not Christianity. This is the perversion of it, the counterfeit, the prostituted witness. This is something Christ too condemned.

The knowledgeable and reasonable historian reviews the sad story of a Christendom forming alliances with the secular state. He knows that such alliances resulted invariably in years of oppression, of intellectual and spiritual bondage, of superstition and injustice. One can only cry out in horror: All this in the name of Christ. The objective student of church-state affairs cannot escape the conviction that in some Marxist states the oppressed Church is simply reaping what it has sown. Who can deny it? The Church has professed Christ, while defending doctrine and practice quite the antithesis of His. It must then bear its share of responsibility, not only for the appeal of Communism, but also for its very existence. Had there been, on the Church's part, more of the spirit of Christian penitence (*Metanoia*), there would also have been a higher degree of realistic self-scrutiny and self-criticism. This would have provided a better chance of looking with less belligerence upon the severe rules, now governing the Church's witness in Communist lands. These observations are not made to obscure the fact that institutional Christianity has suffered, and suffers still, real hardships under Communist regimes. Constitutional guarantees of a right to believe do not translate into a right to witness about those beliefs. The Communist only may freely propagate his atheism. To the Communist, religion is either a tool to be used or an enemy to be destroyed. By the way, Communism was never noted for offering a free market, whether in economics, politics, or religion.

6. THE NEED OF AN INTELLIGENT FAIRNESS FOR A REALISTIC EVALUATION OF NON-FREEDOM IN DIFFERENT REALMS OF LIFE AS A MATTER OF PURE POLITICS

It may look to religious people as if they are the special targets of a dictator's maniac urge to rob individuals of their freedom. But we should not automatically conclude that Communists, for instance, intentionally have made it their specialty to deny freedom of worship to people who depend, for their lives and their happiness, on that precious privilege. In fact, any dictatorship is simply bound to be jealous of freedom of any kind among its subjects. I do not want to say by this that the enemy of all spiritual life on earth (the devil) is ambivalent, in regard to what special type of servitude he would like to rush us into. He has his preferences. But we should know that he too is frightened when his subjects are offered true freedom. Here is another pitfall we should avoid when we make our evaluations about Communist states. Some are more liberal in their approach to religious freedom than are others. As a generalization one might venture to say: Precisely where a state church was most dominant, there the Communist

regime will see to it that the laws regulating religious expression are interpreted most stringently. Particularly this would be expected to apply if the church concerned continues to hold allegiance of a considerable majority of the people. But other considerations may of course enter so strongly in an individual case, for instance that of Poland. So all rules of general routine may seem useless to cope with the enormity of the emerging problems. Is it a suddenly increased respect for the Vatican as a political rival of great dimensions that dictated a more cautious move than would otherwise have been expected? Anyway, shrewd politicians do have some undeniable respect for other politicians, equally shrewd. Generally speaking, it must be admitted that minority churches tend to enjoy greater freedom and greater equity under Communist governments than they sometimes used to do in their church dominated and so-called Christian state before Communism took over.

Wherever churches achieved a civil government status in their capacity as regular "state churches", the danger was imminent. They succumbed to the lurking temptation of soliciting the secular government's help to persecute their smaller competitors. Now, deprived of their privileged status, these former state churches often are first to cry persecution. What a pity that the new men in power (the victorious Communists) have not learnt anything from the foolish and unjust ways of their predecessors. Experiences of the past ought to have told them what a harmful thing it is bound to be to have the field of one's intimate ideas about God merged together with the field of secular government. Just as important as it has always been (apart from the days of theocracy in the ancient Old Testament world) to have a separation between church and state, just as important ought it to be to separate atheism and practical government. Simple experience should be enough to provide that piece of common sense insight. Why should candid Christians be the only ones disposing of such wisdom in the affairs of everyday life? The reason why THEY have arrived at this everyday insight may be that they have found out: Persecution under one aegis is no more to be desired than under the other. (The French Revolution with its revolting excesses should be a historic case in point).

7. WHAT DOES THE "ANTI" ELEMENT OF THE TERM ANTI-CHRIST ACTUALLY MEAN?

Communism undoubtedly contains anti-Christian elements -- although it hardly fits the Scriptural picture of the anti-Christ, as we commonly understand it. Religious Far Righters who hurl the label with abandon, might profitably review the theology of the Reformers. They interpreted "anti" to mean "in the place of," rather than "against." Fifteen of the twenty times it is used in the New Testament, "anti" is translated in this sense; as for instance "an eye for ("anti") an eye." Anti-Christ is identified by Paul as a religious phenomenon, sitting "in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. 2:) To apply the Scriptural anti-Christ to Communism therefore is not only unbiblical but deceiving, for it blinds the Christian to the malignancy of evil. The treacherous thing about anti-Christ, you see, is the fact that it has the incredible audacity of maturing right within the body of Christ, that is, in the Christian Church. It is the religious power that prostitutes itself with the state, and then utilizes the arms of the state to force its false doctrines on dissenters. This is the most terrible thing the Scripture denounces. Moreover, you and I may develop our own private kind of anti-Christ in our lives by simply permitting any little thing to take the place of Jesus Christ. It may be sports or a hobby -- or even our daily work. We are then definitely on the road toward downright apostasy. Our heart is turning into a little Babylon, asserting itself pretty well beside the big one, that is the one about which Revelation calls out: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become the haunt of devils, a prison for every unclean spirit, and a cage for every foul and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk the wine (false doctrines) of her passionate unfaithfulness and have fallen thereby. The kings of the earth have debauched themselves with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the extravagance of her dissipation... "Come out from her, O my people, lest you become accomplices in her sins and must share her punishment, for her sins have mounted up to the sky, and God has remembered the tale of her wickedness." (Revelation 18:2-5. Philips) Confronted with this prophetic judgment of the fallen church -- pictured "drunk with the blood...of the martyrs she has slain," -- what Christian can claim divine mandate to mount the throne called "holier than thou" and point the finger of scorn at Communism? Does not the Bible teach that he who makes the greatest profession, and who fails to measure up to it, incurs the greatest guilt? When did Communists make any such profession of holiness and godcenteredness? Do you feel it is appropriate for you to qualify such a Communist as anti-christian?

8. COMMUNISM NOT A SOPHISTICATED WHORE, BUT A SAVAGE MURDERER; NOT A HYPOCRITE, BUT RATHER A BOLD BEAST OF PREY

On the other hand, it would be an equally fateful error to think of expanding Marxism almost as one would think of a cute little lap dog -- something rather harmless and innocent.

Brother Andrew, the now famous "Bible Smuggler" in Communist lands, should know pretty well what he is talking about. That man has certainly been duly confronted with the red-hot hate engendered in countries behind the iron curtain, both in Europe and in Africa, against Christianity. Beware of that hatred among declared atheists. In some circles, both in America and in the "free" parts of Europe today, there is a naivete that appears absolutely incredible. That is a tendency to look upon the great Marxist revolution now bulldozing its way through the world, as a "lame and toothless" adversary. The beautiful old theory of a gradual "detente" has lulled us to sleep for a long time. It is not fashionable any longer to face with deep concern the Communist threat to our dearest values.

Even in our own churches people are being assured by "experts" that the situation is "getting better" behind the iron curtain. Have you not heard the beautiful story? Some leading brethren have been there to measure the present danger, and they return home with the reassuring tale that the former apprehensions have been "exaggerated." The Christians in Russia "do not suffer as they used to do."

Is this pleasant message a truthful one? Let me tell you briefly what happened to me in my own congregation. It was an experience that awakened me, a real eye opener. At the time I was a teacher in a Christian University in America, we were all glad to have, as one of our students, a Romanian whom his country had graciously permitted to come to our school to study there for one year. We were naturally anxious to have him inform us about the conditions in Romania as far as church matters were concerned. Certain rumors had reached our ears that did not sound too reassuring. Were they true? So one night our student agreed to give a lecture. We looked forward to being finally informed. We were a little puzzled to begin with. Our lecturer started out saying that he had nothing to hide or to be afraid of. We might feel entirely free to use our tape recorders.

By and by we could understand quite well why his "courage" was so great. What he told us was a wonderful sunshine story about conditions in Romania today: Our church simply enjoyed endless privileges and had a prosperous time in all respects. Of course previously things had been quite different. The church had suffered terrible persecution. But that was before the Communists came into power. Since that blessed event, precious blessings had come to the church as well. Persecutions had of course finally come to an end.

I need not tell you that certain doubters among us were somewhat surprised, to state it mildly, at the information we were here given. Our surprise did not become less when the speaker finally assured us that not one single member of our special denomination had been imprisoned. And he ought to know, for he himself was one of the church's foremost leaders in that country.

After the lecture there was a time for questions and answers. (At that stage of the meeting we were asked to put the tape recorders away and we graciously complied).

One person in the audience, however, now had the boldness to express openly his special astonishment at that last piece of information released. He happened to have definite knowledge that certain people he knew, were in prison in that country for their faith's sake. "No-no," said the speaker. "Those who are now in prison are not of our fold; they are Reformists -- every one of them."

Reformists? What did that stand for in this case? In our minds the term aroused reminiscences, of a rather dubious character. It was immediately associated with certain infiltrations happening to our church in earlier days when some off-shoot movement encumbered us with its more or less fanatic trends. It had strong roots in Germany and some other countries, if our memory did not fail us entirely.

The general idea gathered from our speaker's word were clear enough: The attitude manifested by those infiltrating "Reformists" of the present time in his country was such that they hardly deserved anything better than being imprisoned. It served them right.

I was scared -- and awakened -- by the unexpected message I heard that night. You may understand me when I say that the way I came to look at that Romanian student of ours was no longer exactly as it used to be. I should perhaps even admit that in a way I was almost angry with him. I just could not help it. For those prisoners' sake I could not.

Just suppose something similar should happen to you and me. We might easily one day be among those unfortunate Christians persecuted for the truth's sake in a terror regime, and then finally, in addition to all our other misfortunes, we one day have the bitter experience of seeing our own fellow Christians helping the enemy to tear down our reputation and have us stay in prison indefinitely, intimating that "it serves us right!"

Can you understand my anger? I do not ask: Can you accept it? I do not say: It should be accepted. No-no. You see, I have read what Brother Andrew, the man of greater experience, says about these things in his book "Battle for Africa." That makes me rather ashamed today of my anger. The great Dutch writer has the rare grace of tempering his realistic sternness with an equally realistic clemency, a genuine mildness of true Christian compassion:

Brother Andrew tells us a story somewhat similar to mine. He had recently heard the tape recording of a talk made in Baptist Church in Texas. Three Russian pastors happened to be visiting there. They had been asked to describe the position of the church behind the iron curtain. They actually stood there in front of the assembly, assuring them that the persecution of the Christians in Russia was non-existent. Everybody was said to possess full freedom to worship as he liked, and that there certainly was no need of smuggling Bibles into the country. In other words, what good old Brother Andrew had dedicated his life doing, was downrated to the level of utter absurdity. I felt really sorry for that poor brother, being insulted so pitilessly by a group of fellow Christians. How must he feel as a result of such a treatment. If ever righteous anger was appropriate, this must here be the case.

Now, what was Brother Andrew's reaction to that falsehood? His heart was filled with unutterable sorrow. Why? Was not one of the greatest and dearest tasks of his life to get Bibles into Communist lands? And now how would the talk of those liars affect his efforts to carry through his God-given task? Was not this frustrating in the highest degree? So why did he feel just SORRY for those Russian pastors? The answer is simple: He knew the conditions these men were living under. He perfectly realized that what they expressed was simply the state's version of the story. Those pastors, for some reason or other, were betraying the truth. Brother Andrew does not condemn such people. He regards them as victims, not as scoundrels. Day after day they live there with the Soviet police close by, whereas you and I have the pleasant privilege of living in a community of great freedom. How could we have the boldness to condemn them?

But exerting the discipline of leniency toward fellow Christians, should also help us to exert a corresponding discipline of reasonable leniency in the way we judge Communists. Why not?

9. COMMUNISTS THEMSELVES STRANGELY IGNORANT ABOUT THE TREMENDOUS HERITAGE THEY HAVE FROM A MARVELOUS TREASURY OF BASIC CHRISTIAN VALUES

Though Communism does contain anti-Christian elements, it also contains -- and this is the fascinating mystery about it -- some undeniable morsels of the kingdom of God.

This is another fact which Christians, who engage in polemics with Communists, often fail to recognize. Did you know that there is a halo of solemn finality -- something very much akin to Christian eschatology -- hovering over the optimism of Communist world perspectives? You should in fact know something very important about the vision presenting itself to idealistic Communists. According to that vision, the oppression against the proletariat has been a total one. So the fight for deliverance also had to be total.

But where now do we find that drama of human life in its original and purest form in the Bible? Remember the great Exodus event, the story of the extreme desperation happening to God's people on earth. The inhuman bondage the Jewish nation had to suffer in Egypt, the land of a stubbornly God-denying Pharaoh, hardly has its parallel in human history. Nor do we know any account in which the fact of total deliverance became so spectacular. Forever afterwards the Passover story becomes simply synonymous with dynamic deliverance. And the force of oppression here becomes synonymous with sin in human lives.

So the exodus event becomes a symbol of deliverance from satanic bondage embracing both the Old and the New covenant. Every member of the Israel of God has to pass through that historic experience. It is the great escape from the land of sin, the experience of eschatological finality par excellence. There is a D-Day of glorious liberation awaiting every Christian who has faith in the Living God.

And now what does this have to do with Communists and Communism? There is an intimate connection. If the despair of the Proletariat in modern times has been a total experience, its hope for deliverance was also bound to be equally total. The "Proletarian" is

synonymous with the last class, the ugly milestone of ultimate human misery. But precisely for that reason he also becomes the last and magically inspiring hope of a suffering world. Out of the very alienation of the last Proletariat is to be born a world in which oppressive forces are doomed to vanish forever. Communists are convinced that their peculiar social gospel makes perfect sense in the universe.

Now the Christian, to be sure, contends that he has a gospel infinitely more meaningful and far reaching than that of secular Communism. The sad thing is only that he often behaves as if he finds no meaning in it at all. Some modern Christian theologians of the God-is-dead school even seem to be more avowedly atheist, more deterministically materialistic, than even the most doctrinaire Communists. And it is the Scripture that says: "By their fruits (their acts, their works) ye shall know them." Concrete actions count infinitely more than barren theories for demonstration and persuasion.

The early church was different. The disciples believed firmly that God is the One who leads history to its end. This end is Jesus Christ, Himself the beginning and the summation of human idealism and human destiny.

But what was the appearance of the Biblical historical Christ really like? Was not His first coming precisely that of a "Proletarian"? He was a man of "no form nor comeliness," -- a man "despised and rejected." (Isaiah's testimony about Him.) By the way, His personal testimony was not much different: "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." But right out of this lowliness, a willed act of self-humiliation, a new and magnificent world could be born. With the very ignominy of Christ's death the foundation was laid for a glorious resurrection, and a second coming, the eventual establishment of the true kingdom of God.

But right here we are coming to one of the most searching of all questions the Christian might direct to the Communist.

10. WHAT IS MAN'S ANSWER TO THE REALITY OF DEATH?

For Heaven's sake, let us hope we Christians do have an answer more realistic, more logically consistent to that capital question than Marxists have. The pointed dilemma of all Communist ideology in the face of death has been formulated by the French philosopher and theologian George Crespy, a highly respected former teacher of mine at Faculte Libre de Theologie Protestante in the old university city of Montpellier, France. Crespy was himself a man considering the Communist movement in our world with all the respect and intelligent sympathy a Christian should strive to mobilize.

"We do not find any reason to contradict when the marxist says that man can (obviously) live without praying, but that he cannot live without eating. The essential fact we have to establish is that when man ceases to eat, he dies, and that there, precisely, lies his drama... Marxism has no answer to the problem of death." (George Crespy et Gul Wagner: "Christianisme et Marxisme, Les Communistes et les Chretiens," Montpellier, France, Societe d'Evangelisation du Bas Languedoc.)

Of course it is interesting enough, and important enough, to pay due attention to the Marxist's matter-of-fact statement here: "If a man does not eat, he dies." We might add to that: To be sure he does, but even if he does eat, he still dies. After a relatively short period of time that obviously is the thing happening to you and me, isn't it? In fact, after a pitifully short period of time death is what happens to all human beings today. This is our inexorable lot. And precisely here is the problem to which Marxism offers no intelligent answer. In fact, it even fails to ask the question. Marxism stubbornly refuses to face the very question. This is the most serious symptom of its basic irrationalism.

The matter here causing trouble to the minds of men, of course, is nothing new. It is the tradition of all Western humanism. The Marxist simply follows that age-old tradition of all mankind. There was a grain of realism, it is true, trying to penetrate and vanquish the obscurantism of the Middle Ages at the incipient dawn of the new scientific age. But the effort was crushed in its very birth. In what way? Let me show you something here which is simply overlooked, carelessly pushed aside by the historians who do have the duty to keep you informed:

The emerging arch pagan humanism of the Renaissance had the unfortunate idea of firmly linking its partial realism to a gross illusion: What illusion? The stubborn idea that death is not a significant fact to man. True, the humanist of the new age did not go so far in his stubborn illusionism that he bluntly denied the reality of death. But he denied its significance. His sophisticated and fatally misleading suggestion is simply the following: "It is not such a tragic thing, after all, for a human creature to die."

11. IS IT NOT "ALL THAT BAD" FOR MEN TO DIE?

In my book "Man The Indivisible" (Oslo University Press, 1971) I take issue with the surprising idea launched by the remarkable Renaissance philosopher Pomponazzi of the Aristotelian school in Renaissance Italy. He maintains that it is a perfectly normal thing for beings on the creaturely level to simply pass away. Is that a meaningful and intelligent statement? It is not. Death is an anomaly and a meaninglessness, whenever and wherever it happens. That is the simple truth about death. And any person who denies this unpleasant truth about life and about man is bound to be a poor thinker, a poor humanist in the full sense of genuine humanism. His philosophy has to be branded as what it really is: Illusionism. No matter how valiant his glimpses of realism may otherwise be, in this important respect he is and remains a miserable Nirvana dreamer. We must here insist on one stern fact: That constantly reappearing nonsense suggestion on the part of secular man ("emancipated" man) that death "is insignificant", bears witness of a superficiality quite unworthy of true humanism. Precisely that better species of humanism should awaken the individual to the realistic dimensions of life and death. Our failure today to confront the problem of death is our most pitiable heritage from a totally secularized Renaissance. What a shame! What a misnomer to call that movement a "rebirth" of man. This nonsensical denial of death is the poorest legacy left at the "value shrine" of atheist humanism in the present era. Let us now rather be entirely straightforward in what we state about the life and death issue here raised in front of our feeling hearts and our intelligent minds:

No rational foundation exists for any optimism in the face of simple death. The French enlightenment philosophers (Voltaire, Rousseau, Holbach) certainly did not have much reason for being optimistic. And the atheist prophets of modern Marxism have still less. Utopian prognostications of a glorious future ("les lendemains qui chantent") are evidence of sheer illogic, not of logic.

12. THE "SINGING TOMORROWS" - WHAT AN ABSURD PHRASE The ultimate tomorrow of the Marxist -- as of any man who depends on self alone -- is nothing but death. And we never heard about any death that sings, did we?

So it just does not make sense when atheist politicians speak about a "singing tomorrow". In order to speak meaningfully about any "tomorrow" at all, one problem must be faced and resolved: DEATH. The Marxist does not face it in the first place. So how could he have any chance of solving it? He simply acts as if the problem did not exist. This is the willful blindness of materialist philosophy.

Primitive Christianity always admitted death to be a terrible reality. Man, by nature, is NOT, immortal. His ultimate confrontation must ever be with the reality of death.

"Though you forget the way to the temple,
There is one who remembers the way to your door,
Life you may evade, but death you shall not.
You shall not deny the Stranger."

-- T. S. Eliot: Chorus III of "The Rock," The Complete Poems and Plays, p. 104.

13. TWO RADICALLY DIFFERENT EVALUATIONS OF DEATH -- PAGAN PHILOSOPHY COMPARED TO CHRISTIAN CREED WHICH OF THE TWO WAS THE MORE REALISTIC?

As Professor Cullmann has so clearly pointed out in his Ingersoll lecture on Human Immortality, Socrates demonstrates his total inferiority to Jesus Christ as regards a realistic view of death. Greek spiritualist philosophy, by and large, does not at all face the reality of death. To Socrates, or rather to Plato, for whom he is a mere mouth-piece, death is something man may look forward to with great expectations. Not so in the case of Jesus Christ, the Realist par excellence. To Him death is the great horror-inspiring reality. It drives Him to the desperate extreme of having his sweat fall like drops of blood to the earth in the garden of Gethsemane. On the cross that absolutely hope-deprived separation from the face of the Father caused the Son to cry out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

The only remedy for death is the miracle of a literal resurrection. But that is a wonder of exactly the same magnitude as the fact of special Creation. The "song" of the creature who professes to believe in matter exclusively, is bound to be ephemeral, an episode, a tragedy in the last analysis. For the death of the individual is an inalienable reality of the consistent realist. The survival of "mankind" as a general species is a sad case of spiritualist abstraction. It is the kind of "idealism" introvert political idealists strive to jack themselves up to.

Have you heard the lyrical pathos certain prophets of the political Parnassus manage to produce, singing their sacred hymns about the "triumphant proletariat"? It is in a way admirable to see how they find the inspiration to visualize, as their present goal, the distant destinies of future generations. It is all nothing but a fictitious tale. To you and me, concretely existing human creatures, having the reality of our world here and now, such empty phrases can hardly be better than vain abstractions, on the same illusive level as Plato's magnificent pure ideas.

It is not astonishing to see how inevitably an extreme materialism and an extreme idealism meet in the last round? One is just as irrelevant and sentimental as the other.

Christianity is so blessedly different from this. In its valiant quest for dependable optimism, it reaches out confidently for a safe beyond. By so doing the Christian is not exercising either irrelevancy or sentimentality, but stern realism. He has both feet firmly planted on the ground of historical reality.

Man's primal concern - if he remains faithful to himself and to the world he has been placed in - is bound to embrace the age-old question: "Is there a God of combined power and goodness; that is, a God with the ability and the desire to establish perfect justice on earth - or anywhere?"

14. IS THAT PRECIOUS REALITY OF PERFECT JUSTICE MORE TO BE EXPECTED ON THE SIDE OF COMMUNISM THAN ON THE SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY?

The Bible ideal for man is NOT, as the Communist charges, to defend the established authorities, no matter how unjust and oppressive those authorities may be. No, it is to bring the leaven of Christian example to them and point them to ultimate judgment. (Take for your reference Paul, the great apostle to the gentiles, reasoning with the Roman governor Felix about "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.") It is not to provide a cheap escape from present reality, but to insist on confrontation with ultimate reality - and to do so even at the price of martyrdom. It is not to evade life and its present realities, but to place in front of a deprived humanity, life in its fulness. It is not to mask injustice, but to expose it.

The Bible's ideal for man, then, is not to abandon human reason -- not at all. It is not to forget the testimony of history and to settle down to a daydream about future bliss in a fairy world. On the contrary, it is that man develop his intellect and apply it here and now. Life here is a school in which lessons of eternal consequence must be learned and applied. With critical attention man should compare history with the prophetic panorama of Biblical revelation. Then God Himself will enlighten man's mind, bringing him a reasonable and illuminating answer to his severest quests for finality.

There is meaning in human life. There is an answer to death. For there is a God who Himself has gone into history. He has gone into the very grave, the sombre reality kept in store for every natural human being today. But, wonder of wonders, and glory of glories: after three days he went out of that grave. Jesus, the triumphant God-Man Marvel, has conquered death forever in man's behalf. He has arisen mightily to give you and me a singing tomorrow, the only possible song of a meaningful humanity.

15. ATHEISM OF AN UNPRECEDENTED KIND

We have spoken together about so many ways of being godless in terms of acting as if God never existed. But it would be a sad case of neglect in a book of this order if we did not with a reasonable degree of thoroughness and relevancy concern ourselves with the peculiar essence and historical circumstances pertaining to the Marxist variety of utter godlessness, springing right out of dogmatic materialism. For today that specimen of militant atheism has acquired a prestige in modern societies and a charisma rivaling that of many religions. After all, we might find out that it is exclusively in this ultimate form Materialism has any chance of reaching the level of a genuine anti-Christ. Materialism might then still pass the severest test of the perfect anti-Christ: usurping the very place, in men's lives, otherwise reserved for Jesus Christ, the exclusive One.

We already know that John the Revelator does not limit himself to speaking about just one single anti-Christ. "Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last times." I John 2:18.

There should be no difficulty here, as far as the element of timing goes. The hard-boiled ultramodern type of humanist audacity, called Marxist atheism, could hardly be expected to be anything but an endtime phenomenon. Its exceptional boldness also makes it devoid of all realistic sense. And that seems to fit in quite well with the peculiar quality of precisely bottomlessness. It is without any bottom. In other words, every trace of sound human foundation (firm ground to stand on) has somehow been knocked out of it. Of course any endeavor, on man's part, of saving himself is utter foolishness. But never before in the history

of our world had the mystery of iniquity presented itself that boldly as a defiant negation of the existence of God.

Still, let us not be deceived by any appearances. In the last round, of course, that braggingly atheistic type of human pride, or rather downright self-deification, is neither worse nor better in its practical effects, as an anti-God power, than the blandly "religious" types of the same human self-exaltation.

Legalism for instance is not a "better" variety of pride in man. Liberalist trends of religiousness, or any other brand of self-centered humanism, is not one bit better either. The devil has an impressive spectrum of varying ways in which he inseminates unbelief (faithlessness) in human hearts, already made gullible and vain by the natural pride inherent in all humanity. It is all the time just a question of slight variations of an identical theme.

And, nevertheless, it remains an important fact that the particular device of satanic delusion called systematic atheism maintains its individual identity. It is and remains absolutely unique. There is nothing anywhere exactly like it in the whole wide world. Let us make sure that this outstanding "individuality" of Communist atheism is kept duly in mind. Our ability to face it intelligently, and to fight it successfully, might depend on that.

16. A CURIOUS INCONSISTENCY

Before we proceed to look at what Biblical prophecy may predict regarding the appearance and specific nature of atheism, as nothing less than a political system of prime importance in the history of our world, we should pay special attention to one more striking feature generally manifesting itself in Communism again and again.

Tell me, WHO is it atheists of this intensively purposive type are actually fighting with such relentless hatred? Is it really God? How can you hate so intensely One about whom you think that He does not exist?

Of course there may always be an uneasy idea left lurking and actually haunting any atheist's mind: Such a God might exist after all. In one special way He is almost bound to exist in the consciousness of almost any nonbeliever: He asserts Himself as a representative for an unwritten ethical code of a most troublesome nature. God is indisputably there all the time in terms of a more or less guilty conscience. So it becomes natural enough, in a world of general rebellion against that inner code, to put up an active fight of the most uncompromising kind, and that fight becomes only the more exasperating as a result of the irrational element in it.

On the other hand, we must also take into account the eventuality of an unscrupulous astuteness in this world of ours at the present advanced stage of its wickedness. There is a sort of tantrum of hate against everything that is good. Those who nourish that hate, simply seem to insist that others -- as many as ever possible -- shall have a share in it. Take the group of men politically in power at a given moment. The materialist philosophy so many of them have thoroughly espoused, has caused them to be religiously indifferent and undisturbed. In other words they are already rather feelingless with respect to other people, or God, or the world, or anything whatsoever. Just suppose an administrator on the political arena has thus finally reached the level of impassivity characteristic of a stone (Just to take one example of "pure matter.") Then of course he can hardly be expected to have much room in his life any longer for either love or hate. But still a certain astuteness seems able to survive even with a poor minimum of emotional aliveness, by and large. Such a shrewd politician may then still find it profitable enough for the continued prosperity of his demagogical schemes to arouse some mighty waves of negative feelings in the still pretty excitable hearts of other people: His machinations in terms of a carefully planned program of wicked propaganda become those of a devilishly clear-sighted psychologist.

Cynical demagogues all over the world today know perfectly well one thing you and I often seem to be ignorant about. What they find is important enough to achieve, by all means, is to have command of the minds of men.

The new Marxist strategists think it all-important to avoid at any price being sentimental, "Don't worry so much," they say to themselves, "about the poverty or the sickness of those Africans you want to turn into faithful Communists. Fighting poverty and sickness is a useful means but it is not the great goal. Our rush into the 'dark continent' is not mainly for the purpose of healing it, but rather for the purpose of subjugating it. Of course it is nice also to have the reputation of relieving the pains in the physical lives of the peoples of Africa, but this is not in itself the important thing to be accomplished."

What is it then, as the great demagogue looks upon the business at hand? It is simply this: Give the African something to hate. Then he will be a revolutionary, faithful forever to the great world movement. He will simply forget most of his miseries for the idea's sake.

Brother Andrew has drawn an important conclusion from this psychology, as far as the Christian missionary's task is concerned in the same field of operation. What you and I have to do is equally self-evident. We must give those poor fellow creatures of ours something to love. We must give them Some One to love. And then, hand in hand with that Someone, Jesus Christ, we shall manage to solve one problem after the other, problems now oppressing the bodies, the minds, and the deepest hearts of those miserable ones.

We have here tried to analyze more features of an atheism I have qualified as unique. Now that question of an indisputable uniqueness of atheism in present world politics makes another question more topical than ever. Has that God-defying radicalism which was destined to play such a marked role in ultra-modern world strategy, been deemed worthy of finding its indisputable place in the predictions of the Biblical oracles -- alongside with other capital events in history?

17. MAJOR WORLD POWERS?

In what era could you expect Bible expositors to arise who would apply peculiar prophecies about Communism to Communism?

Of course the only intelligent answer to that question would be: The era of communism. Does that automatically imply that our Bible students today are so much more clever, or so much more dedicated in their studies? By no means. Let us look at the matter objectively and in its proper context. During these last two centuries an increasing number of Bible readers have been fascinated by the striking parallelism between Biblical prediction and concrete historical facts. An impressive bibliography could be cited. I shall here mention one book only. Few verse-by-verse expositions of the apocalyptic portions of the Bible have kept more men among us spellbound than the copious work by Uriah Smith: Daniel and the Revelation. Edition after edition of that book has appeared, even right up to the present time.

But would it be logical to expect from an author writing his book around the middle of last century that he should manage to assign a proper place to "Communism" as a world power of gigantic endtime dimensions? Of course not. How could you make that man responsible for failing to evaluate the negative effects of what you and I speak about as the Communist revolution, its impact on the progress of the cause of God in the world? This would be most unfair, in fact, a pretty absurd attitude to take. It must be Bible students of a much later date who have to assume the responsibility for pursuing further that parallelism we mentioned. I am of course referring to, on the one hand the sensational rise of a new political movement of universal magnitude, shaking the hearts and the lives of millions of modern men, on the other hand any possible mention of such an event in Holy Writ. Uriah Smith was not to be troubled by any concrete historical knowledge about the historical year of 1917, nor about the dramatic upheavals destined to happen to this world subsequent to that date. You and I, however, have been placed face to face with that knowledge. So it will be our duty to observe the parallelism between prophecy and history, as far as this period of time is concerned.

By the way, in this field of study we are put to shame very markedly by the admirable accomplishments of our pioneers. Their superiority as students of endtime prophecy is a remarkable fact. This becomes evident all the way from the dawn of the Millerite movement. And there may be nothing so very difficult to understand in that respect. The ability to dig out definite truths about endtime events is almost bound to be proportional to the desire of a given generation to have that endtime, to experience it as a reality of one's own literal life. Do you want the endtime all that realistically? I might as well formulate my searching question in the following way: Do you want the return of Jesus Christ? Do you desire wholeheartedly to stand one day very soon face to face with your Lord and Savior, as He makes His descent in the cloud? Do we actually look forward to that historical event of matchless glory and matchless realism?

Notice one thing here: It was precisely the Advent believers who felt the existential need of being thorough enough to make the necessary travel back in time. In a not very distant past of their own lives they had gone through a great experience, for which they were endlessly grateful to God. They had gone back in time to one Revolution of a historically shaking magnitude, namely that of France in 1789. They had recognized its tremendous prophetic significance. They saw it as an epoch-making event, clearly predicted in Revelation 11. Here they found something then tentatively qualified with the well-known, but not particularly precise term of

"Republicanism". They realized its historical significance as a certain breakthrough of an exceptionally radical character. You And I of course are even better qualified for evaluating that phenomenon in its right historical perspective. It was nothing less than a proletarian revolt, a political movement as far to the left as anything the world had experienced so far.

And one more thing: it was with particular seriousness our pioneers already noted down one unprecedented feature about the Great French Revolution. What here entered upon the historical arena was a hitherto unheard-of type of atheism, an open challenge against all ideas about God, an inexorable and visibly bitter fight against the religion of Jesus Christ, in fact, against religion as such.

Still another thing was noted down and underlined most emphatically. I am referring to the name, given by John to the incipient outbreak in modern times of this incredibly hard-boiled and violently enraged type of godlessness here entering upon the scene: The smoke rising from the shaft of the Abyss. With unswerving firmness and consistency apocalyptic exegetes, emerging just at this time of a gloriously dawning Advent movement, pinpointed that remarkable event in French history -- or rather in world history -- as a direct fulfillment of the prophecies in the book of Revelation, Chapter 11, about the Beast "ascending out of the bottomless pit." (Revelation 11:7. See Uriah Smith, "Daniel and the Revelation," p. 535).

18. THE DEEPER SENSE OF THAT "BOTTOMLESSNESS"

It certainly cannot be regarded as a far-fetched idea, or as unreasonable in any respect, to think of that "bottomlessness" in terms of an exceptionally fateful, and particularly God-forsaken lack, in human lives, of every realistic foundation. For, of course, there must be veritable catastrophe, a certain earthquake experience falling to the lot of a naturally dependent being like man at the moment when he succumbs to the temptation of saving himself, of managing entirely on his own -- without God; that is, without hope, in the world. But here the Bible evidently speaks about a particularly devil-inspired bottomlessness, in fact, an exceptionally defiant and blasphemously challenging one. Its spiritual relationship is expressly said to be toward "Egypt" (Revelation 11:8), rather than to "Babylon" this time.

In other words, it is quite distinctly the stubborn voice of old Pharaoh, the classical atheist: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His Word to let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2).

19. THE HIGH SPEED "FREEWAY" FROM "EGYPT" TO "SODOM" SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

There seems to be a firm law asserting itself throughout history: What has begun to be "spiritually Egypt" (Revelation 11:8), will automatically become "Spiritually Sodom" (Ibid.) as well. For this we have examples as old as those of Cain and Nimrod. Man starts out by denying the very reality of God in his life. Then he ends up losing all moral restraint. This was also the sequence of things happening to daring men in the French Revolution. So it is no mere coincidence that those two specifications of its historic nature are found side by side in Revelation 11.

But now comes our further question, and indeed a most pertinent one: was that peculiar beast "ascending from the bottomless pit" destined to disappear with the 11th chapter of Revelation? Or, another equally pertinent question: Was the remarkable unbridled anti-God spirit, entering so spectacularly upon the political scene in 1793 (the year of "abolishing religion" in France) destined to die out with that one shaking experience of a paganized Europe toward the end of the 18th century?

That would not appear credible at all. On the contrary, we must seriously ask ourselves this question: Was there something, in just that Far Left Revolution of the "masses", the literally famishing disinherited ones, that would go on smoking far down in the smouldering embers of a past event? Was the world going to see an outrage, an eruption of the flames of hell, which it had never witnessed before, and which, therefore, demanded a special designation?

Yes, it certainly was. And our inquiry goes on and on: what more information does the Bible release about the "bottomless pit"? Here no single piece of realistic knowledge should be overlooked. But first of all now a question of enormous personal significance to human individuals should be asked and answered:

20. WHOM DOES GOD HOLD MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MARXISM AS A WORLD MOVEMENT TODAY?

Is it Karl Marx? Is it some other hard-core atheist, perhaps someone we hardly ever think about in that connection? Could it even be you and me?

Self-scrutiny is evidently the type of scrutiny that is most often neglected. It is the type of neglect that is almost completely overlooked in this strange world of ours. There is always a

particularly serious need among us human beings of diving down, deep, deep down into the "bottomless pit" of our own wayward hearts. Obviously there is no other possibility for us to catch hold of the true nature and the real dimensions of the present tragedy hiding itself behind the concept of the "abyss", as the Bible reveals it to us. John uses graphic images to describe realistically the drama of the bottomless pit. He intimates that something at a given moment caused it to be "opened."

Who then are the great "openers" of this type of abyss? I would not hesitate to say, in a general way, and still quite realistically: it is you and I who have distinguished ourselves as veritable experts in this kind of technical maneuvers. Every iniquitous act a would-be righteous person commits, is a "pit opener." It constitutes a potential catastrophe-triggering addition to the already important heap of glowing embers that seem bound, sooner or later, to cause the great eruption. This thing is what is bound to happen every time a professing Christian refuses to let the salvation mystery of Christ enter his life. Any deeds of injustice you and I may inflict on our fellow creatures -- and thereby immediately upon our Creator -- will tend to go on smouldering deep down there in the abyss of our intimate lives. And the "smoke" from them will necessarily arise to the "mouth of the chasm" (phrear tes abussou), "the well of the abyss," (Revelation 9:1). It is clearly the angel of the Almighty who has been given the final control over that monstrous "shaft". It is He who decides -- although not for one moment relieving you and me of our tremendous responsibility as free will creatures. It is He who decides whether the smoke (the burning wrath resulting from sin) is to be permitted to arise and cause a cataclysm or not.

So -- in the last analysis -- God is in full control, of course, of His own world. That applies whatever His intelligent creatures do or fail to do. So ultimately God Himself is and remains the principal Caretaker of your "pit" and mine, although He has never been known as a specialist excelling in the creation of pits. He is the supreme Controller of the pits you and I have produced.

"And he (the fifth angel) opened the bottomless pit and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit." Revelation. 9:2.

Any bold rebellion against a divine order must be prepared to meet the divine retribution. That retribution can be expected at any time God finds appropriate. It is downright foolishness then to exclude the possibility of a just God's intervention to punish the responsible creature's merciless actions toward a poor and already suffering humanity. We must above all understand that we cannot, as persons confessing Christ, go on, day after day, generation after generation, acquiescing in the unrighteousness of a church body placing itself on the side of the exploiters. We cannot indulge in that connivance without contributing our definite share toward the terrible monstrosity of high treason. The sudden eruption is finally bound to happen. The seething vapors of the enormous kettle, the furiously flaming smoke from the bottomless pit, have to make their way out into the open.

21. WHAT EXACTLY IS THE "SMOKE FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT"?

Now back to the question: What is particularly included in the Biblical concept of the Abyssos, and first of all in that ill-reeking "Smoke" described in Revelation 9:2 as arising out of the abyss? It is compared quite impressively to the thick black and red clouds rolling out from a more or less badly ventilated furnace, with the most terrible effects on human lungs and human eyes, and obscuring the last rays of sunshine in human lives. What terrible thing does that "smoke" stand for then in man's plain everyday reality? Well, that smoke is precisely what we more often than not fail to anticipate as the inevitable effect of one person's oppressive acts of mercilessness against another person. It is the explosive passion of an unquenchable anger engendered in the hearts of those who suffer the perpetuated pangs of inhuman bondage and intolerable abuse. This is what makes human beings so blind and bitter. An anger of that magnitude causes man to have no glimpse any longer of the light of the sun, particularly no glimpse of the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ. Old grudges, suddenly carried forward on a particular wave of passionate rage, oh tragedy of tragedies, this is nothing to be trifled with in human societies.

By the way, it certainly is not the first time the Bible uses the term "smoke" for unquenchable anger. About the angry Leviathan it is said: "Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or cauldron." (Job 41:20). And God says about the haughty or hypocritical ones, "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day." (Isaiah 65:5).

You get some adequate idea about the anger erupting from the hearts of the downtrodden proletariat of a ghettolike Paris when you read the "Great Controversy" by Ellen G. White about the meaning of Revelation 11:

"`The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.' The atheistical power that ruled in France during the Revolution and the Reign of Terror, did wage such a war against God and His holy word as the world had never witnessed. The worship of the Deity was abolished by the National Assembly. Bibles were collected and publicly burned with every possible manifestation of scorn. The law of God was trampled under foot. The institutions of the Bible were abolished. The weekly rest day was set aside, and in its stead every tenth day was devoted to reveling and blasphemy. Baptism and Communion were prohibited, and announcements posted conspicuously over the burial places, declared death to be an eternal sleep.

"The fear of God was said to be so far from the beginning of wisdom that it was the beginning of folly. All religious worship was prohibited, except that of liberty and the country."

Notice that inspired description of what the term "bottomless pit" historically stands for. Notice also what Carlyle, the British classical writer on the French Revolution, says. To describe that same historical event of utter bottomlessness Carlyle uses the striking expression: "Wide-yawning dislocation."

"Oh for the lyre of some Orpheus, to constrain with touch of melodious strings, these mad masses into order. For here all seems fallen asunder in wide yawning dislocation. The highest, as in a down rushing of the world, is come in contract with the lowest: the rascality of France beleaguering the royalty of France...a noise like Niagara, like Babel and Bedlam, a splashing and a trampling, hurrahing, uproaring, musket-volleying, the truest segment of chaos seen in the latter ages." Quoted by H. G. Wells: *The Outline of History*, 1921, pp. 318-19.

In fact, even the "outline historian" H. G. Wells himself seems to have nourished his vocabulary from the Book of Revelation, as far as the apocalyptic bottomlessness of modern French Republicanism is concerned. He speaks about the royalists as people who had no other possibility presented to their stupefied senses than the image of a total chaos. All of a sudden they were confronted with the "GULF of the republican extremists that YAWNED at their feet." (Ibid. pp. 321, 322, emphasis supplied).

The hypocritical sanctimoniousness with which the rich (both nobility and clergy) had for years and years exerted their merciless injustice against the poor, was not of course all that different from the excesses that now followed: the furious anger and blasphemy of the new masters, wreaking vengeance on the old ones. Both parties had been taught by one and the same non-human instructor, the master rebel of old, the evil one whose vicious determination it has been for 6000 years to drive man from order to chaos, from law to utter lawlessness.

22. ELLEN WHITE'S TESTIMONY REGARDING THE TERM "BOTTOMLESS PIT" -- REVELATION ELEVEN

The historical "Beast" of that "pit" is distinctly identified.

"France was shaken as by an earthquake. Religion, law, social order, the family, the state and the church, - all were smitten down by the impious hand that had been lifted against the law of God...God's faithful witnesses slain by the blasphemous (God-negating) power that "ascendeth out of the bottomless pit", were not long to remain silent...It was in 1793 that the decree which prohibited the Bible, passed the French Assembly. ("The Great Controversy" pp. 286-287).

The sensational piece of news proclaimed to everyone in the world who cared to listen -- and there was an ever increasing number of those -- was this: God has never existed!

The important thing for all of us then, will be to arrive at a shakingly personal realization of what an abysmal human tragedy the apocalyptical term "bottomless pit" actually symbolizes. To that end we must sincerely search our hearts each single one of us. We must know what part we ourselves have in that abominable world chaos.

We must not forget that it was men of the Church -- namely Cardinals and other high dignitaries -- who, again and again had acted as leaders in the government that was now condemned by the furious radicals among the downtrodden ones. Even right up to the time when a total bankruptcy forced the financial lords of Louis XVI to call in the tiers etat (the otherwise politically disinherited party), it was a Catholic Cardinal who happened to be at the head of that department of finance, a definitely chaotic part of the French government. Moreover, was it not precisely the Church of France herself that had been most eager, for centuries, to carry on a constant war against the Bible? It was the Church as a faithless

representative of God on earth that had first taught the people how to suppress the Scriptures. We might mention the Cardinal Bienne, the King's last Minister of Finance as a main responsible one for the way money matters were taken care of at that fatal moment when the treasury collapsed. However, it becomes rather meaningless and unfair, to put the blame on one particular person where the question of guilt and responsibility is rather a matter of corporate character. But certainly some faithless servants of the Church must assume a particularly heavy responsibility for the way they had for centuries prevented a whole nation, nay an entire continent, from having natural access to the Word of God, the wonderful remedy for innumerable ills.

"The suppression of the Scriptures during the period of papal supremacy was foretold by the prophets. And the Revelator points also to the terrible results that were to accrue, especially in France, from the domination of the "man of sin."

"Said the angel of the Lord: "The holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sack-cloth...And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified...And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on earth. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them." (Revelation 11:2-11).

"The periods here mentioned 'forty and two months' and 'a thousand two hundred and three-score days' - are the same, after representing the time in which the church of Christ was to suffer oppression from Rome. The 1260 years of papal supremacy began in A.D. 538 and would therefore terminate in 1798. At that time a French army entered Rome and made the Pope a prisoner, and he died in exile." (Great Controversy, pp. 265-6. By E. G. White.)

And now, what about those 'three days and a half'? Transferred from prophetic time to historical time, that should give three years and a half. Did anything of interest happen exactly that long after the decree had been passed, about abolishing the Christian religion in France? To be sure. Precisely at that moment there came a new resolution rescinding the former. In fact, the position of the Bible from now on is a particularly prosperous one. The 'two witnesses,' that is, the two Testaments, that have faithfully kept testifying to the goodness and greatness of God across the ages of human history, are now resuming their triumphant march from land to land. The Bible, the great Best-Seller, is being printed and distributed in numbers and with a rapidity that has astonished the world.

But did this miraculous transformation of the material position of the Bible in recent history mean that the beast of the bottomless pit was already conquered for good? Was the revolution madness of the Western World destined to come to a rapid end after that tragic first experience in France? Certainly not. The great series of eruptions had just started.

23. SERIAL ERUPTIONS -- A WELL KNOWN PHENOMENON IN TERRESTRIAL SEISMOLOGY

Here one historical fact of outstanding uniqueness just has to be stated plainly and honestly. Not for one moment since the great French Revolution has the angry proletariat laid aside its bitter grudge against the Son of God. And we must not forget that we -- you and I -- are the ones to blame at the time. Please remember: The most tragic consequence of hypocritical self-righteousness among nominal Christians -- both before and after the great French Revolution --- is still causing downright blindness to people in either group.

Here the same unrealistic subjectivity has persisted in carrying on its wicked game with human minds abandoned to the ruses of the evil one. The general pattern of the fateful process should be sufficiently well-known. But one thing may have to be repeated:

Christ has elected you and me to be living letters, we know that much, don't we? He intended us to be special messengers of His tender love for all men. But we constantly failed to be worthy of our divine calling. We just betrayed the trust God placed in us. We also know how things developed further: The disinherited proletariat had soon accumulated a considerable hate against the Church that had disinherited them. And then, what did they do? If they had been wise, according to the wisdom of Biblical objectivity, they would have left in God's hands the delicate task of finding out and punishing the really guilty ones. Instead they did not only direct their revengeful anger against the Church, but they added to their foolishness the

boundless absurdity --- and the boundless injustice --- of starting a relentless and most meaningless onslaught against Jesus Christ, the innocent Lamb of God, the perfectly just One.

"Ecrasez L'infame" (Crush the Wretch)! This became the wild cry at arms of the anti-clerical masses. Who was that "wretch"? There was no uncertainty in their minds and in their hearts. It was Jesus Christ. He was the one they determined to get rid of, first and foremost. Thus the merciless war against the God-professors turns into a merciless war against God. Upon Him the iniquity of His unfaithful disciples is invariably heaped. Of course that exchange of the respective roles is something He has borne all the time. But man's willful insistence on a perpetuation of that exchange is a terrible thing.

One historical fact is certain: From revolution to revolution every major trait of the original "pit" pattern and of the original "smoke" has remained the same. This applies to the revolution of 1830, that of 1848, and certainly not less that of 1917. Who would dare to suggest that the epochmaking Red Revolution in Russia toward the end of World War I constitutes a real exception? We have entered a series of upheavals in our world, destined to awaken oppressed proletarians everywhere, kindling in them feelings (moods) of unquenchable anger against their oppressors, certainly not excluding the imagined "Master Oppressor." The fatal smoke from the shaft of the pit is ascending freely.

24. WHO IS THE FALLEN STAR OF REVELATION 9?

Revelation 9:1 places the falling of a "star" in close relation to the key which opens the bottomless pit. In Biblical prophecy as a whole, and above all in apocalyptic terminology, the metaphor of a "fallen star" is synonymous with one definite cataclysmic event in the lives of creaturely beings: Apostasy. Of course Lucifer was the first great apostate. He and his angelic host of evil associates are known as the ones leading out in providing for our vacillating world the nefarious example of a falling away from God, the One we all need most desperately to remain staying together with.

The natural consequence of that first spiritual fall was a literal physical one. "And I saw a star falling from heaven unto the earth." Revelation 9:1. But if the general meaning of this downfall is just apostasy, or faithlessness of the most serious kind ever known, then we "Christians" need not, of course, go to founders of non-Christian religions (such as Mohammed), or all the way back to the devil himself, in order to find examples of "fallen stars." The falling away from God is a phenomenon taking place right in our midst. Is not that a tragic fact? Since the awful moment when the great star, the covering cherub in heaven, apostatized and just fell, like a terror-arousing meteor, down, down down --- to the depth of the pit, there has been an increasing multitude of smaller "stars", falling and falling all the time, and notice: this is happening right around us. To anyone of God's children the calamity may happen. We may end our careers of erstwhile shining stars simply as hopelessly fallen stars. Our light may go out and sink into utter obscurity forevermore.

By permitting the forces of darkness to drive us into this extremity, what we finally achieve is of course not to vindicate the name of God. We shall have no part in taking away the ignominy wickedly heaped upon Him. From the beginning certainly that vindication of the holy name was the glorious task for which every one of us was destined. How could we so completely fail our most meaningful destination? You and I were made stars in order that we might shine. But when our brightness (the reflection of Christ's love in our lives) is suddenly swallowed up by the obscuring shadows of iniquity, the result is inevitable: Our failure to witness in Christ's favor among the listening throngs of fellow creatures who happen to be observing us most closely, is a tragically pitpreparing event of our lives. The pit can be opened at any unexpected moment as a result of that failure on the part of the supremely honored ones, the erstwhile most brightly shining ones.

The shining star that decides to go out in darkness, rather than to go on shining to the glory of God, is, according to all this, in a hopeless position, historically speaking: He is, whether he knows it or not, "given the key of the bottomless pit". That is why a crucial question has to be directed to you and me as well: How far are we responsible for the darkening taking place in the minds of OUR fellow men today, due to the blinding "smoke" OUR inter-human unconcern has caused to arise?

What I so often forget is what God has solemnly informed me about: To any neighbor of mine I am "in the place of God." Genesis 50:19. If I show him nothing but merciless indifference, what will he tend to think? Illogically enough, he immediately proceeds to think: "It is God in heaven who distinguishes Himself as all that indifferent." Man, in his hopelessly

subjective reasoning, just isn't one bit more clear-sighted or objective-minded than that. He jumps to his rash conclusion: If Christians are "like that" -- then Christ too must be "like that."

Notice this piece of wisdom from the pen of one of the truly learned theologians of the present day:

"It is exploitation that leads a people to anarchy, according to the author of Proverbs. The key that may open the abyss of popular insurrection is the most shameless exploitation ever known in human history. Quite materially this hostile act of one man against another man leads the latter to such a state of downright physical famine and deprivation that a simple lack of life's most elementary necessities will force one social class to the ultimate extreme. It was with a key of this kind the bottomless pit was opened in the case of the Paris Commune in 1789." "The Last Solemn Warning." ("Die Letzte Feierliche Warning.") Unpublished Manuscript by Erich Lauffersweiler.

25. COULD THE TERM "BOTTOMLESS PIT" HAVE DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN THREE DIFFERENT CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION?

Bible expositors sometimes seem to assume that they cannot expect the Oracles of God to have any reliable trend of consistency. For instance it is thought possible that from verse 13 to verse 15 of the 11th chapter of another apocalyptic book, namely Daniel, the prophet -- or rather the Spirit directing his vision and his writing -- has suddenly changed His mind entirely about the identity of the "King of the North". Now what about the Book of Revelation? Here the term "Bottomless Pit" (abyssos) appears several times (namely in chapters 9, 11, and 17). Would it be asking too much consistency in the vocabulary of an author (in this case also the Author with a capital A) to assume that his term stands for very much the same thing throughout his book?

Now first, what does "abyss" stand for in the Biblical language as a whole? In the Septuagint it is frequently used to translate the Hebrew word TEHOM. In Genesis 1:2 that means primeval. The "deep" is here used almost as a sort of proper name. To call it a "primeval sea" may have too much of a resemblance with the vocabulary of pagan myths. The God of the Bible is the God who realistically creates; that is, makes something out of "nothing", as it is popularly described. It appears reasonable to think then, that TEHOM in Genesis 1:2 is not essentially different from the TOHU of both that same verse and of Job 26:7 ("He hung the earth on nothing.") TOHU was the strange "thing" God decided to "hang the earth upon" at its very beginning. So TOHU here comes very close to "nothingness." It is just sheer emptiness, or non-existence.

Now what does that imply for the concept of "abyssos"? Does it necessarily always have an actively negative sense? No. Genesis 1:2 speaks about events of creation taking place before sin had yet entered our world. So there could be nothing wrong here. In fact, there is bound to be nothing where God has not yet introduced something. In other words, there is no inherent evil in non-existence, as long as God has not, so far, called any creaturely thing into existence. "Chaos", therefore, in such a case, is not at all a negative thing. You could, at worst, characterize it as just zero.

But notice, Biblical ethics does not permit you and me to remain indefinitely at the stage of our personal reasoning about good and evil. We must proceed from that point. And what follows then? Something very serious: The state of nothingness becomes definitely negative. When? At the very moment when there is suddenly nothing where God had instituted something. God's ethics, we know, includes the realization of an elementary fact: A creature of His, such as man, has been granted the enormous privilege of what we call freedom of volition. That immediately implies that man is permitted to reject God's gracious gift of creaturely existence. In other words, he is entirely free to choose gliding right back into a state of nothingness. We call that state death. In Romans 10:7 abyssos is used precisely in the sense of the "place" of the dead. And Psalm 71:20 of the LXX translation has "Abyssos" in the same sense as man's tragic gliding back into nonentity, a state of affairs which only God could ever redeem.

But let us now also notice another thing: That terrible willful relapse just cannot happen without affecting, a most negative way, the all-significant matter of God's reputation as the perfectly Righteous One, the totally Holy One. Hence obedience becomes also, immediately, a matter indispensable for God's vindication. That is the act of washing perfectly clean again something precious which has been soiled: His holy name. Multitudes of intelligent creatures, however, originally endowed with that freedom to accept life, or reject it, have opted for the rejection. This is the serious thing which has cast a dark shadow over the ethics of God. It has raised strong doubts in many minds about God's goodness and almight, including His ability to

know all things, past, present and future. (See "Day of Destiny", chapter on the "Openness-of-God" theory, as overtly taught by some most influential teachers at Loma Linda University, themselves visibly influenced by Whiteheadian philosophy).

From the very dawn of Seventh-day Adventism as a dynamically forward-marching movement in the world, Prophecy has been paramount in waking up slumbering minds and hearts to an intensive awareness of endtime reality. Nothing was ever found more efficient for the purpose of strengthening men's faith in the Word of God than the visible fulfillment of majestically proclaimed prophecies of the Bible. But how could we hope to continue having this mighty approach in our world movement, if no leading men among us feel they can jeopardize their "prestige" within circles of modernist thought in the church by launching a courageous and decisive attack against pagan theories creeping right into our main channels of denominational publication, a philosophy shamelessly stating that God is not omniscient; that is, not able to foretell the future of human beings? How could the faith of our fathers in Biblical predictions survive in an atmosphere like that?

If you and I have succumbed, as responsible leaders in a community of God's people, to the treasonable desire for popularity among the proud elite of "super-intellectuals" (those trying hard to take over the leadership of denominations today), permitting them to use our best publication channels in order to broadcast their heretical ideas about God, then we must hurry to confess our own felony in so doing. We must not cover up, pretending that there is nothing that needs to be put straight again, nothing that needs to be recanted in a thorough public way.

To me this seems to be the proper occasion to remind of one more case in which public confession is desperately needed. That is when we have -- wittingly or unwillingly -- made a public declaration which drags the very honor of fellow human beings down into the dirt. Afterwards we are made duly aware of the total (or partial) falseness of the given defamation. Now, if in a case like that, we fail to restore, as far as possible, and in a definitely public manner, the vital honor of the mercilessly maligned ones (the obviously downtrodden ones) -- can we then expect to retain the blessings of God over our lives, as individuals, and as a people?

26. THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER OF REVELATION, THE MOST APOCALYPTIC ABYSSOS TEXT OF THEM ALL

Now it should be time to go to the last of the chapters in which the world power of utter "bottomlessness" is described (And this time the description has considerable detail.) I am referring to the 17th chapter. Here the mystic monster suddenly turns up again, namely in verse 7. That happens immediately after the main attention has been focused on harlots and abominations of the earth. The term Babylon invariably applies to a hypocritical, spiritual power, threatening, under the cloak of religion, to blot out from man's life one of its greatest values; the freedom to think and act according to one's deepest personal conscience. In fact, the prophet says:

"I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs (witnesses) of Jesus." Revelation 17:6.

That woman is not the beast of the bottomless pit. She is on the top of the beast. To her the beast is a mere vehicle. She mounts it majestically, like a monstrous rider on a monstrous horse. It was at the moment when the prophet saw her thus mounted that he, if we may use his own words, "wondered with great admiration" (verse 6). In modern English we would say amazement. Why was he so amazed? Well, that woman, all by herself, certainly would have made a sight fantastic enough. But she was not "all by herself." She was with the beast. To distinguish between the two, and establish the relationship between them, must be an important task to the expositor. And just here expositors have often failed. What caught the prophet's attention most, as he had his vision, was evidently the woman, the formidable rider. At least, as the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary very reasonably points out, he does use far more space to describe her than to describe the beast (7BC 853). The angel, however, in his explanation, "dwells almost altogether on the beast."

The reason for that may be the following: in this case you could hardly expect to understand essential facts about the rider without first having got to understand essential facts about her mount. The angel does not say that there is no natural reason for John's astonishment. The mystification is natural enough, and now he (the angel) is going to clear it up.

"I will tell thee the mystery of the woman -- and of the beast that carrieth her." (Revelation 17:7.)

Here it is the strange connection between the two that gives the answer. The woman could not do anything of what she does, had it not been for the beast. The beast is her great "base",

her sole foundation -- if you can speak about any "foundation" at all where the ground that carries you is as shaky and illusory as this beast will turn out to be, religiously speaking. The beast is the woman's only vehicle. Her "motive power" is wholly there. The ecclesiastical power she represents so truly -- is entirely sustained and supported -- as long as that support lasts -- by a secular one. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the entire "mystery" in each one of the two, and in their being together, is to be understood in terms of the main thing they have in common. They have both hardened their hearts, as this automatically happens, where the trend is to be more and more secular in one's ambitions, more and more greedy for the prestige and the intoxicating power this world can provide -- materially, intellectually and "spiritually."

What has happened to the Church whom the woman represents is this: The secularism (mere worldliness) of the beast has engulfed her. And here secularization means a gradually intensified "politicalization". The end of it is a simple display of material power in a downright Machiavellian sense. Any ever so genuinely ecclesiastical body will inevitably succumb to one fatality: if I am permitted to coin a new term, I may call it atheistification:

We should watch out and get to know what OUR foundation as nominal Christians happens to be like. And then, for safety's sake we should compare it to what we ought to know about the beast of the bottomless pit. It definitely is not impossible today to know what the actual nature, the actual identity, of that beast happens to be. It has long enough, and thoroughly enough had its hard-beaten trail written down in prophecy and in history as well. We should know by now what a fantastic career that beast has had, serving as a living vehicle for apostatizing religious denominations.

I would not be surprised if what I have intimated so far, leaves you almost just as incredulous as John the Revelator seemed to be at the first moment when he suddenly stood face to face with an incredible fact. I think I can almost hear you cry out in amazement: "You don't mean to say, do you, that present-day Christians -- maybe entire denominations of an impeccable reputation -- could permit themselves the turpitude of being 'carried around' by a satanic confederacy of political power, in fact, a power as well-known today for its hatred against Jesus Christ as world-famous Marxism happens to be? How could any Christian ally himself with a political movement as far from the faith in God as world Communism, today a simple synonym everywhere for hard-boiled atheism!"

My dear friend, should not Bible readers like you and me, even excelling in a traditional emphasis on prophecy, know at least pretty well what kind of being that "woman" is? She is the great symbol par excellence, applicable to any juncture of world history, of a beautiful-looking but internally purifying religiousness, which is satan's most efficient cooperator right in the believers' own camp. And who is the beast she happens to be riding upon? That should not be one bit more difficult to obtain an absolutely reliable idea about. Let us simply see how the beast is graphically described, not by John, but by an angel who profoundly knows:

27. THE "ENIGMATIC" PART OF THE CHAPTER

"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that WAS, and IS NOT, and yet IS (TO BE)." Revelation 17:8.

This sounds like a riddle indeed doesn't it? Who can find his way in such a maze of apocalyptic talk? John's accompanying angel tells who can, namely the "mind which hath wisdom." That must be a God-given wisdom, to be sure, but a wisdom given to men, to normal, but GOD-dependent human beings, obviously without any exceptional IQ. God does not lean on exceptional IQs in creatures. He is satisfied entirely with ordinary men's humble willingness to put to action the common-sense type of reason He has granted to them. Of course, that reason must be sanctified by Him, and led by Him. Otherwise any degree of human reasoning, based on any level of a human IQ, is doomed to fail miserably.

But how then, does God lead wandering men through the labyrinth of apocalyptic prophecy? Here, as well, He leans heavily on one thing that men often consider as too concrete and this-worldly to be worthy of their attention: simple history; that is, past and accurately verifiable events of human experience. We must not forget the main intention of Biblical prediction. It is not just to satisfy speculative men's curiosity in terms of a sentimental, sensation-craving prying into the secrets of the future. No, its main purpose is rather to strengthen the believer's faith. Christ said:

"Now I tell you before it come, that when it come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." John 13:19.

Now, we do know that militant Marxism, or Communism as a world movement, is a fact of history of the most tremendous significance -- significant not only in terms of world politics, but also in terms of the great fight between good and evil, between God and the God-denying spirit of the evil one. Dogmatic atheism has definitely entered the arena of a world-wide controversy; and its main effort is to disprove the existence of the great I AM, His existence in the world and His existence in the lives of human beings. Therefore, the next question to ask would be this one: Had the great I AM ever predicted the entering upon the scene of that phenomenon of systematic negation in terms of an openly, actively persecuting power, a world-power of non-God philosophy?

We know, in a general way, of course, that the spirit of negation and of ever-smouldering rebellion has been there since Lucifer's fall. He was the first brilliant star falling into apostasy, as we have already pointed out. But the question that we are quite particularly bent on asking at this stage of our inquiry is this one: Did the principle of total rebellion and ultimate God-denial establish itself among human beings in such a way that it became embodied in a definite regime, a world empire, tougher than anything the world had ever seen so far?

We have already partly answered that question. The Great Revolution of 1789 was the beginning of a series of events, something hitherto almost unheard of and apparently new in world history. I say "almost" and "apparently." For we shall soon see that it was not entirely unheard of. It was not entirely new.

28. HOW EARLY DOES DOGMATIC ATHEISM ENTER THE ANNALS OF HUMAN HISTORY?

Most of the ancient world empires do lean on some kind of religion. Quite publicly they profess some kind of belief in gods and goddesses. It is evidently only the ultimate bitterness of the fight against God in the endtime that seems able to make men sufficiently bold to broadcast the idea of a consistent atheism. That boldness comes to them at the moment when the smoke of the bottomless pit has made them senseless with fury. The very doctrine of God is then some day publicly being declared to constitute a dangerous poison. It is supposed to be hostile to the prosperity of the regime. It is opium for the people. That decides the issue. We are beginning to understand the essence of the fury that arose like a fume from the well of the abyss.

But why do I still suggest the idea then that the modern eruptions of dogmatic godlessness may not, after all, be an entirely new thing?

The foundation for this is simply Biblical. According to Revelation the very beast of the pit is not at all exclusively a modern phenomenon. We must keep to the simple wording of the prophetic message. Let us have it repeated:

"The beast that thou sawest WAS, and IS NOT, and SHALL ascend (AGAIN) out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." Revelation 17:8 A.

An alternating trend is clearly indicated here. There is appearance, disappearance, and reappearance. John was clearly told that the phenomenon did not assert itself at the time when the angel was addressing him. But evidently it had existed in past history, and was bound to exist once more in the future.

What more is revealed about this unique type of a more or less perennial world regime? Let us see. Verse 10 goes on, in traditional fashion, to speak about "kings."

"There are seven kings. Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come. And when he cometh, he must continue a short space."

This is a more familiar type of prophetic formulation. Therefore, it does not strike us as all that difficult to interpret either. It makes good sense to say (See 7B.C.854): Those seven kings, also described as seven heads, seem to represent, rather understandably, seven major political powers through which Satan has sought to destroy the people of God and His work on earth.

Let us, so far, content ourselves with enumerating the first five that are said to have fallen, thus belonging to the past, from John's point of view: 1. Egypt, once on the point of bringing Israel to a total extinction at the Red Sea (Exodus 1:9-30): 2. Assyria under Sennacherib (Isaiah 8:4-8, and 36:1-15; 37:3-37). 3. Babylon during the Captivity (Jeremiah 38:9, 10, and 52:13-15). 4. Persia under Haman (Esther 3:8, 9, 10; 7:4; 9:1-6). 5. Greece under Antiochus Epiphanes 1 (Maccabees 1:20-64).

And now the sixth. John says about it: "One is. In other words, "It exists now." Of course the persecuting worldly power through which Satan intended to destroy God's people at John's time could be no other than the Romans. But what about the seventh, the one "yet to come"?

The Papacy has been suggested. But how could the Papacy quite consistently be pointed out as the seventh power (or head, or kingdom)? In the first place, the general category of regimes here enumerated, as enemies or persecuting powers, are of a purely SECULAR, that is NON-ECCLESIASTICAL order. In the second place, that seventh king, who at John's time "had not yet come", is described as destined to "continue a short space." There hardly seems to be any reason truly reasonable for reducing the Papacy - in comparison with the other "kings" - in that way. The harlot riding on the beast, it is true, was not as old as the beast (from the bottomless pit). But what immediately impresses historians about her, as soon as they come to envision her in the grim light of historical persecutions, certainly is NOT that HER reign distinguished itself as rather ephemeral. Those who had the misfortune of suffering under HER persecutions from generation to generation would hardly be tempted to describe the apostate Church in that vein, would they? Evidently, in order to find the "seventh king", we shall have to look for another interpretation.

We have already spoken at some length about the French Revolution, that is the incipient spell of furor on the part of the modern beast, or the beast of the bottomless pit, as it is described in Revelation, the eleventh chapter. What should be so illogical in thinking that the "seventh king" points us directly to France and the relatively modest, or at least relatively short-lasting attempt to "crush the Wretch" that country organized toward the end of the eighteenth century?

In itself that event of dire persecution certainly was not of any particularly long duration. But at the same time it did announce other eruptions of revolutionary magnitude that would soon shake the world, and go on shaking it as it had never been shaken before by any kings of the prophetic dynasty. And notice: it was precisely the world of Christendom (our vacillating Western World) that was destined to be shaken in that unprecedented way. The time was ripe for a dogmatic materialism which the "Christian" Occident had hardly ever dreamt of.

It seems sufficient simply to believe what the Spirit of Prophecy says about the beast of the bottomless pit in the 11th chapter of Revelation, in order to know who is the last one of the seven kings. It is revolutionary France as the first modern exponent of a unique and most formidable power. French radical politicians are suddenly seen taking full advantage of the unprecedented oppression now exerted for decades and centuries by nominal Christians against a poverty-stricken laity. Extreme leftist demagogues do not hesitate to "open the shaft of the bottomless pit," that is, a fiery furnace more terror-inspiring than anything history had witnessed up until this moment.

So there should be no reason for theologians to go into any spiritualistic interpretation of the number of just seven kings. It certainly is not just a "purely symbolic" figure we here have to deal with. Seven does not, here, simply mean completeness. It is not a magic trick of pure generalization, meaning "all" world powers fighting against God, without national distinction. No-no. If that had been correct, then how could "one of the seven," namely the sixth, have been singled out as existing at the author's time, as opposed to the previous five already fallen?

29. HOW CAN A "BEAST" (OR A "KING") MANAGE TO BE COUNTED AS THE SEVENTH AND THE EIGHTH AT THE SAME TIME?

"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." Revelation 17:11.

Is there no definiteness about this peculiar beast? What is the specificity of its individual character? Of course, one thing has to be admitted: if the "Beast of the Bottomless Pit" spells Dogmatic Materialism and Militant Atheism, then, in a way, it does indeed adopt a more or less PERENNIAL or UNIVERSAL character.

On the other hand, however, that same beast, in its mature wickedness, actually emerges only closer to the end of our world history, namely in the peculiar Marxism and world-famous Communism of this last century.

This must be an indisputable fact regarding the beast we are trying to obtain an absolutely reliable idea about. In other words, the beast of stubborn God-denial, in its modern appearance, has developed an identity, an individuality it can claim as its own, something pretty unique. In view of that undeniable fact, however, it must have a perfect right, by now then, to claim A NUMBER OF ITS OWN in the mighty dynasty of beastly wickedness in this world, wherever the question of historic persecutions is concerned. It should not be all that surprising then to see the further formulation of the authentic Bible text. The beast of the bottomless pit is simply registered as the EIGHTH KINGDOM. That means the very last head of arch-pagan secular wickedness, bringing the whole series to a final conclusion.

Still, nevertheless - this is not all that surprising either - the beast retains, inalienably, its full right to be counted among the seven, from which it stands out so conspicuously. How can that "inalienable right" be logically defended? The logic is impeccable. Here we are forced to come back to the plain fact that the shaft of the pit was actually opened on several "minor" occasions, not only AFTER the day of John (in France no less than 3 revolutionary explosions, and certainly, historically seen, not MINOR ones, as many of us might be tempted to rubricate them), but even a long time BEFORE John's day. We must now tackle the Inevitable question of THE BEAST THAT "WAS".

30. THE BEAST THAT "WAS"

France was by no means the FIRST country in world history to engage demonstratively in an all-out impious rebellion against the household of God, bold enough to challenge even the sacredness of home and matrimony, the only chance for a new generation to grow up without developing into rogues and inveterate criminals. Oh no, the Great Revolution of 1789 was not the ONLY world event, so far, which dared to announce audaciously what plans satanic godlessness of the most stiff-necked order had in mind to perform in the hotbed of human politics. No-no, way back in antiquity there was a nation to which historians often pay a minor attention. Not all groups of history students, though, have committed the same error of a simple oversight. In this particular case there are praiseworthy exceptions. In fact, some secular men have not at all been that I am referring, sad to say, to certain tyrannical Macchiavellis, administrators of cruel conspiracy, masters in ultramodern politics. In one way it would have been a good thing if you and I had been just as farsighted as they. For to you and me, at the present moment, it is a matter of prime importance to get sight, finally, of the "Communism that WAS".

When the angel from heaven, speaking about the political regime he called "the Seventh" stated briefly: "It is not," that statement may not seem so difficult to explain. For the Roman empire, which was contemporary with the apostle John, however much it could be blamed for evil qualities, yet certainly could not be qualified as a communist regime. It was not even socialist in any modern acceptance of the term. Nor was Rome a kingdom publicly denouncing the BELIEF IN GODS, rather the opposite.

To tell the truth, subjects of that empire were condemned for NOT believing in the gods. The faith in a number of gods and goddesses was, in fact, still an important feature of national life in the Roman world. When Christians were persecuted, one reason given for that persecution was precisely that they were reported to "break down the faith in the gods."

On the other hand, if you ask me, "Was that nation never anywhere close to being submerged by the dictatorship of the proletariat?" - then I have to answer truthfully: They certainly did go through a hectic trial once. At that time they were frightfully close to such a destiny. Rome was actually exposed, toward the end of her reign, to a certain attack which threatened to overthrow everything the "capitalist" type of a traditional Roman held dear and holy.

This was at the critical moment when Spartacus had his day. Spartacus came incredibly close to the destiny-changing event of arriving at a formidable revolution which would most likely have transformed Rome from a bourgeois state into a dictatorship of the popular masses.

Who was Spartacus? He was a poor slave who had run away from his master, and was filled with flaming bitterness against the governing classes. He looked upon them as a corrupt bunch of plutocratic scoundrels. So one day he decided to make violent rebellion against the entire established order, nothing less than that. Multitudes of like-minded slaves flocked around him, and a viable army was formed. The Roman "police" forces that had been sent out to meet the rebels, were defeated again and again. The situation was soon a most critical one. In fact, it was not much different from that existing right after the battle of Cannae. We recall that crisis of an earlier epoch, when Hannibal, the dreaded leader of an invading army, caused the destiny of Rome to tremble in the balance. The Senate of those days solemnly made the laconic announcement: "Hannibal ad portas": That is, "Hannibal at the very gates of Rome."

31. AN UNFORTUNATE "LENIN" OF ROMAN ANTIQUITY

Now, some centuries later, thousands of well-equipped Roman soldiers were defeated once more by a handful of desperate outsiders, fighting for their lives, and for a cause they found to be just.

New bands of desperate slaves joined the army of Spartacus. And what gospel do you think that adventurous leader was preaching, since he managed to gather so many volunteers, fighting with such bravery against heavy odds? He preached the gospel of the eventually victorious

proletariat, Karl Marx's gospel, as it was to be called a millennium and a half later: There is a new day dawning for the righteous cause of the downtrodden ones against the down-treaders, the wicked exploiters. So, proletarians of all lands, unite!

That is the inspiring voice of a strange book of endtime Europe: DAS KOMMUNISTISCHE MANIFEST: Proletarier aller Lander, Vereinigt euch!

But what was the destiny kept in store for that major attempt of a crushing onslaught against "capitalist rule" at the time of Roman world leadership? The age of Spartacus just was not mature for a spectacular downfall of the classical type of Western government. The author of the Book of Revelation could with perfect truthfulness say about the beast of the bottomless pit: IT IS NOT. Ancient Rome just was not going to become a Communist dictatorship, in which the state takes over all control. The angel of heaven, in his inspiring visit to a prophet imprisoned in a lonely island out in the sea, had given him a message in which he pronounced his unreserved "Nyet." No-no, Johannes! The real beast of unbridled secularism, and of godless interference on the part of the state into all God-given privacy, is NOT for this land at this time!

Spartacus was forced to give up his superhuman fight against an overpowering enemy. He and his brave soldiers had to suffer the extreme cruelty of the Iron Empire. No sooner was the sedition crushed, than the usual WOE TO THE VANQUISHED was executed. Every single enemy soldier was crucified. The number of those executed slave rebels was so great that there remained no room for one more cross, we are told, along the Via Appia in all its length.

32. WAS ANCIENT HISTORY WITHOUT ANY TRACE OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNISM THEN?

Don't believe it. In some tremendously important ways, antiquity, in the last analysis, had something definite to do with the very origin of Communism in our world. When and where?

Well, what about the NAME of that tragic fellow Spartacus. Still we may not have managed to detach ourselves from everything the concept of "Spartacus" and his lugubrious drama stands for. Spartacus, Spartacus! Does that ring a bell in your mind? Why should a Roman go around with such a curious non-Roman name? This naturally leads us, in the final round, to the historical ground on which ultra-radical Communism was destined to find its ancient European origin: Sparta! Some will say Communism was CREATED in Sparta, or generally speaking in a Grecian environment. Personally I do not like to introduce the concept of "creation" into matters of this order. To me "evolution" is a more appropriate word. Certain things just evolve. There is a weird type of nefarious automatism at work in their coming into existence. Communism is definitely among those things which just evolve.

By the way, that seems to come pretty close to Marx's idea about it also. The emergence of Communism is among the things taking place all by themselves, as it were. It is a matter of inevitable, irrepressible mechanics. I can appreciate that way of looking upon the issue. It reminds me of the general quality inherent in the phenomenon of SIN. Sin does not have any legitimate or reasonable origin. You cannot account for it in terms of a REASON BEHIND. If there had been any actual intelligent reason for sin coming into being, there would also have been some kind of excuse for it. But sin is just irrational, absolutely inexcusable.

Nevertheless, that total irrationality, and total inexcusability, does not prevent those irrationals and inexcusables from having their specific and indisputable places of birth. And we may very well say that Communism's birthplace was a Hellene territory. Don't forget Sparta and the Spartans, please. The fact that Communism, as a newborn baby, grew up in Sparta, is not a negligible fact. No-no!

That fact could not fail to give Communism a definite prestige of the humanistic kind. For in our culture we are immensely proud of so many things for the simple reason that they have had their birth on Greek soil. Did you know that among the many others which are praised as having found their first glorious efflorescence in Greece; we also have to reckon World Communism?

But here one sobering interpolation should be made. Those who think most dreamily about the ancient Grecian lands in our super-romantic circles, do not immediately focus their attention on SPARTA as THE land of glorious origins par excellence, do they? No, most humanists turn their nostalgic eyes toward Athens as the holy city of true humanism in those incomparable days of an irretrievable past.

But here you should be confronted with a perhaps unexpected question once more:

33. WHICH WAS THE STATE OF GREATER GODLESSNESS IN ANTIQUITY -- ATHENS OR SPARTA?

Both Pythagoras and Plato -- this is a well-known fact -- in their statements on how individuals and family units should be governed, expressed ideas that are definitely Communistic in terms of modern Communism. The concept of a certain "equality" becomes a loud cry in Athens on many occasions. And many historians seem to be absolutely convinced that DEMOCRACY, the great idea of modern statesmanship, finds its origin in Athenian politics.

Of course, the so-called "Popular Democracies" ("Volksdemokratien") in some territories of present-day Communism would not put much stock in the kind of "democracy" ancient Athens boasted of. They would rather think that most countries of the Western World (the so-called FREE WORLD) are cutting a poor joke when they call even their own inequality system of traditional government a "democracy". For to modern Marxism a Democratic GOVERNMENT is a curious phenomenon indeed. It is "popular" in a new sense of the term. A "popular democracy" is not a government in which the PEOPLE THEMSELVES GOVERN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. No, not necessarily so. It is a government jealously concerned with the lofty task of governing with an eye single to the BENEFITS OF THE PEOPLE. This is the current philosophy with which Communists today endeavor to reconcile the otherwise rather opposite concepts of a rigid dictatorship on the one hand and the beautiful notion of "people's rule" (democracy) on the other.

And please remember: here the communist idealist is sincerely thinking of the people as an absolutely integrating totality, one solid body without any reduction.

Well, what about the Athenian type of democracy then? Could the governing class of the Athens of old justly claim that they were indiscriminately concerned with the perfect well-being of the people as an unbroken whole?

By no means. The whole civilization of Athens was based on the unworthy institution called slavery. Even a plutocratic community in our modern Western World would tend to smile mockingly at those ancient Greeks who could qualify a political system of that inhuman kind as a "people's government". In fact, a numerically quite considerable part of the people were not regarded as "people" at all. They were counted as cattle, or as pieces of merchandise. Slaves were not people.

But let us not be one-sided and unfair to any group. Particularly the evaluation of any given group's godlessness, or godliness, respectively, demands a high degree of fairness and impartiality. What attitude did that new blossoming culture of ancient Greece take toward the reality of GOD?

The Hellenes, seen from the Bible's point of view, must be characterized as pure gentiles. The belief in a God with a capital G was not prominent. Even the gods with a small g did not necessarily mean very much in that prevailingly humanistic culture. Admittedly, in the gradually established Platonic tradition with its intensive spiritualism, philosophically considered, there had always been a great deal of talk about God, even God with a capital G. But for all practical purposes it must be openly confessed: in reality that God there is and remains a miserable nonentity. At the same time another thing too has to be admitted. GOD IS spoken about. He is even spoken about with undeniable veneration. Open blasphemy, or downright godlessness is a rare phenomenon in Plato's Athens. The times of the pre-socratic (Ionian) materialists must have been passing into oblivion fairly soon. Irreverent cynics, such as Diogenes, or bold "atheists", such as Democritus, were not fashionable figures at any time.

Of course, the more attentive historical will discover some rather secret phenomena of atheism manifesting themselves. I am now referring precisely to Platonic idealism, the great tradition that was destined to survive and make itself broader than any other spiritual movement in the Western World right up to the present date. Personally, I would not hesitate to point that out as a definitely atheistic trend. But let us hurry to add: This is a pretty lukewarm category of atheism.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not say that Plato in the West (any more than his "almost contemporary" COMRAD, Buddha, in the East) was a poor atheist. It is those who do not care one whit about the idea of a realistic God, who are the truest atheists. Persons who consume their very lives in a constant rather desperate fight against the idea of a living God, are the most pitiable atheists. Sometimes they must become quite disagreeably aware of their inferior status in the hierarchy of God-deniers.

Let us simply leave behind both Plato's pretty godless idealism and his disputed role as an ancient manufacturer of Communist ideologies. Let us leave Athens as a whole.

You see, it is only when we come to Sparta that something clearly significant can be registered relative to our topic. Now how did Sparta comport herself as regards the movement of destiny we are concerned about? There certainly is not too much talk about God in THAT community. You will hardly be disturbed by coming across His name there, either capitalized or in small letters.

"Well," you may object, "but this scarcity of cases in which God is mentioned is still a far cry from the militant atheism, as we have come to know it today through the intensive war waged against God by modern Communist ideologies. What does Spartan politics of old have in common with the world movement of recent Marxism?"

34. WHEN DID THE SACRED TREASURE OF FAMILY PRIVACY BEGIN TO BE LOOKED UPON AS A DANGEROUS WEAKNESS OF "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY SENTIMENTALITY" BANNED BY THE STATE?

This is a feature of tremendous importance which ancient Sparta and modern Moscow have had in common. Their respective rigidity in this field is a trait most decisive for the entire revolutionary radicalness and the crude INHUMANITY of any barefaced anti-God campaign, whether in antiquity or in modern times. It tends to appear wherever systematic atheism in its bolder form happens to turn up its ugly face. This is demonstratively contrary to God's plan for His children on earth. It is fatal to the religious spirit. We should know something elementary about all religiousness that is to have a chance of survival. It is a fact known to all diligent Bible readers and applying to all cultures: True religion in man's world is absolutely inseparable from the existence of a certain elemental cell, basic for the prosperity of all human communities. That cell is the FAMILY. Even before there was any concrete sanctuary set apart, even including the great "sanctuary in time" called the Sabbath, it so happened, in accordance with the plan of an all-wise God, that there was one paramount institution provided for man: the FAMILY. You will recall from the Genesis account that both Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day of creation week, so actually before one single Sabbath had come around. Worship was, from the beginning, a family affair. The institution of marriage and the institution of holy worship are made to fit each other intimately. Separating the two is an experiment that knows no oasis in the automatically growing desert of human lives today.

So we should know what happens at the moment when the State usurps the autonomous position of arbitrarily infringing upon the fundamental rights of the family. Then worship in the Biblical sense is simply banned. Spiritual growth, as well as the literal bodily growth of the normal child, is a family matter. All development of a viable spiritual atmosphere is a family matter.

Communism in our world -- however far you go back to trace its origin -- is inherently insensitive to this elementary fact. In the history of the Western world, as we all know, radically state-directed patterns have emerged as a sort of political idea.

And now back to antiquity. Has Sparta contributed anything toward the development of such an ideal? Or even a more direct and more comprehensive question: Does the development of radical communism in our world culture have a heritage that can be traced back to historical facts of the Spartan state? Let us go to a leading modern encyclopedia, the German MEYER, and see what it says, in a general way, about COMMUNISM (in its article bearing the heading: "KOMMUNISMUS").

"The communist idea is that there should not exist any private property any longer. In other words, the community of possessions is the ideal. The Spartans had a communist institution."

We have already seen what it is that makes Communism such a serious threat to the Christian religion. Let us restate it in terms as direct and as outspoken as we can. For we certainly could not ever afford to make any secret about this capital question of present-day world affairs. Secular Communism's overhanging threat to the world was, from its first beginnings -- and it still is today -- a relentless DETERMINATION TO MAKE THE STATE SUPREME IN ALL THINGS: Nothing -- Absolutely nothing -- is supposed to be private any longer: Not even the bringing up of your children. The State is the great Super-teacher. "He" possesses all there is to be possessed of pedagogical genius. So "He" alone has the natural qualifications for forming the new generation in accordance with what is most conducive to the common good. Parents are simply assumed to be too sentimental in their attitude toward their children. Leaving the education exclusively to them would breed a corresponding sentimentality in the new generation.

This is a visible fear inherent in the very philosophy of Marxist ideology. An excessive amount of privacy and personal freedom within the narrow circle of a human family might

foster such trends of original thinking, and original action, that it would seriously hurt the spirit of genuine state fellowship. So rather a COLLECTIVE pattern of Community feeling and Community thought must be inculcated on the child's mind from the most tender age already.

The scene is set for a terror regime without a match in human history; that is, a terror NOT immediately visible to all observers, for this type of terror has a special mechanism available to it. It always operates under a cloak of "ideal fellowship" ("comradeship"). Hence, its dupes hardly notice that their freedom is all the time kept in check by appropriate measures of state discipline.

35. NAZISM - A WORTHY MATCH FOR ANY COMMUNISM REGARDING ANY FEATURES OF BOTTOMLESSNESS

It should not be necessary to mention that Communism is far from unique in this matter of community terror. National Socialism (Fascism) has demonstrated its ability to compete splendidly with any other spirit of "fellowship" genius, as far as this carefully throughout destruction of the human family is concerned. And who has been the source of inspiration in both systems of modern totalitarian regime? SPARTA, more than any other model in history.

Many students seem to be under the impression that Sparta has had an insignificant place in world history; that is, insignificant in terms of inspiration to subsequent nations. If that depreciation of Sparta is an idea which has happened to you as well, then a work by E. Rawson: THE SPARTAN TRADITION IN EUROPEAN THOUGHT, might efficiently take away your erroneous assumption (Oxford University Press, 1969). That book clearly shows what a great admiration some outstanding leaders of the French Revolution had for the education system introduced by Greek societies, and above all by the Spartans. Rabaut, inspired by this historical example, suggested that Sunday "services", according to the new "national Church", be followed, in fine weather, by military and gymnastic competitions. All the children were to be dressed alike. Elders over sixty were to sit and censure their behavior, and a senate elected among them was to give out prizes. (Rawson: op. cit. p. 280).

In somewhat the same vein, Lepeletier complained that the French schools were not egalitarian enough for a republic. In their place he would institute "Maisons d'Education," removing children entirely from their parents' care at the age of five.

Eschasseriaux, another Sparta enthusiast, admonished, in front of the Convention, that the work one had to do was not the work of Moses, but that of Lycurgus ("Ce n'est pas l'oeuvre de Moise que vous avez a faire: C'est celui de Lucurgus").

In a mood of downright lyricism he describes the supremely "touching" spirit of Lycurgus, the famous Spartan lawgiver: "See what love, what charm, the genius of Lycurgus has given to those festivals conducted in the open air and `sous le regard de la loi et la vertu' (under the auspices of the law and the virtue)." Here is something for all citizens, whatever their age or their sex. They all enjoy the same blessing, celebrating that `douce egalite, fraternite et partie (sweet equality, brotherhood, and fatherland)."

A mood of intensive nationalism is here supposed to make up abundantly for the feelings of deep religion. This is a feature of age-old Fascism, important enough to note down. It made itself broad and boisterous in German National Socialism. And it certainly is not unknown in the Communist super-states of today. They are exuberantly nationalistic in spite of all their traditional phrases about pure inter-nationalism.

No matter how sonorously it is being claimed that Fascism and Communism are "Opposite" ideologies, it is rather their remarkable similarities that tend to strike most impressively the Christian who is exposed to their negative effect on his life. The God-defying intervention of the state in the most sacred matters of family affairs and of personal conscience, this precisely was one of the outstanding traits of Hitler's deep concern about the happiness and vital prosperity of "das dritte Reich."

In this order of ideas it is particularly interesting to the historian of ideas to establish the fact that hardly any other group of modern ideology makers have manifested greater enthusiasm about going into Sparta's history, and imitating the Spartans, than the Nazis did.

To modern German Eugenics maniacs, and other race theorists, Sparta always seemed to have enormous attractions.

"She (Sparta) seemed to fit the Aryan theory, or some versions of it, so well. Her constitution appeared so obviously as the work of a conquering military aristocracy, marking itself off as a caste in numbers of her ruling class. Her laws concerning marriage and children seemed to reveal a striking interest in eugenics

eugenics -- rashly supposed to amount to a conscious desire for racial purity. Spartan women, like German women since Tacitus's day, were honored in typical Aryan fashion." Rawson: op. cit. p. 336.

Even the fact that Sparta was "uncivilized", compared with the rest of Greece, was somehow made to fit the bill wonderfully. Barbarian youth and savage freshness was constantly assumed to have more to offer than the tired old age of modern civilization. What is heard is the challenging voice of Nietzsche's Superman, rejecting Christian ethics as something degenerate. Beware of the Christian weakness of compassion toward the less fortunate creatures! That compassionate "frenzy" was always suspected of keeping mediocrity alive. Down go the mediocre ones!

Now, what actually characterizes that bombastic new socialism, whether it calls itself "national" or "international," is one thing: it is the angry cry, the boldly plainspoken determination to "crush the Wretch" (crusher Linfame). You remember the furious phrase used by the audacious fighters against God and men at the dramatic reopening of the bottomless pit in modern times. Daniel speaks in plainer terms than anyone else we know about the spirit inherent in that amazing audacity and unparalleled willfulness of titanic man?

"And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall speak marvelous things against the God of Gods, and shall prosper `til the indignation be accomplished: For that which is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all." Daniel 11:36.

36. THE FINAL PHASE: THE REAL BOTTOMLESSNESS COMES TO ITS REAL PIT ON A REAL EARTH PRESENTING ALL THE ASPECTS OF ABYSMAL CHAOS AS THE RESULT OF SIN

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand, and he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more, `til the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season." Revelation 20:1-3.

The author of all revolutions and rebellions, the godless one PAR EXCELLENCE, is finally shut up in the formidable pit of his own making. Satan is finally surrounded, in other words, for a literal period of one thousand years, by that very chaos he has made for himself. It is the literal graveyard made for apostate mankind; that is, for all those millions and millions of men who, during no less than 6000 years, allowed the archenemy to lead them into rebellion against Jesus Christ.

Not one single human being among those rebellious ones is still alive. The devil and his fellow demons have no single soul to tempt any more, or lead astray. That is evidently the sense in which they are literal captives in the dungeon of their own wickedness. They are captives of the chaos they themselves have literally brought about. This is chaos, not only in the sense of simple nothingness, but a thousand times worse than nothingness. Satan has only managed to change a once blossoming globe into a chaos of that peculiar negative kind. Lucifer was the first incomparable utopist who decided to have anarchy, simple lawlessness, as the great ideal of his unique political system. In other words, he was the first intelligent creature who stubbornly decided to have NOTHING where the all-wise and perfectly good Creator had planned to have SOMETHING. So for a thousand years from that great eschatological moment on, he will be permitted to enjoy his nothingness in comparative peace and tranquil meditation.

"How Satan's activities will be brought to a halt is clear from the context and from other scriptures, which show that the earth will be utterly depopulated at the second coming of Christ. According to chapter 19:19-21 the wicked are all destroyed in connection with the coming. At the same time the righteous are `caught up...in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.' I Thessalonians 4:17" (7BC 878.)

You still remember, don't you, that silly atheist phrase of a "singing tomorrow." In the vocabulary of those bewildered utopists it was nothing but that same spurious heaven for which the pitiable high priests of a certain "Marxist eschatology" claim to be bound. Is that a real heaven? Certainly not. It is a pseudoheaven of an exclusively human make. It is just a deceitful counterfeit to the Biblical heaven. For just as the radical spiritualism of the East (for instance, Buddhism) always had its classical Nirvana, which it could lull its dying men into, in a quite similar way even our radical materialism of the West would never seem to get along quite smoothly without a "Nirvana" of its own. But remember, Nirvanas are always simply the ultimate nothingness of barren pagan humanism. In the final analysis it reveals itself as simple

Hell, the final separation from God. What genuine comfort could there ever be in that? Occidental man, as well as Oriental man, has got exactly what he bargained for -- nothing more, nothing less. He has got NONENTITY -- the pit that was always made without a bottom.

37. EPILOGUE

What you have here been reading may have interested you. I mean the way any theory containing some elements of novelty may still interest modern man. That surely does NOT mean that it has, of necessity, shaken you in the depths of your heart. It may, on the contrary, have left you fairly unengaged, undisturbed. So it may surprise you a good deal if I tell you something about the way it has interfered with my life. That has been not only existentially gripping but something rather close to a nightmare.

How could the more or less theoretical vision of the destiny of "other people" -- "other lands" -- affect a mere observer with the traumatic intensity of a nightmare? "You were not personally IN IT, were you?" I think I hear your sophisticated question. I have to answer simply and unsophisticatedly: Some of my closest friends and dearest associates were realistically in it. They were right up to the neck IN IT. They have naturally been rather silent about it. I must now SPEAK FOR THE SILENT ONES. That is my sacred duty as a witness for Jesus Christ. There are still many untold stories about Christians behind the iron curtain. Are there some untold stories about Seventh-day Adventists behind the iron curtain? I am referring to nominal Adventists, and to Adventists who went "underground", simply because they insisted on a REFORM, and so were called "REFORMISTS."

Let us not be lulled into fairy tales. About Communists, in most countries where they happen to be in power today, we should know something for a historical fact: Toward Christian patterns of thought, and Christian patterns of behavior, they adopt, quite naturally, an attitude of rigid intolerance.

Now, as you well know, some Christians have the peculiarity of adhering to a radical Biblical tradition. That includes distinguishing sharply between what the Bible regards as COMMON and what it regards as HOLY. We should not be surprised if typically secular minds, brought up in a tradition of pure materialism as their political ideology and cultural heritage, have great difficulty in understanding the fuss some of us are making about even a specific day we regard as definitely holy. Could you blame them so heavily for that? Even good Christians fail to understand. How can we be so particular about that special day of rest that we refuse to send our children to school, for instance, under any circumstances, on Sabbath day?

We are now, of course, not speaking about such strange Seventh-day Adventist phenomena as "Sabbath School". We are speaking about schools of the ordinary public type, that is, the schools to which people in most communities are simply commanded, by civil law, to send their children.

How could we expect stern politicians of a materialistic mold to UNDERSTAND, and TOLERATE, such a degree of peculiarity in a fellow citizen?

We are here right in the midst of one of the most crucial topics of contention, causing no end of problems to Adventists behind the iron curtain. And again, why should we marvel at this? That same refusal on the part of Seventh-day Adventists to send their children to school on Sabbath has caused them to suffer serious hardships (many would not hesitate to say PERSECUTION) even in countries that call themselves Christian, such as Switzerland. There Sabbath-keepers were for a long time forced to pay heavy penalties for withholding their children from going to school on Saturday -- in fact, for some parents with rather restricted financial means, those unrelenting penalties were soon becoming burdens under which they seemed doomed to break down. Still, they went on transgressing the laws of the land, simply in order to avoid the action which they honestly considered to be transgressing the law of God.

Of course in a Communist country such open resistance against the commands of the government will tend to become a far more serious affair. The final choice given to Sabbath-observing Christians is often between letting the children go to school on Sabbath like all others, or having them taken entirely away from the home, to be educated and entirely brought up by institutions of the state. The question parents are then naturally faced with is this crucial one: What will happen to our children's deepest lives at the moment when we leave them to the mercy of atheist educators, instead of remaining under the influence of those who love them most, and have eternal truths with which to feed their souls?

What a shaking question. It hits this writer hard on the head. Once more then an old ethics teacher has been put on the spot. What answer shall I, poor fellow, give to this? Shall I

capitulate the sooner the better in front of that formidable army of ever present situation ethicists, bombarding me with their constantly repeated threat? What I can hear them saying is, "This time, at least, you shall have to give up your stubborn principle of a rigid "consistency ethics". You must finally bow down with fear and trembling before the great, merciless master of human lives: THE SITUATION."

Is that true? Can I no more rely on the God of heaven to assume a full responsibility for the strict commandment He Himself has categorically placed before me? Must I make a historic exception "this one time"? Must I take the whole matter into my own hands? Should I do that, simply in order to save my life and that of my loved ones? Must I make up my mind to forget the Sabbath day, rather than remember it, as the commandment tells me?

Is this what you, from now on, expect me to practice myself, and teach my ethics students? Let me admit one thing: To the question coming from those desperate parents in Communist lands today, I have only one answer: Humanly speaking, I see no way out, no meaningful road of acceptable compromise. Does that mean that every avenue of salvation is closed -- for the parents and for their children?

By no means! Not as long as the hot line telephone is still in operation. Am I speaking about the hot line between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan?

Of course not. I am not thinking for one moment of a world war emergency telephone line between Moscow and Washington, D. C. I am speaking about the "hot line" between earth and heaven, the vital communication channel between man and God. Neither the secretary of the Communist party nor the KGB has any power to decide one tiny bit about one single Sabbath-keeper's life, temporal or eternal. The parents' salvation and the children's salvation is a matter between them and God.

38. THE PRESENT NEED OF TELLING SOME UNTOLD STORIES THE CAREFUL WAY THEY SHOULD BE TOLD

As soon as materially possible I must publish something that is long overdue; namely, my personal experience during several stays in some particularly hard-hit regions behind the iron curtain. That is the story told me by some of my closest friends, and as far as I can judge, most trustworthy witnesses among the Reform movement in Eastern Europe (those present day "Reformists" mentioned above). However, before any such main publication of mine is permitted to see the light of the day, I must make sure that I have weighed and verified the matter in its totality.

There remains a considerable story yet to be told about Seventh-day Adventists behind the iron curtain. Personally, I am accountable for no more than a tiny portion of that story. But it is a portion of tremendous importance for a view of the whole. It is a sacred duty resting upon me to cover that little part with frankness and straightforwardness. For it so happens that I have been favored with greater opportunity to be thoroughly acquainted with its many phases during a couple of decades than any other Western observer I know about. Still even every bit of this has to be confronted with the testimony of other witnesses, above all that of our officially accepted leading brethren, those in responsible positions on this side of the "Curtain", as well as those on the other side.

The inspiring part of all this is to see, again and again, how many "conscientious objectors" there really are, in our world, even in times of widespread apostasy. Men of valor just refuse to go along with what they have come to look upon as an unworthy barter trade in the field of sacred spiritual values. So they make up their minds to take all the hardships involved, all the risks to be feared, in GOING UNDERGROUND.

Resolutely, Advent believers, young and old, cast their lot with the despised minority who only manage to survive, materially and spiritually, in the capacity of UNREGISTERED MEMBERS.

Of course, they do know the good intentions of certain church administrators. Every compromise and "temporary adjustment" those leaders make, is simply in order for the church to SURVIVE. But can this realistically be called "survival"? Hardly. In fact, the only thing virtually "salvaged," in a case of such surrender to that kind of agreements with the state, is just the deceptive comfort of retaining a status of legally registered members of this or that Christian denomination. That is nothing but a merely nominal type of survival. It might be called a pure "Church Record Type of Salvation." The Christian martyrs of old would not have put much stock in that category of salvation, would they? Nor would they probably have derived much realistic benefit from it in the high courts above, would they?

But -- like Brother Andrew -- we must learn to understand those also who opt for the lukewarm compromises as the "only way out." Our feelings toward them must not be feelings of anger, or of bitter contempt, but rather feelings of sorrow.

Again and again we must remind ourselves what the peculiar mark is, marking those whom the angel of destruction finds worthy of survival, true survival, eternal survival. The only ones spared in the wicket city, as he goes through it with his deadly weapon, are those who SIGH and CRY.

"And the Lord said unto him (sealing angel), Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." (Ezekial 9:4.)