

(Editor's Note: The Emerald editorial page is honored today to step aside for what we consider one of the truly great messages of our time. It's a commencement speech which was delivered at Yale University by Erwin D. Canham, editor of The Christian Science Monitor, and reprinted in the Monitor's magazine section.)

LET me tell you my thesis bluntly at the outset.

It is that the struggle for the salvation of free society in our time will be lost unless we in the West—and particularly we in the United States—awaken to and project the fact that we are the great revolutionaries in world history, and that our revolution is basically a spiritual one which we have already proved in action.

We have let most of the world think that the American achievement is primarily materialistic. This is the great gap between ourselves and those who yearn for much more than materialism. And we are the first victims ourselves of the misunderstanding.

**Key to the Future . . .**

The misunderstanding concerning America which is so pervasive in the world today is the key to the future of western society. For, as Dr. Charles Malik, Minister of Lebanon to the United States, has well said:

*"To the superficial observer who is unable to penetrate to the core of love and truth which is still at the heart of the West, there is little to choose between the soulless materialism of the West and the militant materialism of the East."*

And, as Dr. Malik further told us in the West:

*"If your only export in these realms is the silent example of flourishing political institutions and happy human relations, you cannot lead. If your only export is a distant reputation for wealth and prosperity and order, you cannot lead."*

*"Nor can you really lead if you send forth to others only expert advice and technical assistance. To be able to lead and save yourself and others, you must, above everything else, address your mind and soul. Your tradition, rooted in the glorious Graeco-Roman-Hebrew-Christian-Western-European humane outlook, supplies you with all the necessary presuppositions for leadership. All you have to do is to be the deepest you already are."*

There is the challenge of the hour. It is not a challenge requiring the postulating of new fundamentals. It calls for no panaceas. It is a call to awakening and to articulation. The basic need is to understand and to proclaim the truth. The West must find its voice.

**Revolution vs. Reaction . . .**

Let us, therefore, ask ourselves a few fundamental questions. Let us proclaim the truth on the issues which confront the world.

Mankind today is being told it must choose between revolution and reaction. It is told that communism represents revolution.

**We stand in human history as the greatest revolutionaries of all time. Not just we Americans—but all of us in the western world.**

And yet they now see that the power to help or harm mankind lies not in the atom itself, not in the uranium or plutonium or tritium, but in the thinking that motivates the finger which does or does not push the button that does or does not set off these fearful engines of destruction. In the words of a great Yale natural scientist, Dr. Edmund W. Sinnott, "Man, not matter, is the chief problem of mankind today."

In such a confrontation, there would be no choice. Mankind must go forward. But this statement of the issue is an explicit reversal of the truth.

The fact is that communism—like totalitarianism in any form—represents the blackest of reactions. The fact is that the free system, of which capitalism is only a small and modified part, represents the authentic revolution—not a subversive revolution, but a revolution which sets men free.

**We in the western world are the true standard-bearers of a great and emancipating doctrine. But we have allowed ourselves to be thrust into the indefensible position of seeking to protect the status quo. The free system is by no means the same thing as the status quo. Our tradition is not static, but is constantly dynamic. Our tradition strikes off chains. Totalitarianism would put them back on again.**

The stirring battle cry which ends the Communist Manifesto is itself a delusion. Marx and Engels wrote: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

**Where Are Chains? . . .**

Where, in today's world, are most people in chains? Is it in the United States, where what is perhaps the most enlightened labor contract in history was recently signed by our largest industrial corporation and one of our largest trade unions?

Or is it in the world's most extensive Communist state, the Soviet Union, where tragic millions, suffering and dying, are bearing the literal chains of slave labor? Is it in Britain, where labor's own government is in power and is carrying through the most extensive peaceful and gradual social revolution in history?

Where are the chains today? Where are the mental chains?

**Are they in the free universities and the free churches of the western world? Or are they in the Communist states, where man's right to think is now denied on behalf of the omnipotent state, and free science or free religion has ceased to exist?**

These are among the facts to which we must awaken.

But let us come at our task in an orderly way. Let us first ask ourselves, in the most searching possible fashion, what are the chief claims of communism, and let us confront these statements with the best truth we know.

Then let us examine the two doctrines—communism and western democracy—in actual practice, to test their words by their works. And, finally, let us chart a plan of campaign in this great battle of truth against falsehood.

First, what are communism's basic postulates?

**The Claims of Communism . . .**

The primary claim of communism—the foundation stone on which it rests—is that of dialectical materialism. It is the assertion that ultimate reality lies in matter, and in matter alone. But the truth as we know it is that superior to matter in every way is the reality of mind and of spirit.

In our time an awakening to the metaphysical bankruptcy of materialism is beginning to sweep over thoughtful mankind. The awakening is most striking among the natural scientists. They are finding, in the realm of the very little and of the very large—of the infinitesimal and of the infinite—that old materialistic assumptions are no longer valid. Reality is now by them recognized to be related to consciousness. Time and space are seen to be dependent upon consciousness.

Reality is emerging more and more to today's thinker as the basic essence which lies behind and beneath the material manifestation. In short, not the chair of wood and wicker, but the idea of chair existing in consciousness, is seen to come closer to ultimate reality.

There is an even more striking and typical proof of the bankruptcy of materialism. Men have wrought the most powerful engines in their experience; from gunpowder and steam and electricity they have progressed to atomic power.

And yet they now see that the power to help or harm mankind lies not in the atom itself, not in the uranium or plutonium or tritium, but in the thinking that motivates the finger which does or does not push the button that does or does not set off these fearful engines of destruction. In the words of a great Yale natural scientist, Dr. Edmund W. Sinnott, "Man, not matter, is the chief problem of mankind today."

**Second Great Lie . . .**

The second great lie of communism walks hand in hand with the first. It is that there is no God. Today we have the opportunity of knowing as never before that there is indeed a God, who is the loving father of all mankind.

We do not necessarily have to identify God namely with the single three-letter name, G-o-d. Perhaps it is useful to redefine God as the central Principle of the universe. Perhaps it helps to think of Him as eternal truth and life and love. These things cannot be denied.

We know the universe is orderly. We know that it works according to established rules and principles, some of which we have been able partially to define. It seems to me rationally impossible to recognize the reality of an orderly universe and to deny God.

Still further to disprove Communist dialectic, take the assertions that there is no objective and eternal truth, and that

only the transient and the temporal exist. I am sure that we in the western world can readily prove to our satisfaction that there is truth, and that it is transcendent. Again we can prove it in the working laws of the universe. Or we can prove it in the vast and noble reaches of the mind and heart. There is abundant evidence of the values.

These are accessible to mankind through a humble search for understanding. They come through the path of reason as well as down the road of revelation. They lift mankind out of its own confusions and perversities. They are to be confirmed not only in the religious convictions and teachings of mankind, but in the positive philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle, of Hegel and Whitehead.

**Another Falsehood . . .**

Finally we come to another great Communist falsehood: that the individual exists for the sake of society and the state.

This lie follows logically from the assertion of materialism and the denial of eternal truth and order. It is specific doctrine which enslaves mankind. And yet the truth as we know it and prove it in action daily is that the state and society exist for the sake of the individual.

It is this Communist lie which stifles the spirit of man. It is totalitarian. It is contrary to nature and to man.

Again in the eloquent words of Dr. Malik:

*"That the state, the mere organ of government and order, is the source of every law, every truth, every norm of conduct, every social and economic relationship; that no science, no music, no economic activity, no philosophy, no art, no theology, is to be permitted except if it is state-licensed and state-controlled; all this is so false, so arrogant, so autocratic and tyrannical that no man who has drunk deep from the living waters of the western Platonic-Christian tradition can possibly accept it."*

**"The State does not come in first place; it comes in tenth or fifteenth place. The University is higher than the State; the tradition of free inquiry is higher than the State; the Church is higher than the State; natural law is higher than the State; natural law is higher than the State; God is higher than the State; within limits, free economic activity is higher than the State."**—Dr. Charles Malik.

Fortunately, there is also in the Russian people a great and magnificent spiritual and universal yearning. The free Russian soul, in all its exuberance, longs for human brotherhood and bears a heavy burden of anguish for the spiritual failure of mankind.

These deep impulses have helped to support communism. They would be far more effective in support of a free system wrought for the benefit of all mankind. The Russian need for religion has partially and temporarily accepted communism as a religion. When the Russian spirit is ultimately freed, it must find its way fully into the spiritual pastures of the great western tradition of truth and love.

Otherwise, Russia might remain the world's great challenge for long and turbulent years—far more dangerously than in our own time, when Russia is self-curbed by a hopelessly inefficient and inhibiting system. Even under the present limitations, it is unnecessary to add that the Russian achievement is considerable.

The need, therefore, is for an awakening to the spiritual obligation and heritage of the free economic system.

Let us, then, proceed to the second of our main points: an examination of communism and the free economic system as they reveal themselves in action.

**Don't Belittle Soviets . . .**

It is not necessary, first of all, to belittle the actual achievements of the Soviet state. Historic objectivity requires us to recall the importance of the transition from Czarism, the achievement of partial industrialization in the face of two wars.

In a certain narrow framework the Soviet state has accepted a large obligation to the individuals who make it up. It has gone a long way toward harmonizing the diverse interests of widely separated and scattered racial and cultural groups. In World War II the Red Army under Marshal Stalin helped greatly in resisting and defeating a powerful aggressor.

It is important to recognize, also, that we have to live with the Russians, and many of the things we find dangerous in the present Soviet state are traits and trends which long antedate communism. We must find ways of adjusting ourselves to life with an awakened Eurasian continent.

It is, perhaps, a blessing for mankind that the awakening and industrialization of this vast area has come about under a

system which inevitably handicaps and limits its potential achievement. Sometimes one is appalled at the aggressive possibilities of a Russian empire organized with the efficiency and power of industrialized Britain in the nineteenth century or the United States in the twentieth century.

A great natural scientist, Dr. Merle Tuve, recently remarked that the greatest single discovery of World War II was the efficiency of the free system. That kind of efficiency coupled with the natural resources and the immense racial dynamism of the people now under the hammer and sickle would make a world force of incalculable potential.

**More Stifling than Liberation.**

Communism has partly liberated and partly stifled this great capacity. On balance, at the point of the midcentury, there is far more of stifling than there is of liberation. When, as I believe to be inevitable, the Russian peoples are finally and

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genuinely liberated, we must be ready with a universal system of peace and order. Otherwise, they will be an explosive force against which today's communism will be a pallid squib.

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**Chains and Slavery . . .**

But on balance the system remains one of the chains and of slavery. The fact is that communism in its works is both spiritually and materially sterile. It is fundamentally a failure, because it is unable to utilize more than the merest fraction of the forces which are available.

It is the most profligate destroyer of human resources. Its concentration camps and its mass graves are filled with the richest of human talent. Those who survive are denied the immense productive force of free inquiry, of objective experiment, and of full self-analysis.

Against all this, contrast the actual achievement of the free system of the West. The American economy—derided and attacked by its enemies—is today holding the line against world collapse. With all the faults which we know full well lie within our society and in its economic organization, the fact remains that the world today would be in chaos without the stability and productivity of the United States.

I am not here seeking to put a halo around the profit motive; far from it. The first and most important thing to say about the free economic system is that it can survive only

# The Authentic Revolution

*'We Are the Great Revolutionaries . . . And Our Revolution Is a Spiritual One'*

by ERWIN D. CANHAM  
Editor, The Christian Science Monitor

system ever tried. It stands because it is perfectible.

It is not dogmatic—or should not be. It should always recognize the imperativeness of self-criticism and of change. It should remember the paramountcy of human values. But these are not values of social security alone.

**Shortcomings in Security . . .**

There are serious shortcomings in the idea of security, taken as an ultimate value. No society which enshrined security as an end in itself was able long to continue the march of progress. Dissatisfaction, adversity, risk—these are the imperatives of progress.

Furthermore, to enshrine security as an end in itself, and to place its procurement and maintenance in the hands of the state, is to say that the state is above the individual. That is the road of slavery: of social suicide.

**We must keep the individual and the individual-based forms of organization as our primary values: man and church and school, along with family and free economic activity. The state owes nobody a living.**

At the same time, it is necessary and effective to organize through the state the various functions which the individual or private organizations cannot accomplish. It goes without saying that insurance barriers against the hazards of the economic system—old age or unemployment—are accepted and legitimate parts of collective responsibility. That form of social security can be kept in its proper place.

But the increasing sense of dependence of the individual upon the state is not the obverse of the needful recognition of social obligation. It is, however, often the result of the failure of free enterprise to recognize its social obligation.

In an industrial society, dominated by mass production, the individual is peculiarly insecure. He will seek the means of survival through collective action.



For the laborers and artisan, protection comes through unions and government. Sometimes it comes through a co-operative relationship with his employer, which is best of all. For the employer, protection also comes through collective action, sometimes private and sometimes in governmental laws and procedures.

**Have Made Progress . . .**

But we have made great progress in evolving forms which are consistent both with free enterprise and with the special hazards of an industrial society.

And again I must emphasize that these forms work best when they are founded upon a voluntary and perceptive acceptance of social obligation. That is the final and indispensable bulwark of the free system.

**The fruits of the system are expressed. In material and spiritual terms. Altogether too often we have remembered only the material rewards. We boast of our standard of living, and when we go abroad the dollars clink in our pockets. We are sometimes obsessed with material gain and with unrestrained selfishness. We have been our own worst salesman, for we have convinced most of the rest of the world that we are money-mad materialists.**

But the greatest fruitage of the free system is spiritual. It stands in the recognition of the essential dignity of man which is implicit in equality of opportunity. It lies in the concept of legitimate service.

Perhaps you will understand me when I say, not too whimsically, that the American filling station is a very good illustration of the triumph of the free system. It is not the mechanical excellence of the filling station which is its chief virtue. It is its spirit.

There are an enthusiasm and a self-reliance which are the chief problem of mankind today."

—Dr. Edmund W. Sinnott

Something of the same achievement was illustrated the other day by the words of a German editor who recently had an opportunity to visit the United States. He was taken to a small eastern city as the guest of a local newspaper. I asked him how he liked it and what he had learned. He put it in these words:

*"The best thing was that they introduced me to everybody, and they introduced me to the lift-boy just the same way they introduced me to the mayor."*

**Awareness of Individual . . .**  
Awareness of the individual importance of man is our greatest achievement. It lies at the heart of the matter:  
Recognizing the significance of individual men, we have been able to mobilize and utilize the vast and still uncounted and uncountable resources of the human spirit.

This is an accomplishment of revolutionary importance. It springs from the circumstances under which Europeans first came to the New World; it is based upon the political and ideological and spiritual roots of our society. It is genuine democracy.

Established in the midst of the natural resources of a continent, it has enabled us to become a material and spiritual bastion for the safeguarding of western civilization. We have been able to achieve the adequate blending of natural and human resources, and while we have wasted natural resources often in profligate manner, we have come to utilize human resources within enterprising humane bounds.

But I would not gild the lily. There are plenty of dark spots in our human experience. They are part of the challenge, part of the incentive, part of the unfinished business without which we would decline and perish.

And that brings us to our third point: a plan of campaign in the war of ideas. The first necessity is manifestly self-awakening. We must rediscover the ideas by which we live.

The ideology of communism is well known and widely proclaimed. It is passionately believed by many of those who proclaim it. This awareness and intensity is integrated and guided.

There is no comparable intensity or coordination of ideas among those who be-

lieve in the free system. There will not be until we look at our heritage in fundamental terms and arouse ourselves to its revolutionary import today. The obligation of every citizen, of every leader, is to awaken himself and to awaken his fellow man to the significance of today's challenge.

The second necessity, after the awakening, is the voice.

Already there are various small voices from the free nations—voices seeking to penetrate the void of human thinking. They must rise to full articulation. We possess today mighty machines for disseminating ideas to every corner of the globe.

But we have not yet learned what we have to say. In fact, the message we must say is the same old message of truth down the ages: the significance of man under God, of his brotherhood, of his birthright of freedom.

**Demonstrate Freedom . . .**

The third necessity, along with the awakening and the voice, is the fuller demonstration of the free system in action.

There is contagion in falsehood. Some of the lies of totalitarianism and materialism have penetrated into our own thinking. We must not let them stay there.

In this unhealthy atmosphere of no peace, no war, we have wielded some citadels to the enemy. Some have sought to weaken or destroy the free spirit of inquiry and of teaching in our schools and universities. Happily, enough have seen the truth clearly and have prevented the sabotage of our educational institutions.

In these bewildering times we have yielded to distrust of human character, and the cloud of suspicion—often of slander—hangs heavy over the human spirit. We must learn again to trust character, because free institutions depend upon respect for fellow man.

We must spurn the corrosive doubts which do far more harm to our body politic than the dangers to which they pertain. We must, as I have said earlier, manifest social responsibility throughout our economic system.

We must make swifter progress toward the removal of racial and religious barriers which prevent true community. These are but a few of our items of unfinished business—of our ways of proving in action the truth by which alone we live.

And, finally, let us regain perspective, let us cast off the inferiority complex with which communism has bemused us, let us reaffirm a consciousness of our birthright.

**We stand in human history as the greatest revolutionaries of all time. Not just we Americans—but all of us in the western world.**

We are the guardians of a sacred and dynamic heritage. We have come a long way. We have a long way to go.

We have discovered long since the eternal truth of love and peace and brotherhood. We have discovered and in a measure applied the enormous potency of the free man.

We have lifted part way the heavy burden of toil that has crushed humanity down through the years, and more gloriously we have begun to lift the curtain of ignorance which has blanketed the human mind.

**We are on the march.**  
And today we are challenged.  
For the challenge we may be infinitely grateful. Because our society today faces adversity.

There is a hill up which we must climb. We will not decline in slothful ease. We will pit ourselves against the lies which in our time assault the deep foundations of truth.

These lies cannot prevail, even to the extent of setting civilization into a relapse, if we are worthy of our heritage.

And we can and will be worthy of that heritage if and as we waken. The voice of no one of us is powerful enough to awaken all the slumberers in today's world.

**Duty to Think . . .**

It is our individual and collective duty to think these things through for ourselves, and in our free way to help our brother man to his needful awareness.

Let us pass along the message of freedom. One day it will reach critical mass and a chain reaction will begin.

Meantime, we must preserve the physical defense of the western world by keeping military aggression at bay; we must strengthen the economic sinews and the stability of the free world; we must lead our civilization to higher plateaus of demonstrated freedom and achievement.

And from the valley below, those who have accepted the false doctrines of totalitarianism of the right or the left will one day see the heights which we have ascended and will join us on the continuous pathway ahead.