

***Is God Dead, Red,
and a Woman?***

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

MARXISM

&

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

By Richard Wurmbrand

For 14 years a prisoner of the Communists

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Dear Reader,

In every conflict – whether between husband and wife, children and parents, churches and Christian organizations, or between political parties or nations – each faction brings many accusations against the other. They are mostly tangential or of minor import. We must ask, “What is *the one*, important, overriding issue that separates us from the other?”

For instance, what is the great conflict between the Communist world and the free world? It is not the economic system, though I believe the system in the Communist world is fundamentally bad. But other systems have their failings and weak points. It is not even the social system, though the Communist world is brutal with a violence unknown till now in the history of the world. But brutality and violence do exist elsewhere, too.

What, then, is the underlying conflict?

Or what is the main difference between the World Council of Churches and the Bible-believing churches?

The main conflict is not over the Bible: Is it the word of God? Does it contain the Word of God? Does it contain myths and legends as well as truth? These are not the greatest issues.

In fact, most Christians do not own a Bible. It is translated completely only in 270 languages from a total of 3000. In Communist and Islamic countries they are prevented from having access to one. Furthermore, since 60% of mankind cannot read, owning one would be of little help; and since 60% are very poor, they could not afford a Bible even if it were available.

And so the basic problem does not lie in one's attitude toward the Bible or even in one's concept of the church.

Is there a gracious God?

The fundamental problems in which Communism and the World Council of Churches on one side and us on the other side differ from each other are: **IS THERE A GOD, AND IS THIS GOD GRACIOUS TO US?** Does this God love us? Is

there Someone who has created us with a purpose, who has given us an ideal, and also a hope, or does such a God not exist? Or if God exists is he a bad God?

This was the central problem also in Reformation times. The great quarrel was not over the sale of indulgences by the Catholic Church. Luther's main concern was the character of God. He once described the God of his youth in these better words: "I hated God. I feared him. I asked myself, Is there not a gracious God?" And then he found in the Bible the message about a gracious God, that turned his life around and shook the world.

Christianity and Islam have opposing views of God. The Islamic religion does not permit one to call God "Father". To the Moslem he is not a Father but a Master. Therefore, in Islam one cannot appeal to a fatherly heart.

Our quarrel with Communism is that its doctrine allows no God. They say He does not exist. There is no purpose in life; when we die we will be eaten by worms and that is it.

Our main difference from Communists is that we believe in a living God who can impart eternal life to his creatures and that they contest our faith.

Now to the difference between believers in Christ and the World Council of Churches.

Nineteen eighty-three is the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, which is being commemorated by Protestant churches everywhere. Yet the only Lutheran speaker in the plenary sessions of the WCC's congress in Vancouver was Mrs. Sölle, who is renowned since long for having stated, "God is dead, red, and a woman". ("IDEA", W. Germany, July 1983)

Statements like this separate the Bible-believing churches from the World Council of Churches. The basic conflict is not that the Council interprets the Bible differently from us or that it has another concept of the Church, or leans left or right. The basic conflict is over the fact that the World Council pushes to the forefront persons who *do not believe in the existence of a gracious God.*

Communists do not believe in a God at all, but these theologians of the WCC go even further: God exists; He is a corpse, fit only for worms.

A great gulf between

This is the great gulf between the Council and the Scriptural churches.

Obviously, Mrs Sölle's views are not shared by all the delegates. Many of them are precious brethren in Christ. But it is bad enough that these views are tolerated.

The Bible teaches not to receive and not to greet somebody who brings a false doctrine "for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds". (II John 10-11)

The WCC not only receives theologians of the "God is dead" theology, but also gave Mrs. Sölle a position of honor as speaker at its congress.

We can easily ridicule the whole issue: it is stupid of Mrs Sölle to say that "God is dead, red, and a woman." We can laugh, or cluck, or shrug our shoulders. But I have tried to understand Mrs. Sölle and other theologians who write like this. I have prayed for her with love. After carefully reading her writings, I have found out how she came to the conclusion that God is dead.

Mrs. Sölle, a German, went to visit the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp, where thousands of Jews, Gypsies, and others were gassed and burned in ovens. After contemplating the scenes where fellow human beings were tortured, she said to herself, "God must be dead. If God were alive, such a thing could never have happened."

Wickedness and goodness

Now I will tell you of another, totally different, reaction one could have to Auschwitz.

In post-war Czechoslovakia, a Communist leader was thrown in jail by his own comrades and put in a solitary cell. (The Communists jail not only Christians, Jews, and patriots, but also their own party-members. Stalin put his own family in jail; Khrushchev his own wife. My wife and I also sat in prison with Communists.)

In his cell, Loebel, a high-ranking, atheistic official, was subjected to intensive brainwashing. Day and night he was forced to listen to the words, "You are a spy; you are not a spy; you are a

counter-revolutionist; you will be shot; you will be shot; you will be shot; you will be hanged; you will not be hanged; you will be flayed; but perhaps it is a mistake; no, you will be freed; you will not be freed; you will be hanged; you will not be hanged; you will be freed; your wife has died; your children are no more; you will be hanged, traitor. . ." It was maddening.

In the extreme of torture, a thought came to him: "I have now met the extreme of wickedness. If a Communist tortures a Christian there is sense in it. The Christian is my enemy. I have to destroy Christianity; therefore I torture him. But if a Communist tortures a Communist, it makes no sense at all. It is wickedness for wickedness' sake. It is the extreme of wickedness. Anything worse cannot exist."

His thoughts continued; "Does electricity exist with only one pole? It must have two poles. I now see the negative. There must also be a positive. Who has ever seen a coin with only one face? I have seen one ugly face. How do I know that it is ugly? Something is ugly only in comparison with something beautiful. If there exists no beauty, there exists no ugliness. If there is no good, there is no evil.

"If there exists such an extreme of wickedness, there must also be an extreme of goodness somewhere, a mercy that lasts forever. If there is all this evil, there must be somewhere beauty without description. I see we are dealing here with a devil who tortures a Communist without any motive. He makes one Communist torture another. There must be, then, a God who loves for love's sake. He does not love me because I am good. He does not love me because I deserve it. He loves me because he is love. Love is his character."

The next time he was called to be interrogated by a Communist officer, he said: "You can turn off your microphone; it has had its effect. From now on I am a believer in God."

He, a Communist, found God in the midst of terrible evil. And Mrs. Sölle, a theologian, who never suffered herself, but only visited a place of suffering, concluded that there is no gracious God. There might have been one in the past, but now

he is dead. He is not important anymore. Let us now learn from Marx how to revolutionize the world.

We know that God does exist. He is gracious to us and we can rely on his love.

There is a great partition between those who really love God and those who still call themselves Christian but deny that there is a living God who is and will remain gracious forever.

These non-believers argue: "Man does not have enough. He cannot be what he wants to be. Children have been burned in Auschwitz; others hunger, lack the joys of life, do not have what is due them and therefore do not count in this world. And because we do not have and are not what we should be, we will support the revolutionists. We will change the world in order to have and to be."

Only administration

Since I am Jewish, I will tell you a secret of the Hebrew language. In the Hebrew Bible the verb "to have" does not exist. One who has the Hebrew spirit cannot wish "to have" more since he lacks even the word to express his desire. Even in modern Hebrew, which is spoken today in Israel, one cannot say, "I have a car" or "I have money." Only One is the possessor of all possessions. We are only the administrators.

One cannot express in Hebrew the modern theology of the World Council of Churches: "We wish to have more." Neither can he say, "I am important," since the verb "to be" is also avoided in Hebrew, though this exists. (Jesus never said, "Take, eat; this *IS* my body," but only "This — my body." The word "is" is not used.) We are nothing. God is everything. I have not; I am not, for Christ lives in me. He is my all. This is how a real Hebrew thinks.

I have been in very poor countries and have seen children begging in the streets. My heart has been wrenched at the sight of sick and starving children in Africa and Asia. I myself was a poor child and knew what it was to be hungry. I have also suffered extreme hunger in Communist prisons. But I also know the life of the Spirit in

which the desire to have and to be disappears. Christ, the Beloved, is everything to me.

Yes, it is terrible to be reminded of the horrors of Auschwitz. And it is devastating to realize that concentration camps continue to exist and that tortures are inflicted in Russia, and Romania, and many other countries today. But Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate his own life cannot be my disciple."

Since the Christian despises the things of this world, what can poverty and injustice and concentration camps deprive him of? His only longing is for Christ; his only desire, to share this supreme joy with others.

The Son of God, Creator of all things, lacked nothing in his heavenly abode. Beloved of his Father, he sat on the throne of the universe and was adored by angels and worshipped by saints. But all this he despised for the sake of sinners doomed to eternal destruction. He left his throne, left heaven and all the angels, and came to this sin-cursed earth to suffer and die. Condemned by those he came to save, he despised the shame — the verbal abuse, the vulgarities, the torture — for the joy that was set before Him. He loved the suffering in order to serve humanity through his suffering.

This is the Christian way. To be a Christian means to have the Spirit of Christ.

Suffering with Christ

'Marx promised many things. The Communists promise many things. But neither Marx nor the Communists have produced a better, happier, or even wealthier society. Quite the contrary! But suppose that Marx had been able to make his followers millionaires, with a Cadillac in every garage. I for one would not be impressed. I belong to the King of kings who left heaven to serve sinners and who taught us to hate even our own lives in order to serve God.

I am not interested in the promises of Marx, even if they were true. And I do not fear his legacy of concentration camps and solitary cells.

St. Paul, who was an upstanding rabbi highly regarded by his peers, like a Metropolitan or a

patriarch today, said after his conversion, "I desire to know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ." And he had his wish. Beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, chained, imprisoned, he did not become bitter and say, "Mrs. Sölle, you are right. If there is suffering, then there is no God. He must be dead." Rather, he rejoiced, knowing that beyond deprivation lay the crown of life and beyond death the resurrection.

The one who lives in the world of "having" and "being" and "desiring to be or to have" is an easy target for the devil. We should renounce these notions, which are not used in the language of the people of God.

I knew a Hungarian Christian who in Nazi times declared herself to be a Jewess. Her name was Marica Gero, and her intent was to get into the concentration camp in order to tell the Jews who suffered there about Christ. For her the gas chambers and the ovens held no terror because of the joy she had in making Christ known to others. She sacrificed herself in order to share the fellowship of His sufferings.

When my wife and I and six other Christians were put in jail by the Nazis, a Romanian lady knocked at the door of the prison. When asked what she wanted she replied, "My brethren from the people of Israel are suffering here and I want to be with them. Please arrest me too." Her wish was fulfilled. She was arrested, thrown in prison with us, court-martialed together with us. For her, prison with its beatings and degradation was not frightening. She had desired it.

Christ in Miniature

On a human level, the poverty of Asia and Africa should stir us to do everything possible to help the poor and starving. But on a spiritual level it is otherwise. Some of the best of mankind have sought poverty. Christianity enjoins it. St. Francis and others have practiced it. The martyrs surrendered not only property but life itself. But others also shared this insight. Buddha was a prince who sought poverty. Gandhi, who did not espouse Christianity, had imbibed something of its spirit

and sought poverty, though as a lawyer he could have made much money.

I believe the mentality of many in the World Council of Churches is wrong, though I do not wish to speak spitefully of all its leaders. On the contrary, I love them and pray for them. But they are so far from Christian thought that even debate is impossible. How can one debate that "God is dead, red, and a woman"? How can one debate the admission of such a theologian to speak at a Christian congress?

To be a Christian means to be a Christ in miniature. It means to share his thoughts — of renunciation, of sacrifice, of loving, to give up things in order to benefit others, of bringing others to life eternal.

In Romanian prisons, severe beatings are almost routine. One day the Communists wanted to make sport and decided on a Christian pastor who was scheduled to receive twenty-five lashes.

These beatings were far from being a child's spanking. Prisoners were beaten till the blood flowed. The victim was stripped naked, and chains were tied around his hands and his feet. Then he was bent over a low table, and one of the guards would beat him with a rubber truncheon or some other torturous instrument. It was a very heavy beating.

The Communists, in a sportive mood, said to the pastor, "You know, twenty-five lashes await you, and you also know how severe they are. But we are ready to reduce your punishment if you will provide us a little entertainment. Sing us a hymn and you will get only ten lashes — no, only five.

The pastor said, "I will sing you a religious hymn if you will promise me something. Promise that I will have no profit from singing. I do not sing in order to receive fewer lashes but because I love the One to whom I sing."

Imagine what a witness this was! A man in chains, stretched naked across a low table, with Communist guards preparing to beat him!

Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to his defense but chose to drink the cup of suffering to the end. In like manner, this pastor chose not to avoid his suffering.

"All right," he was assured. "You will get the whole beating."

He began to sing Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help."

The Communists roared with laughter. "What? Your help is coming from the hills? All right, we'll stop beating you for ten minutes till someone comes to help you, since you believe help is coming from the hills."

He continued to sing quietly, "My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

They laughed: "Well, we do not believe he made heaven and earth. But even if he did, he cannot come to help you. You will get all twenty-five lashes. We have beaten many a Christian and no one has ever come to help them."

The pastor continued, "He will not allow thy foot to be moved. . ."

"What? He will not allow your foot to be moved?" This was great sport. They beat him on the soles of his feet. "Why doesn't he help you?"

". . . He who keepeth you will not slumber. behold, he who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Was he a madman? Are all Christians who die in Communist prison cells mad? Do they not see reality? In prison we sang every day. How could we sing the hymn, "Standing on the promises of Christ, my King"? Standing on the promises between torture and beatings?

The inward man

We knew something which theologians like Mrs. Sölle of the World Council of Churches do not know.

The Bible reveals a great secret. It is written that we have a "hidden man of the heart." (I Peter 3:4)

There is the outward man and the inner man. Psychologists say we have complexes, neuroses, and psychoses. The Bible does not speak about such things. It says that within the outward man there is another man, a whole man, the hidden man of the heart, a man with emotions, sentiments, desires and a will, a man who hears and thinks.

Within us is a very rich man: Jesus says, "A kingdom, the kingdom of God, is within you."

The Bible records that one man had a legion of devils in him, thousands of devils. We have a kingdom, a whole army of God, within us.

A man can live a lifetime without discovering this treasure within his heart. This hidden man of the heart, this treasure in the field, this pearl of great price cannot be burned by fire nor drowned by water. No Communist can harm him, no poverty can crush him, no hunger can make him despair. Only the outward man suffers and bleeds.

Suffering proves not only from the Nazis or the Communists. People also suffer because of failing marriages, wayward children, financial problems, illnesses, and so on. But we have within us this hidden man of the heart, who is Christ in us. Not the Christ of history, who lived on this earth 2,000 years ago. About such a Christ the theologians of the World Council of Churches may know a little. But Christ in us, the hope of glory! This is entirely different.

To this Christ within you one can sing even while stripped naked, bent over a table, awaiting a bloody beating or being very poor. No need of any Marx!

Crying for God

Once the political officer of the prison in Gherla called me. Holding a rubber truncheon in his hand, he said, "I hear that even in your prison cell you have not yet become a good man, an obedient citizen. You continue to speak about God and about eternal life. Why do you preach such stupid things? Give me at least one quick argument for the existence of God."

I looked at him and said, "Lieutenant, it is very difficult to give an argument to someone with a rubber truncheon in his hand. But still I will comply.

"I have seen many men die near me. There are also many of these regret being atheists and they depart this life crying for God, for Jesus, some for Mary. But never once have I seen a Christian cry

out with his dying breath, 'Marx, Marx, come and save me from Christianity!'"

"You are a wicked fellow," said the officer, irritated. But he sent me back to my cell without a beating.

On the certain truth of a gracious God I take my stand, along with all our brethren in Communist countries.

The Orthodox priest Shepilov has been in Russian prisons for forty years for his faith. My fourteen years seemed endless, but a lifetime of forty years — ? He could probably be free if he would utter three words: "I deny Christ." But how can he deny Christ when Christ is his life?

For some, God is only an object of theological books, whom we can declare to be dead, whom we can paint in red or whose sex we can change. For us, He is our whole existence. I cannot deny my own heart which beats. I cannot deny my supreme Love.

When Christians suffer, they are happy for the privilege.

This belief is the essence of Christianity. It sustains all true believers.

God is alive

We love those in the World Council of Churches with all our heart. If it were possible, I would gladly suffer to bring them to the truth — to Christ. But there is no possibility of understanding or dialogue with those who assert that "God is dead, red, and a woman." Mrs. Sölle, known for this her stand, was cheered at the congress of the WCC in Vancouver, instead of being expelled.

I believe that God is very much alive. God is not red. He has no colour. How could he have a color? He made all the colors of the rainbow, as well as colors we cannot see, such as infra-red and ultra-violet, and colors beyond the ken of science. God is light, not color. He is a loving Father to us. We have this marvelous treasure he has unveiled to us, this ultimate, heart-warming truth: He is a GRACIOUS GOD.

He was gracious to me when I was a sinner, when I came to Him and confessed the weaknesses

of my wretched past. He showed me that Jesus bore my guilt when he died on the cross, and that because of his sacrifice I was forgiven. "Do not talk to me any more about your sins," he said. "I do not wish to remember them. You are forgiven. You are my beloved child."

And when I sinned and did wrong things again, I looked to God and saw that his mercy endures *forever*, not only today and tomorrow. In the worst of suffering we knew this grace of God was with us.

And now I appeal to you most earnestly: Put all your faith and trust in this gracious God, who has shown his mercy in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his good will in the gift of his Holy Spirit, his generosity in the ministry of angels, his trust in making us members of his Holy Church. Seek this gracious God with more zeal than you now seek to have and to be, for he is the richest treasure. Cling to him throughout life and serve him with the devotion exhibited by our brothers and sisters in Communist countries, who die in grace, with a blessing on their lips.

We all have to make a choice ultimately between the non-existent God of the Communists, the "dead, red, and female" God offered by Mrs. Sölle of the World Council of Churches, and the gracious God revealed by Jesus Christ.

The underground church of the Communist countries and its sufferers whose name I speak believe in the living, gracious God.

Aid for guerillas

I was born a Jew and belong to a race which has been persecuted for thousands of years. I wish very much for men of all races to be free, but I regret the decision of the WCC to support the so-called "Freedom-fighters". When these, helped by the WCC, came to power in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, they instituted Communist regimes. Communism states openly as its last aim the abolishing of all religions. How can a Christian organization support the worst enemies of Christianity?

It could be said that under Communism there is no racial discrimination, because it despises and oppresses alike men of all colors.

The World Council gives money for Communist guerillas but not one cent for families of Christians suffering in Communist jails. Is this right?

I cannot agree with the fact that real and alleged sins of the West have been condemned at the congress of the WCC and the complaints about the persecutions against Christians and Jews in Communist countries have been silenced.

The pretext is that in these cases silent diplomacy works better. It is true it works in individual cases, whereas public protest is more efficient generally. But this is not the issue.

The question is who is the persecuted person?

When Jesus meets the persecutor Saul of Tarsus, He asked him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME?" Saul could have replied, "I never persecuted you, but only your disciples." Now, Jesus might be omniscient. There is one thing he does not know, this is the difference between himself and his disciples. He feels one with them. Every pain of theirs is his pain.

Christians learned from Christ. The pain of a tortured brother or sister is their own. When you are whipped and tortured, you do not use quiet diplomacy, even if it would be wise to do so. In my brethren I am whipped and therefore I cry, sometimes with a mad, senseless cry.

The leadership of the WCC might have wisdom. Their sin is that they do not feel the sufferings of their brethren like their own. (Hebrews 13:3) If it were so, they would shout about what is happening to Christians in Communist countries.

* * *

It is childish to criticise the WCC for having received the delegates of the official churches in the Soviet block, though these are "ecclesiastic ambassadors of the prince of darkness". The receivers and the received were led by the same spirit. They feel well with each other.

It was normal the underground church — the real church in one third of the world — should not have been represented at the congress of the WCC.

These letters stand for "the Worldly Council of Churches". It has the spirit of the world, the underground church is the bride of Christ.

It will be discovered once how many of the Western leaders of the World Council of Churches have worked knowingly for Communism, yea, how many of them were Communists in disguise.

When Communism came to power in Romania, the Orthodox professor of theology Constantinescu-Iashi declared openly he had been a Communist all along, with the assignment of subverting the church. The Orthodox priests Patrashcoiu and Riosheabu became immediately Colonels of the Communist Secret Police, explaining to their stunned parishioners they had never been real priests, but Communists.

Li Chu-Wen had been pastor of the Shanghai International Church for 15 years and General Secretary of the Three Self Movement, but at the start of the Cultural Revolution, he revealed he had been a secret Communist Party worker within the church. Now he is Deputy Director of Red China's News Agency in Hong Kong.

Apostles Peter and John would not have accepted to be on a Council with Judas, unless he had repented.

I repeat: Many of the WCC and of its leaders are worthy children of God, but they are in the wrong place and sin through accepting in silence the works of darkness.

* * *

"Jesus to the Communist World" has from God the assignment to help the Christian churches persecuted by the Communists. We provide them with printing machines, Bibles, Christian literature and relief for families of martyrs.

"SOVIETSKAIA ROSSIA", Moscow, of July 29 1983, attacks us fiercely for our work and praises greatly the World Council of Churches. To have an attitude praised by the Communist God-haters and killers of Christians is a shame. For us it is an honor to be attacked by them.

We tread the serpent on the head and will crush it.

Choose to be on the side of Christ, choose life.
Turn from fellowshiping with the worshippers
of the dead God to the living God, the gracious
God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Richard Wurmbrand

Donations to help late Reverend Richard
Wurmbrand missionary work may be sent to:
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