



Transcriptions

The Only Alternative to Revolution

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Annotation: *Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya, 1978.* While at Michigan State University, Ted Ward gave a series of lectures at Daystar University in Nairobi. In his lecture he links liberation and development of the whole person with the message of the gospel. Noting that he sees the world primarily in terms of oppressive forces, Ward asserts that the answer to Marxism/Communism is not to waste energy fighting it, but rather to demonstrate through Christian community a better alternative.



I tease a lot about the habits that we have in formal education partly because I'm deeply concerned about some of the mindsets that we have about dependency in the learning environment because dependency tends to reproduce dependency. And the learning environment can produce a lot of dependency in people and, at the same time, give birth to the most horrible of the factors that we've run into in development and that is tyranny. People who have been tyrannized in one institution will seek out other people to tyrannize in yet another institution. Don't forget it. So I hope not to tyrannize you further.

The premises on which the seminar workshop, as a whole, will be conducted are three: first, that liberation and development of the whole human person is the message of the Gospel. The message of the Gospel is not completed with the simple proclamation that Jesus Christ has come to make it possible for individuals to escape hell. That is but a very meager piece of the message of the gospel; that liberation and development need, then, to be defined in biblical terms and in doing so

we will define them inevitably in the way the Bible defines and that is in terms of all aspects of the person and the society. Now I say that admitting already that I am no utopian. I have a dismal view of the future and my eschatological views are probably among the more conservative in the group here and I hold for the second coming of Christ. But I still believe, that if we accept the biblical teachings of the nature of the gospel, it is very comprehensive; and God's work, though never completed prior to the return of Christ, is the work of social redemption, not just personal salvation. And we minimize and harm the gospel to see it in smaller terms.

Second premise. Although fallen, not yet fully redeemed, awaiting the culmination of the coming Christ yet society, not just individuals, should be the focus of the church. Therefore, to talk in terms of national development; to talk in terms of community development; to be talking in terms of human resource development is a glorification of God.

Third premise. Evangelical Christianity has the potentiality of being the most holistic answer to human need. If I did not believe that, I would be beating a drum for another cause because I see a broken, bleeding, hurting, needing world.

The assumptions are also three: I make the assumption that we are gathered here to learn, to develop, to grow, not to collect academic merit. Indeed, the collecting of academic merit is part-and-parcel of the tyranny process within our society. I speak on a global basis because this is not peculiar to the West. By the way, any of the things that we regard as evil in terms of tyranny in human society arose not only out of the Greek tradition in the West but out of the Chinese tradition in the East, and they're so parallel that you have to believe that they're in the nature of man; that it is ultimately in the nature of unredeemed man to be tyrannical. And that given human institutions outside the redeeming work of Christ, you will have not only bureaucracy, but tyranny. If you don't believe that, just remember my little observation next time you go to get your license renewed.

Second assumption: that we learn through sharing. None of us should expect to have more answers than we have questions. Do not evaluate the worth of any learning experience in terms of how many of your questions were answered. Evaluate in terms of how many more worthwhile questions you are now working on as a human being. One of the most marvelous characteristics of the human being is that he is a question poser. It is glorifying to be inquiring. Man was created in the image of God. God revealed, the image is the reflection of that; therefore, man's place is to inquire because God reveals it. Therefore, our task is not so much to get answers as it is to develop and appreciate questions that make it worthwhile for us to work and inquire and study and search in life situations beyond the so-called learning experience. Therefore, the learning value of this seminar will not be in the next two weeks, but will be in the years ahead of the next two weeks wherein your praxis, your experience in the field, is different because of the next two weeks. Do you see what I'm saying? If we viewed formal education that way, formal education would not have many of the ills that it has. We tend to make the quality of learning too little. It becomes so often the simple regurgitation of facts, the capacity to answer questions. And the merit comes down to the person who has more questions answered than he has to ask. And I submit that that is anti-human, to say nothing of being something of a presumption on the nature of God. God answers, man asks. It is not appropriate for man to usurp what is God's.

Third assumption. We're here as Christians. Thus, we are here as world citizens, not as nationalists. And whether you are American, Canadian, Kenyan, whatever, remember that you have

a right to your citizenship. But in the community of God's people, our common citizenship in the kingdom of heaven is the important citizenship that should bind us together. And in our discussions and activities together, let us not promote on nationalistic grounds, let us not attack on nationalistic grounds, let us promote and attack in terms of our common citizenship in the kingdom of God.

One of the realities of our time is unrest. Even if you live in a nation such as this, and I think we can be grateful for its stability, I am always willing to recognize with honor Jomo Kenyatta and the kind of leadership this country has had since independence. But I am very grateful for the remarkable example, a rare example, of smooth government transition in the Third World that has taken place with your new president moving in. Unbelievable. Some of us back in our situation looked at the Kenya situation and we were very critical. I will admit to it as having been critical over the succession logic that was made available by Jomo Kenyatta; but it was apparently beneath the surface and it was there. And I think the Kenyans have much to be thankful to God about.

I give honor and recognition to that and I give appreciation in our own country and in Canada and in some parts of Western Europe where there still is enough stability that you can get on with some of the constructive acts of life. But I can tell you that that is an increasingly shaky foundation. And even those of you who are thankful in Kenya today you should not assume that Kenya is somehow exempted from the unrest in the world. And I suspect that most of you are well aware that there is, working very close underneath the surface, all sorts of potential for uprising, potential for violence, and potential for a destruction of life forms and lifestyles. It's easy enough to see in some of the countries that are just beyond your borders. It's easy enough to see when you examine Central America, when you look at some of the realities in Latin America, South America. It's easy enough to see when you look in Southeast Asia. If you really have some idea of what's happening in Cambodia you have an idea that this world is coming apart at the seams.

Now I don't intend to preach you a sermon about that, but any discussion of development that does not begin with an awareness of unrest in every society, has somehow failed to be realistic. Beneath that surface, there is an increasing sophistication that makes that unrest more and more dangerous. The awareness of people about very sophisticated Marxist propositions is part of what makes the world dangerous. Now I am not a Communist baiter, I am not a Community hunter; I do not assume that there is one lurking under every bush. But I am a reader and I do know what Karl Marx is all about and I do know why people are flocking in the thousands to Marxist ideology; and I think if you Christians do not get close enough to Marxism to understand it, they are in danger of going to bed with a viper. There is a very serious problem there.

In this lecture, we're going to look at the nature of unrest in the world largely as a seeking of people after what should really be theirs but has been held back from them because of various oppressions. Like the Marxist, I see the world largely in terms of oppressive forces. I think it is appropriate for a Christian to see the world in terms of oppressive forces. I think that's what sin is all about. We do, indeed, share with Marx much of our propositional ideology. But we share with Marx only to a point and we need to understand the danger in assuming that, therefore, we are like the Marxists or that the Marxists can be easily converted to Christianity. It does not follow. Therefore, the issue, as I see it, is not the Christian converting the Marxist, but the Christian community becoming a strong enough social force that it represents a visible real alternative to Marxism. People will choose. The issue, then, is not to fight Communism—and that's where a lot of

Christians waste their energy—but to aggressively create the alternative and unless we do that, the Marxists will win in any country.

To understand the politics of oppression, we need to understand, first of all, that there's a gross loss of confidence in capitalism. The world can be divided into three visions: there's the Adam Smith vision that sees, yes, strikes, protests, but within control. It sees power vested largely in large corporations that manage and create government and provide the stability in which government can exist and can provide such things as resources for its people; though its people, indeed, must sometimes come under unemployment and others may, indeed, be lost in poverty. Much of that can be explained in terms of flaws in those people, not in the society. This view, which is commonly called Adam Smith's view, is also the capitalist view of the world and in this oversimplification of three views, we see this kind of a continued accommodation to the flawed nature of man in a capitalistic view that sees stability ultimately resting on a kind of mercantile base.

Karl Marx's view, and Marxism *per se* traces back to the early part of the 1800s in the writings of Hegel and others, is a view that has reached its culmination in several forms somewhat apart from Karl Marx's own vision in particularly Eastern Europe, Russia, Albania, and the like; to some extent modified in Yugoslavia, and in a somewhat more pure Marxist form in China. The interesting fact behind the Chinese antipathy toward the Russians is that the Chinese are quite correct in pointing out that the Russians pervert Marx.

Now, never mind that the Chinese occasionally do a bit of Chinese perverting of Marx. They, as a whole, have been closer to Marx than has the Russian bloc nations and, therefore, that split within the Communist bloc that should not ever be thought of as a unified force. You may never do well to think of all Communists being alike. There are various kinds of Communists because all of them go to an ideological source that they contextualize it very differently.

The key to the Karl Marx vision is a common base of shared resources where elitist structures are brought down and are used only in the sense of offices necessary for the management of the whole. Therefore, interestingly in somewhat similar terms to what the Bible describes the church as a brotherhood of peers under one Lord but having offices in order to manage and operate. But those offices and officers are defined in terms of servanthood. There is that parallel; it's a very interesting one.

Now, some time ago when the question of world resources was examined, a man by the name of Thomas Malthus came forward with a very dismal view of the future as being a time when ultimately you have a chaos of a decline of society in terms of a disillusioned, frustrated, anguished, revolutionary mass that would ultimately produce a confrontation with stated authority which would inevitably produce conflict. Sharing, of course, with the Marxist proposition the inevitability of conflict and sharing with the capitalist view the notion that the capitalist process must be allowed to run its course even if it comes to decline and to failure.

These three views still today dominate human thought in the development realm. Development is not modernization. Development is not dissemination of technology. Development is not urbanization. But development is redistribution of resources. And the Marxist says, "Of course." The capitalist says, "Wait a minute." The Malthusian says, "It's too late." Development is

broad scale quest for freedom and the Marxist says, “Of course,” and the capitalist says, “Wait a minute,” and the Malthusian says, “Too late.”

In all of that, where is the Christian? Ironically, the Christian comes down on various occasions agreeing with the Communist. Of course, development requires redistribution of resources. You can't have people that are so filthy rich while others are starving. Of course, it is redistribution of power. You can't have a little oligarchy running the things like it's their own private playpen. Of course, development involves a broad-scale quest for freedom. In fact, that's much of what the redemptive work of God is all about.

I'd like to read to you some language that you might be able to identify. Try it and see how it works out. See if you can give me some clues to who might have been behind this. First of all, the essay was on the Gospel of John chapter 15 verses 1 to 14, and you may be aware that that passage is the true vine, my Father's the vinedresser. Christ says. “Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, every branch that bears fruit he prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.” Down through that whole passage, it talks about the interdependency and unity.

This essay was written by a very sympathetic student, late high school age, who said, among other things that “the great teacher of mankind, Jesus Christ, shows us that from antiquity on, where human nature has always tried to raise itself to higher morality, the history of humankind teaches us the necessity of union with Christ. When we consider the history of individuals, the nature of man, we see immediately a spark of the divine in his breast, enthusiasm for the good, a striving after knowledge, a desire for truth. Natural instincts are overlaid by sinful desires. The union of believers with Christ alone can overcome these flaws in human nature and afford the happiness that is needed in life.”

Karl Marx, as a boy, was raised Christian and believed that, in his late high school years, just as I know I have lived with, I have worked with African Christians who were raised and educated within a few miles of here who, like Karl Marx, said that the Christians can't make it work. And like Karl Marx during their college years went over to Hegel and threw it all over.

Do you know that the church of Jesus Christ has produced the three leading Communists of our time, or of history? Number one, Karl Marx. Interestingly, Karl Marx was a Jew. His father was a Jew. His father was the grandson of seven generations of rabbis. I kid you not. His mother was Dutch, also the daughter and granddaughter of a rabbi. But Karl Marx's father found it necessary to convert to Lutheranism for very pragmatic reasons. In order to keep his civil service job during the Empire days there in the in the early part of the 1800s, and he brought his family up as Lutherans. And Karl Marx was a very avid goer to church events, and he was a ringleader behind all the things that, in their time, would have been called Youth for Christ if they'd of known the language. And he was excited about this and he pulled passages like this out of the Scripture and said, “Isn't that beautiful the way the Bible speaks to man's need for interdependency, and that's the way God constituted the human being?” And then he said ultimately, “It can't work. It's a fraud.”

That same Karl Marx is the same one who comes down—and don't forget it—with these words within a period of relatively short years: “Religion is both the symptom and the cause of a deep social malaise and it is also the protest against it. Religion stands in the way of any cure because it justifies social evil. The struggle against religion is indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual role is religion. Religious suffering is, at the same time, an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of oppressed creatures. The feeling of heartless worlds. The soul of a soul-less circumstance. It is the opium of the people.”¹

That's the passage right there. And it was Karl Marx not Lenin. Don't let people tell you that Marxism is somehow okay; that Lenin is the one who fouled it up. It's not so. Lenin hardly had an original idea in his head except in the political realm. It is Karl Marx and it is ultimately at this point; and, by the way, those marks right there embrace in what is a systematic biography of Karl Marx whose transformation from Christianity to his commitment to what he calls Communism in *that* part of his life. What is the part? From high school through college. And the same thing is happening to a lot of disillusioned Third World people today and don't forget it because we have them in our graduate school from your country.

Christianity, in abstract terms, coupled with personal piety but lacking in community experience has been a source of unrest to many people in oppressed situations, specifically, Karl Marx, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Tse-tung. Did you know that Joseph Stalin had trained for the priesthood in the Orthodox Church? Did you know that Mao Tse-tung was very positively influenced in his earlier years by Christian missionaries in China and could quote the Scripture and did so? And if you've ever read his little Red Book, you know the many paraphrases that he uses are of Scripture. He knew the Scriptures.

Now I do not see these people as ultimate demons, but I see them as pathetic people who have been turned away from Christianity because of an emphasis on personal piety that lacks community experience. The community is not there. And here were people, particularly Mao Tse-tung and Marx. I will not put Stalin in that same group; he's a different kind of a rascal. But, at least, Mao Tse-tung and Karl Marx should be understood in terms of a youthful concern about the welfare of human beings that they did not find fulfillment for in Christianity.

I believe today that there are two kinds of vulnerable Christianity. Type one: ecclesiology without soteriology. Type two: soteriology without ecclesiology. Now, pardon me for the big words. Some of you've been to Bible school and to seminary and you know the words. Soteriology, having to do with the doctrines of salvation. Ecclesiology, having to do with the doctrines of the church. Type one: ecclesiology without soteriology. Type two: soteriology without ecclesiology. In other words, two types of very vulnerable Christianity today: one that puts its emphasis exclusively on the building of church as community, and to the building of communities as if the building of communities is enough. Vulnerable. Because it produces community without base; community without foundation.

¹ This appears to have been taken from Marx's book, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*

Type two: soteriology without ecclesiology builds foundation without anything on that foundation, and it particularly has created great havoc in terms of its feeding into the unrest of people in the world today.

Now there are some value issues for Christians. Let me raise some of these. Is it inherent in the nature of Christianity that teaching is of the Word of God; that any government must be supported by Christians? Or, only certain kinds of government supported by Christians? Is it inevitable then, inherent, that Christians must support the status quo? A very big social issue. If you are living in a country, and I submit to some of you whether you are living there, or find yourselves ultimately as missionaries there from Kenya to somewhere else, what is your relationship toward government?

Second of the value issues that we must confront is can bloody revolution be supported. That's the simplest way to ask the question. And, of course, this is the issue that the World Council of Churches is torn wide open about right now as it relates to the Rhodesia problem and South Africa.

Third, the value issue of how do we divide our efforts and resources between our efforts toward church and our efforts toward world? If our efforts are focused too extensively on our own, the church, then we neglect the world. If they are focused too extensively on the world, then we neglect the development of our own community.

A few propositions: all countries in the world are vulnerable. No nation can avoid fallout. Now the concept "fallout" is ironically real and symbolic. Real in the sense that if we have substantial world conflict in the next few years, we will have fallout that will destroy far more in the game park than the poachers and it'll also involve a lot of people. There's no way that Kenya or any other country, no matter how small or how well balanced in itself, can avoid its stake in the world of conflict. The symbolic notion of fallout is particularly a problem in the economic realm. Some of you may not be aware how close to collapse the economic system of the West is and how dependent you are upon it. It's not good enough, then, to simply live as an island. Every nation has a stake in every other nation.

Second proposition: oppressive governments will be challenged ever more profoundly. There is no escaping it.

Third, revolution will be followed by revolution once the process begins in any nation. In today's terms it is a process that recycles itself. You do not get stability after the revolution. And here is the point where Lenin did not really understand what would happen. It is quite likely that there will be even revolution within Russia. Which, of course, the West would say, "Oh, goodie." But what they don't understand is that that simply will produce another cycle of revolution, not any fundamental détente, any fundamental reconciliation over ideologies, because the differences, ideologically, are too deep.

Fourth, Marxism will continue to provide the creeds and the slogans for the world's revolutionaries. Marxism, because of its creedal nature and its anti-Christian-ness, is a very appealing alternative to the claims of Christ. And the world, basically materialistic and basically rationalistic, wants an alternative. It is not fair to say the world wants Christ. No, the world wants an alternative

to Christ. If the world wanted Christ, they could have him anytime. The issue is that the world wants an alternative to Christ and Marxism has provided it and there is nothing else that comes close. Because it is creedal, it is capable of capturing the imagination; it is capable of capturing that fervor and zeal that is in the nature of man. And it is also man-exalting in such a way that man does not have to humble himself before anything other than the idea of man himself. Therefore, repentance is not necessary, and it proposes a Utopia that even Adam Smith fell victim to: a notion that ultimately you can produce enough goodness that everything will be great for everybody.

I make some observations from my vantage point as a roving reporter in the field of development: I observe that simplistic slogans are a primary tool in very effectively bringing together various malcontents within any nation. There are malcontents and they are brought together effectively by simplistic slogans. Secondly, emotional zeal and rhetoric immobilize the masses very effectively. And it's at this point that I warn us that we should be especially concerned lest Christianity simply be a matter of emotional zeal and rhetoric because then Christianity becomes the cheap counterfeit of Communism. And you can't beat them by joining them. The third observation—*Can you repeat that?* Yes. Emotional zeal and rhetoric effectively immobilize the masses.

Third, intellectual arguments based on rational arguments about the futility of reform mobilize the frustrated intelligentsia. Now that's a subtle one. It's a subtle one and one you might not have thought about, but it's a crucial one. Intellectual arguments based on rational arguments, or rational claims, about the futility of reform mobilize the frustrated in intelligentsia. In other words, the intelligentsia of the world are also frustrated even though they may be part of the oppressor class. And ultimately they are brought into revolutionary line by the argument that you just can't reform a society. You've got to start over again.

Now I put this point before you partly so that you can understand Ivan Illich. Because Illich is a good example of an organizer of the intelligentsia along Marxist lines. Now I read Ivan Illich. I think many of his points are perfectly valid; but I think his basic inspiration is such that he would qualify as Marxist. [Someone wants clarification about the use of intelligentsia and could it also mean the rich.] There's a tremendous overlap but I'm not speaking to the issue of the rich. Because I don't think you could bring the rich—unless through the realm of the intelligentsia—that you could bring the very rich into the posture of revolution. The very rich are the target of revolution, but even the intelligentsia, as we've seen in China and Cuba, become part of the revolutionary force. You see the sloganizing mobilizes the masses. The argument that reform is impossible, organizes the intelligentsia and it's that mating of intelligentsia and the masses that triggers a successful revolution. The simple revolution of the proletariat, as Marx would put it, rarely worked. It took the thing that Lenin pointed out and that is you have to have the intelligentsia along with it. But the target is the rich. Now the overlap between the rich and the intelligentsia is obvious, but that's why sometimes you find that the rich divided along those lines as being pro or con revolution.

The fourth observation is that repressions of revolutionary movements tend to accelerate revolutionary process. In other words, if you try to repress it, if you don't give people an alternative but you go at it repressively and you use government measures to hold it down, you make it worse. It's again like pouring benzene on the fire. It just gets worse.

And the fifth of these observations: the control of the revolution is ultimately in the hands of a narrow faction. Therefore, Marxist revolution has nothing at all in common with Christian

revolution. And to assume that a Marxist unrest can be converted to a Christian reform is to fail to understand the logic and the premises of Marxist revolution. And yet we find Christians that are trying to hold hands across a very difficult chasm. Now I do believe that Marxists have a lot in common with Christians and some Marxists can be given a vision of an alternative in Christ that they will see as more meaningful than what they're going for. But they cannot be joining forces with them.

My proposition then: the only alternative to revolution is to take Christianity seriously. The Christian community has a potential for leading national development within any nation.

We've had experiences in Latin America that show us that even among the powerful cliques of Catholic forces in certain Andean Republics, the evangelicals are being recognized as the more honest people; to be trusted as vital posts in secretaries of village co-ops, in rural co-ops. And the Christians—the evangélicos, as they say—are being recognized as having something that even the Roman Catholics are willing to accept. And we are seeing in a number of cases, the Christian community coming forward as the leading community, with sub-community, within communities that needed reform.

But, at the converse, Christianity that does not take Christ seriously has the potentiality of disintegrating the society. And that's what's happening in North America. Christianity that does not take Christ seriously disintegrates the society. Therefore, if we are in missions, we need to ask the question: Are we creating downfall by Christianity without Christ? Are we making matters worse? We need to recognize that the predominant human tendencies are toward materialism and the accepted wisdom of man is humanism—man leaning on his own intellect. That putting this together, you come out with two major world forces: materialistic humanism and ideological social humanism. Now what is materialistic humanism? Capitalism. And what is ideological social humanism? Communism. And there are your major two world forces. The Christians must become a viable third force, not operating from the base in capitalism and not operating from the base in Communism. Neither of the bases is worthy of the church of Jesus Christ.