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A CATECHISM OF
COMMUNISM
for
CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS

By

A PASSIONIST FATHER

C. G. Cook

A Catechism of Communism for Catholic High School Students

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What is Communism?

Communism is the name given to an atheistic and revolutionary form of government that the Soviets of Red Russia want to force upon the citizens of every country in the world.

The word Communism comes from the Latin word *communis* which, roughly translated, would mean "in common." The idea being that all the people share, not only in the government, but in the profits of industry and labor. The word Communism, however, as used by the Soviets, has a meaning far different from the original Latin word.

There are three main elements in the system advocated by the Communists:

(1) The denial of God and the suppression of religion, especially the Catholic Church.

(2) The abolition of private property.

(3) The stirring up of hatred and enmity between the various classes of society (for instance: urging the poor to despise and murder the rich), in order to bring about (1) and (2).

Nicholas Lenin, the father of present-day Communism, defines it as ". . . Nothing less than power based upon force, and limited by nothing—by no kind of law and by absolutely no rule."



Briefly, what is the history of Communism?

Toward the end of the great World War, the Bolsheviki (a Bolshevik is one who believes in the destruction of Capitalism by force) gained control of the government in Russia, as a result of the terrible Red Revolution. They formed what was called the Third International, which soon came to be known as the Communist Party. The leader of this movement was a man who called himself Lenin. His real name was Vladimir Ulyanov, and he died in 1924. Since then, his writings and sayings have become the gospel of all Communists.

Where do the Communists get their ideas?

Communism, as taught by Lenin, is based largely on the doctrines of Karl Marx, a German philosopher of the last century. Marx wrote several books against the prevailing capitalistic system, and urged the adoption of a social reform of his own invention, which he called Marxism, and later, Communism. However, Communism, as we see it in the world today, is not the same as that which Karl Marx proposed. Lenin added many ideas and propositions, mostly destructive and atheistic, of his own. Lenin also borrowed from several other European philosophers. So we can quite correctly say that, basically, Communism is a kind of hodge-podge of radical Eighteenth Century philosophical teaching, mainly German, to which the ideas of Lenin and his associates have been added.

How do the Communists hope to succeed in this world-wide revolution?

They are trying to get the working men and women, together with the boys and girls, of every country to join in destroying all existing forms of government, other than Communism, that are now flourishing in the world. In these hard times, when so many men and women are out of work and therefore are poor and worried, the Communists hold out all manner of impossible things that sound good, but in reality are only deceitful promises, to allure the hungry and the discouraged. In other words, the Communists are trying to stir up a world revolution. Books, newspapers, theaters, movies, schools, camps, all of which are free, are being used for this wicked purpose. Catholic boys and girls, be on your guard!

You say that Communists want to abolish private property. Please explain this further.

Communists say that no one should own any private property. According to the Communists, instead of each of us having things which we can call our own, everything must belong to the State, *i. e.*, to everyone in common. Everything that is grown or produced, or manufactured by working people, the Communists say should be stored in big warehouses where people can get only what they need and no more. If they do take more than the State thinks they need, they will probably be shot. The Communists say further that the

world and all its natural resources belong to the working people; all the machinery and all the other means of manufacture, as well as means of transportation, belong to the working class. The Communists want to set up what they call a Proletarian State, which means one that is governed only by the working class. However, by doing this they deny the democracy which we Americans love so much, and for which so many thousands of our forefathers fought, bled and even died to protect. They seek to stifle the inborn trait in every human that cries out for recognition as an individual, that inward voice which tells us that we are the equal of any other person on earth in our inalienable privilege to enjoy those three great rights mentioned in the Declaration of Independence—"life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The Communists want government control of every conceivable vocation and activity. Communism reaches into the minds and souls of its victims and forcibly changes morals and beliefs and rights to fit its own tyranny. It is a despotism and a domination far worse than that of any czar. It is a cruel dictatorship gone insane with power and oppression. The first step which the Communists take in this is the overthrow of Capitalism.

How do we interpret the words "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," mentioned in the Declaration of Independence?

They are an acknowledgment of three rights given by God to all men: the right to life; the right to good name or reputation; and the right to hold property. To

violate any of these rights is a sin against justice and the violator must make reparation or restitution for the damage done.

Please explain more fully the right to hold property.

The first and fundamental source of all property rights is none other than God. The supreme dominion of proprietorship over the entire universe is His. Hence, He alone can give any part of the world to whom He pleases. He may give much to one and little to another, for He is the Lord, the Creator and the Ruler of all. As a matter of fact, God has given the whole world to mankind. This the Bible tells us when it echoes the words of Almighty God at the moment of creation: "Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth. . . ." Now, the reason why God gave to man this absolute dominion over all things in the world was that man might have everything necessary for his life, health and happiness, be able to fulfill his duties as a creature in serving and worshiping God and thus attain to eternal happiness in Heaven. To put it in another way: Every man upon this earth must serve and worship God to merit eternal happiness. But, as food, clothing, a house and other material things are necessary for all that, God wills that a certain amount of such earthly and temporal things be in the possession of each man. Therefore, we say that every man has a right to a share in the world's goods and products.

How is each man going to get his share of the world's goods in order that he may engage in the pursuit of happiness?

The very first means or manner of acquiring property is our own native and natural ability and industry. God has given to every human being certain physical powers and mental talents. By the cultivation of these and by using them each can attain to a share of the world's goods. Furthermore, as each individual person has the exclusive right to his own natural endowments and talents and abilities so, likewise, each has the exclusive right to such worldly goods as he can attain and obtain by the use of these same talents and abilities. Thus an artist has a right to his own paintings or drawings. He can keep them or sell them or even destroy them. A landlord has the right to the rent of his lands or houses. A farmer has a right to the money he gets from his crops he has worked so hard in tilling and harvesting. A business man has a right to the profits from his honest trading. Or a person has a right to money or property that has been willed to him. At the same time every man has the right to give away, sell, will or bequeath his own property.

But the Communists want to give everybody a share in the world's goods.

That is only partly true. The Communists want to give each man a share but it must be measured out by the tyrannical and greedy leaders of their party. Furthermore, as we said above, the Communists want to

abolish all private property. From our explanation of property rights it should be clear that such a thing is contrary to the mind of God and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Such a manner of acting is called antisocial, that is, harmful to the best interests of the common people.

What do you mean by Capitalism?

Capitalism, or Capital, is a word that is used very often and in a very careless manner, so that, in the public mind, it has quite lost its real meaning. Capitalism, or Capital, is that division or section of human society popularly referred to as the "wealthy class." To the Communist every man who employs other men is a Capitalist and every workman is a victim of Capitalism. Of course, this is all nonsense. The easiest definition of Capitalism is that it means those men, usually very rich men, who, either individually or by banding together into companies or corporations, hire large numbers of men to work for them at certain salaries in order to increase profits. In its strictest sense, Capitalism or Capital, designates the saving or the accumulation of money and possessions as opposed to money or possessions that are spent or used immediately for the expenses or the necessities of every day. Capital is often referred to in the same sentence with the word Labor. Thus we often hear the expression, "Capital and Labor."

What do you mean by Labor?

Labor, in its strictest sense, means a conscious and systematic activity of the human mind or body with the intention of producing definite results or profit. Labor is the name given to the great body of working men in the world. Labor is of three kinds: Intellectual Labor, when the mind produces something that can be sold—as a book; Physical Labor or, as we sometimes say, Manual Labor, which is the work of the hands, such as working in a factory; Mixed Labor, which is a combination of both intellectual and physical labor, such as an invention. Labor in relation to Capital is labor that one man hires out to another and which is used in working or in increasing the property or goods of another. Labor agrees with Capital to do certain work for a certain salary.

Is Capitalism wrong?

In itself, Capitalism is not wrong, but it can easily lead to abuses. There are many such abuses in the capitalistic system flourishing in the world today. We have what is called an economic domination concentrated in the hands of a few. The capital of the world is not properly distributed. Take, for instance, our own country, the United States of America, where about two per cent of the population own sixty per cent of the wealth of the nation. Such a condition is wholly contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Pope condemned such an abuse in very strong language.

If there be abuses in Capitalism today, why then is not Communism right in endeavoring to overthrow it?

First of all, because Capitalism, as we said, in itself is not evil. Secondly, because the plan which the Communists propose would only result in a case of the cure being worse than the disease. In order to clean a house a person does not dynamite it. The Communists would destroy and abolish private property. This is wrong because every man has a right to what he earns or makes as an individual. And if Capital profits from the work of Labor, then Capital has a right to such profits, provided it give to Labor a decent wage, good working conditions and a reward for faithful service in some form of an old-age pension.

According to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the right of an individual or of a group of individuals to acquire and hold in private ownership some of the world's means of production is quite in harmony with the moral law. Private ownership is of great importance from the viewpoint of prosperity and order.

What does the Catholic Church say about the abuses of Capitalism?

The Church has always condemned the abuses of Capitalism, but has never advocated the overthrow of the system. It has always been the endeavor of the Catholic Church to harmonize the relations between Capital and Labor. The Church teaches that the wealthy class and the working class are intended by

nature to live in harmony through the acceptance of the teachings of Christ. As Pope Leo XIII said in his great encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (The Condition of the Working Class): "Just as the symmetry of the human frame is a result of the disposition of the bodily members, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, and should, as it were, groove into one another so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other: Capital cannot do without Labor, nor Labor without Capital. Mutual agreement results in pleasantness of life and the joy of good order; while perpetual conflict produces confusion and savage barbarity. . . . There is no intermediary more powerful than religion in drawing the rich and the poor together, by reminding each class of its duties to the other and especially of the obligation of justice."

The Catholic Church teaches the working man to carry out his agreements and contracts fairly and honestly, never to injure the property of his employer, and never to resort to violence. On the other hand, the Church teaches the wealthy man, or the capitalist, that the working man is not to be treated as a slave; that every man must be respected as a brother in Christ; that labor, far from being a thing to be ashamed of, is a most honorable thing; and that it is inhuman and un-Christian to treat man merely as an instrument of gain or as so much muscle or physical power. The present Pope, Pius XI, has repeatedly urged all people, and especially the rulers of the world, to strive for a renewal of human society in bringing back the "Peace of Christ

in the Kingdom of Christ.” This is the only way in which harmony can be brought about between Capital and Labor.

What do the Communists teach about Religion?

The Communists say that religion is the opium of the people; that all religion is a silly superstition. One of the first things the Communists did in Red Russia was to pass tyrannical and strict laws against religion. Churches were robbed and burned, and otherwise destroyed. All public worship was forbidden. The preaching of religion, and the exercise of religious functions on the part of priests, were punished by imprisonment and even death. Thus, the Communists deprived thousands of poor people of the only consolation and comfort which they knew in life.

What do the Communists teach about God?

All Communists are atheists. They do not believe that God exists. They have formed an Anti-God Union, whose purpose is to blot out the name of God in the world. His tender mercy, His goodness, His love, and all the other wonderful attributes of God, they say, are signs of weakness, and they make fun of them.

What do the Communists teach concerning future life?

They do not believe in a future life. They do not believe that the bad will be punished and the good will be rewarded. They are silly enough to believe that

human nature is going to change overnight, like the color of a chameleon and that nobody will ever be selfish, or lazy, or jealous, or dishonest, or will commit any crimes, if all the world is Communist. They say that we must work here in this world with no hope of any happiness hereafter. But we know better. Almighty God has said that the good will be rewarded and the bad punished. No one can deny the words of God; He can neither deceive nor be deceived.

What do the Communists think of the Catholic Church?

The Communists look upon the Catholic Church as their worst and most powerful enemy. And even while they ridicule and make fun of it, deep down in their hearts the Communists are very much afraid of the Catholic Church. They realize that the Catholic Church is the one enemy that will withstand them to the last ditch.

Can a Catholic be a Communist?

It is quite evident from what was said above that no Catholic can be a Communist.

Are the Communists organized in the United States?

The Communists have an efficient and aggressive organization working in this country. Their exact number is not known. Although they themselves put forth

extravagant claims of a huge membership, especially among working people, there are probably not as many Communists in America as they would have us believe. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that they are growing stronger and more numerous every day.

The Communists even have several newspapers, one of which is published daily and sold at newsstands in many large cities. The Communist Party in America has its strongest and most powerful branches in the larger cities, mill towns and industrial centers. In such places, they try to organize the laboring people and stir up trouble by turning them against their bosses and employers.

They are particularly active and insidious during strikes. Wherever and whenever a strike is called, the Communists rush their expert organizers and most eloquent speakers to the spot. These men and women do their best to "chisel in" on the strike and prevent an early and fair settlement.

In their hearts, the Communists have no great love for or any especial interest in the American working people. Their sole purpose is to make trouble—trouble for everybody. The plan of action which they make use of is to stir up strife, to prolong strife, to pit the worker against the boss, to belittle the Government, and to increase human misery in general.

They resort to all manner of underhanded methods. A short time ago, in a Labor demonstration, a young woman Communist got into an ash can and was photographed as a policeman bent over to help her out. A Communist took this picture, and had it published, and

said that the policeman was caught in the act of throwing the girl into the ash can. This is an instance of the type of propaganda which the Communists try to spread.

The Communists are making special efforts today to win over the American Negro, whom we all know to be the victim of injustice and prejudice. The Communist orators loudly proclaim the brotherhood of man, and in the same breath vigorously condemn the wealthy classes. Strangely enough, although their system is very easy to see through, thousands of uneducated American people fall prey to their deceitful promises and foolish schemes.

Are there any Communists in the American schools?

There are Communists in the schools of America, among both the teachers and the pupils. Thank God, they have not been able to infect the teachers or children in our parochial or Catholic schools, but the public schools are in grave danger, due to the activities of the Communists. There are more than twenty Communist's children's camps in the United States. There is a weekly paper, published for children, called *The Young Worker*. If this paper should ever come into your hands, destroy it at once.

There are thousands of American boys and girls banded together in a unit called the "Young Pioneers." There are branches of this organization to be found in the public schools of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, and other large cities.

Why do the Communists want to get American boys and girls to join them?

The Communists, who are very worldly-wise, know that it is quite easy to abuse the simplicity, generosity and ignorance of youth. As a Communist writer has said: "Nothing is easier than to attract children." They know full well that by gaining the sympathies of the rising generation, the future of their movement is assured.

What do the Communists teach boys and girls in the American schools?

Boys and girls are taught that the only loyalty which they must practice is to the Communist Party. Love of Communism comes before parents or before country. They are taught that there is no distinction between right and wrong, truth and lying, cruelty and kindness, decency and indecency. They are taught to hate all men and women, save those who are members of the Communist Party. They are taught that marriage is not the holy thing that we know it to be; that all the lovely and tender associations of family and home life are foolishness.

They try to make boys and girls discontented with the great opportunities and advantages that are given free. They urge pupils to strike and refuse to go to school unless they have hot lunches and other things given to them. They teach children to resist and fight against all authority. They are taught to hate all mention of religion. They are taught that prayer, and going

to Confession, and receiving Holy Communion, and trying to live as good Catholic boys and girls, are all a waste of time, and a superstition. They are taught that we do not have to support the Government, and that we need not practice patriotism or respect the Stars and Stripes. As the widow of Lenin, who has charge of Communist education wrote: "We must make our schoolboys and girls not merely nonreligious, but actively and passionately antireligious." From all this, you can easily see that Communists are people with whom you should have no dealings, and to whose arguments and speeches you should never listen, and whose books and papers you should never read.

What is the condition of the people in those countries where Communism has gained the upper hand?

In Russia, the Communistic rules are more rigid and more exacting than some forms of slavery. The average citizen has no voice whatsoever. He is much like a cog in a huge machine, and must obey orders or be shot. He is ruled by a bloody and absolute despotism every bit as tyrannical as that of the Czars. A heavily-armed regular army, and another army of more than a million spies and informers, keep order among the Russian people. Such is the tyranny necessary to enforce the principles of Communism. One of the first things Communism does is to crush and kill liberty. Freedom of speech, so loudly demanded by Communists here in America, is always throttled to prevent criticism of the methods and cruelties of Communism.

In Mexico, where the Communists are gaining strength, the people are downtrodden and persecuted. Their churches have been closed; there is no Sunday Mass; there is no Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; there is not even a priest to offer words of consolation and encouragement. The Sisters' schools have been closed, and the Sisters sent away. If a priest dared to celebrate Holy Mass, or hear Confessions, he would be killed.

Do you think that it would be pleasant to live in America if conditions like those prevailed? Such things could easily happen if the Communists got control of the country.

What has the Catholic Church done for humanity and for the betterment of working people?

You know from your history that, due to the influence of the Catholic Church, the story of humanity has been one of progress, prosperity and hope. The culture and the comforts of civilization which we now enjoy were largely brought about by the Catholic Church. It was the Catholic Church that defeated the barbarian hordes and saved Western civilization.

The great works of art and literature which we have today were preserved by the Catholic Church. The Church was the greatest power in the world in encouraging and fostering the pursuit of the arts. It was the Catholic Church that spiritualized the pagan. It was the Catholic Church that brought about the

emancipation of woman, and first taught the sacredness of marriage and the home.

It was the Catholic Church, through the voice of Pope Leo XIII, which dared to advocate better living conditions and higher wages, and more humane treatment for working people, at a time when such things were almost unheard of. And it is the Catholic Church which today carries on this great struggle for social justice, through the present Pope Pius XI and all the leaders of the Church.

In view of what has been said in this answer, we may rightfully compare the Catholic Church to a great mother, fostering the arts and sciences, upholding morality, defending the family, and protecting the workman. Communism may be compared to a deadly germ, gnawing away at the vitals of a strong, healthy body.

Does Communism help us to become good citizens?

Indeed it does not. If one were to be a thorough Communist, he could not be an American citizen. As a matter of fact, most Communists are aliens, and glory in the fact that they are not adherents to the Constitution. They tell us not to support the Government. They say that all war is foolish and try to make our soldiers and sailors desert. Yet, all the time, the Communist army of Russia is the biggest army in the history of the world. They even make the women join. Such is their deceit and hypocrisy.

What does the Catholic Church teach about patriotism and love of country?

We can think of no better way of answering this question than by quoting the stirring words of Cardinal O'Connell:

"This nation of ours, which was founded on a strong confidence in the principles of democracy, gave to men who longed for freedom the first real opportunity in history, gave it in a new land which they could develop themselves, without being hampered by the autocratic traditions of the Old World. That confidence of the Fathers has been justified by events. We have today a country whose like is not to be found anywhere else in the world. It is a land of freedom and opportunity.

"Every man here is equal before the law, the poor have the same civil rights as the rich. We should strive to give back something to the country. We Catholics are happy and glad to contribute to our beloved America, and we make a contribution which we think is unique, and that is, absolute fidelity and loyalty to the laws and the government of this country, and to all those splendid fundamental principles which maintain society at its best.

"You then have a sacred duty in return for all that this land gives to you. This is to give a practical demonstration of your love for a land that offers you so much and has already given you the opportunity to make the best of your lives. You should be proud to be foremost in obedience to all lawful authority, and in loyalty

to the institutions of the land, and in allegiance to its flag.”

Every American Catholic boy and girl should study these words well, learn them, and live up to them.

How should we treat Communists?

There is no better way of handling Communists and Communistic propaganda than by exposing their deceptions and opposing their efforts. If anyone should give you Communist books or pamphlets or papers, you should tear them up at once. If any of your teachers or your companions at school should try to talk Communism to you or your classmates you should report them to the authorities.

What answer should we give Communists?

It is not enough to reply to Communists in words. As true Catholic boys and girls, you must answer Communism by deeds. You must live as convinced Catholics. When time and opportunity permit, you should study the principles of social economy taught by the Church and see that they are broadcast.

Your greatest safeguard against the evils of Communism lies in being a good Catholic. Keep the Commandments of God and the Church faithfully. Go to Confession and receive Holy Communion frequently; read good Catholic books and magazines.

Render due obedience to your parents and lawful superiors. Join Catholic clubs and parish organizations.

Always remember that, although earthly happiness is good, and to be desired, the eternal happiness for which God made us, and which He holds out to us, is far better.

As Pope Leo XIII wrote in his great encyclical: "Everyone should put his hand to the work which falls to his share, and do so as soon as possible, lest the evil which is already so great should become, through delay, absolutely beyond remedy. The leaders of the Government should avail themselves of the laws and institutions of the country; employers and wealthy owners should be mindful of their duties, as Christian men and women. The poor, whose interests are at stake, should make every lawful and proper effort; and, since religion alone can avail to destroy the evil at its root, all men should be persuaded that the main thing needful is to return to genuine Christianity, apart from which all the plans and devices of the wisest and cleverest men will prove useless. . . . For the happy results which we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the abundant outpouring of charity; of that true charity of Christ which is the fulfilling of the Gospel, which is always ready to sacrifice itself for the sake of others, and whose God-like features are outlined by St. Paul in these words: 'Charity is patient, is kind . . . seeketh not her own . . . suffereth all things, . . . endureth all things.'"

As a final and most powerful means of overcoming the menace of Communism which is disturbing the world today, you are urged to say this little prayer often:

Thou seest, O Lord, how the winds have burst forth from every side; how the sea rages and the waves are lashed to fury. Command, we implore Thee, Who alone can do so, the winds and the sea. Give back to mankind that harmony and tranquillity of order, that true peace for which all men yearn, but which the world cannot give. By Thy grace and impulse, let men be restored to proper order, with piety and reverence toward Thee, with justice and love toward their neighbor, with temperance in regard to themselves, and with reason controlling all their passions. Let Thy Kingdom come. Let the duty of submitting to Thee and serving Thee be learned by those who, far from Thee and Thy saving teachings, seek truth and salvation in vain. Grant to us the power to keep Thy commands. The life of man on earth is a warfare, but Thou lookest down upon the struggle and dost help man to conquer. Thou raisest him who falls, and crownest him who triumphs.

Give me, dearest Lord, the great grace to love and serve Thee always. Give me the courage to be a good Catholic and a loyal American. Help me to live a decent, a sincere and an honest life. Let me learn to love Thee more and more each day that I live.

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