

# WORLD DOMINION

The World Dominion Movement advocates Informed Continuous Co-ordinated Evangelism to reach everyone at home and abroad. Its basis is belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture.

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Vol. XIII., No. 3

CONTENTS

JULY, 1935

	PAGE
A SERIOUS SITUATION .. .. .	215
WHAT WALES DID FOR MADAGASCAR. <i>A. M. Chirgwin</i> ..	218
CHURCH PLANTING IN MADAGASCAR. <i>W. Kendall Gale</i> ..	221
GENERALS AS TAXI DRIVERS .. .. .	234
AMONG MEXICAN SOLDIERS. <i>Norman Wilde Taylor</i> ..	235
MEXICAN MISUNDERSTANDING. <i>Kenneth G. Grubb</i> ..	242
LIBERTY IN CHAINS .. .. .	250
NEW SPANISH PARADOXES. <i>Juan Orts Gonzalez</i> ..	251
WORLD DOMINION IN AMERICA. <i>Stewart M. Robinson</i> ..	255
THE TURKISH WOMAN AT HOME .. .. .	257
IN THE HOMES OF CHINA. <i>Mrs. J. P. Leynse</i> ..	260
A TYPICAL NORTH CHINA VILLAGE HOME .. .. .	264
VILLAGES OF INDIA. <i>W. Wilson Cash</i> ..	265
ATHEISM IN THE KINDERGARTEN .. .. .	270
SOVIET RUSSIA AND THE WORD OF GOD .. .. .	271
THE NEW PAGANISM .. .. .	277
STORY OF A NEW TESTAMENT. <i>Patrick K. Horan</i> ..	278
SALVAGE WORK IN NETHERLANDS INDIES. <i>G. J. Govaars</i>	282
SCIENCE AND RELIGION .. .. .	291
GLORY OF THE 'IMPOSSIBLE.' <i>Samuel M. Zwemer</i> ..	292
RELIGIOUS RENEWAL IN THE BALKANS .. .. .	298
UKRAINIAN EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT. <i>Adolf Keller</i> ..	299
NEW LIFE IN GREECE .. .. .	306
IN THE ISLANDS OF THE HUMMING BIRD. <i>Joseph J. Cooksey</i>	307
SINCE JAPAN CAME IN. <i>Edwin J. Tharp</i> ..	313

The Editor does not accept responsibility for views expressed by the writers. Communications may be sent to WORLD DOMINION PRESS, FOUNDER'S LODGE, MILDMAY CONFERENCE CENTRE, LONDON, N. 1, and 156, FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, and 632-634, CONFEDERATION LIFE BUILDING, TORONTO. Published Quarterly. Annual Subscription, 4/6, post paid; Single Copies, 1/2, post paid. The next number of the magazine will be published on the 20th September, 1935.

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# Soviet Russia and the Word of God\*

Translated by MARGARET CROSBY

'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised.' Every Sunday we voice our faith in the words of the Confession, so excellently formulated by the ancient Church, and we realize that each phrase of this Confession was set forth in opposition to some current opinion. The epistle to the Hebrews calls the Christian confession the 'confession of hope' † in contrast with the heathen outlook, which is without hope. Just as the confession, as a whole, expresses the antithesis of current opinion, so every single sentence is a similar opposition. This applies, for example, to the thought of God as the Creator, in contrast to the ideas of teachers concerned only with their own origin, and not with the creation of the world. Or, again, the conception of Christ as the 'only begotten Son' is contrasted with the conception of Him as a mere man, like ourselves.

THE bitterest opponent of our profession of faith to-day is, without question, Bolshevism, which is denying and fighting against all faith in God, and, in particular, against every aspect of the Christian faith. That is why Bolsheviks have had carved on the walls of the Kremlin the words, 'Religion is opium for the people.' To this Marxist statement Lenin adds the assertion that 'fear has created gods,' and that the root of religion is capitalism which exploits and oppresses the worker, and then, in his pitiable working existence, comforts him through the Church with the promise of a better life beyond.

Bolshevism jeers at every part of our Creed. How pitiable is the Creator—God—of whom the Bible relates that He needed twenty-four hours to make light! How different the worker whose horny fist turns the lever in the power station and immediately lights up the whole neighbourhood! Lacking a sense of sin, Bolshevism has not the slightest understanding of Jesus and His redeeming work. Sin is resistance to the will of God, and as there is, according to Bolshevism, no God, there is no sin. The ruthless Bolshevik does not understand the gentle Saviour. He derides Him as a weak revolutionary who recoiled from force and, therefore, ended on the Cross. At Christmas and

\* D. O. Shabert of Riga in *Evangelium und Osten*, February, 1935. (By request.)

† The German Scriptural text uses the word 'hope'.

## WORLD DOMINION

Easter, mockery processions traverse the cities of the Soviet Union. The mystery of the holy birth of Christ is dragged in the filthy mire of sensuousness, and the Ascension is ridiculed as a priestly deception.

Bolshevism is so steeped in materialism that it can make nothing of the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The Bolshevik, who lives only for this world, cannot grasp the idea of resurrection. Cemeteries in Russia have been turned into playing-fields. These are a few examples of the sharp contrast that exists between the Christian faith and the Bolshevik world outlook.

The same thing is apparent in regard to the ten commandments which order our customary behaviour. Opposing the first, we have what Lenin wrote to his partisan, the poet Gorki, 'It is the height of vulgarity to talk about God.' So the Soviet looks upon any public witness for God as a crime. In Bolshevik comic papers He is presented as a ridiculous figure, a little man with enormous horn-rimmed spectacles, always portrayed as a helpless, aged man, fleeing before the worker's fist. It is chiefly as the 'silly clown' that the Soviet people regard God, and it is perfectly obvious that His Name is as little hallowed as His being.

Regarding the third commandment, the Soviet authorities are trying to change the seven-day to a five-day week. The fifth (or sixth) day is not, however, reckoned as a general holiday. Instead, each person has his own free day; perhaps the father has Monday and Saturday, the mother, Tuesday and Sunday, and the school-child, Wednesday and Monday. It is impossible in Russia for a whole family to have a free day together. This new arrangement of time naturally makes religious life difficult. It is impossible to hold a united service when a great part of the congregation cannot attend. This is, of course, intended to destroy the family and community as ordained by God.

Children are forbidden to speak about their parents. People are divided into adults and infants. There must be no respect for father or mother, for even for the children

## SOVIET RUSSIA AND THE WORD OF GOD

there is no authority but that of the State. This deprives the parents of the right to chastise their children. The latter may report his parents for punishing him and they are then obliged to vindicate their action before the court.

Human life has scarcely any value. Bolshevism has long ago laid aside any 'sentimental aversion to bloodshed.' Blood has flowed and still flows in streams, or else hunger is left to work out its cruel end.

According to Russian ruling, marriage as a life-union shall no longer exist. That domesticity which belongs to true marriage is not to be found in Russia, either in towns, where each person receives only his one room, or in the collective households in the country. In the latter, one must share, often with hundreds of others, a large bedroom and living-room. Frequently the husband works and lives in the first department of the 'Collective,' while his wife is assigned work and living accommodation in the third, many kilometres distant. This state of affairs is an obstacle to married life!

On the other hand, a marriage can be nowhere so easily dissolved as in Russia. It is possible to marry in the morning and to be divorced before evening. To register for a divorce costs only a few roubles, and the wish, even of only one person concerned, is reason enough. The result of this is untold misery among the children. Countless numbers of these do not know their fathers and are forsaken by their mothers. These homeless 'unsupervised' constitute a calamity in town and village, for they band themselves together after their animal instincts and maintain an existence by robbing and stealing. The little safety-razor blade, blunt on one side, is their dreadful weapon. These 'unsupervised' give way unrestrictedly to their animal instincts, and are, therefore, usually ill. Thus, through neglect and sickness, there is great misery among the children, such as even the inconsiderate militia cannot cope with. Christian love is naturally forbidden to interfere in this 'affair of the State.'

There is no respect for property. 'Rob the robber!' was the watchword passed round, for 'property is robbery.'

## WORLD DOMINION

So the factory, like the peasant's homestead, was expropriated, and all became nationalized.

There is no adherence to the truth. 'Freedom and bread' the people were promised, but they have been given slavery and the madness of hunger. In order that the nation may believe in the feasibility of the five-year plan, stereotyped ideas, used in the Bolshevist press, must be hammered again and again into the ears of the masses: 'There are surely difficult years ahead, but then the doors to Utopia will open, machines will do all the work, and man will be free to enjoy life'—a state of affairs for which the average lazy Russian yearns. Again, if the five-year plan does not succeed, 'it is not the fault of the press, but of the priests, who have "sabotaged" its fulfilment. Therefore, these must be destroyed.' At bottom, such statements are mere lies, but they are retailed to the masses day after day. It is, therefore, not astonishing that those not given to independent thought finally believe them, and no differing opinion is allowed free expression in the Soviet press.

The last commandment plays no part at all. People do not covet, they simply take whatever they fancy.

The above will suffice to show the sharp contrast between Bolshevism and Christianity, both in religious and moral affairs. But no Christian can remain silent in the face of this. He must profess his faith; he must *testify* to the denier, 'I have experienced God.' He must say to the sinner, 'Salvation is possible through One alone.' A Christian *must* exhort the child to obey his parents, even though this be contrary to State reasoning; and a Christian calls murder murder even when the State calls it, 'the application of the greatest measure of self-defence of the Proletarian State.' For the Christian, stealing remains a sin, even though the State authorities call it 'nationalizing,' or 'putting under State control.' Therefore, as long as Christians live among godless people, there must be conflict.

The State, however, endeavours to get rid of the 'unaccommodating exhorter.' A young clergyman, whose

## SOVIET RUSSIA AND THE WORD OF GOD

courageous testimony was very inconvenient to the Soviet authorities, wished to marry last January. The local Soviet summoned him and made the following proposal: 'You must either give up your office, in which case we will give you a good post and you will be able to support your wife and yourself; or remain a clergyman, and then both you and your wife will be imprisoned. We give you till roth January to decide. Choose sensibly!' The man who reports this incident adds, 'I have to think of the tempter's words, "All this will I give thee, if thou wilt bow down and worship me!"' He followed Christ's example, accepted this burden, and kept the faith.

Is it to be wondered at that in some circumstances keeping the faith is a burden under which weak souls collapse? Take this example. She was a widow, supporting her child and her parents. Her father had been in prison for years, her mother was very ill with heart-trouble. The former would have died of hunger long ago if she had not supplied him with food; the mother would also have died had not she tended her with such touching devotion. This she was able to do through her occupation as a teacher. One day she was caught attending church and summoned before the authorities. How came it that she, an employee of the Soviet, and, therefore, necessarily godless, was attending church? Unless she signed a declaration agreeing to abandon God and her parents she would go to prison for her treachery.

The struggle commenced. What was she to do? If she went to prison, her father would starve, her mother die, and her child go to the dogs. If she did sign, it would be merely an outward act, and she could go on helping the others. She weakened. She did not 'hold fast the profession,' but signed. 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone' at this poor woman. After signing, she certainly had bread for herself and hers, but her conscience was seared. The devil, however, is persistent. He was not satisfied with her signature. Through the Bolshevists he demanded confirmation, which meant that she must also put the Holy One 'to open

## WORLD DOMINION

shame' by taking part in mockery parades and similar demonstrations. She recoiled from publicly shaming what was holy to herself and to her family. Her conscience awakened, she confessed her sin, withdrew her renunciation and commended to the Lord God the misery to come.

'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith!' How difficult this is when our profession is not rounded off by the finely-harmonized 'Amen!' of the congregation, but meets the jeering laugh of hell. Thank God, however, 'He is faithful.' He who led Israel through the Red Sea can also, when He will, hold His mighty hand over the testifier.

A young teacher in training appeared before the Examining Board. He had passed all his subjects excellently and now came the last question, 'How will you prove to your pupils that there is no God?' He, the son of pious parents, boldly declared 'As a Christian I will *not* prove that, for I have personal experience of God as a living God.' There was great astonishment at this brave reply, and this time God let His servant win. Not only did he pass his examinations, but he was allowed to occupy a post as headmaster, although his papers were marked, 'Religious.' God rules even among His enemies. He remains 'the Faithful One' even when, in His wonderful wisdom, He lets His own children suffer for professing their faith.

A woman writes, 'I am a widow. My husband died of hunger. I could have earned my living as a teacher, but that would have meant denying my faith, and I should have been a liar before my children whom I have taught to pray.' Professing and hungering: that is certainly hard, but surely it will be blessed of God, for His faithfulness can make *us* faithful, even among our bitterest enemies, enduring even unto the end.

Before the court in Petersburg there recently appeared a whole society of young Christian men, accused of exercising an unauthorized religious influence upon the young. It happened thus; the five-day week made it impossible to hold confirmation classes, because the pupils, who had

## SOVIET RUSSIA AND THE WORD OF GOD

to be over eighteen years of age, were working in factories and were never all free on the same day. The candidates had, therefore, to be instructed separately in houses after working hours. That was what this Young Men's Society had been doing, and now they had to appear before the court for their 'crime.' They were asked to recant, but they refused, although they knew that this meant exile. They held fast to their faith and were banished to the far-north, where they will have to do forced labour for many years. As far as is known, not one of them has yielded. What a blessed witness!

God keep us all, especially our young folks, from denying Him! When the hour of temptation comes, even when He lets us suffer, He can strengthen us to a faith which He will crown with blessedness, for He Himself is the 'Amen, the faithful and true witness.'

### The New Paganism

A Florence professor, who has spent some time in Berlin, computes that there are no fewer than thirty-two different Germanic religious movements in the Reich. The Prussian Confessional Synod drew up a manifesto setting forth the Church's conception of the limits of State authority and protesting against attempts to use State machinery to subvert their faith; 700 pastors were imprisoned. In comparison with this savage treatment how tenderly the Nazi State deals with the New Pagans! They are allowed as much space in the newspapers as they like; they may advertise their meetings as it pleases them; the authorities will even concede to them those hours normally reserved for Government propaganda in which to broadcast their nonsense. All Germany stands by when a deputation—covered with medals and decorations—goes out to congratulate General Ludendorff on his seventieth birthday and listens while he tells them that he said good-bye to Christianity long ago and counsels the nation to follow his example.

This is the most serious aspect of the German situation. More serious than increased air forces or conscription; more serious for Germany herself. What a glorious part a great Germany, ruled by the Christian ethic, could play in the world to-day!