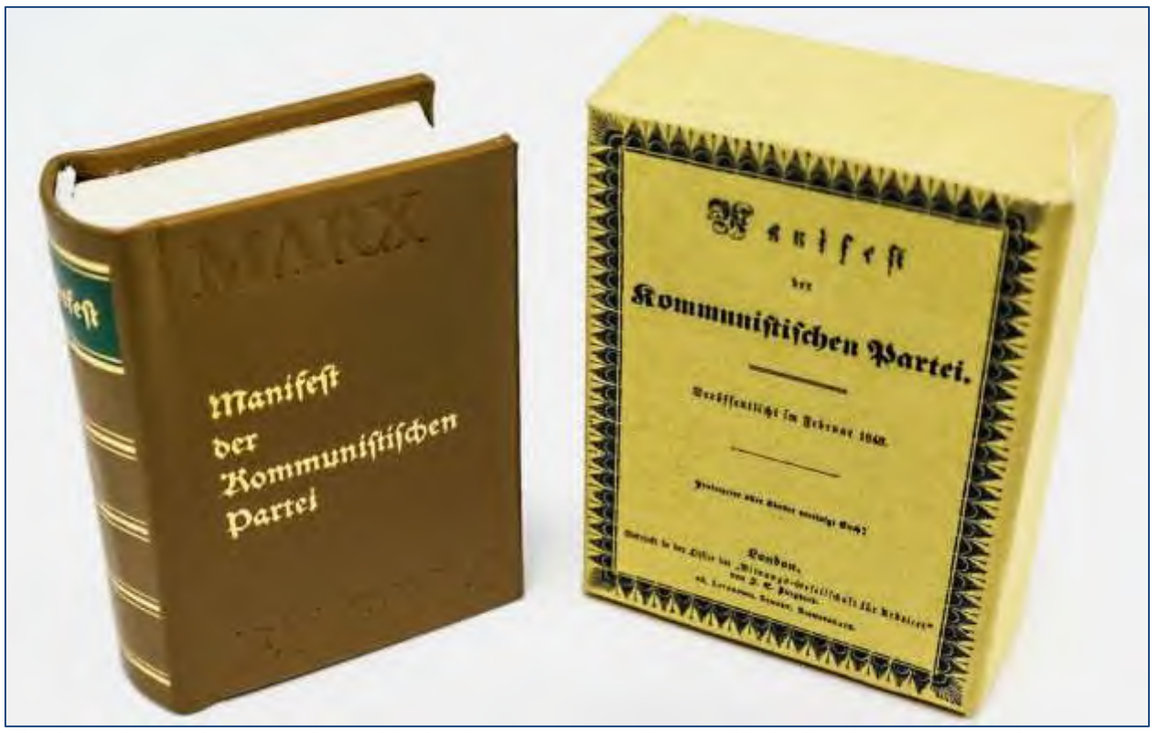
FFWPU International: Communism That Erased God - Part 3

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The first edition of Marx and Engels' The Communist Manifesto, published in German in London, England, in February 1848. Grounded in materialism and the theory of class struggle, it asserted the inevitable downfall of capitalism and the advent of a communist society, serving as the ideological blueprint for the global communist movement. However, in the communist regimes established thereafter, such as the Soviet Union, one-party dictatorship and the suppression of human freedom emerged instead of the promised liberation of humanity, and the prediction that capitalism would inevitably collapse failed to materialize.

[Communism That Erased God: Sang Hun Lee's Ideological Journey and the Path to Human Emancipation] ③ The Temptation of Communism, the Blind Spots of Religion

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Between Communism and Religion: The Quest for a New Thought

Although materialism failed to account for the origin of love and self-sacrifice, Sang Hun Lee did not disregard the sheer power that communism possessed. The communism he encountered in those days exhibited a potent ideological system and capacity for action that were difficult to find within established religions. It also offered an integrated, singular set of answers to why the world had grown unequal, where human history was heading, and what human beings ought to do. Rather than merely serving as slogans inciting the fury of the impoverished, communism wove together everything - from the origin of the cosmos and the essence of human nature to historical development, the structure of capitalism, revolutionary methodology, and the vision of a future society - into a cohesive framework of logic. Furthermore, by locking philosophy, history, economics, and political action into unison, it presented itself not only as an interpretive theory of the world, but as a direct guide to action aimed at transforming it.

Communism Offers Direction to History

Materialism, the philosophical foundation of communism, posits that matter constitutes the ultimate root of the universe and that human consciousness and thought originate from matter. When this was combined with the dialectic - which views reality not as fixed, but as an interconnected process of perpetual change - the philosophical framework known as "dialectical materialism" was forged. To the assertion that matter is the origin of the world was added an explanation of how that material world changes and develops.

The application of this perspective to the course of history is historical materialism (the materialist conception of history). Historical materialism located the fundamental bedrock of human history in the

"mode of producing the material goods necessary for survival." It argued that as productive forces advance and clash with existing relations of production, social revolution occurs, giving birth to a new stage of society. Consequently, it set forth a progression of historical stages: moving from primitive communal society through slave society and feudalism to the emergence of capitalism, and asserting that as internal contradictions deepen, history necessarily advances into socialism and communism.

Yet history demonstrated that not all societies followed these identical developmental stages, nor did the prediction of the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the transition into communism come to pass. Attempting to explain the varied and multifaceted paths of human history through a single deterministic law of development exposed the inherent limitation of communist theory.

Furthermore, Marxism explained the operating mechanics of capitalism through the theory of surplus value. It argued that laborers produce far greater value than the wages corresponding to the value of their labor power; this difference - surplus value - is appropriated by the capitalist, becoming the source of profit. Marxism thus concluded that the impoverishment and exploitation of the working class stemmed directly from an ownership structure in which the capitalist, by owning the means of production, usurps the surplus value generated by labor.

Such explanations extended beyond philosophy and economic theory into a theory of revolution. Marxism maintained that history progresses through the struggle between the ruling class and the ruled class, and that capitalism would ultimately collapse as its internal contradictions and class antagonisms intensified. This revolutionary theory was epitomized in The Communist Manifesto, co-authored in 1848 by Marx and his fellow German thinker Friedrich Engels. The two elevated the working class from mere victims of history to the subjects of history - the agents destined to bring an end to capitalism and build a new society free of classes and exploitation.

Communism did not treat the collapse of capitalism as a mere wishful hope; it claimed it to be an inevitable law of history. Those who took part in the revolution viewed themselves as pioneers who had awakened to the laws of historical development and were accelerating their realization. The conviction that one was riding the massive crest of history endowed young intellectuals with both intellectual satisfaction and a clear purpose in life.

Within that framework, past, present, and future appeared seamlessly linked: materialism elucidated what the world was made of, while the dialectic explained how it transformed. Historical materialism traced the path trodden by human history, and the theory of surplus value dissected the structure of capitalist exploitation. The theory of class struggle identified who would transform history, and the theory of revolution supplied the method. At the end of that path awaited the communist society, entirely devoid of exploitation and alienation.

When compared with religious narratives of salvation, the magnetic pull of communism becomes all the more evident. Where religion taught that human suffering began with the Fall and that the ideal world would arrive through salvation, communism traced the cause of human alienation to the emergence of private property and class distinctions, promising that a classless society would arrive through the revolution of the working class. By placing exploitation in the place of sin, the proletariat in the role of the subject of salvation, and the communist society in place of the ideal world, it closely mirrored a secular system of salvation.

Religion Hesitant in the Face of Reality

Yet this seemingly airtight ideological system could not fully account for human life. If the development of history were merely the inevitable outcome of class struggle, where would that leave the freedom and conscience of those who disagreed with its course? And from what source springs the sacrificial love that gives of oneself for others, transcending all class interests? Communism was formidable in analyzing social contradictions and mobilizing people into action. Yet, in Sang Hun Lee's view, it failed to provide answers regarding the origin of human freedom, conscience, and a love that transcends class boundaries. It was to find answers to these very questions that he turned his gaze toward religion, and specifically toward Christianity.

The conventional Christianity Sang Hun Lee encountered offered comfort to the poor and instilled hope for the Kingdom of Heaven in the hearts of the suffering. Its power to teach love and goodness to humankind was undeniably precious. However, he could not obtain satisfactory answers to the fundamental questions he harbored: Why did human suffering begin, and toward what destination is history heading? While he heard the doctrine that God created human beings and the world, that sin and suffering began with the Human Fall, and that salvation is realized through the Messiah, he yearned to understand more deeply what the Fall concretely was, and through what precise process the providence of restoration and salvation reaches completion.

The same was true regarding the Resurrection, the Last Days, and the Second Coming of the Messiah.

Through the teachings of the conventional Christianity he encountered, it was difficult to clearly comprehend what these doctrines actually signified and how they would transform human life and history. Nor was it clear to him how believers, while waiting in faith, were supposed to transform an unjust society and substantiate God's Will within daily reality.

What Sang Hun Lee sought above all was to understand how faith could actively respond to the suffering of reality, overcome structural injustices such as poverty and exploitation, and practice the Will of God within society. In the established Christianity he knew, it was difficult to find a concrete path toward addressing those questions. In an era when communists were organizing and actively working for social transformation, young people determined to change the world desperately needed a tangible way to put their convictions into practice, just as much as they needed the content of faith itself.

Connecting Love and Thought as One

This did not mean, however, that Sang Hun Lee saw no potential in Christianity to save humankind. The issue lay in its inability to translate that potential into thought and practical action capable of resolving real-world suffering and injustice. His analysis was that although it spoke of God and love, it failed to articulate them into a systematic ideology embracing humanity, the universe, history, and society. While the Christianity he encountered at the time enabled him to clearly recognize the fallacies of communism, it failed to provide a concrete alternative to resolve the issues of poverty, exploitation, and inequality that communism had brought to the fore.

Communism possessed a theoretical framework for interpreting the world and history, a blueprint for a future society, and the organizational power and action to realize it. In contrast, the conventional Christianity of the day had God and love, but lacked both a systematic explanation of how those teachings move history and transform the actual world, and a viable path of practice. This was the shortcoming he felt within Christianity.

Sang Hun Lee recognized that merely criticizing communist ideology as erroneous was not enough to overcome it. One had to elucidate God and love while explaining human beings, history, and society far more persuasively than communism did, while simultaneously providing a practical path to substantiate it in reality. It was precisely here that his quest for a new thought began - a pursuit to bridge the chasm between communism and conventional Christianity.