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The Nixon-Cronin Speeches : A Cold War Theology

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In this paper I plan to uncover and examine a theology that is sometimes explicit, but more often implied, in Richard Nixon's speeches delivered between 1953 and 1960. The original texts of these speeches were written by a Roman Catholic priest, John F. Cronin. In the first part, I will survey the history of the association between Cronin and Nixon. In the second, I will deal with the speeches themselves, and the theology that often lay just beneath the surface. In the final part, I will look at the practical consequences of this cold war theology and the mission entrusted to its believers.

The questions arising from this sort of study are legion. Given the history of American suspicion in regards to Roman Catholics, how did a Roman Catholic priest acquire such an influential position among early cold war theorists—especially Richard Nixon, a Quaker?¹ Do Nixon's speeches presuppose a theological interpretation of world events? Is the cold war theology of the speeches a genuinely Christian theology, or is it a form of idolatry?

The History

In the winter of 1947, Richard Nixon and Fr. John F. Cronin met through a mutual acquaintance, Charles Kersten. Kersten was a freshman Republican congressman from Wisconsin on the House Education and Labor Committee. “[He] came from Milwaukee, where the communist infiltration of unions was a burning issue...”² Nixon was a fellow rookie congressman on the House Education and Labor Committee in addition to his assignment on the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC). Both shared a similar concern about international communist subversion, “particularly the challenge it posed to their common Christian faith.”³ Kersten arranged for Nixon and Cronin to meet, and “a twenty-minute appointment was made, but the actual meeting took two hours.”⁴ “On at least four occasions in late January and early February [1947], Nixon and Kersten drove to Baltimore for briefings from Cronin.”⁵

John Cronin had worked closely with Catholic labor organizations in the early 1940's, in association with George Higgins. He worked for many social causes in the Baltimore/Washington area,⁶ and had been a student of the late John A. Ryan. Charles Curran considers Cronin and Higgins the successors to Ryan in the mainstream of American Catholic social ethics.⁷ Prior to going to Washington, Cronin was a professor of economics and philosophy at St. Mary's seminary in Baltimore, as well as assistant director of the Social Action Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.⁸ His major work, *Social Principles and Economic Life*, was often used in Catholic colleges and seminaries as the textbook for social ethics.⁹ One of the reasons Cronin came to Washington was to become involved in organized labour, particularly with those industries involved in military production.¹⁰ It was in regards to his concern over military secrets falling into the wrong hands that he first became interested in communist infiltration into the American labor movement.¹¹

Cronin's investigations led him to believe that the most secret manufacturing centers had been penetrated by communists, and he uncovered evidence of an espionage network in atomic energy facilities.¹² This data collection on communists led him to a close association with William Sullivan, an FBI agent, with whom he shared information.¹³

Early in the forties, when I was working with the dockside unions in Baltimore, some of my friends came to me with complaints that they were being voted out of union offices by suspiciously packed meetings. I did a little investigating and found these were communists cadres at work. About that time the FBI approached me to find out what I knew about this. Soon I was in touch with Bill Sullivan [now an assistant director of the FBI]. I kept track of what was going on for them. And I got to know many agents intimately. Cardinal—then Archbishop—Mooney heard of my knowledge in this area; so he asked me to prepare a secret report on communism for the American bishops, and I was able to use classified material that had come my way... By this time I was known, in Catholic circles, as something of an expert on communism. Charlie Kersten heard this, and came to see me. Later, he brought Nixon, and I told them about certain Communists in atomic espionage rings and in the State Department.¹⁴

In 1944 Cronin circulated a series of reports to the American bishops, who subsequently asked Cronin to dedicate a year to studying the problem of communism in

America. By the end of 1945 he completed this study entitled “The Problem of American Communism” and sent a copy to each bishop. The report concentrated on Communist infiltration tactics in labor unions and the government. He depended heavily on material given to him by Sullivan, much of which consisted of voluntary testimony before the FBI by former Communists—including current senior editor of Time magazine Whittaker Chambers. Chambers had named people like John Abt, Lee Pressman, and Alger Hiss, who had supposedly formed a Communist core group within the government. He would later share this report with Nixon¹⁵ and would name other names like, Harry Dexter White, Arthur Alexandrovitch Adams, Steve Nelson and Clarence Hiskey.¹⁶ “Nixon thus knew that Hiss was a suspected communist at least a year and a half before Whittaker Chambers mentioned his name at an HUAC meeting.”¹⁷

During Nixon’s years as a congressman serving on the HUAC, it was Cronin who kept Nixon informed with intelligence he received confidentially from the FBI.¹⁸ In turn, Nixon would use this information in his work with the HUAC. For instance, it was through information given to him by Cronin that Nixon proposed that the HUAC send committee investigators to question Whittaker Chambers who had been higher up in the Communist Party structures than others, like Elizabeth Bentley, who were being questioned at the time.¹⁹ The close relationship between Cronin and Nixon grew out of their mutual involvement in the Hiss case, which came before the HUAC in 1948.²⁰

Cronin had also given Nixon practical advice on how to deal with communists and the Communist Party. “He explained communist tactics, put Nixon onto other ex-communists who might be willing to talk, and in general gave Nixon a crash course on the subject.”²¹ This information confirmed Nixon’s suspicions that the Soviet Union was determined to expand its power and influence, and that the U.S.S.R. regarded the United States as its chief enemy. The security of the United States was in jeopardy because the Soviet Union apparently had access to its most closely guarded military and political secrets. Communists had gained access to government and business positions which

could have influenced crucial policy decisions.²² Nixon demanded information on these sorts of activities, and throughout the 1950's, Cronin "devoted himself to Richard Nixon, as a kind of one-man brain trust."²³

After the Hiss case I didn't see much of Dick. As a Senator, he concentrated more on his state's problems. But then, when he became Vice-President, I began writing speeches for him. In fact, from 1953 to 1960, I was his only speech writer.²⁴

Cronin donated a significant amount of time to the composition of Nixon's speeches during those years. "I take credit for what was called the new Nixon that time around. I was able to give a little background to his treatment of social questions, which I had been studying all my life."²⁵

Nixon was strident on the anti-communist issue and his positions were often politically risky. "Though rookie Representatives normally remain backstage during their first term in office, within two years Nixon had parlayed his contacts and opportunities on these committees into a national reputation."²⁶ However, the risks of appearing as a "red-baiter" paid off in the long run as he became a frequent headliner. With the swing in public opinion in relation to internal security and subversion, Nixon found the anti-communist campaign as a means to his political advancement.²⁷ Anti-communist counterinsurgency in developing nations was also a concern that Cronin and Nixon shared.²⁸

It is also germane to mention that Cronin approached Joseph McCarthy during the Tydings investigation in 1951 in an attempt "to steer McCarthy in a more cautious and less erratic direction, but with no success at all."²⁹ He tried to direct McCarthy away from his sensationalistic approach toward a methodology based on more precise information, which Cronin felt was necessary for the proper conduct of this sort of inquiry. However, the restrained and scholarly style of Cronin did not impress Senator McCarthy. Frequently during the Tydings hearings, Cronin and his aides offered McCarthy a packet of information about suspicious people in the government whom they believed worthy of

investigation. However, to their chagrin, McCarthy completely ignored this information. McCarthy did not “even glance at their materials, and ‘when he showed no improvement we gave up on him,’ Cronin recalls.”³⁰

News of Cronin’s attempt to redirect McCarthy hit the Washington rumor mill and Cronin was accused of working closely with McCarthy and funding his campaign against communists—none of which was true. In fact, “Cronin had publicly stated his objections to McCarthy, saying that McCarthy had repeatedly made charges that he would never be able to prove.”³¹ Later, in November of 1954, when McCarthy’s political career was almost completely destroyed, he tried to enlist the assistance of Cronin and the National Catholic Welfare Conference. “Cronin flatly refused, believing that McCarthy was so hopelessly disorganized, so chaotic in his methods of procedure, and so oblivious of the ordinary canons of truth that there was no point in trying to assist him.”³²

From 1953 until the Presidential campaign of 1960, Father John Cronin ghosted Nixon’s major deliveries,³³ although Nixon did a great deal of editing and rewriting.³⁴

Naturally, he tore my speeches apart and remade them in his own style; but occasionally he was too busy, and had to deliver the text as I had written it, and that’s when he would get the full text printed in the New York Times. There is something in Nixon that will not let well enough alone. . . . He keeps simplifying, simplifying³⁵

Cronin said that his speeches always got worse with each successive draft.

Nixon established certain central notions as the focus of his political career and, therefore, these became recurring themes in his speeches. Both Cronin and Nixon apparently had similar views concerning the economy. They believed that the economy was a crucial arena in which fundamental moral values found their ultimate expression. Nixon wrote to Cronin:

I am concerned about the tendency in this administration [Eisenhower] to be sort of a care-taker... to keep the best of the past—things are good—let’s don’t rock the boat... We must not approach the problems with resistance to change—etc.—we must go out and look for new ideas. We talk about finding the way to the moon and the exploration of outer space—let’s do a little exploration in the economic field.³⁶

Nixon wanted to convey a progressive economic policy for the Republican Party that emphasized growth and progress in the economy and national defense. The philosophy was free enterprise unleashed. Nixon had come to believe that major tax cuts, especially in the higher brackets, would create a flood of investment capital, which would increase employment and pull the country out of the recession it was in.³⁷

The marriage of theological issues, with the political, social and economic discourse in cold war ideology is not difficult to trace. At a hierarchically elite level, there was an increasing degree of cooperation between the U.S. government and the Catholic Church during this period.³⁸ Not only were some of the major theological figures, like John Cronin, sought out and included in the political process, but central political figures, such as Richard Nixon, were portrayed as especially pious and having a peculiar reverence for God and the moral law.³⁹ Cronin has this to say about Nixon:

I would consider Richard Nixon an unusually religious man... He is unusual in the sense that he expresses his convictions quite differently from most men in public life. He is reluctant to publicize his church-going. Even during campaigns he tends to slip away from photographers and attend a service quietly and unobserved.⁴⁰

It is unclear from the literature exactly why Nixon chose others to write his speeches during and after the 1960 campaign. A probable motive for Nixon's break with Cronin was the Kennedy candidacy, and the controversy over his Catholicism. A Catholic had never served as President of the United States, and many Americans believed that Catholic loyalty to the Pope would interfere with the presidential duties, and create an apparent conflict of interest. Nixon's campaign managers undoubtedly recognized this as one of Kennedy's political weaknesses to be exploited and vigorously pursued. Having a Roman Catholic priest as the speech writer during a campaign aiming at these sorts of vulnerabilities would have been intolerably awkward.

The Cold war Theology of Cronin/Nixon

The confrontation between communism and democratic capitalism in the 1950's was seen by many in the United States as more than simply an aggressive competition for world dominance between two superpowers. For some, it was more fundamentally an unambiguous clash between good and evil—between the forces of light and darkness. One only had to witness the concrete situation of the average citizen in the U.S.S.R. and compare that to the fortune of the average citizen of the U.S. to understand that “the contrast between the lot of the citizen in their society and ours is a contrast between darkness and light.”⁴¹

Because the cold war represented a relatively unequivocal battle between the forces of Good and Evil, Nixon and Cronin recognized “the necessity to get the United States and the free world off of the ideological defensive and onto the offensive in the battle for the minds and hearts and souls of men.”⁴² For Cronin/Nixon the cold war was not merely an ideological conflict between two superpowers, but virtually a “question of the survival of our civilization.”⁴³ It was important to condemn the communist error, but equally vital was the recognition and affirmation of American virtue and, more broadly, the goodness of the Western political tradition.

American Virtues

We have a tremendous advantage over the Communist conspiracy in this major respect: We are on the right side. We are on the side of freedom and justice, against the forces of slavery and totalitarianism.⁴⁴

According to Cronin/Nixon, Americans believed in “freedom,” and the American system of government promoted authentic human “freedom”—a “freedom” for the individual that was not subordinated to the collectivism of a state apparatus. This definition of “freedom” was intimately, and somewhat narrowly, associated with economic progress and the type of democratic capitalism that existed in the United States. Nixon/Cronin believed that “freedom” for the individual was the dynamic of real

progress in all areas of human activity. Progress was equated with increased opportunity for individual initiative, for private enterprise, and for people working through responsive government institutions. Intervention by the federal government was seen as stifling genuine progress “We believe in a maximum of individual enterprise and a minimum of government intervention—not because we are afraid of government but because of our supreme confidence in the creative genius of a free people.”⁴⁵

“Freedom” was an absolute value of this belief system and was, therefore, essential to preserve.⁴⁶ It was, therefore, defensible by any means necessary.⁴⁷ Economic progress happened only within the context of “freedom.” Therefore, this “freedom” had to be spread and defended throughout the world.

Republican foreign policy—I prefer to call it American foreign policy—carries this principle forward into every corner of the world. We will maintain the military strength we need to defend freedom. We will use our economic resources, public and private, to assist others in their quest for *progress with freedom* and for national self-determination, free of all outside domination. And we put the enemies of freedom on warning, world-wide, that we will tolerate neither subversion nor overt aggression against the integrity of free nations.⁴⁸

In fact, the notion of “progress with freedom” was seen as the pith of the American ideological answer to the communist challenge. It was seen as the positive contribution to what had been a lopsidedly negative objective of criticizing and fighting communism.⁴⁹

Communists claimed to be on the side of the many, but it was only the United States that could offer practical manifestations of being a government ‘of the people.’ The American electoral process was cited in numerous speeches as a shining example of the way Americans did not simply give lip service to the ideal of a people’s government, but actually put these into practice. “When our elected officials cease to represent the people, the people have the power to replace them with others who do.”⁵⁰ It was a tenet of faith that not only did Americans have the right to choose the people who would served in the government, but also that the intent of every politician was to represent “the people,” not the interests of an elite group. Furthermore, the United States could make the

claim of being on the side of the many in the economic realm as well, because the abundance produced by the American capitalist system, “has from the standpoint of distribution of wealth come closest to the ideal of prosperity for all in a classless society.”⁵¹

Related to this belief—that the United States was on the side of the many—was the faith that all democratic capitalists enjoyed popular support. In regards to newly installed Guatemalan President Armas, Nixon had this to say:

I saw that support first hand. Cheering thousands were on the streets every place we went together in open cars. He is the man of the great majority of the people and they are behind him. There is no question about that.⁵²

Moreover, capitalism was the economic system of choice for religious people. The nearness of the capitalist cause to the divine plan was demonstrated by the lusty participation of those who were most intimately associated with God—priests, ministers and nuns.

I will never forget a priest in San Salvador. We stopped at his school as we rode along the road. He is a man in his early forties, full of vitality, who for ten years had been running almost single handedly a school for under-privileged boys. He teaches them trades and the highschool produces graduates who are able to go out and contribute to the economy of their country in a very substantial way.⁵³

American democratic capitalism was a system based on a leap of faith by the founding fathers of the United States that essentially took wealth and power out of the hands of a few and gave it to the many. It was a vision based on the Biblical belief that all people were created equal in the eyes of God. It took faith to embody this belief in the political institutions of the United States which asserted that everyone was endowed with certain inalienable rights.⁵⁴ The structures worked for everyone, including the poor and downtrodden, because this system was, from its very foundation, against any form of aristocracy. “Equality means one simple thing—in the words of Al Smith, ‘We believe in the common brotherhood of man under the common fatherhood of God’.”⁵⁵

The most obvious problems of inequality present in U.S. society at that time, especially racism, were denied or ignored since we “all” enjoyed the benefits of a system that treated each human person as basically equal. “All of us, no matter how diverse our origins, have had the right to equal opportunity under the law, and year by year we have been taking ever stronger steps to implement this right for all Americans.”⁵⁶

From the point of view of Cronin/Nixon, Americans were essentially peaceful, and this amicability found its ground in a kind of faith. (Mt. 5: 8; “Blessed are the peacemakers...” “There is no sacrifice that [the American people] would not make in the cause of peace, except that of principles which they regard as vital to their faith, or loyalty to the causes for which they have given so much.”⁵⁷ Americans were progenitors of peace—they expressed good will even toward their enemies.⁵⁸ (Lk. 6: 27-35; “Love your enemies.”)

A persistent theme throughout the speeches was that America did not have imperialist interests because it was fundamentally a peace loving nation that desired independence and self-reliance for all the peoples of the world. However, the defensiveness implicit in this constant refrain belied the apparent genuineness of this wish, especially in the light of U.S. activities in Latin American during this century.

The American people and Government are dedicated to the cause of world peace. We do not want one inch of territory of any other country, and we cannot condone aggression by one country against another. We want all nations to live independently in peace and security under any form of government they choose. We wish to devote our economic capabilities to peaceful objectives. These are basic American policies which have the unanimous support of all our people.⁵⁹

According to this worldview, the interests of the United States did not lie in overcoming the peoples of the world imperialistically, because all people had basically the same interests and all people wanted the same things. What did Americans want? They wanted “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”⁶⁰ They wanted economic progress, peace, freedom of choice as to their culture, religion, and economic system, as well as fundamental recognition of their equal dignity as human beings.⁶¹ Communism, of

course, was against these things and would force the peoples of the world to abandon these values against their wills.

It is also important to note that Cronin/Nixon believed that Americans were affectionate and friendly.⁶² In addition, the peoples of the world actually loved Americans, contrary to the pervasive anti-American myth which communists attempted to perpetrate. “We all read stories from time to time about somebody or something being anti-American but I can say that the people in these countries could not have been more friendly than they were at every place we visited.”⁶³ Referring to Nixon’s first trip to Latin America, Cronin/Nixon recounted that a young Nicaraguan boy exclaimed, “We love the United States...”⁶⁴ During Nixon’s second trip to Latin America in 1958 his motorcade was attacked by an angry mob in Venezuela. They smashed his car window and almost succeeded in assassinating him.⁶⁵ On the same trip, in Peru, his speeches were greeted with catcalls and anti-American slogans.⁶⁶ Yet Nixon could still say immediately afterward, without reservation or qualification, that there was a “real feeling of friendship and affection that the majority of the people of Latin America have for the people of the United States,”⁶⁷ and that “the Peruvians essentially were very friendly to the people of the United States.”⁶⁸ This faith in American friendliness and the concomitant friendliness that was returned by the peoples of other countries, was truly blind in its capacity to overlook the obvious and overcome logic by denying what would seem to be the clear message emerging from such actions. The Soviets and international communism, of course, were behind these unruly actions.⁶⁹

The people of the United States were a truthful and truth-loving people. They disseminated the truth, while the communists produced propaganda.

We must not be niggardly in supporting the programs which will get across the truth about the Communist world and the free world to peoples who are being subjected to a tremendous propaganda barrage by the Communist leaders. Nothing could be more penny-wise and pound-foolish than to refuse on grounds of ‘economy’ to spend adequate amounts on our information, library and exchange programs.⁷⁰

This was more than a truth-claim, it was the belief that truth itself resided solely on the U.S. side of the cold war conflict. (Is. 45:19; and John 14:6) The converse of this belief was that communists, like the Biblical depiction of Satan in Genesis, were essentially liars and tellers of half-truths.

The American people were a prayerful people under the priestly leadership of the President.

The President has fittingly proclaimed the day the conference begins as a national day of prayer. I know the nation's prayers will be with the secretary and his colleagues as they go to Geneva to speak for the cause of peace and freedom.⁷¹

The highest officials of the U.S. government act as high priests of the established order calling for pious practices from the faithful. The highest official, the President, was especially devout in exercising his priestly duties. He embodied the loftiest virtues know to humankind. Nixon/Cronin believed that Americans could be “thankful that we have as President a man who is a symbol of the cause of peace to the whole world; a man whom every American can proudly hold up to his children as one who has faith in God, faith in America, and who has brought dignity and respect to the highest office in this land.”⁷²

Cronin/Nixon believed that U.S. policies reflected “wisdom.”⁷³ More particularly, the American sage reflected on practical concerns like the necessary freedom of international trade and “the wisdom of increasing trade between nations and reducing the barriers which obstruct it.”⁷⁴ Like the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 7:14) the wisdom of America's leaders was of a pragmatic sort: “What counts in the final analysis of government isn't the theory, but what counts is the effect of a legislative program, what it does to people, is it good for them, is it bad for them?”⁷⁵

In sum, it can be said by Cronin/Nixon that Americans were basically happy with their lot, because the U.S. provided for their essential desires. “We can be thankful that in no land in the world today is the freedom to speak, to travel, to worship, to work, to invest, to save greater than it is in America.”⁷⁶ Things were so good in the United States

that “for the first time in history we are approaching a state in which poverty and economic exploitation will be abolished in a major industrial nation.”⁷⁷ By comparison, the situation of a person living in a communist society was pitiful, representing the absolute negation of the above mentioned values. “The contrast between the lot of the citizen in their society and ours is a contrast between darkness and light.”⁷⁸

The very quality of person attracted by democratic capitalism was of a different sort than those who adhered to communist doctrine. For instance, “when a man like President Eisenhower, with his experience, his hard-headed realism and his judgment, meets with the cynical, ruthless men in the Kremlin, Americans can have confidence that they will be well and safely represented at the bargaining table.”⁷⁹ There were basic, anthropological, differences between communists and democratic capitalists. This kind of philosophical anthropology which conceived the existence of a good and natural human condition over against one which was unnatural, disordered, and evil, was a natural law theology. Cronin, as a Roman Catholic priest coming out of the first half of the twentieth century, would undoubtedly be working out of some version of this philosophy.

Communist Vices

It is important that we remember that communism and nazism are evil things in themselves. They are not wrong merely because they have threatened American security and the freedom of other nations. Even if these threats had disappeared, they would still be wrong, because they denied human freedom and raised their blasphemous hands against the Creator. These things must be said, lest some of the steps taken by our Government be misunderstood.⁸⁰

According to Cronin/Nixon, communism, like nazism, denied the dignity of the human person and the sovereignty of God and God’s moral law. For both of these ideologies, the state was absolute and the citizen was nothing.⁸¹ In short, communism was a political embodiment of the Antichrist, a pure manifestation of evil set against God and the will of the people.

The communist angel of darkness was clothed in light; however, the light was obviously just a masquerade. (Is. 14:12; “O Lucifer, son of the morning.”) One of the “hard facts” cited about communist tactics was that while they “have plunged millions into darkness,” they nonetheless presented a facade that was “all sweetness and light.”⁸²

Communists were essentially warlike and bellicose. They stirred up revolutions around the world and they supported subversion of democratically elected governments everywhere.⁸³ This characteristic made the communists like the Antichrist of *Revelation* for “it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.” (Rev. 13: 7) “Aggressive international Communism presents the only threat to world peace. There will be no major war unless the Communist nations begin one.”⁸⁴ Cronin/Nixon believed that democratic capitalists bring only peace and goodness, and come to establish the preconditions for abundance and happiness. If war existed, it must have been inspired by the communists. For instance. “if China were not Communist, there would be no war in Indochina, there would be no war in Malaya.”⁸⁵ The reason that communism necessarily incited conflict was because its programs and theories went against the fundamental desires of all people. Instead of offering people independence, economic progress and peace, communism brought only colonial imperialism, slavery, poverty and war. “It denies a choice of culture, a choice of religion or of an economic system to those who are under Communist domination.”⁸⁶

Communists gave lip service to the ideal of peace, but in reality, in their concrete activities, they proved themselves to be warlike and bent on domination. The communists used lofty concepts of peace and world harmony to serve the purpose of pacifying the world and winning complacent allies in their march toward their objective of conquering the world for communism.

For example, today we hear a great deal about peaceful coexistence emanating from behind the Iron Curtain. We could make no greater mistake than to assume that the Communists mean what they say unless and until they produce deeds to back up their words. We must remember that time after time in the past 37 years the Communists have talked peace at a time when they have planned to wage war.⁸⁷

Warlike communists sought the domination of other peoples. Communists were colonial powers seeking to enslave the peoples of the world.⁸⁸ “We must always remember that of all the forces in the world, national independence is the one which is the most incompatible with international communism’s design of dominating the world.”⁸⁹ Events in Hungary in 1956-57 were used to emphasize the point that the Soviets were ruthless imperialists bent on enslaving and exploiting the peoples of the world. In cold war language whose content and tenor prefigures the rhetoric of the Reagan Presidency 25 years later (especially in regards to Nicaragua), Nixon condemns Soviet actions in Hungary:

Can it be suggested that any nation in the world today would trust the butchers of Budapest? What has happened in Hungary is a solemn warning to national leaders everywhere that those who invite the Communist in run the risk of the savage slaughter which has been the lot of the freedom fighters of Hungary. They know that the Communists bring with them not the independence, the freedom, the economic progress, and the peace that they promise, but Communist colonialism, slavery, economic exploitation, and war.⁹⁰

Communists spread lies about the United States and its citizens,⁹¹ while Americans told the truth about communists, because Americans were a truth-loving people. Like the half-truths of Milton’s Satan, or the beguiling lies of the Serpent in Genesis, the voice of communism warped the truth to deceive the innocent people of the world in regards to what was in their genuine interest. These lies were frequently directed against America and the American people. “They have created in the minds of the people that we are arrogant, that we are mean, that we are prejudiced, that we are superior, that we are bent on war rather than on a program that will lead to peace.”⁹²

The communists blew American problems out of proportion and made them seem worse than they really were. “...Every act of racial discrimination or prejudice in the United States is blown up by the Communists abroad, and it hurts America as much as an espionage agent who turns over a weapon to a foreign enemy.”⁹³ U.S. racial problems were small and needed to be amplified unnaturally by the communists to appear

outrageous. American racism was a small attitude problem of a few individuals which communists exploited and blew “up out of all proportion” for their propaganda.⁹⁴ When one looked at reality through “communist eyes” one saw a picture of the world that was “distorted or magnified so that it fits into the rigid description of free societies which the Communist doctrine has painted for over 100 years.”⁹⁵

Sinners by nature that they were, communists would obviously manifest this natural tendency in slothfulness, avarice, anger, or one of the other deadly sins. Communists were lazy and incompetent; they squandered the resources of the people. For instance, in Guatemala the communists promised high wages and benefits, but their misguided policies caused prices to rise so fast that the wage increases were worthless. They promised new roads; “but after 9 years, despite huge expenditures of funds supposedly for highway purposes, the national highway network in Guatemala was in the worst condition in history when the new government took over.”⁹⁶ Communists were backwards and against progress. “As a result of their hostility to business enterprise, they discouraged normal economic expansion and drove into exile abroad an estimated 50 million dollars of domestic Guatemalan private capital.”⁹⁷ The misguided and arcane nature of communist policies was clearly demonstrated by a comparison between the awkward and inefficient communist farm system and America’s own exemplary agricultural industry.⁹⁸

The cold war theology of Cronin/Nixon assumed that the nations which had ‘fallen under the Iron Curtain’ had done so against the will of the people. In most, if not all of these cases, the deterioration into communist rule came about not as a popular decision, but as a desperate response to dire economic need. “We who have had so much should not be indifferent to the harsh economic conditions that have made so many people receptive to the siren song from Moscow.”⁹⁹ Our economic programs, therefore, should encourage trade where this is possible “and aid where necessary so that the people

who want to remain on the side of the free nations are not forced by economic necessity to become unwilling satellites of the Communist world.”¹⁰⁰

The American responsibility to aid in the economic development of poverty stricken areas was not merely politically expedient; it was also a God-given mission with moral dimensions.

So long as millions of people in other nations live in poverty and want, our own prosperity is not really secure. We are not secure morally, for we could not feel at ease as a God-fearing people if we did not try to help those who lack the essentials of life while we enjoy its luxuries. Nor are we secure militarily, for unrest and dissatisfaction lead to international tension. Tension in turn can produce war. And a little war may get out of hand and grow into the final war of all mankind, the dreaded atomic war.¹⁰¹

In this way, it was necessary to recognize that “our leadership is moral as well as military and economic.”¹⁰²

Educated people were against communism because communism by its very nature was against authentic education. “It is no accident that some of the strongest opposition to the Communists in Guatemala came from the organizations of university students who saw that Communism was perverting education in that country for Communist purposes.”¹⁰³

Communists were unreasonable and undiplomatic. Their positions on issues were “rigid and dogmatic,”¹⁰⁴ and their actions on the international scene were “unpredictable.”¹⁰⁵ They were also unstable and untrustworthy—their policies were inconsistent and irrational. “A switch in the Communist line is like a change of fashions. It lasts for a while until something more stable comes along.”¹⁰⁶ Communist policies were abstruse, conspiratorial and evasive.¹⁰⁷

All of these sins persisted in the communist personality because communism was a type of faith which engendered fervent loyalty in its followers. “Regardless of his nationality, the Communist has one loyalty and one only—to the ruthless, power-hungry system that has enslaved almost half the world.”¹⁰⁸ In apparent contradiction of their belief that communists were lazy and ignorant, in other contexts, Cronin/Nixon asserted

that communists were people of “iron determination, fanatical dedication, and superb mental discipline. The soft, the flabby, the naive, the lazy will not win in a struggle with men like this.”¹⁰⁹ In reference to Khrushchev, Cronin/Nixon said that his public demeanor of emotional and impetuous behavior should not be mistaken for his real character, for “when the chips were down he was a cold, calculating, tough-minded advocate of his point of view.”¹¹⁰

Although communism engendered these high qualities in its believers, it was a faith in the demonic because it demanded not a kind of morality as other faiths do, but precisely its opposite. In fact, they sought to destroy any manifestations of religion and morality because they feared its power. “They fear and, therefore, respect moral strength. That is why they are so desperately trying to stamp out religion in the countries they control.”¹¹¹

The Mission

The cold war rhetoric of Cronin/Nixon is infused with theological language that established this conflict as more than an ideological contest. It was a clash of faiths—a battle of cosmic proportions between the good “Christian” god of the United States and democratic capitalism on the one side, and the evil materialist god of the communists on the other. This section of the paper will explore the concrete practices that were to arise out of these theological notions.

Expose and Condemn

According to Cronin/Nixon, there was a need to expose and condemn the communist heresy, and speak the truth about the American way, so that no one would be led astray by the communist “siren song,” and so that we might “advocate our own American idea in opposition to it.”¹¹² The communists were waging an ideological war against the

free world, however; “we have finally seized the ideological offensive from the Communists all over the world.”¹¹³

In the cold war worldview of Cronin/Nixon, one could choose either communism, or freedom and justice which was equated with American democratic capitalism. Outside of the coercive world of communist propaganda techniques, the tenets of communism would not hold a candle to democratic capitalism in the “free marketplace of ideas.”¹¹⁴ For this reason, exposure of the true tenets of communism would surely diffuse its explosive appeal around the world.

We must recognize that the great battle in the world today—the decisive one—is the battle of ideas. The best answer to a false idea is not ignorance but the truth... And while we are teaching the truth about Communism to our young people, we need also to do a more effective job of teaching the truth about the United States.¹¹⁵

The exposure of communism must occur in our schools and public information media—“we must never make the error of suppressing free discussion of it.”¹¹⁶ However, because communists were, by their very nature, liars, and democratic capitalists were lovers of truth and the free exchange of ideas, then “communist teachers of course, cannot qualify to teach the truth about Communism because they are under discipline to misrepresent rather than to present it in its true light.”¹¹⁷

Although it was beyond any doubt that in a free exchange of ideas democratic capitalism would prove to be the most attractive, “...we must never condone the placing of freedom and Communism on the same moral level. We have our faults, but we do not enslave our citizens, try to wipe out religion or seek to subvert and conquer nations.”¹¹⁸ Cronin/Nixon did not entertain the question of how this dialogue between democratic capitalism and communism could be called a free exchange if communists were not allowed to speak for themselves and the outcome of the debate was a forgone conclusion since one position was, by definition, morally inferior.

The struggle against communism would require moral qualities which reflected the American character. These qualities could “only be explained in terms of the religious traditions that impel us to adopt as our national motto: In God We Trust”¹¹⁹ The Roman Catholic Church embodied these qualities because it had “been unalterably opposed to Communism from its very beginning. Long before the Soviet Union was founded, the leaders of your Church made clear its total opposition to Karl Marx and the principles he propounded”¹²⁰ In fact, Nixon/Cronin believed that Catholic anti-communism had been prophetic as could be witnessed in papal encyclicals, like *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) by Pius XI. Cronin/Nixon portrayed Pius XI as a “great religious leader [who] spoke out in resounding terms of Communism as a threat to the security and peace of the world. Indeed, much as the world has changed in the interval, there is little in his writings that could not be used to describe the Communist menace today.”¹²¹

The Alternative

Cronin/Nixon felt there was a need to do more than just condemn communism, it was also necessary to offer the world an alternative to communism. “The people in the uncommitted areas of the world must be convinced that there is a better way to get what they want than through following Communist leadership. We have an outstanding case to sell.”¹²² This alternative vision took on cosmic dimensions as it became a divine mission to humankind to defend rights which were the “natural” inheritance of every person. It was an alternative that offered freedom, equality and justice to all. The alternative was more than just democratic capitalism. It was the quintessential American manifestation of democracy and capitalism, and it was America’s destiny to defend, preserve and extend this way of life all around the world.¹²³

All citizens were missionaries of the great American Creator-God in that they were commissioned to perpetuate Its values and proselytize the world. This implied that all Americans had a responsibility to implement the American vision of truth, justice,

peace and equality. “Our churches and schools, our labor unions and employer associations, farm groups and city groups, and the countless associations and societies that we have formed, all must work together toward our great objective.”¹²⁴

As missionaries of the American dream, citizens had to possess the cold war virtues of “courage, dedication, and sacrifice.”¹²⁵ Because the enormity of the challenges the American people faced were of cosmic dimensions, their love for freedom and democracy had to be sacrificial.¹²⁶ “Until we have concrete evidence that the world is truly peaceful, we should make up our minds once and for all that we must be prepared for sacrifice and for patient endurance.”¹²⁷ Americans needed “quiet determination” and “humble faith” because these were their real strengths as Americans. “With this faith the dark moment will indeed be the darkness before the dawn, the dawn of a new future of peace, of human brotherhood, and of respect for the dignity of all men.”¹²⁸

For Cronin/Nixon, the American revolution was a living spiritual, inspirational and transhistorical reality that, like Christ, was “with us unto the end of the world” (Mt. 28:20) This Christ-like incarnation of the American revolution engendered in the believer the mission to make its saving reality known and present throughout the world.¹²⁹

It logically followed that the American answer to communism was to talk less of the threat of communism and more of the promise of the American revolution. This was what the world wanted and needed to hear from America. “We have nothing to fear provided we remain true to the best elements in our tradition.”¹³⁰

I do not see how any believer in God and in the dignity of man can falter in the struggle that faces us. Communism is totally opposed to all that we believe and cherish. We believe in the spirit of man; they treat man as a machine. We believe in justice and the moral law; they believe in force alone. We preach love and forgiveness; theirs is a message of hatred. To the religious person, every man is sacred, because all were created by a loving God. To the Communist, his fellow man is but a tool to be used in the effort to seek total power. We seek peace; they prepare to conquer.¹³¹

Policies

The real fruits of the Cronin/Nixon theology were the policies which flowed from these fundamental principles. The communists posed, not only a challenge to the American way of thinking, but also a menace to the American way of life and to its very survival. The communist threat was not easily reducible to the Soviet Union and her various satellite nations, for communist subversion was also happening right in the United States. “The problem of internal security is deadly serious. One spy in the wrong place can cost the lives of millions of American men.”¹³² In regards to communist subversion, an ounce of prevention was worth a megaton of cure: “Preventive action is needed before the conspiracy reaches the point where it can commit the overt act... we cannot afford to wait until the atomic bomb is exploded.”¹³³

Any kind of public dissent from American governmental policies was viewed by Cronin/Nixon as potentially serving the cunning communist plan to overthrow “free” governments. Anyone in the U.S. who disagreed in a basic way with the administration, even congressmen and senators, were feeding into communist propaganda. For instance, “anyone who charges that there is a war party in the United States is unfortunately feeding the Communist propaganda mill, which has been grinding out this big lie and trying to peddle it around the world for years.”¹³⁴ For this reason, those who were not explicitly for us were against us. (Lk. 11:23)¹³⁵

Although the internal communist treat was great, the international conflict between communism and the “free world” was where this battle reached cosmic proportions. “The struggle against world Communism is the greatest challenge that free men have ever faced.”¹³⁶ The primary arena for this struggle would be among the “uncommitted” peoples of the world, whose verdict concerning whether they would commit themselves to communism, or democratic capitalism would determine the survival or demise of Western culture.¹³⁷ The people of these uncommitted nations were yearning to experience economic progress, and they would prefer to gain that progress and keep their freedom and independence at the same time. However, “if we do not help

them, they will turn elsewhere for help. They will be forced to listen to the Moscow line which promises plenty at the cost of freedom.”¹³⁸

Americans must not try to appease the Communists because these sorts of appeals were interpreted as weakness by an imperialist aggressor like the Soviets. Like the “siren song” coming from Moscow which proclaims goodness and light in the midst of colonial exploitation and economic misery, Americans unknowingly participated in the communist propaganda machinery when they preached appeasement to Soviet demands. “Experience has shown that there is no such thing as a little bit of appeasement. Appeasement is the first step to surrender because the appetite of an aggressor knows no limit.”¹³⁹ A bully only picks on those considered defenseless and fainthearted; therefore, to avoid war Americans had to show that they were not afraid or ill prepared to fight

Cronin/Nixon believed the United States would always negotiate for peace, but it had to negotiate from a position of strength, not from weakness. This meant the U.S. had to begin with effective military strength.¹⁴⁰ The U.S. had to “make it clear that an attack on freedom anywhere is an attack on freedom everywhere.”¹⁴¹ The implications of this statement for justifying the most offensive and blatant forms of intervention in the affairs of other nations should not be overlooked. A recent example of this sort of reasoning can be seen in President Bush’s rationale for invading Panama and Iraq. For Bush these were a justifiable actions on the grounds that they were saving lives and defending democracy and freedom.

However, when the Soviets prepared for war to supposedly bring about peace, this was a different matter altogether. For Cronin/Nixon, the Communists were, by definition, bellicose and bent on dominating the free world. Therefore, their preparations for war obviously did not have peace as their goal, but rather, the subjugation of nations. “They are testing nuclear weapons and devising rockets to carry those weapons. This is a strange way to promote peace, unless by peace they mean the peace of the prison or the tomb.”¹⁴²

Because the Communists were so evil, U.S. policies reflected the “accursed dialectics” which Franz Hinkelammert writes “[T]o reach the ‘reign of social justice’ there must be an increase in the ‘reign of social injustice,’ precisely. The more we foster injustice, the more quickly we attain justice.”¹⁴³ Therefore, according to the speeches, the U.S. spent huge amounts of money on armaments, and risked millions of American lives in battle, not because Americans wanted territory, or wanted the countries we aided to be dependent, “but because we want them to be independent. Not because we want war, but because we want peace.”¹⁴⁴

Echoing the sentiments of his colleague, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles,¹⁴⁵ Nixon assessed the quality of U.S. foreign aid programs. “Let us examine our aid programs solely in terms of one question. Are the interests of the United States being served by them?”¹⁴⁶ Our aid programs encouraged our way of seeing things, and discouraged communism. Cronin/Nixon believed that communist economic policies were temptations that should be avoided; they are weapons of subversion and must, therefore, be opposed by the good weapons of aid and financial assistance from the U.S. “Wherever it has an opportunity to strengthen free economies against the shoddy temptations of Communist trade or the menace of Communist subversion, I believe we should use this weapon of government finance as boldly as Congress will permit.”¹⁴⁷

Since America, by definition, was not imperialistic, then taking aid from the U.S. was safe and beneficial to both parties. “American aid is granted to India and to other countries, not because we want them to be dependent upon us, but because we want India and other countries to be strong enough to be independent of any foreign domination.”¹⁴⁸ Communists, in contradistinction, desire to make “weak subservient satellites” out of other countries through their aid. “Our policy... is in the long run just and right, and in our best interests as well as theirs.”¹⁴⁹

Conclusions

Before moving on to the theological conclusions it is important to mention some of the ambiguities concerning the people involved in this particular body of work, and in the cold war itself. First of all, Cronin was not alone in his Americanism and anti-communism. In fact, his position constituted the official American Catholic position of the period. It is also important to note that John Cronin's views change significantly over the next decade in what he calls "an opening up to the left."¹⁵⁰ The theology expressed in the speeches was the spirit of a specific time and place and Cronin's personal understanding of these issues has changed significantly over the decades. However, it is equally important to keep in mind that the spirit of this era continues to make itself felt in regards to these issues, especially in the United States.

Cold war ideology and theology change over time—sometimes in quite substantial ways. Even within the limited period of this study, important changes in attitude occur due to the death of Stalin (January of 1953) and the emergence of Khrushchev and his new rhetoric concerning a peaceful, economic competition with the U.S. in the economic realm.¹⁵¹ Cronin/Nixon understood that the cold war was "shifting its major front from politics and ideology to the so-called 'ruble war' for the trade and the development of new and neutral countries."¹⁵² These changes in the cold war led Cronin/Nixon to assert the need to support basic human needs in the Third World: "No people in the world today should be forced to choose between bread and freedom."¹⁵³ They also increasingly spoke in a derogatory manner about those who would "insist that we have nothing better to offer than maintaining the status quo."¹⁵⁴ This was a significant shift from earlier rhetoric which generally ignored human rights as being either irrelevant or secondary.

Another change in the rhetoric of the cold war occurs around the turn of the decade. At this time, continued buildup of arms began to be seen by some as senseless and wasteful. During this period, disarmament increasingly becomes a topic on the cold war agenda. However, disarmament and arms negotiations were soon removed from the

exclusive arena of military negotiations, while other considerations were brought into the picture as essential elements of successful arms control. One such element was the idea of the “open society” of the West as opposed to the “closed societies” of communist countries.¹⁵⁵

Another sign of evolution in cold war ideology came about as a result of deteriorating relations between the Soviet Union and the Chinese communists just before the turn of the decade, along with the emergence of the conflicts happening in Southeast Asia. The idea that the communist world was invariably united and controlled from Moscow was undermined to a degree by the increasing animosity between Moscow and Peiking.¹⁵⁶

In spite of these ambiguities, the cold war was also a kind of faith in a certain god, or gods. This faith found its justification and expression in its fairly clear and straightforward theological underpinnings. The very pith of this belief system was a dualism grounded in the conviction that the world was divided into two realms: one basically good and best represented by the United States, and one fundamentally evil and identified with the “world communist movement.” This divided world was in a constant state of turmoil as the forces of evil attempted to extend their imperial reign until they achieved world domination.¹⁵⁷ Standing alone, in the way of this communist tide of evil domination, was the free world, with its most powerful and benevolent representative, the United States, playing the leadership role.

The mission of the relatively good and holy representatives of the free world became clear—they had to oppose communism on every front and in every arena of life. Faithful followers of this theology had to expose the communist falsehood and preach to the world the truthful alternative of democratic capitalism and the American way.

Our problem in the world is to convince the masses of the people, the intellectuals in all the world, that the United States and those with whom we are associated, that we are the protagonists of the real, the true revolution, rather than the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁸

In practice then, Americans had to desire peace and harmony, but prepare for war and strife because the communists were seeking to overcome the free world and destroy our way of life. “We wanted to live our life in peace and we hoped that others would do the same. But it is fatal to mistake hope for reality, or the spoken word for the deed.”¹⁵⁹ For Cronin/Nixon this mission required that we be reluctant warriors for the authentic peace offered by democratic capitalism and the United States. The speeches affirmed, in an obvious Scriptural allusion, that “as we succeed in this grand endeavor, the evil seeds of communism will find no soil in which to grow.”¹⁶⁰ (Mt. 13:3) In addition, special cold war virtues were bestowed to help Americans achieve their God-given mission:

We need the stamina and determination for patient endurance of a cold war for an indefinite period. We did not choose this war. We are trying in every way we know to promote a lasting and just peace, but peace cannot be one-sided unless it is the peace of the conquered, the peace of the prison.¹⁶¹

A final question which needs to be addressed in regards to the cold war theology of Cronin/Nixon is whether or not this is a faith in a God of life, or an idol of death.¹⁶² Before proceeding it is essential to define “idol” and “idolatry” as these terms are being used in this context. Here the lead is being taken from liberation theologians, most notably, Franz Hinkelammert and his book, *The Ideological Weapons of Death*.¹⁶³ Idolatry, in this definition, is the dogmatic, ideological veneration of something that, directly or indirectly, causes and promotes death, impoverishment, unemployment and the destruction of nature. Since the God of Christian Scripture is understood as good and life giving, those people and things which systematically oppose goodness and cause death are likewise at battle with this God of Life. When the opponent to the God of Life has a focal point and the backing of a theological doctrine, then this opponent is labeled an “idol.” Although Latin American liberation theologians have largely concentrated their use of this critical term against capitalist economic structures and the political institutions that accompany these structures, there is a good case to be made for including the kinds of theologies associated with the cold war in this critical category of “idolatry.”

Certainly the cold war has had numerous effects, mostly negative. However, some would contend that the cold war was a lesser of two evils. Others would go as far as to say that the cold war preserved world peace in the face of Soviet aggression. In my own response, I focus less on the relations between the former Soviet Union and the United States and more on the effects of cold war theologies as they have been disseminated throughout the world—especially among the poorer nations of the Southern Hemisphere.

Under the leadership of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen who directed the CIA at the time, the U.S. government, with the cooperation of United Fruit Company,¹⁶⁴ destabilized the elected government of Guatemala and placed Castillo Armas in power. This overthrow of the Arbenz government was understood by Cronin/Nixon as a liberating action for the people of Guatemala. For Cronin/Nixon, Guatemala would be a paradigmatic case in which the world could witness the saving grace of a free government in comparison to the evil underdevelopment imposed by communist leadership. Cronin/Nixon proclaimed this prophecy following the U.S. action in Guatemala:

In no place in the world are the stakes higher for free peoples than they are in Guatemala. Here the whole world has a chance to make a direct comparison between what a communist government can do for an undeveloped country and what a free government can do... I am convinced, and I will make a prediction, that the Castillo Armas Government can do more good for the people of Guatemala in two years than the Communists did in ten years. And that will be a tremendous accomplishment not only for Guatemala but for the cause of freedom every place in the world.¹⁶⁵

The horrendous human rights record of the Guatemala regime since the United States' destabilization of the Arbenz government gives an ironic twist to this hopefully prophetic quote from the Cronin/Nixon speeches. Indeed Guatemala offers an excellent opportunity to examine the practical consequences of policies inspired by a cold war theology, carried through to their logical and ruthless conclusions by “free” governments. Cold war theology makes an absolute enemy out of those who oppose the gods of American democratic capitalism—even resistance of the most innocent kind. These

enemies of the all-good gods are evil “Communists” (whether or not this is a label which these people accept) and they become easy targets for extermination. At least in the case of Guatemala, it can be argued that the gods which inspired a cold war theology were idols of death standing in opposition to a God of Life.

My purpose in this study was to establish that there were theological dimensions in cold war ideology, and to name and develop the major themes as they appeared in the speeches written for Richard Nixon by Fr. John Cronin between 1953 and 1960. Future research in this area could study the influence that this cold war theology had on official Roman Catholic teaching, especially documents of the U.S. Bishops. Another related task that needs research is the sometimes subtle influence which the cold war exercises in current American Catholic theology. It is my conviction that a reexamination of the cold war is a vital theological task in the light of recent events in Central America, South America, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and in the United States.

I do not believe that these events in any way suggest a simple resolution of the cold war in favor of freedom and justice—as some voices in the media have suggested concerning events in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,¹⁶⁶—for the simple reason that, at the same time, current and recent events in Central American and South America contradict the notion that the U.S. has been the force of liberation in the world.¹⁶⁷ Also, at a time when the political situation in former communist nations is in such turmoil and disarray, it is easy to focus on these situations and overlook the rapidly changing domestic political climate. The dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations has encouraged wide and passionate debate over democracy and democratic institutions, yet these same events have also created a radically new foundation for political discourse in the United States. The Brown and Perot candidacy in the recent Presidential elections in the U.S. were signs of a popular dissatisfaction over the inadequacy of the Reagan/Bush policies which were founded, in part, on cold war reasoning. From my point of view, this is not a time for U.S. theologians to be celebrating

with many in the media an apparent resolution of the cold war in favor of the United States due to recent events in Eastern Europe, but a time of sober reflection on the persistence of U.S. cold war institutions and ideology which promote continued misery and unfreedom domestically and internationally.¹⁶⁸

¹ Refer to Robert L. Frank, "Prelude to Cold War: American Catholics and Communism," *Journal of Church and State* 34 (January 1992): 39-56, for details on the developing American Catholic anti-communist campaign in the 1930's and 40's.

² Wills, Garry, *Nixon Agonistes; The Crisis of The Self-Made Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 25.

³ Gary Henderson, *The Nixon Theology*, (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1972), 71.

⁴ Bela Kornitzer, *The Real Nixon* (New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1960), 172.

⁵ Ambrose, Stephen E., *Nixon : The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 144.

At this same time, Kersten introduced Nixon to the then Monsignor Fulton Sheen, who was writing a book on the subject of international communism, *Communism and the Conscience of the West*. The men spent a long evening discussing it, and Sheen gave them autographed copies. Kersten and Nixon then read the book together, spending many hours discussing their reactions to its conclusions.

For Sheen, the conflict between the United States and the U.S.S.R. had greater significance than a mere superpower struggle. He believed it was a confrontation between the two Western ideologies: one fundamentally materialistic, the other essentially theocentric. In this struggle, the church would play a decisive role in providing an ideology diametrically opposed to Marxism. If non-communist countries abandoned the truth of religion, then they were destined to loose this ideological battle. A common Christian religious and moral tradition was the distinguishing characteristic of the non-communist West—not its political or economic systems. "Nixon was convinced that the anticommunist cause was essentially religious, and his convictions were shaped in the course of contact with Roman Catholic associates."

⁶ Ambrose, 144.

⁷ Charles E. Curran, *American Catholic Social Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 174.

⁸ Henry D. Spalding, *The Nixon Nobody Knows* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1972), 203

⁹ Curran, 174.

¹⁰ Spalding, 203.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ambrose 144.

¹⁴ Wills, 26-7.

¹⁵ Ambrose 145.

¹⁶ Spalding, 203-4.

¹⁷ Henderson, 72.

¹⁸ Wills, 28. "Ed Hummer was one of the FBI agents I had worked with. He could have gotten in serious trouble for what he did, since the Justice Department was sitting on the results of the Bureau's investigation into Hiss... But Ed would call me every day, and tell

me what they had turned up; and I told Dick, who then knew just where to look for things, and what he would find.”

¹⁹ Ambrose 167.

²⁰ Wills, 26.

²¹ Ambrose 145.

²² Kornitzer, 173.

²³ Wills, 26.

²⁴ Ibid., 28.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Henderson, 71.

²⁷ Kornitzer, 175.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Crosby, Donald F., *God, Church, and Flag : Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and the Catholic Church, 1950-1957* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 56.

³⁰ Ibid., 56.

³¹ Ibid., 56-7.

³² Ibid., 200.

³³ Henderson, 105.

³⁴ Ambrose 411.

³⁵ Wills, 28-9.

³⁶ Ambrose, 486.

³⁷ Ibid., 486-487.

³⁸ David J. O'Brien, *The Renewal of American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 115. O'Brien claims that “the church, long the world’s leading opponent of communism, played no small part in the development of the cold war, and its views now were widely accepted by men beyond the confines of the church. As the anti-communist stance became identified with patriotism and virtue, the prestige of the church was vastly enhanced and its loyalty to America was less and less questioned.”

³⁹ Kornitzer, 240.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 240.

⁴¹ Ibid., 39.

⁴² Nixon/Cronin, “Mr. Nixon Attacks Communist Conspirators,” *US News and World Report* 35 (September 11, 1953): 31. This was a recurring theme among Catholic anti-communists of the period. See John Courtney Murray, “The Return to Tribalism,” *The Catholic Mind* LX (January 1962): 5.

⁴³ Nixon/Cronin, “The Rule of Law for Nations,” *Vital Speeches* 25:421 (May 1, 1959). Since their independent contributions to the speeches cannot be ascertained, from this point forward I will refer to Nixon and Cronin together when reference is made to the authors of the views expressed in the speeches. I will use Cronin/Nixon in these references.

⁴⁴ Nixon/Cronin, “Mr. Nixon Attacks Communist Conspirators,” 31.

⁴⁵ Nixon/Cronin, “We Believe in the Creative Genius of a Free People,” *US News and World Report* 48 (June 13, 1960): 51.

⁴⁶ “We must never forget one fundamental principle: What distinguishes the American revolution from the Communist revolution is that we believe the most productive source of national progress is private rather than government enterprise.

All of our government policies must, therefore, be designed to encourage and stimulate individual Americans to make their maximum contributions to the realization of the nation’s potential. This can be done only in a climate of

freedom of enterprise.” Nixon/Cronin, “Government Policy in Present Recession” *Vital Speeches* 24 (May 15, 1958): 467.

⁴⁷ The military and the economy were concepts that predominantly went hand in hand for Nixon/Cronin: “Mr. Nixon Attacks Communist Conspirators,” 31; “Nixon Reports: If Communists Win Asia.” *US Department of State Bulletin* 30 (January 4, 1954): 11-12; “A New Approach by the U.S. in Fighting Communism,” *US News and World Report* 37 (August 13, 1954): 26; “Peace Without Surrender” *US News and World Report* 38 (April 15, 1955): 66; “The Chances for Peace Today,” *Vital Speeches* 22 (November 15, 1955): 72; “Nixon’s Size-up of Budget Rise: ‘Higher Prices’ Most to Blame,” *US News and World Report* 42 (May 31, 1957): 48. One message which clearly emerged from my reading of these speeches was that either the economy was a type of weapon, or that weapons were a kind of economy — or both.

⁴⁸ Nixon/Cronin, “Richard Nixon: ‘We Believe in the Creative Genius of a Free People,’” 51.

⁴⁹ Nixon/Cronin, “Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Reemphasizes Unity of Purpose,” *US Department of State Bulletin* 42 (June 20, 1960): 985.

⁵⁰ Nixon/Cronin, “What Freedom Means To Us,” *Vital Speeches* 25 (September 1, 1959): 678.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 677.

⁵² Nixon/Cronin, “Latin America Today,” *Vital Speeches* 21 (April 15, 1955): 1156.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1158.

⁵⁴ Nixon/Cronin, “Equality Under Law,” *Vital Speeches* 23 (November 1, 1956): 38-40.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁷ Nixon/Cronin, “Here’s Ike’s Answer to the Farm Problem,” *US News* 39 (October 21, 1955): 77.

⁵⁸ Nixon/Cronin, “The Chance for Peace Today,” 71. “This is an era in which as a nation we are determined to work with other nations toward the peaceful realization of the dreams of men on both sides of the Iron Curtain for economic progress, independence, freedom, and equality.”

⁵⁹ Nixon/Cronin, “Vice President Nixon Opens American Exhibition at Moscow,” *US Department of State Bulletin* 41 (August 17, 1955): 271.

⁶⁰ Nixon/Cronin, “The Chances for Peace Today,” 72.

⁶¹ Nixon/Cronin, “Nixon Reports: If Communists Win Asia.” 13.

⁶² Nixon/Cronin, “Latin America Today,” 1154.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1157.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1158.

⁶⁵ Nixon/Cronin, “United States-Latin American Relations,” *Vital Speeches* 24 (June 15, 1958): 516.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 516.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 518.

⁶⁹ When Soviet leaders come to our country they can expect a “courteous reception... because this is the American way of doing things. Visitors in our country, regardless of how much we disagree with them, should not be subjected to the rowdiness and riots for which the Communists were responsible when I was in South America.” Nixon/Cronin, “Nixon: Ike Will Not Be ‘Taken In or Bluffed,’” *US News and World Report* 47 (September 7, 1959): 69.

⁷⁰ Nixon/Cronin, “A New Approach by the U.S. in Fighting Communism,” 27.

⁷¹ Nixon/Cronin, “The Chances for Peace Today,” 71.

⁷² Nixon/Cronin, “Here’s Ike’s Answer to the Farm Problem,” 80.

⁷³ Nixon/Cronin, “Peace Without Surrender,” 66.

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- ⁷⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "The Chances for Peace Today," 72.
- ⁷⁵ Nixon/Cronin, "The President is Responsible to 60,000,000 Americans," 12.
- ⁷⁶ Nixon/Cronin, "Here's Ike's Answer to the Farm Problem," 80.
- ⁷⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "In the Cause of Peace and Freedom," *Vital Speeches* 23 (January 1, 1957): 162.
- ⁷⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Equality Under Law," 39.
- ⁷⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "Nixon: Stevenson Takes Fearful Risk With Security," *US News* 41 (October 26, 1956): 134.
- ⁸⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "Equality Under Law," 39.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ⁸² Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," *US News* 41 (September 14, 1956): 106.
- ⁸³ Nixon/Cronin, "Nixon Reports: If Communists Win Asia, Free World is Threatened," 10.
- ⁸⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "Peace Without Surrender," 66.
- ⁸⁵ Nixon/Cronin, "Nixon Reports: If Communists Win Asia, Free World is Threatened," 12.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.
- ⁸⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "A New Approach by the U.S. in Fighting Communism," 26. Of course, no mention WAS made of the American position that if one wanted peace then one had to prepare for war, which, in essence, WAS precisely what WAS being criticized as illogical and untenable on the part of the communists.
- ⁸⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Nixon Reports: If Communists Win Asia, Free World is Threatened," 12.
- ⁸⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "The Visit of Mr. Mikoyan," *Vital Speeches* 25 (February 15, 1959): 261.
- ⁹⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "In the Cause of Peace and Freedom," 164.
- ⁹¹ Communists achieved their colonial hegemony through subversive techniques, using the media to spread their alluring propaganda, and stirring up revolt among the people. They did not go over borders with their armies as the imperialists of the past, but rather, they went "under them with propaganda and over them, far over through the airways as well, under them with subversion, and they stimulate and foment in country after country the forces that will overthrow the existing government."
- Communists were a minority group who imposed their views on the majority — they were undemocratic and ignored the will of the people. Communists were an underground group and actually represented only a small fraction of the population, but they were well-organized. In many countries this well-organized minority had a chance to overthrow the government and impose its rule upon the majority of the people.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁹⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "A New Approach by the U.S. in Fighting Communism," 27.
- ⁹⁵ Nixon/Cronin, "Nixon: Ike Will Not Be 'Taken In or Bluffed,'" 67-68.
- ⁹⁶ Nixon/Cronin, "Latin America Today," 1156.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1156.
- ⁹⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Here's Ike's Answer to the Farm Problem," 77.
- ⁹⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "In the Cause of Peace and Freedom," 165.
- ¹⁰⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "A New Approach by the U.S. in Fighting Communism," 27.
- ¹⁰¹ Nixon/Cronin, "In the Cause of Peace and Freedom," p.165.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.165.
- ¹⁰³ Nixon/Cronin, "Latin America Today," 1156.
- ¹⁰⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "The Visit of Mr. Mikoyan," 259.

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- ¹⁰⁵ Nixon/Cronin, "The Rule of Law for Nations," 421.
- ¹⁰⁶ Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 107.
- ¹⁰⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "Geneva Conference Really Challenged Russians," *US News and World Report* 39 (September 2, 1955): 107.
- ¹⁰⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 106.
- ¹⁰⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "The Visit of Mr. Mikoyan," 261.
- ¹¹⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "Nikita S. Khrushchev," *Vital Speeches* 26 (October 15, 1959): 16.
- ¹¹¹ Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 107.
- ¹¹² Nixon/Cronin, "Mr. Nixon Attacks Communist Conspirators," 30.
- ¹¹³ Nixon/Cronin, "How to Shoot Rats," *Time* 63 (March 22, 1954): 28.
- ¹¹⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "Mr. Nixon Attacks Communist Conspirators," 30.
- ¹¹⁵ Nixon/Cronin, "Geneva Conference Really Challenged Russians," 107.
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 108. This, of course, was easier to assert before it became public knowledge that the CIA, in conjunction with United Fruit, had instigated the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala.
- ¹¹⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "A Blunt Challenge to Our Freedom," *Vital Speeches* 24 (December 15, 1957): 131.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 131.
- ¹²² Nixon/Cronin, "A New Approach by the U.S. in Fighting Communism," 27.
- ¹²³ "Through all history, America's leaders have recognized that the principles on which the United States was founded — freedom, equality and constitutionalism — have universal validity and applicability. The rights we have defended are natural rights which come from God. All men are created equal. In this sense, America indeed has a mission. A destiny to defend, preserve and extend the rights of man. If America makes this clear we cannot but receive the support of most of the people of the world." Nixon/Cronin, "The Promise of the American Revolution," *Vital Speeches* 24 (September 15, 1958): 718.
- ¹²⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "Equality Under Law," 40.
- ¹²⁵ Nixon/Cronin, "In This Decisive Hour," *Newsweek* 48 (December 17, 1956): 27.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.
- ¹²⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "A Blunt Challenge to Our Freedom," 130.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.
- ¹²⁹ "We must make known throughout the world the exciting fact that the American Revolution which captured the imagination of the world 180 years ago did not end at Yorktown but that it is a living, vital idea today; that it is the idea which we believe can most surely satisfy the aspirations of people for economic progress, individual freedom and national independence." Nixon/Cronin, "The Promise of the American Revolution," 718.
- ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 718.
- ¹³¹ Nixon/Cronin, "A Blunt Challenge to Our Freedom," 131.
- ¹³² Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 109.
- ¹³³ Nixon/Cronin, "Mr. Nixon Attacks Communist Conspirators," 28.
- ¹³⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "Peace Without Surrender," 66.
- ¹³⁵ "I am stating our position strongly because there are well-intentioned but misguided people here and elsewhere who contend that our line toward the Communists is too hard

and that we should soften it in view of their changed attitude. It is time that we realize that well-intentioned but mistaken men can be as great a threat to a nation's security as admitted Communists or fellow travelers." Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 107.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 109.

¹³⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "In the Cause of Peace and Freedom," p.165.

¹³⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Nixon's Size-up of Budget Rise: 'Higher Prices' Most to Blame," 48.

¹³⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 108.

¹⁴⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "The Chances for Peace Today," 7.

¹⁴¹ Nixon/Cronin, "Firm Line on Reds... Strong Defense... No Appeasement," 107.

¹⁴² Ibid., 107.

¹⁴³ Franz Hinkelammert, "The Economic Roots of Idolatry: Entrepreneurial Metaphysics," in Pablo Richard et. al. *The Idols of Death and the God of Life*, trans. Barbara Campbell and Bonnie Shepard, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983), 185.

¹⁴⁴ Nixon/Cronin, "The Chances for Peace Today," 72.

¹⁴⁵ "The U.S. doesn't have friends — only interests."

¹⁴⁶ Nixon/Cronin, "The Chances for Peace Today," 72.

¹⁴⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "The Soviet Challenge," *Vital Speeches* 24 (November 1, 1957): 63.

¹⁴⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "The Chances for Peace Today," 72.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁵⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "The Other Priest Who Wrote Speeches For Nixon," *National Catholic Reporter* Sept. 27, 1974.

¹⁵¹ In 1956 Khrushchev condemned Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress, and in 1957 Khrushchev challenged the United States with the proposal that the Soviet system could outproduce and developmentally excel to the extent that uncommitted nations would be so impressed that the Cold War could be won by the Soviet Union without resort to armed struggle. "The Kremlin has offered us a direct challenge. It proclaims to the world that a slave economy can outproduce a free economy. It promises to the developing areas of the world that the Communist system can do more for them in a shorter time than the system of private enterprise which is the economic basis of the free world. "The Soviet Challenge" 62

This explicit challenge from an economic rather than a military standpoint was something entirely new to Cold War rhetoric. Predictably, the response Cronin/Nixon suggests to this challenge is to launch an all out offensive in aggressive free market capitalism — a system grounded in fundamental principles. "I am confident that we can meet and defeat this challenge provided we base out policies on the fundamental principles... the recognition that the most productive source of economic progress is private rather than government enterprise." "The Soviet Challenge" 62.

¹⁵² Nixon/Cronin, "The Rule of Law for Nations," 422.

¹⁵³ Nixon/Cronin, "Responsibility of the English-Speaking Peoples in Preserving Peace and Freedom," *US Dept State Bul* 40 (January 5, 1959): 16.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵⁵ "We must make evident to the entire world that if the Soviets are willing to consider some progress toward the kind of open society which we in the West maintain, both disarmament and peace itself can become realizable objectives rather than hopeless dreams. The closed society of the Soviet Union is, in fact, the major barrier to the disarmament which the great majority of the people in all nations want." Nixon/Cronin, "Appraisal of Summit Conference," *Vital Speeches* 26 (June 1, 1960): 485.

¹⁵⁶ Nixon/Cronin, "Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Reemphasizes Unity of Purpose," 983-4.

¹⁵⁷ Nixon/Cronin, "Nikita S. Khrushchev," 16. "The differences between the Free World and the Communist World are not the result of misunderstanding; they are the product of a deliberate Soviet policy of expanding Communist influence and domination by every possible means in all parts of the world."

¹⁵⁸ Nixon/Cronin, "Events in the Middle East," *Vital Speeches* 24 (August 1, 1958): 619.

¹⁵⁹ Nixon/Cronin, "A Blunt Challenge to Our Freedom," 130.

¹⁶⁰ Nixon/Cronin, "Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Reemphasizes Unity of Purpose," 985.

¹⁶¹ Nixon/Cronin, "A Blunt Challenge to Our Freedom," 130.

¹⁶² Franz Hinkelammert, "The Economic Roots of Idolatry: Entrepreneurial Metaphysics," in Pablo Richard et. al. *The Idols of Death and the God of Life*, trans. Barbara Campbell and Bonnie Shepard, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983).

¹⁶³ Franz J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986)

¹⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, both J.F. Dulles and his brother had been employed by United Fruit as legal functionaries.

¹⁶⁵ "Latin America Today," 1156-7.

¹⁶⁶ "This is a golden year for democratic capitalism." Edward Walter in the *National Catholic Reporter* Sept. 1, 1989.

¹⁶⁷ The continuation of cold war can be seen quite clearly in the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador. Guatemala has been stepping up right wing terrorist activities over the summer and fall of 1989, the express purpose of which is "to liberate them from communism." ("U.S. Nun Abducted, Tortured in Guatemala Escapes Captors." *National Catholic Reporter* Nov. 24, 1989, 8) Another unambiguous example of the perpetuation of the cold war is found in the murder of the two women and six Jesuit priests during the FMLN offensive in El Salvador in 1989. The rector of the college, Ignacio Ellacuria, along with many of his Jesuit brothers, was labeled a communist and fingered as the "brains" (possibly the theory behind the symbolic gesture of cutting open the heads and ripping out the brains of the priests) behind the revolution. (*National Catholic Reporter* Dec. 1, 1989, 79).

¹⁶⁸ For further reflection on these issues see Robert Drusbach "Capitalism Vs. Socialism: It Ain't Over Till Its Over." *National Catholic Reporter* Nov. 24, 1989, 20.