

TEXT OF SERMON DELIVERED FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1962,

by RABBI SIDNEY H. BROOKS,

to CONGREGATION OF TEMPLE ISRAEL, OMAHA, NEBRASKA.

THE CHRISTIAN ANTI-COMMUNIST CRUSADE

- - A Personal View of Defense Against Communism.

The well-known philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, once said: "A clash of doctrines is not a disaster. It is an opportunity." And a recent editorial writer pondering these words goes on to say: "It probably means that beyond the clash a deeper reality waits to be studied and explored."¹

The great clash of doctrines in our time is that between east and west, between what is loosely labeled Communism and what is equally loosely labeled democracy. The clash in our time has also been called the conflict between the nations enslaved and the free world, between godlessness and religion, between materialism and commitment to spiritual values. Our time is the time of the cold war with nations representing capitalism and free enterprise on one side and nations professing socialistic dictatorship on the other of an Iron Curtain. The conflict is also described as the irreconcilable contradiction between the idea of man inherited from our religious tradition that insists upon the inherent dignity of every human being as a child of God and the materialistic "scientific socialism" which debases man as an expendable tool of the state.

1. Journal of Religion and Health
Vol. 1., No. 3, April, '62, p. 195.

TEXT OF SERMON DELIVERED FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1962,

by RABBI SIDNEY H. BROOKS,

to CONGREGATION OF TEMPLE ISRAEL, OMAHA, NEBRASKA.

THE CHRISTIAN ANTI-COMMUNIST CRUSADE

- - A Personal View of Defense Against Communism.

The well-known philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, once

said: "A clash of loyalties is not a disaster. It is an

opportunity." And a recent editorial writer, regarding these

words goes on to say: "It probably means that beyond the clash

a deeper reality waits to be studied and explored."

The great clash of doctrines in our time is that between

east and west, between what is loosely labeled Communism and

what is equally loosely labeled democracy. The clash in our

time has also been called the conflict between the nations

enslaved and the free world, between godlessness and religion,

between materialism and commitment to spiritual values. Our

time is the time of the cold war with nations representing

capitalism and free enterprise on one side and nations profess-

ing socialist dictatorship on the other of an Iron Curtain.

The conflict is also described as the irreconcilable contra-

diction between the idea of man inherited from our religious

tradition that insists upon the inherent dignity of every human

being as a child of God and the materialistic "scientific

socialism" which devalues man as an expendable tool of the state.

The words used to describe the conflict are not precise political or social or philosophical terms. Our description of the differences are emotionally freighted. And as they become emotionally exciting, reason and calm thoughtfulness become increasingly blurred and ineffective. Anger and reason do not go well together. Hatred and understanding are mutually destructive. Passion and a clear view of purpose are incompatible. Anything which arouses feeling and fanatical zeal cannot at the same time foster a sane and sensible program of action.

If there is disaster inherent in the two major ways of life which we witness confronting each other, it will not be in the matter of principles but in the manner in which they are handled. Communism and Democracy, Russia and the United States in their fundamental differences are indeed poised on the brink of disastrous conflict. It is obviously our ethical duty and our inescapable responsibility to preserve what we know to be good and right in our way of life and, at the same time, to avoid a total disaster for mankind.

Now various political and social and religious groups differ in the way they believe this shall be accomplished. Some profess they would rather be "dead than Red", others acting out of desperation and frustration see dark shadows everywhere and would insist upon a constant and penetrating system of vigilance that would, they think, root out not only actual but potential communist subversion from American life. Still others place almost total faith in the deterrent of military preparedness. Thankfully, there are still those who continue

Version of
April 27, 1962

- 2 -

The words used to describe the conflict are not precise political or social or philosophical terms. Our description of the differences are emotionally freighted. And as they become emotionally exciting, reason and calm thoughtfulness become increasingly blurred and ineffective. Anger and reason do not go well together. Hatred and understanding are mutually destructive. Passion and a clear view of purpose are incompatible. Anything which arouses feeling and fanatical zeal cannot at the same time foster a sane and sensible program of action. If there is disaster inherent in the two major ways of life which we witness confronting each other, it will not be in the matter of principles but in the manner in which they are handled. Communism and Democracy, Russia and the United States in their fundamental differences are indeed poised on the brink of disastrous conflict. It is obviously our ethical duty and our inescapable responsibility to preserve what we know to be good and right in our way of life and, at the same time, to avoid a total disaster for mankind.

Now various political and social and religious groups differ in the way they believe this shall be accomplished. Some profess they would rather be "dead than Red", others seeing out of desperation and frustration see dark shadows everywhere and would insist upon a constant and penetrating system of vigilance that would, they think, root out not only actual but potential communist subversion from American life. Still others place almost total faith in the deterrent of military preparedness. Thankfully, there are still those who continue

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

to believe that in free discussion and continuing civilized debate resolution for our differences with Soviet Russia may and must be found.

I doubt that anyone among us seriously questions or is ignorant of the nature of our adversary. Russian Communism is more than a difference of economic method or a way of doing business. It is by nature materialistic, ruthless, conspiratorial and, in theory at any rate, committed to interpret history according to its own preconceived axioms.

I repeat: It is inconceivable there are many Americans today who underestimate the power or danger of Russian Communism. But I do think there are Americans who underestimate the power and stability of our own American democracy. And, in my judgment, because we do, we are easily brought to panic, frightened and frustrated by those who ostensibly to protect us against Communism actually weaken us by weakening our faith in ourselves and in the essential characteristics of American life.

Whenever the method of fighting communism does this by reducing our solidarity as a nation, by injecting sectarian religious issues into a common national American concern, by casting suspicion upon everything and anything liberal or social or international in scope, that method is self defeating. The game is simply not worth the candle. So everything that is or purports to be anti-communist is not by that token alone good for the American people or worth our support. By the same judgment everything that is anti-communist in its program is not unworthy of our support. These times demand nothing less

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

than clear, calm and deliberate thoughtfulness. This is no time to get caught up in slogans or clever phrases or to be swayed in political judgment by social and religious group loyalties. The question is not at all who is right but what is right.

My remarks tonight, as you well know, are occasioned by the activities of those in our community who support the program variously known as the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, the Midwest School of Communism and the American School of Anti-Communism. They are all one and the same organization headed by Dr. Fred Schwarz.

Last November before Dr. Schwarz made his initial appearance in Omaha, I spoke a warning from this pulpit expressing my personal fear that anti-communist intentions often lead to the unnecessary weakening of faith in the institutions of American Government and the rights guaranteed to the individual under the democratic system.

Since that time, organization of the Schwarz School for Anti-Communism has gone on apace in Omaha. I am not so naive as to believe that my own opposition to the school and refusal to lend my support to it has not influenced others. But it should be unmistakably clear both to the Jews and non-Jews of Omaha that no one in any position can or should speak for the Jewish community as a whole. We have no religious or political controls. Jews can and must always act individually in matters of personal political preference and ideology. If there be Jews

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

who support the methodology of the Schwarz group, then I respectfully differ with them as with others of like mind. But Omaha Jewry cannot and will not act as a controlled group on this or any other political subject.

If, on the other hand, Jews of Omaha have in the main or totally refused support to the Schwarz group, it can perhaps be explained as a result of our own unique background and experience. We ought to have a deeper and more sober understanding of the inherent power of democratic governmental institutions to protect themselves.

It is obvious that some will conclude, as has been expressed to me, that Jews are not interested in fighting communism for reasons quite inscrutable to me but somehow clear to those who make this unwarranted allegation. Jews who have historically and in all too recent times suffered more than any other people under the brutality of dictatorships and slave states are perhaps by that very fact more sensitive to the obligation never to compromise the principle of constitutional government even in seeming defense of it.

This week Dr. Fred Schwarz came to see me here at the Temple. We talked for almost an hour in the most cordial and friendly atmosphere. We each understand the other's position, though I'm sure neither of us has altered his posture. It is only fair to say that Dr. Schwarz is one of the most affable, charming and intelligent of men. He is gracious and eloquently persuasive both as to his motives and his method.

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

Nevertheless, speaking only for myself and carefully explaining this to him I am still unconvinced and I still dissent from his position and would share this view with you.

Dr. Schwarz believes that the American people must be informed on the nature and goals of communism. I agree. But I believe his method as outlined in his book and as experienced in other communities in America through his lectures and school is dangerous and misleading.

Firstly, while the word "Christian" in the title of his organization bothers me not one whit, a religious approach to the problem of communist infiltration under any title strikes me as unjustified divisiveness. I am equally opposed to the American Jewish League Against Communism. Dr. Schwarz explains his position this way: "The Christian Anti-Communist Crusade does not apologize for its positive Christian approach. Its structure is built on the foundation of education, dedication and evangelism. We do not concur in the premise that strength is in unity. One unified monolithic group can be easily smeared or subverted..."¹

Now I believe that Communism is a common threat to all Americans of every branch of religion or lack of it. I believe the mixture of an evangelism for religion and a defense of American democracy to be unrelated. There are many non-religionists with whom we may disagree in matters of religious faith who are none-the-less loyal Americans. The opposite of Communism is not necessarily Christianity. And it is interest-

1. What Is the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade. p. 15

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

ing to note that no recognized church denomination or nationally representative Christian Clergymen have supported Dr. Schwarz or his organization.

Secondly, while many have reported that Dr. Schwarz in his own presentations says nothing with which most of us could disagree, it is reported on equal authority that his teachers and lecturers in the follow-up school do. The general impression left by the organization in a community is one of suspicion and distrust of anything that smacks of social concern, liberal thought or rational belief as opposed to fundamentalist religion and the most reactionary, isolationist politics. I do not agree that all liberalism and all forms of welfare and all forms of free thought lead to or are prompted by communism.

Thirdly, while Dr. Schwarz has, according to his conversation with me, attempted to disassociate himself from the so-called extremists, these have nevertheless attached themselves to his coat-tails. The content of the Schwarz school creates a climate of opinion hospitable to narrow nationalism and antagonistic to all forms of international understanding, diplomatic interchange, cultural contacts and attempts at high level international negotiation. By implication and in some cases by direct statement, our faith in the usefulness of the United Nations, cultural and propagandistic interchanges and free access to all information is brought into question by declaring these to be of more use to the communists than to us. For these reasons: right-wingers - with anti-minority group bias,

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

anti- U. N. feelings, and generally reactionary political views, find Schwarz and his group a welcome ally.

Fourthly, while agreeing with me that the chief danger from communism is external rather than internal, Dr. Schwarz and his lecturers still speak as if the danger were internal. The result is deliberate fostering of a sensitivity to subversion and suspicion of typically free American institutions: the school systems and their materials and texts, the free press and the free pulpits, the labor unions, the university intellectuals, liberals of all shades and degree, the Supreme Court and constitutional guarantees of individual liberties which on cited occasions avowed communists have used to their advantage.

To undermine faith in these is to play directly into the hands of the communists.

Fifthly, the Schwarz school is colored far more by evangelical passion and emotion than by the sensible and rational mood of the classroom. Dr. Schwarz's presentations are exciting and emotionally stirring. Well and good if after emotions are aroused clear targets for the expenditure of these aroused feelings are pointed out. But they are not. Dr. Schwarz defends this criticism by saying he wishes only to give information. But the information is unguided and unsupervised after the school closes. Dr. Schwarz says he leaves the use of the information to us. That's where it was in the first place, but minus ill-defined feelings and ill-directed desires to "do something about it."

Lastly, I still feel that the particular approach of the

Sermon of
April 27, 1962

Schwarz group diminishes our reliance upon the existing defenses of our country. Much of what Schwarz calls the necessary protection against communism has long been the avowed purpose of our State Department, the Justice Department and the Intelligence Division of our Armed Services, and above all the free and fearless good sense of the American people. I believe the men and women both within and outside these divisions of our government are and will continue to perform their duties efficiently and loyally. And as long as the American people can go to the polls in freedom we need not fear widespread subversion in our government. We are the government.

I cannot and would not say that one should not attend Dr. Schwarz's lectures or the school to follow. I do believe that utmost care and thought be given to what is said. If Whitehead is right and the clash of doctrines is not a disaster but an opportunity, then we have the greatest opportunity ever given to man to enrich human life. We need to be vigilant, and to be knowledgeable and to be brave. But we need never be fearful, nervous, suspicious or super-sensitive. Without any doubt the very best defense against Communism is to make democracy work. Any compromise of democracy for whatever reason is a communist victory. To make democracy work is increasingly the sacred duty imposed upon us by the blessing of our freedom, the privilege of our American citizenship and the age-old teachings of our faith as Jews.

Let us never shirk that duty in either fear or ignorance. But to democracy and freedom for us and all men everywhere let us give unqualified and unyielding devotion.