capitalism has seen its best days in American, and not only in America, but in the entire world. It is a well known fact that no social institut can survive when it has outlived its usefulness. This, capitalism has done. It has failed to meet the needs of the masses.

We need only to look at the underlying developments of our society. There is a definite revolt by, what Marx calls, “the preletarian”, against the bourgeoisie. Everywhere we turn we are faced with stricks and a demand for socialized medicine. In fact, what is more socialistic than the income tax, the T.V.A., or the N.R.B. “What will eventually happen is this, labor will become so power (this was certainly evidenced in the recent election) that she will be able to place a president in the White House. This will inevitably bring about a nationalization of industry. That will be the end of capitalism. I am not saying that there is a conscious move toward socialism, not even by labor, the move is certainly unconscious. But there is a definite move away from capitalism, whether we conceive of it as conscious or unconscious Capitalism finds herself like a losing football team in the last quarter trying all types of tactics to survive.

AD. MLKP-MBU: Box 113, folder 21.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

“Jacques Maritain”

[20 February–4 May 1951]
[Chester, Pa.]

King delivered this presentation for Smith’s course Christian Social Philosophy, which surveyed the ethical and social thought of Christianity from the era of the New Testament to the 1950s. King explains that Jacques Maritain, a Catholic theologian, was critical of modern philosophy’s move away from theology toward agnosticism and atheism. “Maritain feels that atheism was one of the causes for the rise of communism rather than a mere consequence,” King writes. He insists that although Maritain did not equate Christianity with democracy, “the only valid assumption that one can draw from Maritain’s conclusions on democracy is that he sees it as the nearest political approximation of Christian principles.” Smith made no comments on the paper and gave King an A for the course.

1. “Each student will prepare a paper, which will be presented orally in class. These reports should be 45 minutes long. On the day of the report, the student will submit a two-page, typed summary of his report to each member of the class.” Maritain was listed as one of the “representative proponents” under the section heading “Contemporary Responses to the Social Crisis” (Kenneth L. Smith, Syllabus for Christian Social Philosophy II, 10 February–4 May 1951, CSKC).

2. Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) was a French Catholic theologian. King also examined Mari- tain’s theology in an essay at Boston University. See “Contemporary Continental Theology,” 13 September 1951–15 January 1952, MLKP-MBU: Box 112, folder 14; to be published in volume II.
I. Analysis of The Present Situation

Jaques Maritain stands out as one of the foremost Catholic philosophers of the contemporary scene. From his chair in the Institut Catholique in Paris, Maritain views the whole modern age with a critical eye, diagnoses its diseases, and prescribes “Integral Thomism” as the infallible antidote for all its ills. He diagnoses the ills of modern culture in intellectual terms. The disease of modernity began, according to Maritain, when modern philosophy abandoned its dependence on theology. This separation started a process of dissociation which could not be checked short of the very verge of dissolution. The three great symptoms of this state of dissociation, in the last stages, are (1) agnosticism, or the complete separation of the knowing mind from the object of knowledge; (2) naturalism, or the complete separation of the world from its divine Source or Ground, and (3) individualism, or the complete separation of the rebellious human will from any object of trust and obedience. Maritain now goes on to show that Thomism is the specific antidote for these alarming symptoms, and the disease that underlies them. In applying Thomism as the general solution to the various problems of the modern era, Maritain gives special attention to two closely related questions: the question of freedom, and the question of the destiny of man.

II. Views on Communism.

In a sense Maritain sees Communism as the final great symptom of the disease of modernity. Here he finds atheism exalted to the position of a religion for which dialectic materialism supplies the dogma, and of which communism as a rule of life is the social and ethical expression. This atheism, according to Maritain, is not a necessary consequence of the social system, but on the contrary is presupposed as the very principle of the latter. In other words, Maritain feels that atheism was one of the causes for the rise of communism rather a mere consequence. He attempts to prove historically that Marx was an atheist before he was a communist. The origin


4. Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*, p. 55: “The disease of modernity began, according to Maritain, in the realm of the mind. When modern philosophy abandoned its dependence on theology, it started a process of dissociation which could not be checked short of the very verge of dissolution.”

5. Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*, p. 55: “The three great symptoms of this state of dissociation, in its last stages, are (1) agnosticism, or the complete separation of the knowing mind from the object of knowledge; (2) naturalism, or the complete separation of the world from its divine Source and Ground, and (3) individualism, or the complete separation of the rebellious human will from any object of trust and obedience. Thomism is the specific antidote for these three alarming symptoms, and for the disease that underlies them.”

6. Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology*, p. 56: “In applying this general solution to the various problems of the modern era, Maritain gives special attention to two closely related questions . . . the question of freedom, and the question of the destiny of man.”
of Marx's communism was not economic, as it was in the case of Engels, but philosophical and metaphysical. Maritain is very insistent at this point and he takes great pains to establish his thesis. But he does not stop here. He sees another cause for the rise of communism which immediately reveals his objectivity. Communism arose as a revolt against Christianity itself. It originated chiefly through the fault of a Christian world unfaithful to its own principles.

III. Views on Democracy.

When Maritain comes to a discussion of democracy he quite readily speaks of it as the most ideal political system created by the mind of man. Its virtue lies in the fact that it grew out of Christian inspiration. Says Maritain, "the democratic impulse burst forth in history as a temporal manifestation of the inspiration of the gospel." (Christianity and Democracy, p. 36) But if democracy has its virtues it also has its concomitant vices, and its vices are found in the fact that it has failed to remain true to its virtues. To often has the democratic principle attempted to subsist without the Christian principle. In this attempted dichotomy Maritain finds the "tragedy of the democracies." He feels that the survival of the democracies will rest on condition that the Christian inspiration and the democratic inspiration recognize each other and become reconciled.

From this brief resume of Maritain's views on democracy we must not draw the conclusion that he identifies democracy with Christianity. Such a conclusion would be unwarranted and gratuitous in the light of Maritain's overall thought. For him, Christianity transcends all political systems, and it can never be made subservient to democracy as a philosophy of human and political life nor to any political form whatsoever. So that the only valid assumption that one can draw from Maritain's conclusions on democracy is that he sees it as the nearest political approximation of Christian principles.

IV. Views on Politics and The Relation of Church and State

As we have no doubt noticed in the foregoing discussion, Maritain is far from Catholic in many of his views. This fact is probably nowhere better revealed than in his political views. He has no desire to see the mediaeval supremacy of Church over state restored; he only hopes for a day when "an entirely moral and spiritual activity of the Church shall preside over the temporal order of a multitude of politically and heterogeneous nations, whose religious differences are still not likely soon to disappear." He deplores the social inertia and reaction which beset so many Catholics.7 Some years back he in-

7. Horton, Contemporary Continental Theology, p. 49: "He has no desire to see the medieval supremacy of Church over State restored; he only hopes for a day when an entirely moral and spiritual activity of the Church shall preside over the temporal order of a multitude of politically and culturally heterogeneous nations, whose religious differences are still not likely soon to disappear." He deplores the social inertia and reaction which beset the Catholics."
curred considerable criticism by many of his fellow Catholics because he re-

If it be asked how a loyal Catholic can thus take sides against the interest of his own Church, the answer is very clear. Maritain refuses to identify the interests of Catholics with the interest of the church, or the kingdom of God. The Invincible Armada was sent out by his Most Catholic Majesty, Philip II of Spain, with holy intent and with prayers upon the lips of the faithful; but in Maritain's candid opinion, God was against it.9 For him, Catholics are not Catholicism, and the errors, apathies, shortcomings and slumbers of Catholics do not involve Catholicism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Maritain, J. Christianity and Democracy
   Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944
———. Freedom in the Modern World
   Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936
———. Scholasticism and Politics
   MacMillan Co. n.d.
———. The Angelic Doctor: The Life and Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas
———. True Humanism
   The Contrcrary Press, 1938

TDS. CSKC.

8. Horton, Contemporary Continental Theology, p. 50: “He has lately incurred considerable opprobrium among his fellow Catholics by refusing to see in General Franco the perfect Christian knight-errant that Spanish landed proprietors—yes, and the Vatican itself—seem to take him to be.”

9. Horton, Contemporary Continental Theology, p. 50: “If it be asked how a loyal Catholic can thus take sides against the interests of his own church, the answer is very clear. Maritain refuses to identify the interests of Catholics with the interests of the Church, or the Kingdom of God. The Invincible Armada was sent out by his Most Catholic Majesty, Philip II of Spain, with holy intent and with prayers upon the lips of the faithful; but in Maritain's candid opinion, God was against it.”

Alberta Williams King to Charles E. Batten

10 May 1951
Atlanta, Ga.

In response to this letter, Batten wrote the article “Son of Noted Atlanta Family Wins High Graduation Honors,” which appeared in the Atlanta Daily World on 20 May 1951.