

Oddly enough, some still defending Marx

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This may appear to be an odd time to be flogging the dying horse of Marxism. But it is an even stranger time to attempt to rescue Marxism from well-deserved oblivion. Given this fact, what exactly has possessed Dr. Thomas Lyon of BYU?

Recent events testify of the reversibility of Communism in Eastern Europe. However, Lyon insists that in Latin America "Marxism is on the ascendency and intends to stay," and we had better learn to live with it. This was the essence of Lyon's address titled "Mormonism and Marxism in Latin America," which was part of Religion Week on campus. The address was adapted in the December 20 edition of Student Review, an off-campus student publication.

Lyon's essay examines the conflict between Mormonism and Marxism in Latin America. Both of these religions (Lyon concurs with Schumpeter's description of Marxism as a religion) are relatively new to Latin America. According to Lyon, both are idealistic philosophies with positive visions of "Sharing and caring — brotherhood of all humans." Lyon maintains, "There is little theoretical reason why Mormonism should conflict with Marxist governments."

Regarding the supposed similarities between Mormonism and Marxism, Lyon is elliptical. In the first paragraph he declares, "This essay is not an attempt to prove that Mormons are similar to Marxists." However, in the third paragraph from the end he opines, "Many principles of Mormonism and Marxism are similar." If there is a distinction here, the instrument has yet to be invented that can measure it.

Marxism and Christianity are reconcilable, according to Lyon: "liberation theology has emerged linking Marx and Christ in a very holy union." Rather than being hostile to Marxism, Lyon suggests that "We must be educated about Marxism — where has it worked? What are its teachings? ... naive anti-Marxism hurts us."

As a public service, I will provide a primer on Latin American Marxism. The answer to the first question — where has it worked? — is: nowhere, especially in Latin America. Latin American Marxism is best described as a species of



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Grigg

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violent nativist fascism. All that is necessary for admission into the revolutionary pantheon is a professed hatred for the U.S. Manuel Noriega, who knows little about Marxist theory, was embraced by the Latin American revolutionary movement.

It is the reference to "Naive anti-Marxism" that really grates. Isn't this just a bit like "naive anti-adultery"?

Lyon's remarks harmonize with recent observations made by Soviet spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov. It is true that Communism is evolving, Gerasimov allowed, "But so is Christianity. After all, there are very few differences between Communism and the early church." This appears to be an attempt to portray Communism as a restoration of primitive Christianity.

The arid atheism of Communism is a basic element of the philosophy, but it is an enormous tactical error. Liberation Theology attempts to correct this mistake; it uses Christian symbolism in an attempt to conscript the religious belief of the masses in the services of armed socialism. The instrumental value of Christianity has been apparent to Latin American Marxists such as the late Che Guevara (who is quoted favorably by Lyon).

David Horowitz, a former Marxist who has mended his ways, is less rhapsodic about Liberation Theology than Lyon; he describes the doctrine as a "Satanic creed." It is seductive and corrupting, and it will do immeasurable damage.

Lyon is apparently content to allow Latin Americans to experience the totalitarian nightmare being dispelled in Eastern Europe. I cannot be indifferent in this regard. I served my mission in Latin America; I am of Latino Ancestry. The inhabitants of Latin America deserve better than a hand-me-down tannery that Eastern Europe has outgrown.