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(Editor's Note: This is the third in the series of articles on material forces and activities which seek to be identified with Christianity, or to use Christian people for outside purposes.)

What Kind Of Economy
Should Christian Sell?

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Is there any such thing as "Christian economics"?

Does the Christian religion present an economic system to which the faithful must adhere?

Can Christianity be identified with any economic system?

The need for an answer to these questions is magnified in these times when a multitude of conflicting voices clamor for the Christian's attention.

The Red Dean of Canterbury for years used his influence to seek to identify communism, as an economic system, with Christianity. Multitudes of thoughtful people apparently believe that socialism is really the economic system nearest to the Christian ideal.

Others, like the great Japanese Christian, Kagawa, have clung to the cooperative movement as the economic system with the greatest promise for Christians. Still others fervently declare that "laissez-faire capitalism" (capitalism with no state controls) is "Christian economics."

What is a Baptist to believe?

It is not hard to see that those who would completely identify the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ with one economic system are placing a human limitation on Christianity which is foreign to the concept of the sovereignty of God.

Christianity can no more be identified with a particular economic system than it can be identified with a political party or governmental system.

As no human government is completely Christian, so no economic system is completely Christian, whether it be socialism, or the cooperative movement, or capitalism, or free enterprise, or communism of goods such as was practiced by the New Testament Christians when "neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Acts 4:32)

Economic life in general, no matter how favorably it manifests itself, "is dominated too largely by a pagan, grasping, jungle philosophy of life," as Professor T. B. Maston of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has said.

No economic system is, or can be, completely Christian in this world cursed by greed, selfishness, dishonesty and sin.

Neither the individual Christian nor the church at large wants to be used by existing economic powers to promote their particular ideas, whether of the right, or of the left, or of the middle.

A working acquaintance with the various economic systems is necessary to avoid the trap in which persons are made pawns for one system or another. Without this knowledge Christians cannot be effective in injecting Christian ideals into the whole realm of economics.

Modern capitalism was born in the time of the great awakening when the spirit of freedom led man out of the Dark Ages.

Displacing the ancient feudal system, capitalism developed a belief in the private ownership and control of the basic means of production, distribution and credit. It accepts the profit system, assuming there is not conflict between it and the social good. It believes government should exercise a minimum of supervision and control over economic processes.

Socialism, on the other hand, has developed as an economic system since the industrialization and urbanization of the world, largely in the past hundred years. It believes in public ownership and control of the basic means of production, distribution and credit.

All Communists are socialists, though not all socialists are Communists. The Communists are radical socialists who practically equate private property with original sin.

The thoughtful Christian will not close his eyes to the obvious fact that these and all other economic systems share the weakness of approaching the problems of life from a materialistic standpoint. He will recognize that capitalism is strong in its system of production but weak in its system of distribution.

He will observe socialism has been long on promises but short on action. He will see communism has built its house on the sand of atheistic materialism and has created far more problems than it has solved.

Those who much prefer to live in a democracy, err grievously if they say Christianity depends on democracy.

The Christian religion had its most phenomenal growth under the ruthless totalitarianism of the Caesars. Most who read this likewise prefer the system of modified capitalism to any other economic system.

It would be unfaithful to the sovereign Lord, however, to insist He could work successfully only under America's brand of capitalism.

Christianity is not dependent on any particular economic or political system. Beware of those well-financed voices who seek to use Christianity as a tool to support the specific economic notions of their particular benefactors.

Christianity can make its magnificent, indispensable contribution to the life of mankind only as it maintains its independence of entangling alliances with various social, political and economic movements.

As Professor Maston has also said, "This does not mean that we should not approve what is good in any movement but it does mean that there will not be a formal, organizational identification of Christianity with any particular economic or political system."

Article four next: Scared to death or Christian life?