

## **A World Without Religion**

*By Dr. Greg Bahnsen*

The intellectual circles of Europe in the nineteenth century experienced the exhilaration and pride of an aggressive rationalism which trusted in the guiding and saving strength of man's reason. Unaided by divine revelation, and spurning any superstitious faith in God, human intellect could answer the ultimate questions of life and discover the solution to our enduring social problems.

The French Revolution had enthroned the goddess of Reason. Hegel, who had once admired the French Revolution, taught that the culmination of the progress inherent in history would be the "world-mind" (Weltgeist) - the Absolute. Feuerbach turned Hegel on his head by teaching that history is the development of matter, not mind (or idea). According to him religion is simply the "dream of the human mind."

Karl Marx was in turn influenced by Feuerbach and advocated an enforced socialism which banished God from consideration. Religion was no better than "the opiate of the masses." Such delusions needed to be eliminated in favor of a rational world where men solve their problems without "Outside" intervention.

Such hostility to religious faith was given practical implementation by the Russian Revolution of 1917. Russia would become history's guinea pig for scientific socialism. The last religious services celebrated within the walls of the Kremlin were conducted in October, 1917.

Until this year. October, 1990, witnessed Patriarch Alexi II lead Christian worship in the Kremlin for the first time in 73 years. Praise God! In his first meeting with the Roman Catholic Pope, Mikhail Gorbachev told the pope that his mother had baptized him in the Orthodox Church. In a recent speech, the Russian leader contended that "The Soviet Union is suffering from a spiritual decline."

These are amazing words and amazing events in the amazing time through which we are living. My point is not at all to endorse the theological errors of Romanism or the Orthodox church - much less to trust Gorbachev's assessment of spiritual matters. My point is that it is amazing that the political bastion of atheism can now see such things happening or being said. Religion could be oppressed, but not vanquished. The spiritual nature and longings of man cannot be removed, even within the most hostile anti-religious political regime of history.

Atheism can be legislated. It cannot be lived. Men's hearts will remain restless (as Augustine once said) until they find their rest in the living and true God. What is transpiring in eastern Europe these days is not simply a confrontation with cold economic reality, it is a renewed confrontation

with the reality of our Creator and Redeemer. Atheism continues to be the great failure of history. It is Jesus Christ "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, which shall never pass away nor be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).