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A table of contents for *Canadian Journal of Theology* can be found here:

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# Religious Aspects of Marxism

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**K**ARL MARX wrote that the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism. "Criticism of heaven is transformed into a criticism of the earth, criticism of religion into the criticism of the law, criticism of theology into the criticism of politics."

Marx's understanding of religion derives from the left-wing Hegelian Feuerbach, and it is what we commonly call today the theory of projection. In religion man alienates from himself something belonging properly to his own human essence, denies that this quality belongs to himself, and projects it upon the infinite. He dispossesses himself in order to have a god who has great possessions. Thus "The poor man possesses a rich God." Man finds himself "dispossessed of something essentially belonging to him for the benefit of an illusive reality." He "affirms in God what he denies in himself." He compensates for the fact that he is impoverished, or he impoverishes himself by enriching his God, in filling whom he empties himself. This has not been altogether a bad thing, Feuerbach says, since "strictly speaking, consciousness exists only in beings which can make their [own] essence and their species the object of thought." For a long time the religious contemplation of the essence of God has been the only manner in which man had self-consciousness or consciousness of his own essence "writ large" in the heavens. Tribute to the greatness of God has been a testimony to man's awareness of the greatness of man, since God is only the sum total of the attributes which make up the greatness of man. Perhaps this has been a necessary historical form of human self-consciousness. But the time has now come for man to "take back into his heart that nature which he has rejected," for him to recover what he has projected, for him to come into his own. The original title planned for Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* was *Gnothi seauton* (know thyself).

Marx's only reproach of Feuerbach is for thus making religious self-alienation and projection some sort of strange metaphysical act or an isolated human act, instead of explaining it more positively and concretely in terms of sociological and economic facts. Otherwise he accepts and applies Feuerbach's analysis of religion. "Man makes religion;" he writes, "it is not religion that makes man; religion is in reality man's own consciousness and feeling which has not yet found itself or has lost itself again." "The religion of the workers has no God, because it seeks to restore the divinity of man." Or his more famous statement: "This state and this society produce religion, a mistaken attitude to the world, because they themselves constitute a false world. . . . [Religion] is the imaginative realization of the human essence, because that essence has no reality. The misery of religion is at once the

expression of real misery and also a protestation against actual misery. Religion is the sigh of the harassed creature (the sigh of a creature overwhelmed by unhappiness), the spirit of spiritless circumstances (the soul of a world that has no heart, as it is the mind of an era that has no mind). It is the opiate of the people. . . . Religion is only the illusory sun which moves around man so long as man does not move around himself."

With this view of religion it does not much matter to the orthodox Marxist whether the war is currently being prosecuted against organized religion or whether religious observances are momentarily tolerated while the war is being prosecuted against the social conditions which seem to make them necessary. The result will be the same, for as Marx wrote, "The demand that one reject illusions about one's situation is a demand that one reject a situation which has need for illusion." This may also be read in the other direction: The demand that one reject a situation which has need for illusion is a demand that one reject illusions about one's situation. Thus the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism in such a way that it does not much matter which end of the stick you first take hold of. To prosecute the war against economic exploitation may be the best way to attack religion, for it may equally well be said that the criticism of earth is transformed into a criticism of heaven, the criticism of the law into the criticism of religion, the criticism of politics into the criticism of theology.

Thus the Marxist movement in the mid-19th century announced that the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism of politics and economics. It may be worthwhile for us in the mid-20th century to consider whether the beginning of all criticism of Marxism itself may not be the criticism of the religious aspects of Marxism. By "criticism," of course, I do not mean total or partial rejection, but the proper *understanding* of Marxism. Middleton Murry has said that "Communism is the one living religion in the world today." Rightly grasped, Marxism must be studied as also a religious movement, and not merely as a scientific or philosophical system. There are enough obscurities and inconsistencies in Marxism as a social science to prepare anyone for the conclusion that only a religion could have brought such errors to considerable triumph in the world. Perhaps we may even say that, as Marxism as an ideology endeavors to satisfy all the religious urges of men, its claim to be scientific is a necessary prerequisite in the modern age, for without pretending to be scientific men in our day would not even be religious.

Of course, objectively viewed, Marxism is not a religion, since it has no place for belief in God, no point of reference to reality transcending the human and historical plane; and from this point of view it may seem foolish to speak of the religious aspects of Marxism. But, subjectively viewed, Marxism is but one more proof that Plato was right in describing man as "that most religious of animals." Even atheism, when it succeeds in becoming a vital movement, is informed by genuine religious components. To say

that when subjectively viewed Marxism may be regarded as a religious movement, is to call attention first of all to the fact that men give to it their final loyalty, their absolute allegiance. They find in it their ground of ultimate concern, the resting place and warrant for their faith and hopes. They are engaged in it in such a way that all other concerns are either excluded or fall into subordinate place. In so far as Luther's words are to be credited, "Trust and Faith of the heart alone make both God and the idol. Whatsoever thy heart clings to and relies upon, that is properly thy God," Marxism may surely be said to have its fundamental religious aspect.

Yet there is more analogy between Marxism and religion than this matter of the faith or commitment each evokes. The *faith*-element cannot actually be separated from the *thought*-element in either Marxism or religion. We may expect therefore to find many striking comparisons between the structures of thought and the world-views of Marxism and of the biblical religions. How could this be otherwise, since it was the religious urges of specifically Western man which Marxism as an ideology endeavored to satisfy and redirect? It naturally sucks back into the human essence, and onto the plane of history, all that had been lost from humanity to the specifically biblical Deity. One ought not to forget that, when a grammar school boy, Karl Marx wrote a treatise entitled "The Union of the Faithful with Christ, according to John 15: 1-14, in its Ground and its Essence, its Conditioned Necessity and its Effects." His mother is said once to have remarked that things would be better if only Karl didn't write so much about Capital and made some of it! She might have been sure that in writing about religion and about almost everything else, he had a good deal of it—not simply "religion in general" (which does not exist) but the particular religious convictions of men in the West stemming from the Bible. Indeed, since the break-up of Calvinism, Marxism is almost the only biblical theology which has effectively moulded the thought of ordinary men.

Consider first the religious source or the religious equivalent of some of the characteristics of life in the present age, as Marxism describes it.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." What can be more irreligious than this? Yet if we let the religious doctrine of the Fall of man have for a moment its proper place in our thinking, we shall find nothing inherently unlikely in the Marxist account of history as the history of class struggle. Assuming sinfulness, it may be quite plausible to argue that man's life now is conditioned by his greed and self-interest. Both Marxism and Christianity apparently affirm that man is alienated from himself, from his natural environment, from true community with his fellows. Granting this, the wonder is not that Marxism unfolds the story of mankind as a history of the struggle of man against man, but that it limits this struggle to classes. St. Augustine was more realistic and thoroughgoing. For him the kingdoms of this earth are built up out of an uncertain order and an unjust peace imposed upon inveterate strife and dissension. Cain,

the first murderer was also the first builder of cities. He is the founder of the *civitas terrena*. This is a symbol for the fact that the kingdoms of men in this historical time are built upon fratricide. Of course, the transcendent reference in St. Augustine's view makes all the difference. There is for him a city—the city of God—in which men unite in love for an eternal good in whom men need not fear to have colleagues. It is because men do not seek the *summum bonum et commune* that they are alienated from themselves and one another. In inordinate love for earthly goods, in enjoying which men *must* fear to have colleagues, they base their lives on dissension and implicit fratricide. Their normal condition is war—within themselves and against others. But lopping off the religious reference to transcendent reality, as Marxism does, and viewing history, so to speak, from the underside, the resulting account of the primacy of strife is not so unlike that of the Augustinian tradition in Christianity—only St. Augustine was even more realistic.

Next, the role and function of the state. We ought not at once simply to say that the state is an instrument of the dominant class. This it is in any epoch, but throughout them all the state has a more general function. In Engels's words: "in order to prevent these antagonisms—classes with conflicting interests—from consuming themselves and society in fruitless struggle, a power seemingly above society has become necessary which is to mitigate the conflict, to keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power, originating in society but placing itself above society and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state." Since the antagonisms which the state restrains have their source in the original alienation and dispossession of man, we may say that the state serves to restrain and remedy the original sin or disintegration of the human essence. This was precisely the function assigned the state in Augustinian Christianity until St. Thomas gave it also a more positive purpose, and again this is the role of the state in Lutheranism: to build a dyke against sin and chaos. It is only because the state generally is an instrument to keep society going in its present form, that it thus becomes in any *given* age an instrument which serves to formalize and perpetuate the existing class structure and property relationships, and therefore becomes automatically beneficial to the ruling classes. In this sense only does it turn into an "executive committee" of these classes.

Next, Marxist materialism and economic determinism. This is often wrongly supposed to be the polar opposite of religion, which in contrast, it is said, teaches the power of pious ideals and the ascendancy of spiritual over material things. It may be that in rejecting religion along with idealism, Marxism has misread religion, or at least biblical religion, with which it has close kinship. The material facts of life and the economic and political elements in history are of peculiar concern to the Bible. William Temple remarked that "Christianity is the most materialistic religion in the world." This language is perhaps too extreme, since it, too, omits to mention the transcendent point of reference in every religion. We might say, however,

that biblical religion consists of a this-worldly other-worldliness—or if that is too paradoxical a phrase, that biblical religion is the most incarnational religion in the world, which places a stamp of approval or endorsement upon the concrete and the material facts of life. “It is no part of the Christian thesis,” writes Alexander Miller, “that ideals have been more powerful in history than brute facts: as if God were able to manipulate ideas, but a bit helpless when it came to the sphere of the material and the economic, so that to acknowledge the power of hunger and class-interest and natural or biological causes would be to rob Him of His prerogatives”<sup>1</sup> to a greater extent than by acknowledging man’s actions to be determined by ideas and ideals.

This is a difficult point for me to make, for it happens that I hold another philosophical view of human nature. Yet I have to admit that what the Bible affirms is not the primacy of the spiritual over the material, or the power of ideals in history, but the rule of God over all. It affirms that “God comes first, and not man,” but it is not the least concerned to argue that thought precedes the act in man’s individual and historical existence. It is not in the least concerned to prove that man is a thinking soul-substance. Where *Genesis* states that God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a “living soul,” the word is *nephesh* which should be translated “living being.” It is also used of the animals: they too are living beings, and man is like them in his life. Where the New Testament asks, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” the word *psyche* is a translation of *nephesh* rather than understandable in one of the Greek meanings of *psyche*. The verse should read, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?” Do we feel that something of the inspiration and the spirituality has gone out of it when the verse is so read? Yes, indeed it has: the idealism has gone out of it, and religion as other-worldliness. While Marxism departs significantly from the Bible in denying the importance of the Divine appointment to which man is called, it carries on the biblical emphasis upon the historical and material setting in which human life is placed. Materialistic determination may be wrong, but to replace it by the power of ideas would not necessarily bring us a hair’s breadth closer to the way the Bible understands God to rule in human affairs.

Next, the Marxist passion for social justice and for the humanization of dehumanized, exploited people. In the words of Karl Marx describing the misery of these present times, it is quite impossible not to hear ringing again the prophetic protest of an Amos of Tekoa: “There came a time when everything that men had considered inalienable became an object of exchange, of traffic, and could be alienated. This is the time when the very things which till then had been communicated but never exchanged, given but never sold, acquired but never bought—virtue, love, conviction, knowl-

1. Alexander Miller, *The Christian Significance of Karl Marx*, (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 88.

edge, conscience, etc.—when everything passed into commerce. It is the time of general corruption, of universal venality, or, to speak in terms of political economy, the time when everything, moral or physical, having become a marketable value, is brought to the market to be assessed at its truest value. . . .” Capitalism has “dissolved all natural-organic relationships into money relationships.” “The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’, and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, and callous ‘cash payment.’” Or as the college girl said after her boy friend had spent fifty dollars on her in one evening, “I think I *owe* him something.” Thus the inalienable person herself became an object of exchange; and things formerly communicated but never exchanged, given but never sold, acquired but never bought, pass over into commerce. Marx stands squarely in the line of the prophets and the conscience of the west. His is one mighty protest against the bartering of people. Middleton Murry says rightly that Marxism alone does not explain Marx himself, his passion for social justice, his prophetic faith.

We can see Marx’s concern for the *human relations* behind economic relations—in, with and under them—more precisely and at particular points in his thought. This is true, I believe, even of that most abstract thought tracing all determination home to “the relations of production” in any society. What does this expression mean, “the relations of production?” Are the relations of production ever simply economic relations and not also human relations? Marx scathingly condemns what he calls “commodity-fetishism,” and calls up the wrath of an immanent deity against a world in which the social relations of production and all human relationships in general have turned into exchange relationships. Behind every commodity relation lurks a human relation.

Again, one cannot rightly grasp the “labor theory of value” in Marxist theory just by assessing its validity or invalidity as an economic theory. Rather, one must take into account the century-old justification of the right to appropriate personal property that goes back through John Locke and Thomas Aquinas to Aristotle. Thus, the labor theory of value has its rootage both in classical humanism and in the Christian humanism of the middle ages; and for this reason Marx has been called the last of the school-men. Briefly, the labor theory of property is that man gains a right of possession by the labor he puts forth into the state of nature. He extends his personality in mastering the earth and it becomes his. Whatever he puts his own person into belongs to him. To dispossess him of it is to dispossess him of a part of himself. It is a striking and interesting fact that what is at the root of the positive moral justification of private property in western thought is also at the root of the moral justification of communism—the labor theory of value—and that the argument used for communism against capitalism in the modern period is continuous with the argument

Aristotle used for private property against Plato's communism. Market value and commodity fetishism under capitalism, according to the Marxist analysis, deprive the laborer of what belongs to him, and accomplish the final stage in the alienation of man from himself, just as theft or expropriation threatens human values in a private property system. Marxism says in effect that there needs to be less private monopoly-property in order that there can be more private property of the sort that really counts, in order that a man may not be deprived of what is his, the value of his labor and the product he puts himself into. For this reason "I think I could undertake to compile two columns of extracts about property, the one taken from Marxist text-books and the other exclusively from the various Papal Encyclicals on the Social Order, and defy anyone to tell from which source they respectively came. This is because the fundamental 'right to private property' which Catholic doctrine insists on has nothing to do with the bourgeois monopoly in property against which the Communist Manifesto—like the Encyclicals—was directed."<sup>2</sup> Something like this was done a few years ago by Rep. Hays to the consternation of a witness before the Reese committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Next, consider the remarkable agreement between that great fulcrum of Marxist criticism—the concept of ideology—and the great fulcrum and critical perspective upon human affairs contained in the Christian notion of sin. Ideology means that self-interest and class-interest or one's *locus* in the system of production determines and corrupts what one *thinks* about ethics and politics and law, the arts and religion and every other cultural activity created by man in every period. One might even say that these higher expressions of the human spirit are, for the Marxist, *totally* corrupt; and recall the story of the Calvinist who secured the advantage over an Anglican by declaring, "You are only a 'miserable offender', while I'm totally depraved!" The lack of any transcendent point of reference, however, deprives the Marxist of any capacity for *self*-criticism. He cannot, or does not, apply the concept of ideology to himself or to as radical a suspicion of the ideas and ideals and politics of the working-class movement as to other folk's ideology. By contrast, properly understood the fulcrum of the religious doctrine of the sinfulness or corruption of even (or especially) the highest reaches of the human spirit makes for confession of one's own sin before God and, as Luther said, throws the mantle of charity over the sin or the self-interested ideology of others. This provides ground both for seeking to see the truth and not only the error in the midst of the ideas and ideals of people who because of their own special location in history or in the class structure look out upon the whole with different eyes than ours, and also for more self-criticism of the ideas and ideals, the philosophy and politics, of our own group. But, for all the difference, the religious point of view makes common cause with the probing concept of ideology, and similar criticism of the purity of reason put forward, e.g., by psychology in the modern

2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

period; or rather, religion in the tradition of the Bible affirms that these discoveries are not so new and that all along this was known and summarized in the concept of the sinfulness of the whole man.

When we go beyond these comparisons of details, and consider the Marxian and the Christian philosophies of history as a whole, it is remarkable how alike they are. Consider, first, the Marxist unshakable belief in progress and how this functions in his thought as a surrogate for the belief in providence. This is so remarkable a feature of Communist faith that when, nearly a generation ago now, the Christian philosopher John Macmurray, of the University of London, first began to study Marxism sympathetically with a view toward effecting an intellectual rapprochement between it and Christianity, he suggested that perhaps only the Marxist really believes any longer in God's providential rule over human history.

The Communist lives by a faith in a power, which he calls in his own jargon 'the process of history'. . . . This simply means that Communism, whatever its exponents may say, has recovered that essential core of a real belief in God, which organized Christianity has in our day largely lost.

Anyone who concluded that the behaviour of the Christians showed that they did not really believe in God but only thought they believed, might then equally conclude that the Communists really believed in God and only thought they did not.

There would be nothing paradoxical in the discovery that a religion which had lost its faith in God must be overwhelmed by a faith which had rejected religion. (*Creative Society*).

Do we really believe in God, or—in the revised oath of allegiance to the United States, for example—do we only believe in believing in God?

Of course, the Marxian dialectical progress toward the new age which is the final goal of history removes the transcendent reference from the doctrine of providence, and places faith in a wholly immanent power. This is a significant difference, often too much overlooked by Marxist Christians. Nevertheless, Marxism does represent a continuation of the belief that linear, temporal history and all the events that happen upon this plane have basic significance—a belief which goes back as far as the ninth century B.C. to the earliest strand that found its way into the Pentateuch, the Yahwist writer's account of God's dealings with the generations of men. What happens here and now has a past and will have a future; the present arises out of memory of God's mighty acts in the past and leans forward in expectancy toward what God (or the process of history) is yet about to do; every event and each generation has a heritage and a destiny that falls within some overarching "purpose" being worked out in time, without which we have not properly understood "the time of our lives." To grasp history as a meaningful field of activity—as event-full—it is necessary to speak of both the *terminus from which* every event comes and the *terminus toward which* it is tending. Plato, in the doctrine of creation and the creation of time as the relation between and measure of the motion of creatures, had a *terminus from which*, and to this extent spatio-temporal events had their meaning. But, lacking an eschatology or view of the *end toward which*

temporal history was moving, events were not as meaningful for him as for the prophetic tradition in biblical religion. Consequently, Plato describes time as at best "a moving image of eternity." In it there takes place participation in the eternal or imitation of the heavenly essences. In their biographies individual men and societies may advance toward fuller comprehension and expression of these eternal verities, but each generation stands as close to them as any other. Time and history are not themselves moving toward any consummation. Marxism displays its true parentage when it comes into the world with the exuberant and frightening cry, "Now is our salvation nearer than the hour we first believed." In this the prophets still speak, with their conviction that the Eternal has moved purposefully into history, bending it, and the men who adhere to its grain, toward some appointed terminus in an age beyond the present.

Events in time are of more consequence than the passing shadows on the wall of Plato's cave. Instead they are the very plane upon which human destiny is being wrought out. This ingredient which Marxism shares with the western tradition generally accounts for the fact, that until they are touched by the life and thought of the West, the depressed classes in other religious cultures are simply depressed, while among us they are depressed *into expectancy*. However fantastic be the forms of the expectation that something revolutionary and transforming is about to happen in history, western man—and the Marxians no less than others—live by faith and are saved by hope. The worse the visible situation becomes, the harder the heel of the oppressor, the more evident is it that the powers of evil and injustice are being mustered for their last Armageddon. Or, as a line of the *Internationale* puts it: "Then, Comrades, come rally, and the *last* fight let us face."

Now, the biblical view of history and the Marxian belief in an immanent providence, which we have so far considered only in general terms, both break down into an articulate structure of successive periods. The analogy between their conception of these ages suggests still more strongly the prophetic and biblical component in Marxism. Biblical religion speaks of various "dispensations"—the garden of Paradise, the Fall of man into history as we know it, then the periods from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and finally with quickening pace from Christ to the second coming of the Messiah. The word "dispensations" contains, of course, a reference to transcendent reality, to the free disposing purpose of the living God, which drops out in Marxism. But Marxism does have the structural equivalents of these ages in its view of history: primitive communism, the fall of man from this ideal state into slavery, then feudalism, then capitalism in which the Messianic class appears at first incognito among the common people, then revolutionary upheaval seizes the present age thrusting down the mighty from their seats, and the Kingdom of God or the final communism is ushered in through an intermediary period of socialism.

There is surely more to the Marxian conception of a golden age of primitive communism than was supplied by the researches of Lewis Morgan, the American anthropologist, among the Iroquois Indians. The more is Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. The more also is the Garden of Eden symbol. To this it might be objected that Marxism portrays primitive communism by no means as a Paradise in which the first pair have only to tend the garden at leisure, but as a hard and perilous life in which mankind is slain all the day long by the forces of nature; and also that it pictures the Fall as increased mastery of nature. However, in certain respects theology has always interpreted the Fall as a fall upward. And in any case looking back upon it religious people have been inclined to "praise the sin" upon which precondition so great redemption has been wrought, much as Marxism pays tribute to the achievement of greater mastery over nature during historical ages since the Fall. Thus, the final communism is superior to primitive communism, as the Kingdom of God is to the original paradise, by virtue of what has gone between. And for all the hardship, in primitive communism man was still man, in full possession of his humanity, in spite of the fact that he—integral man—succumbed all the day long before the alien forces of nature. Though he died easily, nothing had yet alienated him from himself or dehumanized him. In primitive society, production was on the narrowest possible scale, but, to quote Engels, "it entailed the producers' mastery over their *process* of production and its product. . . . As long as production is carried on on this basis it cannot grow over the producers' heads, cannot beget any monstrous foreign power facing them, as is regularly and inevitably the case in civilization." In short, while under primitive communism man was not much the master of physical nature, he was the master of his own productive processes. After the Fall he gains mastery over nature only at the expense of being enslaved to his own means of production. These "grow over his head," and become a "monstrous foreign power facing him."

This is the first great alienation of man which lies behind, or underneath, man's life in all later periods of history. Man is dispossessed of his full human stature, he is dehumanized, by the growth of the processes of production "over his head." This is, in Marxist mythology, the "original sin" of man in history as we know it. To grasp the parallel with biblical religion, we must not interpret "original sin" as an isolated action done, but also as a wounding of his human substance which man suffers. This wound, of course, he inflicts on himself. By sin comes slavery to sin, Christians say. And by putting forth himself into the processes of production there comes, say the Marxists, as a consequence man's own dispossession of himself when these grow over his head and face him as monstrous power. The original sin of man the historical animal means the distortion of the human essence under the conditions by which alone his freedom and economic power in the world were actualized. It is the alienation of man from

his true nature, his self-alienation from himself. This, according to both Marxism and Christianity, has "always already" happened.

With Paradise and the Fall behind us, let us turn now and face toward the Kingdom of God to which the present age is rapidly drawing near. The Marxist analysis unfolds before us some remarkable expectations. This is an age of Messianic woes. The present age groaneth and travaileth waiting for the sons of God. A Messiah is expected who will bring division, setting father against son and son against father. Indeed, he may even now be present among us hidden among the common people. Perhaps he is already laid in a manger in some stable among the sons of the poor; and thence about to take up his work and assume his rightful sovereignty over the kingdoms of this world. The Messiah, of course, is the working-class come to self-consciousness as the proletariat. They will save Israel and usher in the Kingdom of God and wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Now what the Marxist says about this Messiah is quite paradoxical. He is not the Messiah you would have expected. We have already noticed that the Marxist confidence in the rationality and competence of working-class thoughts contradicts, or at least limits the application of, the concept of ideology. But notice the description of the qualifications of this Messiah emerging within the historical process. In the proletariat the self-alienation and dehumanization of man reaches its most extreme development. The working-class is utterly alienated from essential humanity, hence able to overcome alienation; dehumanized, hence ready to carry the torch for humanity. The class-consciousness of the proletariat is actually the class-consciousness of man the *commodity*, the consciousness of men who have already been crucified, dead, and buried as men. How can the manhood of the industrial worker, being so alienated from its own human nature, have it within itself to achieve its own emancipation, and at the same time the final salvation of mankind? By its position in history and in the processes of production, the proletariat constitutes a society all by itself, as it were, thrust outside of bourgeois society. It is a counter-society to the existing order, a universal class, a class to end all classes. Totally negated by the existing system it becomes the total negation of that system, and therefore a total summation of human protest against partial humanity. It is a complete expression and veritable incarnation of humanity. Hence it has complete detachment from the ideology of class interest set against other classes within society. Thoroughly dehumanized, it thereby becomes the bearer of the new being, the new humanity, humanity for the first time since the Fall, essential humanity saved from the distortions that held sway during all former periods of history.

Must we not think in this connection of the crucified, suffering Messiah of another celebrated religion? He, too, was thrust altogether "outside the camp," was crucified, dead and buried; yet rises again to new life and obtains the renewal of all mankind. He grew up before us

Like a root out of dry ground;  
 he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,  
 and no beauty that we should desire him.  
 He was despised and rejected by men;  
 a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
 and as one from whom men hide their faces.  
 he was despised, and we esteemed him not . . .  
 yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

Yet he was the new being, the bearer of a new humanity, himself the new being and the new humanity, true man of true man, the saviour of the world.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
 he was bruised for our iniquities;  
 upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,  
 And with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:2-5).

It has frequently been suggested that the final stage of perfect communism corresponds to the Kingdom of God. Let us see just how this is so, for Marxist terminology now shifts to accord with the nature of so great a consummation. We have not yet been speaking of history. History only now has its beginning. All that went before was pre-history. Likewise, the human being for the first time appears before our expectant eyes. All that went before was pre-human. As Engels wrote "a truly human ethic, standing above class contradictions and above the memory of them, will be possible only on a stage of development in society which has not only overcome the antinomy of class, but also has forgotten it for the practice of life." The lion shall lie down with the lamb and the infant shall play a flute before the hole of an asp, and a little child shall lead them. The state shall wither away, for there will be no more of the alienation of man from man or antagonism of class against class for it to restrain and remedy in order to preserve a just, endurable peace among opposites. The church also—that is, the Communist Party—shall wither away; and no longer shall one person say to another, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord;" but each shall dwell under his own vine and a fig tree and each for himself shall know and do what is for the general good.

Since Marxism takes *time* seriously and emphasizes the meaning of pre-history as it grinds violently from one stage of the dialectic to another, the final Paradise cannot be regarded as a heaven static and at rest. The dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis continues, only now it works smoothly and by discussion and persuasion. Under communism there is *activity in* the goal, pre-history has been *activity toward* the goal. This is exactly what Christian theologians say about the vision of God in eternal life. Taking *time* seriously as a relation among creatures and the measure of the activity of creatures, and emphasizing the meaning of historical events, it then becomes quite impossible for the biblical religions to conceive of an altogether timeless eternity. As long as there are creatures whose individuality and actions have ultimate significance, it will take time to be their measure,

only time redeemed from the agony of unfulfillment. There will be activity in the goal and a time beyond present history spent in adhering to God—eternal life in peace, peace in eternal life. We have the same thing in the attenuation of dialectical movement in the Marxist heaven, only there is no God there.

Jettisoning the religious reference to transcendent reality means that the Marxist attitude toward the components of pre-history must be one of total rejection and total revolution. Marxism does not accept, as Augustine said of the Manichees, "with good and simple faith this good and simple reason why the good God created" such a world as this—that for all the evil corrupting it, its basic nature still is good. Instead "everything," writes Engels, "that is real within the realm of the history of mankind is bound to become unreasonable after a while; hence it is already by definition unreasonable, is afflicted with unreasonableness from the very beginning. . . . Everything that exists deserves to perish." In other words, in the present stage of pre-human history, the unreasonable is the real and the real is the wholly unreasonable. On the other hand, in the final days the reasonable is destined to become real and all reality reasonable. "Everything," writes Engels, "that is reasonable within the heads of men is destined to become real, however much it may contradict the existing seeming reality."

You notice in this the Hegelian terminology of an immanent rational spirit in nature and history. Marx claimed he overturned Hegelianism and stood Hegel on his feet again, the feet of dialectical materialism. But Hegel was already bending over clutching his toes, the curvature of the body in that position being a symbol for his philosophy of immanent spirit or rationality. When Marx turned Hegel over, his posture was not much altered, since the system still manifests the structures of immanentism. These are the critical points of Marxism, for example, its failure to find firm moral grounds for *not* using individual men "to manure the soil for the future harmony," for the time to come when the reasonable shall become real. Today there is perhaps good ground for believing, with Gabriel Marcel, that "all philosophies of immanence have had their day." Yet point by point within the limits of a wholly immanent scheme, Marxism evidently provides a religion to end religion by offering viable substitutes for the specific articulated structures of biblical or prophetic religious faith on which it largely depends for its power.