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THE MARXIST CONCEPT OF MAN:

A CHRISTIAN'S CRITIQUE

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
II. MAN INVOLVED IN MARX'S DIALECTIC.	4
III. MAN INVOLVED WITH OTHER MEN	12
IV. THE MARXIST MAN	20
V. A CHRISTIAN'S CRITIQUE.	28
Man - A Word Study in Genesis 1-3	28
A Contrast and Evaluation	31
FOOTNOTES.	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many problems facing the contemporary church stem from its past and present attempts to dichotomize man. Having split man's person into body and soul, material and spiritual, the church then demands allegiance to "either-or." The decision belongs to man. Either he flees the world and its possessions, or the world and its pleasures possess him. Today, more than ever before, churchmen realize that **this** decision is not so clearly drawn. Just as he is not exclusively material (the Marxist heresy), so man is not solely spirit (Christianity's overstatement). No longer can categories be labeled so neatly: religious and secular. Never before in the history of the church has the need for some type of modus vivendi with world culture and thought been so clear. Encounter with the world must be the Christian's watchword. A retreat into institutionalism or well-worn tradition spells certain defeat. Involvement in the study of world problems and issues must be a vital concern of every Christian. To that proposition this paper is dedicated.

None of today's world issues present the church with a greater challenge and threat than that of communism. It would be both unwise and dishonest for the church to bury its head in ostrich-like fashion and ignore this present reality. It would be just as unwise and dishonest to arbitrarily

condemn communism and all its adherents on the basis of superficial hearsay. Rather, on the basis of knowledgeable insight into the doctrinal conflict between itself and communism, the church must confront this issue by presenting its case in various forums throughout the world.

Therefore, understanding, based upon a thorough research into communism's historical development and observation of its contemporary traits, is of prime importance to this Christian encounter. Our aim, then, is to investigate one aspect of embryonic communism, and to evaluate this position in the light of Holy Scripture. Our study confines itself to a critical analysis of Karl Marx's concept of man.¹ It is in their respective anthropologies that the conflict between Christianity and Marxism is set into sharp relief.

"Contrary to popular belief, communism is no mere economic theory but an integrated world view, a philosophy of life, a religion."² At the center of this Marxist world view stands a totally materialistic interpretation of life. Man is closely identified with the all pervading world force (the dialectic), a natural process involving all of nature. Here then lies the difficulty in assessing the Marxist view of man. Because he was primarily interested in the activity between groups or classes of people (sociology), Marx's concept of man, as an individual entity, is difficult to determine. He spoke of classes rather than individuals, of systems rather than of persons. Marx presents an extremely obscure picture of the individual man. In short, he was a

sociologist, not an anthropologist. Hence, a study of Marxist anthropology must be drawn largely from inference on the basis of his sociology. Therefore, an understanding of the Marxist concept of man is not possible without an introduction to Marx's sociology, which in turn proceeded from his dialectic.

In light of these considerations it is the estimate of this researcher that before an analysis of Marxist anthropology per se can be made, man must be seen in his relationship to the vital prolegomena of dialectic and sociology. Therefore, the outline of our research into Marxist anthropology breaks down into three convenient sections: a) Man Involved in Marx's Dialectic, b) Man Involved with Other Men, and c) The Marxist Man. Following these presentations a Scriptural evaluation of the Marxist position will be rendered.

The more important of Marx's works³ form the basis of our research. Again it must be emphasized that Marx speaks to the subject of anthropology only indirectly; therefore, many of our conclusions are based upon the implications which Marx made in these writings. Several of the more significant critiques on Marxist thought were also read in conjunction with this research. Many of their conclusions and observations are cited within the text of our paper.

Having made these introductory comments, we now turn to an examination of Marx's dialectic--our first step in determining the Marxist concept of man.

CHAPTER II

MAN INVOLVED IN MARX'S DIALECTIC

The first link in the chain of Marxist ideology is the theory of dialectical materialism. So essential to Marxist thought is dialectical materialism that a contemporary manual on Marxism, published in Moscow, clearly asserts, "The indestructible foundation of the whole edifice of Marxism is its philosophy--dialectical and historical materialism."¹

As was so often the case with Marx, much of his doctrine concerning dialectical materialism was a modification of an already existing idea. During his course of study at the University of Berlin, the young Marx became intoxicated with the philosophy of Hegel. "Gradually it became more and more evident to him that the one firm pole in the ceaseless flow of things was the philosophy of Hegel."² Life was viewed as a dynamic flow of contradictions and reconciliations which eventually would find its final consummation in the Spirit or Idea. Hegel explained this theory in the terms of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. It was a philosophy of idealism which substituted "Universal Consciousness" for God. The development of this "Universal Consciousness" was predicated upon a "conflict and reconciliation of opposites"³ which had the effect of transforming both opposites. It is important to remember in connection with Marxism that Hegelianism involves a process of progress. Out of this conflict of opposites

emerges a synthesis which is more adequate than the alternative it replaces. It seemed that Marx had found a meaning for life!

Marx's dedication to orthodox Hegelian philosophy, however, was short lived. While he was still twenty years old, Marx joined a club called the "Young Hegelians." It was there that Marx first came under "leftist" influence. Men such as Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach undermined his belief in Hegelian orthodoxy. Feuerbach, a rabid atheist, was determined to throw "the whole philosophy of Hegel on the scrapheap"⁴ and replace it with a materialist philosophy which would elevate man to the position of God.⁵ Man and material would then become the essence of the universe. However, Marx did not allow these "left wing" denunciations to shake his faith in all aspects of Hegelian thought; he still upheld the Hegelian view of an ordered world which was continually changing due to conflicts of opposites. It was rather in regard to the matter of ultimate reality that he differed with Hegel. Marx concluded that it was the social existence of men which determined the pattern of progress and not the "Absolute Spirit." This social existence, in turn, was determined by the external conditions which affect men. In short, Marx believed that men were conscious of only that which they could see, touch, and feel. "It is to this difference that Marxists allude when they distinguish between the 'dialectical idealism' of Hegel and the 'dialectical materialism' of Marx."⁶

John Plamenatz contends that dialectical materialism does not play an active part in Marx's theory, but is rather "a kind of preliminary patter to prepare the mind for historical materialism."⁷ Plamenatz justifies his opinion with the argument that Marx had little interest in philosophy; it was rather the study of sociology with which he was concerned. However, Plamenatz also observes that, while it did not assume an active role, dialectical materialism was, nonetheless, vital in that it gave Marx an a priori justification for historical materialism.

It is Marx's doctrine of historical materialism which provides the "indispensable key to an otherwise often unintelligible sequence of historical changes."⁸ Historical materialism is Marx's answer to "how each period of culture arises, flourishes, and falls."⁹ The movement and development of history has an objective meaning which can be discovered only through historical materialism. This assumption is based upon an extension of the tenet in dialectical materialism which presupposes that human society is an integrated whole. "For Hegel this is constituted by the progressive evolution of the spirit towards freedom, while for Marx it is bound up with man's mastery over nature and material existence."¹⁰ Therefore, if man's consciousness is controlled by a material existence which follows a discernible pattern of transformation, then it can be concluded that men are able to shape their future by being aware of this changing pattern. Man is able to harness the evolution of social existence and channel its

effect upon him by first discovering the laws of change. To put it very simply, "historical materialism is supposed to describe the general laws of every human society, to tell us what phases it must pass through and in what order,"¹¹ so that it becomes possible to predict the future.

Marx refers to historical materialism as if it were both a science and ideology. However, he fails to back up this claim with the empirical evidence that is required of a science. It would be impossible for him to prove conclusively that: 1) "no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room have developed," or that 2) "the bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production."¹² Such claims are merely tools to further his own cause and can hardly be called tenets of a scientific interpretation of history. An interesting footnote to this discussion concerning the scientific validity of historical materialism is the admitted fact that it could be corrected and improved.¹³ This viewpoint is in accord with Marx's rejection of absolute truth, but it seemingly undermines the authority of his whole system.

Thus far we have determined the relationship between dialectical materialism, a philosophical definition of change, and historical materialism, which interprets the movement of history as a logical and discernible pattern influenced primarily by the social existence of men. The tremendous importance of the material conditions in man's

social existence is amplified in Marx's doctrine of economic determinism.

While it would be incorrect to call Marx's doctrine of historical materialism the economic interpretation of history, it cannot be denied that the economic factor is basic in Marx's interpretation of history. This fact was indicated already in the discussion of dialectical materialism. From that discussion we learned that "man's consciousness allegedly changes with the conditions of his material existence." In its relation to economic determinism the term "material existence" assumes the meaning of "relations of production."

The picture becomes a little clearer and more complete. Economic conditions become the most influential factor in determining the progressive evolution of all history. Hegel's concept of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis plays an important role in Marx's theory of economic determinism.¹⁴ "The economic structure of society determines the life of any society in historic times. It is 'the basis' or 'foundation'. As it changes, sooner or later it carries the whole of culture with it."¹⁵

In connection with his theory of economic determinism Marx employed the two terms "basis" and "superstructure" in order to clarify his position. All institutions of society other than economics (such as politics, religion, and the arts) were classified as "superstructure" and were dependent upon the condition of the "basis." In his address at the funeral of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels spoke these words:

Marx discovered the simple fact (heretofore hidden beneath ideological overgrowths) that human beings must have food, drink, clothing and shelter first of all, before they can interest themselves in politics, science, art, religion and the like. This implies that the production of the immediately requisite material means of subsistence, and therewith the existing phase of development of a nation or an epoch, constitute the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal outlooks, the artistic and even the religious ideas are built up. It implies that these latter must be explained out of the former, whereas the former have usually been explained as issuing from the latter.¹⁶

Marx himself asserts:

It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but on the contrary it is their social existence which determines their consciousness... With the change in the economic foundation the whole immense superstructure is slowly or rapidly transformed.¹⁷

The question is now raised, "What is this 'basis'?"

Marx calls the mode of economic production or the social relations of production the 'economic' of a country."¹⁸

No one is certain what is meant by "mode of production"; nowhere does Marx clarify the term. This fault has been greatly criticized by Marx's opponents. Plamenatz denounces this aspect of Marxist doctrine by saying, "Marx had no gift for the clear exposition of fundamentals; when he tried to set out his ideas in a series of precise statements, he failed miserably."¹⁹

Marx's theory of economic determinism has found many adherents throughout the world today. Even some who denounce everything for which Marx stands will defend the unequivocal importance of the "basis." The rapid spread of materialism throughout our country has made many of us all too willing to accept this crass approach to life.

What evidence we have seems to indicate that technological and scientific advancements have affected economic growth more than they have been affected by it. In addition, our general ignorance about the economic development of nations has been "an immense advantage to the Marxists. We know, for instance, much more about what Marx would call the 'superstructure' of Roman or Athenian society than we do about the 'basis'."20

Marx is building bit by bit a defense for the ultimate goal of his economic theory. His aim is to show that the "historical development of capitalism has produced conditions which have paved the way for a socialist society."21 But let's not jump too far ahead in our discussion.

Having set forth the sweeping generalization that the history of society is affected and controlled by the way in which men earn their living, Marx focuses his attention upon the relationship between economics and the state. Marx is consistent with his theories of historical materialism and economic determinism when he declares that all political power is primarily based upon the progressive evolution of economics. The Communist Manifesto stresses this "materialist conception of society in the light of the state."22 For example, the Manifesto states: "The god is a vast association of the whole nation; the public power will lose its political character."23

Marx's views of history and economics have been, thus far, nothing more than philosophical conjecture. The pragmatic

character of Marx is quite evident in his expression of politics and sociology. "Marx the philosopher and Marx the economist speak an obscure, involved, mysterious language. Marx the politician [and sociologist] is more readily understood."²⁴ "To realize his aims, philosophy had to become practical, that is, it had to cease to be philosophy."²⁵ The philosophical basis of historical materialism and economic determinism form the foundation upon which Marx constructs his sociology. In the next chapter we shall see how these philosophical notions determine the relationship which man has with society.

CHAPTER III

MAN INVOLVED WITH OTHER MEN

A study of Marxist sociology must begin with an analysis of the state. Like all forms of society, the state is involved in the perpetual flux leading to eventual perfection. Marx carefully analyzes the development of the state by indicating the various stages in its growth. Through a continuous series of economic conflicts and reconciliations the formal structure of states has evolved from an agrarian slave society to the present society of bourgeoisie capitalism. Because society must be viewed "historically and as a whole,"¹ it is possible to understand the development of the state, and from this one is able to determine the future of the state. Having examined the history of civilization and having discovered its pattern, Marx predicts that the capitalist society will soon be supplanted by a communist society.

Because Marx identifies the "relations of production" as the fundamental basis of every society, it is quite natural that he would equate the "method of production" with the structure of the state. In other words, the state is the embodiment of the economic system which prevails at the time. It is important that we distinguish between Marx's view of the state and his view of government. They are independent of each other and must not be confused. "The state is composed of those institutions--the courts, police, and army--

by means of which disputes concerning economic interests are ultimately settled."² Government, however, is a way in which men regulate their relations to one another; it is void of institutions per se. This distinction plays a vital role in Marx's concept of the communist society, which is without a state.

Marx defines capitalism as "a system of society in which the instruments of production are operated for the private profit of those who own them by means of the labor of workers who are neither slaves nor serfs but freemen."³ The ever increasing accumulation of profits is the goal established by the bourgeois owners of production. In order to accomplish such ends the owners exploit the workers, whose sole commodity is their labor, by paying them low wages and requiring them to work long hours. This then is Marx's interpretation of the capitalist society--and is indeed a fairly accurate account of the economic conditions as they existed in 1848.

Having confirmed his belief that capitalism was essentially evil, Marx assures the workingmen that emancipation from the shackles of capitalism is imminent. The seeds of destruction are sown in the very structure of the capitalist state. The contradictions within the system will bring about its own fall. As the gradual concentration of wealth continues, the gap between bourgeoisie and worker widens. Society will then be divided into two classes: "the oppressed and the oppressors."⁴ This oppression of the workers creates

a feeling of tension which Marx labels as "the class struggle." It is a conflict between the "haves" and the "have nots." This struggle can assume many forms and expressions, the most effective being, of course, open rebellion. It is Marx's conviction that this radical form of struggle is the only way to smash the capitalist society. It is obvious that the privileged classes will be unwilling to relinquish their vested interests and control unless they are forced to do so.

One of the pillars upon which Marx's philosophy rests is the belief that all men have an equal position in the "relations of production." Oppressed workers everywhere have the natural right to an equal share of the state's wealth. The class struggle is the means through which the workers can claim what is rightfully theirs. Marx justifies the worker's right to an equal place in the "relations of production" with his labor theory of value. This theory expresses the viewpoint that the labor expended upon a certain commodity is the sole source of value for that object. Under capitalism, however, the worker produces much more value than he is paid, thus creating a surplus of value. This "surplus value" is the heart and core of the capitalist society. It finds its expression in forms of non-labor value such as profit, rent, and interest. "Since the worker produces more value than he is paid, Marx refers to the capitalist process of production as just as much a system of exploitation as the systems of slavery and feudalism."⁵

Only through the abolition of surplus value can the worker experience true economic equality and assure his rightful place in the "relations of production."

"What Marx was giving account of in his general theory of surplus value was the exploitation of the whole working class by the bourgeoisie capitalists."⁶ In fact, it might be said that the primary purpose of Marx's elaborate theory of economics was to expose capitalism as a system of class exploitation. And yet, it was much more than the capitalistic system which Marx was determined to uproot. Not only did the small, privileged class hold the greatest portion of society's wealth, but it also had the most influential voice in the state's government. In the last resort, it was the interests of the ruling class which determined the moral code in any society. As long as **this** condition prevailed the state was essentially the "instrument of class oppression."⁷ The modern laborer instead of rising with the progress of industry and society sinks deeper and deeper below the condition of his own class.⁸ Therefore, this exploitation of man by man will cease only when the instruments of production are socialized and the powers of the state are minimized. The result of such reforms will be a classless society in which all men shall share the fruits of production. Marx's communistic ideal of a classless society was like Hegel's "Absolute Idea"--the final consummation of an evolutionary process.

Marx was an authentic socialist in that he advocated a

system of society in which the elements of production and the means of distribution were held in common by all people. He agreed that such a society would advance "an equality of concern on the part of the community towards all citizens."⁹ And yet, Marx differed with all previous socialists, whom he called Utopian Socialists, in one important respect. Being a man of action as well as a deliberate thinker, Marx was primarily concerned with how this classless, stateless, society would be realized. The continuity of history held the answer; from it he could determine how, when, and under what conditions socialism would be effected. "How socialism is to be achieved, once the objective historical situation made it possible, was his main concern."¹⁰

Marx sees man in his full concreteness as a member of a given society and of a given class, aided in his development by society, and at the same time its captive. The full realization of man's humanity and his emancipation from the social forces that imprison him is bound up, for Marx, with recognition of these forces, and with social change based on this recognition.¹¹

Marx added another dimension to socialism which heretofore had not been so openly espoused. Marx was a revolutionary socialist. Instead of submitting to the will of the ruling class, all oppressed men must join hands and rise up in righteous rebellion.

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!¹²

According to Marx, the workingman's victory is inevitable, for the "rule of the proletariat" is the next phase in society's evolutionary process. It is interesting to take note of Marx's use of psychology. He hoped that the assurance of victory would give the workingmen an added measure of confidence and the willingness to strike hard and fast.

The destruction of capitalism will inaugurate a new age and a new society. This new society has the potential of attaining perfection. However, it must pass through several successive stages before this perfect state can be brought about. The abolition of bourgeois oppression and property will give way to the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Under this interim government all the people will have the opportunity to adjust to the new society. Finally, all private property will be abolished and the dictatorship will gradually dissolve itself. Out of this will evolve an "association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."¹³

In a certain sense this interdependent series of ideas can be viewed as a highly rationalized motive for rebellion. While it cannot be denied that revolution and the destruction of capitalism are the culmination of Marxist thought, it would be totally unfair to judge this as Marxism's first cause or fundamental thesis. Revolution is merely the agent or means whereby Marx's ultimate goal is reached. The development of his intricate system was not to promote a

rebellion per se, but rather to offer a place under the sun for all men for all time.

Nor should Marx's concept of life be confused with his theory of economic determinism. Economic equality and financial security are not rights in themselves. It was because man had the natural right for freedom that economic equality was necessary. Marx considered it impossible to have freedom in a society in which there were great inequalities of wealth. Economic equality is another means to one, ultimate end.

Neither was the classless, stateless society ~~was~~ the backdrop or atmosphere in which men would live, work, and die. It is man who is the vital center behind all of Marx's systems and theories. Indeed, Marx was a revolutionary, an economist, and a politician, but above all Marx was a humanist. During his college years at the University of Berlin Marx strove to find the meaning of life. Like Feuerbach, Marx discovered man to be the key to life. Man, the free animal, was the center of all change, all progress. But, in order to be able to evolve into a higher and more noble being, man must be free. This was the task which Marx took up.

Marx was often heard saying that "his hide was not thick enough to let him turn his back on the sufferings of humanity."¹⁴ He had a strong belief in the dignity of man; this dignity, however, was being repressed by a society whose characteristics are oppression and exploitation. Marx was determined to do his

share in destroying this profane structure of society.

No man can develop fully unless he is free, but this must not be done at the expense of others. Freedom, to be genuine, must be universal, hence the individual is free only if all other men are free and able to develop as "universal beings."¹⁵

However, as we shall notice in the following chapter, Marx's view of man's dignity and freedom in no way coincides with the humanist tradition.

Our study now turns to an evaluation of the Marxist concept of man. Much of the material already discussed will be re-presented. This is because the Marxist view of man cannot be determined apart from Marx's dialectic and view of society. Inherent in his view of man are these factors.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARXIST MAN

In light of what was said at the close of the last chapter it is possible to interpret Marxism humanistically. It may be seen as a struggle against the various forces in life which would deprive man of his human nature. In this sense then Marx was a humanist, concerned with the restoration of man's integral being. In the scheme of nature man stands pre-eminent.¹ Here lies the chief reason for Marx's hostility to the capitalist system. Capitalism, according to Marx, oppressed human personality, and made man into a thing.² Deprived of the tools of production, the worker has to sell his labor, and thus becomes a thing, necessary to production, it is true, but still a thing. For this reason Marx speaks of "liberty, equality, fraternity"--and all that is implied by these abstract slogans. He is interested in forming "a society in which wealth shall be distributed according to need, work demanded according to ability."³

Yet, the very process of dehumanization which he denounced in capitalism, takes place in Marx's materialistic attitude toward man. Marx does not view each man as a personality, but rather as a function of the social process.

There is lacking in Marx any conception of man as an absolute, self-evident entity...The actual human self is only a historical phenomenon. As such it possesses no "eidetic" reality and no permanent form.⁴

Marx held that because man's material existence affected his consciousness it was only under extremely favorable conditions that the potentialities of man could be fully realized. For this reason, men must first assert their freedom as individuals by overthrowing their oppressive governments. Once capitalism has been destroyed it will be possible to forge a free, classless society. According to Marx, however, this goal "cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property and necessitates further inroads upon the old social order."⁵

Marx inherited his negative attitude toward the individual personality from Hegel, whose dialectic emphasized that the general is of greater importance than the individual.⁶ For Hegel personality had no independent significance; it was only the function of world-spirit.

Owing to his philosophical mode of approach, however, his training in the school of Hegel, Marx felt obliged to prove that his whole scheme of salvation is involved with "historic necessity" in the very laws of the capitalist system which "work with iron necessity toward inevitable results."⁷

"Marx readily admits that he borrowed...[Hegel's] process of historical evolution."⁸ However, he replaced Hegel's idealism with the theory of non-human economics. "Marx views man as a historical entity which is to be understood in naturalistic and materialistic terms."⁹

As a materialist Marx believes that man is a creature of time and space, composed of matter and not spirit, and that his whole existence can be explained in these terms.

We have already indicated that Ludwig Feuerbach¹⁰ played a considerable role in leading Marx to this position.

"...if I speak of individuals it is only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories and representatives of special class relations and interests."¹¹

"Historical man, therefore, is not the possessor of any absolute value....He is the bearer of value only in so far as he is the expression of the positive forces of history."¹² Man, therefore, as Marx views him is a higher form of organic life operating under the physical laws of nature. If man's only reality is his material being, there can be no identification of a soul or self-existing spirit with man's nature.

Because Marx identifies man with the natural process, it follows then that man, like all of nature and history, is in a continual process of change.¹³ The fundamental trait of Marxist anthropology is the fluidity of urges, aspirations, fears, needs, instincts, motives, and characteristics. Man is not what he was yesterday, and tomorrow--if all goes well--he will be something new and different. Human nature is not an entity but a process of dialectical development. Man is a function of the world's social process, a function of the general, a means to an end, by which the new man is manufactured. In Marx own words, "The whole of history is nothing but a continual transformation of human nature."¹⁴ To put it simply, man is a product of nature. "The real historical man is here not an

end in himself, not an ultimate value, but only an instrument for the purpose of creating the society of the future; merely material to be operated on by society."¹⁵

"Man--merely material to be operated on by society?"

This is not to suggest that Marx places man on the same level as all other forms of nature--for instance, the animals. On the contrary, Marx never lost sight of the distinction between man and the animals. In spite of his undeniable preference for the naturalistic theory of evolution, Marx clearly states in his Manuscript on Economics:

Man masters nature; in his relation to nature he is master, whereas the animal is simply a part of nature. Through human productivity man humanizes nature, and as a result, nature appears as his work.¹⁶

Man is unique in his ability to work. Marx regards labor as the essence of life. It is the only means by which man can express his inmost nature. Through labor man is distinguished historically as well as logically from all other forms of nature. "Labour power exists solely as an attribute of a live individual, and hence it presupposes the latter's existence."¹⁷ In effect, Marx regards labor as an expression of man's humanity and existence:

Man is alive only inasmuch as he is productive, inasmuch as he grasps the world outside of himself in the act of expressing his own specific human powers, and of grasping the world with these powers. Inasmuch as he is not productive, inasmuch as he is receptive and passive, man is nothing, he is dead.¹⁸

In addition to his ability to work, Marx recognizes reason as an innate characteristic of man. This is the force

which directs man's labor into the channels of self-realization. As Marx sees it, "Man is a rational being because he is able to create tools and instruments, and is able to devote himself to economic activity (whereas the animal does not produce; it only accumulates)."¹⁹

This ability to make tools, an ability peculiar to man, is then used by man to alter his environment. To this last point we shall return rather shortly.

As was mentioned before, man's nature, as interpreted by Marx, is constantly changing. The direction of this change in man depends upon his environment. Man, being under "iron laws of materialism," is shaped by the manner in which his society produces the essentials of life.²⁰

Marx held that

there was no such thing as "human nature" in the abstract and that men's ideas...were determined by the economic structure of the social organism of which they formed a part."²¹

In other words, man is a social product best described in terms of his social milieu. Marx expresses this viewpoint in his The German Ideology:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material, conditions determining their production.²²

To put it simply, man's nature and being is shaped by how society produces the essentials of life, and by what society produces.

Marx explains human consciousness in the following manner: "It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but on the contrary it is their social [and economic] existence which determines their consciousness."²³ Hence, the basis of all man's action is rooted in the whole social productive organization of man, which directs his consciousness in certain directions and blocks his awareness in others. This explains Marx's thesis that the way men make their living determines the kind of men they are. A man cannot be anything more than what he does in the system of production and is by virtue of his class's role in it. Thus to the extent that men can change their environment, they can change themselves.

"Marx's whole concept of the self-realization of man can be fully understood only in connection with his concept of work."²⁴ According to Marx, labor is or should be the expression of a man's life. Labor expresses man's individuality and being. Only in his being productively active does man make sense out of his life. Man is alive only inasmuch as he is productive, and he realizes his purpose in life through work. Work then is the meaningful expression of human energy.

In the above definition Marx describes labor as he believes it was meant to be. However, due to the despotism

of capitalistic society man's labor becomes a commodity which is purchased and sold. The ensuing division of labor causes man's labor to assume an existence apart from himself. Thus man is alienated²⁵ from the essence of his life. Man's creativity and freedom are buried by the demands and infringements of capitalism.

Therefore, "the central theme of Marx is the transformation of alienated, meaningless labor into productive, free labor."²⁶

In all previous societies, man has been a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic.²⁷

The abolition of alienated labor was then the aim of the Marxist cause. In his writings Marx refers again and again to the "emancipation of labor" and the "restoration of self-activity." As long as the burdens of capitalism remain it is impossible for man to be truly free. Yet Marx confidently looks toward the overthrow of the capitalistic state. His dialectic (the ongoing evolutionary process of all material life) demands this change.

The fact that economics determines the whole of human life is due to past evils, to man's present slavery. The day will come when this slavish dependence on economics will be broken, when

economics will depend on man, and man will become the master.²⁸

Through a series of economic and material changes, man will eventually liberate himself from that which would enslave him. Then he shall work as he will; labor will be the true expression of man's creative self. For Marxism this then is perfection.

If Marxism possesses certain elements of faith, such faith is tantamount to belief that human perfection is to be regarded as possible.²⁹

CHAPTER V

A CHRISTIAN'S CRITIQUE

Man - A Word Study in Genesis 1-3¹

Before the Marxist and Christian concepts of man can be set in contrast, the Scriptural basis for this discussion must first be established. Obviously, we could in no way hope to present the various views of man which are presented in Scripture.² Therefore, our intention is to examine one section of Scripture which presents pertinent information regarding man. The first three chapters of Genesis were chosen due to their vivid distinction between created man and what man has become because of sin.

In an attempt to determine the major emphases pertaining to man's creation, we shall examine three passages in particular (1:26a, 2:7, 2:23).

אֱלֹהִים and **אֱדָמָה** are the first words of our text which apply directly to **אָדָם**. Man was created in the **אֱלֹהִים** and **אֱדָמָה** of God. But what does this mean? Both words are used too infrequently throughout the Old Testament writings to determine anything other than their basic meanings: likeness, resemblance, image, and semblance. The meaning of these words in their relation to **אֱלֹהִים** is clouded further in that this connection is confined to the first nine chapters of Genesis. Even here **אֱלֹהִים** and **אֱדָמָה** lack the exclusive connection to **אֱלֹהִים**. In verse three of

of chapter five the same words express the intimate relationship between אָדָם and his son. אָדָם and אֱלֹהִים are not, therefore, words which in and by themselves affix an intrinsic identity to man. Man is not just אָדָם or אֱלֹהִים. Instead, man has identity and value only in his relationship to God. אָדָם and אֱלֹהִים must be in the construct state with אֱלֹהֵי אָדָם as their nomen rectum before they are a meaningful definition of man's nature.

Chapter 2:7 informs us of the ur-substance out of which God fashioned אָדָם (אֶרֶץ וְאֵשׁ). Notice the striking similarity between אָדָם and אֶרֶץ from whence the אָדָם was taken. אָדָם was taken from the אָדָם. Yet, the essential nature of אָדָם consists in something much more than the אֶרֶץ-אֶרֶץ. אָדָם was the material God used to form man's bodily frame, a frame which Adam later refers to as consisting of אֶרֶץ and אֶשׁ. (Compare this usage to that of Job 2:5) Via a process of divine alchemy אָדָם was transformed into אֶרֶץ and אֶשׁ. Yet the question still remains. What then is created man? Dust, flesh, bone--none of these words offers so much as a clue to the mysterious property or quality which makes man really man. The אָדָם shaped in the form of אָדָם was lifeless until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (2:7). The אֶרֶץ and אֶשׁ, terms which also designate the material substance of animals (7:15-16), shall return to אָדָם (3:19). Surely, אָדָם must be something more than אָדָם. Surely, there must be something which

distinguishes **נְפֹשׁ** from the beasts.

Undoubtedly, **נְפֹשׁ** is the best one-word summary of man's essence. Notice that the word closely parallels the **נְשִׁמָה** which immediately precedes it. Used widely throughout the Old Testament, **נְפֹשׁ** is one of the most pregnant theological concepts in the Old Testament. In spite of the many subtle nuances and shifts in meaning, **נְפֹשׁ** usually symbolizes the breathing substance or the inner being of man. The Septuagint usually translates **נְפֹשׁ** with the word **ψυχή**, meaning "the soul." We must not, however, fall into the trap of thinking that the Hebrews made a sharp distinction between the body and soul. (The dichotomy of the body and soul was a Greek idea) Both creation accounts re-emphasize the traditional Hebrew belief that man was a psychosomatic entity. Brown-Driver-Briggs³ offer a statement supporting this unity of body and soul: "Although **נְפֹשׁ** is distinctly different from **רוּחַ**, they are both conceived as resting on a common substratum." In effect, the **נְפֹשׁ** was the vital expression of one's self. But the animals also had a **נְפֹשׁ** (1:20, 1:24, 1:30). Wherein lies the uniqueness of man?

Within the context of Genesis 1 - 11 man's unique identity lies in the fact that he was formed by God (2;7) and given dominion over all the earth (1;29-30). The uniqueness of man does not lie in the material substance with which he was created, nor in the particular form of his being. Man has a special relationship to God, a relationship

which transcends his being and essence. What then, is man? He is a creature especially created by God to serve Him and His creation. He is a creature totally dependent upon God and responsible to Him.

When he sinned man renounced his responsibility to God and his dependence upon Him. The relationship which was outlined above was destroyed. After he sinned, man's physical composition did not change. The change came in man's relationship to God.

Contrast and Evaluation

We have reached the point where a drawing together of the various articles of Marxist belief can be made and projected in the light of Genesis 1-3.

Marxism claims to be a science and philosophy of sociology. And herein lies the first and basic difference between the thought of Karl Marx and the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. Having different starting points, it is then no wonder that they present conflicting views with regard to man and his existence.

As in all anthropologies based upon the reason of men, Marxism attaches supreme importance to the human personality (the criticism of religion begins with the Marxist precept that the supreme being for man is man³), and to the society in which he lives. Man is regarded as made in the image and likeness of society. Society is the higher being which man

reflects. Hence, Marxism "is sort of a deification of collective man and of a religion of humanity."⁴

Marx contends that a theory of creation "contradicts the self-glorification of socialist man.... Thus, from the standpoint of independence only the theory of the self-generation of man is acceptable."⁵ In his Critique of Political Economy Marx phrases this attitude in the following manner:

Human history is simply the generation of man through human labour. Socialist man possesses the obvious incontrovertible proof of his birth through his own effort, a proof which is found in the very process of his origin.⁶

This view stands in direct opposition to the Biblical doctrine of creation, which claims that man was made in the image and likeness of God--the Creator.

Both Marxism and Scripture agree that man is alienated from the state of existence for which he was intended. Scripture attributes this falling away to man's disobedience and rebellion--sin. Due to sin man is no longer in a right relationship with God. Marxism, on the other hand, regards the economic abuses of capitalism and past cultures as the source of man's alienation. Marx discarded the Christian doctrine of original sin as an affront to the dignity of man. Instead, Marx posited unlimited possibility for the improvement and eventual perfection of man. Man and society must go through a series of evolutionary changes (dialectical materialism). New hopes are built upon the destruction of the old order.

All institutions and thought patterns of the old order

must be destroyed. Included in this upheaval is religion. Religion, like all other aspects of the capitalist society, holds man back in his struggle to attain a free expression of labor. "All religion is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life."⁷ Again we mention that it was from Feuerbach that Marx received the idea that religion (a product of the human mind) was derived from man's material condition. For example, the poor man has a rich God. However, as man becomes richer God becomes poorer or vanishes altogether. As Marx sees it--

Religion springs out of the animal consciousness, the result of a one-sided sense of dependence on nature and society. Religion, therefore, is bound to disappear when the society of the future comes into being: atheism is one of the indispensable conditions of such a "positive humanism."⁸

This then is the Marxist man: both the product of his material environment, and yet at the same time the craftsman shaping his own destiny. In two ways, then, Marx and his followers challenge the Biblical doctrine of man. First, in identifying man with materialistic evolution, Marx rejects the Biblical doctrine of man being created in God's image. Second, Marx's affirmation of man's ability to create a perfect world society is a total denial of Scripture's claim regarding man's original sin. 7

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1

¹Working in close association with Marx was Frederick Engels. This paper makes no attempt to differentiate between Marx's and Engel's concept of man.

²Matthew Spinka, Nicholas Berdyaev: Captive of Freedom (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), p. 24.

³These writings are found in the books listed within the bibliography. The writings of Marx which were examined are: Theses on Ludwig Feuerbach (1845), German Ideology (1845-1846), Poverty of Philosophy (1847), Communist Manifesto (1848), A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), Capital: An Analysis of Capitalist Production (1867-1883), The Criticism of the Gotha Program (1875), and a work by Engels Anti-Dühring (1878).

Chapter 2

¹O.W. Kuusinen and others, Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 22.

²Franz Mehring, Karl Marx: The Story of His Life, Translated by Edward Fitzgerald (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 12.

³John Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), p. 9.

⁴Mehring, p. 52.

⁵G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought: Marxism and Anarchism 1850-1890 (London: Macmillian and Company, Ltd., 1957), p. 265.

⁶Plamenatz, p. 10.

⁷Ibid., p. 18.

⁸G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought: The Forerunners 1789-1850 (London: Macmillian and Company, Ltd., 1959), p. 297.

⁹Sidney Hook, Marx and the Marxists: The Ambiguous Legacy (New York: D. van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1955), p. 19.

- ¹⁰Hook, p. 42.
- ¹¹Plamenatz, p. 80.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 36.
- ¹³Ibid., p. 44.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 34.
- ¹⁵Hook, p. 19.
- ¹⁶Frederick Engels, Karl Marx's Funeral Address. Quoted in Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), p. 258.
- ¹⁷Karl Marx, Critique of Political Economy. Quoted in Karl Marx, Capital and Other Writings, Edited by Max Eastman (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), p. 11.
- ¹⁸Hook, p. 20.
- ¹⁹Plamenatz, p. 35.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 38.
- ²¹Hook, p. 28.
- ²²Cole, 1789-1850, p. 270.
- ²³Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Communist Manifesto, Translated by Samuel Moore (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), p. 56.
- ²⁴George Lichtheim, Marxism--An Historical and Critical Study (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p. 44.
- ²⁵Plamenatz, p. 115.

Chapter 3

- ¹George Lichtheim, Marxism--An Historical and Critical Study (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p. 45.
- ²Sidney Hook, Marx and the Marxists: The Ambiguous Legacy (New York: D. van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1955), p. 26.
- ³Ibid., p. 28.
- ⁴Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Communist Manifesto, Translated by Samuel Moore (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), p. xv.

⁵G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought: The Forerunners 1789-1850 (London: Macmillian and Company, Ltd., 1959), p. 282.

⁶Ibid., p. 284.

⁷John Plamenatz, German Marxism and Russian Communism (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), p. 135.

⁸Marx, p. xxxviii.

⁹Hook, p. 18.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), p. vi.

¹²Marx, Pp. 81-82.

¹³Plamenatz, p. 53.

¹⁴Franz Mehring, Karl Marx: The Story of His Life, Translated by Edward Fitzgerald (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1936), p. 14.

¹⁵Lichtheim, p. 43.

Chapter 4

¹R.N. Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, (New York: Macmillian Company, 1952), p. 33.

²The German word used by Marx was verdinglichung.

³Karl Marx, Capital and Other Writings, Edited by Max Eastman (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), p. xiv.

⁴T.E. Jessop and others, "The Marxist Anthropology and the Christian Conception of Man," The Christian Understanding of Man, in Church, Community, and State (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938), II, 85-137., p. 99.

⁵Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto, Translated by Stefan T. Possony (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), p. 84.

⁶Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963), p. 26.

⁷Marx, Capital, p. xv.

⁸Jessop, p. 106.

⁹ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁰ We have already indicated Feuerbach's influence upon Marx in chapter one. It was Feuerbach who made the following famous statements: "Man creates God in his own image" and "Man is what man eats."

¹¹ Karl Marx, Preface to the first edition of Capital. Quoted in Jessop, p. 104.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Here we refer to our previous discussion on the dialectic. Cf. chapter 1.

¹⁴ Karl Marx, German Ideology. Quoted in Fromm, p. 200.

¹⁵ Jessop, p. 131.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁷ Marx, Capital, p. 37.

¹⁸ Fromm, Pp. 29-30.

¹⁹ Marx, Capital, p. 141.

²⁰ See the previous reference to Engel's address at Marx's funeral.

²¹ Hunt, p. 111.

²² Fromm, p. 207.

²³ Marx, Capital, p. 11.

²⁴ Fromm, p. 40.

²⁵ The German word used by Marx to convey the meaning of "alienated" was "entfremdete."

²⁶ Fromm, p. 43.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁸ Marx, Capital, p. 159.

²⁹ Jessop, p. 129.

Chapter 5

¹ In preparing this study the accepted lexicographical tools were employed. See Frederick Danker, Multi-purpose Tools for Bible Study (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966) for a complete listing of these materials.

² This writer accepts the view that several theologies of man are found in both the Old and New Testaments.

³ Robert C. Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx, (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), p. 11.

⁴ T.E. Jessop and others, "The Marxist Anthropology and the Christian Conception of Man," The Christian Understanding of Man, in Church, Community, and State (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938), II, p. 126.

⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

⁶ Ibid., p. 102.

⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, On Religion, Introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 147.

⁸ Jessop, p. 126.

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