

## MARXIST AND CHRISTIAN DIALECTICS OF LIBERATION

### *Introduction*

In comparing Marxism and Christianity, it is necessary to keep in mind that their axes lie on different planes. Marxism is at once a philosophy, a sociology, a methodology of knowing and acting, and an economic theory. Christianity, on the contrary, is neither a philosophy, nor a sociology, nor a methodology, nor a theory of economics. The prime concern of Jesus was the absolute meaning and value of life, the ultimate ground and goal of human existence. He was concerned with the concrete problems of this world only in so far as God and his reign had a stake in them.

However, that Christianity and Marxism move on two different planes is only part of the truth. It is equally true that they have much in common, whether we consider their origins or their structure and dynamism. Marx's parents were Jews who joined the Christian fold not out of conviction but for reasons of expediency. It is more than probable that their Jewish origin had a profound impact on their children as well. Probably too, Marxian messianism bears the imprint of Jewish messianic hopes. Besides, Marx was a disciple of Hegel whose philosophy is but a rationalistic interpretation of Christian faith. He was so greatly influenced by his master that even when he subsequently weaned himself away from the latter, his criticisms were still couched in Hegelian terms. He inherited from Hegel not only, as is commonly believed, the dialectical method but also much of the content of his philosophy. His originality is evident in the fact that he re-thought Hegelianism in the context of the real world of man and nature, and made use of the dialectic to go beyond Hegel himself. This is especially true of his early writings. The other great influence on Marx, Feuerbach, was also a Christian theologian who tried to re-interpret the true essence of christianity for his contemporaries. Finally, Marx's thought evolved and matured in the context of confrontation with the teaching and practice of the Christianity of his time, and, as it happens often in such

cases, the denial of existing versions of Christian faith amounts to an affirmation of originally Christian truths and values. For these reasons Marxism, both as a vision of the world and as a socio-political movement, retains a certain family resemblance to Christian beliefs and practices. This will become clearer in the course of our analysis.

In the discussion that follows it is important to note that by "Christian Humanism" I do not mean the system of thought regarding man and his destiny that prevailed at any one stage of the development of Christianity. I mean by Christian Humanism the vision of man implicit in the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth; that the prime concern of Jesus was God, and his reign does not mean that for him the realm of the Absolute began, where that of the relative ended. Far from it. He saw the Ultimate as a dimension of the proximate, the eternal as a dimension of the temporal, the absolute as a dimension of the relative. It is in this concrete world of ours that he sought and met God. Loving one's neighbour was for him the same as loving God. Hence Jesus' faith in God is implicitly an affirmation of the supreme value of man. Only in this sense may we speak of a Christian Humanism, not in the sense of a developed and coherent system of doctrines regarding the nature and destiny of man. Similarly, by Marxist Humanism I do not mean the understanding of man embodied in any of its historical versions, but rather the one represented by the original thought of Marx. At the root of this approach lies the conviction that the original teachings of Jesus and of Marx are more relevant today than much of what subsequent interpretations have to offer. One might even say that contemporary Communism and contemporary Christianity are themselves largely alienations of what Marx and Jesus, respectively, taught. This does not mean that all that we have to do is to repeat parrotwise what these great men said. They were themselves the product of their age and had the limitations of their respective thought world. Hence, in certain respects, we may have to go beyond them if we want to be totally relevant today.

In the following pages I shall first indicate the basic dimensions of Marxist Humanism as I understand it, and then proceed to offer my reactions as a follower of Jesus. No claim is made that my views represent the position of the official church, or even of the rank and file of Christians.

For Marx, man is not a finished product who can be defined once for all. He is essentially a process, a becoming, a quest, and a movement. History is nothing but the *becoming* of man.<sup>1</sup> Of this process the dynamic principle is negativity; more precisely, negation and the negation of the negation. Capitalism is the negation of man. It is human alienation at its worst. Communism as the negation of this negation is the process of disalienation. One of the greatest contributions of Marx is that he made an exhaustive analysis of the alienations inherent in capitalist society. Here, a few reflections on the nature and scope of those alienations are in order.

Alienation is a term with many dimensions of meaning. In general, it may be described as the process whereby man exteriorizes his essential powers, either in the world of objects or in that of phantasy, in such a manner that these same powers eventually become autonomous and in their turn begin to dominate and enslave him.<sup>2</sup> It means, therefore, privation, division, conflict, and servitude. Of these the last may be taken as the key concept. In capitalism, man is enslaved economically, socially, politically and ideologically. He is enslaved by what he has brought into being: by the world of products and the means of production; by the ruling classes who own the means of production; by the "political" State which, while professing universal goals, in reality pursues the interests of the privileged classes; and by false ideologies. Of these, economic alienation is basic and sets the pattern for all other alienations. Its suppression, therefore, amounts to the total liberation of man. In the words of Marx, "This material, directly perceptible private property, is the material and sensuous expression of alienated human life. Its movement—production and consumption—is the sensuous manifestation of the movement of all previous production, i.e. the realization or reality of man. Religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science, art etc. are only particular forms of production and come under its general law. The positive supersession of private property, as the appropriation of human life, is, therefore,

1. Karl Marx, "Economic-philosophical Manuscripts" (Abrev: MSS), in Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (Abrev: EW). ed. T.B. Bottomore, Watts & Co; London: 1963, P. 166.

2. *Ibid* P. 201

the positive supersession of all alienation and the return of man from religion, the family, the state, etc. to his human, i.e. social life. Religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man; but economic alienation is that of real life and its supersession, therefore, affects both aspects".<sup>3</sup>

Alienation means that man is not what he ought to be. It is, therefore, at the same time a fact and a challenge, a challenge to break all fetters and achieve freedom. Marxism is a humanism of liberation. The abolition of economic alienation as embodied in private property is the prerequisite for man's transition from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.<sup>4</sup> Marxism comes as a message of salvation with its own demand for "conversion" understood as a *turning away* from the capitalist system and its values and a *turning to* genuinely socialist goals.

The Marxist concept of alienation finds an analogy in the Christian concept of sin. Sin is alienation not only from God but also from man, from nature and from oneself. Naturally, one may not look in the Bible for a sociological analysis of alienation. In the theocratic world in which he lived, in which the social system as a whole was conceived as willed by God, Jesus could not have thought of socio-structural alienations as understood today. But for the Christian of the 20th century, living as he does in the scientific age, an adequate grasp of structural alienations is not only possible but also necessary. Hence he has no difficulty in accepting and integrating in his world-view whatever is sociologically verified and verifiable in the Marxist analysis. He too has to recognize the truth brought to light by Marx that capitalism and its values are essentially dehumanizing.

However, there are certain inadequacies in the Marxist analysis which the Christian cannot but view critically. First, Marx was so exclusively pre-occupied with structural alienations that he failed to note those at the personal-existential level. Of these the most important is the ambivalence of human freedom, in other words, man's capacity to use his freedom to love as well

3. Ibid. P. 156

4. Karl Marx. *Capital III in Karl Marx. Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy* (Abrev: SW) ed. T.B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (London: Pelican 1970) Pp. 259-260.

as to hate, to destroy as well as to build up. To argue that this alienation is only derivative and is bound to disappear once man is inserted into truly socialist structures is to deny the autonomy of man which Marx explicitly affirms when he says that men are not only creatures but also creators of circumstances.<sup>5</sup> So too, he did not grapple with the alienation of death, or with the related problem of the ultimate meaning of individual life. Second, while it is true that economic life conditions in all spheres of life and thought, it is an exaggeration to say that it is the matrix of all other alienations. The relative autonomy of the aesthetic, moral and religious dimensions of human experience is not sufficiently recognized. This problem will be discussed more fully later in the article.

Marx's concern for human liberation, which logically follows from the recognition of alienation, should find a positive echo in any authentic Christian. For he shares the mission of Jesus whose message is equally a manifesto of human liberation: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me; he has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."<sup>6</sup> The reign of God that Jesus proclaimed and to which he was committed is, in the analysis, the reign of justice, love and peace. It is the full flowering on this planet of a universal community bound by love and united with the ultimate ground of God. As such, it is the realization of freedom not only from death and sin but also from all alienations. But, whereas Marx believed that mankind can achieve freedom through its own resources, the Christian is convinced that it can be realized only within the framework of dialogue with God.

Alienation is a value-laden concept and, as such, presupposes a certain understanding of what man ought to be, of his true essence. Conversely, any understanding of his true essence presupposes some grasp of existing alienations. In what follows we shall consider the dialectical polarities which constitute man as he ought to be. In our analysis we assume that these polarities are realized in the capitalist society only in an alienated, distorted form. What we explicitly concern ourselves with is Marx's *pro-spective* vision of man.

5. Karl Marx. "Theses on Feuerbach". SW Pp. 82-83.

6. Lk. 4:18-20

*Man and Nature*

For Marx man is not a stranger on earth. He is but a part of nature. His history up to now is one of emergence from the womb of nature. Nature has meaning only as a longing for man. And man exists only as oriented to nature. He is not a being complete and well defined in himself who only *subsequently* relates himself to the world around. Rather, this relationship is constitutive of his essence. In other words, he is a natural essence.<sup>7</sup> One with nature, he is also different from it. For he makes nature the object of his free, conscious, and creative activity.<sup>8</sup> He is, therefore, not only a natural essence but also a *human* natural essence.

As a *human* natural essence he works upon objects of nature and thereby gives them a new name and form, a new unity and meaning. He shapes them in his image so that they become the extension of his being in time and space. He thus humanizes nature. In doing so, he develops his consciousness and needs, and becomes progressively more human. In other words, in humanizing nature he humanizes himself.

But all work is essentially social, social in its origin and in its nature. The individual works only as member of a community, and with tools provided by it, whether these be spiritual (language, traditions etc.) or material implements). Similarly, the products he creates are meant to satisfy the needs of the community. They are but so many bonds he fashions between man and man. In consequence, the humanization of nature is at the same time the socialization of man. Through work man produces society and is in turn produced by it.<sup>9</sup> Of course the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man exist today only in an alienated form. In the capitalist system, in humanizing nature man becomes dehumanized; in creating products which go to form private property he erects so many barriers between man and man. With the abolition of private property the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature will fully be realized.

The Christian has no difficulty in accepting the Marxist conception of man and nature. He too sees man as emerging from

7. *MSS: EW*, Pp. 206-207.

8. *Ibid.* Pp. 127-128

9. *Ibid.* P. 157.

nature. The story of creation, divested of its mythical garb, only means that this emergence is in response to the call of God, who is both the point of arrival and the point of departure of the process. Man's self-creation in history through work is at the same time the unfolding of the creative work of God. In the Christian vision too it is man's task to "fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth."<sup>10</sup> He is destined to "possess the earth."<sup>11</sup> The revelation of the glory of man is also the fulfilment of the mute longings of the earth for total liberation from the shackles of mortality.<sup>12</sup> The "New Heaven and the New Earth" is nothing but our heaven and our earth filled with the glory of God and man. However, living as they did in the prescientific world, neither the writers of the biblical books nor Jesus could have fully recognized the creative meaning of work. Besides, the original earthliness of the Gospel was largely forgotten when Christian faith passed through the Greek mould of thought with its dualism of matter and spirit, of this world and the other world.

*Man and Society*

The second basic polarity in the Marxist conception of man is that between person and society. We have already seen how man is bound to his fellowmen through production and the product. This relatedness to society is of the essence of man. No man is an island. Nor is man's relationship to other men something added from outside to his already constituted essence. Marx goes to the extent of saying that he is nothing more than the totality of his social relations.<sup>13</sup> Each man is related to the community both practically and theoretically—practically, in so far as he produces society through work; theoretically, in so far as he makes other men the object of his experience, thinking, and willing.<sup>14</sup> He is related to others not only actively but also passively. They satisfy his need—the highest of all needs—for human togetherness.<sup>15</sup> In a true sense, therefore, each man is all men.

10. Gn 1:28

11. Mt. 5:5

12. Rm 8:18-23

13. "Theses on Feuerbach": SW, p. 83

14. *MSS: EW*, p. 126

15. *Ibid.* Pp. 164-165.

"Though man is a unique individual—and it is just his particularity which makes him individual, a really individual communal being—he is equally the whole, the ideal whole, the subjective existence of society as thought and experience."<sup>16</sup> Hence too, society is not an aggregate of monadic individuals "but the sum of the relations in which these individuals stand to one another."<sup>17</sup> This does not however mean that the individual is dissolved in society. The individual, more precisely the person, is the central concern of Marx in spite of certain popular versions of his philosophy. It is significant that the Communist Manifesto defines Communism as an association in which the *free development of each* is the condition for the free development of all.<sup>18</sup> The Marxist vision of man, therefore, goes beyond both primitive collectivism in which the individual is sacrificed to society, and bourgeois individualism in which society is made a means to individual ends.

This understanding of man and society is basically in harmony with the teachings of Jesus though he expresses it less in philosophical than in ethico-religious terms. For him too the true being of man is being—for and being—with others. Love for one's fellowmen is the sum of all prophecy and Law. The individual is called not to seek his private salvation but to belong to the "people". God is gathering to himself in history. The Reign of God, whether we consider it in its final flowering or in its emergence in history, is the reign of the family of man united with one another and with God. However, Jesus does not sacrifice the individual to the community. The individual remains the inviolable centre of decision. It is he who has to opt for or against God and his people. "Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother".<sup>19</sup>

However, this basic harmony between the Marxist and the Jesus-vision of man reveals a divergence when human destiny is seen against the background of history as a whole. Who, according to Marx, is the subject of the historical development from alienation to disalienation? It can only be humanity, not the individual.

16. *Ibid.* P. 158

17. Karl Marx, "Grundrisse": SW, p. 110

18. Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, (Moscow: 1962) I, p. 53.

19. Mk. 3:35.

More precisely, it will be that privileged section of humanity which happens to survive the revolution. What about the millions of individuals and groups who lived and died without enjoying the fruits of the revolution? Are they not reduced to the state of being means to an end? This problem is all the more acute if the classless society remains a dream and is never realized. In that case generations of men will have died for a useless cause. The Christian, on the contrary, lives in the assurance born of faith that the God who is to come is already at work in history gathering all who surrender themselves to him in serving their fellowman, and investing their lives with a meaning that survives death. But he too has no easy solution for the problem as to how individual and collective salvation are to be reconciled and made intelligible. Nor does he claim to be able to give any such explanation, since he, unlike Marx, holds that there are realms of truth which can only be known through faith.

#### *Being and Knowing*

The polarity of being and knowing is more than a methodological question. It is equally an essential structure of man whether he is considered individually or collectively. The "being" in question is not an abstract concept as in scholastic philosophy. It means, rather, the concrete life-process of man, the process whereby he transforms himself in transforming the environment, be it natural or social. In other words, the being of man is praxis i.e. his creative activity having for its object nature as well as other men. Understood thus, praxis is the matrix and the determinant of consciousness and theory. To quote Marx, "The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness."<sup>20</sup> Of theory, praxis is not only the determinant but also the criterion of truth. "Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the "this-sidedness of his thinking, in practice".<sup>21</sup>

This does not mean, however, that consciousness is a mere reflection of reality or that it is not creative. Its creativity con-

20. Karl Marx, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (1859): SW, p. 67.

21. "Theses on Feuerbach": SW, p. 82.

sists in this that it can form "projects", i.e. conceptual models to be realized through subsequent praxis. Marx sees in this capacity one of the distinctive and essential attributes of man. "But what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement."<sup>22</sup> In translating the projected model into practice one realizes that it needs to be revised. The revised model then becomes the basis of further praxis which in turn leads to still another revision of the model, and thus indefinitely. This spiral movement is the mainspring of history.

Viewed in general, the dialectic of being and knowing does not pose any serious problem for the Christian. He too recognizes the fact that the world of ideas, values, and beliefs are conditioned by the concrete life-process of man. Religious beliefs too are largely influenced by the socio-economic infrastructure. Their truth also needs to be tested on the basis of praxis. A belief which in no way changes the quality of life cannot be fully true.

But does not Marx's affirmation that being determines consciousness amount to materialism and undermine the very basis of religion? We do not think so. Marx uses the term "materialism" to contrast his position with that of Hegel, whose system begins with the Absolute Idea conceived as prior to man and nature. Against Hegel, Marx argues that our reflections should have for their point of departure the concrete, objective world of immediate experience. Besides he never says that consciousness is determined by brute matter. When he speaks of "material conditions" determining consciousness, he has in mind not matter in the usual sense of the word but the social life-process of man, i.e. praxis in the sense explained earlier. This is borne out by his words: "The great achievement of Feuerbach is... to have founded genuine materialism and positive science by making the social relationship of 'man to man' the basic principle of theory."<sup>23</sup> More positively, in saying that it is his capacity for self-transcendence which distinguishes men from animals Marx is equivalently affirming the reality of the spirit. For these reasons

it would be more correct to qualify Marxism as humanism rather than as materialism.

However, there are some ambiguities in the Marxist dialectic of being and knowing which raise serious problems for the Christian. The being of man, his social life-process, includes consciousness. Hence to say that being determines consciousness is equal to saying that conscious life determines consciousness. Besides, what is this consciousness inherent in the social life of man? Marx seems to understand it solely as immediate sense-experience comprising both perception and need.<sup>24</sup> If so, the implication is that the other modes of consciousness, especially the moral and the religious, are not original but derivative. But a phenomenological analysis of sense-experience will reveal that it is shot through with intelligence and meaning. What our senses normally reveal are not mere material stimuli but "meanings" which in turn are related to other meanings, not excluding the ultimate meaning of life. If this is the case, moral and religious awareness are not mere reflexes of pure sensation but original components of our primordial relationship to nature and society. In other words, they have more originality than Marx would accord them.

Finally, a word about the role of praxis as the criterion of truth. Unfortunately Marx is neither precise nor consistent in his definition of terms. The Christian has no difficulty in accepting praxis as the criterion of truth if by praxis is meant the primordial, global, active-passive relationship of man to his environment. But the term is often used in a narrower sense to mean man's conscious economic activity. A further narrowing down of meaning occurs when it is taken to mean the revolutionary activity of the proletariat. The narrower the meaning of the term the less valid it is as a universal criterion of truth. How can economic praxis, for instance, be the criterion of aesthetic truth? Besides, if the criterion of the truth of theory is "true praxis", do we not need another criterion to distinguish true praxis from false one? What else can it be but theory?

#### *Man and Transcendence*

Man alone of all animals has the capacity to be what he is not and not to be what he is. In fact he is only in the measure

22. Capital I, Ch. V: SW, P. 102

23. MSS: SW, P. 85

24. *Ibid.*

in which he transcends himself. Transcendence in this sense belongs to the essence of man, and is recognized as such by Marx. But, whereas the Christian believes that man's self-transcendence has God for its absolute term, Marx denies the value of any such belief.

Marx makes three basic affirmations regarding religion. The first is that God is an alienation. He is nothing but the true essence of man projected on to the realm of phantasy. Therefore, the affirmation of God means the denial of man. To believe in a creator is to deny man's creativity. To accept God as master is to condemn man to the condition of a slave. "A being does not regard himself as independent unless he is his own master, and he is only his own master when he owes his existence to himself. A man who lives by the favour of another considers himself a dependent being. But I live completely by another person's favour when I owe him not only the continuance of my life but also its creation; when he is its source"<sup>25</sup> The second affirmation is that the root of religion is to be sought in the alienations of political, social, and above all, economic life. Religion arises either as a reflection and legitimization of reality or as a protest against it.<sup>26</sup> To the poor it provides illusory compensation; to the rich, an instrument of legitimization. The third basic affirmation concerns the supersession of religion, which is thought of as taking place in three stages. The first is theoretical atheism which consists in the criticism of religion as an alienation with a view to unmasking its profane roots. The second stage involves removing the economic conditions which give rise to religion. It represents practical atheism and practical humanism. The third stage is positive humanism where man is so conscious of his self-creation and self-sufficiency that the need for denying the existence of God does not arise at all. "Since, however, for the socialist man, the whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labour, and the emergency of nature for man, he, therefore, has the evident and irrefutable proof of his self-creation, of his own origins"<sup>27</sup>

25. *MSS : EW*, p. 165

26. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegels' Philosophy of Right" : *EW*, Pp. 43-44

27. *MSS : EW*, p. 167

An exhaustive evaluation of Marxist atheism is not possible here. What is offered is nothing more than a few preliminary reflections. First of all, the Christian recognizes the fact that many historical forms of religion are dehumanizing and, therefore, are alienations. This is true also of contemporary Christianity, in spite of the fact that Jesus opposed, at the risk of his own life, the oppressive practices and beliefs of the Judaism of his days. At the same time, the Christian will reject the notion that religion is essentially an alienation, a notion that cannot stand the test of the criterion of truth which Marx himself proposes. It is not on the basis of adequate reflection on historical praxis that he arrived at atheism. If he had studied history objectively he would have realized that religion has played also a positive role in the liberation of man. Many religious movements were, in their original intention and impact, socially revolutionary forces. This is particularly true of Buddhism and the Bhakti movement in India, with their staunch opposition to caste inequality. Has not Christianity contributed to the dissolution of slave society? It is true that these religious movements eventually became reactionary forces. But has not the same fate befallen the Marxist political parties?

If, in spite of all this, Marx came to the conclusion that religion is essentially an alienation, it is because he learned it from his erstwhile master, Hegel, who explained the man-God relationship in terms of the dialectic of master and slave. The slave cannot be free so long as the master remains master. So too man cannot be free so long as God exists. But this way of explaining religion is but a caricaturing of it. For the believer relates himself to God as to one who loves. And it is love that makes man free, a truth recognized even by Marx, who wrote that man can achieve freedom only in a community.<sup>28</sup> If so, cannot community with God be a source of freedom? Should we not go a step further and claim that God is the condition for the possibility of total freedom for man? If the love and recognition of others make him free, the Absolute love that is God frees absolutely.

What is original to Marx is not his qualification of religion as an alienation but his analysis of its economic basis. While admitting that economic realities do influence religious doctrines

28. Karl Marx "German Ideology" : *SW*, p. 253.

and practices, the Christian will maintain that religious consciousness is not derivative but an original component of man's primordial global experience, of which economic activity is only an aspect. It is against the horizon of an absolute concern that man works to satisfy even his immediate physical needs. In his reaction against Hegelian idealism, Marx failed to see this depth-dimension of man as well as his existential alienations, namely, his being unto death, his loss of ultimate meaning, and, above all, the ambivalence of his freedom. The supersession of these fundamental alienations cannot be achieved merely by restructuring the economic base of society. For it is nothing less than a being taken-hold-of by the absolute that is needed.

The supersession of any alienation means for Marx three things: abolition of what is dehumanizing, preservation of what is positive in the state of alienation, and the realization of it (the positive) on a higher level of being. Hence, the abolition of religion is also its preservation and sublimation. This is possible only if the attributes of God are realized as attributes of man. Hence, the denial of the transcendence of God amounts to the affirmation of the transcendence and absoluteness of man. To this we shall turn our attention now.

The Marxist man achieves transcendence in a twofold manner: The first consists in the abolition of private property and the ushering in of the socialist society. It is a radical and qualitative change, implying the end of man's prehistory and the beginning of his true history. In the words of Marx, it is "the *definitive* resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, between man and man".<sup>29</sup> The classless society is one which has left behind not only alienation but also the possibility of alienation. It is the final resurrection of man and nature. That such a society *will* be realized is more an object of hope than of scientific forecast. For, if alienation was necessary for the historical development of man, one does not see why the same law will not operate also in the classless society and generate new alienations. If, on the other hand, it was not necessary but contingent upon the arbitrary will of individuals, for the same reason new alienations could emerge in future. The classless society, therefore, is no more than a secular version of "the new heaven and the new earth" of Christian hope. In this sense, Marxist

and Christian hopes converge. Recognition of this by Marxists and Christians could form a basis for dialogue and collaboration.

But the classless society is not humanity come to rest. It is but the beginning of man's authentic history. Though all alienations have been overcome, the dialectic of work, of self-affirmation through self-objectivation, will continue. It will be a society still on pilgrimage in search of the fulness of power and glory. This is the second sense in which the Marxist man achieves transcendence, but this self-transcendence has no point of survival. It is a search for fullness which will never be fulfilled. Thus the historical optimism of Marx conceals a certain pessimism. But this very belief in indefinite progress after the inauguration of the classless society can be a much needed corrective to the popular Christian understanding of "the new heaven and the new earth". Christians are wont to think of heaven as a state of absolute possession, of total quiescence. If creativity is of the essence of man, should it not continue in the totally liberated man? Again, looking at the problem from the point of view of God, does he not cease to be God the moment he is totally possessed by finite man? Hence, Christians would do well to think of the new heaven and the new earth in terms not of quiescence but of quest. The difference between the man of the classless society and the man of the Kingdom of God consists in this that in the case of the former the quest will be in indefectible dialogue of friendship with God, whereas in the case of the latter it will take the form of a collective monologue.

We have seen that the Marxist and the Christian vision of liberation converge on many points in spite of radical differences. I should like to conclude this article with two remarks: First, both Christians and Marxists should recognize the provisional character of the formulation of their respective positions. They should show willingness to revise them in the light of the global experience of man today. Second, theoretical problems have to be solved practically, namely, through common commitment to the total liberation of man. It is by committing themselves to concerted action for the creation of a better home for the family of man that they will discover the truth that sets men completely free.

29. MSS : EW, p. 155.