

Christianity and Marxism

Robert Varikayil
Parvez A. Abbasi

Introduction

We envisage five basic categories of social philosophy such as the Absolute Humanism of Marx, the Absolute Theism of Advaita, the Theistic Humanism of the Bible, the Evolving Absolute of Hegel and Social Darwinism. This paper argues that the best links to build a bridge between Christianity and Marxism are the last judgement according to Christ and Humanism of the German ideology. We pursue in detail the theistic humanism through the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Medieval Church and Modern Church.

Engles was perhaps the earliest to point out some similarity between Christianity and Marxism. Engles wrote in his discussion on the early Christianity : “Both Christianity and the worker’s socialism preach forthcoming salvation from bondage and misery ... both are persecuted and baited ... etc.” (Marx, Engles, 1975 : 275). But Engles was quick to point out the sharp differences between the two also. “Christianity” continues Engles, “places this salvation in a life beyond, after death, in heaven; socialism places it in this world” (Marx, Engles, 1975 : 275). Marx, on the other hand, has no love for Christianity which preaches, according to Marx, cowardice, self-abasement, resignation, submission and is anti-promethean (Bently, 1990 : 90).

We may further note that according to Christ his Kingdom is not of this world. (John, 18 : 36). Marx, on the contrary, declared “The task of history, therefore, once the world beyond the truth has disappeared is to establish the truth of this world” (Marx, Engles, 1984 : 73). ssChrist teaches: “I am the vine; you are the branches” (John, 15: 5). Marx retorts: “for man the root is man himself” (Marx, Engels 1984: 73).

Yet there are reputed scholars, who interlink Christianity with Marxsim. This paper too discovers certain links between Christ and Marx, though the points of contact traced by this paper are rather new. We start with the Old Testament, the present root of Christianity. As we see it, the Old Testament presents a theistic humanism according to which man is just an appendage to God, the Real Being. Here we think, it is the right context to introduce our five terms.

Yet there are reputed scholars, who interlink Christianity with Marxsim. This paper too discovers certain links between Christ and Marx, though the points of contact traced by this paper are rather new. We start with the Old Testament, the present root of Christianity. As we see it, the

Robert Varikayil is Reader in Sociology, South Gujarat University, Surat-395007 (INDIA)

Parvez A. Abbasi is Reader in Sociology, South Gujarat University, Surat-395007 (INDIA)

Emerging Trends in Development Research
Vol. 4-7, 1997-2000, 60-75

Old Testament presents a theistic humanism according to which man is just an appendage to God, the Real Being. Here we think, it is the right context to introduce our five terms.

Absolute Humanism

The first is what we call Absolute Humanism and we find an ideal typical formulation of this in the writings of Karl Marx. In 1843-44 he declared : “But for man root is man himself “ (Marx, Engels, 1984 : 73). but this man not superman as in Weber, but every man. For Marx contends that all relations in which man is debased, enslaved, forsaken, etc., should be *Holy Family* ... each man must be given social scope for the vital manifestation of his beings.... if man is social by nature he will develop his true nature only in society (Marx, Engels 1984 : 115)

This tenet of Marx makes him an easy target of the criticism that he is an utopian. It is true that there is certain element of utopianism in the dreams of Marx. But Marx can be defended on two points. Firstly, all ideals are utopian; they give only the direction to which we should turn. Secondly, Marx’s utopianism was very much tempered with realism. We read in the first volume of *Capital*, for example, “....one nation can and should learn from others. And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement– and it is the ultimate aim of this work, to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society– it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs (Marx, Engels, 1984 : 246).

But Marx’s humanism is attacked less for its utopianism than for its atheism and anti-clericalism. Marx shouted as early as in 1844 that the basis of irreligious criticism is : Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But man is no abstract being encamped outside the world. Man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, an inverted world-consciousness, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of the world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its *spiritualistic point d’honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realisation of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma.

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of the real distress and also the protest against the real distress and also the real protest against the real distress. Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people (Marx, Engels, 1984 : 72)

Marx continues with the same passage and sounds a wacry – to abolish religion as the illusory happiness of people.

The following comments on the above passage, we think are in order 1. Marx hates religion because it consoles the exploited but justifies the exploitation itself. Hence, his above cited words. Marx was not sounding a wacry as it appears. A wacry would go against his premises according to which the demand to give up illusions is the demand to give up the conditions which need illusions. hence, the interest of Marx is not religious perscution but social change. Marx is against

the religion only as it interferes with public life. Actually Marx is willing to tolerate religion (the irrational): Within limits, within the privacy of our mind. Marx is not against religion, but against the supremacy of religion; is against religion only when religion tries to dominate the state. Thus, he writes in on the Jewish Question : “The limits of political emancipation are evident at once from the fact that the state can free itself from a restriction without man being really free from this restriction, that the state can be free state, without man being a free man. Bauer himself tacitly admits this, when he lays down the following condition for political emancipation : *“Every religious privilege, and therefore, of a monopoly of a privileged Church, would have been abolished altogether, and if some or many persons, or even the overwhelming majority, still believed themselves bound to fulfill religious duties, this fulfillment ought to be left to them as a purely private matter”*.”

It is possible therefore for the state to be emancipated itself from religion, even if the overwhelming majority is still religious. And the overwhelming majority does not cease to be religious through being religious in private (Marx, Engles, 1984 : 57)

In the same way Marxism is not negative in evaluating the power of religion. Of course, religion is opium but opium gives strength. Thus, Marx is positive on religion when he writes “.... The weapon of criticism can not, of course, replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force, but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates *ad hominem*; and it demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter (Marx and Engels, 1984 : 730)

But Marx was critical about the religious revolution as he was about religion in general. He criticises Luther, for example, after praising him. Luther we grant, overcame the bondage of piety by replacing it by the bondage of conviction. He shattered faith in authority because he restored the authority of faith. He turned priests into laymen because he turned laymen into priests. He freed man from outer religiosity because he made religiosity the inner man. He freed the body from chains because he enchained the heart (Marx and Engels, 1984 : 73)

From the above it is clear that Marxian Humanism is realistic, tolerant, absolute, resolute, positive and critical. It is tolerant when religion is confined to conscience of private life. It is realistic because of its submission that it is limited to lessen the pain of life and not to sweep it out. It is absolute in two senses- it embraces the whole humanity and it does not recognise any power beyond humanity. It is resolute because it is willing to fight for its rights. It is positive because it has recognised religion a theoretical sword at least in certain cases. It is critical of religion in general and reforms in particular as for example is seen in his indictment of Luther. One point needs to be stressed here. Marx had no particular love for violence. Marx declared in 1872 in a public meeting at Hague that in countries like America and England the worker may attain his object by peaceful means (Black ed. 1961 : 289). Professor Hacker is surprised at this conversion of Marx. But Marx has made it very clear in *Capital* also that the individuals were dealt with only so far as they are the personification of economic category (Marx and Engles, 1984 : 246). In other words violence and vengeance were not in the programme of Marx.

Absolute Theism

Now we turn to the next category, the absolute theism which is in direct opposition to absolute humanism. The only problem is: there is only God and no universe nor men (which is the

only way to understand absolute theism) which can be accommodate under the title absolute theism. Nobody apart from God can tell us anything because no body apart from God exists. The only way out will be the appearance of a super God who knows even God. This is perhaps the position of Hegel who says “that this ‘idea’ or ‘reason’ is the true, the eternal, the absolutely powerful essence; that it reveals itself in the world and that in that world nothing else is revealed but this and its honour and glory— is the thesis which, as we have said, has been proved in philosophy, and is here regarded as demonstrated”. “The world of intelligence and conscious volition is not abandoned to chance, but must show itself in the light of the self-cognizant idea”.

This is “a result which happens to be known to me, because I have traversed the entire field”. (More on Hegel below).

Actually there is nobody who directly accepts absolute theism. Among those suspected of absolute theism Sankara from Kerala in the 8th century stands first. He accepts existence of God from the Hindu scriptures like Vedant Sutra. He accepts only God. But he does not deny the reality of the world. Shankara says for example the non-reality of the world can not be maintained because we are conscious of external things. In every act of perception, we are conscious of some external things corresponding to ideas (Shankara, 1890 : 420).

Radhakrishnan explains the concept of Maya in the following words. The problem of relations between Brahman from the intuitive stand point and demand an explanation of its relation to the world which we see from logical stand point. We can never understand how the ultimate reality is related to the world of plurality since the two are heterogenous and every attempt at explanation is bound to fail. This incomprehensibility is brought about by the term *maya* (Radhakrishnan, 1952 : 24).

Sankara has, however, pointed out the most complex problem of absolute theism as well as of theistic humanism. We cannot accept anything beyond God because God is infinite. We cannot deny the reality of the world because they impinge on our senses. Shankara found the problem unsolved when he defined the world as *maya*. This *maya* is neither nominal nor phenomenal, nor is it essentially both. It is neither differentiated nor undifferentiated, nor is it essentially both. It is neither particled nor is it imparticled nor is it essentially both; it is the most wonderful and indescribable from (Sankara, 1947).

Thus, the absolute theism is a possible category. If one says there is only man another can say there is only God. But so far we have no clear example of absolute theism. Sankara and even *Bhagawatgeeta* will serve as better examples of theistic humanism.

Theistic Humanism

By theistic humanism we understand the concept according to which there is God and also man, God is Great and of man is humble. God is master and man is slave. Man exists for the greater glory of God. Most of the religious and devout souls accept this point of view. The following are the problems in accepting this way of thinking.

1. There is the mathematical problem of adding something to everything. God is supposed to be infinite and as such contains everything. How does man add something to the glory of God who is already infinite, everything ? One of the usual answers taught in the seminaries is that man can add to the external glory of God, not to the internal glory. Some are persuaded to believe this explanation and some are not. It is difficult to imagine that lakhs of people are killed every year through accident, flood, drought, earth-quake, poverty and qualor. Strange must be the God, according

to some, who is bent on augmenting his glory by roasting crores of people in the immense pan called hell.

2. The usual defence is that God does not cause the above mentioned havocs, but only permits them as the nature of things demand. By nature of things is meant the law of the universe. These laws are supposed to be beyond the control of God. Here comes the problem of voluntary decision as against natural determination. The problem of this explanation is that all the good things in the world are God's responsibilities. All the bad things are the share of anti-God or satan. This explanation too escapes the understanding of millions of human beings.

3. The third problem is that the conflict between the rational and the irrational. There is a story in *Bible* that Abraham got a single child at the old age and he brought him up well. God demands the sacrifice of his son and Abraham concedes. In the same way mankind nourishes a child with too much care. The name of the child is reason or science. These two (reason and religion) are like jealous sister-in-law. Religion burnt thousands of Isaacs and poisoned several including Socrates. Hence, the war-cry of Voltaire: crush the infamy and the demand of Marx to abolish religion. But there were also open fights in which science always won.

Reason taught evolution, religion taught creation : religion stands corrected. Reason taught heliocentrism, religion taught geocentrism; religion stands corrected. Religion (at least the primitive church) taught immediate end of the world; reason predicted longevity; religion stands corrected. Reason explained sickness through germs, religion through demons; religion stands corrected. Religion explained social inequality by the will of God; reason saw the malice of man behind social system; religion stands corrected;

religion found the *status quo* as eternal; reason found it temporal.

In short, it is reason which made culture out of nature. Put off reason and mankind will be back in the forest. All the progress mankind has made was with the help of reason including splitting of atom and putting the man on the moon. It is reason which teaches us that fire burns; that ice freezes; poison kills, etc. So, to abandon reason is to abandon life and that is precisely what theistic humanism demands from man. The further problem is that there are several religions which demand our life. Judaism, Christianity, Bhagavatgeeta etc., each of which tells us that it is the true religion. Even to distinguish between one religion and another we need the help of reason. Hence, most people keep away from religion or fight against it.

We do not pursue neither the absolute of Hegel nor the social Darwinism, partly because we have reviewed them elsewhere (On the materialism and atheism of Hegel see Robert Varikayil, 1987 and on Weber and Social Darwinism see the unpublished manuscript Marx, Weber and Humanism by Robert Varikayil), partly because it would not be a rewarding task. Hegel contradicts himself very clearly, He says for example, without the world God is no God (Cohen, 1978 : 9). Elsewhere Hegel writes "what has happened, and is happening everyday, is not only not without God, but is essentially the work of God". (Friedrich, 1954 : 158). It is not worth resolving the contradiction because initiative in any case is taken out of the hands of man and thus Hegel's system is made unfit for Marxian Humanism which is atleast partly voluntaristic.

Social Darwinism very clearly contradicts Marxian Humanism. Let us take the example of Weber and Summer to illustrate Social Darwinism. Civil rights for Weber is an extreme rationalist phantasy (Turner and Factor, 1984 : 66). For Summer, "there are no rights. The world owes nobody a living" (Hofstadter, 1955 : 54).

With this short introduction we enter Christianity and the theistic humanism with which we are concerned. We take up as mentioned above humanism in the Old Testament in John, the Baptist, Christ, the Primitive Church, the feudal church and the modern church.

Humanism in the Old Testament

The Old Testament begins by elevating man and humanism to dizzy heights. Man is first mentioned in the book of Genesis in the context of the creation of the world. God creates everything except man with a simple *fiat*. God says, for example, let there be light and there is light: But God does not say : let there be man. Instead, God declares solemnly: “Let us make man in our own images, after our likeness and let them have dominion God created man in his image(*Genesis*, I : 26-33). Adam, the first man, was placed in a garden specially made for him. God gave him a partner too. The first garden, as is well known, contained no pain and all pleasures. But here we come to the end of Biblical humanism and to the beginning of theism or theistic humanism. God binds Adam and Eve with a law : “You may freely eat from every tree of the garden; but of the tree of good and evil you shall not eat; for in the day you shall eat of it you shall die.”(*Genesis*, 2 : 15 : 17).

The Bible is perhaps not original in giving a law of conduct as mentioned above. Most of the civilizations have a law which prescribes that what is good and what is evil for a society should be described by the ruling group or class. An average citizen will be executed if he dared to decide what is good for himself. It is a well known fact that the Brahmins of India prescribed death penalty for the non-Brahmins who so much as overheard the *Vedas*.

But the Bible is original, compared to other sacred books, in accepting and revealing certain unpleasant and unorthodox facts. As is well known, Adam and Eve listened to a new prophet, the snake (*Genesis*, 3 : 4-7). The snake is not ridiculed as an idiot, but is accepted by God himself as more subtle than any other wild creature (*Genesis*, 3:1). The Bible even accepts that God was proved wrong and the snake, right. For Adam and Eve did not die on eating the forbidden fruit as predicted by God. (*Genesis*, 2:15-17). On the contrary, the serpent proved correct and God admitted it: “Behold”, says God, “the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. (*Genesis*, 3:22). In other words, one myth exploited and the explosion of another was prevented. “God placed the Cherubim, and flaming sword, which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”(*Genesis*, 3 : 24). It perhaps means that the ruling class claimed itself to be immortal and this class feared that close contact between the two classes could explode that myth. Hence, perhaps the law of untouchability. Now, back to our story..

After enjoying the forbidden thing (Whatever it was) Eve felt that they were naked (*Genesis*, 3 : 8). Nakedness means the lack of something that should have been there like just wages, civil rights, etc. The prophet, the snake, made mankind for the first time conscious of the absence of such things. Perhaps, Adam and Eve became conscious that they are stripped of the fruits of their labour.

But the price for self-assertion or authenticity, was very high. God cast Adam out of Paradise (*Genesis*, 3 : 21). Thus began a trend which spread to all civilizations; security and plenty for the submissive; penury and claims of humanism, though the *Genesis* is a defence of theism or theistic humanism. The *Genesis* makes its message clear through the story of Abraham (Chapters 10–25). Abraham never rebelled; never listened to another prophet. He was ready to sacrifice his only son

when God so demanded (See *Genesis*, Ch. 22). Hence God blessed Abraham abundantly.

The same must be said about the other books, *Exodus* and *Job* which are called rebellious by Block (Bently, 1990 : 90–96) and others. The Exodus according to Block is rebellious because Moses in that book insists that God must remain true to the promise of Canaan or else he is not God (Bently, 1990 : 106). But what is the general tenor of the book? Who should obey Whom? God makes it clear to Moses : “..... if you will obey my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all people, for all the earth is mine” (*Exodus*, 19 : 5). As is well known, Israel did not get the message very straight. The penalty imposed on Israel was a sojourn of forty long years through the Arabian desert.

What is the most important message of Exodus ? We find it in the following verses. “ I am the Lord your God You shall have no other Gods before me I, the Lord, your God, am a jealous God”(*Exodus*, 20 : 1–6). Here again, we find theistic humanism in theory. In practice again, it is all God and no man.

Job is another apparently rebellious book of the Bible. Of course, we agree that Job in his weak moments and amidst his untold sufferings submitted himself to doubt, despair and even revolt. But the cardinal message of Job is that God is free to have his way with the human beings. Hence, the whole story of Job comes to an end with a most abject submission from the part of man : “*Then Job answered the Lord : I know that thou canst do all things and that no purpose of thine be thwarted....Therefore I have uttered what I did not know.....I had heard of thee by hearing of the ear but now my eyes see thee; therefore I desire myself and respond in dust and ashes.*” (*Job*, 42 : 2–6). Further, “*And the Lord restored the fortunes of Joband the Lord gave Job twice as much he had before*” (*Job*, 42 : 10). In otherwords, *Job* gives up rebellion and accepts the wages of submission, security and plenty. Hence *Job* is hardly the field in which to hunt for the seeds of revolution.

In short, there is theism against humanism in all important books of the Old Testament. The ideal prophet of the Old Testament is an agent of the status quo. God of Israel proclaims: “Behold my servant whom I have chosen..... he will not wrangle or cry aloud; nor will anyone here his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick till he brings justice to victory” (See Mathew, 12 : 18–21). Mathew asserts that this was the ideal followed by Christ (loc.cit). Christ has many faces as mentioned above. One of the them is conservatism.

Christ, the Conservative

A conservative Christ assured the Jewish hierarchy : “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfil them”. (Mathew, 5 : 17). He turned to the common man and said : “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practise and observe whatever they tell you” (Mathew, 23 : 2). He poured cold waters on the script of revolution : “Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Mathew, 11 : 29). Christ in this mood has no intention of relieving poverty or persecution. On the contrary, they are blessings according to his sermon on the mount.

“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Gods”.

“Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.”

“Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh”.

(see Luke, 6, 20–25).

In short, the *Status quo* has an honourable place in Christianity, be it (*Status quo*) slavery, feudalism or capitalism. Peter, the first pope writes :“Servants, be submissive to your masters, with all respect, not only to the good and the gentle, but also to the overbearing (Peter, 2:18). Paul too demands: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, “and” slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters” (Paul to the Colossians, 3: 18-25).

This traditionalism is predicated on a deeper justification theologically called the Predestination. Christ elaborates: “All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.” (John, 6:36). Again, “No one will come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” (John, 6 : 44). Paul presents the idea a bit more clearly: “For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined, to conform to his son..... and those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called he also justified.” (Paul to the Romans, 8 : 29–30). Paul defends the doctrine by implying that God is Almighty and can do anything with man”. Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means. For he says to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So, it depends not upon man’s will or exertion, but upon God’s mercy” (Paul to Romans, 9 : 14 – 16). Thus seen, Christ is a continuation of the Old Testament, of theistic humanism which means, as already pointed out that God is everything and man is nothing. Now we pass on to another aspect of Christ, his irrationality.

Christ, His Irrationally

The following incidence will illustrate our point. The disciples of Christ heard that Christ had come back to life. Most of them believed the story. But one of them, Thomas, was a rationalist. He insisted on evidence. Christ did satisfy Thomas by appearing before him. Hence his protest to Thomas: “Have you believed because you have seen me ? “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (John, 20 : 29).

This insistence on faith as an alternative to reason is repeated several times by Christ and his disciples. Christ, according to the Gospel was about to leave this world when he told his disciples: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark, 16 : 15–16). This should be so because Christ is an otherworldly prophet. For he made it clear to the Jews: “You are from below; I am from above; you are from this world; I am not of this world” (John, 8 : 23). Again Christ testified before Pilate: “My Kingdom is not of this world” (John, 18 : 36). So reason, the logic of this world, has no weight before Christ.

Paul writes in his very first letter to the Romans that his duty is to bring about the obedience of faith in the name of Christ. (Paul to the Romans, 1 : 5). Peter too writes in his first letter: “As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls” (I Peter, 1 : 9). Thus the neglect of reason and the acceptance of non-reason or faith, is an important mark of Christ and Christianity. Now we turn to the next theme.

Christ, The Visionary

There is a recurring message in the Gospels reinforced by Christ and the Gospel-writers that the world was about to end with the generation of Christ.

Christ specified certain signs proclaiming the end of the world and then predicted: "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly I say to you, will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the son of man comes" (Mathew, 10 : 23). Christ repeats : "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place"(Mathew, 24 : 34). Again : And he said to them : "Truly I say to you there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power" (Mark, 9 : 1). Peter too means the same thing when he points to a prophecy according to which Peter's generation was the last, or the last days had come, the days when God poured out his spirit upon all flesh (Acts, 2 : 17). Peter repeats elsewhere : "The end of all things is at hand ; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers" (I Peter, 4 : 7). The last book of the Bible, *The Revelation* to John is about what must soon take place, and blessed are those who read that book about, for the time is near (*Revelation*, 1: 1-3) Christ informs the Church of Philadelphia : "I am coming soon." (*Revelation*, 3 : 12). Christ is coming soon." according to Revelation 22 : 12 and 20. The Revelation repeats that he angel has been sent "to show his servants what must soon take place." And Christ says : "And behold I am coming soon." (*Revelation*, 22: 6).

This vision of Christ is sociologically important because the whole political economy of Christ is based on this vision. The economics of Christ is well-known.

Christ, the Revolutionary

The first point that strikes us in this context is a convert theme in the preachings of Christ. Let us consider the following texts, for example. "Then the disciples came and said to Jesus: why do you speak to them in parables ? And he answered them: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven. I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear ; nor do they understand..." (Mathew, 13: 10-13). "And he said he who has ears ti hear, let him hear" (Mathew, 13: 9), Again, " His disciples said : Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure" (John, 16 : 29). From these and similar passages one can suspect that Christ had a revolutionary message; the language, however, had to be conservative or muffled.

If we take a closer look at the life and teachings of Christ, however, we see in him a dedication to the cause of social change. He challenged the Jewish hierarchy at the small age of twelve (Luke, 2: 41-52). Then he withdrew himself upto the age of thirty because a Jew came of age at thirty. Christ unleashed a frontal attack on the Jewish system from the age of thirty. Even here he used diplomacy. As seen above (Mathew, 5 : 17), he assured the ruling class that he stood for the system.

But very imperceptibly, he moves from supporting the system to opposing it. He begins with a couple of statements in support of the Jewish ethics. Judaism, for example, forbade murder. Jesus forbids even getting angry (Mathew, 5: 21-22). After a few examples like that he introduces really new values. Let us consider the following passages: "You have heard that it was said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil" (Mathew, 5, 38-39). Again, you have heard that it was said: "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies” (Mathew, 5: 43-44). We have seen above that most of the parables were used according to Christ himself, so as to prevent the real message from reaching the Jews. Even then, the message got through and the Jews became violent against Christ. Several times they attempted to take his life (Mathew, 12: 14 and Mark, 3: 21-23 are example). There were a number of occasions on which Christ did not mince words and deliberately provoked the Jews.

Typical is the chapter (Mathew, 23) on the Scribes and the Pharisees in which Christ calls them Hypocrites, blind fools, whited tombs, etc. It appears that Marx in all his fury was milder than Jesus. He not only abused the Jews verbally but even made a call to the arms against them. On the night before his death, he told his disciples: “But let him, who has a purse take it and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one”. (Luke, 22 : 36). In the same way Christ, who called himself maker and humble, became physically violent and whipped the money-changers in the temple of Jerusalem (Luke, 19 : 45).

Jesus interprets his own action: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother” (Mathew, 10 :34). Further : “From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and the man of violence takes it by force : (Mathew, 11 : 12).

Christ indicates also that he was speaking about systemic change: not just spiritual revolution. For: “Have you never read in the scripture: the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner ?” (Mathew, 21 : 420). It is quite probable that Jesus understood himself as rejected by Judaism and that he wanted to inaugurate a new system with himself as the stone of the corner.

However, we discover the most radical tenet of Christ in his Humanism. This humanism is practically atheistic and absolute. It was very much visible in the preachings of John, the Baptist, who lay a heavier accent on human relations and social justice than on theistic humanism. The following dialogue between John, the Baptist, and his audience bear out our contention. The multitude asked him, “What then shall we do ?” And John answered: “He who has two coats, let him share with him, who has none; and who has food, let him do likewise”. Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him: “Teacher, What shall we do ? And he said to them, Rob no one by violence, or by false accusation, and be contend with your wages” (Luke, 3 : 10-15). The whole ethics of John is reduced to good human relations and withdrawal from exploitation. Christ continues with the same trend and places a heavier accent on humanism.

Christ’s humanism is the most clearly depicted in his sermon on the last judgement. Men and women in the last judgement, according to Christ, will be divided into two sections, one on the right and the other on the left. The former are blessed and invited to heavenly bliss, the latter are cursed and driven into the fires of hell. But what is the norm based on which the division is made ? It is humanism. It is absolute humanism and practical atheism. God does not play any role in the last judgement. It is man alone that is important. Not even an intention to please God is necessary. The love of the neighbour is automatically transformed into love God. But mankind does not have to know all those things. Man has only to love his neighbour. Christ says: “As you did it to one of the least of my brother, you did it to me” (Mathew, 25 : 41). Christ repeats: “As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me” (Mathew, 41 : 45).

There is no written, or oral, test on the canon law, the moral theology the postoral theology,

etc. There is only one practical test—unqualified humanism and mass-promotion or rejection is granted on this single criterion. This is the highest peak of Christian humanism and this is equivalent to the absolute or secular or atheistic humanism of Marx at least in practice. Now come the churches and Christ. We start with the early church.

The Primitive Church

The early Christians did believe in the quick return of Christ and hence practised the Christian political economy or a sort of primitive communism. For we read: “Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had everything in common. There was not a needy among them, for as many were possessors of lands or houses sold them and they brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid at the Apostles’ feet and distribution were made to each as any had need” (Acts, 4 : 32–36). But the glorious return of Christ did not take place as expected; and the divine economy began to wither away. Neither the severe punishment of Peter (Acts, 5 : 1–11) nor the sweet letters of Paul (2 Corinthians, Ch. 8, 9 and 10) could keep the divine economy going. What was the consequence? We will discuss about it below.

Christ did try to be empirical—rational and has given an empirical proof to back up his the Church’s authority: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark, 16 : 11–18). But the Church found the empirical way unworkable and has moved through the road of faith as can be seen below.

But the church knew very well that cannot actually nobody could watch the birds, walk among the flowers and forget about food and clothing. Hence the church set out most seriously collecting funds and properties and increasing them by investments. This trend was inaugurated under Constantine the great in the fourth century A.D. and reached its climax in the pre-Revolutionary France. The following are some of the noteworthy features of that era.

The priests or the First Estate of France, numbered 200,000 in 1763. The higher clergy were mostly members of the nobility. All of them were appointed by the king and approved by the pope. Many bishops and abbots took their posts for economic reasons alone. Of the 740 monasteries 625 had absentee abbots, who collected two-thirds of the revenue, lived in the world and left the governing to the care of assistants. The bishops lived mostly in Paris or Versailles and enjoyed spending 100,000 livres on a single costume. The Church owned anything from twenty per cent in some regions to six per cent in other regions of the soil of France. The monastery of St. Maur, for example, was worth twenty four millions and the abbey of Promontre had estates worth Forty-five millions.

The same trend continues even now in the church. The following are some of the telling examples. Before the Pope was despoiled of his estates, his annual income amounted to 10,000,000 dollars a year (Bello, 1968: 172). The Pope obtained an indemnity for Italy in 1929. This sum alone had developed, through investment to more than 500,000,000 dollars.

Famous is the story of Pope Julius II, commanding a military operation in deep winter to capture the fortress of Mirandola. Helmeted like an army man, the Pope won the battle and also the eulogy of Machiavelli. Erasmus, however, asked in bewilderment: What have the helmet and the mitre in common ? What connection is there between the crosier and the sword ? Between the Holy Gospel

and the buckler ? (*The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. I.P. 812).

The Holy Inquisition

The following three events bear the distinctive marks of the Feudal Church. Inquisition started in some form with the papal Bull of 1252 and got its final and terrific shape with another Bull of 1478 from Pope Sixtus IV. The most peculiar feature, apart from torture, was that the judge or the inquisitor got the property of the condemned. The inquisition of the second Bull, which is also called Spanish Inquisition, started with burning alive of six men and women on February 6th, 1481, in Seville in Spain (Roth, 1932 : 45). Later the number of victims ran into thousands.

Cecil Roth has produced the translation of documents describing the scene of the trial in which women were stripped before monks and tortured inch by inch. Even dead persons were burned post-humously. The oldest victim was a ninety-six year old lady. The only choice to the victims was to die of throttling for a small bribe or go direct to the flames.

The exact number of those burned will vary according to parties who have investigated. But considering the length of time and the vastness of the area covered, it seems that those burned were in thousands, and those only tortured and robber of their properties were in ten thousands (ibid loc cit). Archbishop of Lisbon is reported to have said: "The inquisitors attained even the infamy of sending to their prison women who persisted them, there satisfying their beastly instincts and then burning them alive" (Rao, 1963 : 43).

Witchhunting

The inquisition was closely followed by the Witchhunting. The institution of witchhunting is also very old one. In many primitive societies the community finds a scapegoat for its calamities. Sickness, drought etc.... are supposed to be caused by malicious persons who are on contract with the devil. Such unfortunates had to undergo lot of shame misery before death.

In Europe, however, even great scholars like Jean Bodin defended the practice. Some witches were supposed to have been carnally united with the devil. Plato, Alexander the great and Martin Luther were supposed to have been born from such unions between women and devils. H. E. Barnes describes briefly what happened in Europe.

In the more than two centuries that separated the papal bull of 1484 from Cotton Mather and the Salem trials in the American colonies, it is estimated by Withington that a quarter of a million persons were put to death for witchcraft that is, they died under torture or were executed after confession. The bishop of Wurzburg burned 900 witches in a single year. In addition to the hundreds of thousands brutally executed, many millions lived in continuous mortal fear lest they be accused and hideously tortured (Barnes, 1965 : 592).

War of Religions

It lasted thirty years. But the shortness of the period was made up by the intensity of its fury: For three decades (from 1618–1648) hostile German and foreign armies tramped back and forth across Germany, killing and raping, and looting the defenceless inhabitants. In the wake of Wattenstein's army of 50,000 for instance, swarmed 150,000 camp followers bent on plunder. (Harrison and Sullivan, 1969 : 353).

In Augsburg in Germany, for example, the population was reduced from eighty thousand to less than sixteen thousands. In other places from one-third to one-half of inhabitants were killed. "People grew up in ignorance and became cruel and selfish as a result of the privation of war"

(Rogers, Adams, Brown, 1935: 42).

This spirit of intolerance was carried aboard as Europeans crossed their frontiers. Even the cast-bound Hindus were astonished when, in 1560, 13092 Hindus were forcibly converted in Goa by the Portuguese. In 1578, the Paulist group, of missionaries pulled down 350 temples and converted 100,000 people. The fourth Bishop's council of Goa ordered Christian not to go to Hindu barbers for a shave. (Rao, op.cit. 44).

This much on the medieval. Now let us have a glance at the *modern church*. According to Pope Paul VI, the following documents convey the social teachings of the papacy of modern church. "Our predecessors in their grand encyclicals, Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* and John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris* not to mention the message of Pius XII to the world did not fail in the duty of their office of shedding the light of the Gospel on the social questions of their times (Pope Paul VI : 3).

Let us start with the encyclical of *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII. We find the traditional endorsement of the status quo repeated in this document also. In concrete it protests against the atrocities of Capitalism in a mild way and protects it by forbidding the working class to use violence against Capitalism. Communism, on the otherhand, is equated with the attack on private property and is rejected outright. The following statements of Pope Leo, we hope, bear out our contention. Private property is elevated to such a height that it would appear that one without property cannot go to heaven. Ownership of property is supposed to be distinctive mark of man over brutes. His Holiness states: For every man has by nature the right to, possess property as his own. This is one of the *chief points of distinction* between man and the animal creation. For the brute has no power of self-direction, but is governed by two chief instincts, which keep his powers alert, move him to use his strength and determine him to action without the power of choice (*Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII, 1939 : 5).

The Pope continues with this account viz., that man alone among animals possesses reason—it must be within his right to have things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living beings have them (ibid : 6). The Pope teaches further – we have insisted that, since it is the end of Society to make men better, the chief good that Society can be possessed of is virtue. Nevertheless, in all well-constituted State it is a by no means unimportant matter to provide those bodily and external commodities, "the use of which is necessary to virtuous action" (ibid : 21).

Two problems rise in our minds regarding this (1) sanctification of private property: Why did not Christ distribute this most important qualification to the vast majority of the people and why did he curse the wealthy instead ? (2) Should we not do something so that every member of humanity should get a share in this salutary gift ? Now back to Pope Leo XIII.

Another important trait of the encyclical is the insistence on other worldly solutions. The Pope makes clear that humanity must remain poor. It is impossible to reduce human society to level (ibid : 11). The Pope recalls God's warning to Adam: "Cursed be the earth in the work, in the toil thou shalt eat of it all the days of the life" (Ibid : 11). Since misery and poverty are God-given, no violence can be exerted in eradicating it. Thus religion teaches the laboring man and the workman to carry out honestly and well all equitable agreements freely made, never to injure capital, not to outrage the person of an employer, never to employ violence in representing his own cause (Ibid : 12).

The Pope exercises what Marx called opiation in the following words: "God has not created us for the perishable and transitory things of earth, but for things heavenly and everlasting. He has

given us this world as a place of exile, and not as our true country (ibid : 14). The solutions offered by the Church are utterly utopian. For the Church will strive to influence the mind and heart so that all may willingly yield themselves to be formed and guided by the commandments of God. It is precisely in this fundamental and principal matter, on which everything depends, that the Church has a power peculiar to itself (ibid : 17). The other encyclicals too follow the same line. The encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* for example, recommends the same veneration of property (see pp 137 F). Encyclical preaches anti-communism (see pp. 141 and 144, 155). Then utopianism too is very clear (see pp. 116). The encyclical *Atheistic communism* demands prosecution of communism very explicitly. The Church demands all diligence should be exercised by states to prevent within their territories the ravages of anti-God campaign which shakes society to its very foundation (*Atheistic Communism* : 204). Communism according to the encyclical is intrinsically wrong and no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it. (ibid : 199)

Then, the Church turns to her modest demand “Unrestricted freedom for the Church”. “At the same time the state must allow the Church full liberty to fulfill her divine and spiritual mission, and this in itself will be an effectual contribution to the rescue of nations from the dread torment of the present hour. Everywhere today there is an anxious appeal to moral and spiritual forces, an rightly so, for the evil we must combat is at its origin primarily an evil of the communistic system flow with satanic logic. Now, the Chatholic church is undoubtedly preeminent among the moral and religious forces of to-day. Therefore, the every good of humanity demands that her work be allowed to proceed unhindered (ibid : 205).

The above quoted passages recall the spirit of vengeance of inquisition of witchhunting and of wars of religion. No wonder that after reading similar passages Marx wanted the abolition of religion and weber denied objectivity to any religion or ideology.

The preceding pages do not claim, as did Voltaire, that the Chatholic church is an infamy that should be crushed. On the contrary, the Catholic church has played an important role in civilizing mankind. So Pope Paul VI makes a just claim when he says: “True to the teaching and example of her divine Founder, who cited the preaching of the Gosspe to the poor as a sign of His mission, the Church has never failed to foster the human progress of the nations to which she brings faith in Christ. Her missionaries have built not only churches but also hostels and hospitals, schools and universities, teaching the local population the means of deriving best advantages from their natural resources, missionaries have often protected them from the greed of foreigners (See the encyclical *On the Development of People*, p. 9). We agree with Paul VI but we suggest that in the following instances the Church has been more progressive: (i) The Church sided with the workers and opposed liberalisation (see the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, (pp.127, 128, 131, 156, 157). (ii) The Church accepted the use of violence for just cause, though implicitly and indirectly see the encyclical, *Progress of People*, pp. 19 where Pope Paul VI says that violence is legitimate where there is manifest long-standing tyranny, etc. (iii) The Church has agreed atleast theoretically upon the chance of convergence with communism. WE are of course, writing in a few atmosphere created by the theology of liberation. In this context we add the following remarks:

To us it seems that the Christian concept of humanism is remarkably close to Marxian humanism. Here is for example the interpretation of Gustavo Gutierrez. Christianity according to him is looking for a “new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all by his responsibility toward his brothers and toward history”. There is a need for persons who are makers of history,

“Who are truly new and artisans of new humanity”, persons moved by the desire to build a really new society. Indeed, the conciliar document asserts that beneath economic and political demands” lies a deeper and more widespread longing. Persons and societies thirst for a full and free life worthy of men-one in which they can subject to their own welfare all that the modern world can offer them so abundantly (1988 : 22 – 23). He is further conscious of the fact that catholic church is allergic to struggle for freedom. For the Church touches up the uneven spots, smoothenes the rough edges, avoids the more conflictual aspects, and stays away from the sharper confrontations among social classes and countries (ibid, 23). It is also remarkable that sin gets a sociological rather than theological interpretation. Sin, in the new definition, is to refuse to love one’s neighbours and therefore, the Lord himself. Sin, a breach of friendship with God and others, is according to the *Bible* the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which persons live (ibid : 24). Christ the saviour liberates from sin, which is the ultimate root of all description of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free, that is to say, he enables us to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human fellowship (ibid, 25). In short, the humanism which the Church pursues had its dawn already in the writings of Marx.

Conclusion

Religions and ideologies have sprung up mostly with the stated objective of enhancing the destiny of man. However, many religions have ended up using its faithful as fodder for cannons in inter-religious quarrels like the crusade, the wars of religion, etc. Still there are optimists among us who envisage inter-religious marriages for the reduction of conflicts. Christianity and Marxism are two categories of eminence with a green light from several horoscopes for an ideological alliance. Even then, there is no licence for full scale agreement. They have to practise what is called embracing by installments. Marxism, for example, is rationalist, humanist and hence also atheist through and through. Christianity on the contrary is mostly irrationalist and visionary an only humanist in the last-judgement and that too by interpretation. Hence, this paper tries to give a warning to the optimists. Christianity is perhaps more conservative, quarrelsome and clever than it appears. Look at the cleverness of the Church in claiming both the keys of heaven and of earth, when it comes to authority and only of the spiritual realm, when it comes to responsibility. The modern world demands just the opposite. The Church should have responsibility for the temporal sphere too, but its authority be confined to the spiritual realm. The destiny of millions of men and women depends on the response of the Church to this challenge of modernism.

Note: *The Biblical references of this paper are taken from The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testament Revised Standard Version, published in 1971 by W. M Collins & Co., Ltd., New York.*

References

- Barnes, H.E. 1965: *An intellectual and Cultural History of Europe*, Newyork : Dover.
- Bently, J. 1990: *Between Marx and Christ*, Delhi : Dishy Publications.
- Black, Max 1961: *The Social Theories of Talcott Parsons*,(ed.), New Lersey : Prentice Hall.
- Cohen, G.A. 1979: *Karl Marx’s Theory of History : A Defence*, London Oxford University Press.
- Friedrich, C.J. 1954: *The Philosophy of Hegel* (ed), New York: Random House.
- Gutierrez, Gustava 1988: *A Theology of Liberation*, New york: Orbits Book.
- Harison, J.B. and R.M. Sullivan 1961: *A Short History of Western Civilization*, New york : Knof.

- Hofstadter, R. 1955: *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, Boston :Beacon.
- Marx, Karl and Fredrick Engels 1848: *The individual and Society*, Moscow : Progress Publishers.
- Pope John XXIII 1961: *Mother and Teacher of all Nations*, Encyclical.
- Pope Leo XIII 1891: *On Condition of Labour*, Encyclical.
- Pope Paul VI 1967: *On the Development of People*, Encyclical.
- Pope Paul VI 1968: *On the Regulation of Birth*.
- Pope Pius XI 1931: *Quadragesimo Anno*, Encyclical.
- Pope Pius XI 1937: *Atheistic Communities*, Encyclical.
- Radhakrishnan, S. 1952: *A History of Indian Philosophy*, London :George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Rao, R.P. 1963: *Portuguese Rule in India*, Bombay : Asia Publishing House.
- Rogers, L.B. 1965: *The Story of Nations*, London : Henry Holtz. F.Adams & M.Brown
- Roth, Cecil 1937: *The Spanish Inquisition* : London.
- Sankara 1890: *Vedant Sutra* (Commentry by Sankara Tr.by George Tibaut, Part I), Oxford.
- Sankara 1947: *Vivekachuddamani* (Text in Devanagari with Tr. by Chatterjee), Madras Adayar.
- The New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. 1
- Turner, S.P. and R.A. Factor 1984: *Max Weber and the Dispute Over Reason Value*, London : R. K. Paul.
- Varickyl, Robert 1987: "Hegel, Marx and Colletti", *Social Science Probings*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 3–21.
- Varickyl, Robert 1992: "Marx, Weber and Humanism", unpublished Manuscript, Surat : Deptt. Of Sociology, S.G. Univ.