

THE BOOK OF REVELATION AND MARXISM: A CRITIQUE OF THE STATE AND PUSH FOR EMANCIPATION

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Abstract

The Book of Revelation as well as Karl Marx share a common concern. They only differed in the solution. Both authors indulge themselves in critique of the State and its abuse of power. They both proffered solutions for their audience. They both posited the poor masses as the victims of the corruption and abuse of power in the state. However, while Marx saw the solution in the power of the people, the author of the Book of Revelation insists that all the believers were to do was to bear witness by their refusal to bow to the power of Rome that there is one who is King over all the kings of the earth. For Marx, the proletariats were to rise and reclaim what was rightful theirs. The author of Revelation encourages his followers to endure martyrdom in the hope that God has the final judgement. This paper examines in detail, Marx's political thought and then, gives a summary of the teachings of the Book of Revelation together with its social setting. In the evaluation and conclusion, effort is made to show that both works criticize the state but while Marx vouches for revolution on the part of the proletariats, the Book of Revelation remains a book of Christian hope, not of triumphalism.

Keywords: Marxism, Revelation, Proletariat, Bourgeois, Beast, Judgment, Political, Society, Symbol.

Introduction

Immanuel Kant once said that it was the suggestions of David Hume that woke him from his dogmatic slumber. Just as Hume was of no little influence on Kant and just as Socrates' thoughts pushed Plato to higher heights, so Karl Marx's teachings were not unconnected with the idealism of yet another German Philosopher, George Friedrich Hegel; Feuerbach and others.

As a university student, Karl Marx (1818-1883) joined a movement known as the Young Hegelians, who strongly criticized the political and cultural

establishments of the day. He became a journalist, and the radical nature of his writings would eventually get him expelled by the Prussian government of Germany. He went over to France in 1843. With Prussian influence France and Belgium later got him expelled also. He then ran into London. In 1847 the newly formed Communist League in London prevailed on him to write the Communist Manifesto. The following year, 1848, Marx and fellow German thinker Friedrich Engels published "The Communist Manifesto," which introduced their concept of socialism as a natural result of the conflicts inherent in the capitalist system. In it, the two philosophers depicted all of history as a series of class struggles (historical materialism), and predicted that the upcoming proletarian revolution would sweep aside the capitalist system for good, making the workingmen the new ruling class of the world. In 1867, he published the first volume of "Capital" (Das Kapital), in which he laid out his vision of capitalism and its inevitable tendencies toward self-destruction, and took part in a growing international workers' movement based on his revolutionary theories.

History championed by the proponents of Capitalism, the American Propagandists have ceaselessly blamed Marx for the evils of Communism. In as much as this research is not structured in defense of Marx or Communism, it must be mentioned that what ended as Communism is not really the thoughts of Marx as we shall see shortly. Just as every good idea is open to the public and many got hijacked, so Marx's thoughts were hijacked and catapulted to its logical conclusion very much distanced from the conceptions of the purported originator.

Marx's primary concern was how the human person could be emancipated. He was not comfortable with the wide gap between the rich and the poor. Equitability is his watch word. Classicism and class divided must be repudiated. This can only be possible with a revolution. It is not a revolution similar to the French Revolution that preceded his day and that really pushed most of his contemporaries like Hegel into their philosophical radicalism. It is a revolution that must come from the people. It must begin with the workers knowing their rights and claiming it. It is a movement that must eschew every form of injustice. It is the struggle of the workers class against the domineering upper class. He believes that this would get rid of the social divide and lead to classless society.

In a similar vein, the author of the Book of Revelation was concerned with the injustices and persecutions against the Christians of his day. They needed a dependable pinnacle of hope and help at this period of hopelessness and gory

situation. The Book of Revelation met with this challenge. It is also called the book of Apocalypse. It remains one of the most puzzling books of the New Testament. For some, the book of Revelation is a genuine apostolic representation of the end of history. For others, it is a valuable monument from a historical crisis in the history of Christianity. Still few consider it a weakly Christianized Judaism (Kümmel 1995). It is a book of revelation in as much as the author claims to have received revelations from God concerning what is to take place (Apoc 1,1) though Hemer (1989) has reservations regarding problems raised by Rev 1. It is an apocalypse because with its exotic imageries it belongs to a type of literature called apocalyptic (Burkett 2002). It is a book that is both spiritual and a critique of the state. As a spiritual book, it addresses believers and encourages resilience and faithfulness in the face of adversity and crises. It gives them assurance of hope. It wants them to believe that there cannot be a crown unless there is first a cross. It posits their sufferings and persecutions as preludes to their glory which will come with the kingdom of God. It is written at the end of the first century and tackles the problem of the Roman persecution of Christianity. This paper submits that the purpose of the author was to inspire hope and confidence in his readers. Pregeant (1998) very strongly documented that the author's appeal was not to the intellectual urge to calculate but to the deep-seated emotional needs of his readers. The emotional need was encouragement in the face of sufferings and apparent hopelessness. Faced with persecutions and seeming ostracisms the author feels the need to convince his audience that after rain comes sunshine. They must know that God in history always permitted the worst to happen to His people before His intervention. But then, His apparent silence in the face of sufferings is for the good of His people. The end is always victorious for those who remain faithful. To achieve his end, the author drew from standard apocalyptic repertoire to develop multiple symbols shaped by his extensive literary sources. By using multiple symbols, he immersed the audience in imaginative portrayals of God's judgment on the one hand and the blessedness of the eschatological rule. God controls the course of history and ultimately exercises coercive power over the forces of evil in bringing them to final judgment. The author in the lines and pages of Revelation and also in the attributes used of God demonstrates Him to be all powerful. Crisis may rock. Persecution may destroy many. Lives may be lost but Divine Sovereignty remains indubitable. Despite the closeness of the end of the world in the view of the author, the book of Revelation remains a secure foundation in the transmission of revelations. It continues in the same vein as the Old Testament wisdom literature like the book of Daniel in that it reads in the present stress the

chance to see the creative activity and dealings in history of God's wisdom and to live according to the guidelines, even with the dangers of persecution. It emphasizes a strong hope in imminent rescue in the last judgment. There is radical rejection of the present and move to ethical dualism in which salvation is now only expected at the future last judgment (Dormeyer, 1998). God will eventually bring all to judgment as the Alpha and Omega, the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. The wrath of God is aimed at those who refuse to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and follow the beast.

Hegel's Influence On Marx's Political Thoughts

Just as faith translates hope into reality (Heb. 11,1), so it could be said that Marx translated Hegel's idealism into political reality. He modified Hegel's movement of the Absolute Spirit and thesis - antithesis -synthesis theory to get his dialectical materialism. Just as Hegel believes that for there to be synthesis, there must be an antithesis against an accepted thesis. The collision between both eventually gives rise to the synthesis which generally is better than the former thesis. Faced with the conflicts and confusions which convulsed Europe after the French Revolution, Hegel aimed to unify and reconcile them in a unified and all-embracing system of thought. Unification operated in two directions. On the one hand, the contradictory aspects of modern society had to form an organic whole. On the other hand, the stages of development of Western philosophy, summed up in its categories, formed a single process, called Mind or Spirit. The movement of world history was identical with this development of thought. In the unfolding of the Idea, each stage of development was 'its own time expressed in thought'. Hegel had shown that social life did not develop in line with some 'natural' characteristics with which humans were endowed, but was the outcome of their own work and the struggle to comprehend this work. The development of philosophy was thus the movement of freedom, as humans became conscious that the world which confronted them was indeed the outcome of their own work. For instance, the antagonisms between individuals in 'civil society' must be contained by a rational higher power, the State (The Absolute Spirit), which seeks to represent the needs of the collective activity of society. Hegel calls this 'Objective Spirit'.

Hegel had pulled the whole tradition of philosophy into a single system. He has a great influence on Marx but not without criticisms. Marx's critique of Hegel confronted that tradition as a whole. When Hegel revealed the element of reconciliation to be at the heart of philosophy as such, Marx agreed with him, but

saw this as the proof that philosophy had to be negated. Marx demonstrates that neither social antagonism nor the State's response to it were logically necessary, as Hegel alleged, but expressed only a particular stage of historical development. Transcending the antagonisms of modern society implied, not a new philosophical synthesis, but a practical revolution in which the State and its basis in private property would be transcended. Marx (1998) sees that taking the standpoint of human society and social humanity, that is, the standpoint of communism, is the only way to grasp what society is. Thus, what his philosophical predecessors faced as their central problem Marx takes as his starting-point. Based on this, Marx posited the idea of historical class struggle. He believes that the poor people who work for the bourgeoisies are cheated. They do the work in factories while the rich seat back at home to enjoy the proceeds and only pay them little salary. He is concerned with the wide gap between the bourgeoisies and the proletariats and believes that a revolution by the later against the former will lead to a classless society whereby every person would be equal. Smith (1998) says of Marx that his entire life's work is the critique of the highest forms of established knowledge, so as to get to the heart of the struggle of humanity for its emancipation.

He is convinced that the anatomy of the civil society must be sought in political economy. To do this, he sees in Hegel fundamental thoughtlines to develop his ideas. As a result, he writes a manuscript titled *Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Although Marx wrote this in 1843, it only became available in the 1950s and 1960s. It deals with a section of Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1820), and so was undertaken before he had read much about communism and before he had begun to see the proletariat as the force for revolutionary change. The *Philosophy of Right* became so important because in it, the last book Hegel published in his life-time, was epitomized the entire tradition of political thought, stretching back to ancient Greece. When he had finished his critique, Marx understood that private property, whose laws were sought by political economy, formed the basis on which political life was founded, and that a truly human society implied the transcendence of both property and the State. Now we can see the radical nature of Marx's critical reworking of the tradition. Being sure that the mass of people had to and would be able to govern themselves, his answers were addressed, not to kings and princes, but to all of us. After the scalpel of critique had done its work of dissection on the body of philosophy, this knowledge could be put into the hands of those who are without power or property. To actualize the wisdom of the philosophers, the propertiless and

powerless ones had to abolish both private property and State power, making possible the free association and free development of all humans as social individuals. In his earlier writings, Marx called this idea 'true democracy'. Later, (to avoid misunderstandings!), he called it 'communism': the real movement to transform social life was the struggle to 'win the battle of democracy' (Marx and Engel, 2005), through the transcendence of private property. Only when private property had ceased to set individuals against each other could they unite in a free, self-governing community. He did not accept Hegel's idea of Democracy and Monarchism. He teaches that Hegel proceeds from the state and makes man into the subjectified state; democracy starts with man and makes the state objectified man. Just as it is not religion that creates man but man who creates religion, so it is not the constitution that creates the people but the people which creates the constitution. In a certain respect democracy is to all other forms of the state what Christianity is to all other religions. Christianity is the religion *kat exohin*, the essence of religion, deified man under the form of a particular religion. In the same way democracy is the essence of every political constitution, socialised man under the form of a particular constitution of the state. It stands related to other constitutions as the genus to its species; only here the genus itself appears as an existent, and therefore opposed as a particular species to those existents which do not conform to the essence. Democracy relates to all other forms of the state as their Old Testament. Man does not exist because of the law but rather the law exists for the good of man. Democracy is human existence, while in the other political forms man has only legal existence. That is the fundamental difference of democracy.

The Influence Of Feuerbach On Marx's Political Thought

Feuerbach sees religion as opium of the people. Karl Marx took this idea to its logical conclusion. Marx's conception of *critique* is central to all his work. At any rate from about 1843 onwards, what he means by it is something quite precise. The critique of a science means to show that its fundamental assumptions and categories are expressions of an inhuman way of life. Negating these assumptions, scientifically and in practice, make it possible to preserve what is human about it. The clearest illustration is his 'critique of religion', which is 'the premise of all critique'. Marx is not concerned merely to follow 'irreligious criticism', by arguing against the truth of religious belief. Instead, his aim is to uncover the roots of such belief in the actual lives of individuals, and to reveal its meaning in their oppression and misery. Religion is then seen to be 'the heart of

a heartless world', and the way is opened for the overthrow of those inhuman conditions to which it is the response. In his quest for revolution, he felt that religion is really a diluting agent. In the church, people are taught to forgive their enemies and to always turn the other cheek. They are told that their reward is in heaven. Marx saw these as opposed to his vision of convincing the poor people about their rights and the need for them to rise against classicism. Thus he moved against religion.

Marx's Political Philosophy

Before Marx could begin his critique of socialism and of political economy, he had a great deal of preliminary work to do. To understand the limitation of the political emancipation for which the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had fought so hard, he had to tackle the nature of politics itself. Although he never published any work dealing specifically with the State, his study of political philosophy, made in the years before 1844, was the essential prelude to all of his later work. In the celebrated 1859 Preface to his *Critique of Political Economy*, he explains the importance of this study as follows:

The first work which I undertook to dispel the doubts assailing me was a critical re-examination of the Hegelian philosophy of law My inquiry led me to the conclusion that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life, the totality of which Hegel, following the example of English and French thinkers of the eighteenth century, embraces within the term 'civil society'; that the anatomy of this civil society, however, has to be sought in political economy (123).

The leading 19th C theorist of socialism, Marx prided himself on having discovered the "laws" which governed the operation of the capitalist system, laws which would inevitably lead to its collapse. His form of socialism, in which the socialist party leaders would guide the working class in a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in order to destroy the capitalist system by means of a revolution, should be distinguished from the "utopian socialists", who wanted to create small, voluntary communities where socialism could be put into practice, and the "social democrats" or "labour parties", which planned to work peacefully within the parliamentary system in order to bring about piecemeal socialist reform.

Marx's political thought could be summarized following his nine basic tenets as follows :

Alienation: is the separation of a person from his humanity by the exploitations of capitalism. He calls it Estranged Labor. Marx lays out here his theory on the alienation of labor. His thesis would advance the view put forth by Rousseau that the social contract as Locke understood it would be a swindle by the rich. In this swindle an economic system is made the law though it leaves workers estranged or alienated from their labor and the product of their labor and inevitably estranged from themselves and their humanity –it dehumanizes the worker by turning him/her into a commodity and a machine. The central argument is that the present economic system is one that involves the alienation of the worker. When the worker is estranged from the product of his labor, when “the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object” then the worker becomes “poorer the more wealth he produces”. Also “an ever cheaper commodity, the more commodities he creates” as the value of the world of things increases, so the value of the world of men decreases and the worker becomes poorer not only in a strictly economic sense but his inner world is poorer the less that belongs to him as his own. In perhaps somewhat of an existentialist point Marx draws again an analogy with religion: “The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself”. When the worker is not the owner of the product of his labor not only does the product of his labor become an alien object, his labor itself becomes an object, that is alien to him: The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien. The laws of political economy determine that the worker “becomes a slave of his object”: the more value he creates, the more valueless he becomes the better formed the product of his labor, the more deformed becomes the worker. The more civilized the product of his labor, the more barbarous becomes the worker. The more powerful his labor becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker. The more ingenious the labor becomes, the less ingenious becomes the worker. Marx would agree with Smith that the division labor produces wealth for the rich but wants to emphasize the privation it produces for the worker. It produces palaces for the rich, but hovels for the worker. It produces beauty for the rich, but deformity for the worker. The advancement of technology produces more wealth for the rich by replacing labor with machines but in doing so it leaves for some

workers only a barbarous type of labor and for others, the workers themselves are turned into machines. It produces intelligence for some, “but for the worker stupidity, cretinism”. The central issue is the relationship between the worker and his production Marx emphasizes that the worker is alienated not only from the product of his production but also from the very process of production the worker is thus alienated from his life activity what lead to, or constitutes the alienation of labor. For Marx the source of the alienation of the worker is that he does not own his labor: First, the fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being, that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. Marx suggests that the system of ‘political economy’ is really a system of ‘forced labor’ or slavery. Lastly, the external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else’s, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Marx elaborates on the notion of the dehumanizing effect of this alienated labor: As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels freely active in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal. At this point Marx develops another theme: that the system of ‘political economy’ not only alienates the worker (1) from the product of his labor and, in doing so, alienates him from the objects of nature (2) and the process of his labor and, in doing so, alienates the worker from himself there is also another aspect of the alienation of the worker (3) the worker is alienated from his “spiritual essence, his human being”. Marx’s point here develops from an argument about what constitutes the Social & Political Philosophy. The essential difference between human beings and animals, the principle difference, Marx, argues is that human beings have the capacity to choose their being. Animals simply are their life activity—they don’t have a choice in determining their life activity. The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. This is what Marx means by defining the human being as a “species being” as a conscious being. The human being determines what being human is. It is just because of this that he is a species being. Or rather, it is only because he is a species being that he is a

conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labor reverses this relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life activity, his essential being, a mere means to his existence. whereas an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself, or for its young. Human beings produce even when immediate needs are satisfied. The human being “only truly produces in freedom” thus, when the worker is alienated from his labor he is estranged from his “species being” and thus from his spiritual essence there is then one final aspect of this alienation of the worker (4) the worker is alienated from his fellow men. An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labor, from his life activity, from his species being is the estrangement of man from man. as the individual worker is estranged from his essential nature he is also estranged from others.

Base and superstructure: Economic needs, according to Marx, are the basis of all societal action. The needs need to be determined, then the superstructure of the aspects which will provide for those needs will commence. Marx notes his starting point to be the “premises of political economy”. What Marx is referring to by ‘political economy’ is that form of political theory that derives from Locke in which the primary function of government is the protection of private property and the economic theory that begins with the assumption of private property and a social division between private property owners and propertyless workers. Marx closes the opening paragraph with the assertion that the economic system established by this ‘political economy’ divides humanity into two distinct classes: “the property owners and the propertyless workers.” Marx will later refer to these separate classes as the proletariat (the workers) and the bourgeoisie (the property owners). Marx notes that the theorists of ‘political economy’ (such as Adam Smith) begin with the fact of private property but are not able to explain private property. They have abstract formulas that describe how the system works and they understand or take these formulas as laws but they do not quite comprehend how these laws arise from the nature of private property. Marx’s central thesis is that the consequences of this economic system are not quite comprehended either: The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are greed and the war amongst the greedy – competition.

Class consciousness: The awareness of the classes of society and their importance to the overall picture.

Exploitation: Marx vehemently asserted that a society of classes will result in one class taking advantage of (or exploiting) another. Marx is referring to the transformation from the feudal to the capitalist system where a doctrine of competition replaced a doctrine of monopoly and a doctrine of the freedom of the crafts replaced a doctrine of the guild and doctrine of the division of landed property replaced a doctrine of the big estate 'political economy'. Marx contends, how competition, freedom of the crafts, and the division of landed property Social & Political Philosophy were the "necessary, inevitable and natural consequences" of the feudal property system. Marx contends that one must begin with "economic facts" need to understand the connections between private property, greed, and the separation of labor between capital and landed property, between exchange and competition, between value and the devaluation of men "the connection between this whole estrangement and the money system". Marx thus ridicules the starting point of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau of going back to a state of nature or, as Marx notes, "a fictitious primordial condition". Such an analysis "explains nothing" it assumes as fact what is supposed to be deduced. It draws an analogy to Theology which explains the problem of evil with the concept of the fall of man when it is precisely this notion of the fall of man that needs to be explained. Marx will turn from this starting point in a fictional past to a starting point grounded in "an economic fact of the present".

Historical materialism: Marx was the first to identify this phenomenon, which is the study of the way in which humans have been affected by, and struggled to attain, material wealth. He talks of private property. He teaches that men (workers) have always struggled to labor only to end up producing private property for others. Marx here turns to the relationship between the worker and the owner of his labor. We must bear in mind the previous proposition that man's relation to himself only becomes for him objective and actual through his relation to the other man. Thus, if the product of his labor, his labor objectified, is for him an alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him. Marx's central point is that private property is not the starting point. It is rather the consequence of alienated labor: Through estranged, alienated labor, then, the worker produces the relationship to this labor of a man alien to labor and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labor creates the relation to it of the capitalist (or whatever one chooses to call the master of labor). Private property is thus the

product, the necessary consequence, of alienated labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself. Thus, it is not private property that is the cause of alienated labor, but alienated labor that is the cause of private property. Again, drawing the analogy with religion, he argues that it becomes clear that though private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labor, it is rather its consequence, just as the gods are originally not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Marx acknowledges that the relationship between alienated labor and private property becomes reciprocal just as private property is the product of alienated labor private property becomes the source of alienated labor, "the means by which labor alienates itself".

Means of production: The manner in which workers produce products.

Ideology: According to Marx, this is only a term that is used to express the manner in which people are persuaded to believe representations as if they were reality.

Mode of production: The means implemented to generate production. This includes machinery and human labor.

Political economy: Peruses the manner of production, and how it interfaces with the economy. Marx tries to apply the analysis of alienated labor:

(1) the issue of wages the system of political economy gives everything to private property and nothing to labor. The result of this is that wages and private property are identical. Marx thus does not think that a forced increase in wages would make a significant difference. An enforced increase of wages (disregarding all other difficulties, including the fact that it would only be by force, too, that higher wages, being an anomaly, could be maintained) would therefore be nothing but better payment for the slave, and would not win either for the worker or for labor their human status and dignity.

(2) the issue of the emancipation of workers from the relationship of estranged labor to private property. It follows further that the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in the political form of the emancipation of the workers; not that their emancipation alone is at stake, but because the emancipation of workers contains universal human emancipation.

At the end of the essay Marx turns to two problems 1) the general nature of private property in relation to truly human and social property 2) how alienated labor is rooted in the nature of human development.

Criticism Of Marx's Political Philosophy

Karl Marx must be praised for his boldness in responding to current problems of his day. His love and concern for all very well reflected in his thoughtful coinage of classlessness is one that invites emulation. Entrepreneurs who prey on their employees must hearken to the gospel of Marx and be just to their workers.

Marx's works as bold and appealing as they seem are not without some notable flaws.

Some scholars postulated some criticisms against Marx's theory of values. The first one who really attempted to answer this question was Dr. Conrad Schmidt (1989). He seeks to reconcile the details of the formation of commodity prices with the theory of value and with an average rate of profit. The industrial capitalist receives in his product, first, an equivalent for the capital advanced by him, and second, a surplus-product for which he has not paid anything. But in order to earn his surplus-product, he must advance capital for its production. He must employ a certain quantity of materialized labor for the purpose of appropriating this surplus-product. For the capitalist, the capital advanced by him represents the quantity of materialized labor which is socially necessary for the production of his surplus-product. This applies to every industrial capitalist. Now, since commodities, according to the theory of value, are exchanged for one another in proportion to the social labor required for their production, and since the labor necessary for the manufacture of the capitalist's surplus-product is accumulated in the capital of the capitalist, it follows that surplus-products are exchanged in proportion to the capitals required for their production, and not in proportion to the labor actually incorporated in them. Hence the share of each unit of capital is equal to the sum of all produced surplus-values divided by the sum of the capitals employed in production. Accordingly, equal capitals yield equal profits in equal times, and this is accomplished by adding the cost price of the surplus-product figured on the basis of the average profit to the cost price of the paid product and selling both the paid and unpaid product at this increased price. Thus, the average rate of profit arises in spite of the fact that, according to Schmidt, the average prices of commodities are determined by the law of value.

Further, Marx's idea of a classless society sounds very idealistic and unrealistic. It is at the most a mere *flatus vocis*. It can best be described as a theoretical possibility without serious foundation in reality. The fact is that it is not even in the nature of man. Human society is naturally ordered hierarchically. If classlessness is realized in our work places, what of in the family? Will the father no longer retain his position as the father and the son as the son. In a case where the son works in his father's factory, what would now be the case?

His attacks on religion lacks objectivity. He capitalized on the exploitation of some people by some church men to wrongly interpret and discredit religion. Imagine a world without religion! Take religion away, morals will go with time. If morals go, the same human beings he fought to emancipate would end up being in more serious chains to criminalities and dehumanizations as right and wrong would become totally relativized.

A Brief On The Book Of Revelation

The book of Revelation is also called the book of Apocalypse. It remains one of the most puzzling books of the New Testament. For some, the book of Revelation is a genuine apostolic representation of the end of history. For others, it is a valuable monument from a historical crisis in the history of Christianity. Still few consider it a weakly Christianized Judaism (Kümmel 1995). It is a book of revelation in as much as the author claims to have received revelations from God concerning what is to take place (Apoc 1,1) though Hemer (1989) has reservations regarding problems raised by Rev 1. It is an apocalypse because with its exotic imageries it belongs to a type of literature called apocalyptic (Burkett 2002). It is a book that is both spiritual and a critique of the state. As a spiritual book, it addresses believers and encourages resilience and faithfulness in the face of adversity and crises. It gives them assurance of hope. It wants them to believe that there cannot be a crown unless there is first a cross. It posits their sufferings and persecutions as preludes to their glory which will come with the kingdom of God. It is written at the end of the first century and tackles the problem of the Roman persecution of Christianity. With Christianity still illegal in the Roman Empire, there was no end of conflict in sight despite periods of respite between aggressive persecutions. The author gives a forecast of more stormy weather before the skies would clear. He expected an imminent parousia and so encouraged the Church experiencing persecution by depicting in a vision the overthrow of Rome and the return of Jesus to establish the kingdom of God

(Marxsen 1976). The author paints his thoughts with all important ecstatic imaginative language. It is not a language laddened with rigorous logic but of religious inspiration. The exotic imageries convey the awesomeness of God. The reader arrested by the imageries adopted sees himself removed from the world of daily troubles and historical despair and placed before the throne of God. The reader captivated by thoughts only imagines that at last God is bringing history to its fulfillment.

The book of Apocalypse though written for Christians, is not devoid of influence by Hebrew prophecy just like other apocalyptic books. Many of its images and symbols have long history in Judaism and in surrounding religious cultures. Its emphasis on the immortality of the individual is in line with Hellenistic consciousness. Its adoption of the figure of Satan with a host of demonic assistants coupled with torment for the unrighteous is an offshoot of later apocalypses and Persian Zoroastrianism. Generally, the book is a combination of disappointment with the present (Apoc 1,9; 2,10; 7,14) and a continuing hope for the Rule and Sovereignty of God. The author presents the woes suffered by believers as precedents to the end of the age and prelude to God's final victory in which crying and pain will be no more (Apoc 21,4). By declaring an end to oppression he declares the beginning of freedom. In proclaiming the end of human injustice, he proclaims the justice of the Rule and Sovereignty of God. He writes to instill hope in a people who felt marginalized and oppressed. He made efficient use of symbols to communicate his message. For scholars the symbols could be interpreted as steno-symbols, that is, standing for something outside the text (Minear 1968). Religiously, they can also function as a symbol of oppressive, God-denying power in any time or place. The visionary looks forward to the ultimate healing of the nations (Rev 22,2). The reverse side of the judgment is that of hope, joy and reconciliation. Fiorenza (1981) rightly notes that the strength of Revelation's language and images is not necessarily in theological argumentation or historical information but in their evocative power inviting imaginative participation. The symbols elicit emotions, feelings and convictions that cannot be fully conceptualized. Apocalypse has mythopoetic language akin to poetry and drama.

Apart from evoking emotions, the visionary also deals with cognitive dissonance by inducing "catharsis" or cleansing of emotions and so enables his readers to express and ultimately manage their fear of Roman power and resentment of Roman wealth (Collins 1984). He also by imagining a heavenly reality in which

the crucified Jesus is already enthroned and by announcing an already determined future in which the forces of oppression are overcome he tries to convince his audience that what ought to be is. He lets them participate imaginatively in the eschatological peace in the here and now. He does not depict Christians as combating Rome or Satan, but he presents Christ and God as defeating and judging these forces. He constantly transfers his aggressive feelings to other subjects and to eschatological future. Notable also is his introduction of the strategy of internalization in which he encourages his audience to embrace a life of asceticism and martyrdom in relation to wealth, sexuality and participation in the general future.

In essence therefore, the author of the book of Apocalypse recognizes the heart-rending situation of persecution facing the Christians. Obviously, many might be scandalized into losing hope. The author is consistent in his conviction that all hope is not lost. Cataclysms would be on the increase. More sufferings would still come. Believers are encouraged to embrace all with the hope that the time is at hand for God to overthrow the enemy, establish peace and his divine sovereignty.

Social Setting And Purpose Of The Book Of Revelation

The book of Revelation like other apocalyptic works is an offshoot of a hope for the future nursed by a contingent of people who are dissatisfied with the present world. They looked forward to a divine intervention to bring about a more satisfactory world. The dissatisfaction arose during the time of persecutions by the Roman Empire. The Christians were dissatisfied with Rome who not only made no separation between the Religion and the State but also persecuted Christians. Rome promoted state religion including Emperor cult. All were expected to participate in it. The Jews were exempted because of the Romans' recognition of their adherence to ancient monotheistic religion. The Christians on the other hand received no such exemption. In the words of Dormeyer (1998):

Christianity and Judaism were seen as closely related due to their historical dependency and common writings. Religio-politically speaking, at the turn of the century or maybe even earlier from the persecutions under Nero, Christianity separated off as a new religion. It was made a *religio illicita* and deprived of the monotheistic privilege enjoyed solely by Judaism under Rome, as is documented in the exchange of letters between the

governor in Asia Minor, Pliny the Younger, and the Emperor Trajan. (p. 40)

Their refusal to practice the state religion was seen as unpatriotism, atheism and arrogance. They on their part saw the state religion as opposed to their faith in Christ. Conflict between the two therefore was inevitable. It is within this setting that the author of the book of Revelation wrote. He focused on the future to encourage people suffering unjustly in the present with the assurance of the intervention of the divine. It gives them hope by predicting that good would eventually triumph over evil. The author is convinced that God is sovereign and would surely punish the unjust and reward the good. The author marries symbolic images with his theme that the sufferings and persecutions are all preludes to the return of Christ for final judgment and creation of a new earth. His purpose was simply to correct the churches, encourage and exhort them. In the words of Marxsen (1976):

Properly understood, therefore, the author does not seek to encourage us to indulge in fanciful speculations; his aim rather is soberly to kindle into new life the hope that is growing faint under the oppression of the forces of the State – without extenuating or denying in any way the present distress that is still to come – and at the same time to issue a call to loyalty and perseverance. (p.276)

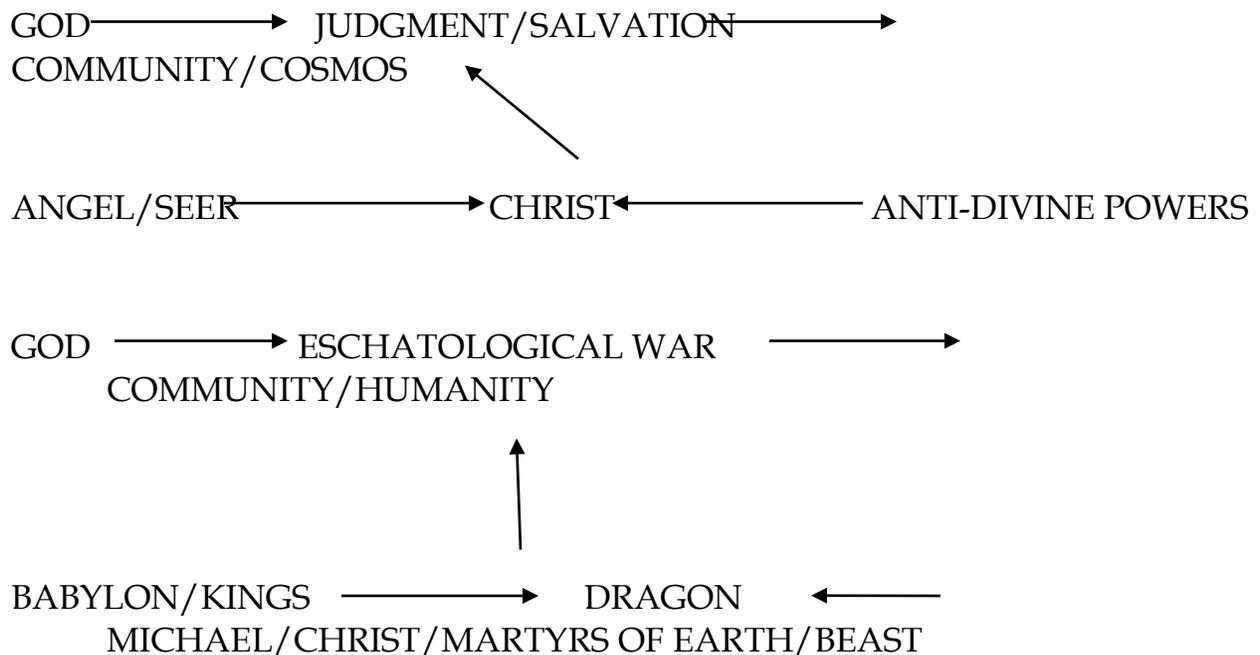
Evaluation and Conclusion

A critical look at this paper shows that Karl Marx as well as the author of the Book of Revelation have a meeting point. Both were moved to write because of the deplorable situation in their respective states and times. They were concerned with paving way for a lasting solution for their respective audiences. But while Marx saw the solution as lying in man's power, the author of Revelation upholds God's sovereignty. Marx pushes for class struggle. The author or Revelation settles for resilience in faith and readiness for martyrdom believing that the world is ephemeral. Eternity is the lasting vision. For Marx, religion must be gotten rid of. For Revelation, it is the bedrock, the foundation and dependable pinnacle in times of necessity.

Marx was pushed by the deplorable condition of the workers in Eastern Europe. The philosophies and thoughts of radical thinkers before him formed his source. Concern for the poor masses, the proletariat was his courage. The initial prize he

paid was expulsion from his home land and even from a welcoming country. He was not daunted. The open arms of Britain accommodated him. His meeting with other top minds disenfranchised like him with the economic quagmire of his country made his ideas erupt like a volcano smoldering for years. The lava gave birth to his "communist manifesto". The contents were convincing. The poor ought to stand and defend their rights. Religion that was thought to be an agent of delusion was thrown overboard. The effect was revolution that overthrew the existent economic system and gave birth to a new wave that would see every person enjoy equal right. There would be no more private property ownership. It is now every person for the government. The idea was to obliterate the great and yawning divide between the proletariats and the bourgeoisies.

On the contrary, the author of the Book of Revelation uses a style that pushes his listeners to see everything from the perspective of heaven. It is filled with symbols of disjunction and separation. Since the listeners following the authors literary style see everything from heavenly perspective as if all is predetermined, they necessarily feel transported to those realms. Life belongs there. Continuing life on earth is unimportant. The real life is in heaven. One must not therefore be afraid of martyrdom. Perkins (1978) has two good graphic representations the functions within Revelation:



The essence of seeing things as if decision is all done in heaven is not to make people relax to the inevitable but to inspire them to a courageous faith in God's power to conquer the forces of evil. Humanity is surrounded by storm of events. Man struggles to achieve happiness and peace. He works against terrific odds. Setbacks are encountered here and there. The author of Revelation in very attractive picturesque presents all these in a dramatic cosmic scale. He assures his audience that because the risen Christ is the Lord of history and because the power of the incarnate God is unconquerable the progress of humanity towards salvation is assured. Still it is not a human achievement. It is a divine gift based on God's sovereignty.

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