

kind of creature to emerge, a human being in *our* image, yours and Mine" (italics his, pp. 72–73). . . . They [Adam and Eve] must leave the garden and *no longer* eat the fruit of the Tree of Life" (italics mine, p. 73).

We all, as Paul said, see through a glass

darkly as yet. We find and then usually defend and try to propagate our own glimpses of truth and our own brands of comfort. In my view, Kushner has produced a world view as flawed as those which he quite admirably critiques.

## Marxism and Mormonism

*Marxism: An American Christian Perspective*, by Arthur F. McGovern. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1980, 330 pp., \$12.95

Reviewed by John R. Pottenger, a Ph.D. candidate in government and politics at the University of Maryland.

MOST MORMONS, in fact Christians in general, would avoid reading a book on Marxism. Any mutually acceptable alliance has always been scuttled by equally mutual suspicion between Marxists and Christians. Carrying on the tradition of the Marxist-Christian dialogues of the 1960s, Arthur F. McGovern analyzes possibilities for philosophical accommodation and describes Christian movements that claim to have successfully combined their biblical values with Marxist social analysis. Significantly for Mormons or mainstream Christians, McGovern demonstrates that atheism and materialism, traditionally the most offensive elements of Marxism for religious readers, are not necessary elements of Marxist socialism.

Like Adam Smith and James Madison, Marx realized that a special and possibly crucial relationship exists between the economic and political realms and that a proper understanding of this relationship is essential for effective problem-solving. Sophisticated social theories have since evolved which retain initial Marxian insights and receive scholarly recognition alongside those derived from such social thinkers as Max Weber and Sigmund Freud. Unlike Weber and Freud, most Christians have dogmatically asserted the

impossibility of a Marxist-Christian alliance. Nevertheless, social theories within the Marxist philosophical tradition have revealed invaluable insights into the origins of current political, economic, and social problems both in the United States and abroad.

The current economic depression in the United States and the burgeoning membership of the LDS Church in Latin America have brought increased awareness among Mormons of the severe problems of unemployment, poverty, and even political oppression. That Mormons should line up against Marxism in the historical antipathy shown by other Christian churches is unfortunate. We have thus cut ourselves off from much perceptive and scholarly research. McGovern's book suggests a possible resolution of this problem that could be very valuable to Mormons.

Although sympathetic to a Marxist-Christian dialogue, McGovern accepts and critiques the challenges posed by various Marxist claims and Christian attitudes. He deals quite effectively with the three greatest objections that Christians have to Marxism: atheism, materialism, and the stinging accuracy of most Marxist critiques of modern societies.

McGovern begins by presenting an overview of the evolution of Marx's thought and that of his intellectual heirs, focusing particular attention on atheism and materialism. Fortunately, he sketches the intellectual development of Marx's own thought without using esoteric jargon. He reveals crucial qualitative differences among Marx, Engels, and Lenin. For example, quite early Marx recognized that

the loss of individual freedom was the most important issue of modern times; thus, he examined the institutions of religion that dealt directly and openly with freedom of conscience. His assessment of religion, like that of Thomas Jefferson and other earlier observers, criticized the importance given to ecclesiastical authority and blind faith at the expense of individual freedom and reason.

However, as McGovern points out, the issue of religion ended up occupying only a secondary place in Marx's thought. "By the fall of 1843 Marx had come to realize that religion should not be the main focus of his criticism. Religion was only a symptom of what was wrong, not a basic cause" (p. 248). The source of the problem lay, he felt, in the material basis of society. Marx (and later Engels) determined that organized religion had historically supported the prevailing political and economic power, even though it was potentially viable as an agent of reform. (Even a superficial study of Mormon history would reveal how Joseph Smith attempted, to the point of martyrdom, to reconstitute religious institutions upon a prophetic and moral foundation.)

McGovern further documents how Engels, but not necessarily Marx, outlawed metaphysical questions, including theological inquiry, from scientific investigation. Influenced by the successes of the natural sciences in explaining physical reality, Engels focused strictly on the material aspect of society. He attempted to systematize Marx's thoughts on economics by providing scientific grounding for them. Although neither Marx nor Engels moved openly against religion, McGovern maintains that "a more hostile and militant atheism did, however, arise with Marxism, and Lenin bears much of the responsibility for its development" (p. 264). In short, McGovern concludes that atheism and materialism are not *essential* elements of Marxist socialism.

In the next section of the book, McGovern contrasts two major approaches — "orthodox Marxism" and "critical Marx-

ism." He shows clearly that the influence on Engels's systematizing of Marx's writing greatly influenced Lenin and those who have followed Lenin in this tradition. Unfortunately, by comparison, his treatment of "unorthodox" variations of contemporary Marxism, such as critical theory, is less thorough. He focuses (briefly) on Jurgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse, neglecting such crucial figures as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Erich Fromm. Yet despite his cursory treatment of critical theory, McGovern successfully demonstrates both the variety and the disparity among contemporary Marxist thinkers.

In discussing both the dynamics and the adverse effects of capitalism from a Marxist perspective, McGovern demonstrates that other approaches often merely describe social problems and thus lack sufficient explanatory power. Alternatively, "Marxists have long argued that there are *structural* reasons for these failures, that inequality, oppression, powerlessness, and false values are natural consequences of the very logic of the capitalist system" (p. 135).

Perhaps one of the most valuable insights of Marxist social analysis reveals not only the interrelatedness of such social problems as unemployment and capital accumulation, but also the *logic* that maintains and exacerbates these problems. "Expansion and profit-maximization are not simply a consequence of the greed of individual capitalists; they flow from the very logic of the system itself" (p. 137).

Certain similarities to early Mormon experiences come to mind as McGovern analyzes Catholic and Protestant developments that, criticizing capitalism, have experimented with communitarian societies. At the same time, like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and George Q. Cannon, Catholic leaders from Leo XIII to Paul VI have emphasized the moral dimension of private property. McGovern points out that certain Christian thinkers have deplored the lack of a concept of stewardship in their critiques of laissez-faire economics, an aspect of economic theory of great interest to Mormons.

Mormon experiences during the Nauvoo period and the "Americanization" of Utah demonstrate the perplexing problems of reconciling individual moral responsibility with social obligation. The history of Christianity itself documents the endless search for conclusive guidance on political ethics. While no consensus exists among Christians on the appropriate use of violence, McGovern also demonstrates that political violence is not a necessary aspect of Marxist social analysis. McGovern's discussions while not offering definitive ethical solutions to contemporary social problems, do provide an adequate starting point for serious moral reflection.

McGovern accurately captures the essence of "liberation theology" and other Latin American movements which claim to embody a successful Marxist-Christian alliance. Theologians of liberation, for example invoke scriptural authority to support their call for liberating the poor and oppressed. Yet they note the lack of analytical perspectives in the scriptures which would help them assess the origins of and the solutions to modern social problems. Hence they combine Marxist social analysis with basic Christian values. McGovern effectively critiques this alliance.

The distinction between Marxist social

analysis and Communist ideology is crucial for McGovern, a distinction effectively displayed throughout the book. As a faithful Christian, he finds a holistic social analysis beneficial in the pursuit of a more just society, hence the necessity for public policies which lead to a form of "democratic socialism." (cf. early Mormon attempts to establish a "United Order.")

In conclusion, *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* offers generally well-thought out and fairly effective arguments, only a small number of which have been alluded to above. At the very least, McGovern's work provides an introduction to Marxist thought from Marx to the present, to the major issues confronting a successful Marxist-Christian dialogue, to recent Marxist-Christian alliances in Latin America, and to the possibility that Christians could employ Marxist social analysis in the United States.

The perceptive Mormon reader may recognize that contemporary Marxist analyses of industrial and developing societies resemble those of nineteenth-century Mormon assessments of American society. Hence a ground of commonality may exist between Marxists and Mormons as both become aware of and struggle with modern problems of social injustice.

## Cultural Reflections

*The Culture of Narcissism* by Christopher Lasch, New York, New York: WW Norton and Company, Inc., 1978, 268 pp., \$11.95.

Reviewed by L. Marlene Payne, a child psychiatrist practicing in Virginia.

THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM is the product of an American historian who has borrowed a psychiatric syndrome to examine issues and to synthesize a picture of our culture. Narcissism, an ancient term with roots in Green mythology, can trace its current psychiatric significance to Freud who distin-

guished the primary, healthy narcissism of the newborn from the secondary, pathological narcissism of those whose earliest relationships had gone awry. Recent psychiatric theorists, most prominently Heinz Kohut, have greatly expanded our understanding of the narcissistic personality, a personality produced in a climate of indulgence combined with faulty empathic responses to the child's emotional needs. The child, highly valued as an extension of the parent, may be used to bolster the parents' self-esteem but is not valued for himself. This results in a person who has both low self-esteem