

Resistance Marxist Library

**Marxism,
Socialism &
Religion**

**Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I.
Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon
Trotsky**

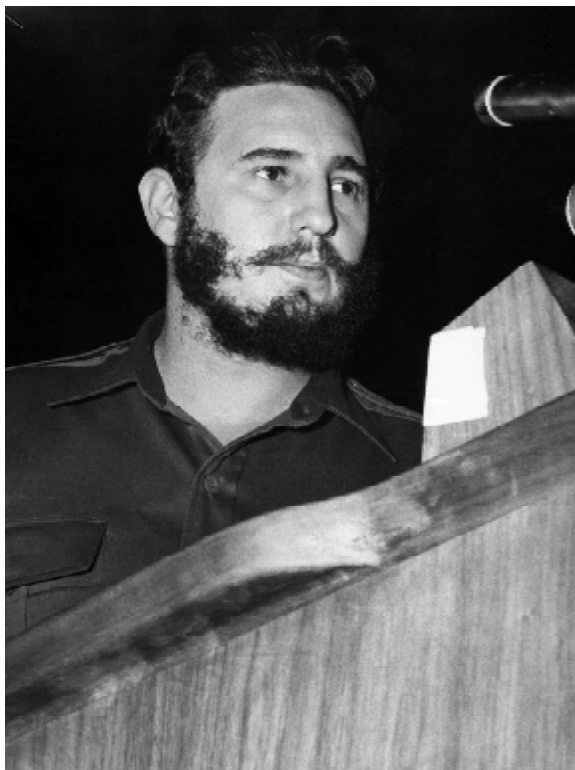
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Contents

Introduction by Dave Holmes	5
Karl Marx	
‘Man makes religion, religion does not make man’	19
Theses on Feuerbach	21
‘The Social Principles of Christianity’	24
Frederick Engels	
The Peasant War in Germany	29
Ludwig Feuerbach & the End of Classical German Philosophy	45
V.I. Lenin	
Socialism & Religion	83
The Attitude of the Workers’ Party to Religion	87
Rosa Luxemburg	
Socialism & the Churches	97
Leon Trotsky	
Soviet Government Rebutts British Clerical Criticism	119
Vodka, the Church & the Cinema	122
From Leninism and Workers’ Clubs	126
Appendices	
1. From The Program of the Communist Party of Russia	132
2. From The ABC of Communism	133
Notes	142
Glossary	146



Fidel Castro: There are "10,000 times more coincidences between Christianity and communism than between Christianity and capitalism".

Introduction

By Dave Holmes

Despite the apparently secular nature of so much of modern life, religion is a long way from being a spent force. For revolutionary socialists aiming to mobilise the masses for a fundamental transformation of society, religion is a question which cannot be ignored:

- While each country has its specific situation, in the West it is undeniable that the traditional religions are considerably diminished compared to even a few decades ago, with church attendances down and religious identification increasingly nominal for wide layers of the population. Moreover, the churches are being shaken by multiple and ongoing controversies and crises — over the role of women and gays, especially as priests; over revelations of past and present sexual abuse of women and children in their institutions; over financial scandals; in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, over damaging exposures of leading clergy flouting their own code of celibacy; over clashes between their conservative and more liberal wings; and over their increased integration into the activities of the state through government funding for charitable and welfare work.

However, despite the difficulties they are experiencing, the mainstream churches remain powerful institutions with a significant influence in society. Furthermore, both within and outside the traditional churches, fundamentalist currents and groups have gained an increased following.

- In a considerable number of African and Asian Third World countries, urbanisation and modernisation notwithstanding, Islam remains a major factor in society. So-called Islamic fundamentalism serves the ruling classes as a very effective weapon to control the masses and oppose the advance of the popular and progressive forces. In India, Hindu chauvinism plays a similar role and in Sri Lanka the Buddhist clergy have been highly vocal supporters of the regime's war against Tamils seeking self-determination.

- The other contender in the Third World is Catholicism, which still retains a huge following. In Central and Latin America, while the traditional church remains very powerful, with the rise of the class struggle from the early 1960s on, a popular and liberationist current developed in many countries, in some instances even supporting the armed struggle and, in the case of Nicaragua after the 1979 revolution, radical priests and lay figures participated in the Sandinista government in defiance of the pope. In a number of traditionally Catholic countries in the 1980s and 1990s, right-wing Protestant sects made extensive gains.

This book presents a selection of classic writings on religion by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. The focus is on Christianity and the European experience but the basic points made have a universal relevance for our understanding of religion and the fundamental considerations determining the way in which the revolutionary socialist movement should relate to it. The selection addresses a number of key topics:

- The basic Marxist analysis of religion.
- The origins and evolution of Christianity.
- The role of religion in historical revolutionary struggles.
- The political attitude of the socialist workers' party towards religion and religious believers.
- The attitude of the post-revolutionary workers' government towards religion.

'The opium of the people'

In Engels' 1886 work included here, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", he explains Feuerbach's contribution to the evolution of the philosophical views of Marx and himself.

Germany in the first part of the 19th century was in the grip of feudal absolutism. But precisely in this stifling atmosphere of repression and censorship, a veritable revolution in human thought took place through the work of Georg Hegel with his development of dialectics. The domination of German philosophy by his school reached its height in the 1830s.

After Hegel's death in 1831, his followers divided into two camps: the conservative and traditionalist Old Hegelians and the more radical Young Hegelians. Marx and Engels belonged to this latter group in the early 1840s, although they soon came into conflict with the mistaken and confused ideas of its leading figures as they developed their own distinctive positions. In this period, open political criticism of the regime was risky and the fight against absolutism took the safer form of a criticism of religion, which was a pillar of the established order.

Feuerbach's work was a crucial bridge enabling Marx and Engels' development

from Hegel's dialectical — yet idealist — system to their mature dialectical materialist outlook. Feuerbach's 1841 work, *The Essence of Christianity*, was pivotal here.

With one blow it pulverised the contradiction, in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence. The spell was broken; the “system” was exploded and cast aside, and the contradiction, shown to exist only in our imagination, was dissolved. One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians. How enthusiastically Marx greeted the new conception and how much — in spite of all critical reservations — he was influenced by it, one may read in *The Holy Family*.¹

In that it was materialist, Feuerbach's philosophy was a great advance over Hegel but it also suffered from some serious deficiencies — as did his explanation of religion. Marx addresses these in summary form in his famous 11 theses of 1845, which are reproduced in this selection.

Feuerbach understood that human beings create religion but for him these human beings remain abstractions, separated from their historical and social context which alone makes them what they are:

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.²

And in his fourth thesis, Marx comments that it is not enough simply to explain the religious world as a reflection of the secular one, it is also necessary to understand this secular world — human society — as it is, with its social contradictions and class divisions. It is precisely the dismal reality of this real world which creates and sustains religion. Furthermore, Marx argues, this world has not only to be understood but then transformed. (The celebrated 11th thesis makes a similar point: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”)

In his slightly earlier “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law”, Marx expands on these ideas.

... *Man makes religion* ...But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. *Man is the world of man*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, a *reversed world-consciousness*, because they are a *reversed world*.³

The “struggle against religion” is necessarily the struggle against the social order “of which religion is the spiritual *aroma*”. And: “The criticism of religion is therefore *in*

embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion.”

This work also contains the following famous passage:

Religious distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people.⁴

Other works included in this selection make similar assessments of the wellsprings of religion. In “Socialism and Religion”, Lenin puts it this way:

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward ... Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.⁵

“Religion is a sort of imaginary knowledge of the world”, says Trotsky in his speech “Leninism and Workers’ Clubs”.

The imaginary character of this knowledge flows from two sources: the weakness of human beings in the face of nature, and the absurd character of social relationships. Overawed by nature or ignoring it, and failing to analyse social relationships or ignoring them, social human beings attempted to tie the various ends together by creating fantastic images, assigning them an imaginary reality, and then going down on their knees before their own creations.⁶

Traditional religion & the church

In its 2000-year history, Christianity has undergone profound transformations. As Engels explains:

... religion, once formed, always contains traditional material, just as in all ideological domains tradition forms a great conservative force. But the transformations which this material undergoes spring from class relations, that is to say, out of the economic relations of the people who execute these transformations.⁷

Christianity began as the religion of the free poor and oppressed in the Roman empire. Some 250 years later, after enduring periods of savage persecution, it became the official religion of this very same empire. The church developed into a powerful institution, supported by the state and, in return, giving it legitimacy.

In the Middle Ages, the church adapted itself to the feudal order. It not only sanctified and justified this order but it was itself feudalised: it had its own feudal hierarchy with the pope at the summit, the cardinals and bishops below him, and further down the ordinary priests and at the very bottom, the laity and the masses. Furthermore, it was also a great temporal power, with vast landholdings across Europe.

With the rise of the bourgeoisie, the Catholic Church split. The Reformation saw the emergence of Protestantism which, in various strains, became dominant in a number of countries. In England, for instance, a new state church was created by Henry VIII in the early 1500s, better suited to the needs of the bourgeoisie. In the ensuing Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church not only waged a ferocious struggle against the Protestant heresy in the lands it controlled, but carried out reforms to adapt itself to the needs of rising capitalism. The Jesuit order, founded in 1534 by Ignatius Loyola, played a leading role in this process.

Everywhere today, the mainstream churches and their leaders accept or justify and support the established capitalist social order, even if they lament particular aspects of it. At any event, they certainly do not denounce it and make common cause with the socialist left to mobilise support among the masses to overthrow it and establish a truly human society. In his 1847 polemic, “The Communism of the *Rheinischer Beobachter*”, Marx makes a blistering denunciation of the “social principles of Christianity” which have always sought to reconcile the masses to their servitude to the ruling class.

In her work, “Socialism and the Churches”, written during the 1905 Russian revolution, which was also shaking her native Poland, Rosa Luxemburg asks the question:

How does it happen that the church plays the role of a defence of wealth and bloody oppression, instead of being the refuge of the exploited?⁸

She points out that by its defence of privilege, the clergy “places itself in flagrant contradiction to the Christian doctrine”. Luxemburg contrasts the humble, communistic origins of Christianity with the current opulence of the Catholic Church. Christianity began as the religion of the free poor in the Roman empire (it was not, she stresses, the religion of the slaves, who carried out the bulk of the backbreaking labour of society). For its first 200 years, it practised communism; its members placed all their belongings into the common store from which they were distributed as needed.

However, this was a communism of distribution, not a communism based on social ownership of the means of production, for which socialists are fighting. Gradually the early communism of the church was eroded and replaced by mere charity on the part of the wealthy and the enrichment of the church and its clergy at the expense of its aid to the poor and needy. Luxemburg points out that the modern socialist movement

has a different agenda:

The communism which the social-democrats have in view does not consist of the dividing up, between beggars and rich and lazy, of the wealth produced by slaves and serfs, but in honest, common, united work and the honest enjoyment of the common fruits of that work. Socialism does not consist of generous gifts made by the rich to the poor, but in the total abolition of the very difference between rich and poor, by compelling all alike to work according to their capacity by the suppression of the exploitation of man by man.⁹

If any contemporary movement can lay claim to the best in the early Christian church, it is revolutionary socialism — for all that it is based, not on a religious view of the world, but on the scientific, materialist, atheistic doctrine of Marxism:

... the social-democrats everywhere lift up the people and strengthen those who lose hope, rally the weak into a powerful organisation. They open the eyes of the ignorant and show them the way of equality, of liberty and of love for our neighbours.

On the other hand, the servants of the church bring to the people only words of humiliation and discouragement. And, if Christ were to appear on Earth today, he would surely attack the priests, the bishops and archbishops who defend the rich and live by exploiting the unfortunate, as formerly he attacked the merchants whom he drove from the temple so that their ignoble presence should not defile the House of God ...

Today it is you in your lies and your teachings, who are pagans, and it is we who bring to the poor, to the exploited the tidings of fraternity and equality. It is we who are marching to the conquest of the world as he did formerly who proclaimed that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.¹⁰

Of course, Luxemburg's powerful polemic is aimed at precisely those church leaders who place themselves at the service of the ruling class in its struggle against the masses. She stresses repeatedly that socialism does not seek conflict with either the church or with religious believers; in fact the socialist movement stands for religious freedom under capitalism and, after the revolution, under socialism. Indeed, there is surely a strong objective basis for collaboration between socialists and those Christians who seek to work for a better life for the people in this world.

Religion & revolution

Included here is a chapter from Engels' work on the 1525 Peasant War in Germany, written in 1850. In writing his stirring and penetrating study, he had two aims.

With the defeat of the 1848-49 revolution fresh in his mind, he wanted to show

that Germany did indeed have a great revolutionary tradition and that just as the bourgeoisie had betrayed the contemporary struggle, their burgher forbears some three centuries earlier had likewise betrayed the epic peasant-plebeian struggle for freedom.

Furthermore, his account sought to demonstrate that the religious conflicts of the Reformation were really class struggles. In a society saturated with religion, in which the Catholic Church was one of the fundamental props of the established order and was itself one of the greatest feudal powers, any challenge to the status quo necessarily had to clothe itself in religious garb and a key focus necessarily had to be an attack on the corrupt official church and its pretensions.

The revolutionary opposition to feudalism [writes Engels] was alive all down the Middle Ages. It took the shape of mysticism, open heresy, or armed insurrection, all depending on the conditions of the time.¹¹

The two outstanding figures in Engels' account are Martin Luther and Thomas Münzer. Luther's reforming activity touched off the conflict but as the struggle radicalised and the burghers of the towns retreated, he too showed his conservatism by abandoning the revolutionary peasants and plebeians and siding with the counter-revolution of the princes and the church. He issued a bloodthirsty denunciation of the insurgent masses, "the murderous and plundering peasant hordes":

"They must *be knocked to pieces, strangled and stabbed, covertly and overtly*, by everyone who can, just as one must kill a *mad dog!*" Luther cried. "Therefore, dear sirs, help here, save there, stab, knock, strangle them everyone who can, and should you lose your life, bless you, no better death can you ever attain ... The peasants must have nothing but chaff. They do not hearken to the Word, and are foolish, so they must hearken to the rod and the gun, and that serves them right. We must pray for them that they obey. Where they do not there should not be much mercy. *Let the guns roar among them*, or else they will do it a thousand times worse."¹²

The real hero of Engels' account is Münzer, the revolutionary leader of the masses. While he had to formulate his platform in religious terms, he was really advancing a radical social program.

Münzer's political doctrine followed his revolutionary religious conceptions very closely, and just as his theology overstepped the current conceptions of his time, so his political doctrine overstepped the directly prevailing social and political conditions. Just as Münzer's religious philosophy approached atheism, so his political program approached communism ... This program, no more of a compilation of the demands of the plebeians of that day than a visionary anticipation of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletarian element that had scarcely begun to develop among the plebeians —

this program demanded the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God, of the prophesied millennium, by restoring the church to its original status and abolishing all the institutions that conflicted with this allegedly early-Christian, but in fact very novel church. By the kingdom of God Múnzer meant a society without class differences, private property and a state authority independent of, and foreign to, the members of society. All the existing authorities, insofar as they refused to submit and join the revolution, were to be overthrown, all work and all property shared in common, and complete equality introduced. A union was to be established to realise all this, and not only throughout Germany, but throughout all Christendom. Princes and lords would be invited to join, and should they refuse, the union was to take up arms and overthrow or kill them at the first opportunity.¹³

Engels explains how, in his struggle, Múnzer made use of the Anabaptist sect, so named because they believed that baptism should be a free choice of thinking adults, not forced on children. Although the Anabaptists were pacifists, they shared Múnzer's communist outlook. They survived the suppression of the peasant uprising, but an imperial edict of 1529 declared death by burning as the penalty for Anabaptism and all over Germany members of the sect were martyred. A section of the Anabaptists finally realised that only armed resistance offered them any hope of survival. They took over the town of Múnster in north-west Germany; for 15 months they heroically resisted a siege by the imperial forces but eventually succumbed and were exterminated. As Franz Mehring put it: "What has today become a religious quirk was once a revolutionary program, before which the ruling classes trembled."¹⁴

In his "Ludwig Feuerbach", Engels explains how with the further development of capitalism over the centuries, the bourgeoisie no longer needed to cloak its aims in religious clothing. By the time of the French revolution of 1789, the bourgeoisie presented its struggle in purely political terms. "Christianity ... had become incapable for the future of serving any progressive class as the ideological garb of its aspirations."¹⁵ It was retained by the ruling classes purely as a means of control of the masses.

The socialist party & religion

The two articles by Lenin included here focus on several fundamental questions concerning socialism and religion.

In the first place, he stresses that socialists strongly support religious freedom and that this demand is a part of the overall struggle for political freedom:

Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every

socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable.¹⁶

On the other hand, the socialist party — “an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class” — cannot be indifferent to the lack of class consciousness which religion represents. However, the party does not have a point in its program demanding that atheism is a condition of membership, thereby automatically excluding religious believers.

While socialists do not hide their materialist, atheistic beliefs, we do not believe that religious obscurantism can be fought fundamentally by propaganda methods. Marxism teaches that the wellsprings of religious belief lie in weighty objective realities — in modern society, the exploitation, oppression and powerlessness of the masses. Only by their active involvement in the struggle to overthrow this oppressive social order and create a socialist society can the masses go beyond the conditions which promote religious belief:

It would be stupid to think that, in a society based on the endless oppression and coarsening of the worker masses, religious prejudices could be dispelled by purely propaganda methods. It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism.

Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.¹⁷

As Lenin explains, this does not mean that the socialist party should not make propaganda criticising religion from a Marxist viewpoint but, rather, that this work takes second place to the main task — drawing the masses into the class struggle against the exploiters and their system — and should only be done in a manner which does not impede it.

Lenin addresses the question: can religious believers be members of the socialist party? There is no hard and fast rule here: while there should be no automatic prohibition, the party cannot be indifferent to the religious beliefs of its members:

It cannot be asserted once and for all that priests cannot be members of the Social-Democratic Party; but neither can the reverse rule be laid down. If a priest comes to us to take part in our common political work and conscientiously performs party duties, without opposing the program of the party, he may be allowed to join the ranks of the social-democrats; for the contradiction between the spirit and principles of our program

and the religious convictions of the priest would in such circumstances be something that concerned him alone, his own private contradiction; and a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the party program ... And if, for example, a priest joined the Social-Democratic Party and made it his chief and almost sole work actively to propagate religious views in the party, it would unquestionably have to expel him from its ranks. We must not only admit workers who preserve their belief in God into the Social-Democratic Party, but must deliberately set out to recruit them; we are absolutely opposed to giving the slightest offence to their religious convictions, but we recruit them in order to educate them in the spirit of our program, and not in order to permit an active struggle against it. We allow freedom of opinion *within* the party, but to certain limits, determined by freedom of grouping; we are not obliged to go hand in hand with active preachers of views that are repudiated by the majority of the party.¹⁸

After the revolution

The three pieces by Trotsky and the two appendices included in this volume deal with the question of the new Soviet regime and religion.

The extract from *The ABC of Communism* gives a picture of how intimate was the relation between the tsarist regime and the Russian Orthodox Church, the role it played in indoctrinating the people on behalf of the established order and the vast financial support it received in return. After the October Revolution, the church was disestablished. It lost its privileged, state-supported place in society; its official subsidies were abolished; its role in the education system was ended; and its huge estates were confiscated for the benefit of the people. On the other hand, freedom of religious belief was guaranteed.

Trotsky's defence of the 1922 decision of the Soviet government to confiscate from the churches precious objects that were not being used in services and put any funds raised to famine relief shows that this was not an attack on religion. Rather it was a legitimate measure in response to a desperate emergency which threatened the lives of millions of people.

The emphasis in these readings is on combating religion, not through any form of persecution, but most fundamentally through the process of widening people's experience and increasing their control over their lives. As Trotsky puts it:

We are driving out mysticism through the use of materialism, above all by broadening the collective experience of the masses, increasing their active influence on society, expanding the framework of their positive knowledge, and it is on this general basis that where necessary, we also aim direct blows against religious superstitions.¹⁹

And further:

Religion will only cease to exist completely with the development of the socialist system, that is, when technology frees people from degrading forms of dependency on nature, and amid social relations that are no longer mysterious, which are completely transparent and do not oppress people ... Only the ending of earthly chaos can do away forever with its religious reflection.²⁰

This is the authentic Marxist attitude. However, under Stalin's bureaucratic rule, the practice of religion was made very difficult and many churches were demolished to make way for prestige projects. But in the extremity of the war against Hitlerite fascism, Stalin rehabilitated the Orthodox Church as part of a campaign to revive Great-Russian patriotism to bolster the people's fighting spirit — since an appeal to the revolutionary internationalist traditions of the October Revolution was excluded.

And today, in the new Russia, where a gang of predatory mafia-capitalists is ruthlessly looting the country and begging the mass of the people, the Orthodox Church is again being favoured by the authorities. As did the tsarist regime in earlier times, the new rulers realise that a desperate people needs spiritual consolation to divert it from turning to revolutionary politics and overthrowing the whole rotten system. New laws severely restrict the activities of non-Orthodox religions (Catholicism, Protestant sects, etc.). The current Russian national anthem now contains a reference to God.

Cuban Revolution

Much closer in time, the Cuban Revolution has demonstrated, in exemplary practice, how a genuine socialist regime relates to religion.

Although Christians participated in the struggle against the US-backed dictator Batista, the Catholic Church, led by Spanish priests, was extremely hostile and some Christians gave support to the US-backed counter-revolutionaries in the 1960s. Some of these priests were expelled from the country, but others were permitted to take their place. In November 1971, meeting with a group of priests during his visit to Chile, Fidel Castro remarked on this situation:

No one can say that the Christians were an obstacle. Some Christians participated in the struggle at the end; there were even some martyrs ... There were some priests ... who joined our ranks on their own ... What happened at the beginning was a class problem. It didn't have anything to do with religion. It was the religion of the landowners and the wealthy. When the socioeconomic conflict erupted, they tried to pit religion against the revolution. That was what happened. The Spanish clergy was quite reactionary.²¹

Over time, relations between the Catholic Church and the revolution progressed from the initial state of antagonism to diplomatic normality. In January 1998, Pope John Paul II made an historic visit to Cuba. Under the scrutiny of several thousand personnel from the international news media, he addressed large gatherings across the island. He was treated with scrupulous courtesy and respect by the Cuban leadership and people, even when parts of his message were obviously at odds with the convictions of most of his audiences.

However, those reactionaries who hoped to see the pope denounce the revolution were definitely disappointed. While the pope expressed his disagreement with certain aspects of life in Cuba, he also called for an end to the crippling US-imposed blockade of the island and denounced neoliberalism and consumerism. Overall, the revolution only gained from his visit; it was widely recognised that the big loser was the United States.

One particularly vexed question which the Cuban Revolution had to confront early on concerned the participation of Christians in the party of the revolution. When the new Communist Party of Cuba was organised in the 1960s, Christians were prohibited from joining. In the situation of intense conflict with the United States, given the record of the church, there were doubts about the loyalty of Christians and it was felt that it was too big a risk to take — even if injustices were done in individual cases.

In fact, this ban also extended to religious believers of any persuasion. It thus excluded from party membership adherents of the African religions, which have long had a significant following among the Cuban masses.

At the party's fourth congress in late 1991, after vigorous debate, this policy was overturned and now, as long as they meet all the normal criteria, Christians and other believers can become party members. Fidel spoke strongly in favour of scrapping the ban:

It is a tremendous contradiction that there are millions of [believers] worldwide and in Latin America who defend the Cuban Revolution, who are actively in solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, and yet, our only response to them is that we don't allow believers in the party. From a political viewpoint, I think that is a grave mistake. And it is unjust. If a believer deserves to become a party member, he or she shouldn't be shut out. (On the contrary.) Our principles, our concept of a party of all the people, of a united party, where no one is discriminated against, would certainly be strengthened. Because discrimination in the party also leads to discrimination in government, and people are kept from holding certain positions because of their religious beliefs. It is high time we rectified this situation.²²

The philosophy guiding Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolutionaries is presented at length in the book *Fidel and Religion*, a series of conversations in 1985 between Fidel and the radical Brazilian priest, Frei Betto.

In his 1971 meeting with the Chilean priests, Fidel expressed his conviction that there are “10,000 times more coincidences between Christianity and communism than between Christianity and capitalism”. At the end of the meeting, Fidel called for a fundamental collaboration between Christians and revolutionary socialists in the struggle for social change: “We would like to be strategic allies, which means permanent allies.”²³ As he later recalled:

They asked me if it was to be a tactical or a strategic alliance. I said it should be a strategic alliance between religion and socialism, between religion and revolution.²⁴

Unite to save humanity

Today humanity faces a crisis without precedent in history, a combined social and environmental crisis, deriving from the ever-increasing rapacity of the world capitalist system. Neoliberal capitalism’s insane drive for profit ahead of all other considerations has brought humanity to the brink of absolute catastrophe. The burning question is how to resist and overthrow this malignant system and replace it with a truly human social order — i.e., with socialism.

The political task is to mobilise and unite the broadest possible popular forces in this struggle. As the crisis deepens, resistance will intensify and draw ever-wider layers of people into action, including religious believers. It will find its reflection in the churches, as is already the case with a wide range of issues. One can expect that sections of the clergy will support the ruling class while others will participate in the mass movement; similarly with their congregations.

While the weight of the religious question varies in the different countries, in general it is an important task for Marxist socialists to be able to develop a real alliance with progressive sections of the religious communities in the fight to save our world and its people. A study of the historic positions and experience of the socialist movement is a prerequisite for meeting this challenge. ■



Karl Marx (1818-83)

Karl Marx
**‘Man makes religion, religion
does not make man’**

“A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law” was written by Marx in late 1843-January 1844. It was intended to introduce a detailed examination of Hegel’s idealist philosophy and political views, a project which Marx never completed.

This excerpt is taken from Marx & Engels, On Religion (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1957). For the full text see Marx & Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 3 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1975).



For Germany the *criticism of religion* is in the main complete, and criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.

The *profane* existence of error is discredited after its *heavenly oratio pro aris et focis*^a has been rejected. Man, who looked for a superman in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the *reflection* of himself, will no longer be disposed to find but the *semblance* of himself, the non-human where he seeks and must seek his true reality.

The basis of irreligious criticism is, *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man. In other words, religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. But *man* is no abstract being squatting outside the world. *Man is the world of man*, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion, *a reversed world-consciousness*, because they are *a reversed world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic *point d’honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its universal ground for consolation and

^a Speech for the altars and hearths. — *Ed.*

justification. It is *the fantastic realisation* of the human essence because the *human essence* has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore mediately the fight against *the other world*, of which religion is the spiritual *aroma*.

Religious distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the *opium* of the people.

The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the *demand to give up a condition which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe*, the *halo* of which is religion.

Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chain not so that man will wear the chain without any fantasy or consolation but so that he will shake off the chain and cull the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusiones man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve round himself and therefore round his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself.

The task of history, therefore, once the *world beyond the truth* has disappeared, is to establish the *truth of this world*. The immediate *task of philosophy*, which is at the service of history, once the *saintly form* of human self-alienation has been unmasked, is to unmask self-alienation in its *unholy forms*. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of right* and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*. ■

Karl Marx

Theses on Feuerbach

Written by Marx in Brussels in the spring of 1845, when he had already completed, in the main, the development of his materialistic theory of history, and had extended materialism to the understanding of human society. According to Engels, this was “the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook”.²⁵ The “Theses” were first published by Engels in 1888 as an appendix to his “Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy”. The text is taken from *Marx & Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 1* (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1969).



I

The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism — that of Feuerbach included — is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object* or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the *active* side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism — but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really differentiated from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity. Hence, in the *Essence of Christianity*, he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical form of appearance. Hence he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary”, of “practical-critical”, activity.

II

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute over the

reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.

III

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society (in Robert Owen, for example).

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionising practice*.

IV

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, of the duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world and a real one. His work consists in the dissolution of the religious world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular foundation detaches itself from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is really only be explained by the self-cleavage and self-contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must itself, therefore, first be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionised in practice. Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be criticised in theory and revolutionised in practice.

V

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, appeals to *sensuous contemplation*; but he does not conceive sensuousness as *practical*, human-sensuous activity.

VI

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the *human* essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something by itself and to presuppose an abstract — *isolated* — human individual.

2. The human essence, therefore, can with him be comprehended only as a “genus”, as an internal, dumb generality which merely *naturally* unites the many individuals.

VII

Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the “religious sentiment” is itself a *social product*, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society.

VIII

Social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

IX

The highest point attained by *contemplative* materialism, that is, materialism which does not understand sensuousness as practical activity, is the contemplation of single individuals in “civil society”.

X

The standpoint of the old materialism is “*civil*” society; the standpoint of the new is *human* society, or socialised humanity.

XI

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it. ■

Karl Marx
**‘The Social Principles of
Christianity’**

“The Communism of the Rheinischer Beobachter” was written in September 1847 in reply to an anonymous article in a conservative Prussian newspaper, the Rheinischer Beobachter (Rhineland Observer), which specialised in feudal and Christian socialist propaganda. Such propaganda aimed to divert the masses from struggling against the actual ruling power, the feudal absolutist regime, and to use them in its struggle against the bourgeois opposition.

Although the article was unsigned, Marx surmised that it was written by a bureaucrat in the circle around the reactionary Prussian minister in charge of “religious worship, education and medicine”, Johann Eichorn.

This excerpt is taken from Marx & Engels, On Religion (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1957). For the full article see Marx & Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 6 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1976).



Besides income tax, the Consistorial Councillor has another means of introducing communism as he conceives it:

“What is the alpha and omega of Christian faith? The dogma of original sin and the redemption. And therein lies the solidary link between men at its highest potential; one for all and all for one.”

Happy people! The *cardinal question* is solved for ever. Under the double wings of the Prussian eagle and the Holy Ghost the proletariat will find two inexhaustible sources of life: first the surplus of income tax over and above the ordinary and extraordinary needs of the state, a surplus which is equal to nought; second, the revenues from the heavenly domains of original sin and the redemption which are also equal to nought. These two noughts provide a splendid ground for one-third of

the nation who have no ground for their subsistence and a wonderful support for another third which is on the decline. In any case, the imaginary surpluses, original sin and the redemption, will appease the hunger of the people in quite a different way than the long speeches of the liberal deputies!

Further we read:

"In the 'Our Father' we say: lead us not into temptation. And we must practise towards our neighbour what we ask for ourselves. But our social conditions tempt man and excessive need incites to crime."

And we, the honourable bureaucrats, judges and consistorial councillors of the Prussian state, take this into consideration by having people racked on the wheel, beheaded, imprisoned, and flogged and thereby "lead" the proletarians "into temptation" to have us later similarly racked on the wheel, beheaded, imprisoned and flogged. And that will not fail to happen.

"Such conditions", the Consistorial Councillor declares, "a Christian state *cannot* tolerate, it must find a remedy for them."

Yes, with absurd prattle on society's duties of solidarity, with imaginary surpluses and unprovided bills drawn on God the Father, Son and Co.

"We can also be spared the already boring talk about communism", our observant Consistorial Councillor asserts. "If only those whose calling it is to develop the social principles of Christianity do so, the Communists will soon be put to silence."

The social principles of Christianity have now had 1800 years to develop and need no further development by Prussian consistorial councillors.

The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it.

The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class, and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable.

The social principles of Christianity transfer the consistorial councillors' adjustment of all infamies to heaven and thus justify the further existence of those infamies on Earth.

The social principles of Christianity declare all vile acts of the oppressors against the oppressed to be either the just punishment of original sin and other sins or trials that the Lord in his infinite wisdom imposes on those redeemed.

The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, dejection, in a word all the qualities of the canaille; and the proletariat, not wishing to be treated as canaille, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride and its sense of independence more than its bread.

The social principles of Christianity are sneakish and the proletariat is revolutionary. So much for the social principles of Christianity.

To continue:

“We acknowledged social reform as the noblest calling of the monarchy.”

Did we? There has been no question of that so far. But grant it. And in what does the social reform of the monarchy consist? In putting into force an income tax purloined from the organs of liberalism and which is supposed to provide a surplus that the finance minister knows nothing about; in the fiasco of the *Landrentenbanken* [land annuity banks], in the Prussian East Railway, and in the first place in the profit of an enormous capital of original sin and redemption!

“The interest of the monarchy itself advises that” — how low monarchy must have sunk!

“That is demanded by the need of society” — which at present requires protective barriers far more than dogmas.

“That is recommended by the Gospel” — it is recommended by everything in general, except the frightfully desolate state of the Prussian treasury, that abyss which will have irretrievably swallowed up the 15 Russian millions within three years. The Gospel, by the way, recommends much, including castration as the beginning of social reform for itself (Math. XXV).

“The monarchy”, our Consistorial Councillor says, “is one with the people.”

This expression is only another form of the old “*l’etat c’est moi*”^a and indeed it is the very form which Louis XVI used on June 23, 1789, against his rebellious Estates: “If you do not listen to me, I shall send you home — *et seul je ferai le bonheur de mon peuple*.”^b

The monarchy must be very hard pressed when it decides to make use of that form, and our learned Consistorial Councillor must know how the French people at the time thanked Louis XVI for using it.

“The throne”, the Consistorial Councillor further assures, “must rest on the broad basis of the people”, there it will be firmest.

As long, of course, as those broad shoulders do not throw the heavy superstructure into the gutter with a mighty jerk.

“*The aristocracy*”, the Consistorial Councillor concludes, “leaves monarchy its dignity and gives it poetic embellishment but deprives it of real power. *The bourgeoisie* robs it of power and dignity alike and gives it only a Civil List. *The people* leaves the

^a “*I am the state*” (an expression attributed to Louis XIV). — *Ed.*

^b “And alone I shall create the happiness of my people.” — *Ed.*

monarchy its power, its dignity and its poetry.”

At this point the Consistorial Councillor unfortunately takes Frederick William's bombastic appeal *to his people* in the speech from the throne too seriously. His last words are: overthrow of the aristocracy, overthrow of the bourgeoisie, establishment of a monarchy relying on the support of the people.

Were these demands not pure fantasies they would contain a complete revolution.

We shall not dwell on the fact that the aristocracy can be overthrown only by the bourgeoisie and the people together, that the rule of the people in a country where the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie still exist side by side is pure nonsense. Such fables from one of Eichhorn's consistorial councillors are not worth answering with serious arguments.

We shall make but a few well-meaning remarks to those gentlemen who wish to save the imperilled Prussian monarchy by a *somersault* into the people.

Of all political elements the people is the most dangerous for a king. Not the people that Frederick William speaks of, which thanks with tears in its eyes for a kick and a silver *groschen*; that people is by no means dangerous, for it exists nowhere except in the king's imagination. But the real people, the proletariat, the small peasants and the populace, there you have, as Hobbes said, *puer robustus, sed malitiosus*, a sturdy but malicious boy, who will not let himself be made a fool of either by thin kings or by fat ones.

This people would first and foremost force His Majesty to grant a constitution with universal suffrage, freedom of association, freedom of the press and other unpleasant things.

And having obtained all that it would use it to show as quickly as possible how it understands the *power*, the *dignity* and the *poetry* of the monarchy.

The present worthy holder of the monarchy could consider himself lucky if the people gave him a job as public declaimer in the Berlin Artisan Association with a Civil List of 250 thalers and a cool pale ale every day.

If the consistorial councillors who now rule the destiny of the Prussian monarchy and of *Rheinischer Beobachter* have any doubt about it, let them have a good look at history. History makes out quite different horoscopes for kings who appeal to their people.

Charles I of England also appealed *to his people* against his Estates. He called his people to arms against Parliament. But the people declared against the king, threw out of Parliament all the members who did not represent the people and finally had the king beheaded by Parliament which had thus become really representative of the people. That was how Charles I's appeal to his people ended. This happened on

January 30, 1649, and 1849 is the second centenary.

Louis XVI of France also appealed *to his people*. For three years he appealed to one part of the people against another; he was looking for *his* people, the true people, the people that was enthusiastic for him, and he did not find it anywhere. In the end he found it in Coblenz camp behind the lines of the Prussian and Austrian armies. But that was too much for his people in France. On August 10, 1792, it imprisoned the appealer in the Temple and convened the National Convention which represented it in every way.

This Convention declared itself competent to decide the ex-king's *appeal* and after a few debates it sent the appealer to Place de la Révolution where he was guillotined on January 21, 1793.

That is what happens when kings *appeal to their peoples*. But we must wait and see what happens when consistorial councillors want to establish a democratic monarchy. ■



Above: *Martin Luther (1483-1546).*

Right: *Thomas Munzer (c. 1490-1525).*



Frederick Engels

The Peasant War in Germany

Written in mid-1850, under the impact of the defeat of the 1848-49 revolution in Germany. The 1525 uprising of the peasants and lower classes was the high point of the earlier bourgeois revolution, the Reformation of the 16th century. Marx once described the Peasant War as “the most radical fact of German history”.²⁶ It, too, was directed at reactionary feudal forces, including the Catholic Church, which held back the growth of capitalist relations in Germany and prevented the formation of a unified nation-state. In 1525 — as in 1848-49 — the urban bourgeoisie of the time betrayed the insurgent masses and sided with the feudal princes. The Lutheran Reformation adapted itself to the interests of the princes and Germany’s development was consequently retarded for centuries.

In writing The Peasant War in Germany, Engels’ intention was to show that the German people did indeed have revolutionary traditions. Furthermore: “The classes and fractions of classes which everywhere betrayed 1848 and 1849, are to be found in the role of traitors as early as 1525, though on a lower level of development.”²⁷

The following excerpt is the second chapter of his work. The text is taken from Engels, The Peasant War in Germany (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1956).



The grouping of the then numerous and different estates into bigger entities was made virtually impossible by decentralisation and provincial independence, the industrial and commercial isolation of the provinces from each other, and poor communications. It proceeded only with the general spread of revolutionary, politico-religious ideas during the Reformation. The various estates that either embraced or opposed those ideas, concentrated the nation, painfully and only approximately, into three large camps — the reactionary, or Catholic camp, the Lutheran bourgeois reformist camp, and the revolutionary camp. Should we discover little logic in this great division of the nation, and partly find the same elements in the first two camps, this is explained by the dissolution of most of the official estates come down from the

Middle Ages, and by the decentralisation which, for the moment, imparted to these estates in different localities opposing tendencies. In recent years we have so often encountered similar facts in Germany that this apparent jumble of estates and classes in the much more complicated environment of the 16th century can scarcely surprise us.

In spite of the latest experiences, the German ideology still sees nothing except violent theological bickering in the struggles that ended the Middle Ages. Should the people of that time, say our homebred historians and sages, have only come to an understanding concerning divine matters, there would have been no reason whatever for quarrelling over earthly affairs. These ideologists are gullible enough to accept unquestioningly all the illusions that an epoch makes about itself, or that ideologists of some epoch make about that epoch. People of that kind see nothing in, say, the Revolution of 1789 but a somewhat heated debate over the advantages a constitutional monarchy has over absolutism, in the July Revolution a practical controversy over the untenability of justice “by the grace of God”, and in the February Revolution an attempt at solving the problem: republic or monarchy?, etc. They have hardly any idea to this day of the *class struggles* fought out in these upheavals, of which the political slogan on the banner is every time a bare expression, although notice of them is audible enough not only from abroad but also in the roar and rumble of many thousands of home proletarians.

Even the so-called religious wars of the 16th century involved positive material class interests; those wars were class wars, too, just as the later internal collisions in England and France. Although the class struggles of that day were clothed in religious shibboleths, and though the interests, requirements, and demands of the various classes were concealed behind a religious screen, this changed nothing and is easily explained by the conditions of the time.

The Middle Ages had developed altogether from the raw. They wiped the old civilisation, the old philosophy, politics and jurisprudence off the slate, to begin anew in everything. The only thing they kept from the shattered old world was Christianity and a number of half-ruined towns divested of all civilisation. As a consequence, the clergy obtained a monopoly on intellectual education, just as in every primitive stage of development, and education itself became essentially theological. In the hands of the clergy politics and jurisprudence, much like all other sciences, remained mere branches of theology, and were treated in accordance with the principles prevailing in the latter. Church dogmas were also political axioms, and Bible quotations had the validity of law in any court. Even as a special estate of jurists was taking shape, jurisprudence long remained under the patronage of theology. This domination of

theology over the entire realm of intellectual activity was at the same time an inevitable consequence of the fact that the church was the all-embracing synthesis and the most general sanction of the existing feudal domination.

It is clear that under the circumstances all the generally voiced attacks against feudalism, above all the attacks against the church, and all revolutionary social and political doctrines had mostly and simultaneously to be theological heresies. The existing social relations had to be stripped of their halo of sanctity before they could be attacked.

The revolutionary opposition to feudalism was alive all down the Middle Ages. It took the shape of mysticism, open heresy, or armed insurrection, all depending on the conditions of the time. As for mysticism, it is well known how much 16th-century reformers depended on it. Münzer himself was largely indebted to it. The heresies gave expression partly to the reaction of the patriarchal Alpine shepherds against the feudalism advancing upon them (Waldenses), partly to the opposition of the towns that had outgrown feudalism (the Albigenses, Arnold of Brescia, etc.), and partly to direct peasant insurrections (John Ball and, among others, the Hungarian teacher²⁸ in Picardy). We can here leave aside the patriarchal heresy of the Waldenses and the Swiss insurrection, which was in form and content a reactionary, purely local attempt at stemming the tide of history. In the other two forms of medieval heresy we find the 12th-century precursors of the great antithesis between the burgher and peasant-plebeian oppositions, which caused the defeat of the Peasant War. This antithesis is evident all down the later Middle Ages.

The town heresies — and those are the actual official heresies of the Middle Ages — were turned primarily against the clergy, whose wealth and political importance they attacked. Just as the present-day bourgeoisie demands a “*gouvernement à bon marché*” (cheap government), the medieval burghers chiefly demanded an “*église à bon marché*” (cheap church). Reactionary in form, like any heresy that sees only degeneration in the further development of church and dogma, the burgher heresy demanded the revival of the simple early Christian church constitution and abolition of exclusive priesthood. This cheap arrangement would eliminate monks, prelates, and the Roman court; in short, all the expensive element of the church. The towns, which were republics by their own rights, albeit under the protection of monarchs, first enunciated in general terms through their attacks upon the papacy that a republic was the normal form of bourgeois rule. Their hostility to some of the dogmas and church laws is explained partly by the foregoing, and partly by their living conditions. Their bitter opposition to celibacy, for instance, has never been better explained than by Boccaccio. Arnold of Brescia in Italy and Germany, the Albigenses in Southern France, John Wycliffe in England, Hus and the Calixtines in Bohemia, were the principal exponents of this

trend. The towns were then already a recognised estate sufficiently capable of fighting lay feudalism and its privileges either by force of arms or in the estate assemblies. This explains quite simply why the opposition to feudalism appeared only as opposition to *religious* feudalism.

We also find both in southern France and in England and Bohemia that most of the lesser nobility joined the towns in their struggle against the clergy and in their heresies — a phenomenon explained by the dependence of the lesser nobility on the towns, and by their common interests as opposed to the princes and prelates. We shall encounter the same thing in the Peasant War.

The heresy that lent direct expression to peasant and plebeian demands and was almost invariably associated with an insurrection was of a totally different nature. Though it had all the demands of burgher heresy with regard to the clergy, the papacy and the revival of the early Christian church constitution, it went infinitely further. It demanded the restoration of early Christian equality among members of the community and recognition of this equality also as a prescript for the burgher world. It invoked the “equality of the children of God” to infer civil equality, and partly even equality of property. Equality of nobleman and peasant, of patrician and privileged burgher, and the plebeian, abolition of compulsory labour, quitrents, taxes, privileges, and at least the most crying differences in property — those were demands advanced with more or less determination as natural implications of the early Christian doctrine. At the time when feudalism was at its zenith there was little to choose between this peasant-plebeian heresy of the Albigenses, for example, and the burgher opposition, but in the 14th and 15th centuries it developed into a clearly defined party opinion and usually took an independent stand alongside the heresy of the burghers. This was the relation of John Ball, preacher of Wat Tyler’s rebellion in England, to the Wycliffe movement, and of the Taborites to the Calixtines in Bohemia. The Taborites even showed republican under a theocratic cloak, a view further developed by the plebeians in Germany in the 15th and early 16th century.

The fanaticism of mystically-minded sects, the Flagellants and Lollards, etc., which continued the revolutionary tradition in times of suppression, seized upon this form of heresy.

At that time the plebeians were the only class that stood outside the existing official society. They had no access to either the feudal or the burgher association. They had neither privileges nor property; they did not even have the kind of property the peasant or petty burgher had, which was heavily burdened with taxes. They were unpropertied and rightless in every respect; their living conditions never even brought them into direct contact with the existing institutions, which ignored them completely. They

were a living symptom of the decay of the feudal and guild-burgher society, and at the same time the first precursors of the modern bourgeois society.

This explains why the plebeian opposition even then could not stop at fighting only feudalism and the privileged burghers; why, in fantasy at least, it reached beyond the then scarcely dawning modern bourgeois society; why, an absolutely propertyless faction, it questioned the institutions, views and conceptions common to all societies based on class antagonisms. In this respect, the chiliastic dream-visions of early Christianity offered a very convenient starting point. On the other hand, this sally beyond both the present and even the future could be nothing but violent and fantastic, and of necessity fell back within the narrow limits set by the contemporary situation at the very first practical application of it. The attack on private property, the demand for common ownership was bound to resolve into a primitive organisation of charity; vague Christian equality could at best resolve into civic "equality before the law"; and elimination of all authority would finally culminate in the establishment of republican governments elected by the people. The anticipation of communism, nurtured by the imagination, became in reality an anticipation of modern bourgeois conditions.

This violent anticipation of coming historical developments, easily explained by the living conditions of the plebeians, is first observed in Germany, with Thomas Münzer and his party. The Taborites had a kind of chiliastic common ownership, but that was a purely military measure. Only in the teachings of Münzer did these communist notions express the aspirations of a real fraction of society. He formulated them with a certain definiteness, and they were observed since then in every great popular upheaval, until they gradually merged with the modern proletarian movement. It was all like the struggles of free peasants in the Middle Ages against the increasing feudal domination, which merged with the struggles of serfs and bondsmen for complete abolition of the feudal system.

While the first of the three large camps, the *conservative Catholic*, embraced all the elements interested in maintaining the existing conditions, i.e., the imperial authorities, the ecclesiastical and a section of the lay princes, the richer nobility, the prelates and the city patricians, the camp of *Lutheran reforms, moderate in the burgher manner*, attracted all the propertied elements of the opposition, the bulk of the lesser nobility, the burghers, and even a portion of the lay princes who hoped to enrich themselves through confiscation of church estates and wanted to seize the opportunity of gaining greater independence from the Empire. As to the peasants and plebeians, they formed a *revolutionary* party whose demands and doctrines were most clearly set out by Münzer.

Luther and Münzer each fully represented his party by his doctrine, as well as by

his character, and actions.

From 1517 to 1525 Luther underwent quite the same changes as the present-day German constitutionalists did between 1846 and 1849, and which are undergone by every bourgeois party which, placed for a while at the head of the movement, is overwhelmed by the plebeian-proletarian party standing behind it.

When in 1517 Luther first opposed the dogmas and statutes of the Catholic Church his opposition was by no means of a definite character. Although it did not overstep the demands of the earlier burgher heresy, it did not, and could not, rule out any trend which went further. At that early stage all the opposition elements had to be united, the most resolute revolutionary energy displayed, and the sum of the existing heresies against the Catholic orthodoxy had to find a protagonist. In much the same way our liberal bourgeoisie of 1847 was still revolutionary, called itself socialist and communist, and clamoured for the emancipation of the working class. Luther's sturdy peasant nature asserted itself in the stormiest fashion in that first period of his activities. "If the raging madness [of the Roman churchmen] were to continue, it seems to me no better counsel and remedy could be found against it than that kings and princes apply force, arm themselves, attack those evil people who have poisoned the entire world, and put an end to this game once and for all, *with arms, not with words*. Since we punish thieves with the halter, murderers with the sword, and heretics with fire, why do we not turn on all those evil teachers of perdition, those popes, cardinals and bishops, and the entire swarm of the Roman Sodom *with arms in hand, and wash our hands in their blood?*"

But this revolutionary ardour was short-lived. Luther's lightning struck home. The entire German people was set in motion. On the one hand, peasants and plebeians saw the signal to revolt in his appeals against the clergy, and in his sermon of Christian freedom; on the other, he was joined by the moderate burghers and a large section of the lesser nobility. Even princes were drawn into the maelstrom. The former believed the day had come to wreak vengeance upon all their oppressors, the latter only wished to break the power of the clergy, the dependence upon Rome, to abolish the Catholic hierarchy and to enrich themselves on the confiscation of church property. The parties stood aloof of each other, and each had its spokesmen. Luther had to choose between them. He, the protégé of the Elector of Saxony, the revered professor of Wittenberg who had become powerful and famous overnight, the great man with his coterie of servile creatures and flatterers, did not hesitate for a single moment. He dropped the popular elements of the movement and took the side of the burghers, the nobility, and the princes. His appeals for a war of extermination against Rome resounded no more. Luther now preached *peaceful progress* and *passive resistance* (cf., for example, *To the*

Nobility of the German Nation, 1520, etc.). Invited by Hutten to visit him and Sickingen in the castle of Ebern, where the nobility conspired against the clergy and the princes, Luther replied: "I do not wish the Gospel *defended by force and bloodshed*. The world was conquered by the Word, the Church is maintained by the Word, the Word will also put the Church back into its own, and Antichrist, who gained his own without violence, will fall without violence."

From this tendency, or, to be more exact, from this more definite delineation of Luther's policy, sprang that bartering and haggling over institutions and dogmas to be retained or reformed, that disgusting diplomatising, conciliating, intriguing and compromising, which resulted in the Augsburg Confession, the finally importuned articles of a reformed burgher church. It was quite the same kind of petty bargaining as was recently repeated in political form *ad nauseam* at the German national assemblies, conciliatory gatherings, chambers of revision, and Erfurt parliaments.²⁹ The philistine nature of the official Reformation was most distinctly evident at these negotiations.

There were good reasons for Luther, henceforth the recognised representative of the burgher reform, to preach lawful progress. The bulk of the towns espoused the cause of moderate reform, the petty nobility became more and more devoted to it, and a section of the princes joined in, while another vacillated. Success was as good as won, at least in a large part of Germany. The remaining regions could not in the long run withstand the pressure of moderate opposition in the event of continued peaceful development. Any violent upheaval, meanwhile, was bound to bring the moderate party into conflict with the extremist plebeian and peasant party, to alienate the princes, the nobility, and many towns from the movement, leaving the alternative of either the burgher party being overshadowed by the peasants and plebeians or the entire movement being crushed by Catholic restoration. There have been examples enough lately of how bourgeois parties, after gaining the slightest victory, seek to steer their way by means of lawful progress between the Scylla of revolution and the Charybdis of restoration.

Under the general social and political conditions prevailing at that time the results of every change were necessarily advantageous to the princes and inevitably increased their power. Thus it came about that the burgher reform fell the more completely under the control of the reformed princes, the more sharply it broke away from the plebeian and peasant elements. Luther himself became more and more their vassal, and the people knew perfectly well what they were doing when they accused him of having become, as the others, a flunkey of the princes, and when they stoned him in Orlamünde.

When the Peasant War broke out Luther tried to strike a mediatory pose in

regions where the nobility and the princes were mostly Catholic. He resolutely attacked the authorities. He said they were to blame for the rebellion in view of their oppression; it was not the peasants, but God himself, who rose against them. Yet, on the other hand, he said, the revolt was ungodly and contrary to the Gospel. In conclusion, he called upon both parties to yield and reach a peaceful understanding.

But in spite of these well-meaning mediatory offers, the revolt spread swiftly, and even involved Protestant regions dominated by Lutheran princes, lords and towns, rapidly outgrowing the “circumspect” burgher reform. The most determined faction of the insurgents under Münzer made its headquarters in Luther’s immediate proximity at Thuringia. A few more successes, and the whole of Germany would be in flames, Luther surrounded and perhaps piked as a traitor, and the burgher reform swept away by the tide of a peasant-plebeian revolution. There was no more time for circumspection. All the old animosities were forgotten in the face of the revolution. Compared with the hordes of peasants, the servants of the Roman Sodom were innocent lambs, sweet-tempered children of God. Burgher and prince, noble and clergyman, Luther and the Pope, all joined hands “against the murderous and plundering peasant hordes”.³⁰ “They must be knocked to pieces, strangled and stabbed, covertly and overtly, by everyone who can, just as one must kill a mad dog!” Luther cried. “Therefore, dear sirs, help here, save there, stab, knock, strangle them everyone who can, and should you lose your life, bless you, no better death can you ever attain.” There should be no false mercy for the peasant. Whoever hath pity on those whom God pities not, whom He wishes punished and destroyed, belongs among the rebels himself. Later the peasants would learn to thank God when they would have to give up one cow in order to enjoy the other in peace, and the princes would learn through the revolution the spirit of the mob that must be ruled by force only. “*The wise man says: cibus, onus et virgam asino.*”^a The peasants must have nothing but chaff. They do not hearken to the Word, and are foolish, so they must hearken to the rod and the gun, and that serves them right. We must pray for them that they obey. Where they do not there should not be much mercy. *Let the guns roar among them*, or else they will do it a thousand times worse.”

That was exactly what our late socialist and philanthropic bourgeoisie said when the proletariat claimed its share of the fruits of victory after the March events.

Luther had put a powerful weapon into the hands of the plebeian movement by translating the Bible. Through the Bible he contrasted the feudalised Christianity of his day with the moderate Christianity of the first centuries, and the decaying feudal

^a Latin for “food, pack, and lash to the ass”. — *Ed.*

society with a picture of a society that knew nothing of the ramified and artificial feudal hierarchy. The peasants had made extensive use of this instrument against the princes, the nobility, and the clergy. Now Luther turned it against the peasants, extracting from the Bible such a veritable hymn to the God-ordained authorities as no bootlicker of absolute monarchy had ever been able to extract. Princedom by the grace of God, resigned obedience, even serfdom, were sanctioned with the aid of the Bible. Not the peasant revolt alone, but Luther's own mutiny against religious and lay authority was thereby disavowed; not only the popular movement, but the burgher movement as well, were betrayed to the princes.

Need we name the bourgeois who recently gave us examples of such a disavowal of their own past?

Let us now compare the plebeian revolutionary, Münzer, with Luther, the burgher reformer.

Thomas Münzer was born in Stolberg, in the Harz, in 1498.³¹ His father is said to have died on the scaffold, a victim of the obduracy of the Count of Stolberg. In his fifteenth year Münzer organised a secret union at the Halle school against the Archbishop of Magdeburg and the Roman Church in general. His learning in the theology of his time brought him an early doctor's degree and the position of chaplain in a Halle nunnery. Here he treated the church dogmas and rites with the greatest contempt. At mass he omitted the words of the transubstantiation, and, as Luther said, ate up the almighty gods unconsecrated. Medieval mystics, and particularly the chiliastic works of Joachim the Calabrese, were the main subject of his studies. The millennium and the Day of Judgment over the degenerated church and corrupted world propounded and described by that mystic, seemed to Münzer imminently close, what with the Reformation and the general unrest of his time. He preached in his neighbourhood with great success. In 1520 he went to Zwickau as the first evangelist preacher. There he found one of those fanatical chiliastic sects that continued their existence on the quiet in many localities, and whose momentary humility and detachment concealed the increasingly rampant opposition of the lowest strata of society to the prevailing conditions, and who were now, with the unrest growing, coming into the light of day ever more boldly and persistently. It was the sect of the Anabaptists headed by Nikias Storch. They preached the approach of the Day of Judgment and of the millennium; they had "visions, transports, and the spirit of prophecy". They soon came into conflict with the Council of Zwickau. Münzer defended them, though he never joined them unconditionally and would much rather have brought them under his own influence. The Council took drastic measures against them; they had to leave the town, and Münzer with them. This was at the close of 1521.

He went to Prague and sought to gain a foothold by joining the remnants of the Hussite movement. But his proclamation had the effect of compelling him to flee from Bohemia as well. In 1522 he became preacher at Allstedt in Thuringia. Here he started by reforming the cult. Even before Luther dared to go so far, he entirely abolished the Latin language and ordered the entire Bible, and not only the prescribed Sunday Gospels and epistles, to be read to the people. At the same time, he organised propaganda in his locality. People flocked to him from all directions, and Allstedt soon became the centre of the popular anti-priest movement of all Thuringia.

Münzer was as yet more theologian than anything else. He still directed his attacks almost exclusively against the priests. He did not, however, preach quiet debate and peaceful progress as Luther at that time, but continued Luther's earlier violent sermons, calling upon the princes of Saxony and the people to rise in arms against the Roman priests. "Does not Christ say, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword'? What must you [the princes of Saxony] do with that sword? Only one thing if you wish to be the servants of God, and that is to drive out and destroy the evil ones who stand in the way of the Gospel. Christ ordered very earnestly [Luke, 19, 27] 'bring hither mine enemies and slay them before me'. Do not give us any empty phrases that the power of God will do it without the aid of your sword, since then it would rust in its sheath ... Those who stand in the way of God's revelation must be destroyed mercilessly, as Hezekiah, Cyrus, Josiah, Daniel and Elias destroyed the priests of Baal, else the Christian church will never come back to its source. We must uproot the weeds in God's vineyard at harvest time ... God said in the Fifth Book of Moses, 7, 'thou shalt not show mercy unto the idolaters, but ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images and burn them with fire that I shall not be wroth at you'."

But these appeals to the princes were of no avail, whereas revolutionary sentiments among the people grew day by day. Münzer, whose ideas became more lucid and bolder, now broke resolutely away from the burgher Reformation, and henceforth became an outright political agitator.

His philosophico-theological doctrine attacked all the main points not only of Catholicism, but of Christianity generally. Under the cloak of Christianity he preached a kind of pantheism, which curiously resembled modern speculative contemplation³² and at times even approached atheism. He repudiated the Bible both as the only and as the infallible revelation. The real and living revelation, he said, was reason, a revelation which existed and always exists among all peoples at all times. To hold up the Bible against reason, he maintained, was to kill the spirit with the letter, for the Holy Spirit of which the Bible speaks is not something that exists outside us — the Holy Spirit is our reason. Faith is nothing but reason come alive in man, and pagans could therefore also

have faith. Through this faith, through reason come to life, man became godlike and blessed. Heaven is, therefore, nothing of another world and is to be sought in this life. It is the mission of believers to establish this Heaven, the kingdom of God, here on Earth. Just as there is no Heaven in the beyond, there is also no Hell and no damnation. Similarly, there is no devil but man's evil lusts and greed. Christ was a man, as we are, a prophet and a teacher, and his supper is a plain meal of commemoration wherein bread and wine are consumed without any mystic garnish.

Münzer preached these doctrines mostly cloaked in the same Christian phraseology, behind which the new philosophy had to hide for some time. But the arch-heretical fundamental idea is easily discerned in all his writings, and he obviously took the biblical cloak much less in earnest than many a disciple of Hegel does in modern times. Yet three hundred years separate Münzer from modern philosophy.

Münzer's political doctrine followed his revolutionary religious conceptions very closely, and just as his theology overstepped the current conceptions of his time, so his political doctrine overstepped the directly prevailing social and political conditions. Just as Münzer's religious philosophy approached atheism, so his political program approached communism, and even on the eve of the February Revolution more than one present-day communist sect lacked as comprehensive a theoretical arsenal as was "Münzer's" in the 16th century. This program, no more of a compilation of the demands of the plebeians of that day than a visionary anticipation of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletarian element that had scarcely begun to develop among the plebeians — this program demanded the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God, of the prophesied millennium, by restoring the church to its original status and abolishing all the institutions that conflicted with this allegedly early-Christian, but in fact very novel church. By the kingdom of God Münzer meant a society without class differences, private property and a state authority independent of, and foreign to, the members of society. All the existing authorities, insofar as they refused to submit and join the revolution, were to be overthrown, all work and all property shared in common, and complete equality introduced. A union was to be established to realise all this, and not only throughout Germany, but throughout all Christendom. Princes and lords would be invited to join, and should they refuse, the union was to take up arms and overthrow or kill them at the first opportunity.

Münzer set to work at once to organise the union. His sermons became still more militant and revolutionary. He thundered forth against the princes, the nobility and the patricians with a passion that equalled the fervour of his attacks upon the clergy. He depicted the prevailing oppression in burning colours and countered it with his dream-vision of the millennium of social republican equality. He published one

revolutionary pamphlet after another, and sent emissaries in all directions, while personally organising the union in Allstedt and its vicinity.

The first fruit of this propaganda was the destruction of St. Mary's Chapel in Mellerbach near Allstedt, according to the command of the Bible (Deut. 7, 6): "Ye shall destroy their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their graven images with fire." The princes of Saxony came in person to Allstedt to quell the unrest and bid Münzer come to the castle. There he delivered a sermon the like of which they had not heard from Luther, "that easy-living flesh of Wittenberg", as Münzer called him. Münzer maintained that ungodly rulers, especially priests and monks, who treated the Gospel as heresy, should be killed, and referred to the New Testament for confirmation. The ungodly had no right to live save by the mercy of God's elect. If the princes did not exterminate the ungodly, God would take their sword from them, *because the entire community had the power of the sword*. The princes and lords are the prime movers of usury, thievery and robbery; they take all creatures into their private possession — the fish in the water, the birds in the air, and the plants in the soil — and still preach to the poor the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal", while they themselves take everything they find, rob and oppress the peasant and the artisan. But if one of the latter commits the slightest transgression, he has to hang, and Dr. Lügner³³ says to all this: Amen. "The masters themselves are to blame that the poor man becomes their enemy. If they do not remove the causes of the upheaval, how can things go well in the long run? Oh, dear sirs, how the Lord will smite these old pots with an iron rod! But for saying so, I am regarded a rebel. So be it!" (Cf. Zimmermann's *Bauernkrieg*, II, p. 75.)

Münzer had the sermon printed. His Allstedt printer was punished by Duke Johann of Saxony with banishment, while Münzer's writings were to be censored from then on by the ducal government in Weimar. But he paid no heed to this order. He hastened to publish a highly inciting paper³⁴ in the imperial city of Mühlhausen, wherein he called on the people "to widen the hole so that all the world may see and understand who our great personages are that have blasphemously turned our Lord into a painted manikin". It ended with the following words: "All the world must suffer a big jolt. There will be such a game that the ungodly will be thrown off their seats, and the downtrodden will rise." Thomas Münzer, "the man with the hammer", wrote the following motto on the title page: "Beware, I have put my words into thy mouth, I have put you over the people and over the Empire that thou mayest uproot, destroy, scatter and overthrow, and that thou mayest build and plant. A wall of iron against the kings, princes, priests, and against the people hath been erected. Let them fight, for victory will wondrously lead to the perdition of the strong and godless tyrants."³⁵

Münzer's breach with Luther and his party had taken place long before that.

Luther had to accept some of the church reforms which Münzer had introduced without consulting him. He watched Münzer's activities with a moderate reformer's nettled mistrust of a more energetic, farther-aiming party. Already in the spring of 1525, in a letter to Melancthon, that model of a hectic stay-at-home philistine, Münzer wrote that he and Luther did not understand the movement at all. He said they sought to choke it by the letter of the Bible, and that their doctrine was wormeaten. "Dear brethren", he wrote, "cease your procrastination and vacillation. It is time, summer is knocking at the door. Do not keep friendship with the ungodly who hinder the Word from working its full force. Do not flatter your princes, or you may perish with them. Ye tender bookish scholars, do not be wroth, for I can do nothing to change it."

Luther had more than once challenged Münzer to an open debate. The latter, however, always ready to take up the battle before the people, had not the least desire to let himself in for a theological squabble before the partisan public of Wittenberg University. He did not wish "to bring the testimony of the Spirit exclusively before the high school of learning". If Luther were sincere, he should use his influence to stop the chicaneries against his, Münzer's printer, and lift the censorship so that their controversy might be freely fought in the press.

But now, when Münzer's above-mentioned revolutionary brochure appeared, Luther denounced him publicly. In his *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Against the Rebellious Spirit* he declared Münzer to be an instrument of Satan and demanded of the princes to intervene and drive the instigators of the upheaval out of the country, since they did not confine themselves to preaching their evil doctrine but incited to insurrection, to violent action against the authorities.

On August 1, Münzer was compelled to appear before the princes in the castle of Weimar on the charge of incitement to mutiny. Highly compromising facts were available against him; they were on the scent of his secret union; his hand was detected in the societies of the miners and the peasants. He was threatened with banishment. No sooner had he returned to Allstedt than he learned that Duke Georg of Saxony demanded his extradition. Union letters in his handwriting had been intercepted, wherein he called Georg's subjects to armed resistance against the enemies of the Gospel. The Council would have extradited him, had he not left the town.

In the meantime, the growing unrest among the peasants and plebeians had made it incomparably easier for Münzer to carry on his propaganda. In the Anabaptists he found invaluable agents for that purpose. This sect, which had no positive dogmas, held together only by its common opposition to all ruling classes and by the common symbol of the second baptism, ascetic in their mode of living, untiring, fanatical and intrepid in carrying on propaganda, had grouped itself more and more closely around

Münzer. Made homeless by persecutions, its members wandered all over Germany and carried word everywhere of the new teaching, in which Münzer had made their own demands and wishes clear to them. Countless Anabaptists were put on the rack, burned or otherwise executed, but the courage and endurance of these emissaries were unshakeable, and the success of their activities amid the rapidly growing unrest was enormous. Thus, after his flight from Thuringia, Münzer found the ground prepared wherever he turned.

Near Nuremberg, where Münzer went first, a peasant revolt had been nipped in the bud a month before.³⁶ Münzer conducted his propaganda surreptitiously; people soon appeared who defended his most audacious theological propositions on the non-obligatory nature of the Bible and the meaninglessness of sacraments, who declared Christ a mere man and the power of the lay authorities ungodly. "There is Satan stalking, the Spirit of Allsted!" Luther exclaimed. In Nuremberg Münzer printed his reply to Luther.³⁷ He accused him of flattering the princes and supporting the reactionary party through his insipid moderation. But the people would free themselves all the same, he wrote, and it would go with Dr. Luther as with a captive fox. The Council ordered the paper confiscated, and Münzer had to leave Nuremberg.

Now he went across Swabia to Alsace, then to Switzerland, and then back to the upper Black Forest, where an insurrection had broken out several months before, largely precipitated by his Anabaptist emissaries. This propaganda tour of Münzer's had unquestionably and substantially contributed to the establishment of the people's party, to the clear formulation of its demands and to the final general outbreak of the insurrection in April 1525. It was through this trip that the dual effect of Münzer's activities became particularly apparent — on the one hand, on the people, whom he addressed in the only language they could then comprehend, that of religious prophecy; and, on the other hand, on the initiated, to whom he could disclose his ultimate aims. Even before his journey he had assembled in Thuringia a circle of resolute men from among the people and the lesser clergy, whom he had put at the head of his secret society. Now he became the soul of the entire revolutionary movement in Southwestern Germany, organised ties between Saxony and Thuringia through Franconia and Swabia up to Alsace and the Swiss border, and counted such South-German agitators as Hubmaier of Waldshut, Conrad Grebel of Zürich, Franz Rabmann of Griessen, Schappeler of Memmingen, Jakob Wehe of Leipzig, and Dr. Mantel in Stuttgart, who were mostly revolutionary priests, among his disciples and the heads of the union. He himself stayed mostly in Griessen on the Schaffhausen border, journeying from there across the Hegau, Klettgau, etc. The bloody persecutions undertaken by the alarmed princes and lords everywhere against this new plebeian heresy, contributed

not a little to fanning the spirit of rebellion and consolidating the ranks of the union. In this way Münzer conducted his agitation for about five months in Upper Germany, and returned to Thuringia when the outbreak of the conspiracy was near at hand, because he wished to lead the movement personally. There we shall find him later.

We shall see how truly the character and behaviour of the two party leaders reflected the attitude of their respective parties, how Luther's indecision and fear of the movement, which was assuming serious proportions, and his cowardly servility to the princes, fully corresponded to the hesitant and ambiguous policy of the burghers, and how Münzer's revolutionary energy and resolution was reproduced among the most advanced section of the plebeians and peasants. The only difference was that while Luther confined himself to expressing the conceptions and wishes of the majority of his class and thereby won an extremely cheap popularity among it, Münzer, on the contrary, went far beyond the immediate ideas and demands of the plebeians and peasants, and organised a party of the élite of the then existing revolutionary elements, which, inasmuch as it shared his ideas and energy, always remained only a small minority of the insurgent masses. ■



Frederick Engels (1820-95)

Frederick Engels

Ludwig Feuerbach & the End of Classical German Philosophy

Written in 1886 with the aim of explaining for a new generation Marxism's debt to Feuerbach — “an undischarged debt of honour”, as Engels puts it in the 1888 foreword below. He explains how Feuerbach's work made possible Marx and Engels' evolution beyond Hegel, but also the limitations of Feuerbach's abstract, ahistorical materialism.

The text is taken from Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol. 3 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1970).



Foreword to the 1888 edition

In the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, published in Berlin, 1859, Karl Marx relates how the two of us in Brussels in the year 1845 set about “to work out in common the opposition of our view” — the materialist conception of history which was elaborated mainly by Marx — “to the ideological view of German philosophy, in fact, to settle accounts with our erstwhile philosophical conscience. The resolve was carried out in the form of a criticism of post-Hegelian philosophy. The manuscript, two large octavo volumes, had long reached its place of publication in Westphalia when we received the news that altered circumstances did not allow of its being printed. We abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of the mice all the more willingly as we had achieved our main purpose — self-clarification.”

Since then more than forty years have elapsed and Marx died without either of us having had an opportunity of returning to the subject. We have expressed ourselves in various places regarding our relation to Hegel, but nowhere in a comprehensive, connected account. To Feuerbach, who after all in many respects forms an intermediate link between Hegelian philosophy and our conception, we never returned.

In the meantime the Marxist world outlook has found representatives far beyond

the boundaries of Germany and Europe and in all the literary languages of the world. On the other hand, classical German philosophy is experiencing a kind of rebirth abroad, especially in England and Scandinavia, and even in Germany itself people appear to be getting tired of the pauper's broth of eclecticism which is ladled out in the universities there under the name of philosophy.

In these circumstances a short, coherent account of our relation to the Hegelian philosophy, of how we proceeded, as well as of how we separated, from it, appeared to me to be required more and more. Equally, a full acknowledgement of the influence which Feuerbach, more than any other post-Hegelian philosopher, had upon us during our period of storm and stress, appeared to me to be an undischarged debt of honour. I therefore willingly seized the opportunity when the editors of the *Neue Zeit*³⁸ asked me for a critical review of Starcke's book on Feuerbach. My contribution was published in that journal in the fourth and fifth numbers of 1886 and appears here in revised form as a separate publication.

Before sending these lines to press I have once again ferreted out and looked over the old manuscript of 1845-46.³⁹ The section dealing with Feuerbach is not completed. The finished portion consists of an exposition of the materialist conception of history which proves only how incomplete our knowledge of economic history still was at that time. It contains no criticism of Feuerbach's doctrine itself; for the present purpose, therefore, it was unusable. On the other hand, in an old notebook of Marx's I have found the eleven theses on Feuerbach printed here as an appendix. These are notes hurriedly scribbled down for later elaboration, absolutely not intended for publication, but invaluable as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook.

I

The volume^a before us carries us back to a period which, although in time no more than a generation behind us, has become as foreign to the present generation in Germany as if it were already a hundred years old. Yet it was the period of Germany's preparation for the Revolution of 1848; and all that has happened since then in our country has been merely a continuation of 1848, merely the execution of the last will and testament of the revolution.

Just as in France in the eighteenth century, so in Germany in the nineteenth, a philosophical revolution ushered in the political collapse. But how different the two looked! The French were in open combat against all official science, against the church

^a *Ludwig Feuerbach* by C.N. Starcke, Ph.D., Stuttgart. Ferd. Encke, 1885. [Note by Engels]

and often also against the state; their writings were printed across the frontier, in Holland or England, while they themselves were often in jeopardy of imprisonment in the Bastille. On the other hand, the Germans were professors, state-appointed instructors of youth; their writings were recognised textbooks, and the terminating system of the whole development — the Hegelian system — was even raised, as it were, to the rank of a royal Prussian philosophy of state! Was it possible that a revolution could hide behind these professors, behind their obscure, pedantic phrases, their ponderous, wearisome sentences? Were not precisely those people who were then regarded as the representatives of the revolution, the liberals, the bitterest opponents of this brain-confusing philosophy? But what neither the government nor the liberals saw was seen at least by one man as early as 1833, and this man was indeed none other than Heinrich Heine.⁴⁰

Let us take an example. No philosophical proposition has earned more gratitude from narrow-minded governments and wrath from equally narrow-minded liberals than Hegel's famous statement:

All that is real is rational, and all that is rational is real.⁴¹

That was tangibly a sanctification of things that be, a philosophical benediction bestowed upon despotism, police government, Star Chamber proceedings and censorship. That is how Frederick William III and how his subjects understood it. But according to Hegel certainly not everything that exists is also real, without further qualification. For Hegel the attribute of reality belongs only to that which at the same time is necessary:

In the course of its development reality proves to be necessity.

A particular governmental measure — Hegel himself cites the example of “a certain tax regulation” — is therefore for him by no means real without qualification. That which is necessary, however, proves itself in the last resort to be also rational; and, applied to the Prussian state of that time, the Hegelian proposition, therefore, merely means: this state is rational, corresponds to reason, in so far as it is necessary; and if it nevertheless appears to us to be evil, but still, in spite of its evil character, continues to exist, then the evil character of the government is justified and explained by the corresponding evil character of its subjects. The Prussians of that day had the government that they deserved.

Now, according to Hegel, reality is, however, in no way an attribute predicable of any given state of affairs, social or political, in all circumstances and at all times. On the contrary. The Roman Republic was real, but so was the Roman Empire, which superseded it. In 1789 the French monarchy had become so unreal, that is to say, so robbed of all necessity, so irrational, that it had to be destroyed by the Great Revolution, of which Hegel always speaks with the greatest enthusiasm. In this case, therefore, the

monarchy was the unreal and the revolution the real. And so, in the course of development, all that was previously real becomes unreal, loses its necessity, its right of existence, its rationality. And in the place of moribund reality comes a new, viable reality — peacefully if the old has enough intelligence to go to its death without a struggle; forcibly if it resists this necessity. Thus the Hegelian proposition turns into its opposite through Hegelian dialectics itself: All that is real in the sphere of human history becomes irrational in the process of time, is therefore irrational by its very destination, is tainted beforehand with irrationality; and everything which is rational in the minds of men is destined to become real, however much it may contradict existing apparent reality. In accordance with all the rules of the Hegelian method of thought, the proposition of the rationality of everything which is real resolves itself into the other proposition: All that exists deserves to perish.⁴²

But precisely therein lay the true significance and the revolutionary character of the Hegelian philosophy (to which, as the close of the whole movement since Kant, we must here confine ourselves), that it once for all dealt the death blow to the finality of all products of human thought and action. Truth, the cognition of which is the business of philosophy, was in the hands of Hegel no longer an aggregate of finished dogmatic statements, which, once discovered, had merely to be learned by heart. Truth lay now in the process of cognition itself, in the long historical development of science, which mounts from lower to ever higher levels of knowledge without ever reaching, by discovering so-called absolute truth, a point at which it can proceed no further, where it would have nothing more to do than to fold its hands and gaze with wonder at the absolute truth to which it had attained. And what holds good for the realm of philosophical knowledge holds good also for that of every other kind of knowledge and also for practical action. Just as knowledge is unable to reach a complete conclusion in a perfect, ideal condition of humanity, so is history unable to do so; a perfect society, a perfect “state”, are things which can only exist in imagination. On the contrary, all successive historical systems are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher. Each stage is necessary, and therefore justified for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin. But in the face of new, higher conditions which gradually develop in its own womb, it loses its validity and justification. It must give way to a higher stage which will also in its turn decay and perish. Just as the bourgeoisie by large-scale industry, competition and the world market dissolves in practice all stable time-honoured institutions, so this dialectical philosophy dissolves all conceptions of final, absolute truth and of absolute states of humanity corresponding to it. For it [dialectical philosophy] nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can

endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher. And dialectical philosophy itself is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain. It has, of course, also a conservative side: it recognises that definite stages of knowledge and society are justified for their time and circumstances; but only so far. The conservatism of this mode of outlook is relative, its revolutionary character is absolute — the only absolute dialectical philosophy admits.

It is not necessary, here, to go into the question of whether this mode of outlook is thoroughly in accord with the present state of natural science, which predicts a possible end even for the earth, and for its habitability a fairly certain one; which therefore recognises that for the history of mankind, too, there is not only an ascending but also a descending branch. At any rate we still find ourselves a considerable distance from the turning-point at which the historical course of society becomes one of descent, and we cannot expect Hegelian philosophy to be concerned with a subject which natural science, in its time, had not at all placed upon the agenda as yet.

But what must, in fact, be said here is this: that in Hegel the views developed above are not so sharply delineated. They are a necessary conclusion from his method, but one which he himself never drew with such explicitness. And this, indeed, for the simple reason that he was compelled to make a system and, in accordance with traditional requirements, a system of philosophy must conclude with some sort of absolute truth. Therefore, however much Hegel, especially in his *Logic*, emphasised that this eternal truth is nothing but the logical, or, the historical, process itself, he nevertheless finds himself compelled to supply this process with an end, just because he has to bring his system to a termination at some point or other. In his *Logic* he can make this end a beginning again, since here the point of conclusion, the absolute idea — which is only absolute in so far as he has absolutely nothing to say about it — “alienates”, that is, transforms, itself into nature and comes to itself again later in the mind, that is, in thought and in history. But at the end of the whole philosophy a similar return to the beginning is possible only in one way. Namely, by conceiving of the end of history as follows: mankind arrives at the cognition of this selfsame absolute idea, and declares that this cognition of the absolute idea is reached in Hegelian philosophy. In this way, however, the whole dogmatic content of the Hegelian system is declared to be absolute truth, in contradiction to his dialectical method, which dissolves all dogmatism. Thus the revolutionary side is smothered beneath the overgrowth of the conservative side. And what applies to philosophical cognition applies also to historical practice. Mankind, which, in the person of Hegel, has reached the point of working out the absolute idea, must also in practice have gotten so far that it can carry

out this absolute idea in reality. Hence the practical political demands of the absolute idea on contemporaries may not be stretched too far. And so we find at the conclusion of the *Philosophy of Right* that the absolute idea is to be realised in that monarchy based on social estates which Frederick William III so persistently but vainly promised to his subjects, that is, in a limited, moderate, indirect rule of the possessing classes suited to the petty-bourgeois German conditions of that time; and, moreover, the necessity of the nobility is demonstrated to us in a speculative fashion.

The inner necessities of the system are, therefore, of themselves sufficient to explain why a thoroughly revolutionary method of thinking produced an extremely tame political conclusion. As a matter of fact the specific form of this conclusion springs from this, that Hegel was a German, and like his contemporary Goethe had a bit of the Philistine's queue dangling behind. Each of them was an Olympian Zeus in his own sphere, yet neither of them ever quite freed himself from German Philistinism.

But all this did not prevent the Hegelian system from covering an incomparably greater domain than any earlier system, nor from developing in this domain a wealth of thought which is astounding even today. The phenomenology of mind (which one may call a parallel of the embryology and palaeontology of the mind, a development of individual consciousness through its different stages, set in the form of an abbreviated reproduction of the stages through which the consciousness of man has passed in the course of history), logic, natural philosophy, philosophy of mind, and the latter worked out in its separate, historical subdivisions: philosophy of history, of right, of religion, history of philosophy, aesthetics, etc. — in all these different historical fields Hegel laboured to discover and demonstrate the pervading thread of development. And as he was not only a creative genius but also a man of encyclopaedic erudition, he played an epoch-making role in every sphere. It is self-evident that owing to the needs of the "system" he very often had to resort to those forced constructions about which his pigmy opponents make such a terrible fuss even today. But these constructions are only the frame and scaffolding of his work. If one does not loiter here needlessly, but presses on farther into the immense building, one finds innumerable treasures which today still possess undiminished value. With all philosophers it is precisely the "system" which is perishable; and for the simple reason that it springs from an imperishable desire of the human mind — the desire to overcome all contradictions. But if all contradictions are once for all disposed of, we shall have arrived at so-called absolute truth — world history will be at an end. And yet it has to continue, although there is nothing left for it to do — hence, a new, insoluble contradiction. As soon as we have once realised — and in the long run no one has helped us to realise it more than Hegel himself — that the task of philosophy thus stated means nothing but the task that a

single philosopher should accomplish that which can only be accomplished by the entire human race in its progressive development — as soon as we realise that, there is an end to all philosophy in the hitherto accepted sense of the word. One leaves alone “absolute truth”, which is unattainable along this path or by any single individual; instead, one pursues attainable relative truths along the path of the positive sciences, and the summation of their results by means of dialectical thinking. At any rate, with Hegel philosophy comes to an end: on the one hand, because in his system he summed up its whole development in the most splendid fashion; and on the other hand, because, even though unconsciously, he showed us the way out of the labyrinth of systems to real positive knowledge of the world.

One can imagine what a tremendous effect this Hegelian system must have produced in the philosophy-tinged atmosphere of Germany. It was a triumphal procession which lasted for decades and which by no means came to a standstill on the death of Hegel. On the contrary, it was precisely from 1830 to 1840 that “Hegelianism” reigned most exclusively, and to a greater or lesser extent infected even its opponents. It was precisely in this period that Hegelian views, consciously or unconsciously, most extensively penetrated the most diversified sciences and leavened even popular literature and the daily press, from which the average “educated consciousness” derives its mental pabulum. But this victory along the whole front was only the prelude to an internal struggle.

As we have seen, the doctrine of Hegel, taken as a whole, left plenty of room for giving shelter to the most diverse practical party views. And in the theoretical Germany of that time, two things above all were practical: religion and politics. Whoever placed the chief emphasis on the Hegelian *system* could be fairly conservative in both spheres; whoever regarded the dialectical *method* as the main thing could belong to the most extreme opposition, both in politics and religion. Hegel himself, despite the fairly frequent outbursts of revolutionary wrath in his works, seemed on the whole to be more inclined to the conservative side. Indeed, his system had cost him much more “hard mental plugging” than his method. Towards the end of the thirties, the cleavage in the school became more and more apparent. The Left wing, the so-called Young Hegelians, in their fight with the pietist orthodox and the feudal reactionaries, abandoned bit by bit that philosophical-genteel reserve in regard to the burning questions of the day which up to that time had secured state toleration and even protection for their teachings. And when, in 1840, orthodox pietism and absolutist feudal reaction ascended the throne with Frederick William IV, open partisanship became unavoidable. The fight was still carried on with philosophical weapons, but no longer for abstract philosophical aims. It turned directly on the destruction of traditional religion and of

the existing state. And while in the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*⁴³ the practical ends were still predominantly put forward in philosophical disguise, in the *Rheinische Zeitung*⁴⁴ of 1842 the Young Hegelian school revealed itself directly as the philosophy of the aspiring radical bourgeoisie and used the meagre cloak of philosophy only to deceive the censorship.

At that time, however, politics was a very thorny field, and hence the main fight came to be directed against religion; this fight, particularly since 1840, was indirectly also political. Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, published in 1835, had provided the first impulse. The theory therein developed of the formation of the gospel myths was combated later by Bruno Bauer with proof that a whole series of evangelic stories had been fabricated by the authors themselves. The controversy between these two was carried out in the philosophical disguise of a battle between "self-consciousness" and "substance". The question whether the miracle stories of the gospels came into being through unconscious-traditional myth-creation within the bosom of the community or whether they were fabricated by the evangelists themselves was magnified into the question whether, in world history, "substance" or "self-consciousness" was the decisive operative force. Finally came Stirner, the prophet of contemporary anarchism — Bakunin has taken a great deal from him — and capped the sovereign "self-consciousness" by his sovereign "ego".⁴⁵

We will not go further into this side of the decomposition process of the Hegelian school. More important for us is the following: the main body of the most determined Young Hegelians was, by the practical necessities of its fight against positive religion, driven back to Anglo-French materialism. This brought them into conflict with their school system. While materialism conceives nature as the sole reality, nature in the Hegelian system represents merely the "alienation" of the absolute idea, so to say, a degradation of the idea. At all events, thinking and its thought-product, the idea, is here the primary, nature the derivative, which only exists at all by the condescension of the idea. And in this contradiction they floundered as well or as ill as they could.

Then came Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. With one blow it pulverised the contradiction, in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence. The spell was broken; the "system" was exploded and cast aside, and the contradiction, shown to exist only in our imagination, was dissolved. One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians. How

enthusiastically Marx greeted the new conception and how much — in spite of all critical reservations — he was influenced by it, one may read in *The Holy Family*.

Even the shortcomings of the book contributed to its immediate effect. Its literary, sometimes even high-flown, style secured for it a large public and was at any rate refreshing after long years of abstract and abstruse Hegelianising. The same is true of its extravagant deification of love, which, coming after the now intolerable sovereign rule of “pure reason”, had its excuse, if not justification. But what we must not forget is that it was precisely these two weaknesses of Feuerbach that “true Socialism”, which had been spreading like a plague in “educated” Germany since 1844, took as its starting-point, putting literary phrases in the place of scientific knowledge, the liberation of mankind by means of “love” in place of the emancipation of the proletariat through the economic transformation of production — in short, losing itself in the nauseous fine writing and ecstasies of love typified by Herr Karl Grün.

Another thing we must not forget is this: the Hegelian school disintegrated, but Hegelian philosophy was not overcome through criticism; Strauss and Bauer each took one of its sides and set it polemically against the other. Feuerbach broke through the system and simply discarded it. But a philosophy is not disposed of by the mere assertion that it is false. And so powerful a work as Hegelian philosophy, which had exercised so enormous an influence on the intellectual development of the nation, could not be disposed of by simply being ignored. It had to be “sublated” in its own sense, that is, in the sense that while its form had to be annihilated through criticism, the new content which had been won through it had to be saved. How this was brought about we shall see below.

But in the meantime the Revolution of 1848 thrust the whole of philosophy aside as unceremoniously as Feuerbach had thrust aside Hegel. And in the process Feuerbach himself was also pushed into the background.

II

The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of more recent philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking and being. From the very early times when men, still completely ignorant of the structure of their own bodies, under the stimulus of dream apparitions^a came to believe that their thinking and sensation were not activities

^a Among savages and lower barbarians the idea is still universal that the human forms which appear in dreams are souls which have temporarily left their bodies; the real man is, therefore, held responsible for acts committed by his dream apparition against the dreamer. Thus Im Thurn found this belief current, for example, among the Indians of Guyana in 1884. [*Note by Engels*]

of their bodies, but of a distinct soul which inhabits the body and leaves it at death — from this time men have been driven to reflect about the relation between this soul and the outside world. If upon death it took leave of the body and lived on, there was no occasion to invent yet another distinct death for it. Thus arose the idea of its immortality, which at that stage of development appeared not at all as a consolation but as a fate against which it was no use fighting, and often enough, as among the Greeks, as a positive misfortune. Not religious desire for consolation, but the quandary arising from the common universal ignorance of what to do with this soul, once its existence had been accepted, after the death of the body, led in a general way to the tedious notion of personal immortality. In an exactly similar manner the first gods arose through the personification of natural forces. And these gods in the further development of religions assumed more and more an extramundane form, until finally by a process of abstraction, I might almost say of distillation, occurring naturally in the course of man's intellectual development, out of the many more or less limited and mutually limiting gods there arose in the minds of men the idea of the one exclusive God of the monotheistic religions.

Thus the question of the relation of thinking to being, the relation of the spirit to nature — the paramount question of the whole of philosophy — has, no less than all religion, its roots in the narrow-minded and ignorant notions of savagery. But this question could for the first time be put forward in its whole acuteness, could achieve its full significance, only after humanity in Europe had awakened from the long hibernation of the Christian Middle Ages. The question of the position of thinking in relation to being, a question which, by the way, had played a great part also in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, the question: which is primary, spirit or nature — that question, in relation to the church, was sharpened into this: Did God create the world or has the world been in existence eternally?

The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other — and among the philosophers, Hegel, for example, this creation often becomes still more intricate and impossible than in Christianity — comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.

These two expressions, idealism and materialism, originally signify nothing else but this; and here too they are not used in any other sense. What confusion arises when some other meaning is put into them will be seen below.

But the question of the relation of thinking and being has yet another side: in what relation do our thoughts about the world surrounding us stand to this world itself? Is

our thinking capable of the cognition of the real world? Are we able in our ideas and notions of the real world to produce a correct reflection of reality? In philosophical language this question is called the question of the identity of thinking and being, and the overwhelming majority of philosophers give an affirmative answer to this question. With Hegel, for example, its affirmation is self-evident; for what we cognise in the real world is precisely its thought-content — that which makes the world a gradual realisation of the absolute idea, which absolute idea has existed somewhere from eternity, independent of the world and before the world. But it is manifest without further proof that thought can know a content which is from the outset a thought-content. It is equally manifest that what is to be proved here is already tacitly contained in the premise. But that in no way prevents Hegel from drawing the further conclusion from his proof of the identity of thinking and being that his philosophy, because it is correct for his thinking, is therefore the only correct one, and that the identity of thinking and being must prove its validity by mankind immediately translating his philosophy from theory into practice and transforming the whole world according to Hegelian principles. This is an illusion which he shares with well-nigh all philosophers.

In addition there is yet a set of different philosophers — those who question the possibility of any cognition, or at least of an exhaustive cognition, of the world. To them, among the more modern ones, belong Hume and Kant, and they have played a very important role in philosophical development. What is decisive in the refutation of this view has already been said by Hegel, in so far as this was possible from an idealist standpoint. The materialistic additions made by Feuerbach are more ingenious than profound. The most telling refutation of this as of all other philosophical crotchets is practice, namely, experiment and industry. If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, bringing it into being out of its conditions and making it serve our own purposes into the bargain, then there is an end to the Kantian ungraspable “thing-in-itself”. The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained just such “things-in-themselves” until organic chemistry began to produce them one after another, whereupon the “thing-in-itself” became a thing for us, as, for instance, alizarin, the colouring matter of the madder, which we no longer trouble to grow in the madder roots in the field, but produce much more cheaply and simply from coal tar. For 300 years the Copernican solar system was a hypothesis with 100, 1000 or 10,000 chances to one in its favour, but still always a hypothesis. But when Leverrier, by means of the data provided by this system, not only deduced the necessity of the existence of an unknown planet, but also calculated the position in the heavens which this planet must necessarily occupy, and when Galle really found this planet,⁴⁶ the Copernican system was proved. If, nevertheless, the

Neo-Kantians are attempting to resurrect the Kantian conception in Germany and the agnostics that of Hume in England (where in fact it never became extinct), this is, in view of their theoretical and practical refutation accomplished long ago, scientifically a regression and practically merely a shamefaced way of surreptitiously accepting materialism, while denying it before the world.

But during this long period from Descartes to Hegel and from Hobbes to Feuerbach, the philosophers were by no means impelled, as they thought they were, solely by the force of pure reason. On the contrary, what really pushed them forward most was the powerful and ever more rapidly onrushing progress of natural science and industry. Among the materialists this was plain on the surface, but the idealist systems also filled themselves more and more with a materialist content and attempted pantheistically to reconcile the antithesis between mind and matter. Thus, ultimately, the Hegelian system represents merely a materialism idealistically turned upside down in method and content.

It is, therefore, comprehensible that Starcke in his characterisation of Feuerbach first of all investigates the latter's position in regard to this fundamental question of the relation of thinking and being. After a short introduction, in which the views of the preceding philosophers, particularly since Kant, are described in unnecessarily ponderous philosophical language, and in which Hegel, by an all too formalistic adherence to certain passages of his works, gets far less than his due, there follows a detailed description of the course of development of Feuerbach's "metaphysics" itself, as this course was successively reflected in those writings of this philosopher which have a bearing here. This description is industriously and lucidly elaborated; only, like the whole book, it is loaded with a ballast of philosophical phraseology by no means everywhere unavoidable, which is the more disturbing in its effect the less the author keeps to the manner of expression of one and the same school, or even of Feuerbach himself, and the more he interjects expressions of very different tendencies, especially of the tendencies now rampant and calling themselves philosophical.

The course of evolution of Feuerbach is that of a Hegelian — a never quite orthodox Hegelian, it is true — into a materialist; an evolution which at a definite stage necessitates a complete rupture with the idealist system of his predecessor. With irresistible force Feuerbach is finally driven to the realisation that the Hegelian premundane existence of the "absolute idea," the "pre-existence of the logical categories" before the world existed, is nothing more than the fantastic survival of the belief in the existence of an extramundane creator; that the material, sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality; and that our consciousness and thinking, however suprasensuous they may seem, are the product of a material, bodily organ, the brain.

Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter. This is, of course, pure materialism. But, having got so far, Feuerbach stops short. He cannot overcome the customary philosophical prejudice, prejudice not against the thing but against the name materialism. He says:

To me materialism is the foundation of the edifice of human essence and knowledge; but to me it is not what it is to the physiologist, to the natural scientist in the narrower sense, for example, to Moleschott, and necessarily is from their standpoint and profession, namely, the edifice itself. Backwards I fully agree with the materialists; but not forwards.

Here Feuerbach lumps together the materialism that is a general world outlook resting upon a definite conception of the relation between matter and mind, and the special form in which this world outlook was expressed at a definite historical stage, namely, in the eighteenth century. More than that, he lumps it with the shallow, vulgarised form in which the materialism of the eighteenth century continues to exist today in the heads of naturalists and physicians, the form which was preached on their tours in the fifties by Büchner, Vogt and Moleschott. But just as idealism underwent a series of stages of development, so also did materialism. With each epoch-making discovery even in the sphere of natural science it has to change its form; and after history also was subjected to materialistic treatment, a new avenue of development has opened here too.

The materialism of the last century was predominantly mechanical, because at that time, of all natural sciences, only mechanics, and indeed only the mechanics of solid bodies — celestial and terrestrial — in short, the mechanics of gravity, had come to any definite close. Chemistry at that time existed only in its infantile, phlogistic form.⁴⁷ Biology still lay in swaddling clothes; vegetable and animal organisms had been only roughly examined and were explained as the result of purely mechanical cause. What the animal was to Descartes, man was to the materialists of the eighteenth century — a machine. This exclusive application of the standards of mechanics to processes of a chemical and organic nature — in which processes the laws of mechanics are, indeed, also valid, but are pushed into the background by other, higher laws — constitutes the first specific but at that time inevitable limitation of classical French materialism.

The second specific limitation of this materialism lay in its inability to comprehend the universe as a process, as matter undergoing uninterrupted historical development. This was in accordance with the level of the natural science of that time, and with the metaphysical, that is, anti-dialectical manner of philosophising connected with it. Nature, so much was known, was in eternal motion. But according to the ideas of that time, this motion turned, also eternally, in a circle and therefore never moved from the spot; it

produced the same results over and over again. This conception was at that time inevitable. The Kantian theory of the origin of the solar system had been put forward but recently and was still regarded merely as a curiosity. The history of the development of the earth, geology, was still totally unknown, and the conception that the animate natural beings of today are the result of a long sequence of development from the simple to the complex could not at that time scientifically be put forward at all. The unhistorical view of nature was therefore inevitable. We have the less reason to reproach the philosophers of the 18th century on this account since the same thing is found in Hegel. According to him, nature, as a mere “alienation” of the idea, is incapable of development in time — capable only of extending its manifoldness in space, so that it displays simultaneously and alongside of one another all the stages of development comprised in it, and is condemned to an eternal repetition of the same processes. This absurdity of a development in space, but outside of time — the fundamental condition of all development — Hegel imposes upon nature just at the very time when geology, embryology, the physiology of plants and animals, and organic chemistry were being built up, and when everywhere on the basis of these new sciences brilliant foreshadowings of the later theory of evolution were appearing (for instance, Goethe and Lamarck). But the system demanded it; hence the method, for the sake of the system, had to become untrue to itself.

This same unhistorical conception prevailed also in the domain of history. Here the struggle against the remnants of the Middle Ages blurred the view. The Middle Ages were regarded as a mere interruption of history by a thousand years of universal barbarism. The great progress made in the Middle Ages — the extension of the area of European culture, the viable great nations taking form there next to each other, and finally the enormous technical progress of the 14th and 15th centuries — all this was not seen. Thus a rational insight into the great historical interconnections was made impossible, and history served at best as a collection of examples and illustrations for the use of philosophers.

The vulgarising pedlars, who in Germany in the fifties dabbled in materialism, by no means overcame this limitation of their teachers. All the advances of natural science which had been made in the meantime served them only as new proofs against the existence of a creator of the world; and, indeed, they did not in the least make it their business to develop the theory any further. Though idealism was at the end of its tether and was dealt a deathblow by the Revolution of 1848, it had the satisfaction of seeing that materialism had for the moment fallen lower still. Feuerbach was unquestionably right when he refused to take responsibility for this materialism; only he should not have confounded the doctrines of these itinerant preachers with

materialism in general.

Here, however, there are two things to be pointed out. First, even during Feuerbach's lifetime, natural science was still in that process of violent fermentation which only during the last 15 years had reached a clarifying, relative conclusion. New scientific data were acquired to a hitherto unheard-of extent, but the establishing of interrelations, and thereby the bringing of order into this chaos of discoveries following closely upon each other's heels, has only quite recently become possible. It is true that Feuerbach had lived to see all three of the decisive discoveries — that of the cell, the transformation of energy and the theory of evolution named after Darwin. But how could the lonely philosopher, living in rural solitude, be able sufficiently to follow scientific developments in order to appreciate at their full value discoveries which natural scientists themselves at that time either still contested or did not know how to make adequate use of? The blame for this falls solely upon the wretched conditions in Germany, in consequence of which cobweb-spinning eclectic flea-crackers had taken possession of the chairs of philosophy, while Feuerbach, who towered above them all, had to rusticate and grow sour in a little village. It is therefore not Feuerbach's fault that the historical conception of nature, which had now become possible and which removed all the one-sidedness of French materialism, remained inaccessible to him.

Secondly, Feuerbach is quite correct in asserting that exclusively natural-scientific materialism is indeed "the foundation of the edifice of human knowledge, but not the edifice itself". For we live not only in nature but also in human society, and this also no less than nature has its history of development and its science. It was therefore a question of bringing the science of society, that is, the sum total of the so-called historical and philosophical sciences, into harmony with the materialist foundation, and of reconstructing it thereupon. But it did not fall to Feuerbach's lot to do this. In spite of the "foundation", he remained here bound by the traditional idealist fetters, a fact which he recognises in these words: "Backwards I agree with the materialists, but not forwards!" But it was Feuerbach himself who did not go "forwards" here, in the social domain, who did not get beyond his standpoint of 1840 or 1844. And this was again chiefly due to this reclusion which compelled him, who, of all philosophers, was the most inclined to social intercourse, to produce thoughts out of his solitary head instead of in amicable and hostile encounters with other men of his calibre. Later we shall see in detail how much he remained an idealist in this sphere.

It need only be added here that Starcke looks for Feuerbach's idealism in the wrong place.

"Feuerbach is an idealist; he believes in the progress of mankind." (p. 19) "The foundation, the substructure of the whole, remains nevertheless idealism. Realism for us is nothing

more than a protection against aberrations, while we follow our ideal trends. Are not compassion, love and enthusiasm for truth and justice ideal forces?" (p. viii)

In the first place, idealism here means nothing but the pursuit of ideal aims. But these necessarily have to do at the most with Kantian idealism and its "categorical imperative"; however, Kant himself called his philosophy "transcendental idealism"; by no means because he dealt therein also with ethical ideals, but for quite other reasons, as Starcke will remember. The superstition that philosophical idealism is pivoted round a belief in ethical, that is, social, ideals, arose outside philosophy, among the German Philistines, who learned by heart from Schiller's poems the few morsels of philosophical culture they needed. No one has criticised more severely the impotent "categorical imperative" of Kant — impotent because it demands the impossible, and therefore never attains to any reality — no one has more cruelly derided the Philistine sentimental enthusiasm for unrealisable ideals purveyed by Schiller than precisely the complete idealist Hegel. (See, for example, his *Phenomenology*.)

In the second place, we simply cannot get away from the fact that everything that sets men acting must find its way through their brains — even eating and drinking, which begins as a consequence of the sensation of hunger or thirst transmitted through the brain, and ends as a result of the sensation of satisfaction likewise transmitted through the brain. The influences of the external world upon man express themselves in his brain, are reflected therein as feelings, thoughts, impulses, volitions — in short, as "ideal tendencies", and in this form become "ideal powers". If, then, a man is to be deemed an idealist because he follows "ideal tendencies" and admits that "ideal powers" have an influence over him, then every person who is at all normally developed is a born idealist and how, in that case, can there still be any materialists?

In the third place, the conviction that humanity, at least at the present moment, moves on the whole in a progressive direction has absolutely nothing to do with the antagonism between materialism and idealism. The French materialists no less than the deists Voltaire and Rousseau held this conviction to an almost fanatical degree, and often enough made the greatest personal sacrifices for it. If ever anybody dedicated his whole life to the "enthusiasm for truth and justice" — using this phrase in the good sense — it was Diderot, for instance. If, therefore, Starcke declares all this to be idealism, this merely proves that the word materialism, and the whole antagonism between the two trends, has lost all meaning for him here.

The fact is that Starcke, although perhaps unconsciously, in this makes an unpardonable concession to the traditional Philistine prejudice against the word materialism resulting from its long-continued defamation by the priests. By the word materialism the Philistine understands gluttony, drunkenness, lust of the eye, lust of

the flesh, arrogance, cupidity, avarice, covetousness, profit-hunting and stock-exchange swindling — in short, all the filthy vices in which he himself indulges in private. By the word idealism he understands the belief in virtue, universal philanthropy and in a general way a “better world”, of which he boasts before others but in which he himself at the utmost believes only so long as he is having the blues or is going through the bankruptcy consequent upon his customary “materialist” excesses. It is then that he sings his favourite song, What is man? — Half beast, half angel.

For the rest, Starcke takes great pains to defend Feuerbach against the attacks and doctrines of the vociferous assistant professors who today go by the name of philosophers in Germany. For people who are interested in this afterbirth of classical German philosophy this is, of course, a matter of importance; for Starcke himself it may have appeared necessary. We, however, will spare the reader this.

III

The real idealism of Feuerbach becomes evident as soon as we come to his philosophy of religion and ethics. He by no means wishes to abolish religion; he wants to perfect it. Philosophy itself must be absorbed in religion.

The periods of humanity are distinguished only by religious changes. A historical movement is fundamental only when it is rooted in the hearts of men. The heart is not a form of religion, so that the latter should exist *also* in the heart; the heart is the essence of religion. (Quoted by Starcke, p. 168.)

According to Feuerbach, religion is the relation between human beings based on the affections, the relation based on the heart, which relation until now has sought its truth in a fantastic mirror image of reality — in the mediation of one or many gods, the fantastic mirror images of human qualities — but now finds it directly and without any mediation in the love between “I” and “Thou”. Thus, finally, with Feuerbach sex love becomes one of the highest forms, if not the highest form, of the practice of his new religion.

Now relations between human beings, based on affection, and especially between the two sexes, have existed as long as mankind has. Sex love in particular has undergone a development and won a place during the last eight hundred years which has made it a compulsory pivotal point of all poetry during this period. The existing positive religions have limited themselves to the bestowal of a higher consecration upon state-regulated sex love, that is, upon the marriage laws, and they could all disappear tomorrow without changing in the slightest the practice of love and friendship. Thus the Christian religion in France, as a matter of fact, so completely disappeared in the years 1793-98 that even Napoleon could not re-introduce it without opposition and difficulty; and

this without any need for a substitute, in Feuerbach's sense, making itself felt in the interval.

Feuerbach's idealism consists here in this: he does not simply accept mutual relations based on reciprocal inclination between human beings, such as sex love, friendship, compassion, self-sacrifice, etc., as what they are in themselves — without associating them with any particular religion which to him, too, belongs to the past; but instead he asserts that they will attain their full value only when consecrated by the name of religion. The chief thing for him is not that these purely human relations exist, but that they shall be conceived of as the new, true religion. They are to have full value only after they have been marked with a religious stamp. Religion is derived from *religare*^a and meant originally a bond. Therefore, every bond between two people is a religion. Such etymological tricks are the last resort of idealist philosophy. Not what the word means according to the historical development of its actual use, but what it ought to mean according to its derivation is what counts. And so sex love and the intercourse between the sexes is apotheosised to a *religion*, merely in order that the word religion, which is so dear to idealistic memories, may not disappear from the language. The Parisian reformers of the Louis Blanc trend used to speak in precisely the same way in the forties. They likewise could conceive of a man without religion only as a monster, and used to say to us: "*Donc, l'athéisme c'est votre religion!*"^b If Feuerbach wishes to establish a true religion upon the basis of an essentially materialist conception of nature, that is the same as regarding modern chemistry as true alchemy. If religion can exist without its god, alchemy can exist without its philosopher's stone. By the way, there exists a very close connection between alchemy and religion. The philosopher's stone has many godlike properties and the Egyptian-Greek alchemists of the first two centuries of our era had a hand in the development of Christian doctrines, as the data given by Kopp and Berthelot have proved.

Feuerbach's assertion that "the periods of humanity are distinguished only by religious changes" is decidedly false. Great historical turning-points have been *accompanied* by religious changes only so far as the three world religions which have existed up to the present — Buddhism, Christianity and Islam — are concerned. The old tribal and national religions, which arose spontaneously, did not proselytise and lost all their power of resistance as soon as the independence of the tribe or people was lost. For the Germans it was sufficient to have simple contact with the decaying Roman world empire and with its newly adopted Christian world religion which fitted its

^a *Religare*: To bind.— *Ed.*

^b "Well, then atheism is your religion!" — *Ed.*

economic, political and ideological conditions. Only with these world religions, arisen more or less artificially, particularly Christianity and Islam, do we find that the more general historical movements acquire a religious imprint. Even in regard to Christianity the religious stamp in revolutions of really universal significance is restricted to the first stages of the bourgeoisie's struggle for emancipation — from the 13th to the 17th century — and is to be accounted for, not as Feuerbach thinks by the hearts of men and their religious needs, but by the entire previous history of the Middle Ages, which knew no other form of ideology than precisely religion and theology. But when the bourgeoisie of the 18th century was strengthened enough likewise to possess an ideology of its own, suited to its own class standpoint, it made its great and conclusive revolution, the French, appealing exclusively to juristic and political ideas, and troubling itself with religion only in so far as it stood in its way. But it never occurred to it to put a new religion in place of the old. Everyone knows how Robespierre failed in his attempt.

The possibility of purely human sentiments in our intercourse with other human beings has nowadays been sufficiently curtailed by the society in which we must live, which is based upon class antagonism and class rule. We have no reason to curtail it still more by exalting these sentiments to a religion. And similarly the understanding of the great historical class struggles has already been sufficiently obscured by current historiography, particularly in Germany, so that there is also no need for us to make such an understanding totally impossible by transforming the history of these struggles into a mere appendix of ecclesiastical history. Already here it becomes evident how far today we have moved beyond Feuerbach. His “finest passages” in glorification of his new religion of love are totally unreadable today.

The only religion which Feuerbach examines seriously is Christianity, the world religion of the Occident, based upon monotheism. He proves that the Christian god is only a fantastic reflection, a mirror image, of man. Now, this god is, however, himself the product of a tedious process of abstraction, the concentrated quintessence of the numerous earlier tribal and national gods. And man, whose image this god is, is therefore also not a real man, but likewise the quintessence of the numerous real men, man in the abstract, therefore himself again a mental image. Feuerbach, who on every page preaches sensuousness, absorption in the concrete, in actuality, becomes thoroughly abstract as soon as he begins to talk of any other than mere sex relations between human beings.

Of these relations only one aspect appeals to him: morality. And here we are again struck by Feuerbach's astonishing poverty when compared with Hegel. The latter's ethics, or doctrine of moral conduct, is the philosophy of right and embraces: 1) abstract right; 2) morality; 3) social ethics [*Sittlichkeit*], under which again are comprised:

the family, civil society and the state. Here the content is as realistic as the form is idealistic. Besides morality the whole sphere of law, economy, politics is here included. With Feuerbach it is just the reverse. In form he is realistic since he takes his start from man; but there is absolutely no mention of the world in which this man lives; hence, this man remains always the same abstract man who occupied the field in the philosophy of religion. For this man is not born of woman; he issues, as from a chrysalis, from the god of the monotheistic religions. He therefore does not live in a real world historically come into being and historically determined. True, he has intercourse with other men: however, each one of them is just as much an abstraction as he himself. In his philosophy of religion we still had men and women, but in his ethics even this last distinction disappears. Feuerbach, to be sure, at long intervals makes such statements as:

“Man thinks differently in a palace and in a hut.” “If because of hunger, of misery, you have no stuff in your body, you likewise have no stuff for morality in your head, in your mind or heart.” “Politics must become our religion,” etc.

But Feuerbach is absolutely incapable of achieving anything with these maxims. They remain mere phrases, and even Starcke has to admit that for Feuerbach politics constituted an impassable frontier and the “science of society, sociology, was *terra incognita* to him”.

He appears just as shallow, in comparison with Hegel, in his treatment of the antithesis of good and evil.

One believes one is saying something great [Hegel remarks], if one says that “man is naturally good”. But one forgets that one says something far greater when one says “man is naturally evil”.

With Hegel evil is the form in which the motive force of historical development presents itself. This contains the twofold meaning that, on the one hand, each new advance necessarily appears as a sacrilege against things hallowed, as a rebellion against conditions, though old and moribund, yet sanctified by custom; and that, on the other hand, it is precisely the wicked passions of man — greed and lust for power — which, since the emergence of class antagonisms, serve as levers of historical development — a fact of which the history of feudalism and of the bourgeoisie, for example, constitutes a single continual proof. But it does not occur to Feuerbach to investigate the historical role of moral evil. To him history is altogether an uncanny domain in which he feels ill at ease. Even his dictum:

Man as he sprang originally from nature was only a mere creature of nature, not a man.

Man is a product of man, of culture, of history

— with him even this dictum remains absolutely sterile.

What Feuerbach has to tell us about morals can, therefore, only be extremely

meagre. The urge towards happiness is innate in man, and must therefore form the basis of all morality. But the urge towards happiness is subject to a double correction. First, by the natural consequences of our actions: after the debauch come the “blues”, and habitual excess is followed by illness. Secondly, by their social consequences: if we do not respect the similar urge of other people towards happiness they will defend themselves, and so interfere with our own urge towards happiness. Consequently, in order to satisfy our urge, we must be in a position to appreciate rightly the results of our conduct and must likewise allow others an equal right to seek happiness. Rational self-restraint with regard to ourselves, and love — again and again love! — in our intercourse with others — these are the basic laws of Feuerbach’s morality; from them all others are derived. And neither the most spirited utterances of Feuerbach nor the strongest eulogies of Starcke can hide the tenuity and banality of these few propositions.

Only very exceptionally, and by no means to his and other people’s profit, can an individual satisfy his urge towards happiness by preoccupation with himself. Rather it requires preoccupation with the outside world, means to satisfy his needs, that is to say, food, an individual of the opposite sex, books, conversation, argument, activities, objects for use and working up. Feuerbach’s morality either presupposes that these means and objects of satisfaction are given to every individual as a matter of course, or else it offers only inapplicable good advice and is, therefore, not worth a brass farthing to people who are without these means. And Feuerbach himself states this in plain terms:

Man thinks differently in a palace and in a hut ... If because of hunger, of misery, you have no stuff in your body, you likewise have no stuff for morality in your head, in your mind or heart.

Do matters fare any better in regard to the equal right of others to satisfy their urge towards happiness? Feuerbach posed this claim as absolute, as holding good for all times and circumstances. But since when has it been valid? Was there ever in antiquity between slaves and masters, or in the Middle Ages between serfs and barons, any talk about an equal right to the urge towards happiness? Was not the urge towards happiness of the oppressed class sacrificed ruthlessly and “by right of law” to that of the ruling class? Yes, that was indeed immoral; nowadays, however, equality of rights is recognised. Recognised in words ever since and inasmuch as the bourgeoisie, in its fight against feudalism and in the development of capitalist production, was compelled to abolish all privileges of estate, that is, personal privileges, and to introduce the equality of all individuals before the law, first in the sphere of private law, then gradually also in the sphere of public law. But the urge towards happiness thrives only to a trivial extent on ideal rights. To the greatest extent of all it thrives on material means; and

capitalist production takes care to ensure that the great majority of those with equal rights shall get only what is essential for bare existence. Capitalist production has, therefore, little more respect, if indeed any more, for the equal right to the urge towards happiness of the majority than had slavery or serfdom. And are we better off in regard to the mental means of happiness, the educational means? Is not even “the schoolmaster of Sadowa”⁴⁸ a mythical person?

More. According to Feuerbach’s theory of morals the stock exchange is the highest temple of moral conduct, provided only that one always speculates right. If my urge towards happiness leads me to the stock exchange, and if there I correctly gauge the consequences of my actions so that only agreeable results and no disadvantages ensue, that is, if I always win, then I am fulfilling Feuerbach’s precept. Moreover, I do not thereby interfere with the equal right of another person to pursue his happiness; for that other man went to the exchange just as voluntarily as I did and in concluding the speculative transaction with me he has followed his urge towards happiness as I have followed mine. If he loses his money, his action is ipso facto proved to have been unethical, because of his bad reckoning, and since I have given him the punishment he deserves, I can even slap my chest proudly, like a modest Rhadamanthus. Love, too, rules on the stock exchange, in so far as it is not simply a sentimental figure of speech, for each finds in others the satisfaction of his own urge towards happiness, which is just what love ought to achieve and how it acts in practice. And if I gamble with correct prevision of the consequences of my operations, and therefore with success, I fulfil all the strictest injunctions of Feuerbachian morality — and become a rich man into the bargain. In other words, Feuerbach’s morality is cut exactly to the pattern of modern capitalist society, little as Feuerbach himself might desire or imagine it.

But love! — yes, with Feuerbach love is everywhere and at all times the wonder-working god who should help to surmount all difficulties of practical life — and at that in a society which is split into classes with diametrically opposite interests. At this point the last relic of its revolutionary character disappears from his philosophy, leaving only the old cant: Love one another — fall into each other’s arms regardless of distinctions of sex or estate — a universal orgy of reconciliation!

In short, the Feuerbachian theory of morals fares like all its predecessors. It is designed to suit all periods, all peoples and all conditions, and precisely for that reason it is never and nowhere applicable. It remains, as regards the real world, as powerless as Kant’s categorical imperative. In reality every class, even every profession, has its own morality, and even this it violates whenever it can do so with impunity. And love, which is to unite all, manifests itself in wars, altercations, lawsuits, domestic broils, divorces and every possible exploitation of one by another.

Now how was it possible that the powerful impetus given by Feuerbach turned out to be so unfruitful for himself? For the simple reason that Feuerbach himself never contrives to escape from the realm of abstraction — for which he has a deadly hatred — into that of living reality. He clings fiercely to nature and man; but nature and man remain mere words with him. He is incapable of telling us anything definite either about real nature or real men. But from the abstract man of Feuerbach one arrives at real living men only when one considers them as participants in history. And that is what Feuerbach resisted, and therefore the year 1848, which he did not understand, meant to him merely the final break with the real world, retirement into solitude. The blame for this again falls chiefly on the conditions then obtaining in Germany, which condemned him to rot away miserably.

But the step which Feuerbach did not take had nevertheless to be taken. The cult of abstract man, which formed the kernel of Feuerbach's new religion, had to be replaced by the science of real men and of their historical development. This further development of Feuerbach's standpoint beyond Feuerbach was inaugurated by Marx in 1845 in *The Holy Family*.

IV

Strauss, Bauer, Stirner, Feuerbach — these were the offshoots of Hegelian philosophy, in so far as they did not abandon the field of philosophy. Strauss, after his *Life of Jesus* and *Dogmatics*, produced only literary studies in philosophy and ecclesiastical history after the fashion of Renan. Bauer only achieved something in the field of the history of the origin of Christianity, though what he did here was important. Stirner remained a curiosity, even after Bakunin blended him with Proudhon and labelled the blend "anarchism". Feuerbach alone was of significance as a philosopher. But not only did philosophy — claimed to soar above all special sciences and to be the science of sciences connecting them — remain to him an impassable barrier, an inviolable holy thing, but as a philosopher, too, he stopped halfway, was a materialist below and an idealist above. He was incapable of disposing of Hegel through criticism; he simply threw him aside as useless, while he himself, compared with the encyclopaedic wealth of the Hegelian system, achieved nothing positive beyond a turgid religion of love and a meagre, impotent morality.

Out of the dissolution of the Hegelian school, however, there developed still another tendency, the only one which has borne real fruit. And this tendency is essentially connected with the name of Marx.^a

The separation from Hegelian philosophy was here also the result of a return to the materialist standpoint. That means it was resolved to comprehend the real world

— nature and history — just as it presents itself to everyone who approaches it free from preconceived idealist crotchets. It was decided mercilessly to sacrifice every idealist crotchet which could not be brought into harmony with the facts conceived in their own and not in a fantastic interconnection. And materialism means nothing more than this. But here the materialistic world outlook was taken really seriously for the first time and was carried through consistently — at least in its basic features — in all domains of knowledge concerned.

Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, one started out from his revolutionary side, described above, from the dialectical method. But in its Hegelian form this method was unusable. According to Hegel, dialectics is the self-development of the concept. The absolute concept does not only exist — unknown where — from eternity, it is also the actual living soul of the whole existing world. It develops into itself through all the preliminary stages which are treated at length in the *Logic* and which are all included in it. Then it “alienates” itself by changing into nature, where, without consciousness of itself, disguised as the necessity of nature, it goes through a new development and finally comes again to self-consciousness in man. This self-consciousness then elaborates itself again in history from the crude form until finally the absolute concept again comes to itself completely in the Hegelian philosophy. According to Hegel, therefore, the dialectical development apparent in nature and history, that is, the causal interconnection of the progressive movement from the lower to the higher, which asserts itself through all zigzag movements and temporary retrogression, is only a copy of the self-movement of the concept going on from eternity, no one knows where, but at all events independently of any thinking human brain. This ideological perversion had to be done away with. We comprehended the concepts in our heads once more materialistically — as images of real things instead of regarding the real things as images of this or that stage of the absolute concept. Thus dialectics reduced itself to the science of the general laws of motion, both of the

^a Here I may be permitted to make a personal explanation. Lately repeated reference has been made to my share in this theory, and so I can hardly avoid saying a few words here to settle this point. I cannot deny that both before and during my forty years’ collaboration with Marx I had a certain independent share in laying the foundations of the theory, and more particularly in its elaboration. But the greater part of its leading basic principles, especially in the realm of economics and history, and, above all, their final trenchant formulation, belong to Marx. What I contributed — at any rate with the exception of my work in a few special fields — Marx could very well have done without me. What Marx accomplished I would not have achieved. Marx stood higher, saw further, and took a wider and quicker view than all the rest of us. Marx was a genius; we others were at best talented. Without him the theory would not be by far what it is today. It therefore rightly bears his name. [Note by Engels]

external world and of human thought — two sets of laws which are identical in substance, but differ in their expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously, while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously, in the form of external necessity, in the midst of an endless series of seeming accidents. Thereby the dialectic of concepts itself became merely the conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and thus the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head, on which it was standing, and placed upon its feet. And this materialist dialectic, which for years has been our best working tool and our sharpest weapon, was, remarkably enough, discovered not only by us but also, independently of us and even of Hegel, by a German worker, Joseph Dietzgen.^a

In this way, however, the revolutionary side of Hegelian philosophy was again taken up and at the same time freed from the idealist trimmings which with Hegel had prevented its consistent execution. The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but as a complex of *processes*, in which the things apparently stable no less than their mind images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away, in which, in spite of all seeming accidentality and of all temporary retrogression, a progressive development asserts itself in the end — this great fundamental thought has, especially since the time of Hegel, so thoroughly permeated ordinary consciousness that in this generality it is now scarcely ever contradicted. But to acknowledge this fundamental thought in words and to apply it in reality in detail to each domain of investigation are two different things. If, however, investigation always proceeds from this standpoint, the demand for final solutions and eternal truth ceases once for all; one is always conscious of the necessary limitation of all acquired knowledge, of the fact that it is conditioned by the circumstances in which it was acquired. On the other hand, one no longer permits oneself to be imposed upon by the antitheses, insuperable for the still common old metaphysics, between true and false, good and bad, identical and different, necessary and accidental. One knows that these antitheses have only a relative validity; that that which is recognised now as true has also its latent false side which will later manifest itself, just as that which is now regarded as false has also its true side by virtue of which it could previously be regarded as true. One knows that what is maintained to be necessary is composed of sheer accidents and that the so-called accidental is the form behind which necessity hides itself — and so on.

^a See *Das Wesen der menschlichen Kopfarbeit, dargestellt von einem Handarbeiter* [The Nature of Human Brainwork, Described by a Manual Worker], Hamburg, Meissner. [Note by Engels]

The old method of investigation and thought which Hegel calls “metaphysical”, which preferred to investigate *things* as given, as fixed and stable, a method the relics of which still strongly haunt people’s minds, had a great deal of historical justification in its day. It was necessary first to examine things before it was possible to examine processes. One had first to know what a particular thing was before one could observe the changes it was undergoing. And such was the case with natural science. The old metaphysics, which accepted things as finished objects, arose from a natural science which investigated dead and living things as finished objects. But when this investigation had progressed so far that it became possible to take the decisive step forward, that is, to pass on to the systematic investigation of the changes which these things undergo in nature itself, then the last hour of the old metaphysics struck in the realm of philosophy also. And in fact, while natural science up to the end of the last century was predominantly a *collecting* science, a science of finished things, in our century, it is essentially a *systematising* science, a science of the processes, of the origin and development of these things and of the interconnection which binds all these natural processes into one great whole. Physiology, which investigates the processes occurring in plant and animal organisms; embryology, which deals with the development of individual organisms from germ to maturity; geology, which investigates the gradual formation of the Earth’s surface — all these are the offspring of our century.

But, above all, there are three great discoveries which have enabled our knowledge of the interconnection of natural processes to advance by leaps and bounds: first, the discovery of the cell as the unit from whose multiplication and differentiation the whole plant and animal body develops, so that not only is the development and growth of all higher organisms recognised to proceed according to a single general law, but also, in the capacity of the cell to change, the way is pointed out by which organisms can change their species and thus go through a more than individual development. Second, the transformation of energy, which has demonstrated to us that all the so-called forces operative in the first instance in inorganic nature — mechanical force and its complement, so-called potential energy, heat, radiation (light, or radiant heat), electricity, magnetism and chemical energy — are different forms of manifestation of universal motion, which pass into one another in definite proportions so that in place of a certain quantity of the one which disappears, a certain quantity of another makes its appearance and thus the whole motion of nature is reduced to this incessant process of transformation from one form into another. Finally, the proof which Darwin first developed in connected form that the stock of organic products of nature environing us today, including man, is the result of a long process of evolution from a few originally unicellular germs, and that these again have arisen from protoplasm or albumen,

which came into existence by chemical means.

Thanks to these three great discoveries and the other immense advances in natural science, we have now arrived at the point where we can demonstrate the interconnection between the processes in nature not only in particular spheres but also the interconnection of these particular spheres on the whole, and so can present in an approximately systematic form a comprehensive view of the interconnection in nature by means of the facts provided by empirical natural science itself. To furnish this comprehensive view was formerly the task of so-called natural philosophy. It could do this only by putting in place of the real but as yet unknown interconnections ideal, fancied ones, filling in the missing facts by figments of the mind and bridging the actual gaps merely in imagination. In the course of this procedure it conceived many brilliant ideas and foreshadowed many later discoveries, but it also produced a considerable amount of nonsense, which indeed could not have been otherwise. Today, when one needs to comprehend the results of natural scientific investigation only dialectically, that is, in the sense of their own interconnection, in order to arrive at a “system of nature” sufficient for our time; when the dialectical character of this interconnection is forcing itself against their will even into the metaphysically-trained minds of the natural scientists, today natural philosophy is finally disposed of. Every attempt at resurrecting it would be not only superfluous but a *step backwards*.

But what is true of nature, which is hereby recognised also as a historical process of development, is likewise true of the history of society in all its branches and of the totality of all sciences which occupy themselves with things human (and divine). Here, too, the philosophy of history, of right, of religion, etc., has consisted in the substitution of an interconnection fabricated in the mind of the philosopher for the real interconnection to be demonstrated in the events; has consisted in the comprehension of history as a whole as well as in its separate parts, as the gradual realisation of ideas — and naturally always only the pet ideas of the philosopher himself. According to this, history worked unconsciously but of necessity towards a certain ideal goal set in advance — as, for example, in Hegel, towards the realisation of his absolute idea — and the unalterable trend towards this absolute idea formed the inner interconnection in the events of history. A new mysterious providence — unconscious of gradually coming into consciousness — was thus put in the place of the real, still unknown interconnection. Here, therefore, just as in the realm of nature, it was necessary to do away with these fabricated, artificial interconnections by the discovery of the real ones — a task which ultimately amounts to the discovery of the general laws of motion which assert themselves as the ruling ones in the history of human society.

In one point, however, the history of the development of society proves to be

essentially different from that of nature. In nature — in so far as we ignore man's reaction upon nature — there are only blind unconscious agencies acting upon one another, out of whose interplay the general law comes into operation. Nothing of all that happens — whether in the innumerable apparent accidents observable upon the surface, or in the ultimate results which confirm the regularity inherent in these accidents — happens as a consciously desired aim. In the history of society, on the contrary, the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals; nothing happens without a conscious purpose, without an intended aim. But this distinction, important as it is for historical investigation, particularly of single epochs and events, cannot alter the fact that the course of history is governed by inner general laws. For here, also, on the whole, in spite of the consciously desired aims of all individuals, accident apparently reigns on the surface. That which is willed happens but rarely; in the majority of instances the numerous desired ends cross and conflict with one another, or these ends themselves are from the outset incapable of realisation or the means of attaining them are insufficient. Thus the conflicts of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produce a state of affairs entirely analogous to that prevailing in the realm of unconscious nature. The ends of the actions are intended, but the results which actually follow from these actions are not intended; or when they do seem to correspond to the end intended, they ultimately have consequences quite other than those intended. Historical events thus appear on the whole to be likewise governed by chance. But where on the surface accident holds sway, there actually it is always governed by inner, hidden laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws.

Men make their own history, whatever its outcome may be, in that each person follows his own consciously desired end, and it is precisely the resultant of these many wills operating in different directions and of their manifold effects upon the outer world that constitutes history. Thus it is also a question of what the many individuals desire. The will is determined by passion or deliberation. But the levers which immediately determine passion or deliberation are of very different kinds. Partly they may be external objects, partly ideal motives, ambition, “enthusiasm for truth and justice”, personal hatred or even purely individual whims of all kinds. But, on the one hand, we have seen that the many individual wills active in history for the most part produce results quite other than those intended — often quite the opposite; that their motives, therefore, in relation to the total result are likewise of only secondary importance. On the other hand, the further question arises: What driving forces in turn stand behind these motives? What are the historical causes which transform themselves into these motives in the brains of the actors?

The old materialism never put this question to itself. Its conception of history, in so far as it has one at all, is therefore essentially pragmatic; it judges everything according to the motives of the action; it divides men who act in history into noble and ignoble and then finds that as a rule the noble are defrauded and the ignoble are victorious. Hence, it follows for the old materialism that nothing very edifying is to be got from the study of history, and for us that in the realm of history the old materialism becomes untrue to itself because it takes the ideal driving forces which operate there as ultimate causes, instead of investigating what is behind them, what are the driving forces of these driving forces. The inconsistency does not lie in the fact that *ideal* driving forces are recognised, but in the investigation not being carried further back behind these into their motive causes. On the other hand, the philosophy of history, particularly as represented by Hegel, recognises that the ostensible and also the really operating motives of men who act in history are by no means the ultimate causes of historical events; that behind these motives are other motive powers which have to be discovered. But it does not seek these powers in history itself, it imports them rather from outside, from philosophical ideology, into history. Hegel, for example, instead of explaining the history of ancient Greece out of its own inner interconnections, simply maintains that it is nothing more than the working out of “forms of beautiful individuality”, the realisation of a “work of art” as such. He says much in this connection about the old Greeks that is fine and profound, but that does not prevent us today from refusing to be put off with such an explanation, which is a mere manner of speech.

When, therefore, it is a question of investigating the driving powers which — consciously or unconsciously, and indeed very often unconsciously — lie behind the motives of men who act in history and which constitute the real ultimate driving forces of history, then it is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of the people in each people; and this, too, not momentarily, for the transient flaring tip of a straw-fire which quickly dies down, but for a lasting action resulting in a great historical transformation. To ascertain the driving causes which here in the minds of acting masses and their leaders — the so-called great men — are reflected as conscious motives, clearly or unclearly, directly or in ideological, even glorified, form — that is the only path which can put us on the track of the laws holding sway both in history as a whole, and at particular periods and in particular lands. Everything which sets men in motion must go through their minds; but what form it will take in the mind will depend very much upon the circumstances. The workers have by no means become reconciled to capitalist machine industry, even though they no longer simply break the machines to pieces as they still did in 1848 on

the Rhine.

But while in all earlier periods the investigation of these driving causes of history was almost impossible — on account of the complicated and concealed interconnections between them and their effects — our present period has so far simplified these interconnections that the riddle could be solved. Since the establishment of large-scale industry, that is, at least since the European peace of 1815, it has been no longer a secret to any man in England that the whole political struggle there turned on the claims to supremacy of two classes: the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie (middle class). In France, with the return of the Bourbons, the same fact was perceived, the historians of the Restoration period, from Thierry to Guizot, Mignet and Thiers, speak of it everywhere as the key to the understanding of all French history since the Middle Ages. And since 1830 the working class, the proletariat, has been recognised in both countries as a third competitor for power. Conditions had become so simplified that one would have had to close one's eyes deliberately not to see in the fight of these three great classes and in the conflict of their interests the driving force of modern history — at least in the two most advanced countries.

But how did these classes come into existence? If it was possible at first glance still to ascribe the origin of the great, formerly feudal landed property — at least in the first instance — to political causes, to taking possession by force, this could not be done in regard to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Here the origin and development of two great classes was seen to lie clearly and palpably in purely economic causes. And it was just as clear that in the struggle between landed property and the bourgeoisie, no less than in the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, it was a question, first and foremost, of economic interests, to the furtherance of which political power was intended to serve merely as a means. Bourgeoisie and proletariat both arose in consequence of a transformation of the economic conditions, more precisely, of the mode of production. The transition, first from guild handicrafts to manufacture, and then from manufacture to large-scale industry, with steam and mechanical power, had caused the development of these two classes. At a certain stage the new productive forces set in motion by the bourgeoisie — in the first place the division of labour and the combination of many detail labourers in one general manufactory — and the conditions and requirements of exchange, developed through these productive forces, became incompatible with the existing order of production handed down by history and sanctified by law, that is to say, incompatible with the privileges of the guild and the numerous other personal and local privileges (which were only so many fetters to the unprivileged estates) of the feudal order of society. The productive forces represented by the bourgeoisie rebelled against the order of production represented

by the feudal landlords and the guild-masters. The result is known: the feudal fetters were smashed, gradually in England, at one blow in France. In Germany the process is not yet finished. But just as, at a definite stage of its development, manufacture came into conflict with the feudal order of production, so now large-scale industry has already come into conflict with the bourgeois order of production established in its place. Tied down by this order, by the narrow limits of the capitalist mode of production, this industry produces, on the one hand, an ever-increasing proletarianisation of the great mass of the people, and on the other hand, an ever greater mass of unsaleable products. Overproduction and mass misery, each the cause of the other — that is the absurd contradiction which is its outcome, and which of necessity calls for the liberation of the productive forces by means of a change in the mode of production.

In modern history at least it is, therefore, proved that all political struggles are class struggles, and all class struggles for emancipation, despite their necessarily political form — for every class struggle is a political struggle — turn ultimately on the question of *economic* emancipation. Therefore, here at least, the state — the political order — is the subordinate, and civil society — the realm of economic relations — the decisive element. The traditional conception, to which Hegel, too, pays homage, saw in the state the determining element, and in civil society the element determined by it. Appearances correspond to this. As all the driving forces of the actions of any individual person must pass through his brain, and transform themselves into motives of his will in order to set him into action, so also all the needs of civil society — no matter which class happens to be the ruling one — must pass through the will of the state in order to secure general validity in the form of laws. That is the formal aspect of the matter — the one which is self-evident. The question arises, however, what is the content of this merely formal will — of the individual as well as of the state — and whence is this content derived? Why is just this willed and not something else? If we enquire into this we discover that in modern history the will of the state is, on the whole, determined by the changing needs of civil society, by the supremacy of this or that class, in the last resort, by the development of the productive forces and relations of exchange.

But if even in our modern era, with its gigantic means of production and communication, the state is not an independent domain with an independent development, but one whose existence as well as development is to be explained in the last resort by the economic conditions of life of society, then this must be still more true of all earlier times when the production of the material life of man was not yet carried on with these abundant auxiliary means, and when, therefore, the necessity of such production must have exercised a still greater mastery over men. If the state even today, in the era of big industry and of railways, is on the whole only a reflection, in

concentrated form, of the economic needs of the class controlling production, then this must have been much more so in an epoch when each generation of men was forced to spend a far greater part of its aggregate lifetime in satisfying material needs, and was therefore much more dependent on them than we are today. An examination of the history of earlier periods, as soon as it is seriously undertaken from this angle, most abundantly confirms this. But, of course, this cannot be gone into here.

If the state and public law are determined by economic relations, so, too, of course is private law, which indeed in essence only sanctions the existing economic relations between individuals which are normal in the given circumstances. The form in which this happens can, however, vary considerably. It is possible, as happened in England, in harmony with the whole national development, to retain in the main the forms of the old feudal laws while giving them a bourgeois content; in fact, directly reading a bourgeois meaning into the feudal name. But, also, as happened in western continental Europe, Roman Law, the first world law of a commodity-producing society, with its unsurpassably fine elaboration of all the essential legal relations of simple commodity owners (of buyers and sellers, debtors and creditors, contracts, obligations, etc.), can be taken as the foundation. In which case, for the benefit of a still petty-bourgeois and semi-feudal society, it can either be reduced to the level of such a society simply through judicial practice (common law) or, with the help of allegedly enlightened, moralising jurists, it can be worked into a special code of law to correspond with such social level — a code which in these circumstances will be a bad one also from the legal standpoint (for instance, Prussian *Landrecht*). In which case, however, after a great bourgeois revolution, it is also possible for such a classic law code of bourgeois society as the French *Code Civil* to be worked out upon the basis of this same Roman Law. If, therefore, bourgeois legal rules merely express the economic life conditions of society in legal form, then they can do so well or ill according to circumstances.

The state presents itself to us as the first ideological power over man. Society creates for itself an organ for the safeguarding of its common interests against internal and external attacks. This organ is the state power. Hardly come into being, this organ makes itself independent *vis-à-vis* society; and, indeed, the more so, the more it becomes the organ of a particular class, the more it directly enforces the supremacy of that class. The fight of the oppressed class against the ruling class becomes necessarily a political fight, a fight first of all against the political dominance of this class. The consciousness of the interconnection between this political struggle and its economic basis becomes dulled and can be lost altogether. While this is not wholly the case with the participants, it almost always happens with the historians. Of the ancient sources on the struggles within the Roman Republic only Appian tells us clearly and distinctly what was at issue

in the last resort — namely, landed property.

But once the state has become an independent power *vis-à-vis* society, it produces forthwith a further ideology. It is indeed among professional politicians, theorists of public law and jurists of private law that the connection with economic facts gets lost for fair. Since in each particular case the economic facts must assume the form of juristic motives in order to receive legal sanction; and since, in so doing, consideration of course has to be given to the whole legal system already in operation, the juristic form is, in consequence, made everything and the economic content nothing. Public law and private law are treated as independent spheres, each having its own independent historical development, each being capable of and needing a systematic presentation by the consistent elimination of all inner contradictions.

Still higher ideologies, that is, such as are still further removed from the material, economic basis, take the form of philosophy and religion. Here the interconnection between conceptions and their material conditions of existence becomes more and more complicated, more and more obscured by intermediate links. But the interconnection exists. Just as the whole Renaissance period, from the middle of the 15th century, was an essential product of the towns and, therefore, of the burghers, so also was the subsequently newly-awakened philosophy. Its content was in essence only the philosophical expression of the thoughts corresponding to the development of the small and middle burghers into a big bourgeoisie. Among last century's Englishmen and Frenchmen who in many cases were just as much political economists as philosophers, this is clearly evident; and we have proved it above in regard to the Hegelian school.

We will now in addition deal only briefly with religion, since the latter stands furthest away from material life and seems to be most alien to it. Religion arose in very primitive times from erroneous, primitive conceptions of men about their own nature and external nature surrounding them. Every ideology, however, once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept-material, and develops this material further; otherwise it would not be an ideology, that is, occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws. That the material life conditions of the persons inside whose heads this thought process goes on in the last resort determine the course of this process remains of necessity unknown to these persons, for otherwise there would be an end to all ideology. These original religious notions, therefore, which in the main are common to each group of kindred peoples, develop, after the group separates, in a manner peculiar to each people, according to the conditions of life falling to their lot. For a number of groups of peoples, and particularly for the Aryans (so-called Indo-Europeans), this

process has been shown in detail by comparative mythology. The gods thus fashioned within each people were national gods, whose domain extended no farther than the national territory which they were to protect; on the other side of its boundaries other gods held undisputed sway. They could continue to exist, in imagination, only as long as the nation existed; they fell with its fall. The Roman world empire, the economic conditions of whose origin we do not need to examine here, brought about this downfall of the old nationalities. The old national gods decayed, even those of the Romans, which also were patterned to suit only the narrow confines of the city of Rome. The need to complement the world empire by means of a world religion was clearly revealed in the attempts made to provide in Rome recognition and altars for all the foreign gods to the slightest degree respectable alongside of the indigenous ones. But a new world religion is not to be made in this fashion, by imperial decree. The new world religion, Christianity, had already quietly come into being, out of a mixture of generalised Oriental, particularly Jewish, theology, and vulgarised Greek, particularly Stoic, philosophy. What it originally looked like has to be first laboriously discovered, since its official form, as it has been handed down to us, is merely that in which it became the state religion to which purpose it was adapted by the Council of Nicaea. The fact that already after 250 years it became the state religion suffices to show that it was the religion in correspondence with the conditions of the time. In the Middle Ages, in the same measure as feudalism developed, Christianity grew into the religious counterpart to it, with a corresponding feudal hierarchy. And when the burghers began to thrive, there developed, in opposition to feudal Catholicism, the Protestant heresy, which first appeared in Southern France, among the Albigenses, at the time the cities there reached the highest point of their florescence. The Middle Ages had attached to theology all the other forms of ideology — philosophy, politics, jurisprudence — and made them subdivisions of theology. It thereby constrained every social and political movement to take on a theological form. The sentiments of the masses were fed with religion to the exclusion of all else; it was therefore necessary to put forward their own interests in a religious guise in order to produce an impetuous movement. And just as the burghers from the beginning brought into being an appendage of propertyless urban plebeians, day labourers and servants of all kinds, belonging to no recognised social estate, precursors of the later proletariat, so likewise heresy soon became divided into a burgher-moderate heresy and a plebeian-revolutionary one, the latter an abomination to the burgher heretics themselves.

The ineradicability of the Protestant heresy corresponded to the invincibility of the rising burghers. When these burghers had become sufficiently strengthened, their struggle against the feudal nobility, which till then had been predominantly local,

began to assume national dimensions. The first great action occurred in Germany — the so-called Reformation. The burghers were neither powerful enough nor sufficiently developed to be able to unite under their banner the remaining rebellious estates — the plebeians of the towns, the lower nobility and the peasants on the land. At first the nobles were defeated; the peasants rose in a revolt which formed the peak of the whole revolutionary struggle: the cities left them in the lurch, and thus the revolution succumbed to the armies of the secular princes who reaped the whole profit. Thenceforward Germany disappears for three centuries from the ranks of countries playing an independent active part in history. But beside the German Luther appeared the Frenchman Calvin. With true French acuity he put the bourgeois character of the Reformation in the forefront, republicanised and democratised the church. While the Lutheran Reformation in Germany degenerated and reduced the country to rack and ruin, the Calvinist Reformation served as a banner for the republicans in Geneva, in Holland and in Scotland, freed Holland from Spain and from the German Empire⁴⁹ and provided the ideological costume for the second act of the bourgeois revolution, which was taking place in England. Here Calvinism justified itself as the true religious disguise of the interests of the bourgeoisie of that time, and on this account did not attain full recognition when the revolution ended in 1689 in a compromise between one part of the nobility and the bourgeoisie.⁵⁰ The English state church was re-established; but not in its earlier form of a Catholicism which had the king for its pope, being, instead, strongly Calvinised. The old state church had celebrated the merry Catholic Sunday and had fought against the dull Calvinist one. The new, bourgeoisified church introduced the latter, which adorns England to this day.

In France, the Calvinist minority was suppressed in 1685 and either Catholicised or driven out of the country. But what was the good? Already at that time the freethinker Pierre Bayle was at the height of his activity, and in 1694 Voltaire was born. The forcible measures of Louis XIV only made it easier for the French bourgeoisie to carry through its revolution in the irreligious, exclusively political form which alone was suited to a developed bourgeoisie. Instead of Protestants, freethinkers took their seats in the national assemblies. Thereby Christianity entered into its final stage. It had become incapable for the future of serving any progressive class as the ideological garb of its aspirations. It became more and more the exclusive possession of the ruling classes and these apply it as a mere means of government, to keep the lower classes within bounds. Moreover, each of the different classes uses its own appropriate religion: the landed nobility — Catholic Jesuitism or Protestant orthodoxy; the liberal and radical bourgeoisie — rationalism; and it makes little difference whether these gentlemen themselves believe in their respective religions or not.

We see, therefore: religion, once formed, always contains traditional material, just as in all ideological domains tradition forms a great conservative force. But the transformations which this material undergoes spring from class relations, that is to say, out of the economic relations of the people who execute these transformations. And here that is sufficient.

In the above it could only be a question of giving a general sketch of the Marxist conception of history, at most with a few illustrations, as well. The proof must be derived from history itself; and in this regard I may be permitted to say that it has been sufficiently furnished in other writings. This conception, however, puts an end to philosophy in the realm of history, just as the dialectical conception of nature makes all natural philosophy both unnecessary and impossible. It is no longer a question anywhere of inventing interconnections from out of our brains, but of discovering them in the facts. For philosophy, which has been expelled from nature and history, there remains only the realm of pure thought, so far as it is left: the theory of the laws of the thought process itself, logic and dialectics.

* * *

With the Revolution of 1848, “educated” Germany said farewell to theory and went over to the field of practice. Small production and manufacture, based upon manual labour, were superseded by real large-scale industry. Germany again appeared on the world market. The new little German Empire abolished at least the most crying of the abuses with which this development had been obstructed by the system of petty states, the relics of feudalism, and bureaucratic management. But to the same degree that speculation abandoned the philosopher’s study in order to set up its temple in the stock exchange, educated Germany lost the great aptitude for theory which had been the glory of Germany in the days of its deepest political humiliation — the aptitude for purely scientific investigation, irrespective of whether the result obtained was practically applicable or not, whether likely to offend the police authorities or not. Official German natural science, it is true, maintained its position in the front rank, particularly in the field of specialised research. But even the American journal *Science* rightly remarks that the decisive advances in the sphere of the comprehensive correlation of particular facts and their generalisation into laws are now being made much more in England, instead of, as formerly, in Germany. And in the sphere of the historical sciences, philosophy included, the old fearless zeal for theory has now disappeared completely, along with classical philosophy. Inane eclecticism and an anxious concern for career and income, descending to the most vulgar job-hunting, occupy its place. The official representatives of these sciences have become the undisguised ideologists of the

bourgeoisie and the existing state — but at a time when both stand in open antagonism to the working class.

Only among the working class does the German aptitude for theory remain unimpaired. Here it cannot be exterminated. Here there is no concern for careers, for profit-making, or for gracious patronage from above. On the contrary, the more ruthlessly and disinterestedly science proceeds the more it finds itself in harmony with the interests and aspirations of the workers. The new tendency, which recognised that the key to the understanding of the whole history of society lies in the history of the development of labour, from the outset addressed itself by preference to the working class and here found the response which it neither sought nor expected from officially recognised science. The German working-class movement is the inheritor of German classical philosophy. ■



V.I. Lenin (1870-1924)

V.I. Lenin
Socialism & Religion

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Present-day society is wholly based on the exploitation the vast masses of the working class by a tiny minority of the population, the class of the landowners and that of the capitalists. It is a slave society, since the “free” workers, who all their life work for the capitalists, are “entitled” only to such means of subsistence as are essential for the maintenance of slaves who produce profit, for the safeguarding and perpetuation of capitalist slavery.

The economic oppression of the workers inevitably calls forth and engenders every kind of political oppression and social humiliation, the coarsening and darkening of the spiritual and moral life of the masses. The workers may secure a greater or lesser degree of political liberty to fight for their economic emancipation, but no amount of liberty will rid them of poverty, unemployment, and oppression until the power of capital is overthrown. Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for others, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward. But those who live by the labour of others are taught by religion to practise charity while on earth, thus offering them a very cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters and selling them at a moderate price tickets to wellbeing in heaven. Religion is opium for the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image,

their demand for a life more or less worthy of man.

But a slave who has become conscious of his slavery and has risen to struggle for his emancipation has already half ceased to be a slave. The modern class-conscious worker, reared by large-scale factory industry and enlightened by urban life, contemptuously casts aside religious prejudices, leaves heaven to the priests and bourgeois bigots, and tries to win a better life for himself here on earth. The proletariat of today takes the side of socialism, which enlists science in the battle against the fog of religion, and frees the workers from their belief in life after death by welding them together to fight in the present for a better life on earth.

Religion must be declared a private affair. In these words socialists usually express their attitude towards religion. But the meaning of these words should be accurately defined to prevent any misunderstanding. We demand that religion be held a private affair so far as the state is concerned. But by no means can we consider religion a private affair so far as our party is concerned. Religion must be of no concern to the state, and religious societies must have no connection with governmental authority. Everyone must be absolutely free to profess any religion he pleases, or no religion whatever, i.e., to be an atheist, which every socialist is, as a rule. Discrimination among citizens on account of their religious convictions is wholly intolerable. Even the bare mention of a citizen's religion in official documents should unquestionably be eliminated. No subsidies should be granted to the established church nor state allowances made to ecclesiastical and religious societies. These should become absolutely free associations of like-minded citizens, associations independent of the state. Only the complete fulfilment of these demands can put an end to the shameful and accursed past when the church lived in feudal dependence on the state, and Russian citizens lived in feudal dependence on the established church, when medieval, inquisitorial laws (to this day remaining in our criminal codes and on our statute-books) were in existence and were applied, persecuting men for their belief or disbelief, violating men's consciences, and linking cosy government jobs and government-derived incomes with the dispensation of this or that dope by the established church. Complete separation of church and state is what the socialist proletariat demands of the modern state and the modern church.

The Russian revolution must put this demand into effect as a necessary component of political freedom. In this respect, the Russian revolution is in a particularly favourable position, since the revolting officialism of the police-ridden feudal autocracy has called forth discontent, unrest and indignation even among the clergy. However abject, however ignorant Russian Orthodox clergymen may have been, even they have now been awakened by the thunder of the downfall of the old, medieval order in Russia.

Even they are joining in the demand for freedom, are protesting against bureaucratic practices and officialism, against the spying for the police imposed on the “servants of God”. We socialists must lend this movement our support, carrying the demands of honest and sincere members of the clergy to their conclusion, making them stick to their words about freedom, demanding that they should resolutely break all ties between religion and the police. Either you are sincere, in which case you must stand for the complete separation of church and state and of school and church, for religion to be declared wholly and absolutely a private affair. Or you do not accept these consistent demands for freedom, in which case you evidently are still held captive by the traditions of the inquisition, in which case you evidently still cling to your cosy government jobs and government derived incomes, in which case you evidently do not believe in the spiritual power of your weapon and continue to take bribes from the state. And in that case the class-conscious workers of all Russia declare merciless war on you.

So far as the party of the socialist proletariat is concerned, religion is not a private affair. Our party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the church so as to be able to combat the religious fog with purely ideological and solely ideological weapons, by means of our press and by word of mouth. But we founded our association, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, precisely for such a struggle against every religious bamboozling of the workers. And to us the ideological struggle is not a private affair, but the affair of the whole party, of the whole proletariat.

If that is so, why do we not declare in our program that we are atheists? Why do we not forbid Christians and other believers in God to join our party?

The answer to this question will serve to explain the very important difference in the way the question of religion is presented by the bourgeois democrats and the social-democrats.

Our program is based entirely on the scientific, and moreover the materialist, world-outlook. An explanation of our program, therefore, necessarily includes an explanation of the true historical and economic roots of the religious fog. Our propaganda necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism; the publication of the appropriate scientific literature, which the autocratic feudal government has hitherto strictly forbidden and persecuted, must now form one of the fields of our party work. We shall now probably have to follow the advice Engels once gave to the German socialists: to translate and widely disseminate the literature of the eighteenth-century French enlighteners and atheists.⁵¹

But under no circumstances ought we to fall into the error of posing the religious question in an abstract, idealistic fashion, as an “intellectual” question unconnected with the class struggle, as is not infrequently done by the radical-democrats from among the bourgeoisie. It would be stupid to think that, in a society based on the endless oppression and coarsening of the worker masses, religious prejudices could be dispelled by purely propaganda methods. It would be bourgeois narrow-mindedness to forget that the yoke of religion that weighs upon mankind is merely a product and reflection of the economic yoke within society. No number of pamphlets and no amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism.

Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on Earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven.

That is the reason why we do not and should not set forth our atheism in our program; that is why we do not and should not prohibit, proletarians who still retain vestiges of their old prejudices from associating themselves with our party. We shall always preach the scientific world-outlook, and it is essential for us to combat the inconsistency of various “Christians”. But that does not mean in the least that the religious question ought to be advanced to first place, where it does not belong at all; nor does it mean that we should allow the forces of the really revolutionary economic and political struggle to be split up on account of third-rate opinions or senseless ideas, rapidly losing all political importance, rapidly being swept out as rubbish by the very course of economic development.

Everywhere the reactionary bourgeoisie has concerned itself, and is now beginning to concern itself in Russia, with the fomenting of religious strife — in order thereby to divert the attention of the masses from the really important and fundamental economic and political problems, now being solved in practice by the all-Russian proletariat uniting in revolutionary struggle. This reactionary policy of splitting up the proletarian forces, which today manifests itself mainly in Black-Hundred pogroms, may tomorrow conceive some more subtle forms. We, at any rate, shall oppose it by calmly, consistently and patiently preaching proletarian solidarity and the scientific world-outlook — a preaching alien to any stirring up of secondary differences.

The revolutionary proletariat will succeed in making religion a really private affair, so far as the state is concerned. And in this political system, cleansed of medieval mildew, the proletariat will wage a broad and open struggle for the elimination of economic slavery, the true source of the religious humbugging of mankind. ■

V.I. Lenin

The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion

Written in 1909. The Duma was a representative body which the tsarist regime had been forced to establish as a result of the 1905 revolution. However, the electoral system was grossly undemocratic and the Duma had no real power. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviki sought to utilise the Duma as a platform from which to make propoganda and secured the election of a number of deputies. The Third Duma (1907-12) was completely dominated by the reactionary bloc of the landlords and the big capitalists.

The debate on the Synod estimates refers to the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church was the official church and was supported directly by the tsarist state.

The text is taken from V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 15 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1963).



Deputy Surkov's speech in the Duma during the debate on the Synod estimates, and the discussion that arose within our Duma group when it considered the draft of this speech (both printed in this issue) have raised a question which is of extreme importance and urgency at this particular moment. An interest in everything connected with religion is undoubtedly being shown today by wide circles of "society", and has penetrated into the ranks of intellectuals standing close to the working-class movement, as well as into certain circles of the workers. It is the absolute duty of social-democrats to make a public statement of their attitude towards religion.

Social-democracy bases its whole world-outlook on scientific socialism, i.e., Marxism. The philosophical basis of Marxism, as Marx and Engels repeatedly declared, is dialectical materialism, which has fully taken over the historical traditions of 18th-century materialism in France and of Feuerbach (first half of the 19th century) in Germany — a materialism which is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all

religion. Let us recall that the whole of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, which Marx read in manuscript, is an indictment of the materialist and atheist Dühring for not being a consistent materialist and for leaving loopholes for religion and religious philosophy. Let us recall that in his essay on Ludwig Feuerbach, Engels reproaches Feuerbach for combating religion not in order to destroy it, but in order to renovate it, to invent a new, "exalted" religion, and so forth. Religion is the opium of the people — this dictum by Marx is the cornerstone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion.⁵² Marxism has always regarded all modern religions and churches, and each and every religious organisation, as instruments of bourgeois reaction that serve to defend exploitation and to befuddle the working class.

At the same time Engels frequently condemned the efforts of people who desired to be "more left" or "more revolutionary" than the social-democrats to introduce into the program of the workers' party an explicit proclamation of atheism, in the sense of declaring war on religion. Commenting in 1874 on the famous manifesto of the Blanquist fugitive Communards who were living in exile in London, Engels called their vociferous proclamation of war on religion a piece of stupidity, and stated that such a declaration of war was the best way to revive interest in religion and to prevent it from really dying out. Engels blamed the Blanquists for being unable to understand that only the class struggle of the working masses could, by comprehensively drawing the widest strata of the proletariat into conscious and revolutionary social *practice*, really free the oppressed masses from the yoke of religion, whereas to proclaim that war on religion was a political task of the workers' party was just anarchistic phrasemongering.⁵³ And in 1877, too, in his *Anti-Dühring*, while ruthlessly attacking the slightest concessions made by Dühring the philosopher to idealism and religion, Engels no less resolutely condemns Dühring's pseudo-revolutionary idea that religion should be prohibited in socialist society. To declare such a war on religion, Engels says, is to "out-Bismarck Bismarck", i.e., to repeat the folly of Bismarck's struggle against the clericals (the notorious "Struggle for Culture", *Kulturkampf*, i.e., the struggle Bismarck waged in the 1870s against the German Catholic party, the "Centre" party, by means of a police persecution of Catholicism). By this struggle Bismarck only *stimulated* the militant clericalism of the Catholics, and only injured the work of real culture, because he gave prominence to religious divisions rather than political divisions, and diverted the attention of some sections of the working class and of the other democratic elements away from the urgent tasks of the class and revolutionary struggle to the most superficial and false bourgeois anti-clericalism. Accusing the would-be ultra-revolutionary Dühring of wanting to repeat Bismarck's folly in another form, Engels insisted that the workers' party should have the ability to work patiently at the task of organising and educating

the proletariat, which would lead to the dying out of religion, and not throw itself into the gamble of a political war on religion.⁵⁴ This view has become part of the very essence of German social-democracy, which, for example, advocated freedom for the Jesuits, their admission into Germany, and the complete abandonment of police methods of combating any particular religion. "Religion is a private matter": this celebrated point in the Erfurt Program (1891) summed up these political tactics of social-democracy.

These tactics have by now become a matter of routine; they have managed to give rise to a new distortion of Marxism in the opposite direction, in the direction of opportunism. This point in the Erfurt Program has come to be interpreted as meaning that we social-democrats, our party, *consider* religion to be a private matter, that religion is a private matter for us as social-democrats, for us as a party. Without entering into a direct controversy with this opportunist view, Engels in the '90s deemed it necessary to oppose it resolutely in a positive, and not a polemical form. To wit: Engels did this in the form of a statement, which he deliberately underlined, that social-democrats regard religion as a private matter *in relation to the state*, but not in relation to themselves, not in relation to Marxism, and not in relation to the workers' party.⁵⁵

Such is the external history of the utterances of Marx and Engels on the question of religion. To people with a slapdash attitude towards Marxism, to people who cannot or will not think, this history is a skein of meaningless Marxist contradictions and waverings, a hodge-podge of "consistent" atheism and "sops" to religion, "unprincipled" wavering between a r-r-revolutionary war on God and a cowardly desire to "play up to" religious workers, a fear of scaring them away, etc., etc. The literature of the anarchist phrasemongers contains plenty of attacks on Marxism in this vein.

But anybody who is able to treat Marxism at all seriously, to ponder over its philosophical principles and the experience of international social-democracy, will readily see that the Marxist tactics in regard to religion are thoroughly consistent, and were carefully thought out by Marx and Engels; and that what dilettantes or ignoramuses regard as wavering is but a direct and inevitable deduction from dialectical materialism. It would be a profound mistake to think that the seeming "moderation" of Marxism in regard to religion is due to supposed "tactical" considerations, the desire "not to scare away" anybody, and so forth. On the contrary, in this question, too, the political line of Marxism is inseparably bound up with its philosophical principles.

Marxism is materialism. As such, it is as relentlessly hostile to religion as was the materialism of the 18th century Encyclopaedists or the materialism of Feuerbach. This is beyond doubt. But the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels goes further than

the Encyclopaedists and Feuerbach, for it applies the materialist philosophy to the domain of history, to the domain of the social sciences. We must combat religion — that is the ABC of *all* materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at the ABC. Marxism goes further. It says: We must *know how* to combat religion, and in order to do so we must explain the source of faith and religion among the masses *in a materialist way*. The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching, and it must not be reduced to such preaching. It must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at eliminating the social roots of religion. Why does religion retain its hold on the backward sections of the town proletariat, on broad sections of the semi-proletariat, and on the mass of the peasantry? Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressist, the radical or the bourgeois materialist. And so: “Down with religion and long live atheism, the dissemination of atheist views is our chief task!” The Marxist says that this is not true, that it is a superficial view, the view of narrow bourgeois uplifters. It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough; it explains them, not in a materialist but in an idealist way. In modern capitalist countries these roots are mainly *social*. The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism, which every day and every hour inflicts upon ordinary working people the most horrible suffering and the most savage torment, a thousand times more severe than those inflicted by extraordinary events, such as wars, earthquakes, etc. “Fear made the gods.” Fear of the blind force of capital — blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people — a force which at every step in the life of the proletarian and small proprietor threatens to inflict, and does inflict “sudden”, “unexpected”, “accidental” ruin, pauperism, prostitution, death from starvation — such is *the root* of modern religion which the materialist must bear in mind first and foremost, if he does not want to remain an infant-school materialist. No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of masses who are crushed by capitalist hard labour, and who are at the mercy of the blind destructive forces of capitalism, until those masses themselves learn to fight this *root* of religion, fight *the rule of capital* in all its forms, in a united, organised, planned and conscious way.

Does this mean that educational books against religion are harmful or unnecessary? No, nothing of the kind. It means that social-democracy’s atheist propaganda must be *subordinated* to its basic task — the development of the class struggle of the exploited *masses* against the exploiters.

This proposition may not be understood (or at least not immediately understood) by one who has not pondered over the principles of dialectical materialism, i.e., the

philosophy of Marx and Engels. How is that? — he will say. Is ideological propaganda, the preaching of definite ideas, the struggle against that enemy of culture and progress which has persisted for thousands of years (i.e., religion) to be subordinated to the class struggle, i.e., the struggle for definite practical aims in the economic and political field?

This is one of those current objections to Marxism which testify to a complete misunderstanding of Marxian dialectics. The contradiction which perplexes these objectors is a real contradiction in real life, i.e., a dialectical contradiction, and not a verbal or invented one. To draw a hard-and-fast line between the theoretical propaganda of atheism, i.e., the destruction of religious beliefs among certain sections of the proletariat, and the success, the progress and the conditions of the class struggle of these sections, is to reason undialectically, to transform a shifting and relative boundary into an absolute boundary; it is forcibly to disconnect what is indissolubly connected in real life. Let us take an example. The proletariat in a particular region and in a particular industry is divided, let us assume, into an advanced section of fairly class-conscious social-democrats, who are of course atheists, and rather backward workers who are still connected with the countryside and with the peasantry, and who believe in God, go to church, or are even under the direct influence of the local priest — who, let us suppose, is organising a Christian labour union. Let us assume, furthermore, that the economic struggle in this locality has resulted in a strike. It is the duty of a Marxist to place the success of the strike movement above everything else, vigorously to counteract the division of the workers in this struggle into atheists and Christians, vigorously to oppose any such division. Atheist propaganda in such circumstances may be both unnecessary and harmful — not from the philistine fear of scaring away the backward sections, of losing a seat in the elections, and so on, but out of consideration for the real progress of the class struggle, which in the conditions of modern capitalist society will convert Christian workers to social-democracy and to atheism a hundred times better than bald atheist propaganda. To preach atheism at such a moment and in such circumstances would only be playing *into the hands* of the police and the priests, who desire nothing better than that the division of the workers according to their participation in the strike movement should be replaced by their division according to their belief in God. An anarchist who preached war against God at all costs would in effect be helping the priests and the bourgeoisie (as the anarchists always do help the bourgeoisie *in practice*). A Marxist must be a materialist, i.e., an enemy of religion, but a dialectical materialist, i.e., one who treats the struggle against religion not in an abstract way, not on the basis of remote, purely theoretical, never varying preaching, but in a concrete way, on the basis of the class struggle which is

going on *in practice* and is educating the masses more and better than anything else could. A Marxist must be able to view the concrete situation as a whole, he must always be able to find the boundary between anarchism and opportunism (this boundary is relative, shifting and changeable, but it exists). And he must not succumb either to the abstract, verbal, but in reality empty “revolutionism” of the anarchist, or to the philistinism and opportunism of the petty-bourgeois or liberal intellectual, who boggles at the struggle against religion, forgets that this is his duty, reconciles himself to belief in God, and is guided not by the interests of the class struggle but by the petty and mean consideration of offending nobody, repelling nobody and scaring nobody — by the sage rule: “live and let live”, etc., etc.

It is from this angle that all side issues bearing on the attitude of social-democrats to religion should be dealt with. For example, the question is often brought up whether a priest can be a member of the Social-Democratic Party or not, and this question is usually answered in an unqualified affirmative, the experience of the European social-democratic parties being cited as evidence. But this experience was the result, not only of the application of the Marxist doctrine to the workers’ movement, but also of the special historical conditions in Western Europe which are absent in Russia (we will say more about these conditions later), so that an unqualified affirmative answer in this case is incorrect. It cannot be asserted once and for all that priests cannot be members of the Social-Democratic Party; but neither can the reverse rule be laid down. If a priest comes to us to take part in our common political work and conscientiously performs party duties, without opposing the program of the party, he may be allowed to join the ranks of the social-democrats; for the contradiction between the spirit and principles of our program and the religious convictions of the priest would in such circumstances be something that concerned him alone, his own private contradiction; and a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the party program. But, of course, such a case might be a rare exception even in Western Europe, while in Russia it is altogether improbable. And if, for example, a priest joined the Social-Democratic Party and made it his chief and almost sole work actively to propagate religious views in the party, it would unquestionably have to expel him from its ranks. We must not only admit workers who preserve their belief in God into the Social-Democratic Party, but must deliberately set out to recruit them; we are absolutely opposed to giving the slightest offence to their religious convictions, but we recruit them in order to educate them in the spirit of our program, and not in order to permit an active struggle against it. We allow freedom of opinion *within* the party, but to certain limits, determined by freedom of grouping; we are not obliged to go hand in hand with active preachers of

views that are repudiated by the majority of the party.

Another example. Should members of the Social-Democratic Party be censured all alike under all circumstances for declaring "socialism is my religion", and for advocating views in keeping with this declaration? No! The deviation from Marxism (and consequently from socialism) is here indisputable; but the significance of the deviation, its relative importance, so to speak, may vary with circumstances. It is one thing when an agitator or a person addressing the workers speaks in this way in order to make himself better understood, as an introduction to his subject, in order to present his views more vividly in terms to which the backward masses are most accustomed. It is another thing when a writer begins to preach "god-building", or god-building socialism (in the spirit, for example, of our Lunacharsky and co.). While in the first case, censure would be mere carping, or even inappropriate restriction of the freedom of the agitator, of his freedom in choosing "pedagogical" methods, in the second case party censure is necessary and essential. For some the statement "socialism is a religion" is a form of transition from religion to socialism; for others, it is a form of transition *from* socialism to religion.

Let us now pass to the conditions which in the West gave rise to the opportunist interpretation of the thesis: "religion is a private matter". Of course, a contributing influence are those general factors which give rise to opportunism as a whole, like sacrificing the fundamental interests of the working-class movement for the sake of momentary advantages. The party of the proletariat demands that *the state* should declare religion a private matter, but does not regard the fight against the opium of the people, the fight against religious superstitions, etc., as a "private matter". The opportunists distort the question to mean that the *Social-Democratic Party regards* religion as a private matter!

But in addition to the usual opportunist distortion (which was not made clear at all in the discussion within our Duma group when it was considering the speech on religion), there are special historical conditions which have given rise to the present-day, and, if one may so express it, excessive, indifference on the part of the European social-democrats to the question of religion. These conditions are of a twofold nature. First, the task of combating religion is historically the task of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, and in the West this task was to a large extent performed (or tackled) by bourgeois democracy, in the epoch of *its* revolutions or its assaults upon feudalism and medievalism. Both in France and in Germany there is a tradition of bourgeois war on religion, and it began long before socialism (the Encyclopaedists, Feuerbach). In Russia, because of the conditions of our bourgeois-democratic revolution, this task too falls almost entirely on the shoulders of the working class. Petty-bourgeois

(Narodnik) democracy in our country has not done too much in this respect (as the new-fledged Black-Hundred Cadets, or Cadet Black Hundreds, of *Vekhi*⁵⁶ think), but rather *too little*, in comparison with what has been done in Europe.

On the other hand, the tradition of bourgeois war on religion has given rise in Europe to a specifically bourgeois *distortion* of this war by anarchism — which, as the Marxists have long explained time and again, takes its stand on the bourgeois world-outlook, in spite of all the “fury” of its attacks on the bourgeoisie. The anarchists and Blanquists in the Latin countries, Most (who, incidentally, was a pupil of Dühring) and his ilk in Germany, the anarchists in Austria in the '80s, all carried revolutionary phrasemongering in the struggle against religion to a *nec plus ultra*. It is not surprising that, compared with the anarchists, the European social-democrats now *go to the other extreme*. This is quite understandable and to a certain extent legitimate, but it would be wrong for us Russian social-democrats to forget the special historical conditions of the West.

Secondly, in the West, *after* the national bourgeois revolutions were over, *after* more or less complete religious liberty had been introduced, the problem of the democratic struggle against religion had been pushed, historically, so far into the background by the struggle of bourgeois democracy against socialism that the bourgeois governments *deliberately* tried to draw the attention of the masses away from socialism by organising a quasi-liberal “offensive” against clericalism. Such was the character of the *Kulturkampf* in Germany and of the struggle of the bourgeois republicans against clericalism in France. Bourgeois anti-clericalism, as a means of drawing the attention of the working-class masses away from socialism — this is what preceded the spread of the modern spirit of “indifference” to the struggle against religion among the social-democrats in the West. And this again is quite understandable and legitimate, because social-democrats had to counteract bourgeois and Bismarckian anti-clericalism by *subordinating* the struggle against religion to the struggle for socialism.

In Russia conditions are quite different. The proletariat is the leader of our bourgeois-democratic revolution. Its party must be the ideological leader in the struggle against all attributes of medievalism, including the old official religion and every attempt to refurbish it or make out a new or different case for it, etc. Therefore, while Engels was comparatively mild in correcting the opportunism of the German social-democrats who were substituting, for the demand of the workers' party that the *state* should declare religion a private matter, the *declaration* that religion is a private matter for the social-democrats themselves, and for the Social-Democratic Party, it is clear that the importation of this German distortion by the Russian opportunists would have merited a rebuke a *hundred times* more severe by Engels.

By declaring from the Duma rostrum that religion is the opium of the people, our

Duma group acted quite correctly, and thus created a precedent which should serve as a basis for all utterances by Russian social-democrats on the question of religion. Should they have gone further and developed the atheist argument in greater detail? We think not. This might have brought the risk of the political party of the proletariat exaggerating the struggle against religion; it might have resulted in obliterating the distinction between the bourgeois and the socialist struggle against religion. The first duty of the social-democratic group in the Black Hundred Duma has been discharged with honour.

The second duty — and perhaps the most important for social-democrats — namely, to explain the class role of the church and the clergy in supporting the Black-Hundred government and the bourgeoisie in its fight against the working class, has also been discharged with honour. Of course, very much more might be said on this subject, and the social-democrats in their future utterances will know how to amplify Comrade Surkov's speech; but still his speech was excellent, and its circulation by all party organisations is the direct duty of our party.

The third duty was to explain in full detail the *correct* meaning of the proposition, so often distorted by the German opportunists, that "religion is a private matter". This, unfortunately, Comrade Surkov did not do. It is all the more regrettable because in the earlier activity of the Duma group a mistake had been committed on this question by Comrade Belousov, and was pointed out at the time by *Proletary*. The discussion in the Duma group shows that the dispute about atheism has screened from it the question of the proper interpretation of the celebrated demand that religion should be proclaimed a private matter. We shall not blame Comrade Surkov alone for this error of the entire Duma group. More, we shall frankly admit that the whole party is at fault here, for not having sufficiently elucidated this question and not having sufficiently prepared the minds of social-democrats to understand Engels' remark levelled against the German opportunists. The discussion in the Duma group proves that there was in fact a confused understanding of the question, and not at all any desire to ignore the teachings of Marx; and we are sure that the error will be corrected in future utterances of the group.

We repeat that on the whole Comrade Surkov's speech was excellent, and should be circulated by all the organisations. In its discussion of this speech the Duma group demonstrated that it is fulfilling its social-democratic duty conscientiously. It remains to express the wish that reports on discussions within the Duma group should appear more often in the party press so as to bring the group and the party closer together, to acquaint the party with the difficult work being done within the group, and to establish ideological unity in the work of the party and the Duma group. ■



Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919)

Rosa Luxemburg

Socialism & the Churches

At the beginning of 1905 the Russian Revolution broke out. Poland was then part of the tsarist empire and the ferment erupted there too. Thousands of radicalising workers joined the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL); in the space of a year its membership grew from a few hundred to over 30,000. Although based in Germany, the Polish-born Luxemburg remained actively involved in the leadership of the SDKPiL. She wrote "Socialism and the Churches" in 1905 as a contribution to the Marxist education of the party's rapidly expanding membership and periphery.

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I

From the moment when the workers of our country and of Russia began to struggle bravely against the tsarist government and the capitalist exploiters, we notice more and more often that the priests, in their sermons, come out against the workers who are struggling. It is with extraordinary vigour that the clergy fight against the socialists and try by all means to belittle them in the eyes of the workers. The believers who go to church on Sundays and festivals are compelled, more and more often, to listen to a violent political speech, a real indictment of socialism, instead of hearing a sermon and obtaining religious consolation there. Instead of comforting the people, who are full of cares and wearied by their hard lives, who go to church with faith in Christianity, the priests fulminate against the workers who are on strike, and against the opponents of the government; further, they exhort them to bear poverty and oppression with humility and patience. They turn the church and the pulpit into a place of political propaganda.

The workers can easily satisfy themselves that the struggle of the clergy against the social-democrats is in no way provoked by the latter. The social-democrats have

placed before themselves the objective of drawing together and organising the workers in the struggle against capital, that is to say, against the exploiters who squeeze them down to the last drop of blood, and in the struggle against the tsarist government, which holds the people to ransom. But never do the social-democrats drive the workers to fight against clergy, or try to interfere with religious beliefs; not at all! The social-democrats, those of the whole world and of our own country, regard conscience and personal opinions as being sacred. Every man may hold what faith and what opinions seem likely to him to ensure happiness. No one has the right to persecute or to attack the particular religious opinion of others. That is what the socialists think. And it is for that reason, among others, that the socialists rally all the people to fight against the tsarist regime, which is continually violating men's consciences, persecuting Catholics, Russian Catholics, Jews, heretics and freethinkers. It is precisely the social-democrats who come out most strongly in favour of freedom of conscience. Therefore it would seem as if the clergy ought to lend their help to the social-democrats who are trying to enlighten the toiling people. If we understand properly the teachings which the socialists bring to the working class, the hatred of clergy towards them becomes still less understandable.

The social-democrats propose to put an end to the exploitation of the toiling people by the rich. You would have thought that the servants of the church would have been the first to make this task easier for the social-democrats. Did not Jesus Christ (whose servants the priests are) teach that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven"?⁵⁷ The social-democrats try to bring about in all countries a social regime based on the equality, liberty and fraternity of all the citizens. If the clergy really desire that the principle "Love thy neighbour as thyself" be applied in real life why do they not welcome keenly the propaganda of the social-democrats? The social-democrats try, by a desperate struggle, by the education and organisation of the people, to draw them out of the downtrodden state in which they now are and to offer a better future to their children. Everyone should admit, that at this point, the clergy should bless the social-democrats, for did not he whom they serve, Jesus Christ, say "That you do for the poor you do for me"?⁵⁸

However we see the clergy on the one hand, excommunicating and persecuting the social-democrats, and, on the other hand, commanding the workers to suffer in patience, that is, to let themselves patiently be exploited by the capitalists. The clergy storm against the social-democrats, exhort the workers not to "revolt" against the overlords, but to submit obediently to the oppression of this government which kills defenceless people, which sends to the monstrous butchery of the war millions of

workers, which persecutes Catholics, Russian Catholics and “Old Believers”.⁵⁹ Thus, the clergy, which makes itself the spokesman of the rich, the defender of exploitation and oppression, places itself in flagrant contradiction to the Christian doctrine. The bishops and the priests are not the propagators of Christian teaching, but the worshippers of the golden calf⁶⁰ and of the knout which whips the poor and defenceless.

Again, everyone knows how the priests themselves make profit from the worker, extract money out of him on the occasion of marriage, baptism or burial. How often has it happened that the priest, called to the bedside of a sick man to administer the last sacraments, refused to go there before he had been paid his “fee”? The worker goes away in despair, to sell or pawn his last possession, so as to be able to give religious consolation to his kindred.

It is true that we do meet churchmen of another kind. There exist some who are full of goodness and pity and who do not seek gain; these are always ready to help the poor. But we must admit these are indeed uncommon and that they can be regarded in the same way as white blackbirds. The majority of priests, with beaming faces, bow and scrape to the rich and powerful, silently pardoning them for every depravity, every iniquity. With the workers the clergy behave quite otherwise: they think only of squeezing them without pity; in harsh sermons they condemn the “covetousness” of the workers when these latter do no more than defend themselves against the wrongs of capitalism. The glaring contradiction between the actions of the clergy and teachings of Christianity must make everyone reflect. The workers wonder how it comes about that the working class in its struggle for emancipation, finds in the servants of the church, enemies and not allies. How does it happen that the church plays the role of a defence of wealth and bloody oppression, instead of being the refuge of the exploited? In order to understand this strange phenomenon, it is sufficient to glance over the history of the church and to examine the evolution through which it has passed in the course of the centuries.

II

The social-democrats want to bring about the state of “communism”; that is chiefly what the clergy have against them. First of all, it is striking to notice that the priests of today who fight against “communism” condemn in reality the first Christian apostles. For these latter were nothing else than ardent communists.

The Christian religion developed, as is well known, in ancient Rome, in the period of the decline of the empire, which was formerly rich and powerful, comprising the countries which today are Italy and Spain, part of France, part of Turkey, Palestine and other territories. The state of Rome at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ much

resembled that of tsarist Russia. On one side there lived a handful of rich people in idleness, enjoying luxury and every pleasure; on the other side was an enormous mass of people rotting in poverty; above all, a despotic government, resting on violence and corruption, exerted a vile oppression. The whole Roman Empire was plunged into complete disorder, ringed round by threatening external foes; the unbridled soldiery in power practised its cruelties on the wretched populace; the countryside was deserted, the land lay waste; the cities, and especially Rome, the capital, were filled with the poverty-stricken who raised their eyes, full of hate, to the palaces of the rich; the people were without bread, without shelter, without clothing, without hope, and without the possibility of emerging from their poverty.

There is only one difference between Rome in her decadence and the empire of the tsars; Rome knew nothing of capitalism; heavy industry did not exist there. At that time slavery was the accepted order of things in Rome. Noble families, the rich, the financiers, satisfied all their needs by putting to work the slaves with which war had supplied them. In the course of time these rich people had laid hands on nearly all the provinces of Italy by stripping the Roman peasantry of their land. As they appropriated cereals in all the conquered provinces as tribute without cost, they profited thereby to lay out on their own estates, magnificent plantations, vineyards, pastures, orchards, and rich gardens, cultivated by armies of slaves working under the whip of the overseer. The people of the countryside, robbed of land and bread, flowed from all the provinces into the capital. But there they were in no better a position to earn a livelihood, for all the trades were carried on by slaves. Thus there was formed in Rome a numerous army of those who possessed nothing — the proletariat — having not even the possibility of selling their labour power. This proletariat, coming from the countryside, could not, therefore, be absorbed by industrial enterprises as is the case today; they became victims of hopeless poverty and were reduced to beggary. This numerous popular mass, starving without work, crowding the suburbs and open spaces and streets of Rome, constituted a permanent danger to the government and the possessing classes. Therefore, the government found itself compelled in its own interest to relieve the poverty. From time to time it distributed to the proletariat corn and other foodstuffs stored in the warehouses of the state. Further, to make the people forget their hardships it offered them free circus shows. Unlike the proletariat of our time, which maintains the whole of society by its labours, the enormous proletariat of Rome existed on charity.⁶¹

It was the wretched slaves, treated like beasts, who worked for Roman society. In this chaos of poverty and degradation, the handful of Roman magnates spent their time in orgies and debauchery. There was no way out of these monstrous social

conditions. The proletariat grumbled, and threatened from time to time to rise in revolt, but a class of beggars, living on crumbs thrown from the table of the lords, could not establish a new social order. Further, the slaves who maintained by their labour the whole of society were too downtrodden, too dispersed, too crushed under the yoke, treated as beasts and lived too isolated from the other classes to be able to transform society. They often revolted against their masters, tried to liberate themselves by bloody battles, but every time the Roman army crushed these revolts, massacring the slaves in thousands and putting them to death on the cross.

In this crumbling society, where there existed no way out of their tragic situation for the people, no hope of a better life, the wretched turned to Heaven to seek salvation there. The Christian religion appeared to these unhappy beings as a lifebelt, a consolation and an encouragement, and became, right from the beginning, the religion of the Roman proletarians. In conformity with the material position of the men belonging to this class, the first Christians put forward the demand for property in common — communism. What could be more natural? The people lacked means of subsistence and were dying of poverty. A religion which defended the people demanded that the rich should share with the poor the riches which ought to belong to all and not to a handful of privileged people; a religion which preached the equality of all men would have great success. However, this had nothing in common with the demand which the social-democrats put forward today with a view to making into common property the instruments of work, the means of production, in order that all humanity may work and live in harmonious unity.

We have been able to observe that the Roman proletarians did not live by working, but from the alms which the government doled out. So the demand of the Christians for collective property did not relate to the means of production, but the means of consumption. They did not demand that the land, the workshops and the instruments of work should become collective property, but only that everything should be divided up among them, houses, clothing, food and finished products most necessary to life. The Christian communists took good care not to enquire into the origin of these riches. The work of production always fell upon the slaves. The Christian people desired only that those who possessed the wealth should embrace the Christian religion and should make their riches common property, in order that all might enjoy these good things in equality and fraternity.

It was indeed in this way that the first Christian communities were organised. A contemporary wrote, “these people do not believe in fortunes, but they preach collective property and no one among them possesses more than the others. He who wishes to enter their order is obliged to put his fortune into their common property. That is why

there is among them neither poverty nor luxury — all possessing all in common like brothers. They do not live in a city apart, but in each they have houses for themselves. If any strangers belonging to their religion come there, they share their property with them, and they can benefit from it as if it their own. Those people, even if previously unknown to each other, welcome one another, and their relations are very friendly. When travelling they carry nothing but a weapon for defence against robbers. In each city they have their steward, who distributes clothing and food to the travellers. Trade does not exist among them. However, if one of the members offers to another some object which he needs, he receives some other objects in exchange. But also, each can demand what he needs even if he can give nothing in exchange.”

We read in the “Acts of the Apostles” (4:32, 34, 35) the following description of the first community at Jerusalem: “No-one regarded as being his what belonged to him; everything was in common. Those who possessed lands or houses, after having sold them, brought the proceeds and laid them at the feet of the apostles. And to each was distributed according to his needs.”

In 1780, the German historian Vogel wrote nearly the same thing about the first Christians: “According to the rule, every Christian had the right to the property of all the members of the community; in case of want, he could demand that the richer members should divide their fortune with him according to his needs. Every Christian could make use of the property of his brothers; the Christians who possessed anything had not the right to refuse that their brothers should use it. Thus, the Christian who had no house could demand from him who had two or three to take him in; the owner kept only his own house to himself. But because of the community of enjoyment of goods, housing accommodation had to be given to him who had none.”

Money was placed in a common chest and a member of the society, specially appointed for this purpose, divided the collective fortune among all. But this was not all. Among the early Christians, communism was pressed so far that they took their meals in common (see the “Acts of the Apostles”). Their family life was therefore done away with; all the Christian families in one city lived together, like one single large family.

To finish, let us add that certain priests attack the social-democrats on the ground that we are for the community of women. Obviously, this is simply a huge lie, arising from the ignorance or the anger of the clergy. The social-democrats consider that as a shameful and bestial distortion of marriage. And yet this practice was usual among the first Christians.

III

Thus the Christians of the first and second centuries were fervent supporters of communism. But this communism was based on the consumption of finished products and not on work, and proved itself incapable of reforming society, of putting an end to the inequality between men and throwing down the barrier which separated rich from poor. For, exactly as before, the riches created by labour came back to a restricted group of possessors, because the means of production (especially the land) remained individual property, because the labour — for the whole society — was furnished by the slaves. The people, deprived of means of subsistence, received only alms, according to the good pleasure of the rich.

While some, a handful (in proportion to the mass of the people), possess exclusively for their own use all the arable lands, forests and pastures, farm animals and farm buildings, all the workshops, tools and materials of production, and others, the immense majority, possess nothing at all that is indispensable in production, there can be no question whatever of equality between men. In such conditions society evidently finds itself divided into two classes, the rich and the poor, those of luxury and poverty. Suppose, for example, that the rich proprietors, influenced by the Christian doctrine, offered to share up between the people all the riches which they possessed in the form of money, cereals, fruit, clothing and animals, what would the result be? Poverty would disappear for several weeks and during this the time the populace would be able to feed and clothe themselves. But the finished products are quickly used up. After a short lapse of time, the people, having consumed the distributed riches, would once again have empty hands. The proprietors of the land and the instruments of production could produce more, thanks to the labour power provided by the slaves, so nothing would be changed.

Well, here is why the social-democrats consider these things differently from the Christian communists. They say: "We do not want the rich to share with the poor: we do not want either charity or alms; neither being able to prevent the recurrence of inequality between men. It is by no means a sharing out between the rich and the poor which we demand, but the complete suppression of rich and poor." This is possible on the condition that the source of all wealth, the land, in common with all other means of production and instruments of work, shall become the collective property of the working people which will produce for itself, according to the needs of each. The early Christians believed that they could remedy the poverty of the proletariat by means of the riches offered by the possessors. That would be to draw water in a sieve! Christian communism was incapable of changing or of improving the economic situation, and it did not last.

At the beginning, when the followers of the new saviour constituted only a small group in Roman society, the sharing of the common stock, the meals in common and the living under the same roof were practicable. But as the number of Christians spread over the territory of the empire, this communal life of its adherents became more difficult. Soon there disappeared the custom of common meals and the division of goods took on a different aspect. The Christians no longer lived like one family; each took charge of his own property, and they no longer offered the whole of their goods to the community, but only the superfluity. The gifts of the richer of them to the general body, losing their character of participation in a common life, soon became simple *almsgiving*, since the rich Christians no longer made any use of the common property, and put at the service of the others only a part of what they had, while this part might be greater or smaller according to the good will of the donor. Thus in the very heart of Christian communism appeared the difference between the rich and the poor, a difference analogous to that which reigned in the Roman Empire and against which the early Christians had fought. Soon it was only the poor Christians — and the proletarian ones — who took part in the communal meals; the rich, having offered a part of their plenty, held themselves apart. The poor lived from the alms tossed to them by the rich, and society again became what it had been. The Christians had changed nothing.

The fathers of the church struggled for a long time yet, with burning words, against this penetration of social inequality into the Christian community, scourging the rich and exhorting them to return to the communism of the early apostles.

Saint Basil, in the fourth century after Christ, preached thus against the rich: Wretches, how will you justify yourselves before the Heavenly Judge? You say to me: “What is our fault, when we keep what belongs to us?” I ask you: “How did you get that which you called your property? How do the possessors become rich, if not by taking possession of things that belong to all? If everyone took only what he strictly needed, leaving the rest to others, there would be neither rich nor poor.”

It was St. John Chrysostom, patriarch of Constantinople (born at Antioch in 347, died in exile in Armenia in 407), who preached most ardently to the Christians the return to the first communism of the Apostles. This celebrated preacher, in his 11th Homily on the “Acts of the Apostles”, said:

And there was a great charity among them (the apostles): none was poor among them. None considered as being his what belonged to him, all their riches were in common ... a great charity was in all of them. This charity consisted in that there were no poor among them, so much did those who had possessions hasten to strip themselves of them. They not divide their fortunes into two parts, giving one and keeping the other

back: they gave what they had. So there was no inequality between them; they all lived in great abundance. Everything was done with the greatest reverence. What they gave was not passed from the hand of the giver to that of the recipient; their gifts were without ostentation; they brought their goods to the feet of the apostles who became the controllers and masters of them and who used them from then on as the goods of the community and no longer as the property of individuals. By that means they cut short any attempt to get vainglory. Ah! Why have these traditions been lost? Rich and poor, we should all profit from these pious usages and we should both feel the same pleasure from conforming to them. The rich would not impoverish themselves when laying down their possessions, and the poor would be enriched ... But let us try to give an exact idea of what should be done ...

Now, let us suppose — and neither rich nor poor need be alarmed, for I am just supposing — let us suppose that we sell all that belongs to us to put the proceeds into a common pool. What sums of gold would be piled up! I cannot say exactly how much that would make: but if all among us, without distinction between the sexes, were to bring here their treasures, if they were to sell their fields, their properties, their houses — I do not speak of slaves for there were none in the Christian community, and those who were there became free — perhaps, I say if everyone did the same, we would reach hundreds of thousands of pounds of gold, millions, enormous values.

Well! How many people do you think there are living in this city? How many Christians? Would you agree that there are 100,000? The rest being made up of Jews and Gentiles. How many should we not unite together? Now, if you count up the poor, what do you find? Fifty thousand needy people at the most. What would be needed to feed them each day? I estimate that the expense would not be excessive, if the supply and the eating of the food were organised in common.

You will say, perhaps, “But what will become of us when these goods are used up?” So what! Would that ever happen? Would not the grace of God be 1000 times abundant? Would we not be making a heaven on earth? If formerly this community of goods existed among three to 5000 faithful and had such good results and did away with poverty amidst them, what would not result in such a great multitude as this? And among the pagans themselves who would not hasten to increase the common treasure? Wealth which is owned by a number of people is much more easily and quickly spent; the diffusion of ownership is the cause of poverty. Let us take as an example a household composed of a husband, a wife and 10 children, the wife being occupied in weaving wool, the husband in bringing in the wages of his work outside; tell me in which case this family would spend more; if they live together in common, or lived separately. Obviously, if they lived separately. Ten houses, 10 tables, 10 servants, and 10 special

allowances would be needed for the children if they were separated. What do you do, indeed if you have many slaves? Is it not true, that, in order to keep expenses down, you feed them at a common table? The division is a cause of impoverishment; concord and the unity of wills is a cause of riches.

In the monasteries, they still live as in the early church. And who dies of hunger there? Who has not found enough to eat there? Yet the men of our times fear living that way more than they fear falling into the sea! Why have we not tried it? We would fear it less. What a good act that would be! If a few of the faithful, hardly 8000 dared in the face of a whole world, where they have nothing but enemies, to make a courageous attempt to live in common, without any outside help, how much more could we do it today, now that there are Christians throughout the whole world? Would there remain one single Gentile? Not one. I believe. We would attract them all and win them to us.⁶²

These ardent sermons of St. John Chrysostom were in vain. Men no longer tried to establish communism either at Constantinople or anywhere else. At the same time as Christianity expanded and became, at Rome after the fourth century, the dominant religion, the faithful went further and further away from the example of the first apostles. Even within the Christian community itself, the inequality of goods between the faithful increased.

Again, in the sixth century, Gregory the Great said:

It is by no means enough not to steal the property of others; you are in error if you keep to yourself the wealth which God has created for all. He who does not give to others what he possesses is a murderer, a killer; when he keeps for his own use what would provide for the poor, one can say that he is slaying all those who could have lived from his plenty; when we share with those who are suffering, we do not give what belongs to us, but what belongs to them. This is not an act of pity, but the payment of a debt.

These appeals remained fruitless. But the fault was by no means with the Christians of those days, who were indeed, more responsive to the words of the fathers of the church than are the Christians of today. This was not the first time in the history of humanity that economic conditions have shown themselves to be stronger than fine speeches.

The communism, this community of the consumption of goods, which the early Christians proclaimed, could not be brought into existence without the communal labour of the whole population, on the land, as common property, as well as in the communal workshops. At the period of the early Christians, it was impossible to inaugurate communal labour (with communal means of production) because as we have already stated, the labour rested, not upon free men, but upon the slaves, who lived on the edge of society. Christianity did not undertake to abolish the inequality

between the labour of different men, nor between their property. And that is why its efforts to suppress the unequal distribution of consumption goods did not work. The voices of the fathers of the church proclaiming communism found no echo: Besides, these voices soon became less and less frequent and finally fell silent altogether. The fathers of the church ceased to preach the community, and the dividing up of goods, because the growth of the Christian community, produced fundamental changes within the church itself.

IV

In the beginning, when the number of Christians was small, the clergy did not exist in the proper sense of the word. The faithful, who formed an independent religious community, united together in each city. They elected a member responsible for conducting the service of God and carrying out the religious rites. Every Christian could become the bishop or prelate. These functions were elective, subject to recall, honorary and carried no power other than that which the community gave of its own free will. In proportion as the number of the faithful increased and the communities became more numerous and richer, to run the business of the community and to hold office became an occupation which demanded a great deal of time and full concentration. As the office-bearers could not carry out these tasks at the same time as following their private employment, the custom grew up of electing from among the members of the community, an ecclesiastic who was exclusively entrusted with these functions. Therefore, these employees of the community had to be paid for their exclusive devotion to its affairs. Thus there formed within the church a new order of employees of the church, which separated itself from the main body of the faithful, the clergy. Parallel with the inequality between rich and poor, there arose another inequality, that between the clergy and the people. The ecclesiastics, at first elected among equals with a view to performing a temporary function raised themselves to form a caste which ruled over the people.

The more numerous the Christian communities became in the cities of the enormous Roman Empire, the more the Christians, persecuted by the government, felt the need to unite to gain strength. The communities, scattered over all the territory of the empire, therefore organised themselves into one single church. This unification was already a unification of the clergy and not of the people. From the fourth century, the ecclesiastics of the communities met together in councils. The first council took place at Nicea in 325. In this way there was formed the clergy, an order apart and separated from the people. The bishops of the stronger and richer communities took the lead at the councils. That is why the bishop of Rome soon placed himself at the

head of the whole of Christianity and became the Pope. Thus an abyss separated the clergy, divided up in the hierarchy, from the people.

At the same time, the economic relations between the people and the clergy underwent a great change. Before the formation of this order, all that the rich members of the church offered to the common property belonged to the poor people. Afterwards, a great part of the funds was spent on paying the clergy and running the church. When, in the fourth century, Christianity was protected by the government and was recognised at Rome as being the dominant religion, the persecutions of the Christians ended, and the services were no longer carried on in catacombs, or in modest halls, but in churches which began to be more and more magnificently built. These expenses thus reduced the funds intended for the poor. Already, in the fifth century, the revenues of the church were divided into four parts; the first for the bishop, the second for the minor clergy, the third for the upkeep of the church, and it was only the fourth part which was distributed among the needy. The poor Christian population received therefore a sum equal to what the bishop received for himself alone.

In course of time the habit was lost of giving to the poor a sum determined in advance. Moreover, as the higher clergy gained in importance, the faithful no longer had control over the property of the church. The bishops gave to the poor according to their good pleasure. The people received alms from their own clergy. But that is not all. At the beginning of Christianity, the faithful made goodwill offerings to the common stock. As soon as the Christian religion became a state religion, the clergy demanded that gifts must be brought by the poor as well as by the rich. From the sixth century, the clergy imposed a special tax, the tithe (10th part of the crops), which had to be paid to the church. This tax crushed the people like a heavy burden; in the course of the Middle Ages it became a real scourge to the peasants oppressed by serfdom. The tithe was levied on every piece of land, on every property. But it was always the serf who paid it by his labour. Thus the poor people not only lost the help and support of the church, but they saw the priests ally themselves with their other exploiters: princes, nobles, moneylenders. In the Middle Ages, while the working people sank into poverty through serfdom, the church grew richer and richer. Beside the tithe and other taxes, the church benefited at this period from great donations, legacies made by rich debauchees of both sexes who wished to make up, at the last moment, for their life of sin. They gave and made over to the church, money, houses, entire villages with their serfs, and often ground-rents or customary labour dues (corvees).

In this way the church acquired enormous wealth. At the same time, the clergy ceased to be the “administrator” of the wealth which the church had entrusted it. It openly declared in the 12th century, by formulating a law which it said came from Holy

Scripture, that the wealth of the church belongs not to the faithful but is the individual property of the clergy and of its chief, the Pope, above all. Ecclesiastical positions therefore offered the best opportunities to obtain large revenue. Each ecclesiastic disposed of the property of the church as if it were his own and largely endowed from it his relatives, sons and grandsons. By this means the goods of the church were pillaged and disappeared into the hands of the families of the clergy. For that reason, the Popes declared themselves to be the sovereign proprietors of the fortunes of the church and ordained the celibacy of the clergy, in order to keep it intact and to prevent their patrimony from being dispersed. Celibacy was decreed in the 11th century, but it was not put into practice until the 13th century, in view of the opposition of the clergy. Further to prevent the dispersal of the church's wealth, in 1297 Pope Boniface VIII forbade ecclesiastics to make a present of their incomes to laymen, without permission of the Pope. Thus the church accumulated enormous wealth, especially in arable lands, and the clergy of all Christian countries became the most important landed proprietor. It often possessed a third, or more than a third of all the lands of the country!

The peasant people paid not only the labour dues (corvee) but the tithe as well and that not only on the lands of the princes and the nobles but on enormous tracts where they worked directly for the bishops, archbishops, parsons and convents. Among all the mighty lords of feudal times the church appeared as the greatest exploiter of all. In France, for example, at the end of the 18th century before the Great Revolution the clergy possessed the fifth part of all the territory of the country with an annual income of about 100 million francs. The tithes paid by the proprietors amounted to 23 million. This sum went to fatten 2800 prelates and bishops, 5600 superiors and priors, 60,000 parsons and curates, and 24,000 monks and 26,000 nuns who filled the cloisters.

This army of priests was freed from taxation and from the requirement to perform military service. In times of "calamity" — war, bad harvest, epidemics — the church paid to the state treasury a "voluntary" tax which never exceeded 16 million francs.

The clergy, thus privileged, formed, with the nobility, a ruling class living on the blood and sweat of the serfs. The high posts in the church, and those which paid best, were distributed only to the nobles and remained within the hands of the nobility. Consequently, in the period of serfdom, the clergy was the faithful ally of the nobility, giving it support and helping it to oppress the people, to whom it offered nothing but sermons, according to which they should remain humble and resign themselves to their lot. When the country and town proletariat rose up against oppression and serfdom, it found in the clergy a ferocious opponent. It is also true even within the church itself there existed two classes: the higher clergy who engulfed all the wealth

and the great mass of the country parsons whose modest livings brought in no more than 500 francs to 2000 francs a year. Therefore, this unprivileged class revolted against the superior clergy and in 1789, during the Great Revolution, it joined up with the people to fight against the power of the lay and ecclesiastical nobility.

V

Thus were the relations between the church and the people modified with the passage of time. Christianity began as a message of consolation to the disinherited and the wretched. It brought a doctrine which combated social inequality and the antagonism between rich and poor; it taught the community of riches. Soon this temple of equality and fraternity became a new source of social antagonisms. Having given up the struggle against individual property which was formerly carried on by the early apostles, the clergy itself gathered riches together, it allied itself with the possessing classes who lived by exploiting the labour of the toiling class. In feudal times the church belonged to the nobility, the ruling class, and fiercely defended the power of the latter against revolution. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the people of central Europe swept away serfdom and the privileges of the nobility. At that time, the church allied itself afresh with the dominant classes — with the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. Today, the situation has changed and the clergy no longer possess great estates, but they own capital which they try to make productive by the exploitation of the people through commerce and industry, as do the capitalists.

The Catholic Church in Austria possessed, according to its own statistics, a capital of more than 813 million crowns, of which 300 million were in arable lands and in property, 387 million of debentures, and, further, it lent at interest the sum of 70 million to factory owners and businessmen. And that is how the church, adapting itself to modern times, changed itself into an industrial and commercial capitalist from being a feudal overlord. As formerly, it continues to collaborate with the class which enriches itself at the expense of the rural proletariat.

This change is even more striking in the organisation of convents. In certain countries, such as Germany and Russia, the Catholic cloisters have been suppressed for along time. But where they still exist, in France, Italy and Spain, all evidence points how enormous is the part played by the church in the capitalist regime.

In the Middle Ages the convents were the refuge of the people. It was there that they sought shelter from the severity of lords and princes; it was there that they found food and protection in case of extreme poverty. The cloisters did not refuse bread and nourishment to the hungry. Let us not forget, especially, that the Middle Ages knew nothing of the commerce such as is usual in our days. Every farm, every convent

produced in abundance for itself, thanks to the labour of the serfs and the craftsmen. Often the provisions in reserve found no outlet. When they had produced more corn, more vegetables, more wood than was needed for the consumption of the monks, the excess had no value. There was no buyer for it and not all products could be preserved. In these conditions, the convents freely looked after their poor, in any case offering them only a small part of what has been extracted from their serfs. (This was the usual custom in this period and nearly every farm belonging to the nobility acted similarly.) In fact, the cloisters profited considerably from this benevolence; having the reputation of opening their doors to the poor, they received large gifts and legacies from the rich and powerful.

With the appearance of capitalism and production for exchange, every object acquired a price and became exchangeable. At this moment the convents, the houses of the lords, and the ecclesiastics ceased their benefactions. The people found no refuge anywhere. Here is one reason, among others, why at the beginning of capitalism, in the 18th century, when the workers were not yet organised to defend their interests, there appeared poverty so appalling that humanity seemed to have gone back to the days of the decades of the Roman Empire. But while the Catholic Church in former times undertook to bring help to the Roman proletariat by the preaching of communism, equality and fraternity, in the capitalist period it acted in a wholly different fashion. It sought above all to profit from the poverty of the people; to put cheap labour to work. The convents became literally hells of capitalist exploitation, all the worse because they took in the labour of women and children. The law case against the Convent of the Good Shepherd in France in 1903 gave a resounding example of these abuses. Little girls, 12, 10 and nine years old were compelled to work in abominable conditions, without rest, ruining their eyes and their health, and were badly nourished and subjected to prison discipline.

At present the convents are almost entirely suppressed in France and the church loses the opportunity of direct capitalist exploitation. The tithe, the scourge of the serfs, has likewise long since been abolished. This does not stop the clergy from extorting money from the working class by other methods and particularly through masses, marriages, burials and baptisms. And the governments which support the clergy compel the people to pay their tribute. Further, in all countries, except the USA and Switzerland, where religion is a personal matter, the church draws from the state enormous sums which obviously come from the hard labour of the people. For instance, in France the expenditure of the clergy amounts to 40 million francs a year.

To sum up, it is the labour of millions of exploited people, which assures the existence of the church, the government, and the capitalist class. The statistics concerning

the revenue of the church in Austria give an idea of the considerable wealth of the church, which was formerly the refuge of the poor. Five years ago (that is, in 1900) its annual revenues amounted to 60 million crowns, and its expenditure did not exceed 35 million. Thus, in the course of a single year, it “put aside” 25 million — at the cost of the sweat and blood shed by the workers. Here are a few details about that sum:

The archbishopric of Vienna, with an annual revenue of 300,000 crowns and the expenses of which were not more than half of that sum, made 150,000 crowns of “savings” a year; the fixed capital of the archbishopric amounts to about seven million crowns. The archbishopric of Prague enjoys an income of over half a million and has about 300,000 in expenses; its capital reaches nearly 11 million crowns. The archbishopric of Olomouc (Olmütz) has over half a million in revenue and about 400,000 in expenses; its fortune exceeds 14 million. The subordinate clergy which so often pleads poverty exploits the population no less. The annual incomes of the parish priests of Austria reach more than 35 million crowns, the expenses 21 million only, with the result that the “savings” of the parsons yearly reach 14 million. The parish properties make up over 450 million. Finally, the convents of five years ago possessed, with all expenses deducted, a “net revenue” of five million a year. These riches grew every year, while the poverty of the toilers exploited by capitalism and by the state grew from year to year. In our country and everywhere else, the state of things is exactly as in Austria.

VI

After having briefly reviewed the history of the church, we cannot be surprised that the clergy supports the tsarist government and the capitalists against the revolutionary workers who fight for a better future. The class-conscious workers organised in the Social-Democratic Party, fight to bring into reality the idea of social equality and of fraternity among men, the object which was formerly that of the Christian church.

Nonetheless, equality cannot be realised either in a society based on slavery nor in a society based on serfdom; it becomes capable of being realised in our present period, that is, the regime of industrial capitalism. What the Christian apostles could not accomplish by their ardent discourses against the egoism of the rich, the modern proletarians, workers conscious of their class-position, can start working in the near future, by the conquest of political power in all countries, by tearing the factories, the land, and all the means of production from the capitalists to make them the communal property of the workers. The communism which the social-democrats have in view does not consist of the dividing up, between beggars and rich and lazy, of the wealth produced by slaves and serfs, but in honest, common, united work and the honest enjoyment of the common fruits of that work. Socialism does not consist of generous

gifts made by the rich to the poor, but in the total abolition of the very difference between rich and poor, by compelling all alike to work according to their capacity by the suppression of the exploitation of man by man.

For the purpose of establishing the socialist order, the workers organise themselves in the workers' Social-Democratic Party which pursues this aim. And that is why the social-democracy and the workers' movement meets with the ferocious hatred of the possessing classes which live at the expense of the workers.

The enormous riches piled up by the church without any effort on its part, come from the exploitation and the poverty of the labouring people. The wealth of the archbishops and bishops, the convents and the parishes, the wealth of the factory-owners and the traders and the landed proprietors are bought at the price of the inhuman exertions of the workers of town and country. For what can be the only origin of the gifts and legacies which the very rich lords make to the church? Obviously not the labour of their hands and the sweat of their brows, but the exploitation of the workers who toil for them; serfs yesterday and wage-workers today. Further, the allowance which the governments today make to the clergy come from the state treasury, made up in the greater part from the taxes wrung from the popular masses. The clergy, no less than the capitalist class, lives on the backs of the people, profits from the degradation, the ignorance and the oppression of the people. The clergy and the parasitic capitalists hate the organised working-class, conscious of its rights, which fights for the conquest of its liberties. For the abolition of capitalist misrule and the establishment of equality between men would strike a mortal blow especially at the clergy which exists only thanks to exploitation and poverty. But above all, socialism aims at assuring to humanity an honest and solid happiness here below, to give to the people the greatest possible education and the first place in society. It is precisely this happiness here on Earth which the servants of the church fear like the plague.

The capitalists have shaped with hammer blows the bodies of the people, in chains of poverty and slavery. Parallel to this the clergy, helping the capitalists and serving their own needs enchain the mind of the people, hold it down in crass ignorance, for they well understand that education would put an end to their power. Well, the clergy falsifying the early teaching of Christianity, which had as its object the earthly happiness of the lowly, tries today to persuade the toilers that the suffering and the degradation which they endure come, not from a defective social structure, but from heaven, from the will of "providence". Thus the church kills in the workers the strength, the hope, and the will for a better future, kills their faith in themselves and their self-respect. The priests of today, with their false and poisonous teachings, continually maintain the ignorance and degradation of the people. Here are some irrefutable proofs.

In the countries where the Catholic clergy enjoys great power over the minds of the people, in Spain and in Italy for instance, the people are held down in complete ignorance. Drunkenness and crime flourish there. For example, let us compare two provinces of Germany, Bavaria and Saxony. Bavaria is an agricultural state where the population is preponderantly under the influence of the Catholic clergy. Saxony is an industrialised state where the social-democrats play a large part in the life of the workers. They win the parliamentary elections in nearly all the constituencies, a reason why the bourgeoisie shows its hatred for this “Red” social-democrat province. And what do we see? The official statistics show that the number of crimes committed in ultra-Catholic Bavaria is relatively much higher than that in “Red Saxony”. We see that in 1898, out of every 100,000 inhabitants there were:

	<i>Bavaria</i>	<i>Saxony</i>
Robbery with Violence	204	185
Assault and Battery	296	72
Perjury	4	1

A wholly similar situation is found when we compare the record of crime in priest-dominated Posen with that in Berlin, where the influence of social-democracy is greater. In the course of the year, we see for every 100,000 inhabitants in Posen, 232 cases of assault and battery, and in Berlin 172 only.

In the Papal City, in Rome, during one single month of the year 1869 (the last year but one of the temporal power of the popes), there were condemned: 279 for murder, 728 for assault and battery, 297 for robbery and 21 for arson. These are the results of clerical domination over the poverty-stricken people.

This does not mean to say that the clergy directly incite people to crime. Quite the contrary, in their sermons the priests often condemn theft, robbery, and drunkenness. But men do not steal, rob, or get drunk at all because they like to do so or insist upon it. It is poverty and ignorance that are the causes of it. Therefore, he who keeps alive the ignorance and poverty of the people, he who kills their will and energy to act out of this situation, he who puts all sorts of obstacles in the way of those who try to educate the proletariat, he is responsible for these crimes just as if he were an accomplice.

The situation in the mining areas of Catholic Belgium was similar until recently. The social-democrats went there. Their vigorous appeal to the unhappy and degraded workers sounded through the country: “Worker, lift yourself up! Do not rob, do not get drunk, do not lower your head in despair! Read, teach yourself! Join up with your class brothers in the organisation, fight against the exploiters who maltreat you! You will emerge from poverty, you will become a man!”

Thus the social-democrats everywhere lift up the people and strengthen those

who lose hope, rally the weak into a powerful organisation. They open the eyes of the ignorant and show them the way of equality, of liberty and of love for our neighbours.

On the other hand, the servants of the church bring to the people only words of humiliation and discouragement. And, if Christ were to appear on earth today, he would surely attack the priests, the bishops and archbishops who defend the rich and live by exploiting the unfortunate, as formerly he attacked the merchants whom he drove from the temple so that their ignoble presence should not defile the House of God.

That is why there has broken out a desperate struggle between the clergy, the supporters of oppression and the social-democrats, the spokesmen of liberation. Is this fight not to be compared with that of the dark night and the rising sun? Because the priests are not capable of combating socialism by means of intelligence or truth, they have recourse to violence and wickedness. Their Judas-talk calumniates those who rouse class-consciousness. By means of lies and slander, they try to besmirch all those who give up their lives for the workers' cause. These servants and worshippers of the Golden Calf support and applaud the crimes of the tsarist government and defend the throne of this latest despot who oppresses the people like Nero.

But it is in vain that you put yourselves about, you degenerate servants of Christianity who have become the servants of Nero. It is in vain that you help our murderers and our killers, in vain that you protect the exploiters of the proletariat under the sign of the cross. Your cruelties and your calumnies in former times could not prevent the victory of the Christian idea, the idea which you have sacrificed to the Golden Calf; today your efforts will raise no obstacle to the coming of socialism. Today it is you, in your lies and your teachings, who are pagans, and it is we who bring to the poor, to the exploited the tidings of fraternity and equality. It is we who are marching to the conquest of the world as he did formerly who proclaimed that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

VII

A few final words.

The clergy has at its disposal two means to fight social-democracy. Where the working-class movement is beginning to win recognition, as is the case in our country (Poland), where the possessing classes still hope to crush it, the clergy fights the socialists by threatening sermons, slandering them and condemning the "covetousness" of the workers. But in the countries where political liberties are established and the workers' party is powerful, as for example in Germany, France and Holland, there the clergy

seeks other means. It hides its real purpose and does not face the workers any more as an open enemy, but as a false friend. Thus you will see the priests organising the workers and launching “Christian” trade unions. In this way they try to catch the fish in their net, to attract the workers into the trap of these false trade unions, where they teach humility, unlike the organisations of the social-democracy which have in view struggle and defence against maltreatment.

When the tsarist government finally falls under the blows of the revolutionary proletariat of Poland and Russia, and when political liberty exists in our country, then we shall see the same Archbishop Popiel and the same ecclesiastics who today thunder against the militants, suddenly beginning to organise the workers into “Christian” and “national” associations in order to mislead them. Already we are at the beginning of this underground activity of the “national democracy” which assures the future collaboration with the priests and today helps them to slander the social-democrats.

The workers must, therefore, be warned of the danger so that they will not let themselves be taken in, on the morrow of the victory of the revolution, by the honeyed words of those who today from the heights of the pulpit, dare to defend the tsarist government, which kills the workers, and the repressive apparatus of capital, which is the principal cause of the poverty of the proletariat.

In order to defend themselves against the antagonism of the clergy at the present time, during the revolution, and against their false friendship tomorrow, after the revolution, it is necessary for the workers to organise themselves in the Social-Democratic Party.

And here is the answer to all the attacks of the clergy: the social-democracy in no way fights against religious beliefs. On the contrary, it demands complete freedom of conscience for every individual and the widest possible toleration for every faith and every opinion. But, from the moment when the priests use the pulpit as a means of political struggle against the working classes, the workers must fight against the enemies of their rights and their liberation. For he who defends the exploiters and who helps to prolong this present regime of misery, is the mortal enemy of the proletariat, whether he be in a cassock or in the uniform of the police. ■



Leon Trotsky (1879-40)

Leon Trotsky

Soviet Government Rebuts British Clerical Criticism

In the spring of 1921 severe drought in Russia's Volga basin and the southern Ukraine led to widespread crop failures and a catastrophic famine which affected 20-30 million people.

The Soviet authorities took desperate emergency measures. These included entering into an agreement with Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration (ARA); and despite its clear anti-Soviet agenda, the ARA did organise the distribution of substantial amounts of food aid. In February 1922 a government decree was published ordering the collection from the churches of precious objects that were not being used in the services. The proceeds were to be put to famine relief.

The Russian Orthodox patriarch Tichon issued a secret circular opposing the collection. Called as a witness in the trial of some priests who had actively opposed the collection, he was then arrested and a trial against him prepared. His detention led a dissident group of priests to form the Living Church, which had a positive attitude to the Soviet regime. In April 1923 this group declared Tichon deposed. But in June of that year, Tichon declared himself guilty in relation to the Soviet Union, promised to no longer oppose the regime and asked to be released, which was done. After his release, the Living Church lost influence and, after Tichon's death in 1925, gradually disappeared from the scene.

The arrest of Tichon drew the following protest from a number of leading British clerics and Trotsky's reply on behalf of the Soviet government.

The text is taken from Meijer ed., The Trotsky Papers 1917-1922, Vol. II (Mouton: The Hague, 1971); it is reprinted with permission.



British clergy protest to Soviet government

June 1, 1922

To: Lenin — Chairman of Council of People's Commissars, Moscow.

In the name of the Christian Communions which we represent we protest most earnestly against the persecution of the Russian Church in the person of its patriarch, Tichon. The public mind and conscience of all Christians and of the whole civilised world, cannot tolerate silently so great a wrong.

The Archbishop of Canterbury; the Archbishop of York

John Smith, moderator of the Church of Scotland,

Donald Frazer, moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland

John Chown, president of the Union of Baptists

Thomas Gates, president of the Congregational Union

Herbert Mumford, president of the Britano-Moravian Church

Ivor Robertson, moderator of the English Presbyterian Church

Samuel Horton, president of the Primo-Methodists

Treffry, president of the United Methodists

Alfred Sharp, president of the Wesleyan Union of Methodists

Trotsky replies for Soviet government

The protest of a number of the clergy of Great Britain against the preferment of charges against the former patriarch Tichon, addressed to the Soviet government, makes it necessary to give the following clarifications.

1. Notwithstanding the words of the protest, there is no attack on the church, but there is the preferment of charges against individual representatives of the church, including the former patriarch of it, of organising resistance to measures taken by the Soviet regime, which were carried out with the object of saving the lives of tens of millions of human beings, children among them.

2. The overwhelming majority of the priesthood in the conflict between the former patriarch Tichon and the Soviet regime, are on the side of the Soviet regime and of the toiling masses represented by it. Only some elements of the church, not numerous ones, the most privileged and debauched by their connection with the tsarist aristocracy and with capital, constitute the group of the former patriarch Tichon. Public opinion in Russia will note the fact that the protesting English ecclesiastical hierarchy is identifying itself not with the hungry, toiling masses of Russia, not even with the majority of the priesthood, but with a numerically insignificant church hierarchy, which has always gone hand in hand with the tsars, the bureaucracy, the nobility, and has now entered upon an outright struggle against the regime of the workers and peasants.

3. Public opinion in Russia also affirms that in the most brutal periods of the blockade, in which the English government also participated, the authors of the protest did not raise their voice against the throttling of Russian workers and peasants and their children. The population of Russia has equally not heard of any protest by the Protestants against the attempt to strangle the toiling Russian people in the noose of usury.

4. This is why both the Soviet regime and the toiling people regard the above mentioned protest of the princes of the various churches in Great Britain as having been dictated by narrow caste solidarity, wholly directed against the real interests of the people and the elementary requirements of humanity.

Trotsky

Leon Trotsky

Vodka, the Church & the Cinema

In 1923 Trotsky published a series of articles in Pravda, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, under the general heading Problems of Everyday Life. They arose out of his discussions with communist propagandists in Moscow. The articles were later published in 1924 in an English translation by Z. Vergerova in the collection Problems of Life. The following piece first appeared in Pravda, July 12, 1923.



There are two big facts which have set a new stamp on working-class life. The one is the advent of the eight-hour working day; the other, the prohibition of the sale of vodka. The liquidation of the vodka monopoly, for which the war was responsible, preceded the revolution. The war demanded such enormous means that tsarism was able to renounce the drink revenue as a negligible quantity, a billion rubles more or less making no very great difference. The revolution inherited the liquidation of the vodka monopoly as a fact; it adopted the fact, but was actuated by considerations of principle. It was only with the conquest of power by the working class, which became the conscious creator of the new economic order, that the combating of alcoholism by the country, by education and prohibition, was able to receive its due historic significance. The circumstance that the “drunkards” budget was abandoned during the imperialist war does not alter the fundamental fact that the abolition of the system by which the country encouraged people to drink is one of the iron assets of the revolution.

As regards the eight-hour working day, that was a direct conquest of the revolution. As a fact in itself, the eight-hour working day produced a radical change in the life of the worker, setting free two-thirds of the day from factory duties. This provides a foundation for a radical change of life for development and culture, social education, and so on, but a foundation only. The chief significance of the October Revolution consists in the fact that the economic betterment of every worker automatically raises

the material wellbeing and culture of the working class as a whole.

“Eight hours work, eight hours sleep, eight hours play”, says the old formula of the workers’ movement. In our circumstances, it assumes a new meaning. The more profitably the eight hours work is utilised, the better, more cleanly, and more hygienically can the eight hours sleep be arranged for, and the fuller and more cultured can the eight hours of leisure become.

The question of amusements in this connection becomes of greatly enhanced importance in regard to culture and education. The character of a child is revealed and formed in its play. The character of an adult is clearly manifested in his play and amusements. But in forming the character of a whole class, when this class is young and moves ahead, like the proletariat, amusements and play ought to occupy a prominent position. The great French utopian reformer, Fourier, repudiating Christian asceticism and the suppression of the natural instincts, constructed his *phalansterie* (the communes of the future) on the correct and rational utilisation and combination of human instincts and passions. The idea is a profound one. The working-class state is neither a spiritual order nor a monastery. We take people as they have been made by nature, and as they have been in part educated and in part distorted by the old order. We seek a point of support in this vital human material for the application of our party and revolutionary state lever. The longing for amusement, distraction, sightseeing, and laughter is the most legitimate desire of human nature. We are able, and indeed obliged, to give the satisfaction of this desire a higher artistic quality, at the same time making amusement a weapon of collective education, freed from the guardianship of the pedagogue and the tiresome habit of moralising.

The most important weapon in this respect a weapon excelling any other, is at present the cinema. This amazing spectacular innovation has cut into human life with a successful rapidity never experienced in the past. In the daily life of capitalist towns, the cinema has become just such an integral part of life as the bath, the beer-hall, the church, and other indispensable institutions, commendable and otherwise. The passion for the cinema is rooted in the desire for distraction, the desire to see something new and improbable, to laugh and to cry, not at your own, but at other people’s misfortunes. The cinema satisfies these demands in a very direct, visual, picturesque, and vital way, requiring nothing from the audience; it does not even require them to be literate. That is why the audience bears such a grateful love to the cinema, that inexhaustible fount of impressions and emotions. This provides a point, and not merely a point, but a huge square, for the application of our socialist educational energies.

The fact that we have so far, i.e., in nearly six years, not taken possession of the cinema shows how slow and uneducated we are, not to say, frankly, stupid. This

weapon, which cries out to be used, is the best instrument for propaganda, technical, educational, and industrial propaganda, propaganda against alcohol, propaganda for sanitation, political propaganda, any kind of propaganda you please, a propaganda which is accessible to everyone, which is attractive, which cuts into the memory and may be made a possible source of revenue.

In attracting and amusing, the cinema already rivals the beer-hall and the tavern. I do not know whether New York or Paris possesses at the present time more cinemas or taverns, or which of these enterprises yields more revenue. But it is manifest that, above everything, the cinema competes with the tavern in the matter of how the eight leisure hours are to be filled. Can we secure this incomparable weapon? Why not? The government of the tsar, in a few years, established an intricate net of state bar-rooms. The business yielded a yearly revenue of almost a billion gold rubles. Why should not the government of the workers establish a net of state cinemas? This apparatus of amusement and education could more and more be made to become an integral part of national life. Used to combat alcoholism, it could at the same time be made into a revenue-yielding concern. Is it practicable? Why not? It is, of course, not easy. It would be, at any rate, more natural and more in keeping with the organising energies and abilities of a workers' state than, let us say, the attempt to restore the vodka monopoly.

The cinema competes not only with the tavern but also with the church. And this rivalry may become fatal for the church if we make up for the separation of the church from the socialist state by the fusion of the socialist state and the cinema.

Religiousness among the Russian working classes practically does not exist. It actually never existed. The Orthodox Church was a daily custom and a government institution. It never was successful in penetrating deeply into the consciousness of the masses, nor in blending its dogmas and canons with the inner emotions of the people. The reason for this is the same — the uncultured condition of old Russia, including her church. Hence, when awakened for culture, the Russian worker easily throws off his purely external relation to the church, a relation which grew on him by habit. For the peasant, certainly, this becomes harder, not because the peasant has more profoundly and intimately entered into the church teaching — this has, of course, never been the case — but because the inertia and monotony of his life are closely bound up with the inertia and monotony of church practices.

The workers' relation to the church (I am speaking of the nonparty mass worker) holds mostly by the thread of habit, the habit of women in particular. Icons still hang in the home because they are there. Icons decorate the walls; it would be bare without them; people would not be used to it. A worker will not trouble to buy new icons, but has not sufficient will to discard the old ones. In what way can the spring festival be

celebrated if not by Easter cake? And Easter cake must be blessed by the priest, otherwise it will be so meaningless. As for churchgoing, the people do not go because they are religious; the church is brilliantly lighted, crowded with men and women in their best clothes, the singing is good — a range of social-aesthetic attractions not provided by the factory, the family, or the workaday street. There is no faith or practically none. At any rate, there is no respect for the clergy or belief in the magic force of ritual. But there is no active will to break it all. The elements of distraction, pleasure, and amusement play a large part in church rites. By theatrical methods the church works on the sight, the sense of smell (through incense), and through them on the imagination. Man's desire for the theatrical, a desire to see and hear the unusual, the striking, a desire for a break in the ordinary monotony of life, is great and ineradicable; it persists from early childhood to advanced old age. In order to liberate the common masses from ritual and the ecclesiasticism acquired by habit antireligious propaganda alone is not enough. Of course, it is necessary; but its direct practical influence is limited to a small minority of the more courageous in spirit. The bulk of the people are not affected by antireligious propaganda; but that is not because their spiritual relation to religion is so profound. On the contrary, there is no spiritual relation at all; there is only a formless, inert, mechanical relation, which has not passed through the consciousness; a relation like that of the street sightseer, who on occasion does not object to joining in a procession or a pompous ceremony, or listening to singing, or waving his arms.

Meaningless ritual, which lies on the consciousness like an inert burden, cannot be destroyed by criticism alone; it can be supplanted by new forms of life, new amusements, new and more cultured theatres. Here again, thoughts go naturally to the most powerful — because it is the most democratic — instrument of the theatre: the cinema. Having no need of a clergy in brocade, etc., the cinema unfolds on the white screen spectacular images of greater grip than are provided by the richest church, grown wise in the experience of a thousand years, or by mosque or synagogue. In church only one drama is performed, and always one and the same, year in, year out; while in the cinema next door you will be shown the Easters of heathen, Jew, and Christian, in their historic sequence, with their similarity of ritual. The cinema amuses, educates, strikes the imagination by images, and liberates you from the need of crossing the church door. The cinema is a great competitor not only of the tavern but also of the church. Here is an instrument which we must secure at all costs! ■

Leon Trotsky

Leninism & Workers' Clubs

Part of a speech given on July 17, 1924 to a conference of personnel of the workers' clubs. The clubs were educational and recreational institutions that existed at many Soviet factories and plants; they were funded by the trade unions but were formally independent, run by elected committees.

Published in Pravda, July 23, 1924. The section on antireligious propaganda excerpted here was translated for this volume by Renfrey Clarke.



Let us dwell once again on the subject of anti-religious propaganda, one of the most important tasks in the field of everyday life. Here too I would like to quote from the resolution of the 13th Congress. “Considerable attention needs to be paid to propaganda promoting the natural sciences (anti-religious propaganda).” I don’t recall whether this formulation was used before — “the natural sciences” followed by “anti-religious propaganda” in brackets. If it was, it has now been authoritatively confirmed. This amounts to a call for a new and different approach to a familiar question.

Under the influence of the beneficial impulse emerging from our congress, from the very fact that it was called, I have examined a great deal of printed material that I would not need to look through in normal circumstances. In particular, I have looked at the satirical journal *Bezbozhnik*,^a where there are numerous drawings, some of them very effective, by our best cartoonists. This is a journal which can probably play a positive role in certain circles, mainly urban ones, but which can hardly represent the main thrust of the struggle against religious prejudices. From issue to issue of *Bezbozhnik*, a ceaseless battle is waged against Jehovah, Christ and Allah, a one-on-one combat between the talented artist Moor and God. You and I, of course, are totally on the side of Moor. But if we did only this, or if this were our main work, then I am afraid the duel

^a The Godless. — *Ed.*

would end in a draw ...

In any case, it is quite obvious and indisputable that there is no way we can place our anti-religious propaganda as a whole on the level of a bare struggle against God. That's not enough for us! We are driving out mysticism through the use of materialism, above all by broadening the collective experience of the masses, increasing their active influence on society, expanding the framework of their positive knowledge, and it is on this general basis that where necessary, we also aim direct blows against religious superstitions.

The question of religion has enormous importance and is linked in the very closest fashion with all cultural work and socialist construction. Marx in his youth said: "Criticism of religion is a precondition of all other criticism." In what sense? In the sense that religion is a sort of imaginary knowledge of the world. The imaginary character of this knowledge flows from two sources: the weakness of human beings in the face of nature, and the absurd character of social relationships. Overawed by nature or ignoring it, and failing to analyse social relationships or ignoring them, social human beings attempted to tie the various ends together by creating fantastic images, assigning them an imaginary reality, and then going down on their knees before their own creations. At the basis of this creative act lies people's practical need to orient themselves, something which in turn flows from the conditions of the struggle for survival.

Religion is an expression of the search for a generalised orientation to the environment, and for the means with which to wage the struggle for existence. This orientation also involves practical, logical rules. All this, however, is intertwined with myth, fantasy, superstition and imaginary knowledge.

Since the whole development of culture consists of the accumulation of knowledge, the criticism of religion is a precondition for any other criticism; in order to prepare the way for correct or real knowledge, it is necessary to get rid of fictitious knowledge. This is true, however, only if we consider the question as a whole. Historically, real knowledge has been combined in various forms and proportions with religious prejudices, not only in individual cases, but also in the development of whole classes. The struggle against a particular religion or against religion in general, and against all types of mythology and superstition, is successful when religious ideology enters into contradiction with the needs of a particular class in a new social setting. In other words, if accumulated knowledge and the need for knowledge do not fit within the framework of the imaginary truths of religion, and burst them apart, a single blow of the critical knife can be enough sometimes for the husk of religion to fall off.

The success of the anti-religious offensive we have waged in the last few years is explained by the fact that the advanced layers of workers, who have gone through the

school of revolution, that is, of an open attitude to the state and to social forms, have easily shaken off the husk of religious prejudices, decisively weakened by the developments that occurred earlier. The position, however, changes substantially when the anti-religious propaganda extends its impact to the less active layers not only of the countryside, but also of the cities. The real knowledge of these layers, however acquired, is so limited and fragmentary that it has no trouble sitting alongside religious prejudices. Direct criticism of these prejudices, because it does not find the necessary points of support in personal or collective experience, will not yield results. It then becomes essential to approach the matter from another direction: to broaden the sphere of social experience and genuine knowledge.

There are very diverse ways to achieve this. Public dining-rooms and childcare centres can provide a revolutionary spur to the consciousness of the housewife, and greatly accelerate the process through which she breaks with religion. Destroying plagues of locusts through aerial spraying can play the same role with regard to the peasant. The very fact of participating in the activities of a club that draws working men and women out of the confining cell of the family apartment, with its icon and icon-lamp, is also one of the ways that lead to liberation from religious prejudices. And so on, and so forth. A club can and must measure the strength of resistance of religious prejudices, and find ways round them by broadening people's experience and knowledge. In the struggle against religion, periods of open frontal attack thus alternate with periods of blockade, of undermining, and of outflanking movements. On the whole, we have now entered just such a period, but this does not mean that in future we shall not resume a direct attack. It is only necessary to prepare for this.

Has our attack on religion been correct or incorrect? It has been correct. Has it yielded results? It has. Who has it drawn toward us? Those people whose preceding experience has prepared them for freeing themselves once and for all from religious prejudices. And beyond this? There now remain the people whom even the great experience of October has not shaken to the point of liberating them from religion. Here, little can be achieved through the formal methods of anti-religious criticism, satire, caricatures, and so forth. If we apply too much pressure, we could finish up with the opposite result. Here, we once again need to drill into the rock-face — and God knows, it's hard enough rock! — place our dynamite charges, set the fuse ... After a certain time there will be a new explosion and a new fall of rock, that is, a new stratum of the population will have been torn away from the inert block ... The congress resolution also tells us that in this field we now have to pass over from the explosion and attack to the more drawn-out work of shaking things loose, above all through propaganda in favour of natural science.

To show how an unprepared frontal assault on religious prejudices can sometimes yield completely unexpected results, I shall cite one extremely interesting example, very recent, about which I have heard from individual comrades by word of mouth, since unfortunately, it has not yet been written up and published. It concerns the Norwegian Communist Party. As you have probably heard, last year this party split into an opportunist majority, led by Tranmael, and a revolutionary minority faithful to the Comintern. I asked a comrade who lived in Norway how Tranmael had managed to win over a majority — only temporarily, of course. One of the reasons he pointed to was the religious beliefs of the Norwegian fishing workers. As you know, the fishing industry uses very primitive technology, and depends totally on nature. Among the Norwegian fishing workers, this provides a basis for prejudices and superstitions. As the comrade who told me of this episode observed wittily, religion for Norwegian fishers is like a set of protective clothing.

In Scandinavia there were also intellectuals, academicians, who were flirting with religion. Quite justly, they were scourged with the merciless lash of Marxism. The Norwegian opportunists used this adroitly to turn the fishers against the Comintern. The fishing workers, revolutionary-minded, profoundly sympathetic to the Soviet republic, and standing wholeheartedly behind the Comintern, said to themselves: either with the Comintern, and so without God and without fish [*laughter*], or reluctantly, to break with it. And so, they split ... This is how sharply religion sometimes cuts even into proletarian politics.

Of course, this applies still more strongly to our peasants, whose everyday religious belief is absolutely bound up with the conditions of their backward economy. We shall only gain a complete victory over the everyday religious prejudices of the peasantry through electrification and the introduction of chemicals to agriculture. This does not mean, of course, that we should not use every single technical improvement, and in general, every favourable social opportunity for anti-religious propaganda, in order to achieve partial collapses of religious consciousness — no, all this is as obligatory for us as it was before. Nevertheless, we have to understand the general perspective correctly. If we simply closed the churches, as has been done in some places, and carried out other administrative excesses, we would not only fail to make decisive gains, but on the contrary, we would be preparing the way for a more powerful relapse into religion ...

If it is true that religious criticism is a precondition for all other criticism, then for our epoch it is no less true that the electrification of agriculture is a precondition for doing away with peasant superstitions. On the topic of the possible significance of the electrification of agriculture, let me quote some remarkable words of Engels, which were unknown until quite recently. Not long ago Comrade Ryazanov published, for

the first time, the correspondence of Engels with Bernstein and Kautsky. These letters are exceptionally interesting. Old Engels comes to seem twice as fascinating with the appearance of more and more new materials, which give us a better idea of his character from both the ideological and personal standpoints. Here I want to quote something that touches directly on the question of electrification and of closing the abyss between city and countryside.

This letter was written by Engels to Bernstein in 1883. I should explain that in 1882 the French engineer Deprez discovered a way of transmitting electrical energy over long distances by wire. If I am not mistaken, at an exhibition in Munich (at any rate, in Germany) he showed that he could send electrical energy of one or two horsepower for a distance of 50 or so kilometres over a simple telegraph wire. This made a colossal impression on Engels, who was extraordinarily sensitive to any advances in the natural sciences, technology, and so on. He wrote to Bernstein: "The recent discovery by Deprez ... finally liberates industry from almost all restrictions as to its location, allowing the use of even the most remote water power. If at first only cities make use of this, ultimately it must become an extremely powerful lever for ending the antagonism between the city and the countryside."

Vladimir Ilyich did not know of these lines, since all this correspondence came to light only recently — Bernstein had kept it hidden away in Germany, until Comrade Ryazanov managed to extract it. I don't know whether all the comrades are aware of the concentrated attention, indeed, the intense love, with which Lenin studied those old teachers Marx and Engels, finding ever new proofs of their powers of insight, of the universality of their thought, and of their skill in looking far into the future. I have no doubt that this quotation, in which the day after the method for transmitting electrical energy over long distances had been demonstrated, in essence on a laboratory scale, Engels already looks over the head of industry to the countryside, and says that the new discovery is a powerful lever for ending the antagonism between city and country — I have no doubt that Lenin would have put this quotation to use in the thinking of our party. When you read these words of Engels, it is as though old Frederick, from the bottom of the ocean (he was cremated, and in line with his will, his ashes were scattered at sea), were calling back and forth with Ilyich on Red Square.

Comrades! The process of doing away with religion is a dialectical one. It includes periods with different tempos, determined by the general conditions of development. The clubs have to act as observation posts. They have to constantly help the party to orient itself correctly on this question, to take the current situation into account, and to settle on the right pace.

Religion will only cease to exist completely with the development of the socialist

system, that is, when technology frees people from degrading forms of dependency on nature, and amid social relations that are no longer mysterious, which are completely transparent and do not oppress people. Religion translates the chaos of nature and the chaos of social relationships into the language of fantastic images. Only the ending of earthly chaos can do away forever with its religious reflection. The conscious, reasoned, planned guidance of all aspects of social life will do away forever with all kinds of mysticism and devilry. ■

Appendix 1

The Program of the Communist Party of Russia

Adopted at the Eighth Party Congress, March 18-23, 1919. Included as an appendix to The ABC of Communism, originally published in England in 1922 in a translation from the Russian by Eden and Cedar Paul. For the full text see Bukharin & Preobrazhensky, The ABC of Communism (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1966).



Religion

With regard to religion, the Russian Communist Party is not content with having already decreed the separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church, that is, with having taken measures which bourgeois democracy includes in its programs but has nowhere carried out owing to the manifold associations that actually obtain between capital and religious propaganda.

The Russian Communist Party is guided by the conviction that nothing but the fulfilment of purposiveness and full awareness in all the social and economic activities of the masses can lead to the complete disappearance of religious prejudices. The party endeavours to secure the complete breakup of the union between the exploiting classes and the organisations for religious propaganda, thus cooperating in the actual deliverance of the working masses from religious prejudices, and organising the most extensive propaganda of scientific enlightenment and antireligious conceptions. While doing this, we must carefully avoid anything that can wound the feelings of believers, for such a method can only lead to the strengthening of religious fanaticism. ■

Appendix 2

The ABC of Communism

The ABC of Communism was written in 1919 by Nikolai Bukharin & Evgeny Preobrazhensky. It was subtitled “A Popular Explanation of the Program of the Communist Party of Russia”. The sections in smaller type were used in the original and represent more detailed explanations.



Why religion & communism are incompatible

“Religion is the opium of the people”, said Karl Marx. It is the task of the Communist Party to make this truth comprehensible to the widest possible circles of the labouring masses. It is the task of the party to impress firmly upon the minds of the workers, even upon the most backward, that religion has been in the past and still is today one of the most powerful means at the disposal of the oppressors for the maintenance of inequality, exploitation, and slavish obedience on the part of the toilers.

Many weak-kneed communists reason as follows: “Religion does not prevent my being a communist. I believe both in God and in communism. My faith in God does not hinder me from fighting for the cause of the proletarian revolution.”

This train of thought is radically false. Religion and communism are incompatible, both theoretically and practically.

Every communist must regard social phenomena (the relationships between human beings, revolutions, wars, etc.) as processes which occur in accordance with definite laws. The laws of social development have been fully established by scientific communism on the basis of the theory of historical materialism which we owe to our great teachers Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. This theory explains that social development is not brought about by any kind of supernatural forces. Nay more. The same theory has demonstrated that the very idea of God and of supernatural powers arises at a definite stage in human history, and at another definite stage begins to disappear as a childish notion which finds no confirmation in practical life and in the

struggle between man and nature. But it is profitable to the predatory class to maintain the ignorance of the people and to maintain the people's childish belief in miracle (the key to the riddle really lies in the exploiters' pockets), and this is why religious prejudices are so tenacious, and why they confuse the minds even of persons who are in other respects able.

The general happenings throughout nature are, moreover, in no wise dependent upon supernatural causes. Man has been extremely successful in the struggle with nature. He influences nature in his own interests, and controls natural forces, achieving these conquests, not thanks to his faith in God and in divine assistance, but in spite of this faith. He achieves his conquests thanks to the fact that in practical life and in all serious matters he invariably conducts himself as an atheist. Scientific communism, in its judgments concerning natural phenomena, is guided by the data of the natural sciences, which are in irreconcilable conflict with all religious imaginings.

In practice, no less than in theory, communism is incompatible with religious faith. The tactic of the Communist Party prescribes for the members of the party definite lines of conduct. The moral code of every religion in like manner prescribes for the faithful some definite line of conduct. For example, the Christian code runs: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." In most cases there is an irreconcilable conflict between the principles of communist tactics and the commandments of religion. A communist who rejects the commandments of religion and acts in accordance with the directions of the party, ceases to be one of the faithful. On the other hand, one who, while calling himself a communist, continues to cling to his religious faith, one who in the name of religious commandments infringes the prescriptions of the party, ceases thereby to be a communist.

The struggle with religion has two sides, and every communist must distinguish clearly between them. On the one hand we have the struggle with the church, as a special organisation existing for religious propaganda, materially interested in the maintenance of popular ignorance and religious enslavement. On the other hand, we have the struggle with the widely diffused and deeply ingrained prejudices of the majority of the working population.

Separation of the church from the state

The Christian catechism teaches that the church is a society of the faithful who are united by a common creed, by the sacraments, etc. For the communist, the church is a society of persons who are united by definite sources of income at the cost of the faithful, at the cost of their ignorance and lack of true culture. It is a society united with the society of other exploiters such as the landlords and the capitalists, united with

their state, assisting that state in the oppression of the workers, and reciprocally receiving from the state help in the business of oppression. The union between church and state is of great antiquity. The association between the church and the feudal state of the landowners was exceedingly intimate. This becomes clear when we remember that the autocratic-aristocratic state was sustained by the landed interest. The church was itself a landlord on the grand scale, owning millions upon millions of acres. These two powers were inevitably compelled to join forces against the labouring masses, and their alliance served to strengthen their dominion over the workers. During the period in which the urban bourgeoisie was in conflict with the feudal nobility, the bourgeoisie fiercely attacked the church, because the church owned territories which the bourgeoisie wanted for itself. The church, as landowner, was in receipt of revenues extracted from the workers — revenues which the bourgeoisie coveted. In some countries (France for instance), the struggle was extremely embittered; in other countries (England, Germany, and Russia), it was less fierce. But this conflict explains why the demand for the separation of church and state was made by the liberal bourgeoisie and the bourgeois democracy. The real basis of the demand was a desire for the transfer to the bourgeoisie of the revenues allotted by the state to the church. But the demand for the separation of the church from the state was nowhere fully realised by the bourgeoisie. The reason is that everywhere the struggle carried on by the working class against the capitalists was growing more intense, and it seemed inexpedient to the bourgeoisie to break up the alliance between state and church. The capitalists thought it would be more advantageous to come to terms with the church, to buy its prayers on behalf of the struggle with socialism, to utilise its influence over the uncultured masses in order to keep alive in their minds the sentiment of slavish submissiveness to the exploiting state. (“All power comes from God.”)

The work which the bourgeoisie in its struggle with the church had left unfinished was carried to an end by the proletarian state. One of the first decrees of the Soviet power in Russia was the decree concerning the separation of the church from the state. All its landed estates were taken away from the church and handed over to the working population. All the capital of the church became the property of the workers. The endowments which had been assigned to the church under the tsarist regime were confiscated, although these endowments had been cheerfully continued under the administration of the “socialist” Kerensky. Religion has become the private affair of every citizen. The Soviet power rejects all thoughts of using the church in any way whatever as a means for strengthening the proletarian state.

Separation of the school from the church

The association of religious propaganda with scholastic instruction is the second powerful weapon employed by the clergy for the strengthening of the ecclesiastical regime and for increasing the influence of the church over the masses. The future of the human race, its youth, is entrusted to the priests. Under the tsars, the maintenance of religious fanaticism, the maintenance of stupidity and ignorance, was regarded as a matter of great importance to the state. Religion was the leading subject of instruction in the schools. In the schools, moreover, the autocracy supported the church, and the church supported the autocracy. In addition to compulsory religious teaching in the schools and compulsory attendance at religious services, the church had other weapons. It began to take charge of the whole of popular education, and for this purpose Russia was covered with a network of church schools.

Thanks to the union of school and church, our young people were from their earliest years thralls to religious superstition, this making it practically impossible to convey to their minds any integral outlook upon the universe. To one and the same question (for instance concerning the origin of the world) religion and science give conflicting answers, so that the impressionable mind of the pupil becomes a battleground between exact knowledge and the gross errors of obscurantists.

In many countries, young people are trained, not only in a spirit of submissiveness towards the dominant regime, but also in a spirit of submissiveness towards the overthrown autocratic-ecclesiastico-feudal order. This happens in France. Even from the outlook of the bourgeois state, propaganda of such a kind is reactionary.

The program of bourgeois liberalism used to contain a demand for the separation of the school from the church. The liberals fought for the replacement of religious instruction in the schools by instruction in bourgeois morality; and they demanded the closing of schools organised by religious associations and by monasteries. Nowhere, however, was this struggle carried through to an end. In France, for instance, where for two decades all the bourgeois ministries had solemnly pledged themselves to dissolve the religious orders, to confiscate their property, and to forbid their educational activities, there has been one compromise after another with the Catholic clergy. An excellent example of such a compromise between state and church was the recent action of Clemenceau. This minister in his day had been fiercely opposed to the church. In the end, however, he forgot his hostility, and personally distributed orders of distinction among the Catholic clergy as a reward for their patriotic services. In the struggle for the exploitation of other lands (the war with Germany), and in the domestic struggle with the working class, the bourgeois state and the church have entered into an alliance, and give one another mutual support.

This reconciliation of the bourgeoisie with the church finds expression, not merely in the abandonment by the bourgeoisie of its old anti-religious watchwords and of its campaign against religion, but in something more significant. To an increasing extent, the bourgeoisie is now becoming a “believing class”. The forerunners of the contemporary European bourgeoisie were atheists, were freethinkers, were fiercely antagonistic to priests and priesthood. Their successors have taken a step backwards. A generation ago, the bourgeois, though they were themselves still atheistically inclined, though they did not believe in religious fairy tales, and though they laughed covertly at religion, nevertheless considered that the fables must be treated with respect in public, since religion was a useful restraint for the common people. Today, the scions of the bourgeoisie are not content with looking upon religion as providing useful fetters for the people, but they have themselves begun to wear the chains. Under our very eyes, after the October revolution, the liberal bourgeois and the members of the professional classes crowded into the churches and prayed fervently to that which in happier days they had regarded with contempt. Such is the fate of all dying classes, whose last resource it is to seek “consolation” in religion.

Among the bourgeoisies of Central and Western Europe, which still hold the reins of power, a similar movement in favour of religion is observable. But if the bourgeois class begins to believe in God and the heavenly life, this merely means it has realised that its life here below is drawing to a close!

The separation of the school from the church aroused and continues to arouse protest from the backward elements among the workers and peasants. Many of the older generation persist in demanding that religion should still be taught in the schools as an optional subject. The Communist Party fights resolutely against all such attempts to turn back. The teaching of ecclesiastical obscurantism in the schools, even though the instruction should be merely optional, would imply the giving of state aid to the maintenance of religious prejudices. In that case the church would be provided with a ready-made audience of children — of children who are assembled in school for purposes which are the very opposite of those contemplated by religion. The church would have at its disposal schoolrooms belonging to the state, and would thereby be enabled to diffuse religious poison among our young people almost as freely as it could before the separation of the school from the church.

The decree whereby the school is separated from the church must be rigidly enforced, and the proletarian state must not make the slightest concession to medievalism. What has already been done to throw off the yoke of religion is all too little, for it still remains within the power of ignorant parents to cripple the minds of their children by teaching them religious fables. Under the Soviet power there is freedom of conscience for adults. But this freedom of conscience for parents is

tantamount to a freedom for them to poison the minds of their children with the opium which when they were young was poured into their own minds by the church. The parents force upon the children their own dullness, their own ignorance; they proclaim as truth all sorts of nonsense; and they thus greatly increase the difficulties which the unified labour school has to encounter. One of the most important tasks of the proletarian state is to liberate children from the reactionary influence exercised by their parents. The really radical way of doing this is the social education of the children, carried to its logical conclusion. As far as the immediate future is concerned, we must not rest content with the expulsion of religious propaganda from the school. We must see to it that the school assumes the offensive against religious propaganda in the home, so that from the very outset the children's minds shall be rendered immune to all those religious fairy tales which many grownups continue to regard as truth.

Struggle with the religious prejudices of the masses

It has been comparatively easy for the proletarian authority to effect the separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church, and these changes have been almost painlessly achieved. It is enormously more difficult to fight the religious prejudices which are already deeply rooted in the consciousness of the masses, and which cling so stubbornly to life. The struggle will be a long one, demanding much steadfastness and great patience. Upon this matter we read in our program: "The Russian Communist Party is guided by the conviction that nothing but the realisation of purposiveness and full awareness in all the social and economic activities of the masses can lead to the complete disappearance of religious prejudices." What do these words signify?

Religious propaganda, belief in God and in all kinds of supernatural powers, find their most grateful soil where the institutions of social life are such as to incline the consciousness of the masses towards supernatural explanations of the phenomena of nature and society. The environment created by capitalist methods of production has a strong tendency in this direction. In capitalist society, production, and the exchange of products, are not effected with full consciousness and in accordance with a preconceived plan; they proceed as if they were the outcome of elemental forces. The market controls the producer. No one knows whether commodities are being produced in excess or in deficiency. The producer does not fully understand how the great and complicated mechanism of capitalist production works; why crises occur and unemployment suddenly becomes rife; why prices rise at one time and fall at another; and so on. The ordinary worker, knowing nothing of the real causes of the social happenings amid which his life takes place, readily inclines to accept the "will of God"

as a universal explanation.

In organised communist society, on the other hand, the realms of production and distribution will no longer contain any mysteries for the worker. Every worker will not merely perform his allotted portion of social work. He will in addition participate in the elaboration of the general plan of production, and will at least have clear ideas upon the matter. Throughout the entire mechanism of social production there will no longer be anything mysterious, incomprehensible or unexpected and there will therefore be no further place for mystical explanations or for superstition. Just as the joiner who has made a table knows perfectly well how the table came to exist and that he need not lift his eyes towards heaven in order to find its creator, so in communist society all the workers will clearly understand what they have produced with their collective energies and how they have produced it.

For this reason, the mere fact of the organisation and strengthening of the socialist system, will deal religion an irrecoverable blow. **The transition from socialism to communism, the transition from the society which makes an end of capitalism to the society which is completely freed from all traces of class division and class struggle, will bring about the natural death of all religion and all superstition.**

But this must by no means be taken to imply that we can sit down at our ease, satisfied with having prophesied the decay of religion at some future date.

It is essential at the present time to wage with the utmost vigour the war against religious prejudices, for the church has now definitely become a counterrevolutionary organisation, and endeavours to use its religious influence over the masses in order to marshal them for the political struggle against the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Orthodox faith which is defended by the priests aims at an alliance with the monarchy. This is why the Soviet power finds it necessary to engage at this juncture in widespread anti-religious propaganda. Our aims can be secured by the delivery of special lectures, by the holding of debates, and by the publication of suitable literature; also by the general diffusion of scientific knowledge, which slowly but surely undermines the authority of religion. An excellent weapon in the fight with the church was used recently in many parts of the republic when the shrines were opened to show the "incorruptible" relics. This served to prove to the wide masses of the people, and precisely to those in whom religious faith was strongest, the base trickery upon which religion in general, and the creed of the Russian Orthodox church in particular, are grounded.

But the campaign against the backwardness of the masses in this matter of religion must be conducted with patience and considerateness, as well as with energy and perseverance. The credulous crowd is extremely sensitive to anything which hurts its feelings. To thrust atheism upon the masses, and in conjunction therewith to interfere

forcibly with religious practices and to make mock of the objects of popular reverence, would not assist but would hinder the campaign against religion. If the church were to be persecuted, it would win sympathy among the masses, for persecution would remind them of the almost forgotten days when there was an association between religion and the defence of national freedom; it would strengthen the anti-semitic movement; and in general it would mobilise all the vestiges of an ideology which is already beginning to die out.

We propose to append a few figures, showing how the tsarist regime paid over the people's money to the church; how the church was directly supported by the common people, who drained their slender purses to this end; and how wealth accumulated in the hands of the servants of Christ.

Through the synods and in other ways the tsarist government annually supplied the church with the average amount of 50 million rubles (at a time when the ruble was worth 100 times as much as today). The synods had 70 million rubles to their credit in the banks. The churches and the monasteries owned vast areas of land. In the year 1905 the churches owned 1,872,000 desyatinas, and the monasteries owned 740,000 desyatinas. Six of the largest monasteries owned 182,000 desyatinas. The Solovyetzky monastery owned 66,000 desyatinas; the Sarovskaya, 26,000; the Alexandro Nevskaya, 25,000; and so on. In 1903, the churches and monasteries of Petrograd owned 266 rent-producing properties in the form of houses, shops, building sites, etc. In Moscow, they owned 1054 rent-paying houses, not to mention 32 hotels. In Kiev, the church owned 114 houses. Here are the stipends of the metropolitans and the archbishops. The metropolitan of Petrograd received 300,000 rubles per annum; the metropolitans of Moscow and of Kiev were paid 100,000 rubles per annum each; the stipend of the archbishop of Novgorod was 310,000 rubles.

There were about 30,000 church schools, and these were attended by one million pupils. More than 20,000 teachers of religion were "at work" in the elementary schools of the Ministry for Education.

Everyone knows that the autocracy supported the Orthodox Church as the dominant and only true church. Many millions of rubles were raised by taxing Musulmans (Tartars and Bashkirs), Catholics (Poles) and Jews. This money was used by the Orthodox clergy to demonstrate that all other faiths were false. Under the tsarist regime, religious persecution attained unprecedented proportions. In the population of Russia, for every hundred inhabitants there were (besides the 70 Orthodox), nine Catholics, 11 Mohammedans, five Protestants, four Jews and one of various creeds. As for the number of the Orthodox clergy, the following were the figures for the year 1909:

The 52,869 churches of Russia were served by:

Archpriests	2912
Priests	46,730
Deacons	14,670
Readers	48,518

In the 455 monasteries there were:

Monks	9987
Lay-brethren	9582

In the 418 nunneries there were:

Nuns	14,008
Lay-sisters	40,811
<i>Total</i>	<i>188,218</i>

The figures relate exclusively to the Orthodox Church. A similar parasitic caste is found in every nation, though of course professing some other religion. These masses of people, instead of extracting vast sums of money from the population in order to promote popular ignorance, would have been able, had they been engaged in manual work, to produce immense quantities of values. The socialist state, when its economic apparatus has been perfected, will introduce labour service for the clergy as for all unproductive classes, so that they will have to become workers or peasants. Of the state revenues paid to the church under the tsarist regime, more than 12 million rubles went every year to the urban and rural clergy. It is plain enough why the reverend fathers were opposed to the separation of the church from the state, since this implied the separation of a dozen million rubles from their pockets. This sum, however, was but a fraction of the clerical incomes, which for the most part were derived from professional fees, land rents, and interest upon the capital of the church. No-one has been able to ascertain the precise amount of the revenues of the Russian Church. Approximately the sum may be considered to have been 150 million rubles — at a time (we repeat) when the ruble was worth 100 of our present rubles. A considerable proportion of this income is still paid by the people to the clergy. ■

Notes

Introduction

- 1 See this edition, p. 53.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 39-40.
- 14 Mehring, *Absolutism and Revolution in Germany 1525-1848* (New Park Publications: London, 1975), p. 22. For the history of the Anabaptists and other heretical sects of the later Middle Ages, see Karl Kautsky's 1897 work *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation* (Augustus M. Kelley: New York, 1966).
- 15 See this edition, p. 81.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- 21 *Fidel and Religion: Conversations with Frei Betto* (Pathfinder Press/Pacific and Asia: Sydney, 1986), p. 14.
- 22 Cited in Reed, *Island in the Storm* (Ocean Press: Melbourne, 1992), p. 83.
- 23 *Fidel and Religion*, p. 14.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Theses on Feuerbach

25 See this volume, p. 46.

The Peasant War in Germany

26 Marx, “Contribution to a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law. Introduction”, Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1975), p. 182.

27 Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1956), p. 37.

28 One of the leaders of the peasant revolt in France in 1251 (the “Shepherds” revolt).

29 A reference to the parliament of representatives of German states that comprised the “German Union” created by Prussia, which sat at Erfurt from March 20 to April 29, 1850. The parliament devoted itself to framing plans of unifying Germany under the counterrevolutionary leadership of Prussia. At that time the plans ended in failure. The dissolution of the “German Union” put an end to the Erfurt parliament.

30 The title of a vicious pamphlet against the peasant movement published by Luther in May 1525, at the zenith of the Peasant War.

31 This date was cited by Zimmermann in the first edition of his book but by a later verified date Thomas Münzer was born about 1490.

32 A reference to the views of the German idealist philosopher David Strauss and other Young Hegelians who treated questions of religion from a pantheist standpoint in their early writings.

33 Münzer refers to Luther; a play on the word “Lügner”, the German for “liar”.

34 A reference to Münzer’s pamphlet, *Open Denial of the False Belief of the Godless World on the Testimony of the Gospel of Luke, Presented to Miserable and Pitiful Christendom in Memory of Its Error*, which appeared in Mülhausen in 1524.

35 In the epigraph to his essay Münzer paraphrases words from the Old Testament book of the prophet Jeremiah, infusing it with revolutionary meaning.

36 According to later information, Münzer first went to the imperial town of Mülhausen, from where he was banished in September 1524 for taking part in disturbances among the city poor. He then went to Nuremberg.

37 Münzer’s pointed reply to Luther was entitled *A Well-Grounded Defence and Reply to the Godless, Easy-Living Flesh of Wittenberg, Which Has Pitifully Sullied Unhappy Christianity Through Shameless Distortions of the Holy Scripture*.

Ludwig Feuerbach & the End of Classical German Philosophy

38 *Die Neue Zeit* — The theoretical magazine of the German Social-Democratic Party, published in Stuttgart from 1883 to 1923. Between 1885 and 1894 it carried a number of Engels’

articles.

- 39 The reference is to *The German Ideology*.
- 40 In 1833-34, Heinrich Heine published his works *Die romantische Schule* (The Romantic School) and *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany), in which he put forward the idea that the German philosophical revolution, the culminating stage of which was Hegel's philosophy, was a prelude to the impending democratic revolution in Germany.
- 41 See the Preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.
- 42 A paraphrase of Mephistopheles' words from Goethe's *Faust*, Part 1, Scene 3 (Faust's study).
- 43 *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* (German Annuals of Science and Art) — The literary and philosophical journal of the Young Hegelians published in Leipzig from July 1841 to January 1843.
- 44 *Rheinische Zeitung für Politik, Handel und Gewerbe* (Rhenish Newspaper for Politics, Trade and Industry) — A daily published in Cologne from January 1, 1842 to March 31, 1843. Marx contributed to the newspaper from April 1842 and became one of its editors in October 1842; Engels was also associated with it.
- 45 A reference to Max Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (The Ego and His Own) which appeared in Leipzig in 1845.
- 46 The planet referred to is Neptune, discovered in 1846 by the German astronomer Johann Galle.
- 47 According to the views current in chemistry in the 18th century, phlogiston was considered to be the principle of inflammability supposed to exist in combustible bodies. The untenability of this theory was demonstrated by the French chemist Lavoisier who supplied a correct explanation of the process of combustion as a chemical combination of combustible substances with oxygen.
- 48 *The schoolmaster of Sadowa* — An expression used by German bourgeois publicists after the decisive July 3, 1866 victory of the Prussians over Austria at Sadowa (today Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic), the implication being that the Prussian victory was to be attributed to the superiority of the Prussian system of public education.
- 49 From 1477 to 1555 Holland was part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. After the latter broke apart, Holland came under the rule of Spain. In the 16th century, by the end of the bourgeois revolution, Holland freed itself from the Spanish rule and became an independent bourgeois republic.
- 50 The reference is to the Glorious Revolution in England (see Glossary).

Socialism & Religion

- 51 See Engels, “Refugee Literature: II. Program of the Blanquist Commune Refugees”, Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24 (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1989).

The Attitude of the Workers’ Party to Religion

- 52 See this edition, p. 20.
- 53 See Engels, “Refugee Literature: II. Program of the Blanquist Commune Refugees”, Marx & Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24.
- 54 See Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1975), pp. 361-363.
- 55 See Engels, Introduction to Marx, “The Civil War in France”, Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1969).
- 56 *Vekhi* (Landmarks) — A Cadet collection of articles by representatives of the counterrevolutionary liberal bourgeoisie, published in Moscow in 1909. They lauded the tsarist repression of the 1905 revolution as having saved the bourgeoisie from the people and called on the intelligentsia to serve the autocracy.

Socialism & the Churches

- 57 The Bible: Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25; Matthew 19:24
- 58 The Bible: Matthew 25:40
- 59 *Old Believers* — Otherwise known as “Raskilniki” (Splitters), a Russian religious sect which regarded as contrary to the true faith the revision of the texts of the Bible and the reform of the liturgy by Patriarch Nikon in 1654.
- 60 The Bible: Exodus 32:1-8.
- 61 “*Proles*’ is the Latin for children, for offspring. Proletarians, therefore, constituted that class of citizens [in ancient Rome] who owned nothing but the arms of their body and the children of their loins.” — From an unsigned introductory article in the September 1847 issue of the *Communist Journal*, published by a group of London members of the Communist League. (See Ryazanoff, *The Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels* [International Publishers: New York, 1930], p. 288.)
- “The Roman proletariat lived at the expense of society whereas modern society lives at the expense of the proletariat.” — Sismondi quoted by Marx in “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1969), p. 395.
- See also: Engels, “Principles of Communism”, Marx & Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 395 (Question 2).
- 62 Abbé Barcille, *Jean Chrycostome*, Vol. 7 (Paris, 1869), pp. 599-603. ■

Glossary

Albigenses — Religious sect widespread in the towns of southern France and northern Italy in the 12th and 13th centuries. Its main seat was in the town of Albi in the south of France. The Albigenses, who opposed the sumptuous Catholic rites and the church hierarchy, clothed the protest of the tradesmen and artisans against feudalism in religious terms. They were joined by a section of the southern French nobility, which sought to secularise church lands. Pope Innocent III organised a crusade against the Albigenses in 1209. The movement was crushed after 20 years of war and brutal persecutions.

Anabaptists — A Christian sect so called because they repudiated infant baptism and demanded a second, adult baptism; they played a revolutionary role in the 1525 Peasant War in Germany.

Appian (end of 1st century AD-70s of 2nd century) — Ancient Roman historian.

Arnold von Brescia (c. 1100-1155) — Medieval Italian reformer, ideologist of movement of townspeople against the Pope and other clerical feudal lords in Rome and other towns; executed as a heretic.

Augsburg Confession — A statement of the Lutheran doctrine read to Emperor Charles V at the Imperial Diet in Augsburg; it adapted the burgher ideals of a cheap church (abolition of lavish rites, modification of the clerical hierarchy, etc.) to the interests of the princes. A prince was to replace the pope at the head of the church. The Augsburg Confession was turned down by the emperor. The war waged against him by princes who adopted the Lutheran Reformation ended in 1555 in the religious peace of Augsburg, which empowered the princes to determine the faith of their subjects at their own discretion.

Bakunin, Mikhail (1814-76) — Russian democrat and writer, took part in the 1848-49 revolution in Germany. One of the best-known ideologists of anarchism. He participated in the First International but opposed the Marxists and was expelled at the Hague Congress in 1872.

Ball, John (?-1381)— English country priest and popular preacher; called for overthrow of feudal lords and for ancient Christian equality and common ownership, one of

inspirers of peasant uprising in England in 1381; after defeat of uprising was executed.

Basil, St. (c. 329-79) — Eastern bishop; defended Orthodox Christian doctrine against Arian heresy which taught that the Son (Christ) was inferior to the Father (God).

Bayle, Pierre (1647-1706) — French philosopher, sceptic, critic of religious dogmatism.

Bernstein, Eduard (1850-1932) — A leader of the extreme opportunist wing of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and the Second International; after Engels' death in 1895 came forward as chief advocate of revising Marxism to accommodate the liberal bourgeois social-reformist practice of the right-wing of the SPD.

Berthelot, Pierre (1827-1907) — French chemist and bourgeois politician.

Black Hundreds — The popular name for the Union of the Russian People, an organisation of pro-monarchist reactionaries who carried out violent attacks against revolutionaries and organised anti-Jewish programs.

Blanquism — A trend in the French socialist movement headed by the outstanding revolutionary and prominent representative of French utopian communism, Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881). The Blanquists, Lenin wrote, expected "that mankind will be emancipated from wage-slavery, not by the proletarian class struggle, but through a conspiracy hatched by a small minority of intellectuals." (*Collected Works*, Vol. 10 [Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1962], p. 392) Substituting actions by a secret clique of conspirators for the work of a revolutionary party, they did not take into account the actual situation required for a victorious uprising and neglected links with the masses.

Boccaccio, Giovanni (1313-75) — Florentine novelist; author of *The Decameron*.

Boniface VIII (c. 1235-1303) — Italian pope; strongly asserted temporal authority of papacy; imprisoned by Philip IV of France in 1303 and died shortly after; after his death, the papacy took up residence at Avignon in France.

Bourbons — French ruling dynasty; deposed by the revolution in 1792 (Louis XVI); restored in 1814 (Louis XVIII, then Charles X). The Bourbon Charles X was overthrown in the political revolution of July 1830 and replaced by Louis Phillippe from the Orléanist branch of the family; supporters of Charles and his heir were known as "Legitimists".

Büchner, Ludwig (1824-99) — German physiologist and vulgar materialist philosopher.

Cadets — The popular name for the liberal-bourgeois Constitutional-Democratic Party formed in Russia in 1905.

Calixtines and Taborites — Two trends in the Hussite national liberation and reformation movement in Bohemia (first half of the 15th century) against the German nobility, the German Empire and the Catholic Church. The *Calixtines*

(who maintained that the laity should receive the cup as well as the bread in the Eucharist), supported by the Czech nobility and burghers, sought no more than a moderate church reform and the secularisation of church estates. The *Taborites* (so called from their camp, now the town of Tabor, in Bohemia) were the revolutionary democratic wing of the Hussites and in their demands reflected the desire of the peasantry and the urban lower classes to end all feudal oppression. The feudal lords took advantage of the betrayal of the Taborites by the Calixtines to suppress the Hussite movement.

Calvin, Jean (1509-64) — A French-born leader of the Reformation; founder of Calvinism, a branch of Protestantism, which expressed the interests of the bourgeoisie in the period of the primitive accumulation of capital.

Charles I (1600-49) — English king; overthrown and executed in 17th century bourgeois revolution.

Chiliasm — From the Greek *chilinsinos*, derivative of *chilias*, a thousand. A mystical religious doctrine that Christ would come to earth a second time and usher in a “millennium” of justice, equality and wellbeing. Chiliastic beliefs sprang up during the decay of slave society due to the unbearable oppression and suffering of the working people, who sought an outlet in fantastic visions of deliverance. These beliefs were widespread in early Christianity and continuously revived in the doctrines of the various medieval sects.

Communist International — Third International or Comintern; founded in 1919 as the revolutionary alternative to the class-collaborationist Second International. Guided by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in its early years it later became bureaucratised under Stalin. Following the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany without any serious opposition from the Communist Party, and the Comintern’s endorsement of the ruinous policy of the German CP, Trotsky concluded that the Comintern was bankrupt as a revolutionary organisation. In 1935 the Comintern adopted the class-collaborationist Popular Front policy, supporting bourgeois coalition governments in Spain and France and the Roosevelt administration in the US. The Comintern was dissolved by Stalin in 1943 as a sign to his wartime imperialist allies of his non-revolutionary intentions.

Copernicus (Kopernik), Nicolaus (1473-1543) — Great Polish astronomer; founder of heliocentric view of universe which dealt heavy blows to religious conceptions of the cosmos; his doctrine was severely persecuted by the Catholic Church.

Council of Nicea (325) — The first council of all the Christian bishops of the Roman empire, in the town of Nicea in Asia Minor; convened by the Emperor Constantine to settle the doctrinal dispute between the Arians and the Orthodox on the status

of Christ compared to god; resolved in favour of the latter that the son is equal to the father; produced the Nicene Creed, a statement of belief obligatory for all Christians; the council was an important step in Christianity becoming the state religion of the late Roman empire.

Deprez, Marcel (1843-1918) — French physicist and electrical engineer; worked on problem of transmission of electrical power over long distances.

Descartes, René (1596-1650) — Outstanding French dualist philosopher, mathematician and naturalist.

Dietzgen, Joseph (1828-88) — German worker and social-democrat who independently arrived at dialectical materialism.

Dühring, Eugen (1833-1921) — German petty-bourgeois philosopher and economist. His views were subjected to a major critique by Engels in *Anti-Dühring* (1878).

Eichorn, Johann Friedrich (1779-1856) — Prussian minister of “worship, education and medicine” 1840-48; a reactionary.

Encyclopedists — Refers to the editors (Diderot and d’Alembert) and contributors (such as Condorcet, Helvetius Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire) to the *Encyclopédie*, a major Enlightenment work of social and political reference published in France 1751-72.

Engels, Frederick (1820-95) — Co-founder with Karl Marx of the modern socialist workers’ movement; co-author of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), a leader of the revolutionary-democratic movement in Germany in 1848-49, outstanding theorist and populariser of scientific socialism.

February revolution — The February Revolution of 1848 overthrew the regime of French king Louis Philippe which represented, not the whole capitalist class, but the financial aristocracy. The Paris workers played the main role in the insurrection.

Feuerbach, Ludwig (1804-72) — Outstanding German materialist philosopher of the pre-Marxist period.

Flagellants — Literally: those who whip themselves. An ascetic religious sect widespread in Europe in the 13th to 15th centuries; propounded self-castigation as a means of expiating sins.

Frederick William III (1770-1840) — King of Prussia 1797-1840.

Frederick William IV (1795-1861) — King of Prussia 1840-61.

“Glorious Revolution” — The name given by British bourgeois historians to the English revolution of 1688. A coup d’état overthrew the Catholic Stuart king James II and established a constitutional monarchy headed by William of Orange. The new monarchy represented a compromise between the landed aristocracy and the big bourgeoisie.

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang** (1749-1832) — Widely regarded as the greatest German writer.
- Gregory the Great** (c. 540-604) — Italian pope (St. Gregory I) 590-604; centralised the administration of the papal properties and thus became the founder of the temporal power of the papacy.
- Grün, Karl** (1817-87) — German petty-bourgeois publicist; a leading “true socialist” in the 1840s.
- Guizot, François** (1787-1874) — French bourgeois historian and politician; from 1840 to 1848 directed French home and foreign policy.
- Hegel, Georg** (1770-1831) — The culminating figure of the German idealist school of philosophy that began with Immanuel Kant. Hegel sought to resolve the traditional philosophical distinction between mind and matter by postulating a unified, monistic reality in which matter is the “alienated” expression of its inner organising force — reason or the Absolute Spirit. While Hegel’s theory of being was idealist, he viewed reality as undergoing a process of dialectical development. In his afterward to the second edition of *Capital* Vol. 1, Marx observed that the “mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell”.
- Heine, Heinrich** (1797-1856) — Great German revolutionary poet.
- Hobbes, Thomas** (1588-1679) — Outstanding English philosopher; mechanical materialist.
- Hume, David** (1711-76) — English agnostic philosopher; subjective idealist; bourgeois historian and economist.
- Hus, John** (c. 1369-1415) — Outstanding Bohemian reformer, professor of Prague University: his opposition to a number of Catholic dogmas and extortions by Catholic priests began a broad liberation movement in Bohemia against German clerical and lay feudal lords; accused of heresy by Constance Council and burnt at the stake.
- Hutten, Ulrich von** (1488-1523) — German humanitarian and poet; an ideologist of knighthood and a participant in the knights’ insurrection of 1522-23.
- Im Thurn, Everard Ferdinand** (1852-1932) — English colonial official, traveller and anthropologist.
- Joachim the Calabrese** (c. 1131-1202) — Also *Joachim of Floris*; Italian mystic; protagonist of the “second coming of Christ” and the “millenium”; teaching declared heretical by the Catholic Church.

- July Revolution** — 1830 revolt which overthrew France’s “legitimate” Bourbon dynasty and installed the Duke of Orleans under the name of Louis Phillippe. The Bourbons represented the big landed nobility whereas the Orleanists relied on the finance aristocracy and big bourgeoisie.
- Kant, Immanuel** (1724-1804) — Founder of German classical philosophy; an idealist; advocated theory of ethics based on a universal moral law, the categorical imperative.
- Kautsky, Karl** (1854-1938) — One of the leaders and theoreticians of the German social-democrats and the Second International; in 1914, when World War I broke out, adopted a pacifist position; chief ideologist of centrism (Kautskyism), an opportunist trend that used Marxist terminology to justify the class-collaborationist reformism of the SPD; founding member of the centrist Independent Social-Democratic Party (USPD) in 1917; an undersecretary in Germany foreign ministry after November 1918 revolution; opponent of the 1917 Russian Revolution; rejoined the SPD in 1922.
- Kopp, Hermann** (1817-92) — German chemist.
- Lamarck, Jean Baptiste** (1744-1829) — French naturalist, founder of the first integral theory of evolution in biology, a forerunner of Darwin.
- Lenin, V.I.** (1870-1924) — Founder and leader of the Bolshevik Party; principal leader of the October 1917 Russian revolution; founder of the Communist International; outstanding Marxist theorist of 20th century.
- Leverrier, Urbain Jean Joseph** (1811-77) — Outstanding French astronomer and mathematician.
- Lollards** — Religious sect originating in the 14th century; widespread in England; bitterly opposed the Catholic Church. The Lollards were followers of Wycliffe, the English reformer, but drew more radical conclusions from his teaching; adopted a religiously mystical stand against all feudal privileges. Many Lollards came from the people and the lower echelons of the priesthood; took part in Wat Tyler’s rebellion of 1331; cruelly persecuted in the late 14th century.
- Louis XIV** (1638-1715) — King of France 1643-1715.
- Louis XVI** (1754-93) — King of France 1774-93; overthrown in French Revolution and executed.
- Lunacharsky, Anatole V.** (1875-1933) — Old Bolshevik; member of Trotsky’s Mezhrayontzi (Interdistrict) Group in 1917 and with them joined Bolsheviks in July; People’s Commissar of Education 1917-29; played key role in reconciling the academic intelligentsia to the Soviet regime; wrote *Revolutionary Silhouettes* (1923), a collection of portraits of the Bolshevik leaders. For memorial article see Trotsky,

“Anatole Vasilievich Lunacharsky”, *Writings of Leon Trotsky* (1933-34) (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1972).

Luther, Martin (1483-1546) — A leader of the German Reformation; founder of Protestantism (Lutheranism) in Germany; ideologist of the German burghers; in 1525 Peasant War sided with princes against insurgent peasants and urban poor.

Luxemburg, Rosa (1871-1919) — Outstanding figure in the international working-class movement; author of a number of important works on economic theory, politics and culture; helped initiate Polish social-democratic movement; from 1897 actively participated in the German social-democratic movement and played a leading role in the struggle against Bernstein and the revisionists; from 1910 led the revolutionary opposition within German Social-Democratic Party; jailed February 1915 but played key role in formation of the Spartacus League; from prison authored the famous antiwar “Junius” pamphlet; freed by the 1918 revolution, she was a founder of the Communist Party of Germany and the editor of its paper, *Die Rote Fahne*; in January 1919 she was arrested and murdered by counterrevolutionary troops of the right-wing social-democratic government.

Marx, Karl (1818-83) — Co-founder with Frederick Engels of scientific socialism; leader of the Communist League 1847-52; co-author of the *Communist Manifesto*; central leader of the International Working Men’s Association (the First International) 1864-76; author of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*.

Melanchthon, Philip (1497-1560) — German theologian, closest associate of Luther; author of “Augsburg Confession”.

Mignet, François Auguste (1796-1884) — French liberal bourgeois historian; came very close to understanding the role of the class struggle in the history of the formation of bourgeois society.

Moleschott, Jacob (1822-93) — Bourgeois philosopher and physiologist; representative of vulgar materialism.

Moor — Pseudonym of Dimitri S. Orlov (1883-1946); prominent cartoonist and caricaturist; after the October Revolution he worked for the State Publishing House; in 1920 he did posters for the Red Army and in 1921 for famine relief; after 1922 a regular cartoonist for *Pravda*.

Most, Johann (1846-1906) — German anarchist; in 1860s joined working-class movement; emigrated to England after promulgation of Anti-Socialist Law (1878); in 1880, expelled from Social-Democratic Party for anarchist views; in 1882, emigrated to the United States where he prominence as a advocate of anarchism.

Münzer, Thomas (c. 1490-1525) — Great German revolutionary, leader and ideologist of the poor peasants during the Reformation and the Peasant War of 1525;

advocated ideas of utopian equalitarian communism.

Napoleon (1769-1821) — In 1804 Napoleon Bonaparte, an army general who had seized power in a military coup in 1799, declared himself Emperor of France.

Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (1809-65) — French economist and ideologist of petty-bourgeois socialism. Author of *What Is Property?* (1840) and *The Philosophy of Poverty* (1846). An opponent of Marxist communism, he opposed strikes and participation in the political struggle, advocating instead various schemes (such as a people's bank) to overcome the contradictions of capitalist society.

Renan, Ernest (1823-92) — French philologist; idealist philosopher and historian of Christianity.

Revolution of 1789 — The development of the bourgeoisie during the 1700s culminated in the overthrow of feudalism and the absolute monarchy; the revolution achieved its greatest scope and intensity in 1793 under the revolutionary dictatorship of Robespierre and the Jacobins; showing tremendous energy it managed to defeat all internal and external enemies; in July 1794 (Thermidor) Robespierre was overthrown and executed and a more conservative bourgeois regime (the Directory) was established.

Rhadamanthus — In Greek mythology, a wise and just judge.

Robespierre, Maximilien (1758-94) — Outstanding politician of late-18th century French bourgeois revolution; leader of Jacobins; head of revolutionary government 1793-94; made unsuccessful attempt to replace Christianity by a “cult of the supreme being”.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques (1712-78) — Great French Enlightenment and democrat; deist philosopher; ideologist of petty-bourgeoisie.

Ryazanov, David B. (1870-1938) — Early member of RSDLP; after 1903 split, sympathised with Mensheviks; became authority on works of Marx and Engels; joined Bolsheviks in 1917; first director of the Marx-Engels (later Marx-Engels-Lenin) Institute 1922-1931; responsible for acquiring immense archives of original and photocopied Marx-Engels manuscripts and related resources and for making possible the first publication of a Marx-Engels collected works; accused in 1931 trial of so-called Menshevik Centre; he was expelled from the party, dismissed from the Institute and sent into exile.

Sickingen, Franz von (1481-1525) — German knight who joined the Reformation movement; leader of the 1522-23 uprising of the knights.

Sismondi, Jean (1773-1842) — Swiss economist who criticised capitalism from a petty-bourgeois standpoint.

Starcke, Carl Nikolai (1858-1926) — Danish bourgeois philosopher and sociologist.

- Stirner, Max** (1806-56) — Pseudonym of Johann Schmidt; German philosopher; Young Hegelian; and ideologist of extreme bourgeois individualism; author of *The Ego and His Own*.
- Storch, Niklas** — Weaver from Zwickau, headed Anabaptist sect; under Münzer's influence preached popular insurrection against clerical and lay feudal lords.
- Strauss, David Friedrich** (1808-74) — German philosopher; Young Hegelian; National-Liberal after 1866.
- Swiss insurrection** — A reference to the 1291 revolt against Austrian rule (from which comes the legendary figure of William Tell).
- Taborites** — See *Calixtines and Taborites*.
- Thierry, Augustin** (1795-1856) — French liberal bourgeois historian.
- Thiers, Adolphe** (1797-1877) — French bourgeois historian and politician; Orleanist; after fall of Second Empire, leading figure in Versailles republic 1871-73; butcher of the Paris Commune.
- Tichon** (1866-1925) — Elected patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church just after the October Revolution; opposed the collection of precious church objects for famine relief; arrested and trial prepared against him; in June 1923 he declared his loyalty to the Soviet Union and was released from prison.
- Tranmael, Martin** (1879-1967) — Opportunist leader of the Norwegian Labor Party (NAP), the main party in the Norwegian working class and the architect of its later move to the right. In 1919 the NAP broke with the Second International and affiliated with the Comintern but left in 1923; in the mid-1930s it was associated with the London Bureau but later returned to the Second International; in 1935 it formed the government in Norway; it granted asylum to Trotsky (June 1935-December 1936) but, bowing to Soviet pressure after the first Moscow trial, it later interned and silenced him before deporting him to Mexico.
- Trotsky, Leon** (1879-1940) — A leading member of the RSDLP. He aligned himself with the Mensheviks in 1903-04, after which he took an independent position within the RSDLP. In the 1905 revolution he became chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet. He played a central role in organising the August 1912 conference of anti-Bolshevik Russian social-democrats in Vienna that set up the Organising Committee, which soon became dominated by the Mensheviks. During the first world war he took an anti-war position but opposed the Bolshevik party's policy of calling for an organisational break with the Kautskyite "Centre" current in the socialist movement. In July 1917 he joined the Bolsheviks and became a central leader. Chief organiser of October insurrection; first commissar of foreign affairs after revolution; leader of Red Army (1918-25). After Lenin's death, led communist

opposition to Stalinism; exiled in 1929; founded Fourth International in 1938; assassinated in Mexico by Stalinist agent August 21, 1940.

Vogt, Karl (1817-95) — German naturalist, vulgar materialist, petty-bourgeois democrat; took part in 1848-49 revolution in Germany; as an émigré in the 1850s and 1860s was Louis Napoleon's paid spy.

Voltaire, François Marie (1694-1778) — Great French satirist and historian of the Enlightenment; diest philosopher.

Waldenses — a religious sect which originated among the urban lower classes of southern France in the late 12th century. Its founder is said to have been Peter Wald, a Lyons merchant. The Waldenses advocated abolition of property, condemned the wealth of the Catholic Church, and called for a return to the customs of early Christianity. The heresies of the Waldenses were widespread among the rural population of the mountain regions of southwestern Switzerland and Savoy, where they tended to uphold the survivals of the primitive communal system and patriarchal relations.

Wycliffe, John (c. 1320-84) — English religious reformer; fought for creation of an English church independent from Rome and a reform of Catholicism; opposed sale of indulgences; the Catholic Church denounced him as a heretic.

Zimmermann, Wilhelm (1807-78) — German historian, petty-bourgeois democrat; son of an artisan; pastor and history teacher in Stuttgart; took part in 1848 revolution, deputy of Frankfurt parliament, in which he belonged to extreme left faction; author of *History of the Peasants' War in Germany* and other works. ■

Despite the increasingly secular nature of modern life, religion remains a powerful factor in society. The readings in this volume present the Marxist view of the question, focusing on Christianity and the Western experience.

What are the material roots of religion? What has been the role of the Christian church in history? What role has religion played in social struggles in the past? How should Marxist socialism relate to religion and religious believers? Can Christians be socialists and Marxists? Will there be a place for religion in a socialist society?

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