

Stencil No. 44

RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE -- ENEMY OF SCIENCE

No ideas are so incompatible as those of science and religion. Scientific and religious ideas are basic opposites and irreconcilable enemies. Comrade Stalin says "...religious prejudices are against science, because in some form every religion is the antithesis of science."

Science evolved from the battle against nature, the practical necessities of human society, and the process of human labor. Since prehistoric times the requirements of animal husbandry, agriculture, and river valley irrigation, gave rise to astronomy and mathematics.

The development of productive forces constantly demands and is itself the basis of progress in physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, and other branches of knowledge. Science, which boldly penetrates into the essence of the most complex phenomena, is based on the study of nature and society and not upon blind faith.

Religion, however, repudiates experience and evidence. Religion, since it serves the interests of the exploiting classes, pervertedly explains the world around us, casts humanity backward, and sentences it to impotence before the forces of nature and to helplessness in the face of its oppressors. Religion is not interested in scientific progress, since each discovery deals it a blow.

In a class society religion is the prop of the ruling classes. In a class society the roots of religion are chiefly social; the impotence of the exploited in their struggle against their exploiters is largely illusory. The masses in their bondage seek solace and forgetfulness in religion, as if it were opium. Religion inculcates in the workers passivity, humility, resignation to their fate, and patience, and diverts them from battling their oppressors, and also from fighting for real happiness on earth.

V.I. Lenin in his article "Socialism and Religion" gave a classic definition of religion and its social basis: "Religion is one form of spiritual oppression, always and everywhere lying heavily upon the masses, who are depressed by the unending drudgery for others, by dire poverty, and their loneliness. The helplessness of the exploited classes in their struggle against their exploiters inevitably gives rise to faith in a better life hereafter, just as the impotence of the savage in his struggle against nature gives rise to a faith in gods, devils, miracles, and similar things. Religion is the opium of the people."

The exploiting classes use religion for the spiritual domination of the workers; in capitalistic countries they complete the economic and political subjugation of the people and do not spare expense to spread religious obscurantism and mysticism. In the USA there are more than 100,000

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fortune-tellers and clairvoyants. The kind of bigotry with which they confuse people's minds there may be seen, for example, from the fact that lectures are given there quite openly on such subjects as "Description of the Heavenly Inhabitants", "religious Life of the Medes", and "Why There Is No Sorrow in Heaven", while at the same time lectures on Darwinism are forbidden in more than 20 states.

To what lengths the representatives of rotting bourgeois culture will go in confusing minds is indicated by the following instance: during a public discussion at Brussels University on the theme "Does Hell Exist?" various speakers who had come to the discussion argued the existence of hell, complete with devils and Satan. A professor of psychology, Vatile, in his talk stated that hell exists, that lately he personally had visited with the spirit of a dead Brussels banker who was in hell and who cried "I am burning constantly and yet I cannot burn up."

II

Every religion proclaims the division of the world into the material world which is real, and the world of the spirit, which is supernatural. No matter what religion we examine, each one necessarily, includes the recognition that the basis of all phenomena is a special, supernatural power--God, and that this supernatural power exists as it were beyond nature and not only directs nature and human society but originally was their Creator.

The supernatural world, invisible and unknowable, is the subject of religious faith; according to religious thought it will exist forever; whereas the material world, nature, which was created at God's command from nothing, is transitory. The admission that God created the world is the basic dogma of every religion. Religion teaches man to believe blindly, not to find out and investigate. Religion has always used for its own ends the complex, obscure phenomena of nature, and it has urged the faithful to pray to God to set aside or change the laws of nature and perform a miracle.

Materialistic science does not recognize anything which is imperceptible by the senses. It is based on the recognition of the objectivity of the material world and draws its conclusions on the basis of experience and practice, not faith. Only thus it is possible really to know the world, forecast future events, influence the forces of nature, and make them servants of man.

For many centuries materialistic philosophical materialism has been able to reveal fully the anti-scientific, reactionary nature of idealistic and religious ideas. The pinnacle of development of scientific thought--dialectical materialism--is the scientific method of knowing and modifying nature and society. Dialectical materialism is an implacable

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enemy of the religious idea of the world and of idealistic philosophy.

Idealistic philosophy always has been the theoretical basis of religion. Idealism and religion are identical in their assertion that the spirit is prior to the mind, while the material world and objects around us are secondary and products of the mind. The difference between idealistic philosophy and clericalism lies only in terminology. Lenin taught: "Philosophy which teaches that physical nature itself is something secondary, is the purest clericalism."

Dialectical materialism repudiates idealistic and religious fabrications as anti-scientific and reactionary, starting from the premise that the basis of the entire world around us consists in matter, or nature. All things in nature, from a simple grain of sand to the sun, from the tiniest particle of living matter to the most highly developed product of nature, the human brain, are merely different forms of the same matter.

Religion is based on the concept that forces exist in the world which cannot be comprehended by the human understanding. A consequence of this is the avowal that everything on earth is directed by the will of God. Religion degrades science, knowledge, and the human mind. Dialectical materialism teaches that there is nothing incomprehensible on earth, but only things which have not as yet become known, but will be clarified and known in the future through the forces of science and experience. In the indissoluble union of science and experience, man's mental horizon widens, and his powers over the forces of nature as well as his control over social relations increases.

III

The bitter and relentless struggle between science and religion appears throughout the history of the human race. Religion has always been the weapon of reaction. Materialistic science serves the interest of the progressive elements in human society and facilitates their steady evolution. Throughout the course of history, science has cleared the way and revealed and defended each scientific truth in a fierce battle with religion. All great scientific discoveries, without which the successes of industry, agriculture, and culture would not have been possible, were confirmed in the relentless conflict with religion.

The doctrine of the great Polish scientist, Copernicus, that the earth is not the immovable center but one of the planets, revolving around the sun, changed the basic human concept of the universe, also shook the religious structure to its very foundations. Darwin's teaching that the entire organic world, including man, resulted from milleniums of evolution, put an end to the idea that organisms were created by a God and are unchangeable. The history of Russian science gives many clear examples of the scientist's war against reactionary, idealistic theories and religious dogmas.

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The great son of the Russian people, M. V. Lomonosov, long before Lavoisier, discovered the law of preservation of matter, from which law follows the deduction that all phenomena of nature are basically material and that matter is indestructible. In science and in the growth of education, Lomonosov saw the power which could overcome religious prejudices.

I.I. Mechnikov and I.M. Sechenov dealt heavy blows to idealism, mysticism, and clericalism. An intrepid fighter against idealism and religion was K.A. Timiryazev. His self-sacrificing struggle for materialism, against mysticism, forms one of the most glorious pages of Russian science.

Soviet scientists are the legitimate heirs of the best traditions of progressive science. Armed with dialectical and historical materialism they develop creatively and advance all branches of science for the benefit of the people and the glory of their socialist homeland. Soviet science is fighting actively against idealism and religious obscurantism.

The greatest contribution to materialistic biology was I.P. Pavlov's doctrine. Pavlov's teaching on the higher nerve activity opened up a new page in the knowledge of the physiology of the brain, the material basis of the psychological life of man.

Pavlov's theories originated and developed during a fierce conflict with idealism, obscurantism, and the destructive ideas of bourgeois science. Reactionary American and British physiologists are trying to prove that thought, consciousness, and the psychological activity of humans are manifestations of an immaterial, eternal, and unalterable spirit.

I.V. Michurin, the founder of contemporary materialistic biology, developed the harmonious doctrine about the directions and manner of changes in the nature of plants and developed the control of their evolutions in the interests of mankind. Michurin's biology in itself means a new era in the development of biology.

Michurin's biology originated from the materialistic concept of organism in an indissoluble union with its environment; it also acknowledges that new characteristics and properties which the organisms acquire under the influence of their environment are inherited. Reactionary idealistic biology, Weismann-Morganism, which maintains that living conditions have no effect whatsoever on the inherited characteristics of organisms, and defends the idea that originally God created the various plant and animal forms, stems from directly opposite principles. Michurin's teaching was developed further in the work of T.D. Lysenko, O.B. Lepeshinskiy, and others.

On the basis of progressive Soviet science and first-class technique, the peoples of the USSR are undertaking a powerful attack on nature; they subdue and conquer the elements which for milleniums ruled over man.

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V.I. Lenin's Volga-Don Canal is the embodiment of the outstanding successes of the Soviet economy and science.

In a period when the Soviet land with its progressive science and technique, is solving the enormous tasks of building communism, the raging camp of imperialistic reaction, with the USA at its head, is rallying all the resources of bourgeois science to the struggle against peace, democracy, and socialism. It is dragging out the worn-out weapons of obscurantism and clericalism. Soviet scientists are fighting successfully against perverted bourgeois ideology in all its aspects. They are helping the party of Lenin and Stalin to educate the workers and the youth in the spirit of Communism and to remove the vestiges of capitalism, including religious superstition, remaining in the minds of the Soviet people.

IV

In a socialist society, where the exploitation of man by man has been abolished, where the communal ownership of productive resources prevails, and the national economy is conducted according to plan, conditions exist for the complete conquest of religion.

In Soviet society the social roots of religion are destroyed, but it would be incorrect to think that religious faith and prejudices will vanish by themselves. That remnants of capitalism do exist in the minds of the people is borne out by the fact that social consciousness remains far behind the evolution of communal life. People do not change their minds as soon as there is a change fundamentally. Besides this it is necessary to consider that capitalistic encirclement, hostile to us, endeavors to support and revive the remnants of capitalism in the minds of the people.

Religion, even in Soviet society, remains an anti-scientific, reactionary ideology, which litters the minds of the faithful with incorrect, fraudulent ideas in regard to the world about them, and is an obstacle to their cultural and political development. Whereas Marxist-Leninist ideology fosters in the Soviet man everything new and progressive, religion teaches him to bow down before the old, the outworn. Complete freedom of conscience exists in the USSR. It is so stated in Stalin's constitution. The conflict against religion in the Soviet Union is not conducted by persecution of it, but by the propaganda of scientific facts and of the materialistic concept of the world.

The constitution of the VLKSM requires from each Komsomol member an active struggle against religious superstitions. A tolerant attitude toward religion and the observance of religious ceremonies are not reconcilable with membership in the Komsomol. A basic and decisive means in the battle against religious prejudices is the dissemination of factual scientific knowledge and tenacious and constant propaganda of the materialistic concept of the world.

STATINTL The war against religious vestiges is the war for the new man, the war for Communism.

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