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JPRS L/9966

8 September 1981

USSR Report

POLITICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL AFFAIRS

(FOUO 22/81)

A Soviet Debate on Religion and Politics



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USSR REPORT
POLITICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL AFFAIRS
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A SOVIET DEBATE ON RELIGION AND POLITICS

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RELIGION AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON (THOUGHTS OF AN ETHNOGRAPHER)

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 3, Mar-Apr 79 (signed to press 31 May 79) pp 87-105

[Article by S. A. Tokarev]

1

[Text] There are many definitions of religion. But they frequently differ only in nuances. In essence there are two definitions or two understandings of religion which differ fundamentally. One understanding belongs to the believers, the theologians and defenders of religion and the other to its opponents, the atheists.

The first understanding proceeds from the view that outside of us there exists a certain mighty supernatural force upon which man is dependent. Hence religion is understood as the establishing of certain relationships between man and this force. These include: an expression of submission to this force, fear of it, recognition of dependence, obedience to its will, the desire to draw closer and merge with this force and so forth. The nature of this supernatural force, the degree of its might, the contents of its demands and admonishments, the attitude toward moral principles (good or evil, a forgiving or wrathful god), the degree of personification and so forth--all of this differs in the individual religions and is differently reflected in the defining formulas of religion. However the differences concern only particular features and details.

The second or "atheistic" understanding of religion proceeds, in contrast to the first, from the denial of the existence of any supernatural being. Religious ideas and images which develop in the consciousness of man are only the fruits of his imagination. Fear of supernatural forces is a fear of something nonexistent; the effort to placate them is an effort to placate something illusory and unreal. For this reason the task of understanding religion, its roots and essence from this viewpoint comes down to the question of in what manner there arose in the human consciousness those ideas or views of things which do not exist in the real world. The supporters of various scientific currents have answered and do answer this question differently (the theories of fetishism, animism, magic and others), but they all have agreed and do agree on one thing: a recognition of the illusoriness of all and any religious ideas.

However, if one looks closer at the "theological" and "atheistic" understanding of the essence of religion, with some amazement we will notice that they, with all their polar opposition, also have something in common. This common feature is an

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understanding of religion as an aggregate of ideas concerning an other-worldly force standing above man. But the theologians say that this force actually exists while the atheists deny it exists.

2

Let us try to ask ourselves the question: Is it possible, generally speaking, to consider the main thing in religion to be the content of the religious notions, that is, the images of religious fantasy? Are they the most essential and the primary aspect of any religion?

The question is a bold one and at the first glance even strange. What else but a belief in god (or in gods, spirits, an evil force and so forth) would seemingly comprise the very essence of religion? Where else but here is its essence to be sought?

However let us look more closely at the question.

Anyone who has been involved with ethnographic or other descriptions of the beliefs of any people cannot help but notice the extreme haziness, lack of clarity and often contradictoriness of these beliefs. In terms of one or another people, one researcher describes these beliefs in one manner and another in a quite different one (this depends upon the choice of the informant and upon other factors). Let us take at random two or three examples out of hundreds.

The totemic beliefs of the Central Australian tribes have been described more than once and by well-trained researchers such as B. Spencer, Fr. Gillen, Carl and Thomas Strelow and others, but still the content of these beliefs remains unclear. Are the images of the totemic ancestors people or animals or both together? Are the sacred "churingas" the "spiritual" part of the ancestor or the "second body" of man? Is the "altgira" a celestial god or the ancient mythical times? And so forth.

In the hunting cults of the Siberian peoples a prominent role is played by honoring the "hosts" of nature, the tayga and animals. But who are these "hosts"? Are they spirits, that is, the protectors of animals, of the various phenomena of nature or are these the very phenomena of nature (the tayga, mountains, the sea and so forth) which serve as the subject of veneration? If these are spirits, do they have any relation to the images of ancestors or to the shaman spirits?¹

And just what are the notorious "fetishes" of the West African peoples? Are they venerated material objects which have been ascribed supernatural properties? Or are they spirits or other imaginary beings which dwell in these objects or are somehow related to them? There have long been disputes about this in science.²

With such ambiguity concerning the subjects of religious veneration and with such haziness in the very content of beliefs it is no wonder that every field ethnographer, in describing these beliefs, like it or not, has endeavored to fit them within the framework of the customary concepts for him regardless of whether these concepts have been taken from the arsenal of theological terminology (god, the devil, the soul and so forth) or from scientific (fetish, totem, mana and so forth). It is no surprise that the same beliefs (of the same people) figure in the scholarly literature as ethnographic illustrations of either animistic, fetishistic or magical (preanimistic) notions, depending upon the author's theoretical views.

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Hence, the long disputes among ethnographers as to what is "mana," what is a "fetish," what is a "totem" or what is a "manitou." Hence, the disputes which have become particularly sharp over whether there has been any people with a notion of a celestial creator god and the intense efforts by the followers of the theory of "premonotheism" (particularly V. Schmidt to find such notions in the Andamanese, Semangs, Bushmen, Tierra del Fuegians, Tasmanians and other backward peoples. Hence also the hopeless efforts to adapt various notions of backward peoples about a vital force to the Christian notion of a "soul."

Among the still unresolved but more particular questions one might mention that of whether the Siberian peoples have an ancestor cult. Previously this answer was usually answered affirmatively and the "ancestor cult" was usually spoke of as an obvious and indisputable fact among the Altays, Khanty, Mansy, Chuckchees and others. However, in recent years doubts have arisen over this and certain researchers are inclined to deny the existence of ancestor cult among a majority of the Siberian peoples.³

One other example: Since the end of the previous century, the view has been widespread that agrarian cults among the agricultural peoples of ancient and modern Europe have been based upon the embodiment of the "spirit of vegetation" (Mannhardt, Wundt and Frazer). But in recent years the opinion has been voiced (Von Sydow) that personifications of these do not actually exist and the "rye wolves," "grain maidens," "grain mothers" and others described by Mannhardt were thought up under the influence of the mythological theory which prevailed in the 19th century, but the people actually knew nothing about them.⁴

It would be possible to give many other examples that behind the descriptions which are seemingly the most conscientious of specific beliefs of one or another people or groups of peoples there stands not a definite category of concepts but rather a certain hazy group of ideas in which each researcher sees what corresponds to his own views.

It is no wonder that after 200 years of efforts to understand and define the nature of the early forms of religious beliefs, science has still not found a convincing answer to the question of what they actually represented: a veneration of nature, ancestor cults, animism, fetishism or something else. If the just-named concepts reflected development stages of religion, then in what sequence did they follow one another?

A critical examination of descriptions found in the literature of beliefs of various peoples led Paul Radin, one of the most prominent American ethnographers, to the bold but very sound conclusion that generally speaking a predominant majority of beliefs described by researchers for peoples in various countries belongs not to the people themselves, not to the mass of the population, but only to a small group of shamans, priests and other "religious thinkers." They are not only the protectors and experts on the beliefs (and the ethnographers largely gained their information from them), but also the creators of these beliefs. But the simple people, that is, a predominant majority of the "believers," does not know these beliefs and is not particularly interested in them except at moments of disasters and then it is merely a question of performing the established rites and making sacrifice.⁵

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3

If one turns to the later stage in the history of religion, that is, to the religions of the ancient states such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, the Classical World and so forth, it is not difficult to see that although the information available to us on the content of religious ideas and on the images of gods and other supernatural beings at times are more complete and more reliable due to the religious texts and iconography, still much remains guesswork. This is particularly so if one poses the question of the origin of these images, that is, what is the origin of the Egyptian Osiris, Isis, Ra, Amon and others, the Babylonian Marduk, Ishtar, Shamash and others, the Classical Zeus, Apollo, Athena, Hera, Poseidon and others? All the more as many and the most important (from the viewpoint of the believers) aspects of theology in the hands of the priests were turned into esoteric strictly secret, sacred knowledge totally inaccessible to the people. This is also inaccessible to our science.

This is why we know so little in essence even about the religions of the Classical World, about the actual content of the beliefs themselves. We are acquainted essentially only with esoteric myths about the gods, their artistic literary translation and even satirical parodies. The true religious notions of Ancient Greece were perpetuated in the secret cults of mysteries, among the priests and mystics, and died with them. But it is not enough that we know little of the ideological content of the ancient nation-state religions; it is not enough that the worshipers of the ancient gods had no clear notion of them. It must be recognized, however strange it may seem at first glance, that this content of the ancient religions was in no way their essential point. Otherwise how can one explain the fact, and I have written about this already,⁶ that the religions of the ancient states which stood approximately on the same level of overall historical development and which performed the same socioideological function, differed extremely from one another in their ideological content? While the religions of the Classical World, and particularly the Ancient Jewish religion, were almost completely oriented at terrestrial life, the Egyptian religion was, on the contrary, subordinate chiefly to the idea of the after-life. The same Egyptian religion with its excessive concern for the body of the deceased (mummification, pyramids and funerary temples) differed sharply from the Iranian Mazdaism which with superstitious terror avoided the impurity of the cadaver. The mystical asceticism of India which reached the point of fanaticism was very unlike the decorousness and purely formal ritualism of Confucian China. The infinite pantheon of the gods of India, Japan and other nations contrasted sharply with the strict monotheism of the Jews in the post-captivity age. Within the limits of the Classical World, the rich, colorful religious mythology of the Greeks stood in contrast to the dry, colorless and abstract images of the gods of the Romans. And one could mention still a number of other such contrasts. They, however, in no way prevent the researcher, at least the Marxist, from linking together these ancient (although some have survived in certain nations up to the present) national state religions as religions of a completely definite type.

Finally, as for our contemporary major "world" religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, here we also find an analogous picture. First of all, it must not be thought that the content of the dogma in these religions is universally known. This is not the case at all. It is known by the professional theologians and certain "secular" specialists. For example, the enormous mass of believers have a very hazy understanding of the content of Christian belief. It can be said that a majority of the believers do not know it at all. This is shown from the data of a

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special religious sociological survey conducted in the United States. For example, according to a poll taken by the Gallup Institute (1954), although 96 percent of those questioned stated that they were believing Christians, 60 percent of them were unable to name the persons of the "Holy Trinity"; 65 percent did not know who had given the "Sermon on the Mount"; 79 percent did not know the name of a single Old Testament prophet. According to another survey, 53 percent of those questioned did not know the names of the Four Apostles.⁷

Something even more important. As in the national state religions, here also we discover that the contents of the beliefs of the three world religions are extremely different. These differences are particularly striking in terms of Buddhism and Islam, where the contrast approaches an extreme (in this sense Christianity holds something of an intermediate position). In Islam there is the fanatical preaching of belief in one divinity (Allah), while in Buddhism there is a recognition of an indefinite multiplicity of divinities of various ranks. In Islam there is unconditional and passive obedience to God, while in Buddhism, initially there was a complete disregard of divinities in favor of man's independent path to salvation, and later a reliance on the aid of living divine humans and their magical actions; in Islam there is belief in a single directed and irreversible historical process which ends with the Final Judgment of God over people, while in Buddhism there is an infinite cycle of world periods controlled consecutively by various divinities; in Islam there is the idea of personal salvation for the immortal human soul, and in Buddhism the denial of personal immortality and the teachings of the eternally decomposing and recombining dharmas....⁸

Again, as is the case in the national state religions, here also the presence of sharp contrasts in no way prevents us from linking Buddhism, Christianity and Islam into a single category, into one type, the type of "world religions."

4

All that has been stated above explains sufficiently the extreme diversity which prevails in the scientific literature on the question of the classification of religious phenomena and the periodization of the history of religion (Hegel, Comte, Lobbok, Frobenius, Achelis, Parrish and many others). Some have endeavored, although by stretching a point, to construct a periodization of religion from the change in venerated objects, while others have done so according to the type of relations between man and the divinity.⁹

The most recent attempts of this sort such as Eric Fromm (authoritarian and humanistic religions¹⁰) or Arnold Toynbee (progressive and cyclical systems)¹¹ are of interest but do not solve the problems.

At the same time, the Marxist teachings concerning society and the general course of its historical development already contain a sufficiently sound basis for constructing a more ordered and objective history of religion. From the Marxist viewpoint, religion is a *social* phenomenon, it is one of the forms of *social consciousness*. In other words, this is one of the forms of "ideological" relations between people. From this follows the very definition of religion: it is not so much the attitude of man toward god (the gods) as it is *the attitude of people toward one another over the question* of the notions of god (the gods).

5

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5

Before moving on to a detailed examination of this subject, let us try again to touch on the question of the very ideological content of religious ideas.

Certainly the very fact of the extraordinary diversity of religious beliefs in the various as well as even in approximately the same levels of historical development inevitably poses for us the question: In such an instance what *common feature* remains in all these religious ideas from the viewpoint of their content, what is that general feature which justifies their categorizing to one sphere of social consciousness and delimits them from any other "nonreligious" spheres?

Such a question is most often answered by pointing to the "belief in the supernatural" as the main or even the sole reliable feature of a religion which separates it from any "nonreligion." For now let us accept this definition without indulging in any criticism of its impreciseness and certain haziness. But just how is this belief in the supernatural specifically manifested, that is, in human consciousness or in actions?

Is it in the attempts to explain the incomprehensible (or generally any) phenomena of the world around us? For example, the origin of the universe, anthropogenesis, the visible movements of the sun, the moon and stars? Certainly not.

Of course, there was a time (the European Middle Ages), when the Christian Church theology replaced knowledge about the world. Theology also subordinated to itself both philosophy and the timid rudiments of the precise sciences. But this time has long passed. The history of the struggle of science for emancipation from church dogma and the history of its victories over the medieval pseudoscience and scholasticism are well known. At present religion does not even try, at least in the civilized countries, to refute the achievements of the precise or natural sciences or even the humanities. It does not endeavor to rival them in understanding the world. Modern theologians--catholic, protestant and others--themselves are excellently formed on the achievements of astronomy, atomic physics and other sciences. Many prominent natural scientists remain believers and religion in no way prevents them from making scientific discoveries.

6

Without claiming for a long time to "explain" the material world, on the other hand religion has claimed a general analysis of life and a solution to cardinal philosophical and philosophical-ethical problems. And primarily, a solution to the question: What is the source of evil in the world and how we must combat it.

If we therefore return to the above-posed question of the very *content* of religious ideas, it can be said that the main thing in this content is not the names of gods or theological teachings about their properties and relationships and not even the ideas of the relationship of man to god, but rather what reply is given by one or another religion to the question of the origin of *evil* in human life.

It is even possible to view the entire history of religion in all ages and among all peoples from the viewpoint of how it has and does settle the question of the causes of evil and the means for overcoming it. Obviously here one can speak about a gradual ascent, in keeping with the overall growth of culture and the complicating of social relations, from a primitive specific physical solution to this question to a more generalized and abstract solution to it; also from the immediate physical sensation of pain to a concept of social evil and the methods of escaping from it.

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At the earliest level of historical development (examples would be the Australian tribes, the Papuans of New Guinea and the South American Indians), evil was the witchcraft caused by the enemy of another tribe; and this witchcraft was represented in a completely material manner by an injury in the form of a certain small bone inserted by the enemy into the victim's body. This injury could be removed by having it sucked out (this was a matter for a special sorcerer) or by killing the witch.

Later, obviously, the idea appeared of an evil spirit which kidnapped the human soul; then it had to be found and returned. Or there was the idea of a spirit which inhabited the body of the sick person; then it had to be expelled. This was the profession of the shamans who were able to control the spirits. Here, as before, there was no abstract understanding of evil but rather a purely practical, material perception of it. But even at this stage there arose as a certain generalization an overall notion of evil spirits as a separate category of invisible beings which caused illnesses and other misfortunes. Who were these spirits, where did they come from, were they the spirits of a hostile tribe or the embodiment of the terrible forces of nature or ancestors angered by the disrespect of the people--all of this was a different question. The ethnographic examples of this stage are the American Indians, the peoples of Siberia, the peoples of Africa and so forth.

In the ancient national (class) religions, the concept of evil assumed a more general and intelligent form. Evil itself operated predominantly as social inequality, suppression, violence and injustice. The reason of evil lay in the anger of the gods who were vexed by the disrespect of their worshipers, by the meagerness of the sacrifices or by other failings of the believers. Here there were many shades of difference. Some gods were evil by nature, others were patient but touchy, others required human sacrifices while still others were satisfied by small tributes. In Classical Religion, where religious philosophical thought reached a high level, a generalized idea of the gods was developed as completely anthropomorphic beings, with human qualities of the soul. The gods punished a mortal for disrespect, for pride and conceit, but they could also send misfortune for a person merely out of envy of the too great fortune of this person (let us recall the classic history of Polycrates). In any event, however, any, predominantly social, evil was transferred to the gods.

In the monotheistic religion of Israel, the same idea gained a one-sided but completely logical development. Evil was the serving of foreign gods instead of serving one's own god, Yahweh. For such apostasy, Yahweh punished the entire people as a whole and also individuals. He also punished for even the slightest disobedience regardless of how it was manifested.

In other strictly systematized national religions of the East, the problem of evil was solved simply and uniformly. In Chinese Confucianism, evil was the violation of nonperformance of established "ceremonies" (li), that is, symbolic acts of obedience to the existing order of life. In Hinduism, evil or the cause of evil was the nonobservance of the laws of the divinely-established castes.

In the dualistic religion of Iran the religious-ethical idea of the cause of evil in the world was raised much more highly. Here good and evil were embodied in the form of two great and for the time being equally powerful gods: the evil, dark, tainted Angra Mainyu and the bright god of truth and purity, Ahura Mazda. The entire world and all human life were an arena of the unceasing struggle between these

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two gods. A man who worshiped Ahura Mazda should participate with all his strength on the god's side in this millenium-long struggle. At the end of the world Ahura Mazda would be victorious and the evil Angra Mainyu would be destroyed and the kingdom of light would arrive.

This ordered, consistently optimistic concept of world evil and its destruction was opposed by another, also consistent but pessimistic moral religious philosophical system, the Buddhist teachings about evil and suffering as an inseparable property of any existence of any life. It was possible to get rid of suffering only by suppressing in oneself the very desire for existence. This path was difficult, the goal was distant but a person who believes in Buddha and his teachings could ultimately achieve this goal and enter Nirvana. Both in Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, human philosophical thought, although cloaked in a religious form, reached a high degree of abstraction. This shows the generally very high level of philosophical moral thinking. Research should raise and explain why the results of this thinking in both instances were diametrically the opposite.

7

The Christian concept of evil and sin unexpectedly disrupted the general, very ordered picture of the gradual ascent of philosophical thought to an evermore consistent and generalized solution to the problem of evil in the world. It was extremely illogical and strange. Why did evil reign in the world? Because the world is sinful. And why is it sinful? Because the first two people disobeyed God and ate the fruit from the forbidden tree. The reply is to say the least strange. Since it is nowhere apparent that the forbidden fruit itself was in any way harmful (the words of God that the person who ate it would die on the same day--Gen., II, 17--were untrue), then obviously the misdeed of Adam and Eve was merely in disobedience, in the very act of violating the prohibition. But if this was a morally bad misdeed, no human morality could justify the consequences of the misdeed which are given there in the text of the bible: the damnation of God by all mankind, all the world and everything living and growing on it, in brief, the establishment of the kingdom of evil on the earth. Here there is not the slightest reasonable tie. It is very strange that the fathers of the Christian Church who over a period of several centuries elaborated the bases of the faith did not find, with the exception of this Ancient Jewish very incoherent myth, nothing in the stores of religious philosophical thought to use as justification of the teachings of the expiational sacrifice of Jesus Christ. *What* precisely was Christ atoning for with his extreme suffering and his torturous immolation? Could it really be just the two eaten apples? It would be difficult to imagine anything more absurd.

The image of the Devil (Satan) holds an equally unclear place in Christian belief. In the Old Testament this figure plays virtually no role. The "Fall from Grace" of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis is ascribed to the serpent (which was "the cleverist of all beasts of the field") and in no way can it be seen that the devil was concealed behind this image. Satan is mentioned three times in the Old Testament (1st Chron., XXI, 1; Job, I, 6-9; II, 1-7; Zach., III, 1-2), but in no way as the opponent of God rather as a spirit obedient to him. A certain "evil spirit" tortures King Saul, but he also was "from the Lord," although it is also reminiscent of a shaman spirit (1st Kings, XVI, 14). In the New Testament, Satan is an image obviously borrowed not from Judaism but rather from Zoroastrianism and plays a much more noticeable role. He "tempts" Jesus in the desert (Matt., IV, 1-11). Subsequently Jesus himself repeatedly drives out "devils" ("unclean spirits" or "devilish spirits") from the sick and insane, as the shamans do; but these minor

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devils have no bearing to evil in the world or the sinfulness of man. Jesus himself is accused for curing the ill "with the strength of Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils" (Matt., XII, 24-27; Luke, XI, 15, 19). Only does Apocalypse speak more definitely about the "great dragon, the ancient serpent called the devil and satan" and his "overthrow in the world" (Rev., XII, 9). But this work stands generally by itself in the Christian literature. The thesis of the devil has not become part of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol of faith. Its role as the cause of evil and sin in the world remains completely unclear in Christian dogma.¹² Here is an open field for religious research.

8

The idea is often voiced that the main thing in religion is the question of death, its inevitability, the possibility of avoiding or surmounting it. "Belief in God," and "belief in the immortality of the soul" (in the "afterlife") are two concepts which very frequently are considered indissoluble. Belief in God and belief in immortality are, supposedly, essentially the same thing.

However, facts show that this is far from the case. Far from all religions endeavor to somehow settle the question of overcoming death. Moreover, a majority of religions does not even pose this question. Of course beliefs related to death and burial rites exist in all peoples. With all the diversity of burial rites and customs, their general sense is the same virtually everywhere. It is a dual one: in the first place, to materially and symbolically dispose of the deceased, to remove and render him harmless; secondly, symbolically to restore and strengthen the system of social ties in a community which has been upset by the death of one of its members. Self-defense of the human collective and its symbolic reintegration are the general tone in the response to the death of a human.

Only in the burial of a certain leader, king, emperor or priest does the deceased himself become the central figure of a ritual. He is presented with burial gifts in order to placate or simply pay him off. Here arose the idea of creating conditions for the well-being of the deceased in the afterlife, the ideal of a certain continuation of earthly life. In the beliefs of the American Indians, a brave hunter after death will hunt in game-rich lands; according to the beliefs of the Ancient Scandinavians, a soldier who fell in battle would fight against enemies in the world beyond the grave. But such a relatively benevolent afterlife is not promised to everyone. Many, even relatively developed religions do not have this. The Classic Greek religion did not promise its followers anything attractive beyond the grave. The same is true in the Ancient Jewish religion. In these and other similar religions, if the gods (or god) even heap good fortune on the person protected by them, this good fortune concerns only the terrestrial life of the person and his offspring and does not stretch beyond the grave.

Only the "soteriological" religions actually endeavor to settle the question of death as an essential evil and its surmounting. The rudiments of the idea of victory over death were, in addition to the above-given examples, also found in Ancient Egyptian and Iranian religions. This idea began to be dominant in Christianity, but in the very inconsistent and essentially paradoxical teaching about "recompense beyond the grave" in which the bliss of paradise was promised only to a minority of people. The same is essentially true in Islam. The Indian religions and Buddhism which grew out of them settled the question of death in their own way, by the doctrine of reincarnation. But this reincarnation, at least for

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Buddhism, represents not a desired overcoming of death but, on the contrary, a persistent continuation of a torturous existence.

In a word, the formula "religion as the overcoming of death," although imaginable, in no way replaces the above-given formula of "religion as an explanation and justification of evil and suffering."

9

Thus, as we see, over the entire long history of religious beliefs, they, regardless of the extreme diversity of forms of belief and religious-mythological images, in essence settled one major question: from whence evil and suffering in human life and how to escape from them? Different answers were given, but this depended primarily upon the general level of social and cultural development but these were answers to the same question. Evil itself was understood differently and this depended upon the same general historical conditions. These historical conditions in the most general form came down to a tendency for a gradual decline in the dependence of man upon the forces of nature and the ever-crueler dependence of the suppressed masses upon the power of the possessing classes. Subordination to the forces of nature of course remained (sickness, old age and natural disasters) but they were more and more mediated by the social structure, that is, the rich suffered less from sickness and from natural disasters than did the poor. But common to any religious explanation of evil was the fact that the sought-after cause of evil was presented in a distorted, mysticized, imaginary and fantastic form. The cause resided in that sphere which we now term "supernatural" or "other worldly." For this reason the means for overcoming evil have also been borrowed from the same "other worldly" arsenal: prayers, invocation, propitiation, sacrifice, atonement and the search for "salvation." Human thought relying on a "self-sundered and self-contradictory earthly basis"¹³ could not give any other solution to the question.

From this it also follows that the *explanation* of the causes of evil would also mean its *justification* for religious thought. Over the centuries the religions of all peoples have *justified* material and *social* evil instead of combating this. Hence, religion has distracted and does distract people from an effective struggle against evil in the world.

If all that is stated above is correct, then an important conclusion follows. We can say that the real difference in the understanding of the essence of religion by believers and atheists is not in the hopeless and sterile repetition of the phrases "god exists" and "there is no god," but rather in the absolutely fundamental opposition of the two practical lines: to call to god (or to the gods) in order to escape from evil, suffering and injustice or to fight with ones own forces against the evil, sufferings and injustice. Any religion disarms and demobilizes people in their struggle for a better future; socialist atheism arms and mobilizes them. Here, and this is particularly important, religion "separates" people who are struggling for happiness (to which god they should pray and how they should pray), while socialist atheism *unites* them by the common aim of the struggle.

It is here that we come close to that aspect of religion which should first interest science and particularly ethnographic science.

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Religion, let us repeat what has already been said, is not so much the attitude of man to god (to the gods) as *an attitude of people to one another over the question of the notions of god (or gods).*

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Certainly there is no single religion of all mankind and there never has been. Each people has its own religion, its own rites, its own "faith." With good reason among the people, and particularly the Russian people, in the past a person's religious affiliation was always viewed as a sign (and even as a synonym) of ethnic affiliation. They asked a person of a different nationality what was his "faith."

Not only in everyday parlance but also in scientific usage, in modern ethnographic science, we have come to consider religious denomination (confessional affiliation) one of the permanent ethnic features and sometimes even one of the most important which distinguishes the given (ethnoconfessional) group from others, neighboring or related groups. The Yezidis are Kurdish fire worshipers; the Parsi are Indian fire worshipers; the Sikhs are a Hindustan-Moslem sect; the Copts are Egyptian Christians; the Khemshins are Armenian Moslems and the Bosnians are Yugoslav Moslems. Although these definitions may be inaccurate and although there may not be a full congruity between the ethnic and confessional affiliations of a person, still for national statistics, for practical political administrative measures and for the drawing of state and administrative frontiers, the religious affiliation of people is taken into account. It often acts as an important and even at times the most important determinant. Here the very content of the belief or its theological-dogmatic aspect would be of interest to few. It can be said that both for a purely scientific understanding of religion and its history of most importance is not a study of the names of the gods or the spirits, not the mythological stories about them, and not a description of the cult rites, not even the most detailed one, or even the dogmatic content of one or another religious system. No, the most important is to study historically the social function of the given religion (and generally any religion) as one of the social features which separate one group of people from another.

Of course, this does not mean that we have no need to study the content of religious beliefs. They must be studied, but this must not be considered the main aim of the research.¹⁴ If this idea seems strange to some it is only because we have still not completely escaped from the theological tradition in the study of religion. Certainly this entire area of knowledge for many centuries has been in the hands of the theologians. For them precisely the beliefs of each given religion (both of one's own denomination and others) and its dogma comprised and comprise the subject of their professional interest. Our science has rejected the truthfulness of religious dogma, the truthfulness of the beliefs of any religion, but it has not overcome the theological tradition having kept precisely the content of belief as the main (if not the sole) subject of research.¹⁵ This has been logical and understandable for theology but not for science.

In this sense, religion is no exception among other social phenomena. On the contrary, it, like any other phenomenon of culture, both material and spiritual, performs a most important social function: to somehow unite and unify a certain group of people and thereby set it in opposition to all other groups.

This dual, or perhaps better "two-in-one" role of religion--as a factor of integration and simultaneously segregation--is inherent to all cultural elements without a single exception. Religion is one of them. It perhaps more visibly and explicitly performs and always has performed this role.¹⁶

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The history of religion is the history of the various relationships which have developed between people in the course of social development and how these relations have been projected into the ideological area, into the area of religious views.¹⁷

This principle should be used also as the basis of the scientific periodization of the history of religion, a periodization which in its basic outlines corresponds to the general division of history into periods.

The earliest period of the history of religion was the *tribal* or more accurately the *kinship-tribal cults*. With all the diversity of the details, their essential traits, as is seen from the extensive ethnographic material, are similar for people in all parts of the world. Most importantly, their social aspect is everywhere the same. One of the most ancient forms of a cult was the burial cult. This expressed the idea of concern for the deceased member of the community and the symbol of the reintegration of the group (community) which suffered a loss. Totemism, another very ancient form of a cult, is an awareness of the solidarity of the kinship, symbolized by the totem, by the rites and myths about the totem ancestors. Witchcraft and belief in harm is an expression of a confused recognition (or sense) of intertribal prejudice and hostility. A cult of a tribal-wide god is the limit of the recognized social integration achieved in the communal-kinship system.

In all these forms of beliefs which are well known to ethnographers there is a combination of a manifestation of the force of intrakinship and intratribal integration and intertribal (interkinship) segregation. With good reason all the totemic rites, the ceremonies of coming-of-age initiations, the secret alliances which grew up out of them and so forth have always been surrounded by forms of strict secrecy. Obviously even the most primitive forms of religious beliefs were never the common knowledge even for the members of one tribe or one community.

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The "*national*" and "*state*" religions correspond to the age of the early class (slave-owning and early feudal) societies. They were different but their overall scheme was the same. A national or statewide pantheon developed by the merging and generalizing of the kinship-tribal cults. The integration encompassed large masses of people and large territories. The ancient tribal protector gods of the nomes [districts] of Egypt (Horus, Khnum, Hathor, Ptah, Osiris and others) became an object of veneration by all the people. The ancient protector gods of the Greek polis make up the Olympian pantheon. In places the head of the pantheon develop into the image of the strongest, almighty and even sole god. This happened with the Jewish Yahweh. But in parallel, and even more sharply, the forces of segregation grew. At first religion operated, per se, not as a factor of segregation but rather as an indicator of it. The intertribal wars characteristic for the transitional period from a pre-class to an early class system with conquests, intertribal associations with their accompanying various forms of dependence (tribute, slavery, a client state and so forth)--all of this arose not out of religion but rather was caused by material factors. But these forms of intertribal antagonisms were *recognized* in the form of the clash of cults, the victory of certain gods over others, theological co-submission and a hierarchy of gods. The princes who worshiped the god Horus unified all of Egypt placing their god above all the others; later supremacy in the Egyptian pantheon moved, as the dynasties and capitals of the states followed one another, to the god Ptah, to Aton (Ra) and to Amon. In Mesopotamia, the struggle of the city states was reflected in the primacy of Enlil, then Ninurta, Marduk and

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finally Ashura. The formation of the extensive monarchy of the Persian Achaemenids meant the triumph of their national god Ahura Mazda over all others.

But up to the end of the Ancient World, until the Late Classic Age, the cult community nowhere gained independent significance. It did not become distinct from the ethnic community. The gods of Egypt were united into a general pantheon but they remained Egyptian gods. And their cult for the time being did not cross the Egyptian frontiers. Even the formation of extensive multinational empires did not lead to a mixing of cults. The victorious people did not impose their gods on the conquered peoples. Even the Persian kings who worshiped Ahura Mazda and made its cult required among the Persians did not extend it among the scores of conquered peoples, graciously permitting them to continue to venerate their own national gods. Only in the Hellenistic and Roman Age, do to the intense and ever-broadening ethnic shufflings, sorts of international cults began to develop. Some of the particularly popular local national gods began to extend beyond their narrow ethnic limits of veneration and acquired followings far beyond their homeland. This was the case with Theban Amon, Serapis, Isis, Cybele and Mitra. This was the first step toward the formation of "world religions," the third great age in the history of religions which will be taken up below.

The national gods were the personification of the forces of segregation and of reciprocal separation of those ethnic (national) groups or states which venerated them. But this reciprocal separation also recognized many shades and degrees from peaceful, although separate coexistence to irreconcilably bloody reciprocal extermination. The worshipers of Ionian Apollo were not hostile to the venerated of Attic Demeter or Doric Poseidon, with the exception of sporadic military clashes. On the contrary, the cult of the Israeli Yahweh reached an extreme degree of fanatical intolerance. In the age of the conquest of Palestine by the Jews, Yahweh prescribed his followers to destroy mercilessly, down to the last man, the population of the conquered cities who worshiped their own local deities (in the Bible they were called "abominations"). Later, in the age of the comparatively peaceful cohabitation of the Israelis with the Cananaean, Yahweh again ordered his "chosen" people to isolate themselves completely, particularly in terms of marriage. A strict national religious endogamy was established: "The family of Israel separated itself from all foreigners" (Nehemiah, XIX, 2).

This national religious endogamy has survived among the Judaic Jews almost until our times, reinforcing their separateness and exclusiveness.

The same inner exclusiveness has been inherent up to the present to the system of the Hindu castes. And this has gone even farther. In the first place, because not Hinduism as a whole but each of the social units comprising it is closed off in itself, for orthodox Hinduism permits only marriages within the caste; secondly, because Hinduism as a whole, at least theoretically, represents an ideally isolated system. In contrast to Judaism it does not recognize individual proselytism. It is impossible to convert to the Hindu faith (regardless of the wide attraction for Indian religious systems in the West); it is essential to be born in one of the castes.

The reciprocal isolation of the national religious organisms (peoples, states) had another, extremely important aspect. The *fiction* of the inner solidarity of

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each of these organisms was created by this reciprocal isolation, that is, the inner social contradictions were thereby obscured. In opposing the Egyptians to all non-Egyptians, the Romans to all non-Romans, the national religions blunted the class self-awareness of the masses of people and, of course, this was completely in the interests of the ruling classes. In comparison with this most important function of the national religions, that is, to serve as the indicator and factor of international segregation and thereby play into the hands of the dominant social stratum of each individual people, the very content of religious beliefs is a much less important aspect. These religions could be monotheistic (Judaism), dualistic (Zoroastrianism) or polytheistic (a majority of the ancient religions); they could be oriented toward terrestrial life (Confucianism, Judaism and the cults of the Classical World) or to the after-life (Egypt); they could have a rich mythology (the Greeks) or have almost none at all (the Romans); they could be full of mysticism (Hinduism) or be profoundly hostile to it (Confucianism and Rome). All of this did not change their basic social function.

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The following, third age in the history of religions began with an unique historical paradox. This is the age of the so-called *world* (supernational) religions. The paradox is that these religions arose as an attempt at a radical and fundamental overcoming of any segregation. Universal, world-wide integration was preached. Ethnic, cultural and political differences were denied in principle. "Here there are no differences between Jew and Hellene because all have one Lord," wrote the Apostle Paul (Rom., X, 12). In the Kingdom of Christ, he wrote, "there is neither Hellene nor Jew, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free man, but all is in Christ" (Col., III, 11).

The teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha were also directed to all people, without distinction as to caste or ethnic group. The universalism of the Moslem religion was not expressed in clear verbal formulas, but the very objective fact of the unusually rapid expansion of the teachings of Mohammed in Africa and Asia bespoke the existence of a certain integrating force. But this force evoked as a sort of antithesis an even stronger and sharper segregation. The Buddhist "student" monks were sharply distinct from the secular and from everything worldly. In Christianity this was even more sharply expressed. Jesus himself who taught the indistinguishability of the Helene and the Jew openly admitted and even emphasized that he had brought to the world "not peace but the sword" (Matt., X, 34). He even demanded from his followers that they "come to hate father and mother, wife and children." The Christian "believers," "brothers" and "persons called" separated themselves from the "heathens." In Islam the opposition between "believers" and "infidels" reached extremes, to the point of waging a merciless war against the "infidels."

A different segregation soon commenced. The new religions did not maintain their unity. The Christian Church from the very first steps was split into a multiplicity of sects, "heresies," and local churches, and the struggle between them extended for centuries, constantly bursting forth and assuming fierce, bloody forms. The rival churches and sects repeatedly damned each other. In Islam the struggle between the sects (Sunni, Shia and others) was no less fierce. In Buddhism the struggle between the sects did not lead to such mass bloodshed, but at times it did approach great intensity.

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The successive splits and splinterings of the Christian Church (churches) led at times to an unexpected result, to the reestablishing to a certain degree of a system of national religions. Thus, the monophysite "heresy" condemned at the Council of Chalcedon of 451 became the national church of the Armenians (as well as the Ethiopians); Presbyterianism became the national church of the Scots and the Anglican Church of the English; the Maronite Church became the church of the Lebanese Christians.

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Integration and segregation are two inseparably linked aspects in the functioning of any cultural phenomenon. In principle they balance one another. The more strongly and closely united a certain group of people marked by a given cultural community, the more sharply and profoundly opposed it is to all remaining mankind. And the reverse is true. But in practice the equilibrium is often upset.

Certainly there are cultural phenomena in which the integrating force greatly prevails. This is true of art. Works of literature, a musical composition, a play, a work of painting or sculpture--all these are forms of communication through which the artist, author or performer transmits his feelings, his ideas to the viewers, listeners and everyone around. The communication of people in art is the highest form of human communication. Of course, there are also elements of segregation and separation here. People may perceive the same work of art differently. An European finds it difficult to understand Chinese music, while the Chinese experience the same with European music. The "abstract" painting in modern Western Europe and America is comprehended by far from everyone even in Europe and America. Within Europe some esteem the classic Italian or Flemish painting while others prefer the Russian realistic school. Some are fond of Glinka, Chopin and Schumann while others like Mahler, Prokofiev and Shostakovich. This is a question of personal tastes and general cultural traditions. But while at times there may not be mutual comprehension between the fans of various tastes, still there is no hostility between them. In history there have still been no cases of bloody wars between the fans of classical and romantic music or between the followers of David and Picasso.

Moreover it is beyond dispute that the reciprocal influence of the various artistic schools with the general rise and deepening of cultural ties in the modern world has led to a further expansion of integration in art. A modern cultured person more and more becomes used to understanding the art of various styles and may enjoy both Indian music as well as Mozart and Shostakovich. He may be fond of European classic painting and African wood sculpture.

In a word, in art the forces of integration are growing and the forces of segregation are weakening.

This is not the case in religion. Here the factor of segregation has prevailed since the very outset. Of course, the totemic rites unite their participants but on the other hand they (and this is the most important thing) not only put them in opposition to all persons of other tribes but even within the community do not create either equality or unity. The "uninitiated," the women and the juveniles cannot, under the fear of death, even approach the place the rites are performed. The same is true of the initiation ceremonies. The institution of secret societies which grew up later out of them is directly designed to sharply oppose the members to the nonmembers. And even between the members usually a sharp distinction of

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ranks and a strict hierarchy are established. Even within the community-kinship system and in the tribal cults there are sorcerers, diviners, witches, "the makers of weather," shamans and later on priests, all sorts of persons who carried secret knowledge and abilities inaccessible to others. Above we quoted the very soundly based view of Paul Radin that these "religious thinkers" not only perform the functions of intermediaries in the communication of persons with the spirits or gods, but that they themselves created the world of spirits and gods, in deceiving their own fellow tribesmen, and ultimately themselves.

That this "religious segregation" grew even stronger in the age of national and state religions can be seen from what was said above. International hostility and prejudice assumed the form of a clash between the gods. But within each state there appeared a clearly separated (in a majority of instances) caste of priests and perpetuators of secret esoteric knowledge and rituals. Within the individual ethnoses in places there arose secret cults which were even more strictly clandestine. In Ancient Greece there were the cults of the Cabiri, Curetes, Orphic cults, Pythagoreans, the Eleusinian mysteries and others.

The appearance of world religions was, as was already said above, a powerful upsurge of the integrating trend. They in fact created communities of people that were of unprecedented scope. Virtually all of Asia was divided between Buddhism and Islam. The religion of Christ was dominant in Europe. But this integration was ephemeral, deceptive and more apparent than real. Above we have already mentioned all sorts of splits, heresies, sects, mutual persecutions and wars between them.¹⁸

It would be extremely naive to think that this splintering, these splits and all sorts of conflicts were based on dogmatic differences or a different understanding of theological truths. That the Armenians, Copts and Abyssinians became separated from other Christians because they believed in a single (and not dual) nature of Christ. That the Russians, Romanians, Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks do not recognize the authority of the Roman Pope because they are convinced that the Holy Spirit derives solely from the Father and in no way from the Father and Son...and so forth. A predominant majority of the simple believers knows nothing of these theological finepoints. The theologians know of them but for them the main thing is the subordination of the Church and not dogmatic disputes. The Armenian hierarchs split from the "Chalcedonian" diophysites because they did not want to submit to the Byzantine Patriarch but wanted to have an independent Church. The Eastern Orthodox hierarchs split from the Western Church because they did not want to be subservient to the Roman Pope (and they could not have even if they wanted for they were subordinate to the Byzantine Emperor).

One can also name examples of church splits where there were no dogmatic differences at all. The most vivid example is the Russian Old Believers movement. The Old Believers stubbornly, from the 17th century up to the present, refused contact with the "Nikonians" from whom they differed not over any details of dogma but only over ritual finepoints such as the writing of the name "Isus--Jesus," the twice-stated "Hallelujahs" and the position of the fingers during prayer. However for these insignificant differences people were sent into exile and death; they burned themselves and others. The Old Believer fanatics sincerely considered the entire world opposing them to be the "Kingdom of the Anti-Christ."

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The forces of segregation do operate in world religions, as in the national ones, not only in the peripheral zone, between the churches, demoninations and sects but also within these communities. There is no equality within them. There are the clergy and the laity; the numerous gradations in the clergy such as deacons, archdeacons, priests, archpriests, bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, exarchs and patriarchs; monks and laymen, and within the monastic orders there are novices, the black cassocks, monks, father superiors and archimandrites and so forth. And this is just within the Orthodox Church. In the Catholic Church there is just as much hierarchical diversity. Hierarchy in the Protestants is significantly simpler but also clearly expressed. The mass of the "laymen" is also heterogeneous. Women cannot be priests; a woman cannot enter the sanctuary; the rich who have made a large contribution to a monestary or a church have privileges....

In a word, the "fraternity" within the church community is a very relative fraternity. Even in terms of the idea that each layman should be concerned only with his personal salvation" and at most with the "salvation" of the members of his family. In the New Testament literature (on behalf of the Apostle Paul) the believers are given even such perfidious advice that each person can secure the salvation of his soul at the price of the loss of the soul of another. "Do not take vengeance on yourself, beloved, but give room to the wrath of God," said Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. "...Thus, if your enemy is hungry, succor him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for if you do this you will bring down hot coals on his head" (Rom., XII, 19, 20). What more can be said about this kind forgiveness, this kind love of one's neighbor!

Need it be said that in the world religions, like in the national ones, the fiction of the religious community of like believers merely conceals and camouflages the sharpest class contradictions, creating an illusion of common spiritual interests between the rulers and the ruled.

"The idea of God," said V. I. Lenin, "has always bound the suppressed classes by belief in the divineness of the suppressors."¹⁹

Thus, religious morality is essentially selfish. It is selfish because it replaces and mediates relations between people by relations of each individual to God. The Gospel commands that we love God more than "others" (that is, man). To the question of what is the greatest commandment in the law, Jesus replied: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like unto it: love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt., XXII, 36-39; Mark, XII, 30, 31; Luke, X, 27). We have just seen how "love your neighbor" was sometimes interpreted and by such authorities as Apostle Paul! Hence, from the religious viewpoint (in the given instance, Christian, if love for man contradicts love for God, the former must be sacrificed to the latter. From this, with logical necessity, followed the justification of the religious wars, the crusades, the inquisition and the persecution of "heretics" and atheists. The value of human life was denied in the name of the absolute obligation of man to God. Strike down the heretics! Strike down the nonbelievers! Strike down the enemies of God!

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Why, it might be asked, has the author of this article up to now said nothing about *fear and impotence* as the root of any religion? Why has he said nothing about the function of religion as a means of *placating* a suffering man? Are these generally known Marxist ideas obsolete or incorrect?

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No, they are absolutely correct and in no way obsolete. But it is essential to have a clearer understanding of what the issue is here.

The fear and impotence of man before the blind forces of nature or the social elements which suppress him are a psychological prerequisite of a religion but not its real root. Animals also feel fear and impotence before danger. They feel it but are not conscious of it. Consciousness appears only in man. But this is not an individual consciousness but rather a collective one. The individual man never resisted nature; nature was always opposed by *social* man, the human collective.²⁰

Let us recall the remarkable words of Marx on the "restrictedness" of the relations of people "to one another and to nature," out of which arose the ancient "natural and popular religion."²¹ Feeling their impotence, people (not "man" but "people") resorted to the defense and protection of *our* totem, *our* god. A foreign god does not protect, but on the contrary, protection must be sought from him (and from enemy witchcraft). But what about fear and impotence when confronted with social forces? Here it is clear that protection against them must only be sought from *our* god: from "Sweet Jesus," the "Virgin," or the "Almighty Creator."

Religion as false consolation? Yes, but again from whom does the suffering man seek this consolation? Not god generally but rather *our* god! From the polytheistic assembly of gods usually several or even one were established as the saviour or consoler. This was the case of Osiris and Isis in Egypt, the "Great Mother" among the peoples of Anterior Asia and Mitra among the Iranians. When the old gods had begun to perform this consoling function too poorly, in the age of general crisis and mass calamities in the Roman Empire, a new consoler was needed, and one for the entire diverse and suppressed population of the Empire. This was Jesus Christ who promised and for a time gave consolation to "all who travail and are heavy laden" (Matt., XI, 28).²²

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The great materialist thinker Spinoza is responsible for the aphorism: "If Peter tells us something about Paul, we learn more about Peter than about Paul." The aphorism is very profound; however, of course, it must not be understood too literally and raised to an absolute truth.

Can it be applied to the science of religion? Seemingly it can.

The great sculptors of Ancient Greece such as Phidias, Polyclitus, Praxiteles and Leochares have left us fine sculptural images of Zeus, Apollo and the other gods of Olympus. But from them we learn not about these gods but rather about the creators of the statues and of the high artistic culture of Classic Greece.

The poems of Homer, the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" tell about the same gods of Olympus. But from these poems we know more about Homer (and about the other story tellers of that age), about the great "Homeric" epic poetry than about the Gods of Olympus. Andrey Rublev painted the ikon of the Virgin and many other ones. But from them we learn more about the artistic genius of Rublev and about the cultural environment from which he came than we do about the Mother of God or the saints.

The theologians of medieval Europe left many works, some very profound, about the properties of divinity and about the various doctrines of Christian dogma. But

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from these works we learn not about God and its qualities, but rather about the flexibility of the human intellect and those sociocultural conditions under which this intellect was directed to examine purely imaginary subjects.

The Gospel and other New Testament literature provide many details about Jesus Christ and about his life and teachings. But from the New Testament works we do not learn about Jesus Christ (we are not even precisely sure whether such a person actually existed) but rather of the social and ideological struggle within the context of which these works were written.

In a word, from Spinoza's aphorism we again draw confirmation that the main task of a historian of religion is not penetration into the essence of the images of religious fantasy or their similarity and differences, but rather a study of that socio-cultural environment and those specific historical conditions under which these images were created. The task is to study the position of people, their solidarity and, conversely, isolation which were reflected in the creation of religious ideas.

FOOTNOTES

1. See, for example: L. Ya. Shternberg, "Pervobytnaya Religiya v Svete Etnografii" [Primitive Religion in Light of Ethnography], Leningrad, 1936, p 31; V. G. Bogoraz, "Chukchi" [Chuckchees], Part 2, Religiya, Leningrad, 1939, pp 4, 11.
2. See V. N. Kharuzina, "Notes on the Use of the Word 'Fetishism'," ETNOGRAFIHESKOYE OBOZRENIYE, No 1-2, 1908.
3. See, for example, B. P. Shishlo, "Istoki Kul'ta Predkov [Sources of the Ancestor Cult], Leningrad, 1972.
4. K. von Sydow, "Selected Papers on Folklore," Copenhagen, 1948.
5. P. Radin, "Primitive Religion," New York, 1937 (2d Edition, 1957).
6. S. A. Tokarev, "Problems of Periodization in the History of Religion," VOPROSY NAUCHNOGO ATEIZMA, No 20, Moscow, 1976, pp 77, 78.
7. W. Hesberg, "Protestant, Catholic, Jew. An Essay in American Religious Sociology," New York, 1956, pp 14, 236; see also Yu. A. Levada, "Sotsial'naya Priroda Religii" [The Social Nature of Religion], Moscow, 1965, p 198.
8. S. A. Tokarev, "op. cit., p 80.
9. S. A. Tokarev, "Ranniye Formy Religii i ikh Razvitiye" [Early Forms of Religion and Their Development], Moscow, 1964, pp 6-10.
10. E. Fromm, "Psychoanalysis and Religion," New York, 1967, pp 34-37.
11. A. Toynbee, "An Historian's Approach to Religion," Oxford (USA), 1956, pp 10-13.

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12. The well-known Russian philosopher Vladimir Solov'yev made a curious attempt to combine Zoroastrian teachings about the great impure spirit, the antagonist of God, with Christian beliefs. He viewed the very concept of evil not in a negative sense, as the absence or lack of good, but as a positive and active world force fighting against good. Vl. Solov'yev understood the Apocalyptic "Anti-Christ" in a completely realistic and completely material manner, as an opponent of Christ which had to be born. See V. Solov'yev, "A Brief Tale about the Anti-Christ," "Sobr. Soch." [Collected Works], Vol 8, St. Petersburg, 1901.
13. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 3, p 2.
14. This was clearly seen by certain more perceptive bourgeois scholars. Thus, Robert Lowie, an ethnographer from the same very sound school of Boas as was Radin, wrote: "If we know that a tribe practices witchcraft, it believes in spirits and recognizes a secret force residing in inanimate nature, or, possibly, the primacy of any supernatural being, then we know precisely nothing about the religion of the given people. All depends upon the interdependence of various areas of supernaturalism, upon the emotional weight ascribed to each of them" (R. Lowie, "Primitive Religion," New York, 1925, p 53). But even more, we might add, depends upon the type and structure of that group of people which adheres to these beliefs and performs these rites.
15. See, for example, I. A. Kryvelev, "Religionznaya Kartina Mira i Yeye Bogoslovskaya Modernizatsiya" [The Religious Picture of the World and Its Theological Modernization], Moscow, 1968, pp 3-13 and so forth.
16. See S. A. Tokarev, "The Delimiting and Unifying Functions of Culture" (Papers for the Ninth International Congress of Archeological and Ethnographic Sciences, Chicago, 1973), Moscow, 1973.
17. In foreign countries a solid literature has already developed on the "sociology of religion." See, for example: G. LeBras, "Études de sociologie religieuse," Vols 1-2, Paris, 1955, 1956; W. Herberg, op. cit.; W. Stark, "The Sociology of Religion," London, 1969; R. Robertson, "Einführung in die Religionssoziologie," Munich, 1973, and others. Of the Soviet works, see particularly Yu. A. Levada, op. cit.
18. This segregating function of religion has been very correctly and clearly expressed by the modern American sociologist-journalist Harold Isaacs who has put religion in the same rank as the other social factors which disunite people (race, language, historical traditions and so forth). "All accumulated (historical.--S.T.) data show that the stronger the religious beliefs and ties, the greater the hostility for other religious beliefs and their supporters" (H. R. Isaacs, "Idols of the Tribe," New York, 1975, p 151). In truth, religious dissention has often served merely as a cover-up for purely earthly interests. But the belligerents have always sought the blessing of their gods. Here the leaders could be hypocrites and cynics, but the masses of people led by them, in believing blindly in them, also believe in the divine blessing. They "murdered and were murdered because they felt their beliefs and rites correct" (ibid., p 153, 154). "One thing can be said with confidence

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when we become acquainted with the conflicts of group individualities of our times: to one degree or another religion figures in all of them" (ibid., p 154).

19. V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 48, p 232.
20. Modern psychological science has reached the conclusion that "the individual does not enter into any ties with nature, any abiotic or biotic factors of the environment except for the various social functions involved in the use or conservation of society's natural resources" (B. G. Anan'yev, "O Probleмах Sovremennogo Chelovekoznaniiya" [On the Problems of Modern Anthropology], Moscow, 1977, p 248.
21. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch.," Vol 23, pp 89, 90.
22. The above-mentioned Harold Isaacs writes completely correctly on this question: "...It must be pointed out that whatever consolation an individual receives, in thus entering into religion, he receives it not as a single individual but as a member of a group. Even in the most contemplative and the most exotic sects and, of course, in all the reborn or millenarian sects in these processes co-contemplaters and like thinkers are essential." "They seek not only inner peace, but also an external tie...a feeling of general belonging to the others who feel the same way. These seekers of salvation do not go off alone to solitary mountains or on a desert vigil, rather they gather together in churches, temples, communes and communities" (H. Isaacs, op. cit., p 168).

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ON THE MARXIST UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION*

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 1, Jan-Feb 80 (signed to press 24 Jan 80)
pp 66-71

[Article by D. M. Ugrinovich]

[Text] S. A. Tokarev is widely known both in our nation and abroad as one of the most prominent Soviet students of religion. His works devoted to primitive religion and to the history of religions have been and remain desk references for many Soviet readers interested in the problems of scientific atheism. For this reason the appearance of S. A. Tokarev in print in an article devoted to the methodological problems of Marxist religious studies cannot help but attract close attention.

The article by S. A. Tokarev is marked by a wealth of historical and ethnographic material. It contains a number of correct and interesting judgments, observations and conclusions. At the same time, the treatment of a number of fundamental methodological questions evokes argument and a desire to refute the author. The present response is a rejoinder to such a dispute. It touches predominantly on those questions the treatment of which seems unconvincing to us in the article by S. A. Tokarev.

In Marxist religious studies, the thesis of religion as a social phenomenon is generally accepted. No researcher defending Marxist positions would deny this thesis. The disputes start when the question is raised of an interpretation of the given general thesis.

In the opinion of S. A. Tokarev (and this obviously expresses the basic idea of his article), "the main task of an historian of religion is not to penetrate into the essence of the images of religious fantasy, their similarity or the differences between them, but rather a study of that sociocultural milieu, those specific historical conditions under which these images were created; that placement of people, their solidarity and, conversely, separateness which were reflected in the creation of religious notions" (p 105).**This general conclusion stems from that definition of religion given by S. A. Tokarev at the start of the article, on page 91:

*On the question of the article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon" (SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979). Further references to this article are given in the text.

**[Pages cited in this and subsequent articles refer to pagination of Tokarev article in SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA No 3, Mar-Apr 79]

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religion "is not so much man's attitude toward God (the gods) as it is the attitude of people to one another over the question of the notions about God (the gods)."

First of all we would dispute the author's presenting religious faith (religious consciousness) as if it were something apart from and insignificant to those relations between people which occur in connection with and as a result of religious belief and which, in the author's mind, should be the main object of research by an historian or ethnographer studying religion. There is no doubt that the designated relations (in modern literature on religious studies they are designated as "religious relations")¹ require a careful study and that they comprise an important element of the religious superstructure. However is it wise to put them in opposition to the religious beliefs of people, emphasizing the little significance of the beliefs (the attitude toward God is also a belief in God) in comparison with the relations? In our view, it is not. The problem is that religious relations (this is also recognized by S. A. Tokarev on page 91) are among the "ideological" (in the terminology of V. I. Lenin) relations which differ from the "material" (that is, economic) in the fact that they always develop in passing through the consciousness of people,² that is, they are formed in accord with their views and ideas. For example, it is scarcely correct to put the moral relations between people in opposition to their moral judgments and views. Certainly outside these moral judgments and views (even in elementary, undeveloped forms) the moral relations themselves are impossible. Thus, moral criteria are inapplicable to the behavior of a breast-feeding child or a mentally ill person. The situation is analogous in the area of religion. Outside an analysis of religious beliefs and ideas it is impossible to understand the basis of that real community which links the believers together and unifies them into a religious community. Certainly the very cult actions of people in this community represent a symbolic embodiment of definite religious ideas, images and notions.³ The relations of people "over the question" of belief in God are impossible if there is no belief and the content of this belief has a substantial impact on the content and form of religious relations. In this regard let us compare the relations between the clergy and the laity in Catholicism where the particular role of the clergy stems from the dogma "there is no salvation outside the Church," and the same relations in certain Protestant organizations which proceed from the dogma that only individual belief provides salvation and they are guided by the principle of a "universal priesthood." Obviously the content of the religious beliefs is in no way somehow secondary or unimportant for understanding the other elements of the religious superstructure, that is, the manner of worship, religious attitudes and relations and institutions.

The article of S. A. Tokarev raises not only the question of the relationship of religious belief and religious attitudes. The author endeavors to create an opposition between the study of religious beliefs and religious consciousness and a study of the social roots of religion and its social functions. (Let us recall the already quoted place on the main task of the historian of religion.) Such an opposition seems incorrect to us. In actuality, is "the penetration into the essence of the images of religious fantasy" possible, from the Marxist viewpoint, outside and in addition to a study of that social milieu in which such images arise? A scientific understanding of religious beliefs inevitably presupposes an elucidation of their social base. But a study of the social base for religious beliefs is impossible if we neglect their content. For example, is it possible to seriously study the social causes for the rise of Christianity if we divorce ourselves from

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the specific religious beliefs of the Early Christians which were reflected in the "Confessions of St. John"? Here let us recall the scrupulous and most detailed analysis by F. Engels of the content of this New Testament book and which he makes in his well-known articles on primitive Christianity.⁴ On the basis of an analysis of the content of the "Confessions," Engels explains the social sources for the rise of Christianity and its rapid spread.

In this regard it must be pointed out that the historian far from always had an opportunity to recreate the economic and social context of one or another state or people proceeding from the sources which describe directly the economy, the social or political system. It sometimes happens that the religious texts are the only sources which come down to us. In this case the researcher is confronted with the task of reconstructing an economic and social system which at one time existed for a certain people proceeding from a knowledge of the religious superstructure and an understanding that it always reflected the basis in a mystified manner. An example of such a very successful reconstruction would be the book by the well-known Soviet historian N. M. Nikol'skiy in which on a basis of the surviving Phoenician religious texts he has been able to prove that Phoenicia was not exclusively a trading country and that ancient agricultural communities played a significant role in its economy.⁵ And S. A. Tokarev himself has a number of works in which he carefully compares the content of religious beliefs with the social environment in which they appeared and thus gives them a scientific explanation. We might mention the work of S. A. Tokarev "The Essence and Origin of Magic,"⁶ in which he provides an informative and profound analysis of the social roots of the various types of magic: for hunting, for casting an evil spell, for love, meteorological and so forth.

It is obvious that opposing the study of the content of religious beliefs to the study of their social basis is also incorrect in methodological terms and can only mislead the researcher.

In the article by S. A. Tokarev, the "penetration into the essence of religious fantasy" is viewed as an unimportant and secondary task also from the viewpoint of disclosing the social functions of a religion and its role in society. This assertion by the author is also refutable.

Initially, one general methodological comment. The social functions of one or another phenomenon in the sphere of social consciousness cannot be correctly described without consideration of to what degree it reflects reality truly and objectively. A true reflection of reality in the consciousness of people always objectively plays a fundamentally different role in society than does a false, illusory one. This applies completely to religion. The attempts to describe the social functions of religion outside of its gnoseological assessment (that is, an assessment as a distorted, perverted reflection of reality) are typical for the modern bourgeois sociology of religion, and in particular for that current which has been called "functionalism." The functionalists, in following E. Durkheim, assert that the social functions of religion do not depend upon the truthfulness or falseness of the religious ideas. In their works they give a one-sided, incomplete description of religion's social functions over-stressing its integrating and communicative function and ignoring its main function, the function of an "opiate," that is, an illusory compensation for the social weakness of people. In ignoring a gnoseological estimate of religious consciousness as a false consciousness, it is impossible to understand the objective social role of a religious faith which creates an illusion of

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a temporary subjective consolation and at the same time objectively diverts a person from the real problems and contradictions of reality and prevents his involvement in the active transformation of social relations.⁷

There is no doubt that these general Marxist theses are known to S. A. Tokarev. It must be pointed out that in his description of religion's social functions, there are many interesting and correct statements and extensive historical material has been brought in. One cannot help but agree with S. A. Tokarev when he points to the role of religion as a factor dividing people and setting into opposition members from different religious and ethnoconfessional communities. Using enormous historical material the author has convincingly shown that the role of religion has been (and presently remains) not only a force which integrates and unites people but also an important factor of their segregation, their disunity, and both the religious integration and religious segregation in a class society have objectively served and do serve the interests of the ruling classes.

However, one can scarcely agree with the author when he feels that segregation is "the most important function of national religions" (p 99). In our view, the most important function of any religions, including the national ones, is the illusory-compensatory function, that is, the function of an illusory compensation for the social weakness of people. Marx had precisely this function in mind in his famous thesis: "Religion is the opiate of the people."⁸ Why precisely is this function of religion the main one?

In the first place, because it reflects the specific essence of religion and separates it from all other forms of social consciousness and cultural phenomena. Certainly not only religion operates as a factor of segregation, but so do many other cultural phenomena which manifest the uniqueness of ethnic communities, the selfish class and estate interests of people and so forth. For example, here one would put certain rites and traditions which have developed within a certain ethnos, and here also in a class society one would include the moral, political and legal views of the ruling classes. The latter justify and reinforce both class and estate as well as racial and national discrimination and they put persons of different national, racial and social origin into opposition. For this reason the segregation function is not specific to religion and does not express the essence of this social phenomenon. On the contrary, the illusory-compensatory function stems from the very essence of a religious depiction of the world, as a false and distorted reflection brought about by the limited nature of human practice and by the inability of people to consciously realize the laws of social development.

Secondly, the illusory-compensatory function is inherent to all religious phenomena regardless of under what social conditions they function. Of course, this does not mean that the given function is realized uniformly in any historical conditions. For example, religious consolation is certainly not the same in primitive magic and in modern Christianity and in Christianity religious compensation plays far from an identical role under the conditions of capitalism and socialism. Nevertheless, religious consciousness always and under all historical conditions (even when religion serves as an ideological banner of progressive social movements) objectively performs the function of an "opiate" which distracts people from reality, impedes the social activeness of the masses and directs this activeness into a false channel. There is the other question that the social role of religion does not come down to the mentioned function but also includes many other areas of social action; some

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of these were examined in detail in the article by S. A. Tokarev. But, in our view, it is fundamentally incorrect to overlook the illusory-compensatory function of religion.

We would also point out that it is impossible to study the illusory-compensatory function of religion without a careful analysis of the contents of religious beliefs and without a clear gnoseological assessment of religion as a perverted, reality-distorting consciousness. In this regard it must be stressed that a Marxist approach to religion presupposes a unity of its gnoseological and sociological analysis. A gnoseological approach to religion not enhanced by the sociological in pre-Marxist atheism led to enlightenment but impeded an understanding of the real ways to overcome religion. But the sociological approach which ignored a gnoseological assessment of religion led Durkheim and his contemporary followers to conclusions on the eternal nature of religion and its inevitability in any society.⁹

We would point out that in his article S. A. Tokarev has not strictly followed the principle proclaimed by him and according to which the content of religious beliefs is of secondary significance for the historian of religion. Thus, on page 91, he raises the question: "But what...remains common in all these religious ideas from the viewpoint of their content, that common feature which justifies putting them in one sphere of social consciousness and separates them from any other, nonreligious spheres?" Thus, the author endeavors to settle the question of the main specific feature of religious consciousness, a question the solution to which is largely determined by an understanding of the place of religion in a society and its social functions. In completely sharing the very posing of the question, we, unfortunately, again are unable to agree with its solution.

In the opinion of S. A. Tokarev, the main thing in the content of religious ideas is "not the names of gods and not the theological teachings about their properties and relationships and not the ideas on the relationship of man to god, but rather what answer is given by one or another religion to the origin of evil in human life" (p 92). In our view, the question of the "origin of evil in human life" cannot be considered the main thing in the content of religious ideas for several reasons.

In the first place, because in the rudimentary religious ideas of the primitive age a concept of evil had not yet been differentiated from the concepts of "bad," "harmful," or "disgraceful." The formation of specific moral judgments, standards and concepts occupied an extended historical period and ended, obviously, only in a class society. This presupposed: a) an abandoning of the identification of society and nature, the "cosmos and the socium"; the moral judgment gradually assumed its own specific object, man; b) a gradual separating of "good" from "useful," that is, the forming of moral judgments per se which were distinct from other value judgments; c) the separation of "what is" from "what should be." Moral obligation ceased to be based exclusively on the authority of custom and tradition and assumed its own independence.¹⁰

Secondly, the question of the origin of evil is not the main thing in religion, since the solution to it was always determined by the belief in the existence of supernatural beings, properties or relationships. This in essence is also recognized by S. A. Tokarev. He writes: "...Common to any religious explanation of evil has been the fact that the sought cause of evil was presented in a distorted, mystified, imaginary, fantastic form; the cause was in that form which we now term the

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'supernatural' or 'other worldly'" (p 96). Thus, in order to prove what the common factor is in a religious explanation of evil, S. A. Tokarev was forced to turn to a belief in the supernatural which is the very core of any religious consciousness and its main content. As for the problem of evil and ethical problems generally, in religion they play an extremely great role and it would be wrong to underestimate them, but here it is essential to bear in mind that they are not specific to religion (a nonreligious solution to them is possible) and for this reason they cannot be viewed as its main content. Moreover, in declaring the ethical problem to be the main content of religion, we thereby involuntarily do service to the defenders of religion who endeavor by all means to show the impossibility of the existence of morality without religion.

We agree with S. A. Tokarev that the tasks of atheists does not come down to a monotonous repetition of the thesis "there is no god," and that it is essential to be able to draw practical conclusions from either the religious or atheistic premises: To call on god (the gods) to escape from evil, suffering and injustice or to fight with one's own forces against evil, suffering and injustice" (p 96). However, it must not be forgotten that correct conclusions can be drawn only from correct premises. If the atheistic premises (including the thesis "there is no god") are not just mechanically instilled by rote but rather are given a thorough scientific and philosophical basis, they comprise a core of an individual's scientific ideology. And in no way should they be neglected.

FOOTNOTES

1. See I. N. Yablokov, "Sotsiologiya Religii" [The Sociology of Religion], Moscow, 1979, pp 105-110.
2. V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 1, p 137.
3. For more detail on this see: D. M. Ugrinovich, "Obryady. Za i Protiv" [Rites. Pro and Contra], Moscow, 1975.
4. See F. Engels, "Bruno Bauer and Primitive Christianity," K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 19; F. Engels "The Book of Revelation," ibid., Vol 21; F. Engels, "On the History of Primitive Christianity," ibid., Vol 22.
5. See N. M. Nikol'skiy, "Etyudy po Istorii Finikiyskikh Obshchinnnykh i Zemledel'cheskikh Kul'tov" [Studies on the History of Phoenician Communal and Agricultural Cults], Minsk, 1948.
6. S. A. Tokarev, "The Essence and Origin of Magic," "Issledovaniya i Materialy po Voprosam Pervobytnnykh Religiozynykh Verovaniy" [Research and Materials on the Questions of Primitive Religious Beliefs] ("Trudy In-ta Etnografii AN SSSR" [Transactions of the Ethnography Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences], Vol 51), Moscow, 1959, pp 7-75.
7. For more detail on a critique of functionalism, see: D. M. Ugrinovich, "Vvedeniye v Teoreticheskoye Religovedeniye" [Introduction to Theoretical Religious Studies], Moscow, 1973, pp 98-104; D. M. Ugrinovich, "Functionalism in Modern American Sociology of Religion," VOPROSY FILOSOFII, No 9, 1976.

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8. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch.," Vol 1, p 415.
9. For more detail on this see: D. M. Ugrinovich, "Vvedeniye v Teoreticheskoye...", pp 82-83.
10. For more detail see: O. G. Drobnitskiy, "Ponyatiye Morali" [The Concept of Morality], Moscow, 1974; A. A. Guseynov, "Sotsial'naya Priroda Nравstvennosti" [The Social Nature of Morality], Moscow, 1974; A. I. Tatarenko, "Struktury Nравstvennogo Soznaniya" [Structures of Moral Consciousness], Moscow, 1974.

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ON THE ESSENTIAL AND NONESSENTIAL IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION*

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 1, Jan-Feb 80 (signed to press 24 Jan 80)
pp 72-79

[Article by I. A. Kryvelev]

[Text] Among the numerous and not very interrelated ideas found in the article, for a start we would point out one which seems basic. Its essence is as follows: the most essential feature of religion, as a form of social conscience, is not the content of the religious beliefs but rather the social functions of the religion. For this reason "the main task of a historian of religion is not to penetrate into the essence of the images of religious fantasy..., but rather a study of that sociocultural milieu and those specific historical conditions in which these ideas were created, that placement of people, their unity and, conversely, disunity which have been reflected in the creation of religious ideas" (p 105). In other words, a historian of religion should study not so much the history of religion as that milieu, that historical situation in which the religions arose and function, that is simply the history of society, the production relations of people, the class struggle, the history of science and generally culture.

The motivation of this thesis as given by the author appears somewhat unusual.

In and of themselves religious beliefs, he states, are very hazy, unclear and even "frequently contradictory." Their descriptions in the ethnographic literature often do not agree with one another. There have been contradictory descriptions of totemistic beliefs, fetishism and fetish, mana and manitou, churinga and ancestor spirits. Moreover, it must be assumed, much in these descriptions has merely been thought up by the ethnographers themselves. For example, "in recent years the opinion was voiced (von Sydow) that in essence there are no personifications of these (spirits of vegetation.--I.K.) and that the 'rye wolves,' 'grain maidens,' 'grain mothers' and others as described by Mannhardt have been thought up.... The people know nothing about them" (p 89). Von Sydow "voiced the opinion" and this was enough to declare numerous statements in the ethnographic literature on the cult of vegetation spirits as absurd.

*On the question of the article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon" (SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979). Further references to this article are given in the text.

What has been said about the unreliability, sparseness and unsubstantiability of our information on primitive beliefs has also been applied by the author to the religions of ancient class societies. Although the information available to science on the ideas of the gods and the content of other religious notions from this age is richer still "much remains guesswork" (p 89). For this reason the ethnographers and historians of religions constantly argue in their attempts to agree not only on the content of the concepts of animism, fetishism, the veneration of nature and so forth but also on the images of Osiris, Isis, Marduk, Ishtar, Zeus, Poseidon and others. The situation is no easier with modern religions.

Here there should not be any such difficulties as there are fully enough materials on modern beliefs. But the author still considers the situation difficult in terms of studying modern religions. He feels that the contents of beliefs are presently little known to the people. Relying on materials from a poll by the American Gallup Institute which show that many believing Christians have a poor understanding of the content of Christian dogma, S. A. Tokarev asserts that "an enormous mass of believers...has a very hazy notion of the content of Christian beliefs. It can be said that a majority of the believers does not know them at all" (p 90); the professional theologians and a few specialists do know them. This also is proof in favor of the thesis that the contents of religious teachings are not of essential significance for religious studies and the history of religions. The line of argument for this idea lies on a somewhat different plane than for the primitive and ancient religions. In one instance, in addition to the fact that the masses had a poor knowledge of their beliefs, modern science can also say little about them. In the other, the scholars can understand, but the believers themselves do not know what they believe. A common conclusion can be drawn that it is not worth the while elucidating the content of either the ancient or modern beliefs for the content is nonessential and difficult to explain. As is known, the task of science is to study the essential phenomena, while the beliefs, as S. A. Tokarev asserts, are nonessential for a description of religion.

As for the difficulties involved in studying religious beliefs, the author is correct. Between the scholarly schools and their individual representatives there have actually been disputes over the question of the content and scope of various concepts used in religious studies. Many of these concepts are indefinite and hazy. The origin of a number of phenomena has been explained differently by the various schools. Many diverse systems of classification have been proposed. But which of the humanities does not suffer from this? For example, is there complete unanimity between the scholars of the various schools and currents on the question of the content of the basic concepts in the science dealing with society and social development? Are certain basic categories of philosophy and their relationship and their origin in our consciousness interpreted uniformly by all philosophers? Can this "clash" in the interpretation of these concepts and problems be considered justification for taking them off the scholarly "agenda" or simply abolishing them?! We feel the opposite solution to be more correct, that is, the less one or another problem has been elaborated in science, the more effort must be made for its truly scientific solution, under the condition, of course, that this is not a pseudoproblem but a real, urgent one which has beset science for an extended period. But that the content of religious beliefs and such ideological phenomena which have been reflected in religious studies in the form of generally accepted categories does not represent an aggregate of pseudoproblems seems obvious, for they are linked to the basic questions of ideology.

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To the above-given argument in favor of the "nonessentialness" of beliefs, S. A. Tokarev adds still another recognized by him as even more important (p 91). Three religions such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity are compared in terms of the contents of their beliefs. It is correctly pointed out that there are great differences between these beliefs. But still, supposedly, "the presence of sharp contrasts in no way prevents us from putting Buddhism, Christianity and Islam into one category, into one type the type of world religions" (p 91). Of course, it doesn't prevent us nor is it clear why it should [prevent us] because the categorization into a single group is carried out in the given case by using a feature which has no bearing on the content of the beliefs. It is rather a question of the geographic distribution of the corresponding religions. As is known from elementary logic, a phenomenon can be classified using various criteria, following, certainly, one principle of division in each individual classification system. The existence of the concept "world religions" for this reason in no way eliminates either the fact of the presence of doctrinal differences between them or the necessity of studying these differences.

Finally, one other argument in favor of the "nonessentialness" of religious ideas and beliefs which we touched upon in passing. The author shows decisive skepticism over whether or not various beliefs exist or arise in a "people" or whether they are imposed on the people by various ideologists. In relying on the American ethnographer Paul Radin, he asserts that "generally a predominant majority of the beliefs described by researchers among peoples of various nations belongs not to the people themselves, not to the mass of the population, but only to a small stratum of shamans, priests and other 'religious thinkers'; they are not only the repositories and experts in these beliefs but also the creators of these beliefs" (p 89). In developing this idea, S. A. Tokarev goes on to say that the "religious thinkers"... "themselves created the world of spirits and gods, deceiving their fellow tribesmen and ultimately themselves" (p 101). As is known, scientific religious studies for a long time has not seriously accepted the vulgar theory which explains the rise and existence of a religion by the deceit with which the fools were ensnared by clever manipulators playing on their stupidity. It is unlikely but a fact that the author has arrived at the deception theory!

The reasons and the material for repudiating the basic idea in the studied article are easily disclosed even in the article itself, for, as strange as it may seem, at a number of places the author argues against himself.

He reminds us that Marxism views religion as a form of social consciousness (p 93). This is correct but precisely from this it follows that research on religion is primarily research on the content and nature of this specific form of *social consciousness*. The author goes on to raise the question of what is "common" in all these religious notions from the viewpoint of their content...?" He then answers this question ambiguously and evasively.

Most often, he says, as the basic feature characterizing all religious ideas they point to a belief in the supernatural. Does the author agree with this solution to the question? It appears as if he agrees but at the same time disagrees. For the present let us accept this definition without indulging in a criticism of its inaccuracy and a certain haziness (p 92). The importance of this "for the present" soon becomes apparent in the sense that the author essentially rejects this "definition."

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Religion, from his viewpoint, in no way creates an opposition between a scientific ideology and its view of the world. Possibly there was a time when this opposition did exist, but not now. Theologians have a good knowledge of natural science and do no dispute its theories just as they do not dispute the achievements in the humanities. On the ideological level, hence, there are no contradictions between religion and science. It goes without saying that this is decisively wrong, for a religion, even an ultramodern one, cannot abandon the bifurcation (in fantasy) of the world into the natural and supernatural elements, and if it does abandon this, then it ceases to be a religion. But we would like to emphasize something else here. The author has engaged in analyzing the content of those very religious beliefs which, in his opinion, is inessential. In the subsequent exposition he constantly speaks precisely about religious ideas, notions, beliefs and views!

On many pages of the text, S. A. Tokarev is concerned with analyzing precisely the religious teachings, but not always (in truth, from my viewpoint) correctly and accurately, as I will endeavor to prove subsequently. He raises the question: What is the main thing in the concept of religious ideas? And he finds this main thing in "what answer one or another religion gives to the question of the origin of *evil* in human life" (p 92). He then describes in detail how the various religions symbolize and personify in their teachings the abstract category of evil, how the idea of satan and other personifications of evil arose and what role was played by this idea in the Old and New Testaments. On this level the myth of the fall from grace of Adam and Eve was criticized on a rather flat, rationalistic level, and in the conclusion of this criticism the author exclaims: "It would be hard to imagine anything more absurd!" (p 92). It is stated that "the thesis of a devil did not become part of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol of faith" and draws the general conclusion: "here there is a wide-open field for religious studies" (p 94). On the contrary, S. A. Tokarev does not see a wide-open field in the problem of the "overcoming of death," for "a majority of religions does not even raise this question" (p 95). This to say the least unsubstantiated assertion is needed by the author in order to draw the conclusion that the formula "religion as the overcoming of death," although imaginable, in no way replaces the above-given formula of "religion as the explanation and justification of evil and suffering." Why one of these formulas should replace the other and not complement it is not very clear. But regardless of whether the above-given thesis of S. A. Tokarev is essentially valid or not, we would point out that the author, in spite of his basic view according to which religious teachings are unessential for a description of religion, here views the latter precisely as an expression of definite *teachings*, whether concerned with the origin of evil or the overcoming of death.

Regardless of how he endeavors in his description of religion, to escape from an analysis of its teachings, he is unable to do this and is continuously caught up in the sphere of religious ideology. He repeatedly declares that "it is most important historically to study the social function of the given religion (and any religion generally) as one of the social features separating one group of people from another" and that "it is most important not to study the names of the gods or the spirits, not the mythological tales about them and not a description of the cult rites...", but rather a study of the above-indicated "social function of religion" (p 97). Here, in truth, a stipulation is made: "this does not mean, of course, that we do not need to study the content of religious beliefs. They must be studied but this must not be considered the main purpose of the research." This ultimately confuses

the entire question. S. A. Tokarev speaks about the advisability of studying religious ideology, but he does not consider such research the main thing in religious studies. Consequently, ideology must be studied but this can be done without studying its component ideas.

It goes without saying that there cannot be any argument against examining the social foundations of religion as a whole and individual religious phenomena and forms, in particular. However, why should this be done at the expense of studying the ideology itself? We find all the more unconvincing the complaints directed by the author against those Soviet students of religion who are concerned with studying religious ideology. He accuses them of nothing more than a theological bias (p 97)! One cannot help but find such odious labeling not a very conscientious move. With sufficient justification S. A. Tokarev could criticize himself that by his constructs, whether he desires it or not, he encourages research on religious teachings and their history. He writes: "The history of religion is the history of what different relations developed between in the course of social development and how these relations have been projected into the ideological area, into the area of religious ideas" (p 97). Is it possible to understand in what manner the "various relations" have been projected into the area of religious ideas if one does not study these ideas?! S. A. Tokarev refutes himself approximately in the same manner when he uses such formulas: "Religion...is not so much man's attitude toward God (the gods) as it is the *relation of people to one another* over the question of the ideas of God and the gods" (p 96). If this is the case, then these ideas (about God and the gods!) are of primary significance for the student of religion and there are no grounds to put their study in the department of divinity.

In truth, our author does have an argument which, it seems to him, rescues his position. He does not condemn an interest in studying religious ideology generally; he is only against giving primary importance to this problem in religious studies. In fact such a move does not alter anything. In order to understand ideology, it is essential to study precisely ideology and its terrestrial (of course, social!) roots. But it is wrong to put one in opposition to the other. There is the other question: Should the student or historian of religion himself be concerned with studying the general historical problems and phenomena or can he use the work of his colleagues specialized in such research ex professo? For example, is it his job to study the productive forces, production relations, the course of the class struggle, political history, cultural history, for example, in the Roman Empire during the first centuries A.D., when Christianity was spreading there? Why should he not use the colossal material which has been acquired on these questions by the general historiography of the given age and continues now to be continuously filled out by the efforts of the Soviet and foreign historians of the Classical World? But the research on religious ideology, in the given case, Early Christianity, is his immediate specialty where he possesses special knowledge and in which an historian of any other specialty cannot replace him. For example, it is impossible to force an art historian to be concerned with independent research on the history, for example, of military affairs on the grounds that battle painting played a major role in the development of fine arts and the actual wars of the corresponding period were reflected in it.

The actual call to abandon an analysis of the content of religious ideology links S. A. Tokarev with an unique ideological neutralism. The question of a divine being is viewed by him only on a disrespectful ironical level. The author depicts the quarrel between religion and atheism over this fundamental question which divides

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them as a "hopeless and pointless repetition of the phrases 'God exists' and 'there is no god'" (p 96). One would not like to see in our press such a caricaturization of the struggle between the apologists of religion and its opponents, particularly one that puts both on the same level. And it is not merely a question of God! It is an issue of the supernatural world, the supernatural beings, their recognition or nonrecognition. And we are in no way engaged in a hopeless repetition of the phrase "there is no god." In fighting against the religious ideology, we criticize the sense and content of its basic postulates, in particular, the teachings about God, and we do this for the sake of establishing a scientific materialistic ideology.

In atheistic propaganda, S. A. Tokarev recommends abandoning the theoretical ideological problems and being concerned only with the "absolutely fundamental opposition of two practical lines: to appeal either to God (to the gods) to escape from evil, suffering and injustice or to fight with one's own forces against evil, suffering and injustice (p 96). Supposedly it is not our concern whether God exists or not as long as we do not appeal to him. But if he does exist, how can one help but appeal to him?!

On individual questions the discussed article contains a number of equally confused and unsound assertions as on the basic question which we have examined above. The exposition starts with the definition of religion described by the author as "atheistic" being recognized as similar to theology. This is achieved by a simple although somewhat strange strategem.

With the imaginary, as the author feels, diversity in the existing definitions of religion, there are only two of them, the theological and the atheistic. He gives a generally correct description of the first, although he forgets to point out that it is based upon the teachings of divine revelation. As for the second, the author finds only one feature to describe it: it proceeds "from a nonrecognition of the existence of anything supernatural" (p 87). Thus, scientific religious studies end up being based on only a certain negative feature, the "not." It goes without saying that such an assertion has no real sense for nothing can be based on a vacuum. In terms of Marxist religious studies, up to now we have assumed that it proceeded from certain basic theses of dialectical and historical materialism concerning the material nature of the world, the relationship of social existence and consciousness and teachings about the forms of social consciousness. The classic definition of religion as a fantastic reflection in the human mind of those external forces which dominate over man (F. Engels) in no way seems to us based either on a "not" or on a kinship with theology, as the author asserts, experiencing here, at his own admission, "some amazement" [p 87]. Incidentally he detects such kinship with theology in all the "atheistic" definitions of religion. On what grounds? On the grounds that all these definitions interpret religion "as an aggregate of ideas dealing with a certain other-worldly force standing above man" (p 87). The difference is slight: "The theologians say that this force actually exists while the atheists deny its existence." All these constructs lead to the same basic idea of S. A. Tokarev according to which ideology can be studied without studying the ideas contained in it. We will not return to a critique of this strange concept but would merely point out that in formulating and defending it, the author recommends a procedure which is rather well known and discredited in the atheistic camp called the deideologization of religion.

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On certain questions S. A. Tokarev evidences a rather real affinity for traditional theological views. For example, he shares the concept of "strict monotheism" which is apologetic for Judaism. In this instance he relates this description to the Judaism of the age "after the Captivity" (p 90) and in others disregards this phasal feature and speaks merely about Judaic monotheism. Here he often contradicts himself. It turns out, for example, that "in the monotheistic religion of Israel... evil is the serving of foreign gods instead of serving their own god of Yahweh" (p 93). If it is a question of belief in really existing foreign gods then what sort of faith figures in a majority of the books from the Old Testament. What sort of monotheistic religion is it if it recognizes the existence of many gods?! Here we are confronted with an ethnotheistic variety of ordinary polytheism. In affirming the "strict monotheism" of Judaism, the Jewish and Christian theologians pursue different but equally reactionary objectives. The former endeavor to thereby emphasize the "god-chosenness" of Israel and boast what a good deed it has rendered mankind in showing us the most elevated form of worship. The latter, in deriving Christianity from Judaism, as is known, link them by a rather close dogmatic proximity and defend their own adherence to strict monotheism, although this is somewhat paradoxical in light of the teachings about the Trinity.

Generally speaking an interpretation of the concept of monotheism merits a separate and serious examination which we will not be concerned with here due to the lack of space. We have touched upon it here only as regards individual mistaken ideas found in the article under discussion.

Also among such mistakes is the assertion that the teachings of original sin as the source of evil in the world was first given by Christianity. The author depicts things as if the ancient religions were steadily and consistently working toward a solution of the question of the origin of evil in the world. The Hellenistic religions and Judaism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Mazdaism were involved in a number of these searches. One discovers "a very ordered picture of a gradual ascent of philosophical thought to an evermore consistent and generalized solution to the problem of evil in the world" (p 93). Suddenly Christianity intervenes in this salutary process (which was almost crowned with success?). "The ordered picture... was unexpectedly disrupted by the Christian concept of evil and sin." There follows a critique of this concept which "is extremely strange and illogical"--in contrast to those which preceded it--and the myth of the fall from grace of Adam and Eve is described. Why did S. A. Tokarev not point out that this myth is found in the Old Testament which was based not on Christianity but on Judaism. It is a different question that in the contents of the remaining Old Testament books this myth does not play a major role for the authors of these books were interested not so much in the fate of mankind as that of the god-chosen people. But the erroneous historical assertion still remains. But most importantly are there grounds to put the Christian concept of origin of evil in the world as "strange and illogical" in contrast to the other preceding religious explanations of this question as lofty and philosophically profound?! They [the latter] are in no way better and are no less "strange and illogical." In the article by S. A. Tokarev a large place is given over to the problem posed by him (possibly not without his own reasons) of that role which religion played in the integration and segregation of people and social groups. The question itself merits special examination, but the schematic solution offered by the author seems unconvincing. On this level he compares religion with art and asserts that while in the course of historical development "in art

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the forces of integration have been growing and the forces of segregation weakening"; in religion, on the contrary, "the segregation factor from the very outset has prevailed" (p 101). And even the appearance of world religions did not alter things. Of course, the "appearance of world religions was...a powerful upsurge in the integrating trend"; but "this integration was ephemeral, more apparent than real, as well as deceptive" (p 102). [He] begins a search for the basis on which to assert that the appearance of world religions was a factor for segregating, not integrating people: First, branches, sects and schools formed in these religions. Second, the churches of the world religions strengthened segregation in the world by not instituting orders of universal equality: The clergy was separate from the laymen, and within the clergy there were various gradations such as deacons and archdeacons, priests and arch priests and later on even bishops, metropolitans and exarchs with patriarchs (p 102). What sort of integration, indeed, can there be in a society where archdeacons and exarchs exist separately from each other (!) and even priest-monks from archimandrites? Absolute segregation! Thus, can one submerge a serious question in unserious wordiness.

For describing the level of religious studies in the given article, the footnote found on page 94* is of interest. It turns out that no one else but Vladimir Solov'yev introduced into Christianity the figure of the devil as a personified embodiment of evil. "He viewed the very concept of evil not in a negative sense, as the absence or lack of good, but as a positive and active world force fighting against good. Vl. Solov'yev understood the Apocalyptic 'Anti-Christ' in a completely realistic and material way as the enemy of Christ which had to be born." But by whom and when has this ever been understood differently. Was it just at the beginning of the 20th century that the notion arose of an Anti-Christ which had to be born? In order to make such statements all the history of Christianity must be forgotten.

Generally speaking, to my great regret, in the article by S. A. Tokarev I do not find that content which would cause one to view it as a contribution to scientific religious studies.

*[See fn 12, S. A. Tokarev, SE, No 3, 1979.]

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ON THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 2, Mar-Apr 80 (signed to press 24 Mar 80)
pp 49-63

[Article by Yu. I. Semenov]

[Text] The article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)"¹ cannot help but attract attention. In it one of our most prominent specialists in this area makes a critique of certain established ideas about religion and at the same time presents his own understanding of the given phenomenon. One can agree with S. A. Tokarev or not but undoubtedly his article will force us to turn again to the question to the essence of religion.

A critical study of the views given in the article to a significant degree is complicated by the circumstance that the author is not always clear and consistent. But, in any event, to the degree that one can understand the article, S. A. Tokarev evidently is not in agreement with the concept prevalent in our literature according to which the main, basic feature of religion is belief in the supernatural. Regardless of individual statements of a different sort (p 92), in his article he, in our view, essentially tries, if not to refute it, than at least to put it in doubt. S. A. Tokarev does this in pointing out that theologians also understand religion as an aggregate of ideas concerned with an other-worldly supernatural force standing above man (p 87). Finally, he directly challenges such an understanding of religion in raising the question of whether or not the main thing in religion is actually the content of the religious ideas or whether belief in God (or in gods, spirits, an unclear force and so forth) is actually the essence of religion (p 88). Immediately after this question the author essentially gives a negative answer to it.

In essence S. A. Tokarev supports the "bold and well-grounded conclusion" of P. Radin that a predominant majority of the beliefs described by researchers for peoples of various nations belongs to a small group of shamans, priests and other "religious thinkers" who have actually created them, while "the simple people, that is a predominant majority of the 'believers' does not know these beliefs and is not particularly interested in them..." (p 89). The author not only does not dispute this thesis but also endeavors to show that it is true in terms of the religions of the ancient world as well as the three world religions (pp 89-91).

But let us pose the question what actually does it mean by "not to know the beliefs"? Does this mean not to have beliefs and not to believe in a supernatural force? No-where does S. A. Tokarev specifically explain this. But the entire logic of his

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exposition makes it possible to understand it precisely in this manner. In the first place, in this section he considers as identical the concepts "the content of religious ideas," "belief in a supernatural force" and "beliefs" (pp 88-89); secondly, the entire system of his line of argument is aimed at showing that belief in the supernatural is not in any way an essential feature of religion. What could be a more convincing proof of the last thesis than the data showing that a predominant majority of the followers of religion does not believe in a supernatural force? It is in no way accidental that S. A. Tokarev in saying that a majority of the "believers" do not know their beliefs, puts the word "believers" in quotes (p 89).

But if these people do not believe in a supernatural force, what gives him grounds to consider them religious and not persons without a religion, that is, atheists. Actually S. A. Tokarev provides not one but rather several answers to this question. One of them he gives in passing. In saying that the simple people do not know the beliefs and are not interested in them, S. A. Tokarev immediately adds: "for them it is enough to perform the established rites and make sacrifices" (p 89). But why did these people perform the rites and make sacrifices? There can only be one answer: they performed the rites and made sacrifices to affect the supernatural forces. In other words, the performance of rites irrefutably shows that these people believed in a supernatural force and thereby had a definite idea of this. It is impossible to have a belief and not know it. Hence, in giving this answer, S. A. Tokarev contradicts all that he has said on these very pages. In practical terms he recognizes not only that the simple people who he has declared not to know the beliefs in actuality believed in a supernatural force but also that this belief is an essential and necessary feature of religion. However he recognizes this only in practical terms.

Also contradictory are all the answers (and precisely the answers and not the answer) of S. A. Tokarev to the question of the essence of religion, including those which he does not give in passing but specifically sets out to establish. If the content of the religious ideas is not essential for a religion, as S. A. Tokarev repeatedly states, then their forms are all the more unessential. If it is possible not to have religious ideas, not to know the beliefs and nevertheless be a religious person, this means that religion is not part of the sphere of consciousness and is not a form of social consciousness. However, S. A. Tokarev does not directly draw such a conclusion. On the contrary, immediately following the pages which contain the above-given ideas, there is his assertion that religion "is one of the forms of *social consciousness*" (p 91). However the author immediately explains: "In other words, this is one of the forms of 'ideological' relations between people" (p 91). First of all it is essential to say that an identity cannot be drawn either between social consciousness as a whole or any of the forms of social consciousness with ideological relations. Although social consciousness and ideological relations are almost closely linked, they nevertheless represent different phenomena which must be clearly differentiated. After such an unfortunately far from precise theoretical introduction, S. A. Tokarev finally gives his own definition of religion: "It is not so much man's attitude toward God (the gods) as it is *the attitude of people to one another over the question of the ideas of God (the gods)*" (p 91).

It must immediately be said that this definition is not among the clearest and most comprehensible. However, without going into the question for the moment of what one must understand by the relations of people to one another over the question of the ideas about the gods, we would point out that having given this definition, S. A. Tokarev has contradicted his own views.

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If this definition is understood literally, then in such an instance it must be felt that religion arose only with the start of the transition to a class society. It is well known that in primitive society ideas did not exist about the gods. In order to fit what is called primitive religion to this definition, the concepts of "god" ("gods") must be replaced by different, broader ones. And such broader concepts exist. These are the concepts of the "supernatural" and "supernatural forces."

But one has merely to incorporate them in the definition given by S. A. Tokarev, and belief in a supernatural force immediately operates as a necessary and essential feature of religion. If religion is the relations of people to one another over the question of the ideas of supernatural forces generally and gods in particular, then undoubtedly people can enter into these relations only in the event that they have such ideas and not merely have them but rather believe in the supernatural force, in the gods. But even if nothing is changed in the definition of religion given by S. A. Tokarev, belief in a supernatural force acts as a necessary feature of religion for it is indisputable that a notion of the gods is nothing more than a notion of supernatural force. In this manner S. A. Tokarev, in giving his own definition of religion, again assumes the position that belief in a supernatural force is a necessary and essential feature of it. And again he accepts this only practically and not theoretically. Theoretically he continues to refute it.

While in the second and third sections of the article S. A. Tokarev, in reducing the content of religious ideas to a belief in supernatural forces, declares this unessential for religion (pp 88-90), in the sixth section he settles this question differently. As he now points out, in addition to information on the gods, the contents of religious ideas also includes ideas on the origin and essence of evil in human life (p 92). Now these, and not belief in the supernatural, are the main thing in religious ideas (p 92).

Since S. A. Tokarev views religion in this and the following section merely as a form of social consciousness and nothing more, he thereby declares the ideas on the origin and essence of evil to be the main thing in religion generally. If it is now considered that directly before this, the author, in commenting on the excessive diversity of religious beliefs, raises the question: "What in this instance remains *common* in all these religious notions from the viewpoint of their content, that general factor which justifies putting them in one sphere of social consciousness and delimits them from all other, 'nonreligious' spheres?" (p 91) and that the declaration of the ideas of the nature of evil are the main thing in religion is the answer to this question, it is not difficult to realize that he sees the distinguishing feature of religion, its specific nature, its essence precisely in the presence of these ideas.

However, such a viewpoint is in an obvious contradiction to the facts. Thinkers far removed from religion, as is known, have also been concerned with the problem of the origin and essence of evil. And they solved this from positions not only distinct from religious ones but also directly opposed to them. On the other hand, primitive religion was not concerned with the problem of the origin and essence of evil. Primitive religion generally did not pose and did not solve any general problems. Of course, in primitive religion there were ideas about misfortune, danger, harm and so forth and correspondingly actions aimed at preventing misfortune and eliminating harm. But it is scarcely correct to feel that here we are concerned with the very

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first posing of the question concerning the cause of evil in human life. The problem of the origin and essence of evil in the precise sense of the word began to be posed only in the religions of a class society.

Specific to the religious positing and solving of this question is an inseparable link with belief in a supernatural force. Where such a belief does not exist, there is no religion regardless of whether the problem of the origin and essence of evil is raised or not. This is recognized by S. A. Tokarev himself. "Common to any religious explanation of evil," he writes, "was the fact that the sought cause of evil was represented in a distorted, mysticized, imaginary and fantastic form; it was in that sphere which we now call 'supernatural' or 'other-worldly.' For this reason the means for overcoming evil were borrowed from the same other-worldly arsenal: prayers, invocation, propitiation, sacrifice, atonement and the search for 'salvation'" (p 96). But from this there inevitably follows the very conclusion which S. A. Tokarev seeks to avoid, that is, that a necessary and specific feature of religion is specifically a belief in a supernatural force. Precisely the presence of this belief is the common factor which unites all religious ideas and distinguishes them from all nonreligious ones. It is impossible to find any other distinguishing feature of religion.

Having declared the main thing in religion to be the positing and solving of the question of the origin and essence of evil, S. A. Tokarev does not stop with this. He unexpectedly states that the most important function of religion which should be of prime interest to science generally and ethnography particularly is its role as a factor of integration and segregation generally and segregation primarily (pp 96-101). We use the word "unexpectedly" because it is impossible to find any logical connection between the understanding of religion as a system of views primarily on the nature of evil and its understanding as a factor of integration and segregation. These two understandings of religion in the article coexist externally. It is indisputable that confessional and ethnoconfessional communities do exist and it is indisputable that religion can contribute to both the unification and separation of groups of people. However it is equally indisputable that this cannot be seen as a specific feature of religion. S. A. Tokarev himself particularly emphasizes that "integration and segregation are two inseparably linked aspects in the functioning of any cultural phenomenon" (p 100). One can hardly see the most important factor of integration and segregation to be religion. As S. A. Tokarev himself convincingly shows, factors going beyond the limits of religion lie even at the basis of the split of religious currents (p 102). This applies all the more to the formation and split of centralized states and so forth. Here religion only to a certain degree can contribute to or impede this, but not any more. S. A. Tokarev himself recognizes in terms of at least one of the ages established by him that religion here operated "not so much as a factor of segregation as an indicator of it" (p 98).*

Thus, all that has been said by S. A. Tokarev about the integrating and segregating role of religion does not bring us one iota closer to an understanding of either the specific features or the essence of this phenomenon. And this is not accidental. The question is not only that the author has adopted as the main function of religion that which in fact is not this, but rather what is a secondary aspect. Generally speaking no approach to religion by examining its functions can bring one close to an understanding of its essence. In order to show the essence of religion, the question must be posed not of what role it played but rather why it arose and what brought it to life.

*[Section 11, Tokarev, No 3, 1979]

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But S. A. Tokarev in essence avoids answering this question. "Why, it might be asked, has the author of this article," he writes, "up to now said nothing about *fear* and *impotence* as a root of any religion?...are these generally known Marxist ideas obsolete or are they incorrect? No they are absolutely correct and in no way obsolete. But it is essential to understand more clearly what is at issue here. The fear and impotence of man before the blind forces of nature or before a social element which suppresses him are the psychological prerequisite of religion but not its real root" (p 103).

First of all one cannot help but note a certain contradictoriness in the given statement. On the one hand, S. A. Tokarev declares the idea that fear and impotence are the root of any religion to be absolutely correct, but on the other, avows that neither fear nor impotence represents the real roots of a religion. As far as one can understand, he himself supports the latter of these two contradictory opinions. But, without agreeing on the given solution to the question of the roots of religion, he himself offers no other substitute in his article. Refusing to solve the problem of the roots of religion, S. A. Tokarev thereby closes off his way to disclose the essence of this phenomenon.

The view about the roots of religion stated in the above-given quotation is considered by S. A. Tokarev to be a Marxist one and this evidently has also given rise to the above-noted contradiction. However this is far from being the case. In stating the proposition that fear and impotence are roots of religion, S. A. Tokarev, as is seen from the context, understands a sense of impotence as impotence.

As a result in his exposition it turns out that Marxism sees the root of any religion in certain human emotions, the feeling of fear and the feeling of impotence, that is, in human consciousness. However, to seek the roots of religion in human consciousness is the purest idealism. Marxism seeks and finds the roots of religion outside human consciousness.²

The founders of Marxism saw the main, basic root of religion in the impotence of man confronted by the blind necessity of nature and subsequently confronted by the necessity of social development, understanding by impotence in no way a feeling of impotence, as not only S. A. Tokarev assumes, but real, objective impotence. This impotence in no instance can be reduced to the powerlessness of man when confronted by terrible natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, forest fires and thunder, as many authors of popular pamphlets devoted to the origin of religion often do. The root of religion is the daily constantly apparent impotence of man. It is impossible to understand how and why religion arose if one does not realize just what this daily impotence of man is and how it specifically is manifested.

The real impotence of man is his lack of strength and it is always manifested in the same thing in which man's strength is manifested, that is, his practical activities. Man's lack of strength is manifested in that he is unable to attain his planned goals and is unable to ensure a successful result from his activities. Human impotence is a practical impotence, the impotence of man's practical activity.

The practical activity of man is a complicated phenomenon. It includes both man's effect on nature as well as his effect on one another and on society. Man's impotence before nature was the prime root of religion. For this reason, in order not

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to complicate the problem, let us restrict ourselves to examining the practical attitude of man to nature. Man influences nature using definite means. Human strength should also be included in the available means. Man is impotent when these means are not sufficient or when he is insufficiently armed.

The impotence of practical activity is simultaneously both the consequence and manifestation of its insufficient development. The insufficient development of human practical activity by necessity causes the insufficient development of his cognitive activity. This deprives man of the possibility of disclosing internal relationships and the inner necessity of phenomena.

When a person does not know the inner connection or the necessity of phenomena, he thereby is unable to predict the course of events and the results of his own actions and is unable to ascertain precisely what type of action of all the possible ones would lead to the achieving of the desired goal. For this reason he is unable to determine how he must act in order to realize the goal. A person is forced to act blindly groping in the dark. The taking of one or another decision or the selecting of one or another type of action depends in this instance not so much upon the consciousness and will of man as it does upon a fortuitous coincidence of circumstances which do not depend on him.

Thus, when a person does not know objective necessity, the manner of his actions is largely determined by happenstance. In determining the manner of a person's actions, happenstance thereby also largely determines the result of his actions. Whether or not a person's actions are crowned with success or he is overtaken by failure depends precisely on happenstance which cannot be considered or controlled. In such conditions a person is powerless to ensure or guarantee the success of his activities. He is under the sway of happenstance or, what amounts to the same thing, is the slave of blind uncomprehended necessity.

In other words, the impotence of man before nature consists in the dependence of the results of his practical activities upon an incalculable and uncontrollable interplay of chances in which the blind necessity of nature is manifested. Man is impotent when his practical activities are not free and they are not free as long as he does not know objective necessity. The impotence of man before blind necessity is one aspect and another aspect is the power of this necessity over man, the sway over him of chance which represents a manifestation of unconscious necessity. Thus, when a person does not know objective necessity, he is unfree and his practical activities are unfree.

But when a person knows the objective necessity of phenomena, he thereby gains an opportunity to predict the course of events and the results of his own actions; he gains an opportunity to act not gropingly but rather with a knowledge of things. In this instance a person is free. He freely takes decisions and acts freely. His practical activities are also free. The more profoundly and completely a man's thinking reflects objective necessity, the freer his activities and the more their results depend upon his own efforts and not upon the coincidence of circumstances and the greater his power over the objective world. The problem of man's impotence before the objective world and his power over it is essentially one of the aspects of the problem of freedom and necessity.

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Thus, all human practical activities can be divided into two types: into activity the results of which depend primarily upon man himself, his *free* practical activities, and the activity the result of which is mediated by the uncontrollable interplay of chance, the *unfree, dependent* practical activity. The line between these two types of activity is extremely relative, as there cannot be either absolutely free or absolutely unfree practical activity and between them lie all stages of transition, but nevertheless it does exist.

Human practical activity, in being based on production, from the very outset, in contrast to the activity of animals, was split into free and unfree,³ and over an extremely extended period of time the sphere of the latter was significantly greater than the sphere of the former. Precisely this bifurcation, with the enormous predominance of the sphere of dependent, unfree activity over the sphere of the free, inevitably caused the appearance of religion. Basically the free was mainly activities relating to the manufacturing of implements, production activity in the narrowest sense.

As for human activities directly and immediately aimed at supporting man's existence, its results depended not only and not so much upon man's own efforts as upon the uncontrollable interplay of chance. This applies primarily to hunting which was the most important source of existence for primitive man.

Without giving examples which abound in the ethnographic literature, we will limit ourselves to just a statement by L. Ya. Shternberg which to a certain degree generalizes the results of an enormous number of observations on the life of contemporary peoples who are in the stage of a primitive society. "By what methods did man struggle for his existence?" wrote the outstanding ethnographer. "First of all he used his own forces. Along with rough physical strength he employed his magnificent implement, his intellect, his inventions, an implement which existed from the earliest period of human existence known to us. His basic method of the struggle for existence was the method of technology and inventions. But then it turns out that all his inspired inventions are not enough to fight against nature. With all his art, in one instance he shoots an arrow at an animal even in the worst weather and kills it, but in another under the best circumstances misses. In one instance in a single day he can catch enough fish to keep him for a long time, but in another entire month can pass and he will not catch a single fish. In a word, in the struggle for existence he is confronted by 'his majesty chance' what we term luck, good fortune and so forth, a phenomenon that is completely incomprehensible and mysterious for him."⁴ If the role of chance is so great in the life of our contemporaries who have hundreds of milleniums of experience behind them, it was all the greater in the early ages of human history.

The very course of practical activity has irrefutably proved to man the existence of certain forces which influence the results of this activity and thereby human life. Man, on the one hand, could not help but recognize chance's tyranny over him, and on the other, could not adequately grasp the blind necessity of nature which ruled over him, for if he could, it ceased being blind, thus ending the rule of chance. The rule of chance, the rule of the blind necessity of nature over man could only be grasped in an illusory form. The natural forces of nature which ruled over man and determined the course and results of his practical activity were realized by him as supernatural forces. Thus religion arose.

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"...Any religion," wrote F. Engels, "is nothing more than the fantastic depiction in the minds of people of those external forces which prevail over them in their daily life, a reflection in which terrestrial forces assume the form of nonterrestrial ones."⁵ Belief in a supernatural force which ruled over man was an illusory reflection of the power of objective, natural forces over man. With the exception of belief in a supernatural force, no other illusory form existed for an awareness of the power of natural forces over man.

In a majority of the Soviet religious studies, simply a belief in the supernatural is given as the basic feature of religion. This is not precise and for this reason is not completely right. The essence of religion consists in a belief not in the supernatural generally but in a supernatural force. Here this is not a supernatural force generally but rather one which rules over each specific man in his daily life and which determines whether or not he will attain the desired result or be unsuccessful, whether or not he will be fortunate or unfortunate, whether he will be sick or healthy, whether he will die early or live a long time, whether after death he will enter paradise or will be doomed to the torments of Hell and so forth. Where a belief in such a force is lacking there is no religion.

In particular, deism is not a religion as in it God acts as a supernatural force which created the world but does not intervene into the affairs of man.

Religion arose not in the process of contemplation of the reasons behind natural or social phenomena. An understanding of the dependence of the outcome of human actions upon forces other than the natural capabilities of man came in the course of practical attempts to ensure the achieving of the desired results at whatever the cost. This initially was expressed in the fact that as those actions which were directed at attaining a desired end turned out to be insufficient, they began to be complemented by acts of conduct which in reality did not help to realize the aim but were viewed as necessary for this.

A symbolic, parasitic way of action which arose as an illusory compensation for the impotence of unfree practical activity also necessitated an illusory, parasitic way of thought. Along with *knowledge* on the natural abilities of man and on the real relationships and influences, there arose a *belief* in the presence in certain human actions to contribute in some incomprehensible, mysterious manner to the achieving of the desired goal, a belief in the existence of secret, supernatural influences and relationships. And here "in the beginning was the deed." It was not the illusion of thought which gave rise to practical illusion, but on the contrary, the practice which gave rise to the illusion of thought. The parasitic way of action, along with the parasitic, illusory manner of thought which arose on its basis, comprised what has come to be called magic and witchcraft. Magic was the ancient form of religion.⁶

Arising as a parasite on the living tree of living human practical activity, magic clearly evidenced its origin. It was always presented as a multiplicity of actions which by a supernatural method should ensure the attaining of the desired result. Magical beliefs, being inseparable from these activities, have no independent significance.

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In the more developed forms of religion which arose out of magic in a preclass society where the opposition of the natural world and supernatural force is not restricted to a distinction merely to natural and supernatural influences on human activities but rather assumes the nature of an opposition between natural and supernatural beings, natural and supernatural worlds, beliefs assume a more complicated nature.⁷ However, with all the changes, religion never lost its predominantly practical nature. Since it never represented belief merely in a supernatural world but always a belief in a supernatural force which determines the present and future of each man, then respectively, at the center of attention of each believer was always the question not about the nature and structure of the supernatural world but rather of the actions which must be undertaken by man in order to ensure a favorable influence of the supernatural forces on his destiny and to prevent a bad one.

Belief in a supernatural force which determines the outcome of a man's practical activities and thereby his destiny and a belief in actions by which a person can influence the supernatural force in such a manner that it will help or at least not obstruct the implementation of his plans are inseparable and represent two aspects of the same thing. Where one of these aspects is lacking the other is not found either. Cult and ritual actions were indispensable elements of any religion along with the beliefs manifested in these actions and not existing outside these actions; these could be termed practical beliefs. Initially religion was totally a question of practical beliefs and ritual actions.

For an ordinary believer, religion has always been primarily a practical matter. He was primarily interested in what must be done (or what must not be done) to ensure a favorable effect of supernatural forces on the outcome of his activities and to prevent a bad effect. As for the question of the nature of the supernatural forces, he was least of all interested in this. For him the existence of the supernatural forces operated as something given and not requiring any proof, any explanation or any reflection. For this reason he did not endeavor to analyze his own beliefs or disclose the ties between them. Primitive religion never represented an ordered system. It was a disordered accumulation of the most diverse beliefs, ideas and rites often not only contradictory but even mutually exclusive. S. A. Tokarev is perfectly right when he writes that "anyone who has been involved with ethnographic or other descriptions of the beliefs of any people could not help but note the extreme haziness, lack of clarity and often contradictoriness of these beliefs" (p 88). However, one cannot agree with the conclusion which he reaches. As he feels, these data show that the content of religious ideas and hence belief in a supernatural force do not represent an essential aspect of religion. This conclusion, in his opinion, is fully confirmed by materials relating to the religion of a class society. The worshipers of the ancient gods also did not have a clear understanding of them (pp 89-90). But the main thing in favor of the given thesis, in the opinion of S. A. Tokarev is the fact of the existence of a sharp difference between the "ideological content" of both the ancient national-state religions and the three world religions (pp 89-91).

The content of religious ideas in a certain sense is actually unessential. It is unessential how people actually imagine the supernatural force and how developed and clear are their ideas of it. But the essential point is that the religious views are only religious to the degree that they include a belief in a supernatural force. A diversity of religious ideas is inevitable. Certainly religion represents not an

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adequate but rather an illusory reflection of the natural forces which rule over man. For this reason and awareness of the dominance of these forces is preordained only in one regard. It always represents a belief in a supernatural force. However, the specific forms of this awareness are not preordained and they can be the most diverse. However, this does not change the essence of religion in the slightest.

At one time the notion was widespread and even now has not fully disappeared that religion arose in order to satisfy man's need to explain phenomena which he did not understand. In our view, this idea is wrong. Religion in no way arose to satisfy either this or any other social or individual need. Religion in no way appeared in order to perform a certain socially necessary function.

Religion arose simply because it could not help but arise. The power of blind necessity over man could not help but be recognized and at the same time could not be adequately grasped. The consequence was the rise of an illusory awareness of this power of blind necessity over man and simultaneously of human impotence before it. Religion arose as a parasitic outgrowth on the living tree of human practical activity. But having arisen, religion began to perform definite functions.

In particular, it began to be used also to explain natural and social phenomena. At the same time the first attempts appeared to analyze and provide definite systematization for the religious beliefs and rites themselves. As a result even in pre-class society at a certain stage of its development, religious ideas appeared although these were closely tied to practical beliefs and rites but also possessed a certain independence of them. In particular, this applies to a certain part of the religious myths. However they did not play any essential role. In particular, to a significant degree they were the property only of a small group of persons, the shamans, priests and so forth. As for the basic mass of people, they were little acquainted with them. Precisely these and other above-quoted facts have led P. Radin and subsequently S. A. Tokarev to conclude that a majority of the believers did not know the beliefs. However, even a complete ignorance of these secondary religious ideas, even the most extreme haziness and contradictoriness of all religious ideas generally in no way prevented these people from being convinced of the existence of supernatural forces and the necessity of performing rites.

S. A. Tokarev isolates three basic stages in the development of religion: the age of kinship-tribal cults, the age of the national and state religions and the age of world religions. However, the most profound boundary separates the religion of a preclass society from the religion of a class society.⁸ The transition from a preclass society to a class one was accompanied by a profound reform in religion and this was based primarily on a metamorphosis of its roots.

While the practical impotence of man before blind necessity of nature was the main source of religion prior to the rise of a class society, with the appearance of classes the practical impotence of people confronted by the blind necessity of social development more and more became its root.

The power of the blind forces of society is manifested differently. Like the power of the blind necessity of nature, it was manifested in the sway of chance over each specific man, in the dependence of each individual's fate upon the uncontrollable coincidence and the interplay of chance. "Fear of the blind force of capital,"

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wrote V. I. Lenin in disclosing the reasons for the existence of religion under capitalism, "which is blind for it cannot be foreseen by the masses of people, which at every step in the life of the proletariat and small farmer threatens to bring him or does bring him 'surprise,' 'unexpected' or 'accidental' ruin, death or reduction to poverty, to a pauper, to a prostitute or to death by starvation--this is the root of modern religion which the materialist should bear in mind above all and more than anything else...."⁹ Such a form of the manifestation of the rule of the blind forces of society taken independently helped to reinforce practical beliefs and rites.

The splitting of society into classes where some appropriated the labor of others was manifested in the above-described form of the rule of chance over each individual man. But this split of society which was a consequence of the action of the blind necessity in social development was also manifested directly in the interaction of the classes and in the clash of class interests. In operating in such a form, the power of the blind necessity of social development led to the transformation of the inner structure of religion, to the appearance of a new element, ideology in it.¹⁰

The basic interest of exploiters has always consisted in perpetuating the existing orders and, consequently, in systematically suppressing the resistance of the exploited. A manner of conduct beneficial to a ruling class was imposed on the exploited primarily through the state machine. However physical coercion was never sufficient. Spiritual coercion was always required. Only ideology could be the means of the latter.

Ideology has always existed in the form of teachings. The essence of any doctrine is primarily in what it teaches people, in how they must live, that is, it is a guide to action. In always representing a definite program of conduct dictated by class interests, any doctrine inevitably should include a basis of this program which could not help but be a definite interpretation of social phenomena and a definite explanation of them. When it is a question of the ideology of a ruling class, an explanation of social phenomena is simultaneously a justification of existing orders.

A doctrine cannot appear and exist without teachers. Priests were the first ideologists and the beliefs, religious myths and so forth were the material which they used in creating the first teachings. Ideology arose for the first time in the form of religious teachings. And these doctrines always presupposed a certain explanation of natural and social phenomena. In them the existing social order operated as a derivative from the action of supernatural forces and the following of the offered program of conduct was seen as the only method to merit the benevolence of the latter and protect oneself from their wrath.

Thus, religious teachings were practical to no less degree than practical beliefs. But while the latter were primarily related to ritual actions the former involved human conduct as a whole. The basic idea of all religious teachings was that it was impossible to achieve help from the supernatural forces merely by rites. A certain method of daily conduct was required from a man in society, a certain way of life. Any developed religious teaching without fail was simultaneously an ethical teaching. So-called religious morality was the realization of this teaching.

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In any religious ideology, the necessity of a person to adopt a certain way of conduct was established by pointing to the will of supernatural forces. The supernatural force which established certain standards of conduct was viewed as constantly interfering into the lives of people in order to attain the observance of these rules from them. Any deviation from them sooner or later necessarily involved punishment while their observance meant a reward.

The rule of the blind necessity of social development over a man in a class society in the most obvious form was apparent in class suppression which rested as a heavy burden on the shoulders of the workers, which suppressed them and doomed them to hunger, torment and a dependent existence. The powerlessness of people before the blind forces of society was manifested primarily in the objective impossibility existing over the milleniums of abolishing the exploitation of man by man and hence in the objective impotence of the workers to put an end to the suppression and suppressors.

In other words, the rule of the blind necessity of social development in a class society was expressed in the dominance of social inequality, social evil and the inerradicability of this evil in all stages of its development, excluding only the last at which the material and spiritual prerequisites arise for eliminating the exploitation of man by man. This rule of evil was inevitably felt by all the exploited and not only by them. The greatest task for the ideology of a ruling class was to force the suppressed to accept this evil and not to act against it. For this reason any religious teaching inevitably should provide some explanation for the origin of evil and one which would justify the existence of evil. Without this it could not claim to be accepted by the exploited as a guide for conduct.

The problem of the origin and essence of evil actually does hold an important place in religion, but not in religion generally, as S. A. Tokarev asserts, but only in a religion of a class society. Actually he himself arrives at this as well. "...An explanation of the causes of evil," he writes, "has meant for religious thought also a justification of it. Over all centuries the religions of all peoples have justified physical and social evil instead of combating it" (p 96). It is not difficult to understand that all that has been said here could be fully applied only to a religion of a class society.

In the various religions of a class society, evil was explained and justified in far from the same way. Let us halt for a moment on this method of explaining and justifying evil which lies on the general evolutionary path of religion in a class society.

It was not sufficient to intimidate the exploited with punishment to force a way of conduct advantageous for the exploiters on the suppressed. It was also essential to provide a reward for the constant following of the prescriptions of religious teachings. But it was difficult to promise a reward in the terrestrial, natural world. Such a promise did not stand up in contact with reality. The way out was to transfer the reward to the supernatural world. But it must not be thought that the rise of teachings on recompense in the afterlife was the result of a conscious effort by ideologists of the ruling class who were endeavoring to console the suppressed and force them to tolerate reality. This idea arose among the exploited masses.

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The idea of a reward and recompense in the hereafter arose as an illusory form of resolving the contradiction between a passionate desire of the working masses to seek revenge on the suppressors and secure a happy lot, on the one hand, and the objective impossibility of doing this, on the other. "The impotence of the exploited classes in the struggle against the exploiters," wrote V. I. Lenin, "just as inevitably gave rise to a belief in a better life in the hereafter as the impotence of the savage in the struggle against nature gave rise to a belief in gods, devils, miracles and so forth."¹¹ The idea of a reward in the hereafter was a form of protest by the masses against the social injustice which had to be tolerated. For precisely this reason this idea which initially arose in the social lower ranks gradually penetrated the ideology of the ruling class and was picked up and developed by the defenders of its interests.

The appearance of the idea of recompense after death created an opportunity for religion to recognize and at the same time justify the existence of social inequality. This was done in the form of the idea of the inevitability of evil in this world and its necessity as a means of testing people in the natural world for disclosing those worthy of reward in the supernatural world. Correspondingly a new character was assumed by the opposition of the natural world and the supernatural world. The natural world was now presented as one where evil reigned while the supernatural world was one in which there was a restitution of justice which was constantly violated in the natural world, as one in which the just could await a reward and the unjust a punishment for everything committed by them in this earthly life. As a result religion now began to act as a true opiate of the people.

All of this can be clearly seen from the example of the evolution of such a "national" religion as the Ancient Egyptian. This line of development came to an end in a world religion like Christianity. Contrary to the opinion of S. A. Tokarev (pp 92-94), the solution proposed by Christianity for the problem of the origin and essence of evil does not stand outside the general line of religious development. On the contrary, all the basic particular features of religion in a class society were expressed in a most complete form precisely in Christianity.

This can be explained in the fact that Christianity, in the first place, owed its rise to the impotence of people before the blind necessity of social development exclusively, and not of nature; secondly, it arose only as a religious teaching; thirdly, it arose as an ideology not of a ruling class but rather of the exploited masses of people, as an ideological current opposed to the existing orders.

The circumstance that Christianity in its origin represented only a religious ideology contributed to its wide spread. "Christianity," wrote F. Engels, "did not have any rites which introduced separation... In thus denying all the national religions and the rites common to all of them and in appealing to all peoples without distinction, Christianity itself became the *first possible world religion*."¹² However, having arisen as a religious teaching, Christianity could not remain thus for long. Inevitably it was overgrown by all sorts of ritual actions and correspondingly turned from a "pure" religious teaching into a true religion consisting of the same elements as the earlier religions of a class society. But in contrast to the latter, Christianity (and also to a significant degree the other two world religions of Buddhism and Islam) was structured not from the bottom up (from the cult and practical beliefs to the teachings) but, on the contrary, from the top downwards

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(from the teachings to the cult and practical beliefs). This made an impression on all its system. This also to a significant degree determined the organizational independence of Christianity. Actually only in terms of it can one speak with complete validity of the existence of a church as an independent organization.

All of this taken together made Christianity the most adequate embodiment of the higher and last stage in the evolution of religion in a class society and hence religion generally. As was stressed by F. Engels, with the appearance of Christianity "all the possibilities of religion are exhausted; after Christianity, after an absolute, that is, abstract religion, after 'religion as such' no other form of religion could appear."¹³

In conclusion we must also take up the division proposed by S. A. Tokarev between the atheistic and religious understanding of the essence of religion. "We can say," he writes, "that the true difference in the understanding of the essence of religion by believers and atheists is not in the hopeless and meaningless repetition of the phrases 'God exists' and 'there is no god,' but rather in the absolute, fundamental opposition of the two practical lines: to evoke God (the gods) in order to escape from evil, suffering and injustice or to fight with one's own forces against evil, suffering and injustice" (p 96).

The desire at whatever the cost, if not to refute then at least to compromise the view that belief in a supernatural force is the basic feature of religion, has led S. A. Tokarev to a caricaturization of the customary understanding of the difference between the atheistic and religious views of religion. The customary atheistic understanding of the essence of religion consists in no way in the incessant and pointless repetition of the phrase "there is no god." It consists in a view of religion as a fantastic depiction in the minds of people of those natural forces which rule over them in their daily life and one in which the natural forces assume the appearance of supernatural forces. Supernatural forces exist only in the consciousness of people as an illusory reflection of the natural forces which rule over them in reality. They do not exist in reality. In reality only a natural, material world exists, only natural forces exist. In opposition to the atheists, the adherents of religion feel that in reality there is not only a natural world but also a supernatural one, not only natural but also supernatural forces. For them religion is the truth. It is not hard to understand that there is a principled and fundamental difference between these two views of religion.

It is completely illogical to oppose the difference of these two understandings of the essence of religion to the difference between the two practical lines of approaching a solution to the problem of evil. The two different lines of approach to the question of evil derive inevitably from precisely the difference of the two above-mentioned understandings of the essence of religion.

If supernatural forces exist which rule over man and which determine all his life, from this it inevitably follows that we must appeal to them to avoid evil, suffering and injustice. But if the supernatural forces do not actually exist, then man in the struggle against evil, suffering and injustice must rely solely on himself.

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FOOTNOTES

1. SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979. Below all references to the article by S. A. Tokarev will be given in the text.
2. The question of the roots of religion, including the so-called "gnoseological" roots have been examined in detail in: Yu. I. Semenov, "Idealism, Religion: Similarity and Difference," NAUKA I RELIGIYA, No 9, 1976.
3. In line with this it is essential to point out that the thesis proposed by us on the bifurcation of practical human activity into free and unfree even in the earliest age of the history of mankind at one time was supported in an article by S. A. Tokarev "Problems of Social Consciousness in the Preclass Age" (see "Okhotniki, Sobirатели, Rybolovy" [Hunters, Gatherers, Fishermen], Leningrad, 1972, pp 244-245).
4. L. Ya. Shternberg, "Pervobytnaya Religiya v Svete Etnografii" [Primitive Religion in Light of Ethnography], Leningrad, 1936, pp 246-247.
5. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 20, p 328.
6. For more detail on the birth of religion, see: Yu. I. Semenov, "Kak Vozniklo Chelovechestvo" [How Mankind Arose], Moscow, 1966, pp 347-379.
7. For more detail on the forms and stages in the evolution of primitive religion, see *ibid.*, pp 319-446.
8. For more detail on the basic stages in the evolution of religion, see: Yu. I. Semenov, "Religion: The Logic of Evolution," NAUKA I RELIGIYA, No 11, 1974; Yu. I. Semenov, "The Development of Socioeconomic Formations and the Objective Logic in the Evolution of Religion," VOPROSY NAUCHNOGO ATEIZMA, No 20, Moscow, 1976.
9. V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 17, p 419. As is apparent from the context, in speaking about fear as a root of religion, V. I. Lenin had in mind primarily the real daily impotence of people before the blind force of capital.
10. The religion of a class society, in adopting a religious ideology, could not be reduced exclusively to just this. It usually included, along with religious teachings, practical beliefs and rites as well. In the early religions of a class society, the "national" ones, the religious teachings arose as an unique superstructure over the existing practical beliefs and ritualistic actions. It is quite understandable that the appearance of a religious ideology had an enormous inverse effect on the last two elements of religion. This was expressed in the transformation of the old practical beliefs and rites and the appearance of new ones. The rise of a religious ideology had as a consequence also a gradual conversion of religion from an unordered accumulation of the most diverse beliefs and rites, as it had remained over the entire extent of the history of a preclass society, into a definite system. And this system was more ordered the larger the role played in it by religious ideology. It goes without saying that a predominant majority of the rank-and-file believers were not in any way well acquainted with this system.

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11. V. I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 12, p 142.
12. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch.," Vol 19, p 313.
13. Ibid., Vol 1, p 591.

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ON THE MAIN ISSUE IN UNDERSTANDING RELIGION

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 2, Mar-Apr 80 (signed to press 24 Mar 80) pp 64-71

[Article by V. N. Sherdakov]

[Text] The article by S. A. Tokarev¹ takes up important aspects in the general theory of religion; in doing so it critically touches upon a number of positions which many of our scholars have defended and do defend. The article contains the idea of reorienting research in the area of religious studies and indicates that approach by which, in the opinion of the author, it is possible to correctly see the essential content of any religion and its historic place in the overall evolution of religious consciousness.

Initially S. A. Tokarev draws our attention to that generally well-known but little considered fact that the religious beliefs of the masses have always been distinct from the religious teachings as presented in the canons. The rank-and-file believers, as a rule, had a poor understanding of the mythology, dogma and mysteries and what they did know was often refracted in their consciousness in a very substantial manner.

It is also indisputable that religion cannot be reduced to a mythology, dogma and religious ideas. Religion is primarily a belief, a convoluted complex of experiences including definite sets and imperatives and a sense of value shaped in a certain manner (not only moral but also aesthetic).

Finally, in contrast to any *teaching*, including the dogma itself, religion cannot exist without believers. It is real only in the consciousness of the masses. Let us point out for the future that one of the most important and essential characteristics of a religion as such consists in the uniting of people by the uniform ties of faith. From a comparison of these simple facts, seemingly the conclusion would emerge that to define the very phenomenon of any religion means to study what it is for the believers. This cannot be done solely from the sacred books and theological treatises. Nor can this be done by removing from the mythology and dogma those common ideas which have "settled" in the minds of people or by establishing how these ideas have been warped. It is not merely a question of ideas. A religion, as was already said, is something more.

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S. A. Tokarev writes: "For a scientific understanding of a religion and its history it is most important not to study the names of the gods and the heroes, not the mythological stories about them, not a description of the cult rites, even a most detailed one, and not the dogmatic content of one or another religious system. No, it is most important to study historically the social function of a given religion (and generally any religion) as one of the social features separating one group of people from another" (p 97).^{*} Let us defer for the moment the question of what S. A. Tokarev considers "most important."

In anticipating an argument, S. A. Tokarev immediately stipulates: "This, of course, does not mean that we do not have to study the content of religious beliefs. They must be studied but this need not be considered the main purpose of the research." Certainly what is listed by S. A. Tokarev (the names of the gods, the myths and so forth) applies to religion as a phenomenon but the main purpose of scientific research is to reach the essence. But it is also possible to make the objection: "Belief in the supernatural has always been considered a distinguishing feature of religion. From *your* viewpoint, it is not the main thing." Here is a matter for discussion. Belief in the supernatural (precisely a belief and not the fantastic images) is, of course, the distinguishing feature of religion. However, it must be pointed out that secular religions, the plans for the religions of Feuerbach and Comte, the theologies of the "dead god" and "nonreligious Christianity" and so forth do not fit this feature, although in their other attributes they do conform to a religion or religious teaching. Why do we say that the difference between deism which denies the supernatural and the other religious teachings is not fundamental and that one differs from the other no more than a devil of one stripe differs from a devil of another? What makes them so close? This question can be settled only if we go beyond the narrow, abstract understanding of religion as simply a belief in an imaginary supernatural world.

Even L. Feuerbach convincingly proved that religious ideas are not a baseless fantasy but rather an unique depiction of a terrestrial foundation and as such is the main subject in analyzing various beliefs. Terrestrial life can be judged from religious ideas. The chief content of religion is the human world and human relations. Marxism considers this approach to religion limited. The religious ideas must be derived from those social conditions which necessitate their rise. An alienation from the earthly base can only be understood as a result of its contradictoriness. The struggle against religion hence is a struggle for social change. God is not an empty fiction but is the very "earthly base" which "separates one from oneself and carries one to the heavens as an independent kingdom."² In this sense religious ideas and concepts are full of a real, historically determined content. The idea of god is necessarily present in the phenomenological field of social and individual consciousness over an enormous period of human history. Man found this idea in the sphere of social consciousness and it was further developed in the experience of man's perception and relationship with the world. It is wrong to reduce all the history of religious consciousness to an interiorization of certain ideas; religious ideas arose in the mass consciousness in reflecting the reality of social life.

"There is no god and it is stupid to speak of him," was how an 18th-century Russian nobleman voiced the idea of common sense. In the novel "The Possessed" by F. M. Dostoevski, a captain, listening to the discussions of atheism by the nihilists, said making a helpless gesture: "If there is no god, then what sort of captain am I?" This captain

^{*}[See Section 10, article by Tokarev in SE, No 3, 1979]

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was linking the existence of god to his own understanding of the world and sense of existence. That atheism which restricts itself to denying god and the afterlife as empty fictions, fantasy and invention is as empty as would be a belief in god not related to a certain understanding of life. God in a certain sense is a more real force. In all the history of mankind, it would be difficult to find any other so active idea which in terms of length and force of effect could be compared with the idea of god. The idea of god is objective in the sense that the factors bringing it to life and sustaining it (the "god-forming forces") did not depend upon the arbitrariness of people. An enlightened view of things dwells on the idea that belief in a nonexistent god is the chief distinguishing feature of a religion and reduces its task to refuting the idea of a supernatural world as a harmful and groundless invention. At this point the "common sense" of an enlightened approach to religion thus accepts on faith the conviction of the believers themselves that the idea of god is the basic and crucial idea of religion. But for a Marxist the main thing is that the idea of god is a derivative from its social function. It is not people who serve the nonexistent god but rather the gods who serve people, their needs and interests. Otherwise religion would be a simple fable or a crazy invention. And it is such when the study of religion is reduced to a study of the names of the gods or spirits, mythological tales and so forth. Let me hurry and stipulate, however, that in the most general and abstract sense, of course, the nobleman is right in denying the existence of god just as Ostap Bender was right in the famous dispute with the Roman Catholic priests.

The main idea of S. A. Tokarev, it seems to us, is that in religion one must see a force which unites people by a common belief in god and the afterworld (and sometimes also by another method) and offers them definite views of life. These views and the nature of association in various religions have varied depending upon the conditions of life. Certainly from the very idea of god it is impossible to deduce the specific perception of the world and understanding of life. Religion has served completely different societies but the function of uniting and unifying people (and simultaneously opposing them to foreigners) is linked to the very essence of religious belief. At the very nature of religious belief is a desire not only to believe oneself but also to force others to believe the same thing.

It is well known how this desire appeared in history. It is not difficult to understand that the consoling and compensatory function of religion in psychological terms is impossible without a community of belief. The unifying and dividing nature of belief has sometimes been most starkly apparent, overshadowing the content of the dogma. "We are Moslems," "we are baptised"--many have said and do say, meaning not the symbols of the faith but only a metaethnic community; the same can be said by those who do not believe in Christ or in Allah. It is also known that the transition from one historical age to another has always been accompanied by a change in religion and that the state particularly needed the uniting of people by religious ties.

The article by S. A. Tokarev also examines the problem of in what manner people have been unified into a religious community. This has been achieved by an interpretation of the problems of life, by an explanation of the causes of evil and formulas for combating it. "Over all the history of religious dogmas," writes S. A. Tokarev, "they, regardless of the extreme diversity of the forms of belief, the religious and mythological ideas, in essence have solved one major problem: from whence come evil

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and suffering in human life and how to escape from this? Various answers have been given..., but these were answers to the same question" (p 95). As we can see, here the very ideas of the supernatural world played a subordinate role and served as a means of expressing definite earthly objectives and value orientations.

"The main thing in this content (the content of religious ideas.--V.Sh.) is not the names of the gods and not the theological teachings about their properties and relationships," emphasizes S. A. Tokarev, "and not the idea of the relationship of man to god, but rather what reply is given by one or another religion to the question of the origin of evil in human life" (p 92).*

It cannot be doubted that the designated question is the main thing for Christianity and other world religions. Christianity appeared not as a new teaching about the world (the mythology remained basically Old Testament), but as a new teachings about life. The sense and spirit of the New Testament teachings have a clearly expressed ethical nature. We have in mind not only the direct moral teachings of Christ, the "Sermon on the Mount," and the Parables but also the very image of the "Son of Man" and the description of the life of Christ by the apostles. V. I. Lenin, in expressing his agreement with L. Feuerbach, commented that "Christianity made god out of morality and created a moral god."³ Other world religions are frequently and not without reason termed ethical. Buddhism, as is known, arose as a moral teaching; the fantastic images, mysteries and other attributes appeared later in it.

Seemingly everything should be clear here. However, often in our atheistic literature it is asserted that the moral teachings of Christianity are derivative from its dogma. The main thing is the dogma and the religious moral teachings were derived from the dogmatic ideas and partially borrowed from the arsenal of common human values. Let us endeavor to show the erroneousness of these widespread notions. A theologian can attempt to derive morality from dogmas. This is quite right. But it cannot be denied that the moral teachings found in the gospel were created by certain conditions of life and arose, as is known, significantly earlier before the dogmatic teachings. The dogma appeared when the religion already existed, and was to provide the theoretical basis for the developing religion and protect it against external attacks by philosophical criticism and from the inner doubts already appearing. The moral sense of Christianity which comprises its essence cannot be derived from dogmas and myths. On the contrary, the dogmas and myths were reworked and made to conform with the moral state of mind as expressed in the New Testament works.

Far from all theologians derive moral theology (if one is speaking now about theology, a later product) from the dogmatic. Orthodox thinkers often term moral and dogmatic theology "sisters," while many Protestants give primary significance to the moral sense of Christianity. This is no place to speak about the Kantian understanding of god, the immortality of the soul and redemption as postulates of practical reason, although it is worth mentioning that the ideas of Kant are widely employed by modern theology and not only of the Protestant camp.

F. M. Dostoevski saw in religion a method of distinguishing good and evil which was inherent to one or another people and could not be perceived by a scientific, rational approach. In expressing an idea close to the author's, the hero of the novel "The Possessed" says: Peoples come together and move about by a different force (i.e.,

*[See Section 6, Tokarev article in SE, No 3, 1979]

not by reason and science.--V.Sh.) imperative and commanding, but the origin of which is inexplicable.... The 'search for god' is how I would call it most simply.... There has never been a people without a religion, that is, without an understanding of good and evil."⁴

L. N. Tolstoy called the religious question the main question for each man, for "religion is nothing more than an answer to the question of the sense of life."⁵

The answer to what religion is, for the mass of rank-and-file believers, must be made in the following manner: religion and the church in their eyes act primarily as guides in life on the questions of consciousness, morals and so forth, and then in the role of explainers of the questions of the order in the world. The latter function, at one time significant, at present is virtually finished and obsolete, nevertheless religion continues to exist and makes claim precisely to the role of the protector of moral values.

But, as certain authors feel, the religious standards per se must be distinguished from those which are a simple borrowing from the arsenal of common human values which in no way arose out of a religious consciousness. There is one question of the concept of hell, paradise, a merciful and punishing god, original sin, eternal guilt and so forth; there is the other question of the admonition of love, help for the neighbor, respect for parents and others. The former are derived from the idea of god while in the latter there is nothing religious and their earthly origin is completely apparent.

Such arguments are widespread and they must be investigated. First of all we would point out that both the former and the latter standards and ideas have an earthly origin and sense. It is simply impossible to separate them using this feature, although certain authors have searched for the grounds, for example, to put the admonishment to love one's neighbors among the "unreligious" and "borrowed" and the admonition to forgive and love one's enemies among the "specifically religious." All, even the most fantastic ideas of religion arise out of the conditions of earthly life. Only for a believing man do the commandments stem from the command of God. In fact, they were born "of the earth" and reflect "earthly" concerns and affairs and only later were ascribed to God.

The commandments were not derived and cannot be logically derived from religious ideas and notions per se, although theologians have endeavored to depict things in such a manner. On the contrary, the very religious ideas themselves such as hell, paradise, sin and others arose out of a certain social psychology of humans and are full of an earthly moral sense which for this reason is primary. The concepts of hell and paradise appeared to express definite ideas of a moral nature and the image of merciful and suffering god for the Christian is also an expression of a moral idea. The concepts of original sin and guilt undoubtedly expressed certain realities of a moral and psychological level such as the moral disintegration of the individual, the contradiction between "mind and heart," the desired and the should and the "spirit" and the "flesh."⁶ Christian mythology and dogma are adapted to express a certain moral attitude toward the world and largely represent a moral symbol. For this reason the moral content of religion is a wider concept than are specifically the moral teachings of a religion. It fills the myths, dogmas and rituals which otherwise could not be understood and interpreted except by a comprehension of their moral sense. With good reason, to criticism from the standpoint of

common sense, all concepts and ideas of religious fantasy appear as simply rubbish. But the Marxist approach to mythology and dogma makes it possible to understand their sense and because of this a critique of them becomes adequate. But enlightened criticism often invests in dogma a different sense than do the believers.

It must also be pointed out that with all the diversity of the commandments in the Gospels and with the absence of a system for giving them, they still in a very integrated manner express the basic moral state of mind. The commandments and precepts borrowed from previous times have been assimilated in this state of mind and conform to it, often thereby altering their initial sense. Undoubtedly *the forces which brought the ideas of religious fantasy to life and the forces which determined the nature of their corresponding moral teachings are of the same order.*

The following argument can be made against the thesis of S. A. Tokarev: well and good, in Christianity and the other world religions this may actually be how things are, but how were they in the earlier religions, and finally, in a preclass society, when the religious and moral elements existed separately and arose from different sources?

The religions of a developed class society, beyond any doubt, basically carry a clearly expressed moral sense. They represent different variations of teachings about "salvation" and "deliverance." Their concern with pointing out a path to "salvation" or "purification" shows their origin from conditions of inequality and social suppression.⁷ As for the earlier times, a thorough and profound answer has been given in another article by S. A. Tokarev entitled "Problems of Social Consciousness in the Preclass Age."⁸ Here S. A. Tokarev has given a logically and factually based critique of the widespread thesis that initially religious ideas and morality were not interconnected and existed completely separately. The opinion that ideas of the supernatural were initially completely devoid of a moral nature at one time arose under the influence of the evolutionary concepts of E. Taylor and G. Lobbok who felt that the rise of the religious complex started with the animistic notions of the savage and their link with morality appeared only in a later stage of development. S. A. Tokarev proves very convincingly that the religious basis was the first form of man's realization of standards of conduct. Of course, it is not a question of the rise of social standards of conduct which emerge from the conditions of everyday life but rather the form in which they began to be realized and established. Here it must be pointed out that S. A. Tokarev proceeds from a very broad definition of morality including in it the initial rules of human communal life. But in the literature on the questions of ethics recently more and more the idea has been established that morality in the strict sense of the word arose later and represents a separate form of social regulation which presupposes the action of consciousness and a differentiation of good and evil.⁹ In this instance the question of the relationship of morality with religious ideas is chronologically moved back into a significantly later age and requires clarification.

However, it is clear that the evolution of religious morality is inseparable from the evolution of religion itself and has always been its essential aspect. Initially the spirits protected certain orders and required obedience but they were not yet in the full sense moral legislators as Yahweh became among the Ancient Jews. Yahweh was the guardian of morality but still not the personification of the moral ideal as the evangelical Christ became. From an omnipotent and terrible sovereign

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who knew no limitation, god evolved into something quite the opposite. The paradoxical idea of Christ as a man-god, a victim-god, a suffering god who experiences all the hardship of human injustice gives an indication in what milieu and in what hearts he could appear. Subsequently, in the theological and philosophical teachings and in ordinary religious consciousness, god more and more was turned into a moral symbol, he was identified with a moral order in the world and finally transformed into a moral "X," an abstraction where the question of the actual existence of this made no sense to discuss. Here it is curious to note that in abandoning the idea of a transcendent god and in calling their views "nontheism," "nonreligious Christianity" and "the theology of a dead god," the modernists leave the most important thing of Christianity, its moral teachings. Of course, here they remain more Christian than many other believers. But the main thing is not the idea of god per se but rather the entire complex of feelings, habits, standards and values related to this idea. For this reason the deists who recognize god the creator but do not derive any ideas of a moral order from this in terms of their convictions can be generally closer to the atheists than the supporters of the "theology of a dead god."

We have given all these arguments in order to show that the principle pointed out by S. A. Tokarev as an approach to the study of religion is fundamental in the classification of religion and in establishing the stages of its evolution. It is of great significance for orientation and the programming of research in the area of religious studies.

The article raises many other interesting ideas. For example, particular emphasis was given to the assertion of the presence of conscious deceit in religion (p 101). Marxist religious studies as a whole have rejected the concept of deceit. In actuality, religion arose not so much out of conscious deceit as out of self-deceit and is not so much an invention for the people as it is an invention of the people themselves.

However, in saying all of this, there is a grain of truth in the theory of deceit. The founders of Marxism spoke a good deal about the deception of the masses by the priests. An aspect of intellectual dishonesty in principle can be present in any religious mythopoeia.

The problems of religion and atheism are examined by each generation of people. Our atheistic science undoubtedly in the last 10-15 years has achieved noticeable successes and is presently on the upswing. The works of the new generation of philosophers have raised the level of atheistic criticism to a new stage and have freed it from numerous shortcomings and blind spots. It is all the more pleasant to recognize that our major scholar and representative of the "old school," S. A. Tokarev, continues to enrich religious studies and the philosophy of religion with new and important ideas. His works hold a special place in our science and are undoubtedly among the most valuable which we possess. Their soundness and depth, it seems to me, are inseparably united and, possibly, are caused by those qualities of thought which relate to the moral characteristics of cognition. Morality and cognition are inter-related more closely than may seem at first glance. Aside from scientific consciousness which protects science from the influence of factors alien to it (careerism, ambition and competitiveness) and from any sort of hurry and irresponsibility in conclusions, aside from the recognition of a scholar's moral responsibility for his

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works (and this is extremely great among the students of religion, for it is a question of the convictions, consciousness and sometimes the destiny of people), aside from all of this, there is also that link between science and morality which largely predetermines the depth to which the studied subject is penetrated. In reading the works of S. A. Tokarev, I have always been amazed by their simplicity, a simplicity of thought, a simplicity and unpretentiousness of exposition. It would seem that a nonspecialist could not properly appreciate this simplicity. Only in knowing all the complexity of the questions does one understand that this is the simplicity of which La Bruyère wrote, the simplest expression of thought which seemingly should have come into your mind first of all but did only last.

FOOTNOTES

1. S. A. Tokarev, "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979 (below references to this article are given in the text).
2. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 3, p 2.
3. V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 29, p 54.
4. F. M. Dostoevski, "Soch." [Works], No 10, Moscow, 1957, Vol 7, pp 265-266.
5. L. N. Tolstoy, "O Smysle Zhizni" [On the Sense of Life], St. Petersburg, 1906, p 5.
6. On this level it is difficult to agree with the description by S. A. Tokarev of the myth of the fall from grace as "very awkward," and the explanations given by the myth as strange and absurd (p 94). This, in the judgment of Hegel, "Great Myth of Mankind" contains a profound philosophical and ethical sense and allegorically reflected very important aspects of social practice. For precisely this reason it was able to provide explanations which satisfied people and the tale of the first people in the world was able to survive and become established while many other myths quickly lost their influence. For more detail on this see: V. N. Sherdakov, "Sotsial'no-Psikhologicheskii Analiz Khristianskoy Morali" [Sociopsychological Analysis of Christian Morality], Leningrad, 1974, pp 86-90.
7. See, for example, A. Donini, "Idoly, Lyudi i Bogi" [Idols, Peoples and Gods], Moscow, 1962.
8. "Okhotniki, Sobirатели, Rybolovy" [Hunters, Gatherers and Fishermen], Leningrad, 1972.
9. See, for example, O. G. Drobnitskiy, "Ponyatiye Morali" [The Concept of Morality], Moscow, 1974.

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RELIGION: BELIEF, ILLUSION, KNOWLEDGE

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 4, Jul-Aug 80 (signed to press 31 Jul 80) pp 80-87

[Article by Yu. A. Murav'yev]

[Text] The article by the prominent Soviet ethnographer S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)"¹ is devoted to a problem which could not help but cause interest. In fact, the question of the essence of religion and its social role has concerned specialists from the most diverse areas and the broadest range of readers. When such a prominent scholar turns to such a question, the reader has every right to expect particularly interesting ideas and an original elucidation of traditional questions and the positing of new ones. In becoming familiar with the article by S. A. Tokarev, the reader would be convinced that he has not been deceived in his expectations. Here he actually encounters interesting thoughts and an original treatment of the problems, with rich erudition making it possible to draw far-reaching comparisons and bold conclusions.

However, the greatest value of this work is probably that it stimulates creative thought and forces one to redirect attention to the problems which seemingly have long been solved. For this reason our comments are actually more "thoughts on the question of" the article of S. A. Tokarev than an attempt to critically assess it.

"Thoughts of an Ethnographer" is how S. A. Tokarev humbly describes the type of his article in the subtitle. However, it is clear that it will not be possible to restrict oneself to the limits of ethnography in discussing such a question as the social essence and role of religion. This problem involves many scientific disciplines and most importantly has such a clearly expressed ideological aspect that here a philosophical and primarily a theoretical cognitive analysis is indispensable. Our brief comments will take up precisely this aspect of the question.

The basic thesis in the article by S. A. Tokarev is understandable and cannot help but evoke sympathy. This is that religious dogma does not comprise the essential aspect of religion. Witness the diversity of religious ideas, differences in the content of the religious dogma and beliefs of various peoples, countries and ages. The article demonstrates extremely starkly that a modern believer, as a rule, has very hazy ideas of the essence of the belief to which he belongs. Such a positing of the problem naturally requires an explanation of what in this sense is essential for religion and what justifies putting it "in just one sphere of social consciousness"

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(p 91). The author is not inclined to see "belief in the supernatural" as the common feature which makes it possible to classify so many diverse views toward religion. One must also agree with the author that if one does see in such faith "the main or even the only reliable feature of religion" (p 92),*it must be recognized that belief in supernatural beings arising out of popular fairytale fantasy is a variety of religion. It must be recognized that in telling, for example, a child a story in which there are supernatural beings, in doing this in a lively way and in forcing him to believe in their existence, we thereby prepare the grounds for inculcating a religious awareness in the child. This example helps us to understand what precisely delimits "religion from any other 'nonreligious' spheres" (p 91). In actuality, when you suggest the idea that these supernatural beings *rule or prevail* over man or at least have a decisive effect on his fate does a story about supernatural beings become the preparatory grounds for a religious awareness. It is no misfortune, therefore, if a child believes in the existence of brownies or wood goblins as their lively images will help to develop a child's poetic fantasy and thereby the development of consciousness generally since consciousness does not exist without fantasy. It is a misfortune if in so-doing in one way or another the idea is instilled that these beings *watch over* man, *control* his conduct and can influence him. Fear of punishment for the nonobservance of various rules of conduct can become a condition for the rise of a religious consciousness. It is a condition but not a cause! It is the grounds but not the root!

This seemingly minor detail is very important, but all its importance can be realized only in the instance that we move from examining the "ontogenetic" problems of the rise of a religious consciousness, that is, the problems of its appearance in the consciousness of an individual, to the problems of its "phylogenesis" or appearance in the history of mankind. Here it is essential to examine the question of the roots and sources of religious consciousness. Regardless that this question has constantly attracted the attention of Marxist researchers, still no unanimous opinion has been reached on this question. This can be seen, for example, from the fact that in the literature they still continue to speak about the "gnoseological roots of religion," while in a number of works by Yu. I. Semenov a convincing (and up to now unrefuted by anyone in print!) argument has been given in support of the thesis of the absence ofgnoseological roots in religion.² The result of such a state of the problem has been an insufficiently clear idea about many (at present already fully indisputable for the Marxists) concepts concerning the origin and history of religion. Unfortunately, such lack of clarity is also endemic to the article by S. A. Tokarev.

We will not speak of the inaccuracies in word usage due to which the forms of consciousness are identified by the author with ideological relations between people (p 91) while religion is defined as "the relation of people to one another over the question of the ideas about god (the gods)" (ibid.) and thereby many varieties of religious views (demonism and all the so-called "godless" religions) are excluded from the sphere of religion. Such inaccuracies in the "thoughts of an ethnographer" are frequently encountered. But directly wrong, in our opinion, are his views on the nature, roots and essence of religion which upon closer examination turn out to be idealistic and endemic at best to the pre-Marxist materialists who, as is known, were unable to rid themselves of idealism in views about society. From the text of the article it is clear that from the viewpoint of S. A. Tokarev, fear and impotence are not the "real root" of religion but merely comprise its psychological premises (p 103). If one understands impotence as S. A. Tokarev does, that is, in a purely

*[See Section 5, Tokarev article in SE, No 3, 1979]

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psychological manner, as the *feeling* of impotence, and we must agree with this, then it is not clear how Marxism understands the real roots of religion. It cannot limit itself to an explanation of the form of consciousness--religion--from the state of consciousness--the psychology of man! Here the problem is that both fear and the *sense* of impotence are the result of the *real practical* impotence of man which, in turn, is a consequence of the lack of development of practice. Appearing in the form of rule by chance, people's real practical impotence in the face of blind uncomprehended necessity, even in the first stages of development of practical activity, gave rise to special types of actions objectively unrelated to any result but subjectively as necessary as those leading directly to a result. While people ultimately step by step could trace the relationship of the latter to the results, the link with the result of the unfree chance-dominated actions ultimately could appear as mysterious as one which must be accepted as a given, not subject to check, that is, accepted on faith. An illusory manner of action naturally gave rise to an illusory manner of thought.³ Here we cannot trace in detail all the stages in the evolution of religious consciousness, but it is important for us to emphasize that religion arose not as an attempt at any *explanation* of the surrounding world, not as a *knowledge* (even illusory) of this world, but rather as a *blind faith* in the ability of certain actions in an incomprehensible manner to ensure a result. *This faith was blind to the degree that the uncomprehended necessity giving rise to it was blind.* Arising out of practice, religion in its early forms (in a preclass society) and even later (with the transformation of its roots under the conditions of a class society) carried out a completely "practical" function. With the aid of certain actions a person endeavored to ensure himself against the action of supernatural forces. This is why ritual is or becomes so important for each religion. This is why any developed religion presupposes the existence of more or less strict regulation of the believers' conduct. For precisely this reason religious teachings must include an ethical component in forming a religious morality. Thus, not the explanation or justification of evil and suffering, not the attempt to answer any such questions (about life, death, the sources of evil and so forth) lies at the basis of religion. Its roots are in the impotence of human practice which naturally gives rise to an illusory manner of thought.

All the rich ethnographic material given in the article by S. A. Tokarev shows that religious mythology never became the *basis* of religious consciousness (p 89). But how better than by this to prove the idea that the main thing in religion for the mass of believers is the prevention of the effect of bad forces which have no natural explanation on the destiny of man. Hence, the question of the specific feature of religion as posed by S. A. Tokarev must, in our view, be given a different answer than the one given by him. Religion is an illusory view of the world presupposing the existence of supernatural forces which dominate over man. Incidentally, one must not see the specific trait of religion in the exercising of its functions of integration and segregation. The author himself has repeatedly emphasized that analogous processes are inherent to all social and sociocultural phenomena.⁴

The reasons that we must come back again and again to the question of the specific nature of religion, regardless of the fundamental solution to it given in the works of the founders of Marxism, are, of course, not so much in the subjective errors of the researchers as in the difficulties of the question itself. Having arisen in a preclass society, religion was so transformed in a class society that this has been

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the grounds for a number of researchers (A. A. Popov, V. N. Chernetsov and B. F. Porshnev) to generally consider the rise of religion in the age of a class society. Conclusive arguments against such a view have been given in a number of previous works by S. A. Tokarev,⁵ although he himself supports a "pluralistic" position in the dispute about the first form of religion.

The transformation of religion in a class society involved primarily its roots, since there was a change in the form of the power of necessity over man. The broader the sphere of free activities in the relations of man and nature, the more apparent the dependence of man's lack of freedom in social relations. The transformation of the roots of religion led to the transformation of religion itself and to a change in its social role. In remaining a belief in the dominance of supernatural forces over man, at the same time religion became an implement of spiritual suppression and acquired an ideological function. Thus, ideology initially arose as religious ideology and for a long time did not exist outside of a religious form. This did not mean, however, that religion in this stage could be reduced to ideology. Ideology comprised only a part of religious consciousness aimed at defending the interests of the exploiters. The priests, as the first ideologists, in the words of K. Marx, helped to establish and subsequently preserve exploiting, antagonistic production relations by creating religious teachings or ideological constructions which always contained an impetus to a certain type of conduct in life. For this reason, beliefs as an early form of religious ideology always possessed clearly expressed subjective traits, that is, the impression of the personality of the author-dogmatist who instilled the rules of conduct worked out by him. But the first attempt to construct any line of conduct led the ideologist to the necessity of assessing surrounding reality and one which would conform with all present sensed and practical *experience*. The creation of dogma by the ideologist for this reason represented the process of *systematization* of the entire present vital material in the form of a system of ideas which established a definite program of conduct and for which the corresponding interpretation of social phenomena was essential.⁶ But such an interpretation presupposes a referral not only to beliefs, but also to facts, the use of not only belief but also knowledge. The article by S. A. Tokarev contains numerous examples of the most fantastic combination of facts, knowledge, beliefs and superstitions in the early religious teachings. In actuality it is bewildering!... But in the given instance, we are convinced, help can come only from a theoretical cognitive analysis of religious consciousness which can only be carried out from this moment.

Initially "woven" into practice, consciousness of the primitive man subsequently remained a confused network of "practical illusions,"⁷ but at this stage it was not a *system of knowledge* relative to which alone could be raised the question of the truthfulness or falseness, the conformity or discrepancy of the perception of objective reality. Only with the division of labor into material and spiritual (this involved the first ideologies or beliefs), did consciousness gradually assume the traits of systematization, although the spectrum of arising systems was almost unencompassably vast.

The diversity of ideological interpretations of faith in the dominance of supernatural forces over man can be explained in the fact that all these interpretations are aimed at reinforcing religious illusions thus representing a variety of error. This is a truth which, being objective and not dependent upon the subject, is hard and fast. There is no counting the errors. But it would be wrong on this basis not

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to make a distinction between the types and sorts of errors. This is important not only for the historian of religion but also for example, for the ethnographer since he studies the spiritual life of a given ethnos and should be aware of what a complicated mental formation every time is the subject of research. This complexity has repeatedly inspired and at the same time led astray the most prominent modern ethnographers. As an example one has merely to recall Levi-Strauss' "Mythologies"⁸ as a grandly conceived but extremely contradictory attempt to systematically present the development of reason. A solution to the problem of truth is one of the necessary conditions for a true solution to this problem, since the typology of errors is only a portion of this "eternal" and probably most complicated philosophical problem. Its dialectical materialistic examination presupposes a disclosure of the dialectics of truth and error in the process of cognition. This is precisely how the problem of truth was understood by the founders of Marxism.⁹ At the same time, in the works of Marxist gnoseologists, the appearance of a dialectical, "processual" nature of truth is frequently seen only in the dialectics of absolute and relative truth. Here it is forgotten or not noticed that the disclosure of the dialectics of truth and error operates as a *condition* for a true understanding of the dialectics of absolute and relative truth.

The incomplete elaboration of the designated aspect of the problem of truth tells, in our opinion, on the examination of the question of religion's social role by S. A. Tokarev. It is easy to note that in his article the *entire* area of religious ideas is viewed as an ideological area (p 97), and this makes it possible for the author to apply truth judgments to the entire religious sphere (p 104).^{*} At the same time, to talk about religion of a preclass society as a variety of error is at least incorrect. Such a gnoseological characteristic is applicable only to a religious ideology. Conversely, if one is speaking about overcoming the "theological tradition" (p 97) in the approach to religious beliefs, then one should first be concerned not to approach them with the same measures as scientific theories. This happens inevitably although at times involuntarily when in a debate with believers one relies on a logic as the last argument.

We feel that the conceptual material of religious teachings can be viewed as consisting of three "layers": 1) empty superstition, the products of sheer fantasizing, complete ignorance reflecting the moment of man's *absolute impotence* when confronted with necessity (natural or social); 2) an unique conglomerate or even unity of knowledge and ignorance with the ignorance having the form of knowledge or the result of the inadequate reflection by consciousness of really existing processes and problems and a manifestation of *relative* impotence when faced with objective necessity; 3) real factual knowledge which coincides fully in terms of content with the reflected reality, particles of truth, the product and appearance initially of an extremely narrow sphere of human freedom, and *rule* over the forces of nature and social forces. These particles of truth must be considered in constructing any ideological system but actual knowledge is never sufficient. It must always be pondered and conceived of with the aid of *fantasy* and this entails an additional opportunity of error. Fantasy is a necessary component of any truly mental activity, including strictly scientific. But scientific fantasy is always oriented at the possibility of checking in accord with certain criteria for distinguishing truth from error, a measure which by its nature is aimed at achieving objectivity. Ideological (in the initial Marxist sense excluding the possibility of scientific ideology) fantasy in principle does not presuppose such a criterion. "...The person who constructs the

^{*}[See Sections 10 and 15, Tokarev article in SE, No 3, 1979]

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system is forced to fill in an infinite multiplicity of gaps with his own inventions, that is, to irrationally fantasize and be engaged in ideologizing."¹⁰ Precisely such irrational fantasy is inherent to a religious ideology in contrast to a scientific fantasy, that which is subordinate to rational criteria. Thus, all the three above-mentioned layers of early class consciousness were permeated with fantasy, but the nature and measure of this fantasizing differed for each of the manifestations of this consciousness. If one does not fear forgiveably schematic solutions for a complicated and even more confused problem, it can be said that blind religious faith and religious form of consciousness are related to "sheer" fantasizing arising out of the absolute impotence of man. Fantasy related to an inadequate understanding of the really existing phenomena is most inherent to mythological consciousness as the very appearance of the myth was caused by attempts to answer the question of how one or another phenomenon was "arranged." These attempts were based on an illusory idea of any existence as a product of activity (compare Plato's any existence is creation). Such an approach to mythological consciousness possibly would permit one to understand the bases of the unity of mythological and religious consciousness as a manifestation of man's impotence (in one case relative and in the other absolute) confronted by uncomprehended necessity as well as the reasons that historically mythology often played a subordinate role in relation to religion. There is always a share of the absolute in the relative. At the same time from such an understanding of mythology there follows the mistakenness of identifying it with religion. The boundary of the relative and the absolute is also relative but it does exist. Finally, a more profound boundary separates religion and mythology from the rudiments of scientific knowledge. "Scientific" fantasy from the very beginning was aimed at the possibility of an experimental check and this excluded the necessity of appealing to supernatural forces. Precisely this distinguished the first scientific (natural philosophical) constructs. Here even the gods were subordinate to natural necessity. Thus, "scientific" fantasy differed from the religious and mythological not only quantitatively but also qualitatively.¹¹ Never mind that occasionally religious fantasy had a substantial influence on scientific. This circumstance could not destroy the fact that a profound and fundamental difference existed between them.

Ultimately the prevailing of aspects of truth or error in an ideology depends upon the degree to which the interests of the given class coincide with the objective course of historical development. Ideological illusions are a particular type of error. These are errors forced on consciousness by the system of prevailing production relationships and in this sense such errors operate as necessary and inevitable.¹² As was pointed out, religious teachings were the form in which ideology first arose. For this reason the process of the rise of religious teachings was a process of converting religious illusions into religious-ideological ones. Religious illusions arose out of the impotence of human practice. The religious-ideological ones arose out of a system of production relations. The question for the ethnographer is to disclose how far this process has gone, to what degree the religious illusions serve the ideology of the ruling class and what specific forms have been assumed by the process of forming ideological illusions. For example, there is a clearly expressed class character to the idea of a reward after death and the degree of its development can serve as an unique indicator of the formative stages of ideology.

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Ideological illusions, in being errors the roots of which have a completely real, economic basis, are not only imposed on the masses by the selfish ideologists of the ruling class. The ideologists themselves share the illusions which are implanted by the ideological constructs they have created. Moreover, those for whom these illusory constructs are basically designed, the exploited masses, by economic reality itself are ready to accept the constructs worked out by the ideologists.

Of special interest is the process of the break-up of the old system of ideological illusions and its replacement by a new one. It is important to stress that it is a question of the process the various stages of which can be watched by an ethnographer, even now, for example, in many of the developing countries.

What has been said, we feel, makes it possible to explain a frequently made serious theoretical mistake and at the same time to point out all the seriousness of the consequences from confusing the whole and the part, that is, religion and religious ideology.¹³ This is the question of the supposed "progressiveness" of religion in the individual stages of mankind's historical development. The supporters of such a view are inclined to refer to eras of the flourishing of religious painting, music and art generally, to the outstanding role of individual religious figures in the historical development of one or another society and so forth. If one considers that in all these instances it is a question of *religious ideology* and not religion generally, the given fact is simply explained. We have already seen that under the religious shell of ideological systems there can be a breakdown of ideological illusions, the accumulating of moments of truth and a change in ideological orientation. As for religion as a whole, and it has never been reducible to ideology, it, being a blind faith in the dominance of supernatural forces over man, never played and in principle could not play a positive role in any social process whatsoever. This fact is obscured by the circumstance that over an extended historical period religious ideology has remained the sole form of the existence of ideology. The consequences of identifying religion in general with its part--religious ideology--are far from harmless.

In the context of the "thoughts of an ethnographer" it would obviously be very interesting to examine another entire series of problems in religious studies related to gnoseology. For example, it would be interesting to draw attention to the relationship of scientific (philosophical, theoretical) illusions and their role in maintaining religious illusions, to take up the problem of the relationships of idealism, theology and so forth. However, all of this would lead us too far away from the article by S. A. Tokarev the basic purpose of which, as we see it, is to challenge our thoughts.

FOOTNOTES

1. SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979, pp 87-105. Subsequently references to this article are given in the text.
2. See Yu. I. Semenov, "Vozniknoveniye Chelovecheskogo Obshchestva" [The Genesis of Human Society], Krasnoyarsk, 1962, pp 400-403; Yu. I. Semenov, "Kak Vozniklo Chelovechestvo" [How Mankind Arose], Moscow, 1966, pp 368-370; Yu. I. Semenov, "Idealism, Religion: Similarity and Difference," NAUKA I RELIGIYA, No 9, 1976.

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3. For more detail on this see the book by Yu. I. Semenov, "Tak Vozniklo Chelovechestvo," pp 347-446.
4. S. A. Tokarev, "Delimiting and Unifying Functions of Culture," (Papers at the Ninth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographic Sciences, Chicago, 1973), Moscow, 1973.
5. S. A. Tokarev, "Ranniye Formy Religii i Ikh Razvitiye" [Early Forms of Religion and Their Development], Moscow, 1969; S. A. Tokarev, "On the Marxist Periodization of Religion," NAUKA I RELIGIYA, No 12, 1974.
6. See Yu. I. Semenov, "The Development of Socioeconomic Formations and the Objective Logic of Religion's Development," VOPROSY NAUCHNOGO ATEIZMA, No 20, Moscow, 1976, pp 54, 55.
7. The concept "practical illusion" used by K. Marx is internally contradictory. On the one hand, etymologically the term "illusion" presupposes a tie with the sphere of contemplation. Its attribution as a practical one draws us to the sphere of activity. This contradiction is only one of the manifestations of the dialectical nature of practice with which its very existence is tied.
8. Cl. Levi-Strauss, "Mythologiques," Vols 1-4, Paris, 1964-1971.
9. See K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 20, p 92; V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 29, p 514. For more detail on this see also our article: Yu. A. Murav'yev, "The Dialectics of Truth and Error in the Development of the Theory of Genetics," "Nauchnyye Trudy Ryazanskogo Meditsinskogo Instituta" [Scientific Papers of Ryazan' Medical Institute], 1970, Vol 29 ("Scientific Methodology. Methodological Problems of Biology and Medicine"), pp 288-318.
10. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch.," Vol 20, p 630.
11. Artistic fantasy has a special nature but an elucidation of its nature cannot be part of our plans in the given instance.
12. For a long time Marxist teachings on ideological illusions were not a matter of attention for Marxist philosophers. After long neglect these teachings were first analyzed in the work by Maurice Kornforth ("Dialectical Materialism," Vol 3, "The Theory of Knowledge," London, 1954). Great attention is given to the problem of the relationship of truth and ideology and to the problem of ideological illusions in the book by L. Zhivkovich, "Teoriya Sotsial'nogo Otrazheniya" [The Theory of Social Reflection], Moscow, 1969.
13. Such a mistake has not only been made by S. A. Tokarev. One of the recent examples can be seen in the work by A. P. Midler, "Philosophy and Religion," "Filosofiya i Tsennostnyye Formy Soznaniya" [Philosophy and Value Forms of Consciousness], Moscow, 1978. Here we encounter the identification of religion with religious ideology.

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ON THE CONTENT OF RELIGION¹

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 4, Jul-Aug 80 (signed to press 31 Jul 80) pp 88-97

[Article by Ya. V. Minkyavichyus]

[Text] 1. A "Strange" Question

The question of the main content of religion raised by S. A. Tokarev (p 88), can scarcely be considered strange. The presence of many definitions shows the complexity of the question, the ongoing search for the essence of religion and the intertwining of all sorts of its conceptual interpretations. These interpretations can scarcely be uniform and complete as long as religion exists (and hence, is evolving, substantially changing and is under new conditions) and as long as various methodological positions and different ideological orientations clash over the solution to this question.

The author of the discussed article "with a certain amazement" points out that with all the polar opposition between theological and atheistic understandings of the essence of religion, there is "something in common" between them (p 87). In his opinion, the common thing is that atheism in essence perceives the theological conception of religion only in a negative sense. Consequently, such atheism does not have its own conception of religion. Certainly one cannot help but agree that the opposing of atheism and religion only in the sense of denying its "idea of a certain other-worldly force standing above man" (p 87) is futile and, of course, does not correspond to the essence of the Marxist-Leninist conception of religion and atheism. S. A. Tokarev is correct in drawing attention to the fact that "we have still not finally parted from the theological tradition in the study of religion" (p 97).

Unfortunately, the methodological pressure of the theological tradition on atheism can be felt both in the theoretical and in the practical area. How much energy of practical atheism is channeled into combating the "flimsiness" of religion! In the scholarly and popular literature atheism is often simplistically represented as a denial of what religion affirms. Certainly we must emphasize the shakiness of the religious understanding of the world and the corresponding solution to the problems of human existence. However, if atheistic criticism is aimed at the ideas of religious fantasy as supposedly the chief content of religion, then such criticism is distracted from viewing religion as a social phenomenon. The essence of religion can be understood from the positions of a materialistic interpretation of

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social phenomena only in bearing in mind the philosophical and ideological "grounding" of religion, its gnoseological roots in the cognitive process (including its parasitic role in natural sciences and the exploitation of natural scientific problems), the historical context of its existence, its psychological nature and so forth. Any other proof of the unsoundness of religion would logically lead to its exclusion from the structure of social consciousness which reflects social existence. This would actually be philosophically (materialistically) unsound. The theological apology for religion, in mysticizing its essence, actually removes religion from its natural sociohistorical context as there are many aspects of a methodological similarity between trivial atheism and a theological interpretation of religion.

Such a lamentable miscomprehension stems from the fact that trivial atheism in its comprehension of religion proceeds primarily from a complex of ideas and concepts of "god," "the immortality of the soul," "personal salvation," "divine judgment," "predestination," "the reward of the afterlife" and so forth. How little this says about religion as a social phenomenon, all the more from a materialistic philosophical position! Even within the theological tradition, the named ideas and concepts do not apply to religion as a whole, for they are lacking in many religions.²

It also happens that atheistic criticism of any specific form of religion, for example Christianity, misses the essential point. Let us assume that the main thing in Christianity is the very belief in Christ. Then all the polemics between the atheists and Christians will revolve around the problem of Christ. In such an instance the question of the essence of Christianity is replaced by the question of the historic or mythological fact of Christ. Christianity is "unmasked" by the atheists by denying the very existence of its founder. But then is Confucianism or Islam more valid than Christianity merely because Confucius and Mohammed are historical figures while the historical fact of Christ's existence has still not been proven?

When atheism is basically aimed at a criticism of the images of religious fantasy, is it not burdened down by the entire tradition of bourgeois enlightenment which certainly has its own historical justification? As is known, the limitations of this tradition to a significant degree were already removed by German classic philosophy and not only by the materialist Feuerbach but also by the idealists Kant, Fichte and Hegel who viewed the phenomenon of religion dialectically. In pre-Marxist philosophy, only Feuerbach was able to validly turn the question of the essence of religion into the sphere of human existence, that is, that sphere in which it (the essence of religion) only can appear.³ In overcoming the abstract anthropological conception of man and the related Feuerbachian theory of religion and atheism, the founders of Marxism-Leninism shifted this question into the sphere of the specifically social, class existence of man. Having turned the question of the comprehension of the world into the question of its revolutionary transformation and mastery, Marxism eliminated the enlightened tradition. The phenomenon of religion meant not so much the flimsiness of man's comprehension of the world as an illusory attempt to master it and to survive in this alien world. "Religion is only an illusory sun which moves around man until he learns to move around himself."⁴ Religion and science as forms of social consciousness, in differing over the object of reflection, the form of reflection, the result of reflection, over the structure and functions, can coexist and do coexist not only chronologically but also in the same culture, in the same man. Science and education are not only not the sole but also not the main antifactor (crisis factor) of religion, all the more in the modern

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age, in the age of the scientific and technical revolution. This is explained by the fact that the main thing in religion is not the contents of the fantastic ideas and not the view of what the absence of can be proven scientifically. Of course, the fundamental opposition of science and religion does not dispute this, but attention is drawn to the fact that science alone is not sufficient to overcome religion.

Religious fantasy arose and developed not out of ignorance and exists not as a result of ignorance and it is eliminated chiefly also not by knowledge. Religious ideas on man and the world, the soul and salvation, the symbols of faith, the principles of worship and confessional communications can be understood (including from the atheistic viewpoint of "establishing" their so-called flimsiness) not by themselves but only in the real context of the social life of the believers, the culture of the peoples, the ethnic structure of society and the ideological process. Religion does not exist in a "pure form," that is, outside of morality and art, political consciousness and philosophy, and the entire culture of a certain people with their ethnic features, traditions, value orientation, psychological structure and entire way of life. Precisely in such a context it is possible and necessary to examine the ideological content and worship of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, not to say the tribal religions. Soviet scientific religious studies are developing precisely in this direction and the historical and ethnographic sciences and Marxist-Leninist methodology are mainly contributing to this.

No, a strange question did not occur to the ethnographer who views religion as a social phenomenon. This is a question of the correctness of the scientific (Marxist) content of religion in the confrontation with the ideological and theological interpretations of it, with the tradition of its enlightened and metaphysical-materialistic criticism, with the scientific fetishization of modern science and with the limitations of the methodology of technological determinism in understanding modern scientific-technical and social progress and its influence on religion. The article "Religion as a Social Phenomenon" is primarily valuable in methodological, theoretical and practical terms.

2. The Socioethnic Context of Religion's Existence

The ideological content of religion, that is, the ideas and concepts of religious fantasy, is not autonomous. It exists in an entire involved structural-functional complex of religion which, in turn, is woven into the sociocultural type of an ethnically determined society. S. A. Tokarev views the history of religion, its periodization and the historical types of kinship-tribal cults, national (national-state) and world religions from the viewpoint of relations between people existing in the course of their social development and projected into the ideological sphere. He traces the integrating and segregating functions of religion. All of this is very important for understanding religion as a social phenomenon.

When we say that religion is a form of social consciousness and define it by the well-known statement of F. Engels ("Any religion is...a fantastic reflection in the minds of people of those external forces which rule over them...a reflection in which the earthly forces assume the form of unearthly ones"⁵), we are dealing with this definition as an abstraction divorced from its concrete historical content. It appeared as a result of the polemics between F. Engels and E. Dühring who "out-Bismarcked Bismarck himself," having banned any religion as "a primitive infantile

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notion that behind nature or above it there dwell beings which could be influenced by sacrifices or prayers."⁶ As we can see, the mentioned definition of religion was set down as a matter of polemics and it can be adequately understood only in the corresponding context. Its idea is that religious fantasy reflects man's position confronted by external forces which rule over him and not simply these forces (as might be the case in taking the text of F. Engels literally). Here F. Engels is speaking not about people generally but about various peoples, in mentioning the Hindus, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Celts, Lithuanians and Slavs who in an unique manner developed their own ways of worship. In defining religion as a fantastic reflection of external forces, F. Engels was drawing chief attention to the social attributes of this reflection, that is, to the social status of people and to the social nature of religion. He considered that comparative mythology had a one-sided view of the gods only as a reflection of the forces of nature. But he was interested in religious ideas primarily as a reflection of historical forces.⁷ Precisely this focus is of decisive significance in understanding the essence of religion. Consequently, only genetic and structural-functional analysis of the historical forms and types of religion, as disclosed in the historically dynamic socio-ethnic structure of kinship groups and tribes, nationalities and nations, makes it possible to disclose the content and essence of religion.

The basic components of religion--religious consciousness, religious worship and religious institutions--in turn are also complicated. Religious consciousness can and must be viewed (in a vertical breakdown) on the levels of ordinary and theoretical consciousness, social psychology and ideology, as well as (in a horizontal breakdown) as an intertwining and interaction of images, concepts, ideas, feelings, moods, will, customs, traditions, conceptual apparatus and so forth. The aggregate of components comprising a religious consciousness is related and interacts with other forms of social consciousness: science, philosophy, morality, art, law and politics. Religious consciousness is objectified by very diverse means in the practice of the cults which differ both in object and in forms. The carrier of religious consciousness is the social subject with his spiritual world and is always a specific representative of a certain ethnic community. Religion performs its specific (ideological, compensatory, psychosuppressive, regulative, organizational and communicative) and nonspecific (economic, political, legal, aesthetic, cultural, caritative and so forth) functions not so much in relation to the inner world of a believing individual as in terms of his social existence which also possesses socioethnic specificity.

The concrete content of religion is apparent when all its complex in a structural and functional aspect is viewed in the historically concrete context of its existence in a certain system of the ethnosphere. The ethnos with its social and natural determinants and with its components (language, folklore, morals, customs, rites, national characters, commonness of origin and historical destiny and endogamy) places a substantial imprint on the entire religious complex and this is not felt uniformly. It is a question of the varying degree of interaction and interconnection of the various structural components and functions of religion (including the world, supranational religions), on the one hand, and the ethnosphere, on the other.⁸

If one views the integrating and segregating functions of religion and the ethnos, modern ethnic communities can be characterized from the viewpoint of their mono- or polyconfessionality while the modern confessional communities can be described as monoethnic or polyethnic. By comparing the mono- and polyethnic confessional

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structures, one can make a further typologization of the kinship-tribal cults, the national (state) and world (supranational) religions. In bearing in mind the socio-ethnic nature of religion, it is also essential to distinguish in its content various more or less expressed orientations such as transcendental or natural, humanistic or cultural-historical, theocentric or anthropocentric and so forth. For example, in terms of their orientations the Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism) differ substantially from the monotheistic tradition of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Comparative religious studies show that characteristic of the Western religions and Islam are a dualistic dividing of the world, creationism, personification of the deity (monotheism), individualism and personalism, strict definition of doctrine, exclusiveness and historicalness, while the Eastern religions are naturally and cosmically oriented. In them the world is understood as unified and eternal, time is little sensed; their divinities are impersonal, little interest is shown in strictly determined doctrines; individuality (the personality or individual) is dissolved in the universal and they are inclusive.⁹ Such substantial differences in the symbols of belief, in the understanding of nature, man and history, in worship and the religious idea of life, as well as in the structure of the professional community certainly cannot be explained within the religious concepts and ideas themselves. The specific nature of the Eastern religions must be sought in the history and culture of the peoples of India, China and Japan and in the particular features of their ethnic life and regional contacts. The same applies to Judaism as the monotheistic religion of the Jews. Arab culture is so closely tied to Islam that it is often identified with Moslem culture. The Koran and Sunna adopted a multiplicity of cultural elements of the peoples and ethnic groups inhabiting the Arab empire, the caliphate. The history and culture of the Roman, Slavic and German peoples to a significant degree determined the specificness of the three basic varieties of the most cosmopolitan religion, Christianity: Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism.

Of course, this comparison of confessional and ethnic forms of a human community has a very tentative, schematic, imprecise and incomplete character. But it is of fundamental importance for studying the content and essence of religion, its nature and functioning. With such an approach attention is drawn to the fact that the pluralism of religious concepts and ideas arose not as a result of affiliation of ideas, dogmatic disputes of theologians or doctrinal and institutional schisms. Certainly the appearance of Orthodoxy is explained not by the doctrinal dispute about filioque but rather by the conditions of the Byzantine Empire. The action of Martin Luther in Wittenberg against indulgences served only as a pretext for the broad Reformation in Germany, for the need for a reformation of Christianity had matured within the humanistic culture of the Renaissance when the Catholic Church became a serious obstacle on the path to the establishing of new social relations, including the ethnic development of the German nation. The appeal of the founder of Protestantism to the authentic source of the Christian belief, the Bible, and the opposing of each believing individual to the integral institution of the Church (the turning directly to God in bypassing the Church) could have become so effective only in the real context of the socioethnic, cultural and ideological conditions in 16th-century Germany and not because they were based on the "purity" of the Christian faith.

Although Christianity arose as a fundamental denial of ethnic, cultural and political differences and although it endeavored to integrate many peoples, cultures and

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political systems; nevertheless, it was itself subjected to ever-greater disintegration as a consequence of the influence of various ethnic, cultural and political factors. With all the claims of Catholicism to "universality," the cosmopolitan Catholic service is inconceivable outside the national organism of the Italian or Spanish, Austrian or Irish, Polish or Lithuanian, Mexican or Chilean peoples. This religion has been introduced and is being introduced into the national organism, imbibing elements of pre-Christian beliefs of the given people and taking on a national form through the sphere of everyday life, traditions and customs, folklore and the mental attitudes of the people. The ethnic and confessional elements are closely intertwined in the art and moral standards of the people. A certain cult element of Christianity which is most widespread and deeply rooted and which has become popular in the given country becomes a national specific feature.¹⁰ The orientation of Catholicism toward national specific features in the various countries was strengthened after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

3. The Modern Evolution of Religion

As is known, the ideological content of religion with all its conservatism has not remained unchanged. Religion as a whole is evolving because it is a social phenomenon. Scarcely any other age can be compared with the present one in terms of the scale and profoundness of the changes in the awareness of society and involving its attitude toward religion. Conditionally one can speak of three different global regions of the contemporary religious situation. These are the countries of the world socialist system, where religion has lost its position as the most mass and dominant ideology and the church has been deprived of its former very solid sociopolitical status. There are the developed capitalist countries in which the sociopolitical and cultural life has been more or less secularized while religion and the church are in a state of crisis. There are the developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America where religion has great reserves in mass consciousness of the believers, in the way of life of entire peoples (particularly the Moslem, Buddhist and other), in their cultural tradition and in state policy.

Still, regardless of these essential differences, in all three regions there is a certain common situation which in its contradictoriness differs from all previous crisis situations. Social dynamism and scientific-technical progress with their contradictory consequences have confronted mankind with vitally important economic, military, moral and other problems which have created a real threat to his existence. This not only undermines the entire age-old tradition of religion but also revitalizes it and creates a different soil for its existence in an altered form. Thegnoseological and social nature of religion is being modified. Christianity most of all has been exposed to the action of the modern factors. Precisely in extensive regions of Christianity's spread, the religious tradition has been broken by secularization and atheism.

But the violation of a religious tradition in no way means its end. The most interesting thing is how this tradition has altered. The very Western and obviously the most socialized (along with Islam) religion, Christianity, has been exposed to the contradictory action of antagonistic sociocultural factors which have given rise to new forms of alienation. Man was confronted not only with creative but also naturally destructive, uncontrollable, although self-created forces (the mighty scientific and technical potential, industry, the militaristic means of mass destruction, the

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mass information media, the world of things, mass culture, bureaucracy and so forth). This uncontrollable force of man in an antagonistic society has been twisted by its weakness. Western non-Marxist philosophy (particularly the philosophy of life, existentialism, philosophical anthropology, phenomenology, hermeneutics and others) has dramatized the spiritual atmosphere of capitalist society. All of this and much else have not only contributed to the de-Christianization of the believing "lower ranks," but have also agitated certain theological circles among whom have appeared such unorthodox figures as the Frenchman P. Teilhard De Chardin, the German Karl Rainer and the Swiss Hans Kung. The Dutch catechesis and the Latin American varieties of "theology of liberation," "theology of revolution" and finally "theology without god" are these not the proof of the shattering of the strict doctrinal system of Christianity (primarily Catholicism)?

To put it briefly, exclusive, theocentric and definitely transcendently oriented Christianity with its strict theological doctrine that divided the world and personified the deity has been undermined in terms of all these features. It has been deformed as a consequence of the weakening of doctrinal, liturgical and institutional discipline. The theocentric religion has been weakened by the detheization of religion, by its inner secularization and by the strengthened anthropocentrism. With good reason at present in the West theological and secular sociologies of religion have begun to speak widely about pseudoreligions and substitute religions. With good reason in Western Europe, the United States and Canada the religious-philosophical and ethnic ideas of the Eastern cults have become popular (particularly Buddhism and Zen Buddhism), the system of Yoga and so forth in which there is no great interest in strict doctrines, the dichotomy of the world, the personified divinity, transcendence and so forth. It is not accidental that one of the most conservative, strictly disciplined, intolerant, absolutist confessional institutions with cosmopolitan claims, Catholicism (the Vatican or Papacy) at present has been forced (starting with the Papacy of John 23d and the 2d Vatican Council) to revise its traditional positions, to face the real world, to actually admit its ideological pluralism, to commence a dialogue with non-Catholics, with non-Christians, with non-believers, to abandon anathema, to even rehabilitate its victims, to recognize the Protestant ideas of ecumenism and so forth. With good reason the first encyclical of John-Paul II "Redemptor hominis" (1979) emphasized the dramatic situation of man in the modern world. It even used the fundamental term of existentialism "alienation" (for the first time in a Papal encyclical) evidencing an existential modification of the Catholic view of man.

Characteristic of the present-day ideological and sociopsychological situation in bourgeois society is a unique syncretism of the traditional, church-controlled religions and any manifestations of occultism, astrology, horoscopes, theosophy, mysticism, and countercultural extremism. This process is eroding the orthodox theistic traditions; it is shifting the accent from theocentrism to anthropocentrism and is existentializing religion. Thus, the former objectivization and ontologization of the ideas of religious fantasy and the symbols of faith lose their sense and religion more and more is subjectivized in the inner experiences of man, fulfilling the function of a certain spiritual and moral therapy. In stressing these aspects, certain bourgeois religious students have asserted that the essence of religion coincides with the essence of man. For example, the professor of psychology at Toronto University D. Bakan, in endeavoring to reconcile psychology, theology and Christian religious "therapy," proposes that religion is "a mental phenomenon from the essence of which it follows that the roots of human existence and what in the narrow sense

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is represented as religion are basically the same."¹¹ Of course, it is possible to agree that the essence of religion consists in the essence of man. Only in this sense does religion in an illusory manner replace the unrealized essence of man.

The modern socioethnic, cultural, political and ideological processes in the world, in warping and destroying the traditional content of religion and in bringing to life new ideological phenomena as indications of alienated consciousness provide the grounds for a very extensive hazy interpretation of religion. For example, a group of American students of religion, members of the American Academy of Religion, in examining "religion as a basic human affair in many of its measurements," came to the conclusion: "religion is any confidence (reliance) of man in a basic value in which he finds his essential fullness as an individual and as a social man; for him all other values are subordinate to this main value."¹² The authors propose overcoming "Western provincialism" by such an axiological interpretation of religion (that is, to assimilate the Western and Eastern cults), to consider confessional pluralism in the context of socioethnic, cultural and ideological pluralism and ensure a sound future for religion under the conditions of further scientific-technical and sociocultural progress.

In actuality, the scientific-technical revolution, secularization and the internationalization of culture and the way of life have confronted the entire complex of ethnoconfessional structures with not an apocalyptic but rather a natural dramatizing of world history in which the fate of man has been fused with a system of the biotechnosociosphere. Under such conditions, as many foreign non-Marxist ideologists and philosophers as well as certain theologians assert, there must be a global, universal, cosmic consciousness, a new world transconfessional and transethnic religion.

All these new trends show that in the alienated world of an antagonistic society, the alienated man is unable to overcome his alienated consciousness and alienated vision of the world.

Is this not proof of the main content of religion?

S. A. Tokarev correctly emphasizes the chief orientation of religion, its "claim to a general reasoning out of life, to solving the cardinal philosophical and philosophical-ethical problems" (p 92). But can these problems be reduced to the problem of evil (although in the broadest sense) as the main one. For religion exploits not only existing evil but also the axiological, moral and aesthetic attitude of man toward reality and the desire to understand it.

Religion, as a social phenomenon, reflects not nature, not the cosmos, not man, not history, but rather the alienated situation of man in relation to nature, society and himself. In the present age of social dynamism and the scientific-technical revolution, more and more in the forefront is the alienation of man when confronted with the contradictory consequences of his own activities; and religion is also oriented to this, exploiting any components of alienation.

For this reason it can be assumed that scientific atheism should pay more attention to philosophical and sociocultural research on the problems of man as a social subject, certainly, in cooperation with other social sciences.

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The fact that religion is in the sphere of the ideological struggle between the two confronting social systems, that it is motivated by the most diverse class, political and national interests of peoples and states and that it is eminently part of the awareness of law and moral relations as well as the way of life of many societies shows that the role of religion cannot derive simply from the complex of its fantastic and illusory ideas. Finally, on the question of the basic content of religion it is very important to consider that it has its past in a socially and culturally little-developed as well as antagonistic society but probably does not have a future in a communist society.

Thus, we can briefly sum up a few results.

Religion, as a social phenomenon, is an involved complex. The ideas of religious fantasy related to a belief in the supernatural hold an important place in it, but they do not comprise its chief content for they do not possess their own essence. Besides, the diversity of religious ideas does not lend itself to unification. However whatever features religion possesses, whatever its component parts, it in any event exists in the context of the cognitive and value relationship of man, as a social subject, to reality. Its specific feature is that it reflects the dependence of the social subject upon an alien external world and shows his desire by superstitious means to master it and compensate for his alienation. In religion man is oriented to himself in an aspect of existence and nonexistence. It is an illusory method of man's self-realization in the absence of an adequate cognitive and value mastery of the world and himself. A religious state is subjective and psychological but it is objectivized in the historically concrete context of man and becomes a definite sociocultural and ethnic reality. Religion does not belong to human nature rather it is the product of sociocultural development, but only within historically determined limits (while man is exposed to social collisions).

Thus, religion is an ethnically designated, syncretic, spiritual (intellectual and emotional) phenomenon which is objectivized in the sociocultural process and arose as a result of the antagonism between objective reality and the ideals, interests, aspirations, subjective sets and so forth and exists as an illusory form for resolving this antagonism until society resolves it by real means. Whether religion is manifested in ideas, images and concepts of superhuman subjectivity or supernatural objectivity, of immortality or eternity, paradise or hell, divinity or an evil spirit and so forth--all of this is secondary.

Again (following S. A. Tokarev), in referring to the aphorism of Spinoza about Peter and Paul, it can be said that the task of religious historians, archeologists and ethnographers, psychologists, sociologists and philosophers has a sort of hermeneutic character. It consists in considering the symbolic language of religious fantasy as a socially informative and concretely historical language of science.

FOOTNOTES

1. On the question of the article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979. Further references to this article are given in the text.

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2. In examining the question of the content of religion, it is essential to draw attention to the terms "religion" and "atheism." In the etymological sense, the term "atheism" is unsuitable for elucidating the content of religion not only because it is negative but also because it is directed not against all but only the theistic religions and theism does not comprise the essence of the latter. As for the term "religion," it has been used very loosely. (See R. Tsanoff, "Religious Crossroads," New York, 1942.) In the most diverse sense, in no way theistic, the term "religion" is found in the works of Caesar, Horace, Lucretius, Livy, Petronius, Tacitus, Apuleius and other representatives of ancient Roman culture in those times when this term was in use. Cicero understood religion in the sense of venerating the gods. Lactantius and St. Augustine gave it a Christian (monotheistic) sense.
3. See K. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 3, p 2.
4. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch.," Vol 1, p 415.
5. Ibid., Vol 20, p 328.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., pp 328, 329.
8. For more detail on this see Ya. Minkyavichyus, "Religiya v Mnogonatsional'nom Mire" [Religion in a Multinational World], Vilnius, 1978, pp 27-47.
9. See "Exploring Religious Meaning," Englewood Cliffs, 1973, pp 371-374.
10. For more detail see Ya. Minkyavichyus, "Katolitsizm i Natsiya" [Catholicism and the Nation], Moscow, 1971, pp 207-227.
11. D. Bakan, "Mensch im Zwiespalt. Psychoanalytische, soziologische und religiöse Aspekte der Anthropologie," Munich, 1976, p 11.
12. "Exploring Religious Meanings," p 366.

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CERTAIN CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 5, Sep-Oct 80 (signed to press 30 Sep 80) pp 72-83

[Article by G. G. Gromov]

[Text] The article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)"¹ belongs among a comparatively rare form of scholarly work. This article is the reflections and musings of a prominent Soviet ethnographer and student of religions on the place and role of religious ideas (more accurately errors) in the life of human society. Hence the article's structure as a study where in each of the sections S. A. Tokarev endeavors to state his opinion on what in his mind are the most important, pertinent and still unresolved problems. The author repeatedly emphasizes that the judgments made by him do not obviate and do not replace all that has been done in the study of religion up to now (pp 103-104). But he is concerned primarily with the further direction of the study, that is, in what ways it should move and what problems and questions a researcher should set for himself. We feel that the somewhat sharp polemical tone set by the opponents of S. A. Tokarev in the heated debate is not completely justified.²

The aspects touched upon by S. A. Tokarev in the relationship of religious views and the life of real human society are very broad just as the materials and proofs used by him are extensive. It is very difficult to compete with him here. Obviously it would be better to accept his invitation to reflect and to state one's judgments not on all the questions raised but only those which are closest to me as a specialist in the area of Russian ethnography.

Each person who has observed and does observe the role and place of religion in the life of a population and the real existence of religious ideas cannot help but agree with the thesis developed by S. A. Tokarev at the beginning of the article. In actuality what we often and not always correctly term a religion in a given group of a population,³ be it an ethnic or local group (for example, a cluster of villages), with a closer analysis turns out to be a very amorphous, indefinite or, in the term of S. A. Tokarev, "hazy" idea (p 88). This ambiguity involves all aspects of religious ideas. Along with information drawn one way or the other from the Christian sacred books, the New and Old Testament, one can also hear the story of how the Prophet Elijah, somewhat hard of hearing in his old age, did not hear the request and instead of sending rain when people asked for it sent it when they had already begun to harvest. In my more than 30 years of field work I have never encountered a

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coherent exposition of a Christian concept for any of the questions which religion claims to answer. Both the questions of the creation of the world, the questions of the origin of man, morality, law and ethics--all of this in the explanations of our informants at best merely had a certain crust of Christian dogma. The same hazy and eclectic approach could also be traced constantly in studying the rites. Yes, marriage took place in the church, and yes a priest was invited to a burial, and yes, it was considered essential to baptize a child. But one has merely to listen to a consistent description of how the rite is performed from beginning to end and one must state that the purely clerical aspects hold a surprisingly small place. A larger portion of the ritual actions, even those which are performed in the presence of the priest, have no bearing on Christianity. Precisely in family ritual the church endeavored to hold strong positions if only because the fee for church ceremonies comprised a significant portion of its income.

It would be possible to give many other facts and observations of a similar sort, but these are well enough known by all ethnographers who study religion. For this reason the question asked by S. A. Tokarev of "what is the essence of religion?" seems neither strange nor untimely, regardless of the definitions of religion known to all of us. In actuality it is worth investigating this more carefully.

One of S. A. Tokarev's opponents, Yu. I. Semenov, has already quoted the definition of religion given by F. Engels.⁴ As a whole, religion undoubtedly is a fantastic reflection of reality in the minds of people. But here it is also wise to recall the definition of religion given by V. I. Lenin which emphasizes that religion is a barren flower on the tree of knowledge.⁵ And this is knowledge generally and not just on the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as is possible to conclude from the sixth-ninth sections of S. A. Tokarev's article (pp 92-96). For human society, knowledge, thought, understanding of both the world around as well as the society in which he lives and, finally, knowledge of himself as an individual of his place in this world of very complex relations between one's "ego," society and nature are not a whimsey or a pastime but rather a necessity for his existence as Man. The mediation of the relationships between man and nature through culture, that is, that complicated mechanism of relationships which is created by implement and other production activities of human society, inevitably gives rise to the necessity of knowledge and not the knowledge of individual processes or phenomena, but rather knowledge as a system of ideas concerned with the world surrounding man. Regardless of how insignificant the knowledge of the most primitive man may seem to us, it was knowledge and not merely the experience of one individual. The very assessment of such knowledge from modern positions always entails a certain distortion as our distant ancestors may not have known so little and the more profoundly and carefully we study the history of primitive culture the more convinced we are of this.⁶ Undoubtedly, this knowledge not only quantitatively but primarily qualitatively is in no way comparable with what science has made available to us. However, an excessively prejudiced attitude toward the system of mankind's knowledge in the past is clearly unjustified.

At the same time, if we open any, even a very serious ethnographic work, there we will find a special section on religion, sometimes very detailed and extensive but on the system of positive knowledge at best there will be a short and cursory essay.⁷ Inevitably not only does one gain the impression but it has even become an established tradition that little attention is given to the knowledge while

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excessively much is devoted to the "barren flower" on the tree of knowledge. When S. A. Tokarev writes that the content of religious ideas among the mass of people was virtually unknown and of little interest to them, this can be valid precisely because people in their practical, real life are most concerned with what is so cursorily described in ethnographic works as "positive knowledge." For this reason it is quite natural that the majority has preferred "to perform the established rites and make sacrifices" (p 89) and only this or "god is god and will not be bad" and "one does not get full with prayer." The misfortune of our religious studies is not only that a certain tilt has arisen toward examining the purely theological concepts of early beliefs but also that the place and proportional amount of religious ideas in the system of human knowledge in a specific era generally have not been defined with sufficient clarity.

If one turns to the most elementary analysis of any real form of human activity, inevitably a very complex chain of relationships unfolds between all the stages of this activity. For example, in gathering, a person had to know all the species of useful plants (and there are over a hundred such species⁸) their growing seasons, for in some plants the young shoots were used as food or for other purposes, while in others it was the green roots and still others the dried seed. It was essential to know the places the plants grew, the associated plants in order to more easily discover such places and so forth, and so forth. Add to this the necessary knowledge on the gathering, processing and preparation of useful plants as food and here we have often entire production cycles. It was not merely necessary to know all this but also to transmit the knowledge to subsequent generations in order not to break the succession of culture which was not any too strong at the given level of development. It was also essential to be able to determine such a complex factor as time as the growing seasons had to be correlated to some more abstract category. The possible influences of the weather also had to be considered. In a word, if we endeavor to order this entire process into a chain of reciprocal links without omitting one essential one if possible, this would take up more than a page. And when we compare precisely such a full idea about the amount of positive knowledge needed by man with the magical actions which at times were performed for the sake of "multiplying the harvest," then a belief in the plant spirits is so miserly and "communication" with them is so inessential in real life that it becomes understandable why people were not so greatly interested in the various constructs of a purely religious order. Equally complicated and diverse was the knowledge needed by man in hunting, fishing, in all aspects of his daily life. Nor did man find it easy to gain experience in social relationships of a varying level and nature, from relations in a family group to intertribal ones.

With the greater complexity and development of human culture, with the appearance of new economic undertakings and with the specialization of individual social groups and strata in various areas of human activity, inevitably there was an increase in the complexity of the necessary real knowledge on the surrounding world and a comprehending of its patterns. Along with this there was an inevitable further complicating of what we classify as religion in the corresponding stages of human society. Religion, the cult and the performing of rites became the privilege and duty of a certain group of persons, the priests. With the lack of data it is difficult to judge whether such groups possessed a secret conception on all the questions of the universe and ideology. But even in the most cursory review of the known facts, it is possible to confidently conclude that specialization in the cults

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and rites developed not automatically but as a barren flower on that actually necessary and completely real knowledge about the movement of the suns, planets and other heavenly bodies. At the same time this was essential for determining the optimum times of field work and for satisfying other more involved needs of society. The fact that such knowledge was presented to the population and perceived by them as a miraculous, God-given phenomenon in no way alters its very realistic essence. The appearance of writing, the first mathematical knowledge and the first medical discoveries, on the one hand, were nothing more than a generalization of the very complex previous experience of thousands of generations, and on the other, an outgrowth of the needs in a new stage of human cultural development. While the ancient inhabitants of Sumer or Egypt, India or Peru may have known nothing about the "mysteries" of the priestly estate in the contents of the beliefs themselves, in being content with the role of observers in performing the rites, the other function of this new social group, a purely practical one, that is, setting the date for planting, the use of writing in the administering of the state, the collecting of taxes, the calculating of percentages, legal activities and much else which to a greater or lesser degree was related to the activities of the priests, this function very tangibly concerned the inhabitants of the newly arisen state system. And here, if we separate the purely religious aspects from the necessary practice of life, the role of religion and its "essence" is very meager and insignificant. Obviously this idea determined the title of one of the fundamental studies by S. A. Tokarev "Religiya v Istorii Narodov Mira" [Religion in the History of the Peoples of the World] (and not merely "The History of Religion").⁹ And this is the source, it seems to me, of that harmfulness and insufficiency in working out the religious systems and postulates, their eclecticism, contradictoriness, and inconsistency, their divisions between the individual divinities and cults. It is hard to believe that it was ever different--indeed, religious beliefs, or to be more exact, beliefs of a religious character always parasitically use real knowledge and real patterns discovered or just revealed by man as the essence of the explanations of these or those phenomena. The religious explanations of such patterns are a fantastic reflection in the minds of people of true reality. But initially there must be the true reality.

We should note one other particular feature of that complex of ideas which is often accepted as a definite religious system (as we are talking about such systems), namely what is actually religious in these systems? Take the famous commandments: "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," "Honor thy father and mother" and so forth. Is this actually religion? Is this not the summing up of long social experience of man and definite rules for necessary social intercourse? In the folklore of any people you will find edifying tales with the same conclusion about the benefit of good and the inevitable punishment of a misdeed, only in a much more vivid, apt form and hence more effective in indoctrinating the moral convictions of man. Usually religion contributes one thing, the fear of divine punishment, to such moralizing subjects. One must not kill because on "judgment day" or immediately after death (for example, Christianity does not provide a definite answer to this question), the sinner guilty of violating the commandment will be punished. Folklore versions more often promise punishment even in this life. One other most essential difference in the religious interpretation is that "thou shalt not kill" not because this is the most unnatural act of human relations, but because "it is against the will of God." It is not difficult to note that in such constructs, the church and church teachings intrude into the generally accepted commandments of the standards of human conduct. Again the church and religious teachings, and here they are loyal to their nature, merely draw from the social

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experience of human society without providing anything positive in merely imposing their own interpretation of the reasons why one must not do something but rather do something else. In analyzing one or another religious system, the researchers, in following the theologians--and S. A. Tokarev is undoubtedly right in his accusation --analyze a certain system of views, often not taking the trouble to isolate what is truly religious in it and what is a generalization of human experience, man's observations and that total of acquired, practical (including social) knowledge (morality, law and ethics) inevitable and necessary in the life of any human society. As a result of such a substitution, religion itself is presented to us in its impressive raiment, although a larger portion of the fabric from which this raiment has been made has no relationship to religion per se.

It must be pointed out that we would not be right to attribute every error which abound in the medieval European ideas about the structure of the earth or universe to religion. The idea of the earth as a certain plane resting on three elephants is, of course, a fantasy and does not correspond to reality like tales about persons with dog heads are also fantastic. But such an idea is not religion rather a simple error, a fantasy, an invention, an attempt to compensate for a lack of knowledge. In this fantasy there is lacking the basic thing which is inherent to religion, an other-worldly, supernatural force. It is not difficult to trace the gnoseology of such erroneous constructs considering the self-contained world of the medieval way of life which for the majority was greatly limited. It is easy to understand the purely human desire in some way to make up for and compensate for the lack of knowledge by fantasy. We see something quite different in Christianity's solution to the question of the genesis of the world: "In the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the word was God."¹⁰ Here there is no hedging. The prime cause is clearly defined. Incidentally, the very picture of the creation of the world and the genesis of various phenomena in it in Christianity has been described in a fragmentary, inconsistent, eclectic and often contradictory manner as has been repeatedly pointed out by the critics of Christianity. This applies not only to the concept of "evil and sin," but the system of the Christian ideas about the genesis of the world is extremely illogical and inconsistent and is inferior in terms of logical order to any "pagan" myth about the same subject (p 92). But is this trait characteristic of only Christianity as one of the world religions? In no way. Not one of the largest religious systems or "faiths" possesses an integrated concept of life.¹¹ Moreover, the impression is created that not one of the world religions has set for itself the task of providing such an overall concept, of working it out or creating an in-any-way ordered system of ideas about the genesis of the world, man and all life on the earth, and the basic laws controlling this world. In the religious "systems," attention is focused on one or another aspect of human life in its religious understanding. Those differences between religions which S. A. Tokarev interprets as a different attitude toward evil concern rather the differences precisely in aspects which are of primary significance in the various religions. On this level we have every justification of asking to what degree it is actually right to divide people by religious denominations, according to the corresponding "beliefs," and do they actually exist? When people are put by religion in the categories of Christians, Moslems, Buddhists and so forth, what is actually at issue here, are we classifying them according to the followers of a religion or the supporters of a certain church? Certainly these concepts are far from being equal. Very valid is the contradiction noted by S. A. Tokarev between religious self-awareness (of the Christians, Moslems and so forth) and the degree to which a

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majority of the believers is informed of even the basic postulates. This is an obvious reality, although from it it in no way follows that if a person has a poor understanding of the canons of faith then he is a person of "little faith" or a complete nonbeliever. Even the degree of performing the rites prescribed by one or another religion is still not an indicator of an adherence to a faith. The present existence of religion in Western Europe shows with particular convincingness that the performance of rites has been reduced to a minimum. However, this does not prevent many from clearly professing their religion, that is, considering themselves in a certain church. On this level, very curious is the observation by S. A. Tokarev that "religion...is not so much man's attitude toward god (the gods) as it is the attitude of people toward one another over the ideas of god (the gods)" (p 91). Here obviously, as in any analysis of ideological phenomena, it is essential to draw a clear distinction between ideology per se, the world view of people, and those social institutions which serve this world view and justify their existence. The thesis of S. A. Tokarev on the main difference between religions in their concepts of good and evil does not seem too convincing to me. And the very problem, like many others, goes beyond the limits of just religious views as the claims of the church to a monopoly in solving this problem are as unfounded as the claims to solving other moral and ethical problems. For this reason in the given instance it is a question not so much of religions generally as it is groups of people united by a single church. Actually the profession of faith is an awareness of one's belonging to a certain church as a social institution or organization. Just how much such an affiliation is reinforced by a complete acceptance of the ideological canons of the given church in reality is a secondary question both from the viewpoint of the believers themselves and for the church. S. A. Tokarev gives numerous examples of precisely such duality. To be consistent, it must be recognized that the differences which comprise the spiritual world of the believer and his ideas about the faith can be easily detected not only between the masses of the followers of various religions but also between individual groups of adherents in the same religion. The Orthodoxy of the Russian peasantry, for example, differed very strongly from the Orthodoxy of the landowners, although they prayed in one church and confessed to one priest. Obviously we must speak not about religions as an expression of attitudes between people but rather about churches uniting the people of one faith and separating the people of different faiths, currents, schools, sects and so forth. From the modern viewpoint, the difference in the content (or the particular features of the belief) of different religions is amazingly small. Even smaller is the difference between the currents of one religion (for example, crossing oneself with two fingers or three fingers amongst the Nikonians and the Old Believers). People actually did go to their death "for the faith." But for the sake of what? What divided them and made them irreconcilable? Was it really faith? No. It was primarily a sense of belonging to a certain church as a social institution with all the ensuing consequences. The common accusation in the Middle Ages of heresy most often for a majority of the population was not on; not understood but the people did not even try to understand this. It was enough to know that "their" church and "their" priests had declared someone to be a heretic or apostate and the severest sentence would be carried out. But the "heretics" proceeded in precisely the same manner if the law and force were on their side. The church, and precisely the church, became the source, the judge of the "trueness of faith." Blind obedience and following of the judgments of the church (not the faith, not the dogma but the church!) was the most typical trait of a majority, if indeed not all, the trials of heretics. These medieval processes are striking in their cruelty and fanaticism and in recent times,

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the judgment of anathema against Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was based upon the same church fanaticism. For this reason the thesis of S. A. Tokarev that religion "like any other cultural phenomenon, both material and spiritual, carries out a most important social function. That is, how in some way to unite and unify a certain group of people and thereby set them against all other groups" (p 97), considering all that has been said above, sounds somewhat strange. And primarily because it is scarcely correct to so decisively equate religion (a barren flower and error) and other phenomena of human culture. With all the possible both positive and negative effects of other areas of culture on society's development, all of them are phenomena that are real, rational and somehow adding to the richness of mankind. In this sense religion is an irrational, imaginary value. It gives nothing to people. Its unifying or disunifying function is also illusory and imaginary as are all the remaining "merits" ascribed to religion. In actuality it is a question not about the role of religion, but rather about the role of the church, the denomination, that is, about a certain organization of people. That such an organization is very conditionally linked with the real ideas about religion in the mass of believers is affirmed by numerous facts, including those given by S. A. Tokarev. Here we would point to just one aspect from the history of the development of dogmas.

A large portion of researchers uses a rather standard development scheme of the world religions.¹² Individual ideas, myths, canons and postulates are borrowed from a certain number of sources from an earlier time. At a certain moment all of this is united by a new dogma and there begins a period of the propagation of a new faith and the winning of adherents. The further development of the faith is depicted as a dividing of a single whole into currents, sects, heresies and so forth. Here the relationships of the new teachings and the new church are viewed as phenomena that are organically linked and intertwined, where the faith and its postulates determine the church and the church organization. If one proceeds from the approach termed "theological" by S. A. Tokarev, then such a scheme is quite logical. But if we consider the appeal of S. A. Tokarev that it is essential to study primarily the mass perception of the religion and the mass ideas about faith, then the picture changes substantially. Incidentally, the unity of church and dogma according to the "theological" scheme is a phenomenon that is more desired and declared than real.

In actuality, the development of the major religions such as Christianity, Islam and others followed a much more complicated path. First of all here it is essential to emphasize the development of two interrelated but essentially different phenomena, namely the formation of the corresponding church, that is, a certain social institution, and the formation of the corresponding dogma. In the given article we do not have the right to be diverted to the questions of the formation of the church as this is a separate and complicated problem for history. But the dogma of any major world church can scarcely be viewed as something given or formed by the time the given church arose. On the contrary, analysis shows that all modern major churches are based on an extremely hazy, far from original (usually borrowed "from the neighbors") and only initial aspects of the new cult. If one takes Christianity specifically, in the early Christian communities, the aspect of social action and not the dogma is dominant. The initial communities simply endeavored to embody the ideas of equality, justice and morality which without difficulty could be found in any version of any religion or any philosophical system of the past. For social practice, ready-made, previously more or less elaborated explanations and ideological interpretations of social conduct were chosen from various sources and all of this

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was ascribed to new prophets and the "new" faith for the sake of holiness and as an "aid to memory." Only as the church developed and grew was there a need to shape a more or less consistent statement of the dogma. Here the church fathers did not trouble themselves excessively with mental endeavor but usually restricted themselves to simple borrowing from what was already known, quickly adapting or differently interpreting the ideas worked out before them. And hence those infinite contradictions, discrepancies and different interpretations which have been such a bother for research on the history of religion. Regardless of all efforts by theologians, early Christianity remained nothing more than a particular instance or heresy in the equally eclectic system of Judaism, if one refers to the "holy" texts. S. A. Tokarev (pp 93-94) also points to the contradictoriness and illogicalness of the early Christian postulates of the faith. One can only be amazed how the churches succeeded in calmly combining simultaneously the books of the Old and New Testament as the sacred sources of the faith.

When we turn not to the "theological" but to the real content of Christian teachings, that is, to how this Christianity was understood and perceived by the mass of believers, then here we encounter numerous facts of eclecticism of a completely different sort. These facts are well known to the ethnographers. It is a question of the absorption by Christianity of local pagan cults, beliefs, superstitions and so forth (in contrast to such paganism as found in the biblical texts). One can note (in most general terms) two basic paths of such adoption. The first is the acceptance by the church of local cults in a Christianized form (the identifying of local cults with church holidays). For example, Christmas, Ligo, Ivan Kupala and the Day of John the Baptist, Semik and the Trinity and so forth. In this instance the church wraps the local heathen cults under the "covers" of its holy holidays. The very dividing of the faith and cults into Christian and pagan, as has become traditional in the literature is extremely hypothetical. The system of cults recognized by Christianity as its own, nonpagan one, often draws its roots from a similar heathen system adopted from the biblical texts. Merely added to this are the saints and martyrs, that is, the apocryphal legends about the church-canonized saints. Christianity did not have any elaborated and logically correlated system of dogma. The canonizing of saints went on over all the history of the church and in various countries and in different currents of Christianity there developed specific "lists" of saints. Only recently has Christianity endeavored to somehow unify, generalize and legitimize this portion of its cult for all.

Such a combining of concepts and postulates from essentially different origins have led and does lead to paradoxical phenomena when, for example, a major church holiday is devoted to the Prophet Elijah, a former god of thunder, although the role of this Elijah is not very significant in the church hierarchy. At the same time, the religious holiday of the Virgin in the Eastern Slavic world holds a much smaller place. In Italy, on the contrary, the cult of the Madonna is almost the central cult of all Christianity, again in the perception of the mass of believers. All attempts by the church and the theologians who were in favor of the "purity" of dogma led to nothing in the struggle against such phenomena not only because the local cults and adherents to them were too strong. The point was that the church had nothing to oppose these local cults with. We do not know so well from surviving sources the ideological system of the various heathens concealed by the later cover of Christianity (primarily due to the fault of the same Christian theologians who energetically ignored the views of their predecessors). But what we do know

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about paganism shows more ordered than generally realized, more coordinated, elaborated and logical systems of beliefs about the origin and structure of the world, the place and role of man in it, the stages of his life, let alone about the moral and ethical standards of conduct. Gradually material is being acquired which makes it possible to hope that we will be not only able to partially reconstruct the pagan systems in the various groups of the Eastern European population but also create more or less accurate models of such an ideology as a whole, in its most essential parts. The Christian church not so much fought against the local cults as it did absorb them and incorporate them in its "dogma," not being very concerned about the integrity and logicalness of the resulting picture. This aspect of Christianity, like the other world religions, still needs special research, and the article by S. A. Tokarev gives us cause for thought. But the relation of paganism and Christianity leads not only to a direct contact when actually Christianity itself inevitably breaks into a number of dogmas, schools, sects and so forth under the influence of the differences in the local cult and religious systems lying at its basis.

Equally important is another process. From the very outset Christianity, for example among the Slavs, has acted as the dogma and to a certain degree the ideology of a very restricted group of the local population, the representatives of the dominant classes and strata, although for them as well the former pagan ideas and beliefs continued for a very extended time to play a crucial role (we might remember the double names of the Russian Princes!). But for a predominant majority of the population, the very fact of "baptizing in the new faith" remained such a formal action that it could scarcely be considered seriously. Hence that dualism in the dogmas which is so typical for the popular or as it is sometimes styled "everyday Orthodoxy." S. A. Tokarev has devoted an entire booklet to the beliefs of the Eastern Slavic peoples.¹³ where he has assembled and analyzed the role, so to speak, of the junior spirits and deities (wood goblins, water nymphs, brownies and so forth). Of course, this can be described as "vestiges in religious consciousness" (which is very much to the liking of church theologians), but certainly belief in these spirits survived up to the 20th century, and even we, the students of S. A. Tokarev, in expeditionary work have still encountered elderly persons who sincerely believed in the force of such spirits and in their ability to somehow influence the life and activities of man. If one notes that these junior spirits and deities are "in charge" of such important spheres of life for the peasantry as the forest and river areas, that they could predict the fate of man, influence his health, protect or skill livestock and so forth, the role and significance of them, according to peasant views, turn out to be not so slight. Certainly the practical and at the same time the ideological, spiritual and world-view interests of the peasant family inevitably were focused (although not restricted to this) on their homes, farms, health and family. If one adds to the list of the junior members of the Eastern Slavic pantheon examined in the book by S. A. Tokarev the numerous saints who, in the eyes of the peasantry, combined purely Christian holiness with protection of the endeavors of the simple people, that is, all those Cabbage Barbaras, Vlasii the protector of livestock, Nikolay who in addition to performing miracles was "in charge" of crafts, trade and so forth, then we are presented with a rather complete pantheon of deities encompassing virtually all aspects of peasant life. What remains for Christianity? The creation of the world? The explanation of the bases of the universe and the order of the world? But certainly the peasants could obtain their own answers to these eternal questions for normal man and not church answers. These answers to one degree or another were also found in the magical tales as has been convincingly

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shown by the work of V. Ya. Propp.¹⁴ It can be argued that these are just tales. But how can one explain their amazing viability in the memory of the people? Only by their attractiveness? By their aesthetic or artistic value? Possibly, the secret to the longevity of the tales is precisely in the fact that for a majority of the population (this majority up to the 20th century exceeded 90 percent!) they described a rather detailed picture of the universe which was much closer and more comprehensible than the biblical tales which could be offered on the same question by Christianity. In this article there is no sense or opportunity to further develop this question and confirm it by ever-new evidence, although there is a good deal of this. One thing is indisputable. Christianity as a dogma and as a philosophical system discloses, from my viewpoint, a rather obvious flimsiness even in comparison with those "pagan" systems which could be described on the basis of any studied sources. The possibilities of finding new sources and a more careful, attentive analysis of the already found ones are far from exhausted. All the experience of contact with representatives of the older generations of the Russian peasantry during field work has forced me to critically accept the classifying of them as Orthodox Christians. I am convinced that the same holds true for the Christianity of other peoples in Europe. When the textbooks and references write about the dominance of Christianity, it is a question of the dominance of a certain church and not the dogma of this church. For precisely this reason I would be skeptical of many ideas in the article by S. A. Tokarev where he equates the church, the official religion, the religion of the ruling upper classes and the religion of the entire population. Is this not the reason for the incompleteness and lack of elaboration in the postulates of Christianity, that these gaps were feverishly filled in with the appropriate subjects from previous paganism, while the official church took "care" of a very restricted range of questions often of very accidental and arbitrary quality which were of interest to a narrow range of theologians?

Church ritual is one of the most important spheres in the activities of any religion and any church. Intuitively and consciously a lie endeavors to play not on reason but rather on feelings and emotions. All major religious currents over many centuries have rather carefully worked out the procedures for such an effect, starting from the location of the churches and their form, to church music and the vestments of the priests. But very indicative is the fact that not only clearly pagan elements were incorporated in this ritual. For example, we might recall the famous "autumn feasts" of apples, honey and nuts, when the priests were forced to become orchard growers and bee keepers in order to offer the parishoners apples and honey on the corresponding days. Where, in which of the Gospels will you find a canon for the church rite of the marriage of bride and groom? Try to compare the burial of Jesus with the burial ritual which is practiced by the Russian Orthodox Church, and you will encounter the same thing. The church ritual did not arise out of canons, rules and the principles of faith which were established somewhere and at some time. The ritual developed on a strictly local basis and not all at once, but gradually adopting new rules and traditions over the centuries. What is accepted as the religious system of Russian Orthodoxy in virtually all its major points developed comparatively late even within the limits of the religion and church of a ruling class. Evidence of this is found in the miniatures of the famous 16th century Chronicle Compendium in which the marriage rite is shown in a drawing starting only from the 16th century,¹⁵ and before this the miniaturists limited themselves to an obligatory wedding feast, although the marriage rite is mentioned in the text. And the basic subject of the everyday drawings of this official chronicle is the life of the

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princes and not the simple people. For this reason it is not at all surprising that, according to the observations of A. Ya. Yefimenko, the attitude of the peasantry in the hinterlands to the church marriage or baptism rite was purely formal in the 19th century.¹⁶ For this reason one of the basic positions in the article by S. A. Tokarev, that is, to study a religion one must have not the opinion of the theologians, their constructs and systems, but rather the real existence of religious views (errors) is very essential and long overdue.

The scope of a journal article forces one to restrict oneself to just certain questions touched upon by S. A. Tokarev. Other questions raised in his article to one degree or another have been analyzed in the works of opponents involved in the debate. One thing is indisputable. The article by S. A. Tokarev has forced many to reflect again on the problems of the history of religion as a phenomenon in the ideology of mankind and on the place of this phenomenon, its actual importance in the history of spiritual life.

In concluding this article, I would like to reemphasize the following thing. What we often understand under the general term of "religion" is a complicated and multi-part phenomenon. The religious errors in this concept are frequently intertwined with phenomena of a completely different type and essence, that is, the actual knowledge of people, the presence and effect of the church organization as a social institution and the emotional effect (the various forms of art used by the church to establish its influence). It is not always an easy thing to separate such syncretism and symbiosis in our own days. For example, not so long ago the influence of the sun and the moon on the health and psychophysical state of people was established and scientifically explained, and there was a certain change in the attitude toward the "heavy" years (leap years) and to other ideas which prior to this were considered simple superstition. It would be possible to give many other examples of a similar sort. Religious ideas and errors always nourish themselves on the juices of others and behave like parasitic spiritual orchids on the real achievements of human labor and reason. The role and influence of the church, the denomination and "faith" in the real history of mankind are explained not so much by religion itself or by the very postulates of the dogma of one or another sect as by the role and influence of the real achievements of human culture on which these religious errors are parasitic. Research on how in reality there was (and at present partially is) a mixing of real knowledge and real truth with religious interpretations and explanations of the achievements of human reason is a difficult but completely feasible task if we will rely on a sober analysis of concrete historical facts. The entire sense of the article by S. A. Tokarev calls for us to do this.

FOOTNOTES

1. SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA (below SE), No 8, 1979, pp 87-106 (subsequent references to this article are given in the text).
2. D. M. Ugrinovich, "On the Marxist Understanding of Religion," SE, No 1, 1980; I. A. Kryvelev, "On the Essential and Nonessential in the Study of Religion," *ibid.*; Yu. I. Semenov, "On the Essence of Religion," *ibid.*, No 2.

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3. The concept of religion is often perceived by the population not only and even not so much as a belief in certain supernatural forces as a complicated syncretic group of ideas. Legal standards, moral-ethical principles, the explanation of the order of the world and much else are mixed up in this group.
4. F. Engels, "Anti-Duhring," K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 20, p 328. In the article by Yu. I. Semenov, the corresponding reference is given on p 56.
5. V. I. Lenin, "On the Question of Dialectics," "Soch." [Works], Vol 29, p 322.
6. It has been established, for example, that even Paleolithic man not only knew a numbers system but used this to calculate the lunar calendar. For this question in Russian see B. A. Frolov, "Chisla v Grafike Paleolita" [Numbers in Paleolithic Graphics], Novosibirsk, 1974.
7. Very indicative in this regard is the volume "Narody Avstralii i Okeanii" [Peoples of Australia and Oceania] (in the series "Narody Mira. Etnograficheskiye Ocherki" [Peoples of the World. Ethnographic Essays], Moscow, 1976, published under the editorship of S. P. Tolstov and S. A. Tokarev. In it 41 pages are devoted to the religion of the Australians (pp 209-250), and 20 pages to positive knowledge and folk creativity (pp 251-271).
8. Jose de Castro, "Geografiya Goloda" [The Geography of Hunger], Moscow, 1954, pp 61-62.
9. S. A. Tokarev, "Religiya v Istorii Narodov Mira" [Religion in the History of the Peoples of the World], Moscow, 1964.
10. The "Gospel According to St. John," Chapter 1.
11. See, for example, S. A. Tokarev, "Religiya v Istorii...", Chapters 13-24.
12. Among such researchers is S. A. Tokarev himself. See S. A. Tokarev, "Religiya v Istorii...", pp 436-526 and so forth.
13. S. A. Tokarev, "Religioznye Verovaniya Vostochnoslavvianskikh Narodov" [Religious Beliefs of the Eastern Slavic Peoples], Moscow, 1955.
14. V. Ya. Propp, "Istoricheskiye Kornii Volshebnoy Skazki" [Historical Roots of Magical Tales], Leningrad, 1946; V. Ya. Propp, "Morfologiya Skazki" [The Morphology of the Tale], Moscow, 1969.
15. The evolution of the wedding ritual in princely life as shown in the drawings of the 16th Century Chronicle Compendium has been traced in the diploma work of O. I. Brozhzhova "The Wedding Rite from the Miniatures of the 16th Century Chronicle Compendium." This work was done under the leadership of the author of the given article and is kept at the Ethnography Chair of Moscow State University. The wedding rite in the church is first shown in a drawing depicting an event of 1509, the marriage of the daughter of Ivan III, Feodosiya.

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16. A. Ya. Yefimenko, "Issledovaniya Narodnoy Zhizni" [Research on Folk Life], Moscow, 1884 (the article "Folk Legal Views of Marriage").

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FOR DEVELOPING RESEARCH ON THE PROBLEMS OF RELIGION

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 5, Sep-Oct 80 (English transl. 30 Sep 80) pp 84-87

[Article by M. I. Shakhnovich]

[Text] The article by S. A. Tokarev¹ has attracted attention by the fact that it was written by a most prominent representative of the ethnographic school in Soviet religious studies, the founders of which were such outstanding scientists as L. Ya. Shternberg and V. G. Bogoraz-Tan.

S. A. Tokarev, who for more than 50 years of his research and teaching activities has urged a scientific criticism of religion, with unflagging enthusiasm continues to show the necessity of bold searches for a materialistic explanation of the most complicated and difficult problems of religious studies.

It seems that this interesting article belongs to the pen not of a famous researcher who has created a library of remarkable books on ethnography and religious studies but rather a young author who is ready with bold daring and courage to reject all that has been achieved by long-established scholars. He, the author of such fundamental works as "Ranniye Formy Religii i Ikh Razvitiye" [Early Forms of Religion and Their Development], "Religiya v Istorii Narodov Mira" [Religion in the History of the Peoples of the World], "Istoriya Zarubezhnoy Etnografii" [The History of Foreign Ethnography] and others, has proclaimed that after 200 years of efforts to understand the nature of early religious beliefs, science has not found a convincing answer to the question of what these beliefs represent (p 89). S. A. Tokarev feels that a majority of the descriptions of religious beliefs published by prominent scholars is largely the fruit of the fantasy of these scholars. In rightly attacking the subjectivism of bourgeois ethnographers, he asserts that in the descriptions of the beliefs and rites of one or another people they often see only what corresponds to their own views.

One can scarcely understand all of this completely literally. S. A. Tokarev has always been and remains an implacable enemy of the leftist slogans of "Science Overboard!" On the contrary, the entire drift of the article and its inner subtext are an appeal to the scientific youth to more profoundly study the works of prominent ethnographers and to develop research on the problems of religion.

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Probably S. A. Tokarev is not disturbed by the fact that his arguments contain much that is inconsistent and contradictory. For him all of this is not the main point. He has set the goal of showing that the disputed problems of religion must be examined creatively, profoundly and thoroughly, and for doing this the ideas about religion which have become established among the specialists must be disputed.

However, prominent religious scholars and the masters of polemics I. A. Kryvelev and D. M. Ugrincovich, in rebutting S. A. Tokarev, have convincingly, it seems to me, shown that he has scarcely succeeded in establishing the flimsiness of many ideas about religion as found in our literature, for example, on belief in the supernatural as a determining feature of religion.²

Why, along with many correct and valuable observations and conclusions does the article by S. A. Tokarev contain numerous dubious and at times incorrect arguments about the essence of religion, the origin of views about good and evil and other problems? In my view, this is largely explained by the fact that he is not a philosopher. With reason the article's title contains the subtitle "Thoughts of an Ethnographer." The questions viewed in it require primarily a philosophical analysis.

However, the importance of S. A. Tokarev's article is not in its controversial judgments. The value of the article and its true purpose is that S. A. Tokarev, contrary to the opinion of many bourgeois scholars who preach agnosticism and fideism in religious studies, ardently and convincingly endeavors to show that all the questions of religion which have been and are being debated over the centuries will be resolved as scientific knowledge progresses.

Certain arguments by participants in the debate require answering. For example, Yu. I. Semenov does not agree that in a majority of the Soviet religious studies belief in the supernatural is pointed to as the basic indication of religion. He feels that this is not accurate and hence not completely correct, as, in his opinion, the essence of religion consists not in a belief in the supernatural generally but in a supernatural force. Yu. I. Semenov proceeds from the preanimistic concept according to which belief in a supernatural force comprises the basis of religion. However, religious people believe not only in it but also in supernatural beings such as the spirits and gods, they recognize the presence of an immortal soul and the life in the hereafter and so forth. For example, it is impossible to reduce the essence of the Christian religion which preaches the coming of Christ and the end of the world merely to a belief in a supernatural force. For this reason, when scholars write about the basic feature of religion as a belief in the supernatural, one must understand the entire complex of beliefs in the supernatural, regardless of what form this assumes.

Yu. I. Semenov in his papers and articles has actually supported the opinion of G. M. Gak who in 1960 denied the existence of the gnoseological roots of religion,³ and also defended the origin of religion out of magic. These views have not been supported in scientific atheistic literature.

Yu. I. Semenov asserts that "...the main, basic root of religion was seen by the founders of Marxism in man's impotence when confronted with the blind necessity of nature, and subsequently the necessity of social development."⁴ But, in the first place, in K. Marx and F. Engels there are no direct statements of this, and,

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secondly, it is not completely clear what the "necessity of nature" means and why impotence before the necessity of it and social development should give rise to religion. Really, has not a sufficiently correct and clear definition of the social roots of religion been given by V. I. Lenin?: "The impotence of the exploited classes in the struggle against the exploiters thus inevitably gives rise to a belief in a better life after death, as the impotence of the savage in the struggle against nature gives rise to a belief in the gods, devils, in miracles and so forth."⁵

All the publications in the journal SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA on the article by S. A. Tokarev indicate that at present the problems of studying religion, as a social phenomenon, have acquired particularly great political and scientific pertinence. This is explained by the fact that in the modern world, along with the crisis of religion, there has been a noticeable increase in the activities of religious organizations. In the aim of rescuing itself from the crisis, the Christian church has set out on the path of modernization. American reactionary politicians are endeavoring to use religion for propagandizing anticommunism and anti-Sovietism and are endeavoring to attract the most conservative portion of the clergy into serving imperialism. In the Near East the Zionists have sanctified the aggression against the Arab countries by Judaism and are politicizing it. There are religious disputes on the Indian subcontinent, in Ulster, Lebanon and a number of the developing countries.

In certain countries progressive democratic aspirations of many workers can still assume a religious form due to various socioeconomic factors: the insufficient level of political awareness of the masses of people, illiteracy, as well as the influence of a clerical upbringing. In Iran, the antiimperialist popular movement which overthrew the rotten regime of the shah is using Islam for its own purposes.

In the USSR, the urgency of developing Marxist religious studies arises out of the need for scientific atheistic indoctrination. Among the younger generation there is a growing interest in the past, in the history of the peoples, their spiritual culture, and this creates an interest in religion and its monuments. However, as was written by N. K. Krupskaya, "a knowledge of the history of religion is little found in our nation.... Our popular books say little about the history of religion.... In our school curriculums the history of religion is very poorly taken up.... We have not sufficiently popularized the history of religion."⁶ Since this was written, the situation, in my view, has not substantially altered! It would be possible to give many examples of ignorance. Thus, in the TV film "Seventeen Instants of Spring," the anti-Fascist pastor quotes...the "Prophet Ecclesiastes," and in one story an Orthodox priest during a service swings...a church chandelier (the author has confused the censer with the chandelier which is a hanging light having more than 12 candles).

Soviet scholars in the social sciences are confronted with serious tasks in the area of developing Marxist religious studies. Regardless of the fact that in the 1970's such significant works were published as the two-volume "Istoriya Religiy" [The History of Religion] by I. A. Kryvelev, "Vvedeniye v Teoreticheskoye Religiyev-edeniye" [Introduction to Theoretical Religious Studies] by D. M. Ugrinovich, the monograph by M. A. Korostovtsev on the Ancient Egyptian religion, the research by A. I. Klibanov on the history of the Russian religious-social movements and many books on religions in the modern world, clearly not enough such fundamental original works are published. There are just one or two a year.

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The reader has no encyclopedia of religious studies, dictionaries on the sociology and psychology of religion, a dictionary of the superstitions of the Soviet peoples, catalogues of religious monuments in our nation or a religious history atlas. There are no general works on the Ancient Slavic religion, works on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, the history of the beliefs and rites of the Soviet peoples. We also lack historiographic research on religious studies. There are no religious studies textbooks and readers for the students of VUZes.

In the 1970's we have obviously forgotten the advice of V. I. Lenin on translating foreign literature devoted to a scientific criticism of religion: "It is essential to carefully follow all the appropriate literature in all languages, in translating or, at least, abstracting all that is in any way valuable in this area."⁷ The Izdatel'stvo Nauka must, in my view, organize publishing a series of religious studies by Soviet scholars similar to the series "Issledovaniya po Fol'kloru i Mifologii Vostoka" [Research on the Folklore and Mythology of the East] which has been published by the Main Editorial Offices of Eastern Literature of this publishing house since 1969. The series has already published valuable works relating to the problems of religious beliefs: on the poetics of myth, on the mythology of India and Africa and on Georgian and Ossetian myths. The Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism has the manuscripts of V. G. Bogoraz-Tan on shamanism, by I. G. Frank-Kamenetskiy on biblical mythology and other scholars on various problems of the history of religion. Certainly these works should be published in a series of religious studies.

The socialist nations are also expecting new fundamental works on a scientific critique of religion from the scholars of the Soviet Union where a scientific, materialistic ideology prevails in the social consciousness of peoples.

FOOTNOTES

1. S. A. Tokarev, "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979; below the references to the article are given in the text.
2. I. A. Kryvelev, "On the Essential and Nonessential in the Study of Religion," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 1, 1980, pp 77 et seq.; D. M. Ugrinovich, "On the Marxist Understanding of Religion," *ibid.*, pp 70-71.
3. G. M. Gak, "'Ucheniye ob Obshchestvennom Soznanii v Svete Teorii Poznaniya" [Teachings about Social Consciousness in the Light of the Theory of Cognition], Moscow, 1960.
4. Yu. I. Semenov, "On the Essence of Religion," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 2, 1980, p 53.
5. V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 12, p 142.
6. N. K. Krupskaya, "Iz Ateisticheskogo Naslediya" [From the Atheistic Heritage], Moscow, 1964, pp 154-155.

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7. V. I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 45, p 25.

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ON THE SOCIAL ROLE OF RELIGION (THOUGHTS OF A STUDENT OF RELIGION ON THE THOUGHTS OF AN ETHNOGRAPHER)*

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 6, Nov-Dec 80 (signed to press 3 Dec 80) pp 61-66

[Article by I. R. Grigulevich]

[Text] Recently it has become fashionable for prominent scholars to speak out on important ideological questions with the reservation that scattered thoughts, cursory sketches and comments are being presented.¹ S. A. Tokarev has given his, in my view, important and informative article "Religion as a Social Phenomenon" the humble title of "Thoughts of an Ethnographer." In following his example, I would also permit myself to title my reply to it as "Thoughts of a Student of Religion." The reader will understand why I have done this from the text of the given comment.

The article by S. A. Tokarev has caused, judging from the abundance of replies to it published on the pages of the journal SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, a broad response among students of religion and this shows the pertinence of the questions touched upon in it. In actuality, due to a number of circumstances at present interest in the questions of religion has noticeably increased both among specialist scholars and among the broad circles of the community. There are various reasons for this. In the socialist countries the combating of religious vestiges still is on the agenda. Outside the countries of the socialist commonwealth, the traditional religions are experiencing a profound crisis and internal decay; they are losing followers and are forced to change their orientation and adapt to new conditions and to the realities of the modern world. There are the generally known facts as the Second Vatican Council, the election of the Polish Cardinal Wojtyla as Pope and the first non-Italian in the last 420 years to the Throne of St. Peter, the activities of the "rebel" clergy who condemn capitalism and imperialism, the role of the Moslem clergy in the antiimperialist revolution in Iran, the appearance of new cults and at the same time the growing abandonment of religion by broad strata of the workers in the capitalist countries. Even the naked eye can see in these changes the tie of religion with the sociopolitical changes occurring in the modern world.

*On the article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1980.

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At the same time, religion has been and remains a complicated phenomenon which is diverse both on the historical level and the social one. Certainly religion has existed in all latitudes, in all times, and in all historical formations, with the exception of the remote primitive society. There are enormous varieties of it. Certain scholars have counted around 3,000 of them. And each religion is itself a complicated combination of such elements as mythology, cult, church institutions, a certain moral and ethical code and specific emotions. Ethnography alone is unable to encompass this entire range of diverse elements which are in a dialectically contradictory unity. Religious studies as a scientific discipline use the data of both ethnography and a number of other humanities, particularly as it is not enough to have just the "thoughts of an ethnographer" in solving general problems concerning the very content of this scientific discipline. To limit oneself here to just the criteria and framework of ethnography would mean to show a certain disciplinary limitation. I consider myself also not to be a novice in ethnography, but I view religion not only as an ethnographer but also as a student of religions in the broadest sense. A Marxist student of religions cannot help but be an atheist.

In religious studies a definite interpretation of the very concept of religion, that is, a definition of the latter, is indispensable. S. A. Tokarev has shown certain skepticism for all the possible definitions of religion. He reduces them to two types--theological and atheistic. With "some amazement" comments S. A. Tokarev, both the mentioned definitions with all their polar opposition also have "something in common" (p 87), namely: the theologians assert that an other-worldly force (that is, God) exists while the atheists deny its existence. In another place the author speaks about the hopeless and pointless repetition of the phrases "God exists" and "there is no god" (p 96). Incidentally, the person who many centuries ago first said that "there is no god" made a beginning to a real revolution in the minds of people. This assertion lies at the springs of the scientific thinking of mankind. The modern bourgeoisie is extremely shocked by the denial of god although it was precisely from their ranks that recently the "overthrowers" of god emerged. When the Mexican artist Diego Rivera drew the words "There is no god!" on one of his frescos, this caused a great scandal in anticlerical Mexico. Upon the orders of the fresco's owner the words were obliterated. Many such examples could be given. For this reason it seems to me as a student of religions that the designated words do not merit being equated in terms of significance with the theological thesis about the existence of god, particularly in accompanying them with disrespectful commentary. Proceeding from the assertion of S. A. Tokarev, it could be felt that he considers atheism a sort of "reverse religion," that is, he adheres to a viewpoint, as is known, of the literature prevalent in Western religious studies and not only in religious studies and aimed at discrediting scientific atheism and Marxism as a whole.

S. A. Tokarev admits that it is essential "to study the content of religious beliefs," and he cuts out the word "social," and this allows him to conclude: "They (the beliefs.--I.G.) must be studied but they must not be considered the main goal of the research" (p 97). Those who do not agree with this strange assertion (unfortunately, he does not indicate who specifically he has in mind) are accused beforehand by the author that they supposedly "have still not ultimately shaken off the theological tradition in the study of religion" (p 97). To argue in this manner means to shift responsibility from the sick head to the healthy one. The desire of S. A. Tokarev to put the believers and atheists on one level causes amazement to say the least. The poet K. Bal'mont reasoned much more logically. He wrote:

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Yes, life is sleep,
 And sleep is all dreams.
 But he who merits the highest wreath,
 Is he who does not wish delusion in sleep.

The atheists precisely do not want delusion. This is the fundamental difference between them and the believers. But if S. A. Tokarev views this differently, we would like to ask him: where precisely does he stand? Up to now we have considered him not only an atheist but also a Marxist atheist.

The author ascribes to atheism, and in particular to Marxist atheism, the amazing limitation that the entire arsenal of atheism consists supposedly in the formula "there is no god." Such good-for-nothing atheists were belittled by Il'ya Il'f and Yevgeniy Petrov, having depicted in the novel "The Golden Calf" the dispute between Ostap Bender and Roman Catholic priest Aloiziy Moroshek. Ostap asserted that there was no god and that this was a medical fact, while Moroshek said there was a god because "everything living was created by Him." To which Ostap replied: "I know, I know, I myself am an old Catholic and Latinist. Puer, socer, vesper, gener, liber, miser, asper, tener."

Regardless of what Ostap Bender was, the Soviet scholars of religion, in following the instructions of the CPSU, have always condemned primitivism in atheistic propaganda. They proceed from the Marxist understanding of religion as a complicated social phenomenon. God, V. I. Lenin taught, is "(historically and in actuality) primarily a complex of ideas arising out of the suppression of man by both external nature and class suppression, ideas which reinforce this suppression and vitiate this struggle." At the same time V. I. Lenin in no way interpreted religion as outside an historical framework. At the same place he pointed out: "There was a time in history, when, regardless of such an origin and such an actual significance of the idea of god, the struggle of democracy and the proletariat occurred in the form of the struggle of one religious idea against another."²

The Marxist atheists in no way reduce everything to a dispute about god although this question, of course, does figure in our propaganda. They have never considered the idea of god or religious teachings as a whole as artificial inventions, deception or trickery, but rather viewed them as ideas which arose in a specific historical context and on a definite social basis. Along with these conditions and with the base the ideas evolve, they alter and are "alienated," and sometimes show even greater vitality than the conditions which gave rise to them.

The author ascribes to Marxist atheism much of which is inherent to the views of the enlightened and the bourgeois anticlericals. For them religion is a collection of "stupid fables," evil inventions and clerical deceptions. But the Marxists disclose the earthly roots of the supernatural and in this they differ from the bourgeois atheists. But, as Lenin taught, the works of the great enlightened persons can and should be used by us in the struggle against religious prejudices. Prof Syed Hussein Alatas in the UNESCO journal devoted to social sciences published an article entitled "Difficulties in Defining Religion." In this article he wrote: "Unfortunately, the sources of religion remain mysterious and reasoning about this remains largely invention. Some even feel that it is hopeless to try to elucidate this question."³ S. A. Tokarev belongs among the latter. He asserts that "after

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200 years of efforts to understand and define the nature of the early forms of religious beliefs, science has not found a convincing answer to the question of what they are..." (p 89).* But even if a scholar agrees with this contentious assertion, he does not have the right to put this question to rest, Science differs from religion in the fact that it does not cease working on solving difficult problems.

S. A. Tokarev has stated that the ancient religions which stood approximately on the same level of general historical development and performed the same socioideological function differed extremely from one another in their ideological content (p 90). Here it is hard to say what is meant by ideological content. At the same time S. A. Tokarev asserts that the contents of these religions "in no way comprised their essential aspect" (p 90). The conclusion is paradoxical and illogical. The author has evidently forgotten that the world, particularly the primitive and ancient one, was marked by diversity because of a whole number of circumstances and this told not only on the differences in the cults but also in linguistic, racial and many other aspects. But from this it in no way follows that such differences could be found in a series of inexplicable, mysterious phenomena. The author asserts that the main thing in a religious ideology is the problem of the source of evil in the world and in no way the belief in a supernatural, for the latter is lacking in a number of cults. The idea is not a new one. It has been voiced in the past by many religious scholars. Thus, the already-mentioned article by Syed Hussein Alatas states: "Where good and evil do not exist there is no society and man cannot live. A differentiation of actions according to understandings of good and evil is the basis of human existence. Religion meets this need in providing moral normative rules which clearly differentiate good from evil."⁴ Nevertheless it is possible to find scores of cults in which the problem of the source of evil does not figure in at all or the center of gravity is shifted to a preaching of nonresistance to evil (Tolstoyism) or even its exaltation as in certain so-called demonic cults. But even where religion proclaims the struggle against evil to be its main function, it not so much fights it as it does help to strengthen evil. Let us recall the famous statement by Lucretius: "How much evil can be wrought by religion" ("Tantum religio potuit andere malorum"). This in no way means that the struggle against evil does not hold a prominent place in many cults, but just as correctly belief in the supernatural also is a distinguishing feature of many religious cults.

Does this mean that there is no single distinguishing trait which is characteristic for all existing religions? In no way. Such a distinguishing trait does exist, and it was first pointed out by Marx who termed religion the opiate of the people. This is the trait which, in our view, defines religion as a social phenomenon, although certainly religion is not reduced to this.

It was Marx himself who first pointed to religion as a social phenomenon, thereby causing a true revolution in our ideas about religion. These facts, of course, are well known to the author. However, in an article about religion as a social phenomenon, he for some reason felt it possible not to touch on them....

The founders of Marxism-Leninism taught that we should view religion through the prism of class struggle. Let us recall the appeal of V. I. Lenin in his article "On the Importance of Militant Imperialism": "It is particularly important to use those books and pamphlets which contain many specific facts and comparisons showing

*[See Section 2, Tokarev, SE, No 3, 1979]

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the link between the class interests and class organizations of the modern bourgeoisie with the organizations of religious institutions and religious propaganda."⁵

In light of these Leninist statements, is it possible to call religion an "element of culture" (p 27)?

S. A. Tokarev feels that we know little or nothing about the early forms of beliefs. Modern "believers," in his opinion, know little about the dogma of their religions. This applies also to the "world" religions such as Buddhism, Christianity and Islam where the content of the dogmas are extremely different. Furthermore, in referring to the Marxist viewpoint according to which religion is a social phenomenon and one of the forms of social consciousness, the author asserts that from this the very definition of religion must follow: it is not so much the attitude of man toward god (the gods) as it is the attitude of people toward one another over the question of the ideas about god (the gods) (p 91). And from this the conclusion is drawn that to study religious ideas is a question of secondary importance.

It is hard to agree with this conclusion. Yes, in truth, our knowledge about the early forms of religion are not sufficiently complete and accurate, but they have made significant headway in comparison with the previous century. The same is true for other aspects of the understanding of religion. The very fact of the insufficiency of our knowledge about religious teachings in no way means that we should stop studying them. "Any religion," F. Engels pointed out "is nothing more than a fantastic reflection in the minds of people of those external forces which prevail over them in daily life, a reflection in which earthly forces assume the form of unearthly ones."⁶ It is also essential not to forget that in defining religion as the opiate of the people, K. Marx had in mind its teachings and in no way the relationships of people.

In the process of studying a religion we elucidate the circumstances which gave rise to the religious ideas in order to disclose the ways to overcome them. Marxists endeavor to know everything about a religion not merely to scientifically explain its rise, its particular features and the factors of its perpetuation in human society, rather they need this knowledge as a weapon to fight for man's liberation from religious prejudices.

One is also amazed by the definition given by S. A. Tokarev as the chief task of an historian (ethnographer?) of religion: not the penetration to the essence of the ideas or fantasy, their similarity and differences, but rather the study of that sociocultural milieu and those concrete historical conditions under which these ideas arose, that placement of people, their unity or, conversely, separation which was reflected in the creation of religious ideas (p 105). If the student of religion is only concerned with this, he will scarcely attain the essence of religious ideology and disclose the content of religion as a social phenomenon and social evil. Moreover, one cannot understand why the author excludes the class approach from the sphere of studies for the student of religion, replacing this with the integration-separation phenomenon which is a derivative of class contradictions. Religion is too complex a phenomenon and cannot be explained by just sociological analysis. The historian, in proceeding from the data concerning the class structure of society, studies the content of religious ideas, the dogma of the given religion, its ritual, church organization, the social activities of the church, the presence of "popular" forms of the cult in a given society, other religions in addition to

the one being studied, and examines the mechanism of the perception of the religious teachings by the believers and its psychic, physiological and other aspects. That this is precisely the case is shown by the very example of S. A. Tokarev, a student of religions who in his work in no way restricted himself to a narrow ethnographic approach which could disclose only one of the aspects of the religious phenomenon. In contrast to some of us he is an ethnographer "par excellence." Possibly, for precisely this reason the ethnographers virtually did not reply to his article for in it he touched on a range of questions where his colleagues do not feel competent. For Marxists there is the important question of whose class interests are served by religious ideas and the church. Marxists endeavor to attract believers to fight for the renewal of the world. This is seen from the fact that many communist parties, in criticizing the reactionary positions of the church, do not prevent believers from joining the party. Marxists have always had a negative view of the "abolition" of religion.

There is one other question which must be taken up. S. A. Tokarev inquires what subjects should be studied by the ethnographers interested in religion? And he replies: the relationships of religion and the ethnos. This subject is too indefinite and at the same time narrow. In actuality, if one judges from the experience of S. A. Tokarev himself, our leading student of religions and ethnographer, the range of his interests in this area is significantly broader than the formula given by him here. And this is natural. The very article by S. A. Tokarev, although it is subtitled "Thoughts of an Ethnographer," touches upon fundamental, basic questions in all religious studies. In all of this the ethnographers have their own specific questions and subjects. This is the reflection of religion in the everyday life of the people, popular beliefs, religious rites and cults like "popular" Catholicism, the phenomena of religious syncretism, the vestiges of primitive cults, the cults of peoples without writing, the "minor" cults, new sectarian formations, popular beliefs and new rites. In other words, everything relating to beliefs and lying outside the "organized" traditional religions should be a subject of ethnographic research. But this in no way means that the ethnographer students of religion should not study organized religions or their beliefs.

S. A. Tokarev unjustifiably feels that research on religious teachings contributes to the theological tradition. The fact that S. A. Tokarev himself does not study dogmas still does not mean that those who do this from the Marxist viewpoint are similar to theologians. Dogma is a component part of any organized religion and it would be naive to not study it from Marxist positions merely because S. A. Tokarev feels that dogma is a group of inventions, absurdities and alogisms.

We know S. A. Tokarev as a prominent Soviet scholar, as an historian and ethnographer. We esteem and respect him for his scientific erudition, his dedication to the interests of science, for his disdain of routine and desire to state his ideas and express a new, fresh thought or consideration. In this regard S. A. Tokarev is an example worthy of following. However, we cannot agree with everything that our prominent colleague asserts, he himself does not expect complete agreement with him and is always pleased if his statements evoke debates and do not leave his colleagues indifferent. I am hopeful that my comments on this level will be to his liking.

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FOOTNOTES

1. See, for example, the article by Academician D. S. Likhachev, "Comments on Russian," NOVYY MIR, No 3, 1980.
2. V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 48, p 232.
3. Syed Hussein Alatas, "Les Difficultés de Définir la Religion," REVUE INTERNATIONALE DES SCIENCES SOCIALES, Paris, XXIX, No 2, 1977, pp 233-276.
4. Ibid.
5. V. I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 45, p 28.
6. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 20, p 328.

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CSO: 8344/0982

ONCE MORE ON RELIGION AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON (A REPLY TO MY CRITICS)

Moscow SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA in Russian No 1, Jan-Feb 81 (signed to press 2 Feb 81)
pp 51-67

[Article by S. A. Tokarev]

[Text] My article "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)" published in SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979 (below in referring in the text to this article the corresponding page will be given) has evoked a lively debate.¹ It was designed to do this. However, I have been somewhat taken aback by something else: written by an ethnographer and directed primarily to ethnographers, there has been virtually no response from this side. Predominantly philosophers have responded to it. This is both good and bad. It is pleasant that an article written from the ethnographic standpoint has evoked a lively interest among representatives of other (related) sciences; but it is lamentable that there has been virtually no debate in our own ethnographic milieu.

However, regardless of the differences in the initial positions, it has generally been possible to find a common tongue for the ethnographer author and his philosopher critics. Setting aside certain miscomprehensions--probably, accidental and easily eliminated--it seems to me that a positive solution to the questions raised in my article is completely possible.

Although the nine authors who stated their opinion on my article differ greatly in their overall assessment (some were inclined to a positive assessment and others more to a negative one), there was criticism in each of the named articles and it was more or less the same, a difference only in shadings.

The main subject of dissent was, as one might expect, the question posed by me of what is the main and determining thing in religion? I feel that, contrary to the traditional view, the main and determining thing is not the content of the beliefs (not the mythology, not the dogma) but rather a certain form of relationships between people. To put it more specifically, although less precisely, for me, as an ethnographer, religion is one of the *ethnic features*. From the very beginning to the very end, religion is a form of social contact, of mutual drawing together (integration) of like-thinkers and mutual repulsion (segregation) of persons who think differently. In this sense it performs the same (more accurately, the analogous) role of any other "ethnic feature": language, forms of material culture, folk creativity and so forth.

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The very content of beliefs, that is, the ideas about god or the gods, about their relationships, properties and so forth, from this viewpoint is not the primary or determining elements of each religion (and religion generally) but rather derivative and mediated elements.

This thesis has caused contention from my opponents. Some of them found in this a call not to study the content of religious beliefs at all. At the same time they understood this as an unacceptable "opposition" by me of religious beliefs to the social role of religion (Ugrinovich, pp 67-68; Kryvelev, pp 73-76; Semenov, p 63; Grigulevich, pp 62-65).

Both these criticisms are pure misunderstanding. To distinguish does not mean to oppose. To consider a certain subject not as primary, not as basic but rather as derivative and secondary does not mean to consider it unworthy of study or to neglect it, as D. M. Ugrinovich puts it (Ugrinovich, p 67). K. Marx wrote about the forms of social consciousness as something derivative from social existence, but from this it in no way follows that he considered their study unnecessary or disregarded them. Moreover he never "opposed" the material relations of people to their ideological relations.

In the given instance our entire quarrel is over what is primary and what is derivative in religion. It could be said that both (the beliefs and the attitudes of people) are so interrelated that the very question is reminiscent of the well-known problem of the chicken and the egg. But this is not the case. Marxism differs (as a theory of cognition) from modern structuralism in the fact that it sees in the system of interacting social functions not only their relationship but also raises the question of what the basic thing is here. D. M. Ugrinovich rightly recalls the correct solution by Engels to the problem of the origin of Christianity; he rightly recalls the correct understanding of the roots of Ancient Phoenician religion by the well-known historian N. M. Nikol'skiy (Ugrinovich, pp 67, 68). But N. M. Nikol'skiy does not consider the cult of the gods to be the basis of agriculture among the Phoenicians (on the contrary!); and F. Engels did not consider the book of Revelations to be the basis of the economic and political crisis in the slaveowning system of the Roman Empire (on the contrary!). And the other examples quoted by my critic in affirmation of his view (Catholicism and Protestantism, Ugrinovich, p 57) actually speak more against him. Certainly it was not over dogmatic differences that the Protestant church communities split away from Rome, but rather the contrary, the spontaneous protest against the despotic and plunderous policy of Papal Rome in the countries of Central and Northern Europe developed into a form of theological disputes about "justification by faith" and "justification by works" and other disputes, which, incidentally, were carried out only by the theologians and remained completely inaccessible for the mass of laymen. Incidently, these disputes were settled (in the first stage of them, in the 16th century, as is known, on a compromise formula which generally did not contain any dogma but was purely political: "whosever the country, so the faith" ("cujus regio, ejus religio" from the Augsburg Religious Truce of 1555), that is, quite simply, obey the superiors and do not reason for yourself!

But this question requires further clarification and elucidation. Let us pose it as follows: what precisely comprises the subject of ethnographic study in religion? (And my article was addressed, let me repeat, to ethnographers.) Should an

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ethnographer study, for instance, Catholic dogma in its differences from Orthodox or Lutheran? Should he delve into the works of the fathers of the church, into the theological-philosophical treatises and an analysis of the Old and New Testament sources? Obviously not. But is it enough for him, and here let us go to the other extreme, to know to what faith one or another people belongs in order to immediately share this "ethnic" feature? Is it enough for the ethnographer to know that the Serbs are Orthodox while the Croatians are Catholics, that the Irish are Catholics and the Scots are Presbyterians, who are the Tata Moslems and the Tata Hindus, and that in Japan there are Buddhists and Shintoists? No, of course, this is not enough for the ethnographer. Where is the boundary of the "legitimate" sphere of ethnographic science in the area of religion?

For a moment let us turn to the side and examine how analogous questions are settled in terms of other features of ethnographic study in the area of material and spiritual culture.

For example, language, another equally important "ethnic feature," is in an analogous situation. Linguistics over the 150 years of its existence has accumulated colossal material on the most diverse--if not all--languages of the world. Enormous holdings of lexical material have been assembled, the most refined questions of the grammatical structure of individual languages and their phonological typology have been worked out, the theoretical questions of linguistics, structural problems in linguistics and others have also been elaborated. Should and can the ethnographer understand all this linguistic wisdom? Certainly not! And if not, where is the boundary of his requisite level of knowledge? We feel that an ethnographer can and should know the geneological taxonomy of languages, the linguistic families and their subdivisions such as groups, subgroups, branches, dialects, accents of at least a certain region; he should also know the facts of social existence and functioning of languages, the relationship of dialects with literary languages, linguistic contacts, phenomena of bilingualism and the general problems of linguistic communication.

Or another example from the sphere of material culture. Many ethnographers are interested in the food of peoples and there is an entire literature about this. But it is not their job to compile cooking recipes, it is not their job to figure the caloric value of the nutrients or determine the taste qualities of the foods. The task of the ethnographer is to study the functioning of the biological process of eating as forms of human contact: ordinary and holiday feasts, ritual meals, the methods of their preparation, the ritual of communal eating, feasting, banquets, the methods of sharing food, food taboos, fasts, customs, rites and beliefs concerning food; in a word, eating as a means of social contact: who could and should eat and drink with whom and who should not?

Let us try to apply these examples to the ethnographic study of a religion.

The religious beliefs of various peoples are amazingly diverse. They are much more diverse than languages, than food or the other phenomena of material or spiritual culture. The reason for this is that religious beliefs are the fruits of religious and mythological fantasy and, as is known, there are no limits to human fantasy. Does an ethnographer need to study and know these beliefs in all their diversity? Yes, of course, he should. But here it is essential not to view the beliefs as

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things in themselves, as existing independently or separately from people. It is essential to raise the question of their social roots and their socioideological role. Here, and this is particularly important, not in the sense of common, perpetually frozen formulas but rather what is a specific historical reality.

Incidentally, probably any Marxist would agree with this. The differences begin only later. What is *more important* for understanding the essence of religion as a social phenomenon. Is it the contents of religious fantasy or the social functioning of religion? Is it religion as a type of human mental activity or as a form of the uniting and disuniting of people? I myself prefer the second answer, while my opponents, at least D. M. Ugrinovich, I. A. Kryvelev, Yu. I. Semenov and I. R. Grigulevich prefer the first. But between them there are also differences which we should take up.

D. M. Ugrinovich also feels that in religion the main thing is its social functions. But he sees the most important socioideological roles of religion in its "illusory-compensatory" function while he considers the integrative-segregative function of religion to be secondary, for it supposedly is not specific to religion (Ugrinovich, p 69). This is a serious argument. But the entire question is that the "illusory-compensatory" function with all its importance is performed by a religion not in relation to an individual "man" (which is very often the concern of the philosophers), not the individual, but always, *without a single exception*, in terms of a certain collective, a certain *group* of people. An excellent example of this is the Christian teachings about Judgment Day and a reward in the afterlife. In the full sense of the word this is an "illusory-compensatory" doctrine. But when and how did this doctrine become an actual force? Only when there appeared initially small and later mass groups of followers, the Judeo-Christians, the "faithful," the "brothers," the "persons called," and those who "travail and are heavy laden," who passionately thirsted for deliverance from all the evils of the world. The early Christian communities were formed from these persons and this was the initial nucleus of Christianity. This was the case in all other instances. The "illusory compensatory" function of any religion collects its adepts, followers, believers and like thinkers around it and separates them from all other persons who have, as a rule, *their own* religion with *their own* illusory-compensatory function. If this cluster (or this mass) of people does not exist, then their religion with all its functions does not exist!

Incidentally, one other thing must not be forgotten. The illusory-compensatory function of a religion, with all its importance, does not operate constantly. In an ordinary secular situation, during periods of relative well-being (and certainly these exist even in a class antagonistic society!), a person usually does not feel the need for such a compensation, whether it is illusory or not. Even people from the exploited classes such as the peasantry, craftsmen and workers, are usually accustomed to their situation, to their dull routine, to philistine or peasant well-being. During such periods people rarely remember god. This is all the more true of the people in the ruling classes. In benefitting from all the goods of life, as a rule, they do not require any "illusions" or "compensations." Only in the event of misfortune, severe illness, fire or crop failure do people begin to feel a need for "compensation," or more accurately a need for help, salvation and protection. During periods of social crises, mass disasters, famines, epidemics, enemy invasions, in these extreme moments, this is when religion appears on the scene with its illusory-compensating function. This was the case in the age of the birth of

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Christianity, and this was the case repeatedly in the Middle Ages when mass plebian sects appeared which promised their members salvation from disaster. This is why, without denying the enormous role of religion as an "illusory-compensatory" force, I still could not consider it as the main function of religion.

I. A. Kryvelev in his arguments emphasizes a different aspect more. One must not underestimate the importance of studying religious ideas and primarily the question of the existence or nonexistence of supernatural beings. Otherwise, supposedly, the difference is obliterated between the theologians and the atheists and otherwise it is generally impossible to even approach religions phenomena (Kryvelev, pp 74-77). In his opinion, without attention to the "theoretical ideological problem" it is impossible to settle the question of combating evil, that is, to fight against it by one's own forces or to pray to god. "It is not up to us," writes I. A. Kryvelev in his usual ironic style, "if god exists or not, we will simply not turn to him. But if he does exist, then how can we not help but turn to him?!" (Kryvelev, p 77). It is very possible! In Africa among very many peoples there is the notion of a celestial creator god (Njama, Zambe, Kalunga, Leza, Mulungu, Kiumbe and others). But they feel that this creator god, having created the world, has long ceased to be interested in it and does not intervene at all into the affairs of man. For this reason the people consider it useless to turn to him with prayers, to make sacrifices and so forth (ancestors serve as the subject of prayers, sacrifices and the cult). This is the "deus otiosus" ("idle god"). Similar examples are known on a higher level of social development. The founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, taught his students that it was futile to turn to the gods. Gods exist but they not only cannot help people escape from a torturous existence (and life is complete suffering!), but they themselves are caught in the eternal circle of existence; only by his own efforts can man achieve the desired goal of blissful Nirvana.

The arguments of Yu. I. Semenov are the most decisive but on the other hand they are the least convincing. The impression is created that Yu. I. Semenov simply did not understand the contents of my article. For some reason it seemed to him that the main thing in it is my desire at whatever the cost to refute the definition of religion "prevailing in our literature" as "belief in the supernatural" (Semenov, pp 49, 50 and 51). Where Yu. I. Semenov got this conclusion is difficult to say. In my article I specifically refrained from discussing how successful such a definition of religion is and accepted precisely it--religion as a belief in the supernatural (p 92). How is it possible to see the main content of my article in a question which I refuse to discuss?

However, in order to make the question more or less clear and eliminate any pretext for an incorrect understanding of the sense of my article, I am ready to incorporate the expression "belief in the supernatural" into my formula (SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA, No 3, 1979, pp 91, 96) which in no way alters its sense. In this instance it will read as follows: "Religion is the attitude of people to one another over the question of belief in the supernatural." I hope that now it would be clear to anyone that the main purpose of the discussed article does not depend to the slightest degree upon the use of nonuse of the words "belief in the supernatural."

In his arguments directed to me, Yu. I. Semenov goes even farther. He argues against my thesis that the "believers" themselves ordinarily have a poor knowledge--or even do not know at all--the subject of their belief. In the opinion of Yu. I. Semenov, this is impossible. "It is impossible to have beliefs and not know them" (Semenov,

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p 50 and elsewhere). Yu. I. Semenov here to a certain degree would be correct if religion in fact came down to merely belief in a supernatural force. Then, of course, if I believed in a supernatural force then I would know that I believe in it and this would be enough. But certainly it is possible to actually believe in the supernatural but not have any idea of what this represents, that is, an indifferent or dangerous force, the mysterious art of the warlock or witch, an evil spirit, a sacred bull or serpent, a divinity or a whole host of gods....

If one remembers that the religions of the entire world are far from reducible to "belief in the supernatural," but include infinitely diverse ideas of gods and spirits, and in complicated religions, a strict dogma, various "symbols of the faith," theological teachings and so forth, then it is strange to even think that all of this could be demanded from a simple layman "believer." But to be convinced that it is fully possible "to have beliefs and not know them," one has merely to conduct a simple experiment: ask the parishioner of any church two or three questions on the Orthodox catechism. The dispute will be settled automatically.

However, in going even farther in his polemics with me, Yu. I. Semenov reaches assertions that are at least strange. The social function of religion, is, in his opinion, not only not its most important element but also generally not obligatory and nonessential. "Generally no approach to religion from a study of its functions can approach an understanding of its essence," writes Yu. Semenov (Semenov, p 52). "Religion appeared," he writes in another place, "not to perform any definite socially necessary function" (ibid., p 58)... "religion arose simply because it could not help but arise" (ibid.)... "but having arisen, religion began to perform definite functions" (ibid., p 58).

The idea that the essence of a social phenomenon is one thing (in the given instance religion), and the performing of certain social functions by it is another is an idea reminiscent of the Kantian distinguishing of a "thing unto itself" and the phenomenon understood by us. It has repeatedly been advanced in sociological research. It was very clearly expressed at one time by Durkheim. However, I feel that such an opposition of the "essence" of religion to the "functions" performed by it (and the idea understood here of the noncompulsoriness of any of its "functions" whatsoever) is wrong. A social phenomenon which does not perform any social functions cannot exist. In order to make this clearer, let me give several clear examples. What is the origin of art? There are various theories about this. If we follow the line of argument of Yu. I. Semenov, then it arose "simply because it could not help but arise"; but having once arisen, it began to perform definite functions: communicative, magical, aesthetic, symbolic and so forth. Another example: what is the origin of farming? According to such a line of reasoning, it "arose simply because it could not help but arise"; but having once arisen farming began to perform socially necessary functions: to supply people with bread and other food, flax and cotton for clothing and so forth. It seems to me that such reasoning does not lead either to the understanding of the essence of a certain thing or its origin.

Certain of my opponents evidently are disgruntled by the fact that I consider primitive "polemics" on religion of the sort "there is no god--there is a god" to be an empty waste of time. In doing this I, in the first place, have seeming "put believers and atheists on the same level" (Grigulevich, p 62), and secondly, I cast

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aspersions on the atheists who can only repeat this worn out phrase. For greater impact, I. R. Grigulevich gives the humorous example of Ostap Bender and his religious debate with the Roman Catholics (Grigulevich, p 63). He is right, unfortunately, that we do have such "atheists" who in terms of general development are on the level of a fifth grader. I am afraid that their average mental level is even lower as Ostap Bender at least knew several Latin words and that there are even many more of them than there are atheist scholars of religion. But we are not seeking the level of Bender's "atheism"! I would personally prefer to conduct the debate on a higher level, let us say on the level of Spinoza, the great thinker whose materialistic ideology did not prevent him from calling the "prime substance" "god"! As is known, "Spinoza made the central point of his ontology the identity of god and nature which he understood as united and one, an eternal and infinite substance which excluded the existence of any other principle and hence as the principle of itself (causa sui)."²

Unfortunately, the main thesis of my article remained virtually outside the view of my critics. This was the thesis of the social, segregative-integrative function of any religion. It was virtually passed over in silence. Yu. A. Murav'yev, having initially addressed several complimentary phrases to me ("interesting thoughts," "a nonroutine elucidation of the problems," and "rich erudition"...), subsequently did not even mention my major thesis. V. N. Sherdakov, only in passing although with approval, mentioned it as did G. G. Gromov (Sherdakov, p 66; Gromov, pp 77-78). Yu. I. Semenov, having raised this question, decisively rejects my viewpoint. Although, he says, "it is indisputable that religion can contribute to both the integration and separation of groups of people," yet "this cannot be seen as a specific feature of religion." What I consider "the main function of religion" is, in actuality, a "secondary aspect" (Semenov, p 52). If one were to agree with Yu. I. Semenov, then we would have to close our eyes to the age-long history of the bloody religious wars and to the "accomplishments" of the Inquisition which tortured and imprisoned millions of completely blameless persons, "heretics" and "witches"; we would have to close our eyes to the bloody crusades, to "St. Bartholomew's Massacre" and numerous similar crimes, to the bestiality of the Moslem butchers over the Christians, to the Hindu-Moslem carnage, to the years-long wars between the Catholics and Protestants in Ulster and so forth and so forth.... Is all of this really a "secondary aspect"? Then where is the main aspect? Possibly, in a "belief in a supernatural force" or in the dividing of human activity into "free and unfree," as the philosophical method of Yu. I. Semenov demands?

I. A. Kryvelev also argues against my thesis but more evasively. He considers the very problem of segregation and integration "not without interest," but my solution is "unconvincing" (why?). But he reduces his argument--out of his literary habit--to a joke. "What, indeed," he writes ironically, "sort of integration can there be in a society where archdeacons and priests exist separately from each other and even superiors from archimandrites? Absolute segregation!" And here he even criticizes me for intending "to submerge a serious problem in unserious wordiness" (Kryvelev, p 78). But who of the two of us is more unserious here? It seems to me that to make a joke of a serious problem does not mean to solve it.

Only D. M. Ugrinovich made a sensible argument against my thesis. It is very simple. Religion is not the only segregation factor, he says. A similar role is performed by other social phenomena such as ethnic traditions, political and legal views of

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the ruling class, class, estate and other interests (Ugrinovich, p 69). Completely right! But in my article I was precisely endeavoring to put religion in the same rank with other social forces which perform the same basic function. I wrote (I repeat this for readers who have not read all of this): "In this sense (in the sense of a main social function) religion is not an exception among the other social phenomena. On the contrary, it is similar to any other phenomenon of culture, both material and spiritual, and performs a most important social function. It unites and unifies a certain group of people and thereby sets it into opposition to all others. This dual, or to put it better "two-in-one," role of religion--as a factor of integration and simultaneously segregation--is inherent to all elements of culture, without a single exception. Religion is one of them. And it possibly more clearly and more explicitly performs and always has performed this role."(p 97). Hence, the argument of D. M. Ugrinovich misses the point.

I was also very disappointed that little attention was given by my opponents to that portion of my article where I speak about the "problem of evil" as the main contents of any religion generally (pp 92-95). In truth, Yu. I. Semenov has rightly noted that this part of the article is not sufficiently linked--and even, perhaps, not at all linked--with its basic part (Semenov, p 52). He is correct. This question could completely make up the contents of a separate article. However, on the other hand, within the present article it would have been impossible to pass over the question in silence of what has comprised the most important contents of religious beliefs in all ages and countries?

Is it right that precisely the problem of evil and the methods of combating it comprise the most important aspect of religious ideology and religious psychology? This idea is not at all new. Where there is suffering so there is religion, said the philosophers of the 18th Century Enlightenment. The complex "world" religions have long come to be called "soteriological" or "religions of salvation." Salvation from what? From all forms of evil in the world. Cults of "savior gods" also existed in the ancient world.

What here are my opponents arguing against? In the first place, they feel that the very concept of "evil" is applicable only to a class society. In the primitive age the "concept of evil was still not differentiated from the concepts of 'bad,' 'harmful,' 'awful'" (Ugrinovich, p 70; Semenov, pp 51, 52). Secondly, in religious consciousness the idea of evil and the idea of avoiding it have always been linked with the notion of a certain supernatural being which caused evil or a similar being which was capable of freeing man from evil. Hence, here the basic thing is precisely a belief in this supernatural being (Ugrinovich, pp 70, 71; Semenov, p 51). Thirdly, and lastly, the "problem of evil" has been the concern not just of religious figures but also thinkers far from religion (Semenov, p 51). Here obviously the dispute is caused by the fact that the word "evil" is being used generally in different meanings. I have used it for the sake of brevity in the broadest sense, including here any suffering, pain, harm, failure, hunger, disease and so forth, in a word, everything that a normal man endeavors to escape from, regardless of whether or not in each individual instance the concept of evil (in the narrow sense) has been differentiated" from the concepts of bad, harmful and so forth. The concept of "evil" in the narrower, moral or social sense is inherent to a higher level of social development. No one would argue against this. It is a pity to me that my opponents did not note that in my article precisely an attempt was made to

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examine in an historical sequence the developmental stages of the concept of "evil" depending upon the general course of history, starting from simple physical pain up to the abstract and universal concept of world evil.

It is well known that the concept of "evil" (in the broad sense) at each stage of historical development has been linked in religious consciousness with ideas of supernatural agents of evil or with the idea of a supernatural salvation from evil. But here the dependence is precisely the reverse from what my opponents are thinking, that is, man endures pain (suffering or evil) and hopes for supernatural salvation from it not because he believes in the existence of such agents but rather on the contrary because he believes in them and hopes for their help that he endures the pain and longs to be free of it.

Has the problem of evil been solved not only by religion? Of course. This question has been and is the concern of medicine (the treating of diseases), firefighting (the combating of fires) and the public security bodies (the fight against crime). Religion has also fought and is fighting both against the particular manifestations of all that is undesirable and unpleasant as well as against world evil as a whole, the latter in the developed, "soteriological" religions. But the misfortune of religion is that the means of the struggle for it are unsuitable and illusory. Incidentally, in my opinion, the struggle against evil should not be included in a formal definition of the concept of religion.

The position of I. R. Grigulevich on this question is not completely clear. He, on the one hand, writes that the idea of religion as a "struggle against evil" is "not new" (in quoting from an article of one of the foreign religious scholars) and he is right in this. On the other hand, he mentions "scores of cults" in which the problem of evil is not raised at all. It would be interesting to know what sort of cults these were? Possibly, they do exist. But I. R. Grigulevich gives as an example (very unsuccessfully) such religions (Tolstoyism or "demonic" cults) which quite the contrarily very starkly illustrate my thesis. There is a strange ring to his assertion that "...even where a religion proclaims a struggle against evil as its main function, it does not so much fight against it as it does help to strengthen it" (Grigulevich, p 64). Indeed! We reject the religious ideology because it points out a *false* path to combat evil! That is why K. Marx called religion the opiate of the people"; and D. M. Ugrinovich in developing the ideas of Marx, speaks about its "illusory-compensatory" function.

Incidentally, about religion as the "opiate of the people." The same I. R. Grigulevich in his article uses this expression of Marx several times (Grigulevich, pp 64, 64), imagining that in this way he can argue with me. Quite in vain. The formula of K. Marx is absolutely correct and merely affirms my basic thesis. But I. R. Grigulevich errs in applying this formula as a "definition" of religion. This is in no way a "definition" (it does not meet the logical concept of a "definition"), but rather a phrase taken out of context where Marx in several expressions aptly describes the socioideological functions of a religion. Let me recall how this place reads in context and which is so frequently abused by an abbreviated quotation:

"The basis of irreligious criticism is as follows: man creates religion and religion does not create man. Precisely: religion is the self-awareness and self-sensation of man who either has still not found himself or who has lost himself

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again. But man is not an abstract being huddling somewhere outside the world. Man is the world of man, the state and society. This state, this society gives rise to religion, a distorted view of the world, for they themselves are a distorted world. Religion is a general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in a popularized form, its spiritualistic point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its triumphal embodiment, its universal basis for consolation and justification. It turns human essence into a fantastic reality because human essence does not possess true reality. Consequently, the struggle against religion is indirectly a struggle against that world the spiritual delight of which is religion.

"Religious squalor is at the same time the expression of true squalor and a protest against this actual squalor. Religion is the breath of suppressed creatures, the heart of a heartless world just as it is the spirit of spiritless orders. Religion is the opiate of the people.

"The abolishing of religion as an illusory happiness of the people is a demand for their true happiness. The demand for the abandoning of illusions about one's position is the demand to abandon such a position which requires illusions. A criticism of religion is, consequently, in an insipient form a criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is its sacred halo.

"Criticism has thrown off from the chains the false flowers which embellished them not in order that mankind could continue to wear these chains in a formed devoid of any joy or any relishment but in order that it could throw off the chains and extend a hand to the living flower. Criticism of religion frees man from illusions in order that he can think, act and order his reality as a person free of illusions and now reasonable; in order that man can turn around himself and his true sun. Religion is only an illusory sun rotating around man until he learns to move around himself."³

I particularly regret that my critics have disregarded the very essential question of the place of Christian teachings in the history of the religious concept of evil. Anyone who is even superficially familiar with the great religions of Asia would not hesitate to mention the religious and ethical teachings of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism among them. Both these doctrines are an all-encompassing philosophical generalization although the conclusions in either teachings are the opposite. Buddhism (the early variety) teaches the universality of suffering as an eminent property of life itself; Zoroastrianism teaches of the eternal struggle of good and evil in nature and in history with the prospect of the ultimate victory of good over evil. Whatever one may think about the moral and ideological aspect of either concept, it is impossible to deny both of logical consistency and clarity. I cannot understand how it is possible to conceive of putting on the same level as them or even a little higher (as does Semenov, p 61) the confused dogma of Christian religion on "original sin" committed by Adam and Eve (out of inexperience!) who tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree and for which the all-good god punished the completely blameless future mankind and all nature. (Gen., III, 17-19) This is the root and cause of evil in the world according to the Christian doctrine!

My opponents have also passed over in silence the related question of the place of the idea of the devil in Christian dogma. It is traditionally considered to blame for evil in the world. But in the "sacred writings" there is no support for such a view. In the Old Testament the role of the devil (Satan) is completely insignificant. He does not figure in the story about the "fall from grace," and for this

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reason cannot be considered to blame. Adam and Eve were tempted by the clever "snake" (Gen., III, 1-5). In the New Testament there are only hazy mentionings of the "tempter," but nothing at all about the original cause of evil and sin. The devil is not even mentioned in the "symbol of the faith" which is obligatory for all Christians (325-381 A.D.). Generally the role of the devil as the party responsible for evil in the world remains theologically unestablished. But for science this problem in religious studies remains of great interest. Parenthetically I would point out the criticism addressed to me by I. A. Kryvelev of a poor knowledge of the Bible. In his opinion, Tokarev "did not notice" that the "myth on the fall from grace" is found not in the New but in the Old Testament (Kryvelev, p 78). In fact, not Tokarev but Kryvelev did not point out that the article mentions explicitly the "ancient Jewish very awkward myth" accepted by the "fathers of the Christian church" (p 94).

There are other misunderstandings as well. The same I. A. Kryvelev has reproached me for a whole series of historical or religious studies inaccuracies and in some he is partially right. He is correct (Kryvelev, p 77), having pointed out my inaccuracy of designating the religion of Israel as "monotheistic" (p 93), without the proper stipulation that it became such only in the postexilic era (as I mention in another place; see p 90). He is also incorrect in interpreting my philosophical and religious view of Vl. Solov'yev. I mention the "curious attempt" of Solov'yev to "reconcile the Zoroastrian teachings about the great impure spirit, the antagonist of god, with Christian teachings" (p 94). But I. A. Kryvelev has understood me as if I were ascribing to Vl. Solov'yev generally the "introduction of the figure of the devil into Christianity" (Kryvelev, p 79). The religious-philosophical teachings of Vl. Solov'yev generally merit a more careful analysis, but why distort the ideas of Solov'yev himself and those writing about him? The same is true about the idea of the Anti-Christ, the teachings about which, it seems to me, Vl. Solov'yev endeavors precisely to introduce within the world historical process, as the future opponent of Christ. "But by whom," exclaims I. A. Kryvelev, "and when has it ever been understood differently?" (Kryvelev, p 79). How, by whom? In the "Apocalypse," the primary source of the teachings about the Anti-Christ, he is depicted as a beast with seven heads and ten horns (Rev., XIII, 1, 2, 7 and so forth). That many historical figures from Friedrich II to Peter the Great have been considered as Anti-Christ by believers is well-known to me and everyone and the fact that I do not mention these historical "Anti-Christ" still does not bespeak my "obliviousness" to the "entire history of Christianity," but rather bespeaks inattentive reading of my article by my opponent.

The same inattentive reading probably explains certain historiographic comments by I. A. Kryvelev. If I mention the critique of Mannhardt's theory of "agrarian demons" by the Swedish ethnographer Von Sydow (p 89) as an example of differences in the understanding of early forms of beliefs, this still does not mean that I agree with this criticism (Kryvelev, 72); on the contrary, I have always considered and do consider Mannhardt's theory excellently grounded. My brief mention of the very sound research by Paul Radin on the role of "religious thinkers" in the early forms of religion has led I. A. Kryvelev to amazement. "It is unlikely but a fact," he writes, "that the author [Tokarev] has arrived at the deception theory!" (Kryvelev, p 74). We must not confuse the somewhat sensational attacks by Melier or Marechal against the clergy with the conclusions of such a conscientious and ultracautious author as Radin, the research of whom would never fit into the confines of a primitive "deception theory."

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Certain of my critics, in taking up only in passing the essential aspects of my article, on the other hand give great importance to certain philosophical fine points. For example, they pose the question: What actually caused the rise of primitive religion, was it the very fact of primitive man's impotence before the vicissitudes of nature or was it a feeling (awareness) of this impotence. Yu. I. Semenov considers the first answer to be a Marxist one and the second to be "purist idealism" (Semenov, p 53). Yu. A. Murav'yev (Murav'yev, p 81) agrees with him on this, but M. I. Shakhnovich (Shakhnovich, p 85) is decisively not in agreement. However, here again is a misunderstanding. No one doubts that the feeling (awareness) of primitive man's impotence before the surrounding forces of nature was just a reflection of the very fact ("real, objective," as Yu. I. Semenov puts it) of impotence. But before the rise of social consciousness, this "real objective" impotence could not give rise to any religion for the same simple reason that a similar impotence does not give rise to a religion in animals which also "really and objectively" are impotent before the vicissitudes of nature but are not aware of this impotence. Only by passing through human consciousness (social consciousness) could man's powerlessness engender religious ideas and all that we generally term religion. One can deny this only by defending positions of vulgar, mechanical materialism. After I have above examined carefully a whole series of my differences with Yu. I. Semenov, I am very pleased to mention a question over which I, on the contrary, am in full agreement.

"For the ordinary believer," says Yu. I. Semenov, "religion has always been primarily a practical matter. He was primarily interested in what must be done (or what must not be done) in order to ensure a favorable action by the supernatural forces on the outcome of his activity and to prevent a bad one. As for the question of the nature of the supernatural forces, he was least of all interested in this. For him, the existence of the supernatural forces operated as something given which did not require any proof, any explanation or any reflection. For this reason he did not endeavor to either reason out his beliefs or disclose the connection between them. *Primitive religion never represented any structured system.* It was a chaotic jumble of the most different beliefs, ideas and rites, often not only contradictory but even mutually exclusive" (Semenov, p 57; emphasis mine.--S.T.).

Quite right! Here I will not dwell particularly on the fact that these thoughts of Yu. I. Semenov somewhat contradict what he himself has written in other places. But these completely correct thoughts hit the nail on the head for the modern structuralist "semioticians" who everywhere search for "systems," "codes," "models" and so forth. The head of modern structuralism Claude Levi-Strauss directly views mythology as a certain independent being independent of human consciousness and subordinate to its own immanent logic.

My opponents (particularly I. R. Grigulevich) touched only in passing on an important question which, in truth, in my article as well remained virtually unexamined, namely, the question of the relation of religious communities to the class structure. On this question for me there is no necessity to defend any special position as there are no differences here only much that has not been examined. I. R. Grigulevich is wrong in rebuking me for supposedly excluding a class approach from the sphere of study for a student of religion, in replacing this by the integration-segregation phenomenon (Grigulevich, p 65). I do not exclude it, but in my article I had no opportunity, because of a lack of space, to carefully examine this difficult problem. It is more complicated than seems at first glance. At first it is

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essential to study those rather numerous historical facts where in a class social system the ruling class adhered to one belief and the majority of the suppressed classes another. Thus, in Bosnia, under the Ottoman regime the rich landowners were largely Moslems while the predominant majority of poor peasants (the "kmets") were Christians (Catholics or Orthodox). There was an analogous situation among certain Caucasus peoples, particularly among the Ossetians, where Christianity (mixed with pre-Christian cults) was the religion of a majority of the communal peasants while the princes and aristocracy were Moslems. On the right-bank Ukraine and in Western Belorussia the nobility or "szlachta" professed Catholicism while the peasantry ("khlops") were Orthodox or Uniates. In Northern Ireland up to the present the ruling class has been Presbyterian while the dispossessed peasants were Catholics. There are many such examples and in each case there must be concrete historical research in order to understand the role and function of each religion. Here religious strife reflects class interests and a class struggle.

But undoubtedly even more frequent are the situations in which the ruling and suppressed classes are formally united by a common religion. In these instances it carries out a function of a fictitious and illusory "fraternity" in masking class suppression and exploitation. It is quite clear in such situations whose class interests religion serves. However here also much still remains unstudied.

We would particularly like to take up the article by G. G. Gromov which stands out starkly among the articles by the other participants in the debate. It is special, in the first place, because it has been written, like my article, from ethnographic positions and, secondly, because it contains many fresh constructive ideas which merit serious attention.

We must first of all support G. G. Gromov's desire to shift the center of gravity in studying social consciousness (among backward peoples) from the religious and magical ideas and superstitious rites to positive knowledge and the rational practical activities of man. In actuality much of what we habitually consider as superstitions and magical rites upon closer examination often turns out to be a manifestation of positive if not always systematized folk knowledge. Even the professional activities of witches and priests who are separate from the people and keep the rites of their profession a secret are ultimately based upon the real knowledge of the people forming a certain "barren flower" on this knowledge. G. G. Gromov sees an analogous relationship, and rightly so, between the standards of morality which have a completely reasonable and useful purpose and their religious garb (Gromov, p 76). But there is no reason for G. G. Gromov to so heighten the difference between the folk religious ideas and the official church institutions with their theological ideology (Gromov, pp 78-80). No such impassable boundary runs between them. For this reason it is scarcely valid for him to try to restrict my understanding of religion as a force of segregation, that is, to restrict it by considering this function not as part of religion as a whole but only as part of the church. For religion as a whole, this function, in his opinion, is "imaginary" (Gromov, p 78). Unfortunately, this is not the case. The age-long religious wars were waged not by just the theologians and clergy but rather the people participated in them! Unhappily, the everyday separation of the followers of different sects ("...one faith does not sing, eat or marry with another," was how the Russian traveller Afanasiy Nikitin wrote about the inhabitants of India in the 15th century) remains among the backward strata of the population even now. This is a far from "imaginary" isolation!

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Thus, what is the general conclusion? From what viewpoint must religion be approached in order to understand its very essence and to grasp that role which religion has played and does play in the life of people? Let us take a specific case to get closer to the answer.

What is the role of Islam in the current international situation and in the events in the individual Asian and African countries? Can this role be understood using references to the fact that Islam is "a belief in a supernatural force" (as the position of Yu. I. Semenov requires)? I do not think so. Or by referring to the "illusory-compensatory function" of any religion (from the viewpoint of D. M. Ugrinovich)? Scarcely. In order to understand what role is presently played by the Moslem religion in Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, in Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria and elsewhere, it is scarcely essential to delve deeply into the dogma of Islam (which is very simple), to examine all the names, epithets and attributes of Allah (they run into the hundreds!), to investigate the debates over the divine or human origin of the Koran and so forth. All of this is interesting but scarcely helps us in solving the above-raised questions. Obviously, there must be a special study to understand from whence comes this enormous force which has had such a great influence on the sociopolitical development of many countries and peoples living under quite different conditions. But this study cannot be replaced by a repetition of formulas about "belief in the supernatural" or about "free and unfree human activity."

Another example is the Catholic religion which in the present-day international situation, having shown unusual flexibility and adaptability, plays a very complicated role which differs in the various countries. In some it defends the people against military fascist military dictatorships (Latin America), in some it supports the peasantry and enters in their struggle for land (Ulster) and in some it serves as a buffer between the democratic masses and the neo-Fascist currents (Italy). For understanding the economic and ethnoconfessional conflicts in the same Ulster not much is to be gained from a comparative study of the Catholic and Protestant catechisms.

But still I should admit my error here. In being engrossed by the task of putting precisely the social aspect of religion in first place in studying this phenomenon, that is, religion as a form of the integration and segregation of people, I left another aspect of the problem too much in the shadow, that is, the study of the very contents of beliefs which has become sanctified by a long scholarly tradition. Although I made a special stipulation on this issue (p 97), this obviously was insufficient and I myself provided certain grounds for criticism that I supposedly did not consider it particularly essential to study the contents of the beliefs. I repeat again that a specific study of religious beliefs of all peoples has been and remains an important task of science. Only it is not necessary, in the first place, to confuse--as G. G. Gromov has rightly pointed out--authentically popular beliefs with a dogmatic catechism which the believers themselves, as a rule, do not know; secondly, in studying the contents of beliefs, it must not be forgotten for a minute that these beliefs exist not in and of themselves (as the "semioticians" imagine) but only in the minds of people who over the question of these beliefs are united or separated.

Let me return to what started this article. There has been a debate but the forces of its participants are unequal: two ethnographers against eight philosophers although in truth certain of them made an adjustment for the ethnographic focus. On

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the other hand such a situation gives me grounds to examine the differences in the very method of the approach to religion. Incidentally, in generally styling my opponents "philosophers," I have in mind, of course, not their specialties and not the positions held but only the method of approach to the subject.

In any religion there is an object and there is a subject. The subject is who believes. The object is what he believes in. A great deal has already been said about the object of religion. Be it God, the gods, the supernatural or the after-life. Let us accept whatever we like. But where is the subject of religious beliefs?

For the philosopher this is the thinking man, the "believer" who acts here primarily as the subject of understanding the world around. It is a different question whether the understanding is adequate or inadequate. Of course, a Marxist philosopher, in contrast to his bourgeois professional colleague, views the human individual as a social being and not as a biological specimen. But still for the philosopher precisely "man" with his needs, abilities and habits is the subject of the religious understanding of the world. For the ethnographer, the subject (agent) of a religion is the people, the ethnos or group of ethnos or, in the case of poly-confessionality, a part of the ethnos. Thus the ethnographic study of religion, in taken as such, organically fits into the problem of ethnographic science per se. For the ethnographer, the Spaniards, Italians, Irish and Maltese are Catholics; the Swedes, Danes and Finns are Protestants; the Greeks, Serbs and Romanians are Orthodox; the Iranians are Shiite Moslems. Here the question is not about the personal convictions of the "believers" but rather the objective fact of the predominance of a certain religion in a given country. Among the Catholics of Italy and among the Lutherans of Sweden there can be (and are) people of various views, vacillators, persons indifferent to religion or even convinced atheists. Religious statistics do not take this into account; only in a few countries is the number of free thinkers and atheists considered separately. Thus, the ethnographic method of studying religion--at least in this regard--is purely objective. It seems to me that this must be counted among its merits.

Of course, this does not mean abandoning the study of religious views of individual thinkers (Swedenborg, Skovoroda, Lev Tolstoy, Syutayev and others). They are also interesting but for the ethnographer only as individual reflections of certain general, mass (at least in the past) religious currents.

One last comment. I intentionally here have virtually not taken up those statements by participants in the debate which were either aimed at supporting the ideas defended by me or even developed them further. These would be the comments by Yu. A. Murav'yev (on the level of the theory of cognition), V. N. Sherdakov (religion and morality) and particularly Ya. V. Minkyavichyus (on the sociological level) and G. G. Gromov (purely ethnographically). Here I can limit myself to merely expressing to them sincere gratitude for a well-intended response.

FOOTNOTES

1. See: D. M. Ugrinovich, "On the Marxist Understanding of Religion," SOVETSKAYA ETNOGRAFIYA [henceforth SE], No 1, 1980; I. A. Kryvelev, "On the Essential and Nonessential in the Study of Religion," SE, No 1, 1980; Yu. I. Semenov, "On the

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Essence of Religion," SE, No 2, 1980; V. N. Sherdakov, "On the Main Issue in Understanding Religion," SE, No 2, 1980; Yu. A. Murav'yev, "Religion: Belief, Illusion, Knowledge," SE, No 4, 1980; Ya. V. Minkyavichyua, "On the Content of Religion," SE, No 4, 1980; M. I. Shakhnovich, "For Developing Research on the Problems of Religion," SE, No 5, 1980; G. G. Gromov, "Certain Controversial Questions in the Study of Religion," SE, No 5, 1980; I. R. Grigulevich, "On the Social Role of Religion (Thoughts of a Student of Religion on the Thoughts of an Ethnographer)," SE, No 6, 1980 (subsequently the references in the text give the name and the page).

2. See "Filosofskaya Entsiklopediya" [Philosophical Encyclopedia], Vol 5, Moscow, 1970, p 112.
3. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 1, Moscow, 1955, pp 414, 415. I would note in passing that Marx was not the first to liken religion to a "opiate," and before him such a comparison was made by Rousseau, Marechal, Kant, Heine, Bruno Bauer and Feuerbach.

[Editorial Comment] on the Results of the Debate over the Article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon"

Scholars from different specialties including philosophers, students of religion and ethnographers have participated in discussing the article by S. A. Tokarev "Religion as a Social Phenomenon (Thoughts of an Ethnographer)." This has given the debate a comprehensive and interdisciplinary nature and has made it possible to discuss a broad range of problems. The participants in the debate have raised a number of interesting ideas which will attract the attention of specialists. Emphasis was put on the necessity for the greatest possible development of Marxist research on the urgent problems of religious studies. In a brief conclusion it is impossible to take up all aspects of the debate but the editors consider it necessary to voice their opinion on its crucial questions. Soviet researchers of religion are confronted with important and responsible tasks. For successfully carrying out these tasks it is essential to have a thorough consideration and creative development of the theoretical heritage of the founders of Marxism-Leninism, a profound analysis of the present-day religious situation and a comprehensive examination of the problems in religious studies by the representatives of all social sciences, including ethnography.

As was emphasized in the course of the debate, in our times religion is changing and is endeavoring to adapt to the realities of the modern world. Because of this the boundaries of the subject of religious studies are becoming more fluid and the research priorities in studying the religious situation are changing. Thus, in the opinion of S. A. Tokarev, the basic thing in religion is not the content of the religious ideas per se but rather the social functioning of religion as a form of ideological relations between people. This approach marks a new focus in the study of religion, particularly from ethnographic positions, but it also evoked the most lively disputes.

No matter how religion may evolve, its essence remains unchanged. This essence has been disclosed by the founders of Marxism and the system of their views on the

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given questions remains the theoretical foundation for Marxist religious studies. Proceeding from this the editors see no grounds for disputing the concept widely held in Soviet religious studies that religion is primarily a form of social consciousness and only after this a form of relations between people. And precisely belief in the supernatural is a specific feature of religion as a form of social consciousness. As became clear in the course of the discussion, S. A. Tokarev also does not argue against this view.

At the same time, no matter how convincing a solution provided for the questions about the nature (essence) of religion and even the problem of its origin, it is still essential to explain the age-long existence of the same or similar religious systems under very different social, political and cultural conditions. From this it follows that we should study, as is ordinarily done, both the stable "on-going" properties of religious phenomena as well as their historically variable or varying forms and their very specifically understood social functions in the history of human society, in specific situations and in specific ethnic communities.

On this level of undoubted interest is the idea of S. A. Tokarev about the importance of studying not only the object of religious ideas but also their subject. And this, in his opinion, for the ethnographer is not "man" generally but rather the people or ethnos.

The article which served as the basis of the debate convincingly showed that the everyday beliefs of the masses of people which should be the primary area of study for ethnographers ordinarily do not coincide with the theological systems and official church teachings. Unfortunately, for this reason the author of the article, S. A. Tokarev, has drawn an unconvincing conclusion (evidently in a desire to initiate a debate) that the study of the contents of specific religions is of secondary importance. The opponents argued correctly against him. However in the course of the discussion not enough emphasis was put on the difference in the tasks which confront philosophers in the study of religion (the essence of religion as a form of social consciousness), the students of religion (the historical development of religious beliefs and doctrines) and the ethnographers (the everyday functioning of religion and its ethnic functions) and at the same time the necessity of an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to this entire range of questions.

Thus, in recognizing that the article which precipitated the debate raised certain important problems in modern religious studies, we must also point to the author's clear underestimation of the importance of a scientific analysis and criticism of the contents of religious beliefs.

At the same time, as is known, the reactionary social role of a religion is directly tied to the contents of its teachings. For this reason we cannot help but agree with those participants in the debate who pointed to the invalidity and inadmissibility of any opposition whatsoever between the study of the social roots of religion and its social functions to the studying of religious beliefs and who called for a unity of the gnoseological and sociological analysis of religion.

The editors are hopeful that the debate carried out in the journal will contribute to the further development of a comprehensive study of religion in the modern world.

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