

Questions of Scientific Atheism
(*Voprosy Nauchnogo Ateizma*)

No. 18, "Mysl", Moscow, 1975, 390 pp. No price.

The intellectual standard of this collection is extremely low. Although it is devoted to questions of scientific atheism, it was written for propagandists. But its low quality also derives from the complexity of the task which the authors have set themselves. Whilst strongly attacking the Church and especially all western clerics, religious theoreticians and sociologists, it conforms to the principles of peaceful coexistence, as enunciated by the Communist Party.

The first part of the collection – "Criticism of Clerical Anti-communism" – tries to present an historical and sociological analysis of the so-called foundations of contemporary clericalism. The authors of this section try to show that behind any serious (philosophical or sociological) study of religion by western writers lies a political ideology. The second part of the collection – "Bourgeois Nationalism and Religion" – consists of three articles which, from the point of view of both sociology and religion, are unfounded and empty. Perhaps some small interest is offered by Simonenko's article, "Religion and Ideology in the Practice of Ukrainian Bourgeois Nationalism", where the author chiefly attacks Ukrainian Catholicism and Metropolitan Slipyi. This whole section gives the impression that the sole aim of religion in the national republics is to tear the latter away from the Soviet empire. The third section – "Criticism of the Theological Interpretation of Scientific Atheism" – is the most pseudo-scientific. Its authors try to draw a sharp division between Marxist methods, as practised in the USSR, and bourgeois analytical methods. An example is the article by O. D. Leonov, which is devoted to the young Marx. It is a typical product of the struggle between orthodox Soviet philosophers, who reckon that the views of the young Marx already contained the programme of militant philosophical historicism, and those so-called revisionists in communist and left-wing parties of the West who emphasize the young Marx's humanism and tolerance as regards religion and ideology in general. The fourth section – "Religion and the Problems of Socio-political Development" – tries to generalize about those complex religious situations which have developed in western and Third World countries over the last decade.

The propagandistic character of the collection is clearly shown in the numerous attacks on those émigrés from the Soviet Union (or their descendants) who are making a study of religion. But the abuse spreads further and moves from the English historian Toynbee (because he suggested that nationalism is not alien even to the Soviet people) to the Rev. Michael Bourdeaux, who is accused of slander and anti-soviet activities.

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