

Questions of Scientific Atheism

(Voprosy Nauchnogo Ateizma)

No. 16, "Mysl", Moscow, 1974, 358 pp.

The first part of this collection contains Party directives on religion (religion is treated as a "tool of monopolistic capitalism"). The second part contains articles which reflect contemporary trends in the study of religion: contemporary sociological and statistical methods are used, but in a superficial way. The third part is the most interesting. This deals with the successes and failures of anti-religious propaganda and contains a study of religious beliefs which exist in the Soviet Union. Of particular interest is A. I. Demyanov's article, "On the Contemporary State of the Religious Movement of True Orthodox Christians". It is based on investigations which were carried out in the central provinces of the RSFSR. Demyanov, too, uses sociological and statistical methods. The True Orthodox Christians are not described as a sect but as a "grouping" with no overall leadership. In the author's view it is an anti-soviet and schismatic movement, which came into being after Patriarch Tikhon and is now gradually declining. In fact, however, judging by the author's own figures, this latter claim is not true. That the majority of True Orthodox Christians are almost completely illiterate is highly dubious. The author's conclusion that most of them are elderly is also contradicted by his own statistics. The table which shows the level of believers' convictions is remarkable. It is divided into the following groups: "fanatics", "convinced", "nominal believers", "undecided". The article as a whole shows not only that True Orthodox Christianity exists but that it is growing.

The next group of articles deals with atheism on a theoretical level. Of particular interest is L. A. Chukhina's article, "The Problem of Faith and Non-Belief in the Religio-Philosophical Investigations of F. M. Dostoevsky". L. A. Chukhina is limited by her political views; she accuses idealistic philosophers of equating Dostoevsky's views with those of his heroes (Alyosha, Fr. Zosima, Sonya), and at the same time shows that the ideas of the atheist, Ivan Karamazov, are echoed in Dostoevsky's own statements. To her, Dostoevsky is a great man not because he tried to propagate religion, but because he searched honestly for the truth "in this world" in spite of his "hunger for belief".

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