

spirits, angels, saints, etc., in short—*religion*. The masses of the people have become accustomed to believe in these things, and yet, if we approach these beliefs sensibly, and come to understand where religion comes from, and why religion receives such warm support from the bourgeois gentlemen, we shall clearly understand that the function of religion at present is to act as a poison with which the minds of the people have been and continue to be corrupted. And then we shall also understand why the Communist Party is so resolutely opposed to religion.

THE WORSHIP OF THE SOULS OF THE DEAD RICH WAS
THE FOUNDATION OF RELIGION

Present-day science has pointed out that the most primitive form of religion was the worship of the souls of dead chieftains, and that this worship began at the moment that, in ancient human society, the elders of the tribe, old men more wealthy, experienced and wise than the rest of the tribe, already had secured power over the remaining members. At the very outset of human history, when men still were in the semi-ape stage, they were equal. The elders did not put in their appearance until later, and then began the subjugation of the other members. Then also the latter began to worship the former, and this worship of the souls of the dead rich is the foundation of religion; these "saints," these little gods were later transformed into a single threatening deity, who punishes and rewards, judges and regulates. Let us see why it was that this conception of things arose among men. The fact is that man always attempts to see things little known to him in the light of those with which he is well acquainted. He measures them with the yardstick of what he knows and understands. A scholar has recorded this example: a girl who had been brought up on an estate on which poultry-raising was extensively practised, was constantly occupied with eggs; eggs were constantly dancing before her eyes; and when she was confronted with the sky full of stars, she declared that eggs were scattered all over the sky. Any number of such examples might be given. Man observed that there were those who obeyed and those who issued commands; he was constantly confronted with this picture: the elder (later the prince), surrounded by his aides, was the wisest and most experienced, the strongest, the richest, and he issued the orders; and in accordance with his instructions the others acted: in short, they obeyed him. These relations were observable at all seasons and at all hours, and gave occasion to an interpretation of all occurrences as being due to similar causes. On earth, as it were, there are those who command and those who obey. Perhaps, people thought, the whole world is so constructed?

The world also has its master, a great powerful, threatening creature, on whom all depends, and who will severely punish all disobedience. Now this master over all the world is *God*. Thus the conception of God in Heaven arises at the moment when on the earth below, the formerly unified society is divided up into those who obey and those elders who lead and command the tribe.

THE WORD "GOD" IS DERIVED FROM THE WORD "RICH" *

It is an interesting fact that all the designations for God speak eloquently of this origin of religion. What does the word "Bog" mean? It is from the same root as "bogaty" (rich). God is he who is great and strong and *rich*. How else is God glorified? As the "Lord." What is a "Lord"? A "Lord" is a master and the opposite of "slave." In fact, in the prayers we say: "We are thy slaves." God is also glorified as "*the ruler of the heavens*." All the other appellations of God point in the same direction: "conqueror," "Dominus," etc. Precisely. A "Dominus" is a person who dominates, who rules over many others, who possesses a pretty good supply of wealth. What sort of thing, therefore, is God? God, so to speak, is a really rich, powerful master, a slaveholder, one who "rules the heavens," a judge—in a word, a precise counterfeit and copy of the earthly power of the elder, later of the prince. When the Jews were ruled by their princes, who punished and tormented them in every possible way, there arose the doctrine of a God that was evil and malignant. Such is the God of the Old Testament. He is a ferocious old man who inflicts cruel punishments on his subjects.

EVENTS ON EARTH ARE PARALLELED IN HEAVEN

Let us glance now at the God of the *Orthodox Church*. This conception was elaborated in Byzantium, which furnished the model for an autocratic régime. At the head of the state stood the autocratic monarch, surrounded by his ministers; then came the superior officeholders, further down a whole system of legalized grafters. And the Orthodox Faith is a close replica of this system. At the head was the "Lord of the Heavens." Around him his foremost saints (such as the Wonderworker Nicholas, the Mother of God—somewhat of the nature of an Empress, a woman of holy spirit), corresponding to the ministers; further down there follows a whole series of angels and saints, arranged in an order similar to that of the "chinovniks" in the autocratic

* In Russian this is the case. *Bog* (God) comes from the same root as "bogaty" (rich).