

*Vanguard Studies
of Soviet Russia*

RELIGION UNDER THE SOVIETS

JULIUS F. HECKER



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of Soviet Russia*

RELIGION UNDER THE SOVIETS

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Vanguard Studies of Soviet Russia

Religion Under the Soviets

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Professor of Social Ethics in the
Moscow Theological Academy
Author of *Russian Sociology*,
and other works



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*To the sincere men and women of Russia who, despite
prison, exile, and death, burned out their
lives trying to attain freedom, peace,
and brotherhood for the
common people.*

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

JULIUS F. HECKER

Born in Leningrad, Russia, in 1881; elementary school education in Russia; college and university education in the United States,—Ph.D. in the department of political science at Columbia University; studied theology at Drew and Union Theological Seminaries,—B.D. from the former; special studies in pedagogy at Teachers College, New York, and University of Lausanne in Switzerland; in charge of Russian section of East Side Parish Settlement, New York, 1910-1916, editing Russian magazine *Enlightenment*; worked with Prisoners of War service under War Work Council of Y.M.C.A. 1916-1917; in charge of Foreign Language Publication Department of Association Press, 1918-1921; returned to Russia in 1921, engaging at first in Famine Relief, and later, in 1922, in educational work in Moscow; in 1923 helped reconstruct theological education of Orthodox Church and engaged in reopening of Leningrad and Moscow Theological Academies; occupies chair of sociology and social ethics in latter; author of *Russian Sociology*, 1915; *Cultural Institutions of America* (In Russian) 1920, and other works.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE Russian Revolution startled a war-diseased world and ushered in the most daring political and economic experiment of the twentieth century. Considering the vast territory affected, the radical changes inaugurated, and the influence which has been and still is being exerted on international relations, there is probably no greater event in modern history, whether for good or evil. Most Americans forget that a decade has already passed since Lenin and his Communistic followers assumed the power. The period of rapid revolutionary change has gone. Russia is painstakingly, step by step, building something different, something unique, something whose final destination is unpredictable.

America has been a land of discovery from its foundation. Not only in the realm of scientific invention, but in first attaining the coveted North Pole and in exploring other unknown areas of the world, Americans have given generously of life and treasure. Today we are uninformed about a great nation covering one-sixth of the land surface of the world. Russia is cut off by an Atlantic Ocean of prejudice, misunderstanding, and propaganda. We still maintain a rigid official quarantine about the Soviet Government. The result is ignorance frankly admitted by one "of the highest authorities in our Government," who declares this inevitable "in the absence of diplomatic relations." Judge Gary corroborates this verdict, "Like many other Americans, I am ignorant in regard to many of the

conditions which exist in Russia at the present time."*

Every scientist realizes that ignorance is one of the most dangerous forces in the world today. No matter how good or how bad the Soviet system, we should know all about it. Instead, we have been ruled by propaganda and hearsay.

The fact is that for the past ten years the Bolsheviki government has been operated on, dissected, and laid in its coffin amidst loud applause and rejoicing by distinguished orators in all parts of the world; yet today it is stronger, more stable, than ever before in its history and its leaders have been longer in power than any other ruling cabinet in the world. It is high time that we appraise this government as scientifically and impartially as possible, without indulging in violent epithets or questionable and controversial dogmas. Surely the world is not so abysmally ignorant that after ten years of the rule of the Soviet we cannot discover a common core of truth about Russia.

Whether the Communists are thought to be "dangerous enemies of society" or the "saviors of humanity," the facts should be known before judgment is pronounced. No matter what our conviction, we have to admit that the Bolsheviki are hammering out a startling new mechanism in the field of political control. Their experiment deserves scientific study, not hostile armies; intelligent criticism, not damning epithets.

In the past, America has been flooded with propaganda of all shades. Dr. E. A. Ross dedicates his last volume on Russia "To my fellow-Americans who have become weary of being fed lies and propaganda about Russia." In his chapter on the "Poison Gas Attack"

* *Current History*, February, 1926.

he lists forty-nine stories broadcast throughout America which have been proved totally false. Other writers have pointed out similar facts. Walter Lippman, Editor-in-Chief of *The New York World*, in his illuminating study of all Russian news which appeared in *The New York Times* in the early period of the Revolution, has proved the stupidity, inaccuracy, and falsehood of the "facts and fabrications" which have passed as news. Even those articles and books which have tried to deal honestly with the subject have usually been inadequate. They have either been too general or they have been specific but too brief to be of more than passing value. In all too many cases they are based on only a few weeks of observation in Russia by someone who did not know the native language.

The present series is designed to meet the need for reliable, accurate information on the major aspects of present-day Russia. We have tried to make it as scientifically accurate as is possible in the treatment of contemporary phenomena. It has been our aim in selecting each author to choose someone who because of previous experience and training was peculiarly well qualified as an authority on the particular subject to which he was assigned. In every case we have chosen those who either have made a prolonged stay in Russia, actually writing their volumes while in the country, or those who have made a special trip to Russia to secure the facts about which they write. We have tried to make the series inclusive, covering the more important aspects of the many-sided developments in Russia. Each volume is devoted to one major subject alone. People want detailed, accurate facts in readable form. Here they can be found, ranging all the way from an

analysis of the governmental machinery to the school system. Within this series some repetition has been inevitable. The editor believes that this is distinctly desirable since each author expounds his subject in his own way, with an emphasis original to him and in the light of his own data. No effort has been made to eliminate contradictions, yet they are surprisingly few. Where the testimony of all is unanimous, the conclusions reached are overwhelmingly strong. Where differences exist, they should stimulate the reader to weigh the evidence even more carefully.

It is probably too much to hope that propaganda organizations will not endeavor to discredit any such genuine effort to arrive at the truth. Perhaps it is sufficient to say in refutation that no similar attempt to secure the facts about Russia from trained experts has yet been made in America or elsewhere, so far as the writer is aware. There is scant ground for intelligent criticism unless similar scientific studies have been made with conflicting results; even then time alone can proclaim the final truth. No sincere and unprejudiced scientist will deplore an effort to study and describe what has happened in the first experiment the world has ever seen in applied communism, even if mistakes have been made in the analysis.

These volumes on the whole not only contain the most valuable data so far available, but they will probably remain of permanent worth. In the future no real historian endeavoring to master the facts about the great political upheaval in Russia will care to ignore them. Is Russia the most tyrannical dictatorship of bloody despots that the world has ever seen? Is Russia the first step in the building of a new world order whose keynote will be industrial democracy? We do

not pretend to give here the final judgment of history, but we do claim to have made a sincere effort to portray the facts.

Thanks are due to the authors who have so painstakingly sought to present the truth as they found it, to the publishers for their assistance in making this a notable and usable series, and to all those whose labor, whether by hand or brain, has helped to give these volumes to the American public.

JEROME DAVIS,
Yale University.

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this book is to make possible an intelligent understanding of the religious problem of the Russian people living within the boundaries of the Soviet Union.

Social and religious phenomena can be made clear only if one studies both the nature and the nurture of the social organism. This calls for the study of the psychological peculiarities of the Russo-Slavic race, and a historical survey of the church and its doctrines within the environment of semi-feudal czarism in the past and contemporary anti-clerical sovietism.

Christianity in the Eastern orthodox form was the state religion of old Russia. It was, at least nominally, professed by the vast majority of the subjects of the Czar, and it is with the fortunes of the old established church and other Christian sects of churches that this book deals. The reader will not forget that the problem of organized religion in Russia is, however, not exclusively the problem of Christian churches. There are fifteen million Mohammedans in Russia and three million Jews. With the Mohammedans the Soviet authorities have shrewdly avoided any religious controversies. To the Jews they brought liberty from the terrible restrictions and persecutions of the regime of the Czars. The activities of Jewish relief agencies in Russia have won the cooperation of the government authorities. Nevertheless, Jews in Russia, like Christians, are, of

course, subject to the secularizing pressure of the dominant Communist groups.

The psychological aspect of this study is treated in Chapter I; Chapters II and III give the necessary historical and doctrinal background of the Russian Greek Orthodox Church; Chapters IV to VI trace the revolutionary changes which have taken place in the Church since the February (political) and October (social) revolutions of 1917; Chapters VII to XI give a survey of the non-conformist and sectarian movements, which play an increasingly important part in the religious life of the Russian people; Chapter XII deals with the religious tragedy of the Russian intellectual class and the efforts of such men as Tolstoy, Merishkovsky, Berdyaev, and others to reconcile Christianity with the intellectual demands of modern times; Chapter XIII is a study of the attitude of the Communists towards religion and their methods of anti-religious propaganda. Finally, a venture is made to forecast the possible future of religion under the Soviets.

My personal interest in the religious life of the Russian people and my previous studies in Russian civilization and sociology, together with many years of close association with the people which have afforded me exceptional opportunities for observation, have given me the courage to undertake this most difficult problem of producing a book on *Religion Under the Soviets*.

It is evident that within the scope of this modest volume it is possible to give little more than an introduction to this intricate problem. The events of the last years are still so close to our personal hopes and fears that they make a cold, scientific analysis of the situation hardly possible, and, I think, undesirable. History should be more than human paleontology, more than an excava-

tion of dry bones of a past age. If, therefore, I have been able to embody in this study some of the religious passions, woes, and hopes of the revolutionary era through which we have lived in the Soviet Union, I shall be happy for having accomplished it and shall make no apologies.

I am no pessimist as to the future of religion under the Soviets. I believe the Soviet regime is most favorable for true religious expression and I fully share Oswald Spengler's point of view that the Russian people have but commenced their creative period in religion.*

JULIUS F. HECKER.

* Oswald Spengler: *Untergang des Abendlandes*, Vol. II, Chap. V, p. 623, footnote 1.

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APPENDIX

NON-CHRISTIAN AND ALIEN RELIGIONS IN SOVIET RUSSIA

It was our purpose to treat in this book such religious conditions as are directly related in larger or smaller degree to the Russian people. To go beyond this limit and describe the religious life of the various races which are living in the U.S.S.R. as well as the religions of foreigners is impossible and hardly necessary within the scope of this small volume. Besides the Christian religions there are about three million Jews and fifteen million Mohammedans, Tartars and other Turkish races, such as the Ardserbadjans, the Usbeks, and many so-called pagan religions. Before the law of the Soviet Union all religions are treated alike. However, an advantage has been granted to the Moslems by special provision of the Soviet government permitting them to commence religious education of their children in special schools of religion from the age of fourteen upward. All other confessions, Christians, Jews and pagans are allowed to have systematic religious education only from the age of eighteen upward. The fourteen year age limit permitted to the Moslems is explained by the argument that the Moslem children have to learn the Arabic language to understand the Koran and need a longer period of time to master it.

Of the foreign Christian confessions the Lutheran and Roman Catholics should be particularly mentioned.

In the old Russian empire there were many adherents of the Lutheran Church, particularly in the Baltic provinces, in Finland and some of the German colonies along the Volga. Of these only the Volga Germans have remained within the limits of the U.S.S.R., besides some scattered smaller German and Scandinavian communities who are adherents of the

Lutheran Church. The position of the Lutheran Church before the law is the same as that of all other religions in the U.S.S.R., but due to the fact that the well-to-do classes among whom there were a good many Germans have ceased to exist, many of the Lutheran congregations, particularly in the larger cities, can hardly maintain their existence.

The Roman Catholic Church, which in the old empire of the Czar was very strong among the Poles, has with the independence of Poland ceased to be a factor in the U.S.S.R. There are, however a few Polish communities of the Roman-Catholic faith along the border, particularly in White Russia and the Ukraine, and there are also a considerable number of Catholic parishes in the larger cities, particularly Leningrad and Moscow.* Nevertheless, they cannot be considered a factor in the religious life of the Russian people since their adherents are almost exclusively Poles and other foreigners. In spite of great efforts on the part of Catholic missionaries to proselytize the Greek Orthodox, they had no success among the Russians. They were able to gain some following among the Galicians, where the Catholic missionaries under the protection of the Polish Government and later the Austrian Government compromised with the Greek Orthodox by maintaining their old ritual, and were satisfied when the Galicians consented to recognize the authority of the Pope of Rome. This Church in Galicia is known as the Uniat Church, but it never spread to any extent among other Ukrainians who lived in the territory of the Russian Empire.

There was always a strong animosity between the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church. The reasons for this were partly political enmity towards Poland, and partly racial and psychological, the Latin language and cult being rather distasteful to the psychology of the Russian people who have merged their cultural development with the Byzan-

* There are no statistics kept by the State on the religious affiliation of the population, hence the estimates of the number of adherents to various creeds are hard to obtain. Catholic authorities claim there are about 500,000 Catholics in the Moscow and Leningrad provinces.

tine type of Christianity. Under the Czarist regime the Roman Church was but tolerated as one of the alien religions, but no propaganda of Catholicism was allowed among the Russians, particularly among the common people. Efforts made by Jesuit missionaries to proselytize among the Russian aristocracy had some success, e. g. conversion of some members of the family of princes Galitzin, Martynov and Gagarin, all of whom were exiled by order of the Czar and lived abroad.

The October Revolution gave equal rights to the Roman Church but it also demanded that the Roman hierarchy recognize Soviet legislation regarding the Church. At first for the sake of expediency the leaders of the Roman Church agreed to submit to the Soviet laws, but later under the leadership of Archbishop Cieplak they changed their mind, and on the occasion of the confiscation of the Church treasures for the famine fund the Catholic hierarchy came into open conflict with the Soviet Government. This ended with the unfortunate execution of Budkevicz and the imprisonment of Bishop Cieplak and twelve of his priests. Since then the situation has changed for the better. The imprisoned Bishop Cieplak and his priests have been either liberated or exchanged for political prisoners in Poland, and the Catholic Church at present has submitted to the laws of the Soviet State. Its churches are open and services are held, but there is, however, no Bishop appointed for the U.S.S.R. and the episcopal functions are carried on by occasional visits of bishops from Poland.

EDITOR'S NOTE

'After this volume had been written the Acting Patriarch Sergei of the All-Russian Orthodox Church issued a statement signed by the six members of his Patriarchal Synod in which among other things he said,

"We church workers are not affiliated with the enemies of the Soviet Government nor are we working with the senseless

weapon of intrigue but we are working with our people and with our government. . . .

"Today the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union has not only full canonical but civil legality. . . .

"We must show that not only in words but in deeds we can be as true citizens of the Soviet Union, as loyal to the Soviet Power, as non-believers. . . .

"Every blow against the Union whether it is war, boycott, or any general calamity, or secret murder like that in Warsaw, impresses us as a blow directed against us. . . .

"We demand that all priests who are serving abroad should give written proof of their complete loyalty to the Soviet Government in all their general outside work. Those who do not give such proof or those who violate their declaration will be excluded from membership in the clergy."

The above declaration was signed July 29, 1927, and was published in the *Izvestia* on August 19, 1927. It apparently marks the end of any official opposition to the Soviet Government on the part of the central administration of the Russian Orthodox Church.

JEROME DAVIS.

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