

A Communist Complaint: What Makes Them Religions?
(Condensation of an article in *Science and Religion*,
a monthly publication of atheist propaganda published in the USSR)
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An atheist leader tries to convince a believing young girl. He speaks tactfully, convincingly. She is seated at a table and her hands tightly gripping the edge. She does not raise her eyes, and remains silent. Finally the leader is satisfied. The girl has no arguments, there is nothing she can say, her position is weak.

But the truth of the matter is very different. The young girl has lots to say, but the defense she puts up is her silence, her bent head, the white knuckles of her hands tightly gripping the table.

A eighth-grader was talking to an atheist teacher about religion. At first the student argued, quoted the Bible, and answered questions. Then she clammed up. Her only comments became "I don't know" "perhaps you are right" and the teacher might have been led to think that the girl began to doubt her faith. But her later behavior showed that it was not so, -- she remained an ardently believing Christian. She had simply become "psychologically closed" to any arguments of atheist propaganda.

This "shut-up" condition of the believing young people has two causes. One is made up of their deficient knowledge, -- knowledge of human society, wrong ideas about the world, about life. The second cause has its roots in their relationship with their environment, their feeling for it. A child, an adolescent, will accept knowledge only when it is offered by those whom he emotionally accepts, by those whom he loves. If he is unhappy in an environment, reacts negatively to it, he refuses to accept its knowledge and its arguments.

A believing youngster does not simply accept a structure of ideas, certain dogmas and rules of behavior. He has an emotional attitude to religion. He accepts religion not as a matter of knowledge, but as an inner commitment, as an object of his affection.

The article gives several examples.

Volodia Z.'s parents were separated and he lived with his mother and maternal grandmother. The mother remarried, and her second husband proved to be a brutal step-father. A child was born. Volodia felt rejected by his mother and drew closer to his grandmother, a believing woman. He then wrote to his own father about the unhappy situation at home and the father immediately responded, taking Volodia to his own home. But the father was married again too, with three children. Volodia's insecurity and loneliness grew stronger and stronger. The school was no help. At this time of complete frustration and mistrust of all values represented by his non-believing parents, he came into contact with some Christians. He was in a "state of readiness," he "accepted" belief.

When his religious convictions became known at school, the teachers tried to bring him back to atheism, but it was too late. He was psychologically “deaf” to all arguments.

Another boy had an accident in his early childhood. When he was in 7th grade he began losing his eyesight and hearing and his hands became partially paralyzed. His mother was away all day working in a factory and only a district nurse visited him occasionally. He was alone most of the day.

One day two women entered his room and greeted him with the words: “Glory to God!” The boy answered “There is no God!” The women’s arguments did not convince him, but in his complete loneliness, their care, their attention, their friendliness caused an emotional change. He became involved in their religious community. When his health improved and he returned to school, he looked at his teachers, his schoolmates, at the lessons of atheism, with new eyes. He was “closed” to them. His mother disapproved of his interest in religion but even her words could not keep him away from his new friends.