

In Hegel's view there is also the phenomenon of extremely educated and enlightened people who simply deny that God is and that religion is the veracity of man's subjective spirit.¹⁴⁶ The bourgeois enlighteners asserted even that the priests are cheats, when they suggest a religion to people since they, in doing so, have merely the intent, to make the people submissive to their own and secular authority.

According to Hegel another attempt to prove the necessity of religion, carried on by bourgeois enlighteners arrives only at an external, conditional necessity.¹⁴⁷ In this external necessity, religion is made into a means, into something intentional, utilitarian, into an instrument, into a function. In this conditioned necessity, religion is degraded into something contingent. As such, religion has no validity in and for itself. Therefore, man can eliminate religion arbitrarily as well as use it in terms of his own intent and particular interest. In Hegel's perspective the true view, the substantial relationship, and the false relationship stand here very close to each other. The untruth of the later contingent relationship seems to be only a slight shift in the first substantial relationship. Only a small step seems to lead from the true position of the inner, unconditional necessity to the false position of the external, conditioned necessity of religion.

According to Hegel, philosophers and theologians taught in Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Modern Time, that this city, this state, this family, or this individual perished because of their contempt for the gods or God.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, the veneration of



God or the gods and the reverence for them preserves and is a blessing for the state. The happiness and the progress of the individuals is furthered greatly by their religious attitude.

Hegel agrees with the traditional philosophers and theologians, that the righteousness of the nations becomes indeed something solid and the fulfillment of the duties receives its verification only, when religion is their foundation.¹⁴⁹ The most interior core of man, his conscience, has only in religion its absolute obligation and the security of it. In Hegel's view the state must rest on religion, since only in it the security of the moral sentiment, of the duties against the former, is absolute. In case of any other, secular mode of obligation men know how to make for themselves excuses, exceptions, counter-reasons; know how to belittle the laws, institutions and the individuals in the government and in authority; men know how to bring the authority under perspectives through which they can emancipate themselves from the respect for it. All these determinations--law, institutions, government, authority--are not only what they are in themselves, essentially. But these determinations have at the same time an empirical, present, finite existence. They are of the quality, that they invite the reflection of men, to investigate them, likewise to accuse and to justify them. These determinations elicit the subjective consideration, which can easily dispense itself from them. In Hegel's view it is only religion, which can cast down this arbitrary subjective judging and weighing and make them into nothing and bring forth an infinite absolute obligation. In short, according to Hegel, the devotion of God strengthens and preserves the individuals, the families, the states. The contempt of God dissolves the rights and duties, the bonds of the families and the states, and thereby leads them into ruin.

All this is for Hegel a highly true and important consideration, which contains the essential, substantial connection between religion and state, including society, family and individual.¹⁵⁰ But when out of this statement, that religion integrates the state,



so Hegel argues, the experience is concluded that therefore religion is necessary, then this is an entirely external mode of concluding. This conclusion can still be merely insufficient in relation to the subjective knowledge. In this case, the content of the conclusion does not yet receive a false turn or position. But the conclusion can sound like this: ergo the religion is useful for the purposes of the individuals, governments, states, etc. In this case a relationship between religion and state is introduced, in which religion is posited as means. It is instrumentalized.

But in Hegel's perspective, in the case of religion we are dealing with man's subjective spirit and all its cleverness.¹⁵¹ Already the organic body is in its sicknesses indifferent against the remedies. Certainly these remedies exercise a necessity of the mode of effectiveness against the body. But the body is indifferent against the remedies in terms of their specificity. Therefore, the body has, so to speak, a choice among a large number of means to heal its sicknesses. According to Hegel man's spirit degrades even more than the body what it has as means and what it can use, into something particular. Man has then the consciousness of his freedom to use this particular means or also another.

So, Hegel argues, if religion is a means, then man knows in his spirit, that he can use religion in order to integrate the state, but that he can also grasp other means in order to achieve the same purpose.¹⁵² Then man stands even in such a relation to religion, that he may want to depend on himself alone. He may want to integrate the state without religion, by his own human forces.

According to Hegel, man has furthermore the freedom of his purposes.¹⁵³ Man's power, cunning, the domination of the opinion of the people, etc., are also means. Man has in the freedom of his purposes--which lies in that, that his purposes ought to be what is valid, and religion only a means--the freedom to make his power and domination into his purpose. Thus man can posit purposes for himself in relation to which he can dispense with religion altogether or which are even opposed to religion. Contrary to all this what for Hegel really counts is, that man decides for such universal pur-

poses or that he knows himself obligated by such purposes, which are objective in and for themselves, with neglect and sacrifice of other merely subjective, particular, arbitrary purposes. According to Hegel, objective universal purposes demand the giving up of subjective particular interests, inclinations and purposes. In Hegel's view, this negative element is contained in the statement that the devotion of God is the foundation of the true well-being of the individuals, families, societies, and states. If indeed this well-being of the state is the consequence of that religious devotion, then this devotion is the main issue. Then this religious devotion has its determination for itself and regulates the particular purposes and opinions of men. These purposes and opinions are as particular ones not the primary issue. They ought not to determine themselves for themselves. Such a slight turn in the position of reflection changes and destroys completely the first true meaning of the sentence, that religion integrates necessarily state, society, family and individual and makes out of the inner, unconditional necessity of religion a merely external, instrumental, functional conditional necessity, a mere utility, which being contingent can easily be perverted.

In his philosophy of religion, Hegel is mainly concerned with the inner necessity of religion, which is in and for itself.¹⁵⁴ Certainly man's arbitrariness, his evilness can oppose this inner necessity of religion. But this arbitrariness of individuals or groups falls then outside of the inner necessity of religion. It belongs to the side of the arbitrary ego, the foul selfish subject. This subject, since he is free, can always put himself on the peak of his being-for-himself, his self-consciousness. This subject is no longer the inner religious necessity's own self-perverting nature, as it is the case as long as the necessity of religion is only grasped as utility.

Fromm, like Hegel, intends to prove the necessity of religion.¹⁵⁵ This is the very core of Fromm's theory of religion. Fromm knows as well as Hegel, that not all nations have genuine and authentic religion.¹⁵⁶ Fromm agrees with Hegel, that nations, who are involved in worshiping any kind of object in the immediate sensuous nature



and are therefore really devoted to idols, do not have authentic religion.¹⁵⁷ Fromm's theory of religion is fundamentally ideology.¹⁵⁸ It is a negative hermeneutics. Its main concern is the destruction of idols in traditional or modern society. Ideology is the very core of negative theology.¹⁵⁹

Fromm himself belongs to the group of highly educated enlighteners, remembered and anticipated by Hegel, who deny the being of God.¹⁶⁰ But Fromm does not negate the possibility that a humanistic "religiosity" freed from all idolatry can very well be the veracity of man's subjective spirit.¹⁶¹ Fromm takes more serious than Hegel the charge of the bourgeois enlighteners, that priests can abuse religion as a legitimization of the power structure of which they are a part, that is as ideology.¹⁶² While Fromm's theory of religion is fundamentally ideology critique, for him something remains of religion after it is deideologized--the x-experience.¹⁶³ Religion is more for Fromm than mere apology for the power of religious or secular despots or oligarchs. Fromm's theory of religion is like that of Marcuse, a fierce attack against any kind of authoritarian religion, but at the same time also a defense of humanistic religion.¹⁶⁴

During his actual membership in the Frankfurt Institute, that is between 1929 and 1939, Fromm's attempt to prove the necessity of religion does not come farther than merely to an external, conditional, instrumental, functional necessity.¹⁶⁵ During this time, Fromm sees in religion nothing else than an integrative factor of society. As such, religion is for Fromm something merely historical and therefore, accidental. It has no validity in and for itself. In Fromm's as in Horkheimer's perspective, the dominant Few can arbitrarily liquidate religion or use it to control the dominated Many.¹⁶⁶ But while Fromm emphasizes in his theory of religion during the 1930s mainly the functional necessity of religion, during the following three and a half decades his emphasis shifts more and more to the inner, unconditional necessity of religion in terms of a humanistic religiousness.¹⁶⁷ The further Fromm's theory of religion evolves through the decades the sharper he knows to differentiate

between the inner necessity of religion, which is in-and-for-itself, and the arbitrariness and evilness of the dominant One or Few, who make out of religion a means for the achievement of power and domination over the Many and thereby degrade it into a mere useful commodity and a fetish. Fromm's theory of religion is the attempt to de-reify and to de-fetishize religion in civil society.¹⁶⁸ The further Fromm develops his theory of religion, the more he becomes aware of the fact that the arbitrariness of the One or the Few falls outside the inner, unconditional necessity of religion; that it does not belong to the inner necessity of religion; that it is not the religious necessity's own self-perverting nature. Fromm's theory of religion is critical precisely insofar as it never ceases to criticize the perversion of the inner necessity of religion, which is the consequence of its instrumentalization into a useful means of social integration and control in traditional as well as in civil society.

Disillusionment

Fromm's theory of religion does not only participate in the bourgeois enlightenment, but also in the Marxian enlightenment.¹⁶⁹ It is fundamentally a reinterpretation of Marx's theory of religion, as it is contained in the latter's "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right."¹⁷⁰ Here Marx states in 1841--20 years after Hegel taught his philosophy of religion the first time at the University of Berlin, following Friedrich Feuerbach, who heard Hegel's lectures on religion twice--that the basis of all irreligious criticism is: Man makes religion, religion does not make man.¹⁷¹ For Marx, religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again.¹⁷² In Marx's view religious man is necessarily alienated from himself.

But according to Marx man is not the abstract being as which Feuerbach portrayed him, squatting outside the world as society and history.¹⁷³ Man is the world of man, the family, the society, the state. This state, this society, this family produce re-

ligion. As such religion is a reversed world consciousness, because state, society and family are a reversed, untrue world. In Marx's view, religion is the general theory of this untrue world as family, society and state, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its spiritualistic point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its universal ground for consolation and justification. Marx sees in religion the fantastic realization of the human essence, because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore mediately the fight against the other world, of which religion is the spiritual aroma. Marx's critique of religion has an anthropological foundation.

For Marx the religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress.¹⁷⁴ Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world. It is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. According to Marx, the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions. In Marx's perspective, the criticism of religion is in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion.

In Marx's view, socialist criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chain not so that man will wear the chain without any fantasy or consolation, but so that he will shake off the chain and cull the living flower.¹⁷⁵ According to Marx, socialist criticism of religion disillusioned man to make him think and act and shape his reality like a man who has been disillusioned and has come to reason, so that he will revolve around himself and therefore around his true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself. Religion is to be replaced by a realistic humanism.¹⁷⁶

The task of history, as Marx sees it, once the world beyond the truth, has disappeared, is to establish the truth of this world.¹⁷⁷ According to Marx the first task of philosophy, which is at the service of history, once the saintly form of human self-alienation has been unmasked, is to unmask self-alienation in its unholy



forms. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of right and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.

Fromm agrees with Marx that man makes religion.¹⁷⁸ This is the anthropological basis of Fromm's critical theory of religion. Traditional religion is for Fromm as for Marx the false consciousness of alienated man. Fromm recognizes like Marx, religion as the product of man as a social being. Fromm attacks like Marx the perverted external functional necessity of religion for society: religion as opium of the people, as justification of the untrue empirical social totality, as socially necessary appearance, as idolatry.¹⁷⁹ Like Marx Fromm interprets the inner, unconditional necessity of religion anthropologically: as the inner necessity of man's own nature, which in the untrue empirical social whole cannot be fully realized. Fromm emphasizes more than Marx and very much like Bloch the protesting, polemical, critical character of religion.¹⁸⁰ Fromm promotes as much as Marx the abolition of religion insofar as it is the illusory happiness of the people, so that they may really become happy. Fromm plucks like Marx the religious flowers from the chains by which the One and the Few keep in imprisonment the Many and themselves so that All will shake off their chains. It is the intent of Fromm's as of Marx's theory of religion to disillusion man, so that he may think and act and change his reality like a man who has come to his senses.

Fromm attempts like Marx to replace the theo-centric religion by an anthropo-centric socialist humanism.¹⁸¹ For Fromm as for Marx it is the task of the critical theory of religion to establish historically the truth of this world and to unmask philosophically man's self-alienation in all its unholy ideological forms.¹⁸² As for Marx so turns for Fromm the critical theory of religion into the critical theory of society, its right and its political practice.¹⁸³

Infantile Prototype

Fromm's theory of religion is finally like that of Marcuse, not only a reinter-

pretation of Marx's, but also of Freud's critical theory of religion.¹⁸⁴ For Freud religion is essentially humanization or personalization of nature.¹⁸⁵ According to Freud impersonal natural forces and destinies cannot be approached. They remain eternally remote. But if the natural elements have passions that rage as they do in man's own soul, if death itself is not something spontaneous but the violent act of the evil will of a God or gods, if everywhere in nature there are divine beings around man of a kind he knows in his own society, then he can breath freely.¹⁸⁶ Then man can feel at home in the horrible world. Then man can deal by psychical means with his senseless anxiety. To be sure man is still defenseless, realistically speaking. But man is no longer helplessly paralyzed. Man can now at least react. Now man is no longer entirely defenseless. Man can apply the same methods against these natural forces which have turned into violent supermen, into Gods, outside, that he employs in his own society. Man can try to adjure the Gods, to appease them. Man can rob them of part of their power. In Freud's view a replacement like this of natural science by psychology not only provides immediate relief, but also points the way to a further mastering of the situation.

According to Freud this situation is nothing new.¹⁸⁷ It has an infantile prototype, of which it is only the continuation. Once before man has found himself in a similar state of helplessness: namely as a small child in the family in relation to his parents. The child has reason to fear his parents, particularly the father. At the same time the child is sure of the father's protection against the dangers of the world outside the family. In Freud's view it is quite natural that man assimilated the two situations in nature and in the family. Man makes the forces of nature not simply into persons with whom he can associate as he would with equals. That would not do justice to the overpowering impression, which those natural forces make on man. But man gives those forces of nature the character of a father. Man turns the natural forces into Gods following in this not only the infantile prototype of his early family situation, but a philogenetic one as well.



According to Freud's theory of religion, in due course of time men made the first observations of regularity and conformity to law in natural phenomena, as can be shown for instance, in the philosophy of Anaxagoras.¹⁸⁸ With this discovery of laws, the forces of nature lost their human traits. But man's helplessness, so Freud argues, remains nevertheless and along with it, his longing for his father and the gods. According to Freud, the gods have a threefold task or function for man and society: 1. They must exorcize the terrors of nature; 2. They must reconcile men to the cruelty of Fate, particularly as it shows itself in sickness and death; 3. They must compensate men for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life in common has imposed on them. It is obvious, that Freud no longer knows anything about the inner, unconditional necessity of religion. He--even more so than Marx--is exclusively concerned merely with the external, conditional, functional necessity of man struggling with nature and his own civilization. Only in the concept of Fate, as it was worked out in the Greek religion--Moira standing above the gods--dawns to the fatalist Freud something of the inner, unconditional necessity of religion. But this something remains entirely undeveloped in Freud's theory of religion.¹⁸⁹

In Freud's perspective, religious ideas, which are given out in positive religions as sacred teachings, are not precipitates of experience or end results of thinking.¹⁹⁰ For Freud the religious ideas are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of the strength of the religious ideas, according to Freud, lies in the strength of those old wishes. In Freud's view, the terrifying impressions of helplessness in childhood aroused in the child the need for protection through love, which in the family was provided by the father. Man's recognition, that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary for him to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one than the one experienced by the child in the family. Thus, according to

Freud, the benevolent rule of a divine Providence allays man's fear of the dangers of life. The establishment of a moral world order insures the fulfillment of the demands of justice, which have so often remained unfulfilled in human civilizations. Finally the prolongation of man's earthly existence in a future life provides the local and temporal framework in which these wishfulfillments shall take place. In Freud's perspective, answers to the riddles that tempt the curiosity of man, such as how the universe began or what the relation is between body and mind, are developed in conformity with the underlying assumptions of the religious system. According to Freud, it is an enormous relief to the individual psyche, if the conflicts of its childhood arising from the father complex—conflicts which it has never completely overcome—are ^{re}moved from it and brought to a solution which is universally accepted.

For Fromm as for Freud religion arises from man's encounter with the world as nature.¹⁹¹ It is the personalization of nature's particular forces. Fromm sees like Feuerbach, Marx and Freud in the gods, projections of the human psyche into nature.¹⁹² Fromm agrees like Horkheimer with Freud that man's situation in nature has its prototype in the infantile family situation.¹⁹³ Fromm, like Freud and Marx and the bourgeois materialists in Hegel's time, reduces religion to man's feeling of helplessness and powerlessness, be it in nature or in family, society, state and history.¹⁹⁴ But Fromm revises Freud's position by saying that the child fears and feels protected against dangers by not only the father alone, but also the mother.¹⁹⁵ Fromm corrects Freud's patriarchal-authoritarian attitude, revealed in his psychoanalytical theory, on the basis of the matricentric principle discovered by Johann J. Bachofen ^{in his} /book, Mother Right, of 1861, ^{by} L. H. Morgan ^{in his} /work, Ancient Society, and by Robert Briffault ^{in his} /work, The Mothers, of 1928.¹⁹⁶ Fromm asserts that man gives the forces of nature not only, like Freud had said, the character of a father, but of a mother as well. For Fromm as for Freud, man turning the forces of nature into parental figures follows in this not only an infantile, but also a phylogenetic prototype. But while for Freud religion remains entirely a childhood affair of the individual



and of mankind, for Fromm religion can mature in terms of its conception of God and of man toward a non-theistic religiousness.¹⁹⁷

Fromm agrees with Freud that in the evolution of the natural sciences and the discovery of the natural laws, nature becomes more and more depersonalized.¹⁹⁸ According to Fromm as to Freud, religion survives the progress of the natural sciences, since man's helplessness and powerlessness continues and with it his longing for his parents and the gods or God.¹⁹⁹ Fromm attributes fundamentally the same psychological functions to religion as Freud: protection against the terror of nature and history, the reconciliation with Fate and the compensation for civilization-conditioned frustrations.²⁰⁰

Fromm is as much as Freud interested in the psychical origin of religious ideas and ideals.²⁰¹ Fromm is as much as Freud and Marx aware of the fact that religious ideas are not the precipitates of experience or results of analytical thinking. For Fromm as for Freud and Marx religious ideas are illusions.²⁰² Following Freud, Fromm like Horkheimer sees in religious ideas the record of the wishes, desires, and accusations of countless generations.²⁰³ For Fromm as for Freud the strength of religious ideas lies entirely in man's oldest and strongest wishes. According to Fromm, man's God concepts become sheer ideology, justification of his unjustifiable social chains, if they are no longer rooted in his longings, wishes, desires, and emotions.²⁰⁴ Fromm agrees with Freud, that the powerful father-gods of patriarchal society are the hypostatization of very earthly fathers.²⁰⁵

With Freud, Fromm argues against man's neurotic clinging to human or divine father or mother figures.²⁰⁶ Both men are enlighteners and as such want to free people from their fears and make them into masters of their fate. They also want to emancipate men from their gods and God.²⁰⁷ Fromm can, as little as Freud, accept in the face of the suffering in the world since thousands of years the traditional concept of the rule of a powerful and benevolent divine Providence, particularly not after Auschwitz.²⁰⁸ Fromm, nevertheless, has more hope than Freud, that the moral

world-order, which religion promised, can be realized on humanistic grounds, so that man's demands for justice may be fulfilled.²⁰⁹ Fromm--like Horkheimer--can as little as Freud accept the religious belief in eternal life and happiness as promised by some religions.²¹⁰

But Fromm is more aware than Freud of man's fundamental need for a system of thoughts and values, by which he can orient himself in the world intellectually and for a relationship to an object of devotion.²¹¹ Fromm defines religion as nothing else than a system of orientation and the relationship to an object of devotion.²¹² As a matter of fact, Fromm defines the notion of religion so broadly, that even the irreligious Freudian and Marxian theory of man and society can be subsumed under it.²¹³ The Freudian and the Marxian system give modern men and women intellectual orientation in the world and an object of devotion--the total man, the sane man.²¹⁴ Certainly also Fromm offers in his critical theory of man, society and culture an intellectual system of orientation to men and women living in antagonistic civil society.²¹⁵ Fromm points in his critical theory to an object of devotion--the sphere behind the God-hypostases of all positive religions, including Judaism and Christianity; what Horkheimer and Adorno call the entirely Other than this world as nature and history, its universal negation; and what the Catholic theologian Hans Küng identifies simply ^{as} "the Other Dimension."²¹⁶ By Fromm's own definition of religion his critical theory of society is humanistic religion.²¹⁷ Certainly Fromm presents his critical theory of religion as a system of ethical orientation and as the manifestation of a true object of devotion--the x-dimension--to modern men and women, who have like himself gone through the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment . . . ; who can therefore no longer accept the religious illusions demasked as such by Voltaire, Marx and Freud; who have left behind any kind of infantile religious prototype, situation or attitude attacked by these enlighteners; and who are precisely therefore searching for a new meaning for individual and society beyond the Jewish, Christian and Moslem theism.²¹⁸ One can certainly

speak of the religion of Fromm's critique of religion.²¹⁹

Basis, Character, Superstructure

While Fromm is without doubt deeply indebted to the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment, he nevertheless begins to go beyond all three of these enlightenment movements already in his first major religious study, The Dogma of Christ, by introducing in seedlike form the core concept of his whole critical theory of man, society and culture, particularly of his theory of religion: the concept of the individual's social character or personality.²²⁰ This concept of social character soon finds its empirical verification in Fromm's Frankfurt Labor study of 1931, and its further theoretical development in his first articles in the Frankfurt Institute's Journal for Social Research of 1932: "On Method and Task of an Analytical Sociopsychology" and "The Psychoanalytical Characterology and its Significance for the Socialpsychology."²²¹

In The Dogma of Christ Fromm is concerned with a narrowly limited problem of socialpsychology: namely, the question relating to the motives conditioning the evolution of the concepts about the relation of the Father to Jesus in the classical Christology from the beginning of the Christian church to the formulation of the Nicene Creed in the fourth century.²²² Fromm's investigation aims to determine the extent to which the change in certain religious ideas, more precisely in Left-and Right Christology of Antiquity is an expression of the psychic change of the people involved--the first ten generations of Christians, orthodox as well as heretics. Fromm wants to find out to what extent these psychic changes are conditioned by the economic and social life conditions of the first generations of Christian believers.

Following the dialectical methodology of Hegel's phenomenology and philosophy of religion and Marx's theory of religion, Fromm makes the attempt in his own theory of religion to understand the Christological ideas of the early Christian church in terms of concrete men and women and their real economic and social life partners.²²³

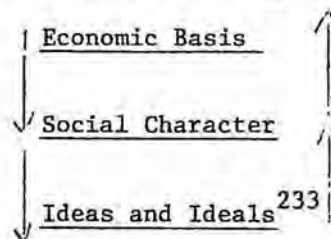
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Fromm goes beyond Marx, when he tries to show in his theory of religion with the help of Freud, that the development of the Christological dogma can be understood fully only through the knowledge of the unconscious of the believers, upon which external economic and social reality works and which determines the content of their religious consciousness. While Fromm supercedes Marx's theory of religion by adding to it the Freudian concept of the unconscious and psychic change, he moves beyond Freud's theory of religion by adding to it the Marxian concept of peoples' concrete economic and social life conditions and of socio-economic change, and of the connection between these changes and changes in religious ideas, cultural change. The dialectical unity of the socio-economic life-conditions, the individual consciousness and the individual unconscious, and the religious ideas and ideals constitutes the very methodology, the form of Fromm's theory of religion from The Dogma of Christ of 1930 to the To Have Or To Be of 1976.²²⁴ The language concerning the three elements in Fromm's dialectical methodology changes somewhat during the evolution of his theory of religion. Soon, for instance, Fromm replaces socio-economic life conditions by socioeconomic basis or base structure, consciousness and unconscious by social character, and religious ideas or ideals by religious or cultural superstructure.²²⁵ While Fromm takes the concept of basis and superstructure from the Marxian theory of society, his concept of social character is rooted in Freud's theory of man and society. Fromm clarifies continually the three elements of his dialectical theory of society and particularly of religion. But the three elements of the dialectical configuration of Fromm's theory of religion remain amazingly identical and constant throughout the half century of its development and a tremendous accumulation of religious data.²²⁶

Fromm states in his article "The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory" of 1965, that the Freudian concept of social character serves in his critical theory of man and society since The Dogma of Christ, to explain the link between the Marxian concepts of the material basis of society and its ideological superstructure.²²⁷ According to Fromm, Marx has often been interpreted as implying

that the ideological superstructure was nothing but the reflection of the economic basis. In Fromm's view this interpretation is not correct. In Fromm's perspective the fact is, that in Marx's theory the nature of the relation between basis and superstructure was not sufficiently explained. Like Bloch, Fromm attempts to give the explanation of the nature of the relationship between economic base structure and cultural superstructure, which is missing in Marx's theory.²²⁸ In fact, Fromm reinterprets, like Bloch, Marx's theory of the economic basis--and the cultural superstructure in favor of the latter, particularly the religious aspects of the superstructure.²²⁹

According to Fromm a dynamic psychological theory, like his own, can show that society produces the social character and that the social character tends to produce and to hold on to ideas and ideologies which fit it and are nourished by it.²³⁰ But in Fromm's view it is not only the economic basis which creates a certain social character, which in turn, creates certain ideas. Fromm, following here Max Weber more than Marx and Freud, asserts that the ideas once created also influence again the social character and, indirectly, the social economic structure.²³¹ Fromm emphasizes that the social character is the intermediary between the socio-economic base structure and the ideas and ideals prevalent in the cultural superstructure of a society.²³² According to Fromm, the social character mediates in the direction of both extremes, from the socioeconomic basis to the ideas of the cultural superstructure and from the ideas to the socioeconomic base structure. The following scheme expresses the dialectical methodology of Fromm's theory of society:



In terms of Fromm's theory of religion, this dialectical configuration--economic basis, social character and ideas--means, that the social character mediates between



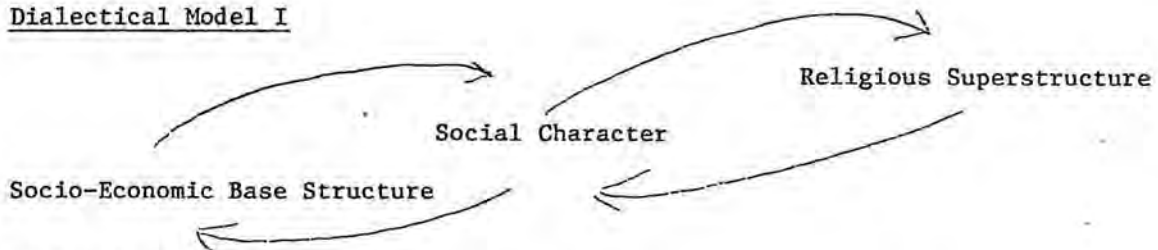
the socioeconomic base structure and the religious superstructure.²³⁴ The social character mediates from the economic basis to the religious ideas and from religion to the socioeconomic basis. This dialectical configuration is already clearly visible in Fromm's The Dogma of Christ: here the social character of the early generations of Christians mediates between their socioeconomic base structure, their work, their low class status on one hand and their religious superstructure, their Christological beliefs on the other hand.²³⁵ The social character of the early Christians mediates from their socioeconomic basis to their Christological ideas and from the latter to the former.

In all configurations of Hegel's dialectics the middle term is of greatest importance.²³⁶ So in Fromm's dialectical theory of religion--methodologically based on the Hegelian logic--the middle term, the social character, is of greater weight than the extremes, the economic basis and the religious superstructure.²³⁷ This specific dialectical configuration is the strength as well as the weakness of Fromm's critical theory of religion. This dialectical configuration gives Fromm's theory immediacy, empirical concreteness and humanistic warmth. But this dialectical configuration also leaves Fromm's theory open to the charge by Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, that he does not differentiate enough between what Hegel calls the subjective, objective, and absolute spirit; that he is not sufficiently aware of the dichotomy between psychology and sociology; that he psychologizes the family, society, state, history and culture; that he precisely thereby promotes the adjustment of the individual to the untrue, that is antagonistic empirical social totality.²³⁸

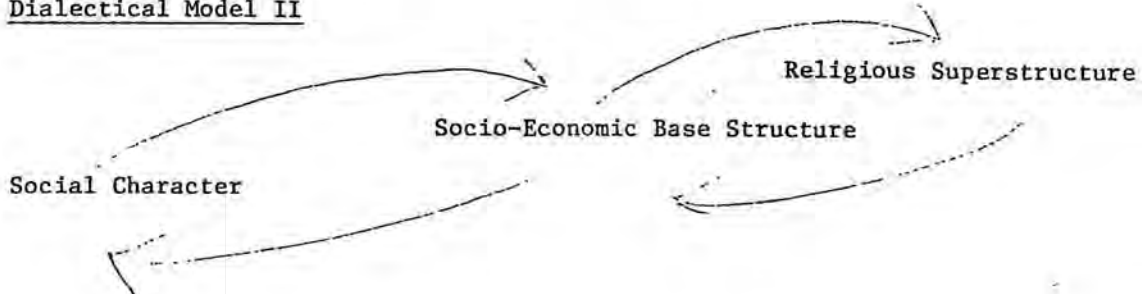
Fromm could protect himself against such charges by the other critical theorists through the Frankfurt School's usual recourse to Hegel's social philosophy.²³⁹ Hegel's dialectical logic allows for a variety of transformations of the dialectical configuration of individual, society and religion.²⁴⁰ According to Hegel's philosophy of right, philosophy of history, and philosophy of religion not only, like in the case of Fromm's theory, the individual mediates as family member, bourgeois, citizen

and historical individual between family, society, state and history on one hand, and religion on the other hand; but likewise the family, society, state and history mediate between the individual and religion, and religion mediates between the individual on one and, and family, society, state and history on the other hand.²⁴¹ In case Fromm would follow in his theory of religion Hegel's variations of the dialectical configuration of individual, society and religion, he would not only allow, as he does, the social character to be the middle term and to mediate between the socio-economic basis and the religious superstructure and vice versa, but also the socio-economic basis to be the middle term and to mediate between the social character and the religious superstructure and vice versa and religion to be the middle term and to mediate between the social character and the socio-economic basis and vice versa.²⁴² It is not only the socio-economic basis which creates a certain social character, which in turn creates certain religious ideas and vice versa, but also the social character produces a socioeconomic basis, which again produces a certain religious superstructure and vice versa, and the social character creates a religious superstructure, which in turn creates a certain socioeconomic base structure and vice versa. Such variations of Fromm's dialectical theory of religion can be expressed in the following three dialectical social-psychological models:

Dialectical Model I



Dialectical Model II



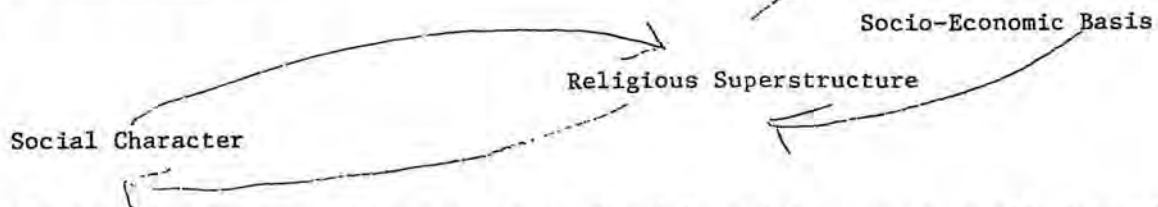


is in addition to the hostility to gods or God, a hostility to certain real figures, in particular to the powerful One, the despot and the dominant Few, the oligarchs in society and state.²⁴⁶ According to the strict Marxist Fromm, in the peculiar structural stratification of society into social classes, the infantile situation is repeated for the individual. The individual subject sees in the ruling minority the powerful ones, the strong and the wise. The powerful and clever are to be revered. The individual believes that the powerful Few wish him well. They are benevolent. The subject also knows that resistance to the powerful Few or One is always severely punished. The individual is content, when by docility he can win the praise of the powerelite.²⁴⁷

Fromm is convinced like Marx and Freud, that these feelings of reverence, fear and docility of the powerless Many in relation to the dominant Few are the identical feelings, which as a child the individual had for his father.²⁴⁸ According to Fromm it is understandable, that the subject is as disposed to believe uncritically what is presented to him by the ruling class or its political representatives as just and true, as in childhood he used to believe without criticism every statement made by his father. The powerless Many behave like children in relation to the powerful Few or One. Therefore the Many remain powerless.

According to Fromm, as to Marx and Freud before, the figure of the gods or of God forms the ideological supplement to this situation of dependence, in which the Many find themselves in the society and the state, which they themselves continually reproduce.²⁴⁹ In the strict Marxist and Freudian Fromm's view, God is always the ally of the ruling Few or One. When the dominant Few, who are always real personalities, are exposed to criticism, they can rely on God. According to Fromm, God by virtue of his unreality only scorns criticism. God by his authority confirms the authority of the dominating class. Here lies the reason, why Fromm, throughout the whole development of his critical theory of religion intends to emancipate people living in civil society from God in terms of a negative theology and idology.²⁵⁰

Dialectical Model III



The three models together guarantee equal weight and importance to all three elements in Fromm's dialectical theory of religion.²⁴³ Together these models avoid the danger not only of the psychologization of society and religion, but also of the sociologization of individual and religion and the theologization of individual and society. While the three models together avoid the danger of psychologism, sociologism, and theologism, they do justice to the justified demands of the critical psychologist, the dialectical sociologist and the critical theologian.²⁴⁴ All three models need of course further empirical verification. Model II and III lead beyond the present form of Fromm's theory of religion and thereby beyond the framework of this paper. We return to the origin of Fromm's theory of religion in The Dogma of Christ.

Socio-Psychological Function

Fromm follows Freud's theory in The Dogma of Christ when he states that man's helplessness and powerlessness in the face of nature is a repetition of the situation, in which the adult found himself as a child, when he could not do without help against unfamiliar superior forces, and when his life impulses, following their narcissistic inclinations, attached themselves first to the objects that afforded him protection and satisfaction, namely his mother and father.²⁴⁵ According to the strict Freudian Fromm, to the extent that society is helpless with respect to nature, the psychic situation of childhood must be repeated for the individual member of the society as an adult. The adult transfers from father or mother some of his childish love and fear and also some of his hostility to a religious fantasy figure, to the gods or God.

Fromm integrates Freud's theory into Marx's theory when he points out, that there

In Fromm's as in Marx's and Freud's perspective, in this psychological situation of infantile bondage in which the powerless Many find themselves, resides one of the principle guarantees of social stability, cohesion and equilibrium.²⁵¹ The Many find themselves in society, state and history in the same situation they experienced as children in the family, standing helplessly before their father.²⁵² The same mechanism of domination operates for the Many now in society and state and history as once in the family.²⁵³ According to Fromm, this psychic situation of the Many becomes established through a large number of significant and complicated measures taken by the powerful One or Few.²⁵⁴ It is the function of the powerelite to maintain and strengthen in the masses their infantile psychic dependence and to impose itself on their unconscious mind as a father figure.

In Fromm's like in Hegel's view, one of the principle means of achieving this purpose is authoritarian religion.²⁵⁵ In the class society, religion has the function of preventing any psychic independence on the part of the people. Religion has the task of intimidating the Many intellectually, so that they do not trust their own reason and perception. Religion has the function of bringing the Many into the socially necessary infantile docility toward the authorities. Religion reproduces the false appearance and consciousness necessary for the stability of the antagonistic society. According to Fromm at the same time, paradoxically enough, religion has the essential function to offer the Many a certain measure of satisfaction, that makes life appear sufficiently tolerable for them to prevent them from attempting to change their position from that of obedient son to that of rebellious son, from slave, serf or wage laborer to revolutionary. For Fromm like for Hegel and Marx, authoritarian religion is per se reactionary and counter-revolutionary.²⁵⁶

Fromm is sure, that the satisfactions, which religion can grant are certainly not those of the ego drives of selfpreservation, nor those of better food, nor those of other material pleasures.²⁵⁷ According to the dialectical materialist Fromm, such satisfactions are to be obtained only in the socio-economic reality. For that



purpose, the Many do not need religion. In Fromm's view, religion serves merely to make it easier for the masses to resign themselves to the many frustrations that the world as society, state, and history presents to them. According to Fromm, the pleasures which religion offers to the Many are of a libidinous nature. They are satisfactions which occur essentially in fantasy. This is so, because libidinous impulses, in contrast to ego-impulses, permit satisfaction in fantasy. This is so, because libidinous impulses, in contrast to ego-impulses, permit satisfaction in fantasy.

According to Fromm, the pleasures provided for by religion are such that in essence they can be realized especially in collective fantasies.²⁵⁸ In Fromm's view insofar as society does not permit real satisfaction in its socioeconomic structure, fantasy satisfactions serve as a substitute and become a powerful support of the social equilibrium. The greater the renunciations, which the Many endure in the socioeconomic reality, the stronger must be the concern for compensation. Fantasy pleasures share with every narcotic the double function: they act both as an anodyne and as a deterrent to active change of the socioeconomic reality.

In Fromm's perspective, the common fantasy satisfactions, shared by the Many, have an essential advantage over the daydreams of each single individual.²⁵⁹ By virtue of their universality, the social fantasies of the Many are perceived by the conscious mind of the individual as if they were real. An illusion shared by the Many becomes a reality. According to Fromm, the oldest of these collective fantasy satisfactions is religion. With the progressive development of society, religious fantasies become more differentiated, complicated and rationalized. So today, for instance, Roman Catholicism constitutes a highly differentiated religious system. Also with the progression of social evolution out of religion and besides it, appear art and philosophy as other more or less autonomous expressions of collective fantasies.²⁶⁰

According to Fromm, religion has altogether three functions for society.²⁶¹

Religion has the function for all mankind to console men for the privations exacted by life. For the great majority of men religion fulfills the functional requirement to encourage them to accept emotionally their low class situation. Religion functions for the powerelite ^{as} relief from the guilt feelings caused by the suffering of the Many, whom they oppress and exploit. What does this social-psychological functionality of religion mean in terms of a concrete positive religion, for instance Christianity?

Christian Proletariat

The course of Fromm's investigation into Christianity is determined by the functional presuppositions he took over from Marx's and Freud's theory of religion.²⁶² In The Dogma of Christ, Fromm describes first of all the total socio-economic situation of the social class from which the early Christian faith originated.²⁶³ Then Fromm tries to understand the psychological meaning of this faith in terms of the total psychic situation of the social class, which creates the Christian beliefs. Fromm shows how the mentality of the people who carry the Christian faith through the first three centuries of the Christian church, continually changes as a result of their changing class position. Finally Fromm tries to understand the unconscious meaning of classical Christology which crystalized in the Christological dogma of the Nicene Council as the end product of an evolution of three hundred years. We concentrate here on Fromm's view of the very content of the primitive Christian message and its function for the people who believe it, the Christian proletariat, and for the society, in which this proletariat exists.

According to Fromm, as to Hegel before, in the foreground of the original Christian message stands the eschatological expectation.²⁶⁴ Jesus preached the nearness of the kingdom of God. Jesus taught the people to see in his activities the beginning of this new kingdom. Like other Marxists in the 1920s and later on Bloch, Vieteslav Gardavsky and Milan Machovec, Fromm explains Jesus's main attraction

for the people by his ability to make the eschatological future, the kingdom of God, present for them here and now in his person.²⁶⁵ As little as Gardavsky later on, is Fromm really interested in the problem of the historical Jesus.²⁶⁶ Fromm's concern is the idea the early Christian generations have of Jesus and the changes it has undergone.²⁶⁷ Fromm's interest lies in the effect-history of the Jesus event.²⁶⁸ Fromm wants to understand the social effect of the primitive Christian message only on the basis of the classes to which it was directed and by which it was accepted. Only the understanding of those classes' psychic situation is important for Fromm.

According to Fromm, following Adolf Harnack, the proclamation that the kingdom of heaven was at hand was the germ of the oldest Christian kerygma.²⁶⁹ It was this eschatological message which arouse in the suffering and oppressed Many in Israel and then all over the Roman empire an enthusiastic hope. In Fromm's perspective, the feeling of the people was that the world as society and state was coming to an end. If the hopes of the other groups of the same oppressed Many in Israel or the Roman Empire, the Zealots or the followers of Sparatacus were directed to bringing about political and social revolution by their own energy and effort, the eyes of the early Christian community were focused solely on the great event, the miraculous beginning of a New Age, the arrival of the Eschaton and the Eschata.²⁷⁰ The ideational content of the primitive Christian message was not an economic nor a social reform program, but the blessed promise of a not-distant future in which the poor would be rich, the hungry would be satisfied and the oppressed would attain authority.

According to Fromm, the mood of the first enthusiastic Christians is clearly seen in the Sermon on the Mount.²⁷¹ Here Jesus announces:

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you, that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.
Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.
Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude
you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account
of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for
behold your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers
did to the prophets.
But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your
consolation.
Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.

Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.
Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their
fathers did to the false prophets...."²⁷²

Fromm notices like Hegel before, that the Sermon on the Mount does not only express the longing and the expectations of the poor and the oppressed for a new and better world, but that it shows also the extremely polemical attitude of the early Christians, coming mainly from the lower classes, toward the dominant One and Few, their complete reactive or rational hatred of the authorities--the rich, the learned, the powerful.²⁷³ Fromm finds the same hostile mood in the biblical story of the poor Lazarus, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.²⁷⁴ Fromm notices the same polemic attitude in the famous words of Jesus, that it is hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!²⁷⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Fromm sees the poor Christian's hatred against the pharisees and tax collectors run like a red thread through the gospels and the entire later Christian tradition.²⁷⁶

Fromm hears this Christian hatred of the rich again in the epistle of James in the middle of the second century.²⁷⁷ James writes:

"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man. He does not resist you.

Be patient therefore brethren, until the coming of the Lord... behold the judge is standing at the doors."²⁷⁸

According to Fromm, this hatred against the rich and powerful One and Few, present in the gospels, determines the Christian mentality more or less up to the Constantinian turn, when the Christian Church makes peace with precisely the same Roman establishment, in the name of which Jesus had been crucified three centuries earlier.

Fromm, speaking of the rational hatred against the powerful Few among the early Christians, agrees with the Marxist K. Kautsky, when he says, that rarely has the

class hatred of the modern proletariat in civil society attained such forms as that of the Christian proletariat in the Roman slave holder society.²⁷⁹ According to Fromm, the hatred of the Christian proletariat in the Roman Empire is the continuation of the hatred of the Am Ha-aretz for the Pharisees of the Zealots and the Sicarii for the well-to-do and the middle class, of the suffering and harassed people of town and country for those in authority and in high places in Israel and beyond, as it had been expressed already in the pre-Christian political rebellions and in the Messianic fantasies.²⁸⁰ Like Horkheimer, Fromm integrates Jesus and early Christianity into the long history of Jewish revolutionary enlightenment and emancipation.²⁸¹

Fromm sees intimately connected with the early Christian reactive hatred for the spiritual and social authorities an essential feature of the social and psychic structure of early Christianity, namely its democratic, brotherly character.²⁸² According to Fromm, if the Jewish society of the first century was characterized by an extreme caste spirit pervading all social relationships, the early Christian community was a free brotherhood of the poor, unconcerned with institutions and formulas. In this early brotherhood, mutual economic assistance and support, what Harnack called "Love-communism," played a special and important role.²⁸³

In Fromm's view the early Christians were men and women, the poor, uneducated, oppressed masses of the Jewish people, and later of other people in the Roman Empire and beyond.²⁸⁴ In Fromm's perspective, in place of the increasing impossibility of the Christians altering their hopeless situation through realistic means, there developed among them the expectation that a change would occur in a very short time, at a moment's notice, and that the Christian proletariat would then find the happiness previously missed. The rich and the nobility would be punished, in accordance with justice and the desires of the Christian masses. In Fromm's view the first Christians were a brotherhood of socially and economically oppressed enthusiastic proletarians, held together by hope and hatred.

In Fromm's view, what distinguished the Christian proletariat of the first and



second century from the non-Christian proletariat struggling against Rome's power-elite was not their basic psychic attitude.²⁸⁵ In Fromm's estimate, the first Christians were no more humble and resigned to the will of God, no more convinced of the necessity and immutability of their lot, no more inspired by the wish to be loved by their masters than were the non-Christian revolutionary political and military fighters. The two groups, the Christian and the Jewish pagan proletariat hated the ruling fathers in Rome the same way. They hoped with equal vigor to see the downfall of the Roman authorities and the beginning of their own rule and of a satisfactory just future.

In Fromm's perspective, the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian proletariat in the Roman empire lay neither in the presuppositions nor in the goal and the direction of their wishes, but only in the sphere in which they tried to realize them.²⁸⁶ While the Zealots and Sicarii and the followers of Spartacus endeavoured to realize their wishes in the sphere of political praxis, the complete hopelessness of possible fulfillment led the Christian proletariat to formulate the same wishes in fantasy. The expression of this wishfulfilling fantasy was the early Christians' faith, their Christology, their idea concerning Jesus and his relationship to the Father-God.

Left Wing Christology

Fromm finds the oldest Christological statement in the quotation by Luke in the

Acts:

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, whom you crucified."²⁸⁷

This oldest doctrine of Christ is for Fromm of greatest interest, especially since it was later supplanted by other more extensive, Christological statements.²⁸⁸ In Fromm's view this oldest teaching on Christ is called by theologians the adoptionist theory, because here an act of adoption is assumed.²⁸⁹ Adoption, so Fromm explains, is here used in contrast to the natural sonship which exists from birth. According to Fromm's



interpretation, the thought present here is that Jesus was not Messiah from the beginning. In Fromm's view, the adoptionist theory teaches that Jesus was not from the beginning the Son of God, but became so only by a definite very distinct act of God's will. For Fromm this is expressed particularly in the fact that the statement in Psalms 2:7--

"You are my son, today I have begotten you" --

is interpreted by Luke in the Acts and later on by the Adoptionists as referring to the moment of the exaltation of Jesus.²⁹⁰ Fromm's whole interest lies with adoptionism as one form of Left-Wing Christology besides Ebionitism, Arianism and Nestorianism.²⁹¹ Fromm is not really interested in the counterpart of Adoptionism in Right Wing Christology, namely Modalism, or any other form of Rightwing Christology like Doketism, Apollinarism or Monophysitism. Leftwing Christology is Christology from below.²⁹² It starts out from Jesus's humanity. Rightwing Christology is Christology from above. It starts from the Father-God and the divinity of Christ. Fromm shares the interest in Leftwing Christology or Christology from below/^{with} all other Marxist Christologists in this century, like Bloch, Gardavsky, Machovec, Horkheimer.²⁹³

In Fromm's view the concept of Jesus held by the early proletarian Christian community was the adoptionist notion, that he was a man chosen by God and elevated by him as a Messiah and later on as Son of God.²⁹⁴ This Leftwing Christology of the early Christian community resembles for Fromm in many respects the concept of the Messiah chosen by God to introduce a kingdom of righteousness and love, which had been familiar among the Jewish masses for many centuries. Fromm finds only two new elements in the early Christian faith: the idea that the Messiah is exalted as Son of God to sit at the right hand of the Almighty; and the idea that this Messiah is no longer the powerful, victorious hero of the Jewish tradition, but that his significance and dignity reside just in his suffering, in his death on the cross. In Fromm's perspective, in the early proletarian Christian community Jesus was thus a man exalted after his death into a God who would soon return in order to execute judgment, to make