

# Research on the Contemporary Value of Marxist Religious Views from the Perspective of Religious Sinicization

Shao Dong

Independent Researcher, Haikou, Hainan, China

## Abstract

Marx's view of religion is an important part of his theoretical system, Marx adopts the perspective of historical materialism to conduct in-depth study of religious thought, and conducts dialectical analysis of the formation, development and influence of religion, which not only helps us to fully understand and grasp its theoretical connotation, but also provides a scientific methodology for understanding and grasping the essence of Chinese religious phenomena in the new era, and provides a solid theoretical foundation for handling religious affairs. Better guide China's religious work at present.

## Keywords

Marxist View of Religion; Sinicization of Religion; Value.

## 1. Introduction

The Marxist view of religion scientifically analyzes the origin, development and essence of religion, and makes a comprehensive and thorough analysis and thinking on religious phenomena, which has important value for the construction of Chinese-style modernization and can play an important role in the improvement of social governance capacity and the construction of a harmonious China. Religion is an important part of social ideology and superstructure, and it is closely linked to many social issues. Therefore, combing and studying the background, development process and main content of the Marxist view of religion plays an important role in the development of China's socialist modernization today, and provides methodological guidance for the government to handle religious affairs in accordance with the law and understand the essence of religion. Because the issue of religion is an inevitable problem to be solved in modernization, how to understand, think about, and deal with religion needs to be conducted in in-depth research under the guidance of the Marxist view of religion in light of China's reality and national conditions.

## 2. The Background and Development Process of the Marxist View of Religion

It is precisely because of the religious issues in the context of the times that Marx proposed that religion should be separated from politics, and that the proletariat should be separated from religion and should be viewed comprehensively and rationally. The development of capitalism changed people's thinking at that time, and people began to question traditional theology and aspire to establish free and equal economic relations and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the bourgeoisie began to target religious theology in an attempt to promote the reconstruction of social structure, bring about fundamental changes in society, and promote the progress of human society. In 1517, Martin Luther published the "Ninety-Five Theses", which became the fuse of the Reformation movement, and the core idea was "justification by faith". [1]It is believed that religious belief does not need to be intermediated by pastors and other religious clergy, as long as they sincerely trust God, they can communicate with it, which breaks through the monopoly of religious clergy on religion and the right to interpret doctrines,

reflects the changes in people's thinking at that time, began to question traditional religion and feudal system, and began to pursue individual freedom and equal rights, reflecting the beginning of the social system at that time and the reshaping of the social structure.

Marx deeply realized that the social structure began to change and people looked forward to the emergence of a new social system, so Marx systematically analyzed the institutional model, economic foundation and superstructure of the society at that time, and began to imagine the path model of the future society. It is believed that the proletariat should draw a clear line with religious issues, adhere to the guiding ideology of science, view religious issues rationally and correctly, strengthen the class position, adhere to the people-centered approach, promote the transformation of people from the "kingdom of inevitability" to the "kingdom of freedom", and promote the free and all-round development of everyone.

**Table 1.** The Concept of the Realm of Necessity and the Realm of Freedom

Inevitable kingdom	The kingdom of necessity refers to the social state in which human beings are dominated by blind necessity, including natural necessity (human beings can never fully dominate the laws of nature) and historical necessity (the alienated state in which workers are dominated by private ownership in class society);
Free Kingdom	The free kingdom refers to the social state in which human beings are freed from servitude for the purpose of ability development, and its essence is that human ability develops into an end itself.
The relationship between the two	The relationship between the two is manifested in historical transition (the kingdom of necessity is the material basis of the kingdom of freedom), the unity of opposites (the kingdom of freedom needs to be built on the basis of the kingdom of necessity) and infinite development (mankind is always in the historical process of transition from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom).

Of course, the formation of the Marxist view of religion has a process of development and maturity, from theism to atheism, from idealism to materialism. Marx's early religious views were influenced by family factors, and it can be seen from Marx's articles that Marx in middle school was biased towards theism, believing that religion can play an important role and have a huge impetus for the shaping of social morality, which can be seen in Marx's middle school compositions and doctoral dissertations, from which it can be seen that his thinking is changing, "Nature stipulates the range of its activities for animals in nature, God also gave man a designated range of activities and set a goal to exalt man." [2] This shows that Marx was still a theist at that time, and later with the influence of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment, Marx's view of religion changed, these movements spread liberalism and the impact on traditional religions, and the changes in these ideas of course also had an impact on Marx, causing Marx's ideological changes, prompting him to start thinking about the problems of traditional religion and begin to look at religious issues from a rational perspective, although Marx was still religious at this time. But it has been distinguished from traditional theists.

In his doctoral dissertation, Marx used dialectics to question theism and fatalism, especially in the appendix to his doctoral dissertation, "Criticism of Plutarch's Debate on Epicurus Theology", declaring: "God does not exist, and the proof of God's existence is nothing more than empty synonymous repetition." [3] It shows that Marx at this time had begun to adhere to atheism, with a tendency to historical materialism, from God to the individual, to the ordinary individual, to see the essence of promoting social development, it is the broad masses of the people, not a few, even "God", believing that the religious problem is essentially an economic problem and a class problem, believing that the solution of the contradiction of reality cannot rely on "God", but on the "individual", and believes that religion is an illusory phenomenon reflected in reality, which is lost by people" In religion, people can no longer see "man" itself, but only the

characteristics of human beings physiologically. Only by criticizing religion and adhering to the proletarian position can people clearly realize themselves and realize that human development is to be realized in real life, not in the illusion of false phenomena.

Marx profoundly expressed the essence of religion, which shows that Marxism's understanding of religion at this time was very accurate and rational, indicating that its religious outlook was gradually maturing. [4] In his later years, Marx's view of religion began to pay more attention to religious practice, began to analyze the laws of human development in religion, began to look at the East and the world, and began to think about the role of religion in the development of human society and the demise of religion in the future. "Every clan thinks that it originated from a god", [5] realizing that in the early days of human beings, in order to fight against natural forces or explain natural forces, it was necessary to create a "god", through "god" to show the worship and confrontation of power, and at the same time, it can also unite forces through "gods", unify thoughts, and realize the inevitability of the emergence of religion in the early days of human society, and finally think about the issue of human liberation and human development. It is in this continuous practice and thinking that the Marxist view of religion has been continuously improved.

### **3. The Main Content of the Marxist View of Religion**

The Marxist view of religion is a systematic theoretical system, which contains Marx and Engels' thinking on religious issues, reflects Marx and Engels' understanding of the origin, essence and phenomenon of religion, and is a scientific theoretical system.

#### **3.1. Marxism's Understanding of the Origin and Development of Religion**

Marx believed that "religion itself has no content, its roots are not in heaven but on earth", [6] and believed that the origin of religion is directly related to real life, a projection of real life in the field of religion, and a false reflection of real life. Entering capitalist society, human beings are no longer afraid of simple natural phenomena, but people themselves still cannot truly belong to themselves, and the labor of workers is gradually alienated, surplus value is squeezed, and then religion seeks psychological comfort, so religion at this time plays a role in alleviating social contradictions.

Marx believed that religion is essentially an ideology, a subjective image of people, and also has its process of emergence, development and extinction. Therefore, Marx has been solving how to make people "people", how to realize everyone's development, and thinking about how to realize the future society. Marxism founded by Marx and Engels is to realize the liberation of mankind and to enable everyone to realize value. It is believed that only in a communist society will this false and illusory religious problem naturally disappear, especially in a communist society, where material and spiritual abundance are greatly enriched, and people no longer need religion for psychological comfort and spiritual comfort. Of course, the demise of religion is a long process, which is basically consistent with the realization of communism, reflecting that religion is closely related to the development of the social system, the change of social structure, and the structure of social classes, so it is necessary to correctly understand and view religion.

#### **3.2. Marxism's Revelation of the Essence of Religion**

Religion is an inverted worldview, which is Marx's revelation of the essence of religion, believing that religion is a worldview that is inverted to reality, precisely because in real life people cannot find satisfaction and respect, workers converge on "tools" under the oppression of capital, so in reality people who cannot find spiritual satisfaction and then need religious satisfaction, in the real society, if individuals encounter problems, religion will use religious doctrines to explain, provide spiritual comfort and satisfaction for them. To make up for the

sense of loss in the real society, it shows an upside-down way of behavior. At the same time, religion also shows a phenomenon of alienation, which is an alienation of the essence of man in religion, believing that belief in religion itself is an alienation of human social attributes, an alternative manifestation of reality, Marx pointed out: "Feuerbach reduced the essence of religion to the essence of man, the essence of man is not only an abstraction inherent in a single person, but also the sum of all social relations in its reality", [7] It is believed that religious issues are also a part of social relations and a manifestation of social relations, so religious issues are essentially human problems, and as long as the problem of "people" is solved, religious problems will naturally be solved.

### **3.3. Marxism's Understanding of Religious Forms**

Marx, Engels, Lenin, etc. all expounded the relationship between matter and consciousness, analyzed the relationship between social existence and social consciousness, and believed that religion is a kind of social consciousness, a reflection of social existence, and inseparable from the influence of social existence. Religion is a conceptual superstructure and a false reflection of social existence, so it is necessary to continuously verify that social consciousness conforms to social existence through practice, and to deeply realize that the "god" in religion is in the world, not in "heaven", which reflects the philosophical principle that social existence determines social consciousness. We are required to adhere to the truth, oppose fallacies, persist in practice, and oppose empty talk, so as to reduce the formation of an "upside-down worldview" and the false reflection of social consciousness on social existence in the field of religion.

## **4. The Revelation of the Role of Religion in the Marxist View of Religion**

Religion has played an important role in the development of human society and the evolution of social forms with the development of human society. Religion itself belongs to a kind of superstructure, which may be used by the ruling class to control the people, so that they can find answers to practical problems in religion, and then alleviate social contradictions. Marx further analyzed the role of religion and believed that it was two-sided, both used by the ruling class and the revolutionary role of uniting to resist oppression. Recognizing that the process of extinction of religion is long, and religion also exists in socialist society, we must adhere to the Marxist view of religion and rationally look at and understand religion, so as to make full use of the cultural and spiritual comfort role of religion to play a role in a harmonious socialist society. The cultural heritage in the field of religion itself is a part of the long history of China, so the correct study of religion can promote the development of the religious field and the influence of culture.

## **5. The Value of the Times of the Marxist View of Religion**

The Marxist view of religion is a scientific and correct theory, which still plays a huge role in the process of socialist modernization, and has important value in guiding the sinicization of religion in China, as well as religious research and religious interpretation.

### **5.1. Provide a Scientific Worldview and Methodology for Understanding Religion**

A correct and scientific worldview and methodology can guide people to understand the essence of religion and analyze religious phenomena, which can make people see the illusion and illusory appearance of religion, while the wrong worldview and methodology will give people a wrong understanding, unable to correctly understand and look at religion, unable to touch the essence of religious issues, and unable to find the truth. It can effectively promote the

adaptation of religion to socialist society, promote the direction of sinicization of religion, help better carry out religious governance, and better implement China's religious policy. Give full play to the positive social role of religion, weaken the negative role of religion, prevent the influence of religious erroneous ideas on young people, produce wrong values, outlook on life, and worldview, lead to cognitive deviations, and finally affect people's real life. Especially in the current international context, the impact of the ideological field is more severe than ever, and many people will be affected by wrong trends of thought, leading to the wrong path of life. At the same time, in today's era of information and the Internet age, people's access to information channels and richness is easier than ever, and the impact of religious issues may be more complex.

### 5.2. Guide the Formulation, Adjustment, and Practice of China's Religious Principles and Policies

Under the guidance of the Marxist view of religion, combined with the actual situation and national conditions of China, China's religious policy clearly points out that citizens not only have the freedom to believe in religion, but also the freedom not to believe in religion. Marx pointed out: "The right to practice religion, to believe in religion in any way, and to perform worship in one's particular religion is clearly included in human rights." [8] Marx believed that the policy of freedom of religious belief was a guarantee of human rights and the proper meaning of the proletarian regime, and believed that it was in line with human rights. It is against the law of social development and the stage of people's consciousness development.

Marx pointed out that religion cannot be confused with politics, in real life, religion is a very complex issue, and human rights, ethnicity and other issues are intertwined, which requires that when dealing with religious issues, it is necessary to prevent religious issues from spreading to the political field, the government supports religion in the context of socialism to carry out religious activities reasonably and legally, and religious groups can govern religious activities internally, but correspondingly, religion cannot interfere with administrative, educational, judicial and other activities, and the two must be distinguished. China adheres to the principle of religious independence and self-management, and at the same time adheres to the management of religious affairs in accordance with the law, and manages religious groups, religious activity sites, and religious clergy in accordance with the law. Religious activities should be carried out under the framework of the law and in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations of our country. It is necessary to actively guide religion to adapt to socialist society, actively promote the Chinese practice of religion, and actively develop the Chinese interpretation and model of religion, so that religion can play a positive role to a greater extent and contribute to the construction of a harmonious socialist society.

### 5.3. Guide the Construction of Chinese-style Modernization

**Table 2.** An Introduction to Chinese-Style Modernization

The content of Chinese-style modernization
Chinese-style modernization is modernization with a huge population
Chinese-style modernization is the modernization of common prosperity for all people
Chinese-style modernization is a modernization that harmonizes material civilization and spiritual civilization
Chinese-style modernization is the modernization of harmonious coexistence between man and nature
Chinese-style modernization is modernization on the path of peaceful development

From the founding of the People's Republic of China to the present, China has experienced the process of revolution and reform, and after entering the new era, the development of society has been turned upside down, in the construction of Chinese-style modernization, the religious

issue must be a problem that cannot be ignored, so the Marxist view of religion can provide theoretical and practical guidance in the construction of modernization, and an important content of Chinese-style modernization is to realize the coordination of material and spiritual, and the religious issue is a spiritual problem, how to better deal with the two problems, correctly understand the religious issue, All of this requires the scientific guidance of the Marxist view of religion. The essence of Chinese-style modernization is to achieve all-round development of people and the prosperity of the country, which is the purpose of Marxism. Actively creating a good religious atmosphere and using dialectics and historical materialism to view and understand religion can make it easier to understand the essence of religion and think about the future development and demise of religion. In the context of the new era, it is necessary to persist in improving social governance capabilities, make good use of the "Fengqiao experience", steadily promote the construction of a safe and harmonious China, promote the formation of good relations between believers and non-believers, promote the harmonious development of different religions, and form a good religious atmosphere.

Actively study and interpret the positive cultural factors in religion, actively strengthen the interpretation of religious culture, strengthen religious cultural exchanges with foreign countries, enhance the external influence of Chinese religion, actively cultivate outstanding religious international talents, cultivate a group of high-quality religious talents who meet the requirements of socialism, and widely absorb various excellent cultural resources. Carry out research on religious philosophy and religious ethics, actively participate in international cultural exchanges, spread Chinese voice and image in the field of religion, and enhance China's cultural soft power. We should adhere to the Marxist view of religion as the guide, analyze and discern, promote the development of religious culture, and then promote the role of the religious field in modernization. Steadily promote the construction of Chinese-style modernization.

## 6. Conclusion

Adhere to the guidance of the Marxist view of religion, correctly understand religion, adhere to the direction of sinicization of religion, give full play to the contemporary value of the Marxist view of religion, play a role in education and education, the governance of religious affairs, and Chinese-style modernization, highlight the theoretical and practical guiding role of the Marxist view of religion, conscientiously study the main content of the Marxist view of religion, and learn how Marx and Engels understand religion and how to analyze its essence. The study of religious issues and the handling of religious affairs play an important role.

## References

- [1] Martin Luther. "Ninety-five Articles of Discussion" [M]. He Guanghu, translation. Beijing: Life, Reading, New Knowledge Triple Bookstore, 2013, 287-296.
- [2] The Complete Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 1 [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995:455.
- [3] The Complete Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 1 [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995:100.
- [4] Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 1 [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2012:139.
- [5] The Complete Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 45 [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1985:511.
- [6] Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 1 [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2012:3.
- [7] Selected Works of Marx and Engels: Volume 1 [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995:56.
- [8] Collected works of Marx and Engels [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009:40.