



Lenin, Religion, and Theology (New Approaches to Religion and Power)

Roland Boer

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This book pursues the implications for linking Lenin with theology, which is not a project that has been undertaken thus far. What does this inveterate atheist known for describing religion as 'spiritual booze' (a gloss on Marx's 'opium of the people') have to do with theology? This book reveals far more than might initially be expected, so much so that Lenin and the Russian Revolution cannot be understood without this complex engagement with theology.

It also seeks to bring Lenin into recent debates over the intersections between theology and the Left, between the Bible and political thought. The key names involved in this debate are reasonably well-known, including Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, Antonio Negri, Terry Eagleton, Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Boer has written concerning these critics, among others, in Boer's earlier five-volume *Criticism of Heaven and Earth* (Brill and Haymarket, 2007-13). *Lenin and Theology* builds upon this earlier project but it also stands alone as a substantial study in its own right. But it will be recognised as a contribution that follows a series that has, as critics have pointed out, played a major role in reviving and taking to a new level the debate over Marxism and religion.

The book is based upon a careful, detailed and critical reading of the whole 45 volumes of his *Collected Works* in English translation – 55 volumes in the Russian original. From that close attention to the texts, a number of key themes have emerged: the ambivalence over freedom of choice in matters of religion; his love of the sayings and parables of Jesus in the Gospels; his own love of constructing new parables; the extended and complex engagements with Christian socialists and 'God-builders' among the Bolsheviks; the importance of Hegel for his reassessments of religion; the arresting suggestion that a revolution is a miracle, which redefines the meaning of miracle; and the veneration of Lenin after his death.

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