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Iconoclast

from the Anarchist Encyclopedia — S. Faure

Sébastien Faure

1934

Iconoclast: Means breaker of images (the name image in antiquity applied to all figures, either painted or sculpted). It particularly designates those persons or sects opposed to the adoration of images and pursuing their destruction. Due to this iconoclasm belongs to the history of those religions which admitted and practiced the cult of images.

Around the first quarter of the 8th Century a religious sect was founded which had as its objective the smashing of all the images of saints and the banning of their cult. This sect of “iconoclasts” was at first approved by the Council of Constantinople in 754.

Approving these acts meant making in large part impossible the task of the Roman church, which has a whole army of more or less miraculous saints to propose to the veneration of the faithful. So the Council of Trent (787) and those that followed pitilessly condemned the sect, which disappeared at the beginning of the following century. Later the Albigensians, the Hussites, the Vaudois and the Calvinists took up the practices of the iconoclasts, for they didn’t recognize the “sanctity” of the apostles.

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Extending the meaning of the word, giving it a fuller meaning, the anarchists call themselves iconoclasts. The Compagnon Percheron, in the song *La Ronde des briseurs d'images*, very precisely explained the why of such an affirmation. Wanting to destroy not only the images of saints, but those of all false gods, of all idols, of all prejudices; bowing before no moral or material authority, the anarchists want to destroy from top to bottom the old society that rules over us. This is why with all their disrespect for established things they are so attached to smashing all images (state, religion, politics, property, bosses, fatherlands, etc) with which the people are still today fooled, and which make slavery last.

Recognizing the high moral import, the great beneficial value of the lives of certain men devoted to science, philosophy, the Revolution, the anarchists sometimes cite as an example and a teaching the works of these precursors. But not wanting to see any kind of predestination in any man, they rise up against any attempt, from wherever it comes, to make legendary personalities of some of them. And they smash all the images of all the secular or revolutionary gods that some- yearning for adoration, and for not very reputable ends- propose to the veneration of the crowd