

[1968. In *Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Edwin A. Palmer, ed. Wilmington, Delaware: National Foundation for Christian Education.]

FEUERBACH, Ludwig A. (1804-1872), German materialist philosopher. Feuerbach studied under Hegel, later abandoned his early idealism, accepted a purely physiological explanation of thought, and with certain qualifications prepared the way for Karl Marx. His materialism is epitomized in his famous pun “Der Mensch is was er isst” (Man is what he eats). The activity of human bodies may be determined by some mind or spirit: no doubt we consciously choose to eat; but this choice is first determined by the bodily condition, hunger, and eating material food is more important than idealist fancies. Food is the beginning of wisdom; and the Irish were unable to defeat the English in 1848 because the peasants ate only potatoes.

Feuerbach, unlike Strauss and Bauer who used historical criticism to attack Christianity, used a psychological method of attack in *The Nature of Christianity*. In it he said that religion is based on feeling; its doctrines are disguised wishes reflecting man's inability to control nature. The idea of a resurrection is an expression of one's fear of death. An alleged knowledge of God is actually a knowledge of oneself. Progress will consist in referring less and less to “God,” and more and more to man.

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