

the prototype Christian of our new age belonged to what she called 'the post-Christian Church', an unspoken communion of believers able to coalesce and disperse without an external organisation, for whom – as for her in latter days – Church 'membership' meant no more than living constantly in the presence of God.

*Alyosha's Way* had been envisaged as a finished work of six chapters, four of which were put into shape by Iulia in her widowed retirement at Woodcote, the fourth being 'Chrysostom and constant prayer'. The climax was to be an exploration of the relationship between prayer and the Virgin Mary. A further revision, near her death in 1977, brought Iulia to offer an account of her own experience of prayer in prison and concentration camp; and of Solov'yov 'the only Russian philosopher', and his influence. What remained to us after Iulia's death has here been published (pp 153-171).

What the author has done, as an act of pietas no less than an offering of great in-

sight, is to provide an unvarnished account of a life of creative suffering which began with fierce action and ended in deep contemplation; then a series of notes and letters that fall under the heading 'Echoes of friendship' and substantiate the tale told; then the final writings, notably *Alyosha's Way*, that Iulia never got to the publisher. There are pages of illustrations; but the biographical element is not strictly the point: the point is that it is a valuable record of a very significant spiritual aeneid. Something of the meaning of suffering in a Christ-like context is brought out by Iulia's comment upon her erstwhile torturers: 'When you overcome the pain inflicted on you by them, you make *their* criminal record less villainous. . . . But when, through weakness, cowardice, lack of balance, lack of serenity, you augment your pain, their crime becomes so much darker; and it is darkened by you'.

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**MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY** by Denys Turner  
*Basil Blackwell, Oxford. £17.50.*

'Anyone who, like me, feels crushed between the moral cynicism of a Brezhnev and the moral hypocrisy of a Reagan . . . will have identified the controlling concerns of this book' (p xi). It is both necessary and difficult for the reader of Dr Turner's vigorous, dense, lucid and provocative essay to keep this observation in mind. Necessary, because it exhibits the practical passion which shapes his attempt 'to define a problem about the possibility of morality' (p vii). Difficult because, although he insists that his 'argument is severely restricted in scope . . . austere, formal and conceptual' (p vii), the reader (and perhaps, at times, even the author) may be misled into supposing that *such* an argument can generate substantive conclusions of greater range and weight than it can, in fact, support.

The outlines of the argument can be briefly stated here, because Turner has, over the years, tested several features of it in *New Blackfriars*. Six chapters on 'Ideol-

ogy' (defined as 'a praxis characterized by a form of contradictoriness, in which the modes of social perception and relationship which it routinises misrepresent the social processes which generate them', p 127) are followed by three chapters expounding the thesis that, since Marxism is the only 'form of social knowledge' which, under capitalism, satisfies the necessary conditions of 'scientific' (in contrast to 'ideological') knowledge, and since 'Morality is that form of knowledge which, in relation to a given form of society, can be called the science of it' (p 117), therefore, under capitalism, 'morality is Marxism'. In the final four chapters, he argues that 'it is both necessary for Christianity to incorporate . . . the Marxist criticism of religion and possible for it to survive that incorporation' (p 160). Only in the measure that it does so will it be in a position to supply, in turn, essential critical correctives to Marxist 'amorality'.

The author insists that this is not a

theological essay (and, indeed, the theological material in the final chapters, especially the handling of the paradoxes of divine 'presence' and 'absence', is not merely underdeveloped but, in certain respects, surprisingly crude). It seeks 'merely to set theology a problem which, so far as I know, theology has grown accustomed not to set for itself' (p viii).

The problem is that of the circumstances in which contemporary Christian speech and action can hope to be other than 'ideological'. Because I share Turner's view of the centrality and urgency of this problem, and of the extent to which it is (at least in British theology) neglected, and also because of the clarity with which he presents his argument (notwithstanding its difficulty: to say that the argument is clear is not to say that it is always easy to follow), I welcome this book.

Nevertheless, although it is concerned with a crucial set of problems (some such title as 'Ideology and Morality' would have been less misleading than 'Christianity and Marxism'), I have several difficulties with the way in which the argument is constructed and the problems described.

The way in which Dr Turner construes the term 'Marxism' to refer primarily to a 'science' is, I think, near the heart of my unease. In the first place, for all his disapproval of Marxist 'scientism' in the sense of 'positivism', his account is 'scientistic' in a distinct but related sense in restricting to the realm of the 'scientific' everything which is to count as 'knowledge': "'science" in the sense in which Marxism claims to be scientific is nothing more than knowledge' (p 103). Notwithstanding his criticisms of Althusser on other counts, he appears to stand foursquare in what I take to be a discredited tradition (of which Althusser was merely a recent and gifted exponent) for which everything, in matters epistemological, that is not 'science' is 'ideology'.

His systematic depreciation of the metaphorical is significant here (the text abounds with reference to 'mere' metaphor). On liberation theology: 'Persuasive as rhetoric, there is no substance in those happy-sounding metaphors stretched across biblical and Marxist categories' (p 211).

This is a wave of the paw, not an argument. Should someone concerned (as he is) with the *practical* character of discourse be quite so dismissive of 'rhetoric'? And in what way does the metaphor of 'stretching' metaphors illuminate the limits within which, for hermeneutical purposes, certain analogies may or may not be fruitfully drawn? It is difficult to see how story-telling can appropriately be described (even on his generously broad definition of 'science') as a 'scientific' activity. And yet I would wish to argue that narrative modes of discourse are an indispensable and irreducible feature of, though by no means exhaustive of, the enterprise of Christian theology.

In the second place, there are, within Christianity, familiar and perennial criteriological problems concerning the grounds on which this or that pattern of belief or behaviour is to be judged more or less authentically, faithfully, 'Christian'. Turner arbitrarily restricts 'true' or 'authentic' Marxism (cf. e.g. pp 232, 236-7, 224, 246) to that form of its theory of which he approves. Arbitrarily, because no attention whatsoever is paid to cognate criteriological considerations. (In the light of the literature, can there really be said to be any such thing as 'the strict Marxist sense', p 55, of 'ideology'?) As a result, he has no difficulty in dismissing as *inauthentic* most of the forms of Marxism which actually exist. The connections between this issue and that of the restriction of 'Marxism' to 'science' may be glimpsed in the following passage: 'Marxism's claim to scientificity rests *uniquely* upon the adequacy of its critical relationship with capitalism. Its knowledge is knowledge of capitalism' (p 139). But this evades problems, as fundamental and intractable for Christianity as for Marxism, of the extent to which critical or 'negative' discourse can survive *as such* when, historically, it becomes part of the apparatus of *power*.

Thus, for example, if it is *only* 'capitalism' which Marxism 'knows', some rather queer consequences seem to follow concerning the scope that exists for knowledge within Soviet Russia (or between Russia and China). There seem to be two possibilities. The first is that communists

in Russia only have 'opinions' about Soviet politics, economics, physics, art and agriculture, *except* insofar as consideration of these 'objects' is refracted through analysis of the impact of capitalism on Soviet society. The second is that discourse in communist societies is *necessarily* as systematically distorted by ideology as it is elsewhere in the world. In which case, where might Marxist 'science' be found except in the seminars of Western intellectuals? Simply to *write off* Soviet communism (as Turner tends to do) as 'inauthentic' Marxism, *without* consideration of the criteriological issues, seems to me as unsatisfactory as the dismissal (which is also fashionable) of virtually the whole of Christian history since Constantine as 'inauthentic' Christianity. This way, as I see it, lies gnosticism not knowledge.

In the third place, I have related difficulty about his account of 'morality' (a term which, perhaps in the interests of the unity of theory and practice, he uses, somewhat awkwardly, to embrace both moral behaviour and ethical theory). I have no quarrel with his defence of the concept of 'moral knowledge' (brilliantly executed, especially in his treatment of R.M. Hare) but, by *defining* 'morality' as 'that form of knowledge which, in relation to a given form of society, can be called the science of it' (p 117), he seems to oblige himself to give a rather odd account of *immorality*.

In the fourth place, I have (as I hinted earlier) some problems with the notion of 'conceptual' argument implicit in Turner's fondness for stipulative definition (or what he describes as 'building' the 'skeleton of a theory . . . out of the logical links between its controlling concepts', p ix). When he says that 'in all ages there is ideology. But there is no one thing which, in all ages, ideology always is' (p 7) my first reaction is to agree, my second to wonder what kind of *'thing'* ideology (as distinct, perhaps, from ideologically deformed discourse) could ever be. There seems, to put it crudely, to be an assumption at work

that there is some kind of fairly close 'fit' between substances and substantives. 'To have', he says, 'the concept of something is to know how to talk about it' (p 16).

But what is this 'something', this 'it', of which diverse instances are to be considered? Thus, 'the concept of "the state" is the account that can be given of the state *in all its forms, or in as many as we know about*' (p 16, my stress). Are there not at work, in this way of describing the problem of arriving at a general account (or, as he would say, of 'abstraction') traces of that assumption that common terms refer to entities between all types and instances of which there is 'something in common' which (if I understand it) Wittgenstein's account of 'family resemblances' sought to subvert?

I raise the question (tentatively, because I am not a philosopher) in order to indicate something of the difficulty I experience in *locating* the entities – 'Christianity', 'Marxism', 'ideology', 'morality', 'class', 'capitalism', and so on – to the consideration of which the argument is devoted. Phrases such as 'Marxism claims to be scientific' (p 103), 'Marxism claims to "know" ideology' (p 112), abound. But I do not think I am being pedantic in insisting that the widespread conventional (and metaphorical?) usage according to which 'sciences' or 'forms of knowledge' (as distinct from their human 'bearers') can be said to 'claim' *anything* is, in these matters, dangerously misleading.

Dr Turner asks his reader to share with him 'a sense of the very great difficulty of these matters' (p ix). I do. I also share his sense of their importance and urgency. It is this shared conviction which accounts for the critical character of my comments. I hope that he will accept them in that spirit, and I would be most grateful to him should he ever find time to provide some equally critical comments on my own (very different) attempt to confront some of the same issues.

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