

authorities cannot deal with, or in the case of appeals to Rome, which have always been recognized in the ancient Church, from a bishop and his synod to the metropolitan, from the metropolitan to the patriarch either to a general council or (if one cannot be summoned) to the first see. And as regards the ancient principle that the Holy See can be judged by no one it could also be stated that this does not exclude the possibility, if its occupant were to fall into heresy, that the universal Church might act, either by a council or by some other way suggested by providence if that proved impossible”.

Are Bouyer's proposals incompatible with the decrees of Vatican I at least if we can listen to *all* the voices that composed them?

## Past And Present

Peter Lee

Much recent theological writing has emphasised the changes in culture in different periods of history, and the way in which the expressions of the Christian faith which arose in different periods have been influenced by the surrounding culture. Particular emphasis has sometimes been laid on the changes in culture since the times when the books of the Bible were written and the Creeds and declarations of the ecumenical councils were drawn up. From this, different conclusions have been drawn.

One view would see the ancient formularies as needing to be repeated in different ages, and would stress the ecumenical nature of many of these formularies, particularly those drawn up before the final break between the Eastern and Western churches, though holders of this view would acknowledge with St Hilary that “We are compelled to attempt what is unattainable. . . . to speak what we cannot utter. Instead of the bare adoration of faith, we are compelled to entrust the deep things of religion to the perils of human expression” (De Trin. II, 2.4). A second view would value and keep in use the ancient formularies, seeing them as having abiding significance (given a similar proviso) but would wish to lay alongside them other expressions of the faith which aim to express the same basic Christian gospel but in terms more easily understood in our own day. A third view would lay stress on the

cultural relativity of all language expressing Christian beliefs and would see the earlier formularies (the Bible, Creeds and decisions of the ecumenical councils) as of historical interest but no longer suitable instruments with which to describe in the 20th century God and His relationship with the world and mankind. Writers taking this line emphasise the problems of using the past as a resource for contemporary life. They would argue that "The past may none the less be ultimately inaccessible. . . . communication with the past has problems all its own. If these cannot be overcome, then the past can scarcely be used as an authentic resource for contemporary life" (Essay on "The Pastness of the Past", *Christian Believing*, SPCK 1976 p. 7). "If the exercise of entering sympathetically into an understanding of the past is both problematic and productive of little that is of general value", they ask, "What is our attitude to the past to be?" They would see a solution in an emphasis on the contemporary community as the place where God's mind and will are encountered, a view of Christianity as an ongoing and changing enterprise, and a diminution of emphasis on the formulas of the past, even of the Biblical past (pp 10 and 11 of the same essay).

I want in this article to argue for the second view, and to suggest that there is a place for the continued use of and respect for the Bible, the Creeds and those decisions of ecumenical councils which are consonant with the apostolic judgment of the faithful among the church at large; this view would carry the corollary that the words and expressions used by them should remain in use in the life of the church. At the same time I would see a place both for works of cultural guidance and interpretation to help to make their meaning clear for us today, and for restatement of the gospel they express, in terms more easily understood nowadays, to be laid alongside them - though not to replace them in such a way that they fall out of use. In this latter connection there would be a place for the kind of process described by Professor Wiles in *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, where he writes that he thinks that Christian doctrine has been right "in recognising something special about its relationship to its own past, to the events of Christ's life and the scriptural witness to them in particular" (p. 9) but that changes in Christian doctrine (as changes in other disciplines) occur through "seeing the same subject in a new perspective" (p. 7, also cf. p. 13 paragraph 1 of his article "In what sense is Christianity a historical religion?" in *Theology*, Jan. 1978); nevertheless I would see this as a process of laying new terms alongside the old (as often happens in commentaries in the field of the arts) rather than of replacing them.

For I want in the first place to bring forward examples from other disciplines - of art, architecture and drama - to suggest that

the pastness of great achievements, their historical remoteness and subsequent cultural changes do not prevent recognition of their greatness. It is normally necessary to study the period and the cultural conditions when they were created to fully appreciate them; yet their greatness has been appreciated, especially with the help of such study, in very different ages and cultures. It seems reasonable to say that there are factors integral to the works of art, architecture and drama that enable them to have significance to people of very different periods and cultures; their original production in a different culture to our own does not prevent their being meaningful to us in the present day.

In the second place, I want to suggest that if past great achievements (acknowledged as such in the cultural climate in which they were created and later) are no longer highly regarded and no longer made use of, then a vital stimulus for future creative developments is lost.

Let us, then, to bring out these points, examine in art the Byzantine styles, and its influence on the Renaissance painters in Italy and Spain. Certainly, the Byzantine style of painting developed in a different cultural climate to Renaissance Italy or Spain. Moreover, it concentrated on producing an effect rather than an exact likeness; with its full-frontal, two-dimensional figures and stylised features it was very different from the later more "realistic" trends in art. Yet it can be understood with the help of artistic and cultural guides which explain the stylistic conventions; moreover, as regards the greatness of the finished work of art, preferences are very divided between critics who prefer the early Byzantine works and those who prefer those of the Renaissance. The greater pastness of the Byzantine art and its greater cultural remoteness do not necessarily seem to affect the final impression made on the beholder.

Furthermore, it seems to have been the fact that Byzantine styles of painting were available to view and the techniques of the Byzantine painters could still be studied and learnt that acted as a stimulus to Giotto and later El Greco; if Byzantine art had been destroyed or even no longer highly regarded, would Giotto or El Greco have had the stimulus to develop their own style of painting? It seems unlikely that those artists would have developed their own work without an opportunity to look at great Byzantine works of art and study their creators' techniques.

In rather a similar way, El Greco acted as a stimulus to the impressionist painters in the 19th century and 20th century. Despite the "pastness" of El Greco's work, he can be understood with the help of a cultural guide, and his works inspired such painters as Cezanne, Degas and Picasso, who aimed to reproduce his distortions, to secure similar dramatic effects.

Architecture, too, affords another example of how the “pastness” of architectural styles and the cultural remoteness of the ages which originally developed those styles need not prevent later generations with a different cultural background from appreciating the earlier achievements. The classical architecture of Greece and Rome had left considerable surviving remains which could be observed by the architects and builders of the Renaissance period. Although the buildings came from a very different culture and civilisation yet this did not prevent the builders of the Renaissance from appreciating and admiring their achievements, and paying them the ultimate compliment of reproducing their characteristics.

Moreover, if the buildings had not themselves remained visible, so that *their styles and proportions could be copied*, it is hard to see how the Classical revival found in Renaissance and later architecture could have been inspired. If the buildings had all been demolished as outdated and from an alien culture then a major stimulus for revived buildings in these styles would have been lost, and also those interesting adaptations of Classical forms for new uses which we find in Renaissance architecture would probably never have taken place.

If we turn now to drama and dramatic literature, we similarly find that many writers whose greatness is widely acknowledged lived in times far past, and culturally remote from our day. Shakespeare, for example, in his plays has many references, allusions and themes which are closely related to the cultural conditions of his day. But with the help of a commentary it is possible for these to be explained, so that we can enter sympathetically into the cultural background of his day, and thereby understand and appreciate the plays more fully. Moreover, it is possible still to perform Shakespeare to a crowded theatre; there seems to be a perennial interest in the themes and the predicaments of the characters in the plays which can in fact be appreciated since we share so many features of life and human personality with the people depicted.

Again, if Shakespeare had no longer been performed it would seem that a great stimulus to other artists would have been lost. Indeed, even if his plays had been preserved in written form, it seems scarcely likely that they would have inspired others without performance and use. As it is, we find that Shakespeare has inspired prose renderings, opera, ballet and incidental music. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” has inspired an opera by Britten; “Romeo and Juliet” has given rise to operas by Bellini and Gounod, a ballet by Prokofiev and the “Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture” by Tchaikovsky. “The Merry Wives of Windsor” was the source for operas by Nicolai, Salieri and Verdi and for “Sir John in Love” by Vaughan Williams; it also inspired “Falstaff”, a symph-

onic Study by Elgar. "Much Ado About Nothing" gave the stimulus to an opera by Stanford, and "Julius Caesar" gave rise to operas by Handel and Malipiero. "Hamlet" has inspired an opera by Mercadante, a symphonic poem by Liszt and a concert overture by Tchaikovsky; "Othello" has given rise to great operas by Rossini and Verdi, and to Dvorak's "Othello" overture. "King Lear" has led to a concert overture by Berlioz and incidental music by Debussy, "Macbeth" to operas by Verdi, Bloch and Collingwood and also a symphonic poem by Richard Strauss; "Antony and Cleopatra" has given rise to an opera by Malipiero, while "The Tempest" has inspired incidental music by Purcell, Sullivan and Sibelius.

Yet while it is doubtful if these works would have been inspired if Shakespeare's works had not been in use and performed, the existence of these later versions does not diminish Shakespeare's own stature. However great some of these works are in their own right, they are not normally considered to replace Shakespeare's work, but are laid alongside it.

It seems then that in these other disciplines the pastness of achievements and their cultural remoteness need not prevent people from understanding them with the help of cultural guides; for this reason arguments against the continued use of and authority of the Bible, Creeds and even decisions of councils which were accepted by the greater part of the Christian faithful, which argue against them simply on the grounds of their pastness and cultural remoteness do seem to carry much less weight. Though clearly the truth-claims made by and through these documents need to be assessed (just as we can ask whether Byzantine painters successfully depict the personalities of those whom they portray, or whether Shakespeare's characters show *true-to-life attitudes and reactions*), yet here too cultural guides to the thought of the period can make the meaning intended clear and show us their significance.

Again, "greatness" on some theories of language has been held to be a subjective term expressing our appreciation of that of which it is predicated. Though not all philosophers of language would accept this view, and some would prefer to see "great" as expressing a perception of an objective quality of greatness, yet, on either view of language, the "greatness" of the Bible and Creeds and (on a lesser level) declarations of faith which have commended assent on a world-wide scale needs to be justified; for adherents of the former theory of language the need is particularly acute. In either case, moreover, an assessment of "truth-claims" and intrinsic qualities plays an important part in deciding whether the work can be termed "great". What I have been concerned to do in the space of this article is to suggest that if in other fields "the great" is not exclusively identified with "the contemporary" but can be

recognised in works springing from very different cultures, it does make implausible arguments that temporal distance in the past and production in a different cultural world need inhibit recognition of greatness if other grounds for predicating this are present.

For the pastness of great achievements in the fields of art, architecture and drama does not seem to prevent appreciation of their greatness in the present day. The works have continued to be gazed at (in the case of art and architecture) and performed (in the case of drama). They have inspired more recent creative work to be set alongside them, but on the one hand it is doubtful if so much creative work would have been inspired if the earlier great works had disappeared or become disused, and on the other hand the existence of newer works inspired by the older ones has not detracted from the acknowledgement of the greatness of the older works, nor has it prevented continued use of and respect for them.

I want to argue from these parallels that, as regards theology and the life of the Church, the distance in time and culture which separates us from the ages in which the Bible was written, and from the world in which the Creeds and Conciliar decisions were formulated is not a ground which need prevent recognition of the greatness and permanent value of these writings if other reasons for predicating these are present. More than this, I want to suggest that if there were a "diminution of emphasis on the formulas of the past, even of the Biblical past" then a vital stimulus for future creative developments in explanation of the divine activity disclosed to us through the earlier documents would be lost.

If in the general fields of art, architecture, drama and its literature the pastness of great achievements which do not make any special far-reaching claims for themselves need not preclude recognition of their greatness, then in theology, where the gospel writers tell us of the far-reaching claims made and implied by Christ, where the church on a universal scale has attributed high authority to those writings which prepared the way for Christ and to the apostolic witness to him, and where as a subordinate authority the Church has approved declarations of faith to explain that witness, then there seems further reason not to let the "pastness" of these writings, or their emanation from a world in some ways different culturally from our own, prevent us from an examination of the claims concerned.

If, as T. S. Eliot suggested, in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, "the historical sense involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence" and, in connection with poetry and the arts, a writer "is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is

dead, but of what is already living” can we not reasonably say that in theology likewise the pastness of the past and its comparative cultural remoteness need not preclude our examination of the claims of past figures and works to greatness?

## **Trotsky’s Morals And Ours Political Morality And The Revolutionary Christian**

Duncan Macpherson

This article is based on Trotsky’s article *Their Morals and Ours* (*New International*, February 1938) which I will refer to as TMO. Taken together with his second article *The Moralists and Sycophants against Marxism* (*New International*, 9 June 1939)<sup>1</sup> which reiterates many of the same arguments TMO is important because it represents a clear and consistent account of the moral philosophy of Revolutionary Marxism. In passing I should point out that even talking about the moral philosophy of Marxism is a little contradictory since for Marxism political philosophy and moral philosophy are the same thing. In classical times no distinction was made between the political and the moral obligations of man. In the Greek city state a good member of the *polis* was quite simply a good man. Only with the rise of capitalism did it become necessary to posit the Kantian moral imperative as something external to the social and political life of man.<sup>2</sup> In his essay on Kant<sup>3</sup> Herbert Marcuse argues that Capitalist ideology was faced with two conflicting needs. On the one hand it was necessary to foster individualism as an essential component of the growth of capitalist economy but on the other hand it was necessary to subordinate the individual to the needs of the bourgeois state. If the individual were subordinated by crude repression this would expose the mythological character of capitalist freedom of the individual. By positing the moral *a priori*, a call to duty above class, Kant provided bourgeois ideology with the solution to this problem. Like Marx but unlike Marcuse TMO is polemical rather than speculative in tone, written in a specific historical situation to meet specific charges against Marxism.