

famous *Akathistos Hymnos* uses rhyme as a formal constituent in metre several centuries before rhyme was used in European poetry. It would take a longish essay rather than a review to do justice to all that lies between these chapters. I will only say that the comparisons between modern, ancient and medieval ways of thought are scrupulously fair and extremely interesting.

The Bible is referred to, in accordance with Soviet usage, under the heading of "the literature of the ancient near east" and the copious references to the Bible and other early religious writings are generally given in Latin. The notes and indexes at the end of the book give an enormous amount of valuable information which is often very hard of access in the Soviet Union, but could be omitted from an English translation.

All in all, the book is perceptive and beautifully written, as well as being very learned. I am not completely convinced by all Mr Averintsev's views, but he is generally right and he is always stimulating.

JOHN LAWRENCE

The Christian-Marxist Dialogue and Beyond

by Peter Hebblethwaite, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977, 122 pp.,
£2.50.

*Communism and Christianity in Theory and Practice:
Doctrines/Facts/Conclusions*

by Aid to the Church in Need (United Kingdom), 1978, 136 pp. No price.

Among the tributes which flowed in upon the death of Paul VI, several came from communist sources, including some particularly warm ones from Italian communists. This, many newspapers pointed out, was quite a new development which had happened to no other Pope, at least not on this scale. What did such a response indicate? Did it mean that Marxists were at last recognizing that Christianity provides something necessary for mankind which their own system lacks, or was it, on the contrary, an oblique way of expressing their gratitude for the beginning of what they might hope to be a Christian "sell-out" to their own position?

Pius XI declared that communism was "intrinsically evil" – yet by the 1960s many Christians believed that they were Marxists as well. In the past 15 or so years, Christian-Marxist dialogue has been increasingly pursued in Europe and Latin America. In *The Christian-Marxist Dialogue and Beyond* Peter Hebblethwaite provides an account of this dialogue which is both highly objective and, despite the jargon encrusted nature of the subject, stimulatingly readable. He deals with this dialogue first as

it has taken place in Europe, and then in Latin America where the European dialogues tend to be regarded merely as so many futile colloquies. He looks at the possibility of future dialogue with Chinese communists and examines whether the "outstretched hand" offered by the Euro-communists to the Church indicates any modification in their position. Finally, he considers whether dialogue can really take place in any depth between two systems ostensibly so opposed to each other.

This, of course, is the crucial question. In *Communism and Christianity in Theory and Practice: Doctrines/Facts/Conclusions*, published by the United Kingdom branch of Aid to the Church in Need, we are provided with a useful anthology of passages dealing with the teaching of the Church on communism, the teaching of Marxism on religion, and the reactions of Christians who are experiencing Marxist rule. This particular collection tends to give only the official line on both sides – clearly a book which provided extracts representing every shade of Christian-Marxist attitudes would extend to an enormous length – but the passages are skilfully selected and well-balanced. There are many mis-spellings and a few inconsistencies – it may not be obvious to everyone for example that Kounial (p. 84) and Cunhal (p. 136) are the same person – and some of the translations appear to be reaching us at two removes from the original. But these are minor blemishes in a useful book which, although unlikely to be found in the hands of those engaged in dialogue, represents a point of view which has to be taken into account if the results of dialogue are to have any substance.

But can they have any substance at all in any case? Both books agree that the fundamental cleavage between Christianity and Marxism is to be found in their differing attitudes to human nature. In what is still the most mammoth exposition of the specifically Christian philosophy of history, the *City of God*, St Augustine rejected the classical Greek view of society on the grounds that it was founded on a defective understanding of human nature. Is the Marxist view of human nature something that Christians can simply overlook in the hope of cooperation on a "practical" level, or is it something that invalidates their whole system, particularly in its effects on the "practical level" from which, after all, human nature can hardly be absent? (See on this issue "Marxism-Leninism: Original Sin and the Destiny of Christian Civilization" by Nicholas Zernov in *Christian*: Vol. 2, No. 3, Lent 1975, pp. 209–18.) And to what extent, if at all, is Christian-Marxist dialogue merely an academic parlour-game, played by intellectuals who appear to be equally unrepresentative of the sides for which they claim to be speaking? These are the kind of questions which these two books, both highly stimulating and strangely complementary to each other, provoke.