

## ON CHRISTIAN ART

IF the art of painting exists for its own sake, if painting is nothing more than a sensuous arrangement, or (as the modernists would put it) an "organization" of line, colour, rhythm and mass, and if there is no underlying ethical or religious principle that finds its way from the artist's mind to the painted work, then of necessity the speculations and conclusions contained in the following essay are valueless. As a basis of agreement it may be acknowledged that art has no conscious concern with morals, and that the painter who has the deliberate intention of expressing an ethical or moral concept by means of his art is handicapped from the start. We may agree also that the satisfying quality (which we call beauty) of a painting depends upon quite other elements than those that belong to moral worth, and that the ethical outlook of the artist cannot and does not affect the aesthetic perfection of his work. All this we may concede. But it would be unreasonable to infer from this that his ethical outlook does not nevertheless find expression in his work, *whether he will it so or not*. A pious person may produce an execrable or negligible work of art, but at least the piety will be apparent in it. A hedonist, of a robust and vigorous habit of mind, may produce a series of works of great aesthetic perfection, but in the sum total of his works his hedonism can hardly fail to appear. All art is self-revelation.

To deny this is to deny the artist's power of projecting his whole personality into his work. It is to make of him two men, or rather two half men, instead of one complete man. But he cannot be Mr. Smith when he goes to the church, the tavern or the theatre, and Mr. Jones when he stands before his easel. He remains the same personality whatever his immediate preoccupation, and it is this personality in its completeness that (for those that have eyes to see) stands revealed in his work, for art partakes of the nature of confession.

The statement that art exists for its own sake is therefore only partially and very imperfectly true. Its truth is only

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completed by the assumption that art is a thing quite apart from daily life—a matter which it is the purpose of this essay to dispute. And the critic who resists the thought of this isolation of art from life will necessarily resist the thought of art's existence for its own sake. Such a man will urgently desire to see a higher degree of visible reintegration of art with the things of daily life, for he will be firmly convinced that, in reality, the two things are inseparable, just as Mr. Jones before his easel is inseparable from Mr. Jones drinking his beer in the tavern, or from Mr. Jones listening to a sermon. "Do not undertake the ridiculous enterprise," writes Maritain, "of dissociating within yourself the artist and the Christian. They are one, if you *are* truly Christian, and if your art is not isolated from your soul by some aesthetic system. But apply the artist only to the work, and precisely because they are one, the work will be entirely that of both."<sup>1</sup> A work of art reveals far more than its author's power of aesthetic expression.

The apparent separation of art from life, which would seem to be so marked a feature of our own country and our own times, is the fruit of centuries of development. And although the dogmatic enunciation of the "Art for Art's sake" creed was long delayed—delayed indeed until the late nineteenth century, the period of Whistler and of Oscar Wilde—the seeds of isolation were sown at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, when the whole field of European culture was harrowed by these "liberating" movements, and since when there has been a continuous tendency for the artist to depart further and further from the ken of the common people and to rise steadily in the social scale. In the fourteenth century the artist had indeed been sometimes a monk, but much more frequently he had been a peasant, even a serf. In the sixteenth century he might be a courtier, in the eighteenth century a knight. Victoria showed that he might even aspire to the Peerage. But the artist's gradual conquest of the heights of gentility was by no means

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<sup>1</sup> *Art et Scholastique* (Louis Rouart et fils, 6 Place Saint Sulpice, Paris, VI), p. 113.

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an unmixed blessing to the community at large, for as he himself rose above the ranks of the common people he unfortunately took his painting and his influence with him. In England his work disappeared from the walls of the churches and found its way, first to the private galleries of the artist's new-found peers, the landed gentry, and eventually to the public galleries of the great cities. It was soon to disappear from shop-signs, and to-day even inn-signs are the product of the machine. We may still admire the artist's work in the galleries (often free of charge), but we must not think of taking it home with us. It is governmental or municipal property. If we belong to the middle class of society, we buy a few reproductions and hang them about our flats. If we belong to the "working class," we just forget all about it.

To all appearances, then, "Art for Art's sake" has won a notable victory. We have given such practical expression to this creed that we have succeeded in building a dividing wall between art and life, between what is "beautiful" and what is "useful." "Useful" things are now supplied for us by machines, while "beautiful" things are heaped together in vast semi-public collections. But, in spite of this apparent triumph of "Art for Art's sake," there are still among us some recusants who obstinately refuse to believe in the soundness of this modern article of faith, and who decline to give spiritual submission to its hierarchy. Not only do such men refuse to attend public worship at Burlington House, but when they are assured that art is for the "cultured" and has no connection with ordinary, daily life, they rudely contradict, crying—"Bosh! All art is propaganda!" And this, of course, is a flat denial of the creed of "Art for Art's sake."

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But if in fact it be true that all art is propaganda, and if, in the self-revelation that is of the essence of his work, the painter must perforce express something of his beliefs, and of his personal attitude towards ultimate things, then indeed it follows inevitably that, since the sixteenth century disintegration of Christian unity, there must have existed as

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many shades of sectarian thought in European art as there have been artists to paint them. The truth of this becomes more apparent if, for a while, we consider the converse; for it is not to be denied that, before the Renaissance and the Reformation, art was a very much more "united" thing in Europe. National characteristics can indeed be detected in Gothic art, but an expert eye is needed to discover them. When we know that, in the earliest spring-time of the Middle Ages, *lapis lazuli*, to be made into colour for the use of European illuminators, was already being brought by caravan down the "golden road" from Samarkand, "when we realize" (as Professor Laurie writes) "that the Irish monks of the eighth century used ultramarine to colour their manuscripts, and remote Iona and Holy Island used this pigment, the material for which had probably come across Asia and Europe from Bokhara, we get a new conception of the trade possibilities of what are glibly called 'the dark ages.'"<sup>2</sup> We may get a new conception, too, of how, two centuries before William the Norman set foot on English soil, the interchange of European knowledge in things pertaining to the painter's art was already an accomplished fact. And later, when in the fourteenth century monastic patience had been rewarded and the art of painting had passed into the hands of the faithful commons, a unified family likeness is found throughout the world of European art, a likeness that is unmistakable, even in the work of countries so far separated and (as one might be excused for supposing) as little in touch as England and Poland. Truly, in the universality of the formal art of the Europe of the Middle Ages, there is striking evidence of the supernatural character of the bonds of faith.

"Nothing," writes Christopher Dawson, "could be more spontaneous, less artificial and 'cultured' than the genius of Saint Francis, yet he is the final fruit of a long process of spiritual cultivation. He marks the coming of age of Christian Europe and the birth of a new consciousness. And hence it is no accident that his advent should have been followed by the appearance of a new Christian art and poetry which,

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<sup>2</sup> *New Light on Old Masters* (Sheldon Press), p. 31.

as Walter Pater wrote, 'gave visible feature and colour and a palpable place among men to the regenerate race.'<sup>3</sup> Paul Claudel has voiced the same thought thus: "Saint Francis on fire brings Giotto in his wake, and Giotto brings the whole art of Italy."<sup>4</sup> Three generations after Giotto, and in the same direct line of spiritual descent, comes Cennino Cennini who, in about the year 1400, was writing the book of his art for the benefit of his pupils and followers, and who speaks with grateful reverence of the Saint and of the painters who followed after him. Agnolo Gaddi, Cennini's master and teacher, was (he tells us) the son of Taddeo Gaddi, and Taddeo had been held at the Baptismal font by Giotto himself, and had subsequently worked for no less than twenty-four years as Giotto's pupil.

Cennini's book was "made and composed in the reverence of God, and of the Virgin Mary, and of St. Eustachius, and of St. Francis, and of St. John Baptist, and of St. Anthony of Padua, and in general of all the Saints of God; and in reverence of Giotto, of Taddeo, and of Agnolo, the master of Cennino . . . either as a labour of love for all those who feel in them a desire to understand, or as a means of embellishing these fundamental theories with some jewel, that they may be set forth royally without reserve; offering to these theories whatever little understanding God has granted me as an unimportant practising member of the profession of painting."<sup>5</sup> The book is filled throughout with practical instructions for all that pertained to the various branches of the painter's craft, as this was understood in the late Middle Ages, but the Holy Trinity and the Saints seem never to be absent from the writer's thought—"Always invoke the name of the glorious Virgin Mary"—"in the name of the Holy Trinity, I will introduce you to the laying on of colours"—"I give you this urgent advice, to make an effort always to embellish with fine gold and with good colours, especially

<sup>3</sup> *Mediæval Religion* (Sheed & Ward), p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ways and Crossways* (Sheed & Ward), p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> Three MS. copies of Cennini's work are believed to exist, and it has been more than once translated into English. For this and the following quotations I am indebted to Prof. Thompson's translation published by the Yale University Press.

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the Figure of Our Lady, and if you would wish to reply that a poor person cannot make this outlay, even if you were not adequately paid, God and Our Lady will reward you for it body and soul." And the book runs on to its conclusion while the hands of the writer are never lifted from the keys that give forth these same chords of prayer "that God All High, Our Lady, St. John, St. Luke the Evangelist and Painter, St. Eustachius, St. Francis, and St. Anthony of Padua, may give us grace and courage to sustain and bear in peace the burdens and struggles of this world; and, as regards the students of this book, that they will grant them grace to study it well and to retain it well, so that by their labours they may live in peace and keep their families in this world through grace, and at the end on high through glory *per infinita saecula saeculorum.*"

If the spirit of "Saint Francis on Fire" is found to burn so fiercely in the writing of Cennini, undertaken some sixty or seventy years after the death of Giotto, it becomes easier to understand how it is that the "message" of the Primitives appears in their work as clearly and as forcibly as its beauty. And here there is a striking refutation of the doctrine of "Art for Art's sake" and of the misleading half-truth that it conveys. The Primitives indeed sought the perfection of their work for its own sake, but they sought it also, and principally, for the sake of the glory of God and of His Saints, for the love of Holy Church and the ideal of Christian Unity. They had no need to strive consciously towards "Christian" art. In the cultural atmosphere of the age in which they lived such a motival impulse was inevitable, and since they were *environed* by the Faith, their art was interwoven with their religious consciousness. In their eyes, therefore, slipshod work was to the artist what a fault in choir was to the monk—negligence in the presence of God.

St. Dionysius the Areopagite, writing of the Celestial Hierarchy, has suggested that since the supernatural beings who abide in the divine Presence are far beyond any notion or image that we are capable of forming of them, it is more fitting to represent them by showing them as they are not, than by attempting to show them as we imagine that they

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are.<sup>6</sup> Herein is profound truth, but the practical application of this truth to religious art tends eventually to reduce this to a system of pure symbols. The Primitives recognized no obligation to confine their art within such boundaries. On the contrary, they seemed to be able to gauge to a nicety just how far representational painting might be carried with safety, and to maintain a delicate balance between realism and symbolism. It is perhaps idle to speculate upon just how far they were trying to achieve that realism that was to become an accomplished fact in the glaring noon-day light of the full Renaissance. The tendency of modern art criticism is to discover a precursory school of thought to every movement, and in the light of this view, we would seem to be justified in assuming that the Primitives were working towards a greater realism than they were themselves ever able to achieve; and that the very qualities that go to make them "primitive" were due, at any rate in part, to certain technical limitations belonging to their epoch. However that may be, it remains the fact that painters of talent, or even genius, living in modern times, who have tried, like Puvis de Chavannes, to recapture the spirit of Primitive painting have had but little success in doing so, and this despite the fact that they have had at their command a wealth of knowledge and all the advantages which the modern artists' colourman can give. The reason for such non-success is no doubt that, for the purpose of such experiment, the times were "out of joint." It is certain, however, that the painters who worked between the period of Giotto and that of Jan Van Eyck were making use of a medium which set a definite limit upon the manner of their expression. They worked in tempera, and later with a "stand-oil" medium similar to that which is still used by coach-painters and sign-writers, but which, at the close of the Middle Ages, was to disappear from the artist's paint-box and to be replaced by modern linseed. It is a

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<sup>6</sup> "In things divine negations are true, affirmations are incongruous; to set forth unlikeness fits better the showing of their darkness. Things unlike them, if they do not add to their honour, at least do not dishonour. *Si non condecorant, non dedecorant.*" Quoted by Claudel. *Ways and Crossways*, p. 135.

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sufficiently curious fact that, with the "liberating" movements of Renaissance and Reformation, there came a "liberating" medium that enabled the painter to use his brush in a new and freer way, in a way that was perhaps more individualistic, more spontaneous, and certainly very vigorous and telling. "Stand-oil" had been the ideal medium for the painstaking formality of Gothic painting. Its chief characteristic is that stiffness that makes it quite unsuitable for rapid, "brushy" work, or for obtaining a quick impression; but it gives a more clean-cut line and a greater brilliance of colour, and, owing to the fact that it protects the pigment from chemical reaction when in contact with air, it gives to the work a far greater permanence than later painters have been able to achieve. Scientifically considered, it has great advantages over modern linseed and, used with a sable brush, it is admirably suited to the artist who wishes to give a deliberate, formal character to his work.

But, in point of fact, at the time of the Reformation, the whole technique of painting underwent a fundamental change. The formality of Memling, Van Eyck, William Baker and Gérard David was to disappear, giving place to a new and more liberal school that was quick to realize the possibilities of the new technique, and that found such giants as Rembrandt and Rubens among its early champions. The *methods* of painting that came into being at the close of the sixteenth century have remained substantially unchanged until the present day, for, with the coming of modern linseed oil, the quality of "bravura" entered the world of painting. Rembrandt, Velasquez, and the English school of the eighteenth century, were soon to exploit the possibilities of a rich and heavy impasto, and of dashing draughtsmanship carried out directly with the fully loaded brush. Realistic representation, perspective, chiaroscuro, had one by one been explored and mastered. Landscape was to be studied for its own sake, and not merely as a background for a portrait or a figure, and the young painter, no longer an apprentice but a student, was soon to forget all that his predecessors had had to learn with regard to the preparation of the materials of the painter's craft. While schools of art replaced the



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masters' work-shops and picture-galleries came into being, there also appeared a new race of men—the artists' colourmen. The last trace of "servility" had disappeared from painting. She was now fully established as one of the liberal arts.

The close of the sixteenth century, then, saw the death of that formality in painting that had seemed to accord so naturally with the Liturgy, the chant, the philosophy of the Schools, the architecture of the great Cathedrals (with which it was intimately allied), and all that co-existed with the universal acceptance of a clear-cut and dogmatic faith. But the advent of the new technique, accompanied as it was by the revival of interest in the myths of antiquity, was made the occasion of an outburst of Paganistic art that extended from Venice, Rome and Florence throughout Europe. Whereas formerly the painter had laboured with loving patience to embellish with gold and colours the austere or splendid robes of the Saints of God, now he took delight in moulding the heroic torso of a demigod or the limbs of an Aphrodite. In the art of the Church, in place of Gothic, there arose the style known as Baroque, and which, writes Claudel,<sup>7</sup> "seems to have taken for its object not, like Gothic art, to *represent* the concrete facts and the historic truths of the Faith to the eyes of the multitude just like a great open Bible, but to *point out* with noise, with pomp and eloquence and often with the most moving pathos, a vacant space like a medallion, with its approaches barred to senses cast out with pomp and circumstance. There you see Saints whose face and attitude bespeak the ineffable and the invisible; the whole disorderly plethora of ornament, with angels in a whirlpool of wings upholding a picture blurred and bewrayed with religious intensity, and statues that look as though they were blown about by a great wind coming from another world."

But most significant of all, the opening of the flood-gates of liberal thought upon Northern Europe eventually brought into being that school of anecdotal, capricious, sentimental

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<sup>7</sup> In a letter to Alexander Cingria, author of *La décadence de l'Art sacré* (Cahiers Vaudois, Lausanne).

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and impulsive artistic expression by means of which for the first time the Incarnate Lord appears in the guise of an elegant and well-groomed young man. Never has the painter been further from the spirit of St. Dionysius' exhortation on the "shadowing forth of the Angelic Names" by means of contrast and antithesis rather than by an attempted likeness, and never before has the Church been at a greater loss to accord the art of the century with her changeless Liturgy. "The figures of the Lamb, the Lion, and the Fish," as Claudel has written, "would more fittingly represent for us the Word made Flesh than that portrait of a smart young fellow in a well-groomed beard. The disguise of a child, poor man or leper fits him better than our tinsel gold-braid and that derisory purple cloak which mankind, since the days of the *Ecce Homo*, endeavours to put around His shoulders. He would have no other Crown than the Crown of Thorns, no other Royalty than what Pilate traced above His Head upon the Cross in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. It is when He opens His Heart to us on Calvary that He tries to tell us what made His Face dazzling upon Mount Tabor."<sup>8</sup>

But the new realism in painting was to become a faultless vehicle in the eyes of the Reformers; for, in spite of the iconoclastic excesses of the more fanatical of their followers, neither Luther nor Calvin was positively antagonistic to art as such, and so long as it was free from the taint of "idolatrous purpose." Luther is said to have encouraged the painting of Biblical illustrations upon the walls of private houses, and Calvin protested that he yielded to no man in the matter of the appreciation of art. The fanatical zeal that led the Huguenot and the Puritan to such ruthless destruction of Gothic art was probably due, at least in part, not only to their religious susceptibilities, but to a real disgust towards a form of primitive and quasi-sacramental art that, in the light of the New Learning, they genuinely looked upon as barbaric, crude, boorish and ignoble. Protestantism, too, with its strong humanistic emphasis, found in the new realism a ready means of propagating its own various and

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<sup>8</sup> *Ways and Crossways*, p. 136.

particular views upon the aspects of the Sacred Humanity. In the person of Rembrandt there was soon found a champion both of the new religion and of the new art, for it was in Holland and in England that the seeds of Protestant expression in art were to fall upon the most favourable soil. But in England indeed the blossoming of such art was to be long delayed. In what had once been a veritable fortress of Liturgical art, the immediate effect of the iconoclastic onslaught was to stem up the tide of native painting altogether; for, since in the sixteenth century the flames of sacred art had been forcibly extinguished, it was not until the time of Hogarth that Englishmen were to turn again to the practice of subject-painting. English painting, however, was to know a real renewal, and, under the influence of a Protestant and Classical culture, to give to the world that unrivalled school of portrait-painters and landscapists of the eighteenth century, by whom the subtle greys and blues of English skies, and the glorious park-like dignity of the English landscape were realized for the first time. But under these same influences, the art of the Sanctuary lay, as it were, in the tomb; and since the partial recovery of Catholicism in England, the problem of the revival of ecclesiastical art in England is one that has exercised many minds. Pugin, taking arms against a sea of troubles, sought the solution in a heroic and almost single-handed endeavour to resuscitate the art of the thirteenth century, and died magnificently in the attempt. The "Pre-Raphaelites," meanwhile, thought it possible to recapture the spirit of the Primitives without possessing the Primitives' faith, and were successful in giving to the world an artistic output that is as faithfully Protestant in its feeling as is the writing of Dickens or Browning. In the painting of Burne-Jones, Rosetti and Holman Hunt, there is even less "Gothic" feeling than in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and it is perhaps a matter for congratulation that the Victorian "Gothic Revival" in architecture brought no very considerable corresponding movement in pseudo-Gothic painting; for, in the things belonging to art, the form of its general expression must be dictated by the mind of the epoch, and the form of individual

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expression by a sincere purpose in the mind of the artist.

Since the Renaissance, then, and under the widespread influence of Protestantism in all its forms, the artist has permitted himself far greater liberty in the treatment of sacred themes than ever his mediæval ancestors knew. The advent of the "easel-picture," that child of the Renaissance, released the artist from the obligation or privilege of working in close co-operation with the mason, the sculptor and the carpenter, and was largely instrumental in causing the abandonment of the religious "formulae" that had been so prominent in the ecclesiastical art of the Middle Ages. Both in painting and in sculpture the mediæval craftsman had made a free use of certain well-known and easily recognized formulae, not only for "shadowing forth" the things of God, but also for the representation of allegories, romances, legends and fairy tales. The legends of Tristram and Isolt, of Valentine and Orson, of the Knight of the swan, of Sir Yvain, and even Aesop's Fables, were all made the subjects of conventionalized treatment, and this method of expression became intensified when the subject was of a religious nature, more particularly when it was of a dogmatic nature. The higher the theme, the more definite was the formula used for giving it expression. A certain liberty is seen in the treatment of such subjects as "the Dance of Death" or "les Trois Morts et les Trois Vifs," but for work of an utterly sacred nature the formula becomes less flexible, and such is the case with representations of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Eucharist, the Corporal Works of Mercy, even the Crown of Thorns.<sup>9</sup> Whereas the treatment of secular and romantic subjects tended to be humorous, free and whimsical, the religious formulae were definitely dogmatic in their clarity, but permitting nevertheless of an almost infinite variety in such matters as purity of line, choice of colour, and all that belongs to the sphere of decoration. The effect of the enlargement and of the diversity of Protestant thought was to

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<sup>9</sup> Derived, in this case, from the Relic itself, as Dom Ethelbert Horne, O.S.B., has shown in a short monograph on this subject.

liberate the artist from the obligations and precautions (the fruit of centuries of unified Christian culture) which were embodied in these formulae, and which had safeguarded his work from the danger of giving expression to a false or temerarious interpretation of the defined dogmas of the Church. It is by no means an exaggeration to allege that whereas Protestantism has expected that the "inspired" artist should, by means of his work, be able to throw new light upon divine things, especially upon new aspects of the Sacred Humanity, under the mediæval culture no such thing was either expected or encouraged. In dealing with the dogmas of the Church, let the formulae suffice the artist. He was free at least to "decorate" these formulae to his heart's content, and, in any case, he would hardly be likely, by his own unaided efforts, to evolve anything more solemn or more significant; and, properly understood, these formulae gave him all the scope and all the freedom that he could reasonably desire. There was always danger in abandoning them. No permanent or stable substitute has since been found to take their place, and the whole tendency of present-day religious art, whether Catholic or Protestant, is to return to their use. A deliberate return to formalism in secular art also has recently occupied the minds of many artists, both in England and on the Continent, and such a return would perhaps be the logical outcome of all that is best in present-day artistic thought. *Prosit.*

But in considering the earthly means whereby a regeneration of the art of the Church can be brought about, it is necessary to take into account all that has been achieved in the world of art since that world ceased to look to the Church as its centre of radiation and the source of its life. The work of the Protestant masters of painting, however ill-accorded it may be thought to be to the spirit of the Liturgy, cannot now be passed over as if it had never been. Before a unified Catholic art can be brought again into being it will be necessary to take cognisance of all the artist's new-found powers, and all his newly discovered means of expression. If the artist, in exploring the realms of Protestantism and even of agnosticism, has developed new qualities, then it is

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the task of the Church to subject these qualities to conversion. A unified Catholic artistic expression would provide one of the surest material means towards the reconversion of Europe, just as a unified English Catholic art would surely tend towards the reconversion of England. But, however desirable either of these ends may be, it would seem to be impossible, or at least unlikely, that a unified aesthetic expression should precede conversion, or *vice versa*. The two things must develop side by side. The conversion of a people and the development of its sacred art are correlated—the one must reciprocate the work of the other.

“Christianity,” writes Maritain, “does not make art any easier. It takes from art many of its easy methods, bars its way before many places, but this it does in order to raise the level of art.”<sup>10</sup> And again, “Say not that Christian art is impossible. Say that it is difficult, doubly difficult, difficult *squared*, since it is difficult to be an artist and very difficult to be a Christian, and because the whole difficulty is not simply the sum but the product of these two difficulties multiplied; for it is a matter of reconciling two absolutes. Say that the difficulty becomes outrageous when the whole epoch is living far from Christ, for the artist is very much dependent upon the spirit of his age. But has courage ever yet been lacking on this earth?”<sup>11</sup>

It is the practice now, as indeed it was at the very time of the Reformation, for artists to work for both Catholic or Protestant alike. Thus was the doctrine of “Art for Art’s sake” given practical expression at the very beginning of the new order of things. But when a non-Catholic artist is asked to “shadow forth” dogmatic teaching to which he feels no obligation to give intellectual assent, it is difficult to see how he can now do otherwise than make some form of adaptation of the artistic formulae that served the mediæval craftsman. Whether he is able to use these formulae with complete understanding, or whether (as is very probable) there is a certain essence in the older work that is found to be outside the range of his realization, it is yet more difficult

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<sup>10</sup> *Art et Scholastique*, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

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to see how he, a non-believer, can give to the work that spark of fire, and above all that essential sincerity, that befit a painting or an image designed to be placed before the eyes of the faithful as a subject for meditation or a stimulus to prayer. If it be agreed that sincerity is of the very heart and essence of the painter's or the sculptor's work, then it is surely in the very highest degree desirable that the art of the Church should be free from the slightest suspicion of containing what is counterfeit, factitious or *ersatz*.

The sacred formulae of the mediæval Church, when they had passed through the mind and hands of the craftsman, were something more than so much painted wood or stone. Nor did they arise from haphazard thought. They were, like St. Francis himself, "the final fruit of a long process of spiritual cultivation," and there is a certain reverence due to these "sermons in stones." For example, the image of the Holy Trinity, which may still be seen on the Hussey tomb at Wells, is indeed a fitting matter for Christian meditation, and it is possibly from the practice of some such meditative exercises that the living fire and the dominating, pervading sincerity, essential to Christian art, may be expected to arise again.

"Art demands great tranquillity," said Fra Angelico, "and in order to paint the things of Christ, the artist must live with Christ." Meditation is now more necessary than ever to the rebuilding of the art of the future Catholic Church in England. The intellectual legacy that has almost miraculously survived in these works of "Jak de Seint Albion" and "Alan le Peyntur" is not to be grabbed at hastily. Formality in art is not the same thing as imitation.

IVAN BROOKS.