

universalities of salvation; although at times Gill managed to combine both, and David Jones (who is not exhibiting here) transformed his economy of line into a romantic poem built up of tentative calligraphic images.

The wood engravings were perhaps the most satisfying in the show, no doubt because the laws governing the craft are radically different to those ruling the painter or sculptor; it is a more restricted thing and the Gill style is well suited to it. Denis Tegetmeier contributed a beautifully carved and austere Crucifix in wood, the figure conveying both compassion and a real dignity. Also May Blakeman, outside the Gill tradition, presented a terra cotta relief of the Nativity. The system of composition is reminiscent of certain Byzantine reliefs, but the forms are not derivative and the relief is perhaps a trifle too low to be entirely satisfactory. The exposition of the subject is intimate and tender, relying on simple directness rather than any dramatic force to tell the story. But these are isolated instances and even so they do not contain the inner power displayed by some of the lesser masters of earlier days.

The problem still remains, unsolved. Perhaps it may be suggested that the solution lies in the hands of the faithful themselves. The strength of religious art ultimately seems to depend on the lively faith of the populace; they create the demand for something vital to express the virility of their own faith and to tell its story. Crowds flocked to see van Eyck's Ghent altar-piece when it was painted, and until we witness a similar enthusiasm born of faith, and the integration of art and life becomes re-established as it was then, the existing vacuum is likely to continue.

M. SHIRLEY.

OBITER

ART VERSUS CHRISTIANITY is a form of the age-old problem of Christian humanism or art and morals, a form which the Editor of the attractive *American Catholic Art Quarterly* (Christmas issue; Newport, Rhode Island) sets forth boldly to elucidate. This *Art Quarterly* follows in its clear and clean American way the traditions laid down by Eric Gill, so that we are not surprised to find the Editor taking up the problem on the assumption that art is skill in making. This skill may of course become too attractive in itself, and ceasing to be a means to an end it becomes introverted and the skill becomes its own publicity agent. It is here that art ceases to support morals or Christianity.

When the artist grows so skilful that he becomes increasingly engrossed in his skill as such, he is reaching a danger point. The first warning he gets is that all the little people who had previously stood in amazed admiration of his work now no longer appreciate it. . . . So the circle of admirers becomes restricted to fewer and fewer connoisseurs, and the artist remains apart from society. When at last his skill is appreciated by no one but himself, then he is confined to the terrifying isolation of one whose work is for his glory alone. . . . When an artist really knows and loves his fellow men and is interested in making his work really of use to them, he will work naturally for their sake. He will think nothing of giving his time, his labour, his patience; he will also naturally give up any display of skill or individuality for its own sake; he will give the best he has and will give it to the full.

And a further article on 'The Freedom of the Artist' develops this theme to show how this service modifies the artist's freedom. This is simple teaching and puts in a clear light the insistence Gill always laid on functionalism and skill. Certainly the practice of such principles remain as complex and difficult of achievement as ever but the principles are straightforward. Artists with other principles tend to sophistication and consequently to obfuscation. Surely the brilliant Jean Cocteau translated in the autumn (1949) *Wind and Rain* (which sustains a consistently high literary level and will continue as a substantial rival to the modern *Month*) obscures the issue and is only seemingly on the side of the angels when he writes:

A poet is guilty of sloth when he waits for his voices to speak. Such passivity is dangerous. If they are silent it is because he is not doing what he should to make them speak to him. He must discover his own rules of physical and moral health. He must contrive always to be in a state of grace. The poet too has his religious exercises to perform.

Cocteau is in fact not concerned with the service of the common good but rather with the service of the arts, or so it would seem. In one way we need more such servants of the arts, yet we must have a care that such service does not make the Muses into introverts.

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CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY continues to provide the main theme for *Christendom*, whose December issue contains a summary of some of its summer school papers on the subject. Dom Aelred Graham, who is now taking a leading part in an attempt to influence the modern political developments with Christian principles, was speaking of 'the Background to Christian Democracy', and in his lecture he makes the valuable distinction between *persona* and *res*, which offers a more straightforward explanation of the great problem of

the relation of part to whole in human society than the rather misleading distinction between person and individual:

'Person', says St Thomas, 'is that which is most perfect in all nature'. What is the basis of the classical distinction between *persona* and *res*? Things (*res*) can be used for various purposes; but whenever we merely 'use' a person we offend. For the person cannot be regarded as a means to an end; he is in some way an end in himself. Man's physical individuality is raised to the status of *personality* by his having intelligence and will. . . . The aim of society is in fact its own *common good*, the social body is the common good of *human persons*. The *raison d'être* of society is the communion of its members in the good life. Thus the social good is something common both to the community considered as a whole and to its individual members—the latter bringing in the complimentary factor that, being persons, they are themselves wholes.

It is really only the Christian who can approach this problem integrally for he finds his wholeness by his readiness to lose it, by his offering to sacrifice himself wholly to the final end which is God. And so Christian democracy is the best solution to this vexed question because the democratic principle should guarantee that the sacrificial Christian principle is not abused by power and self-seeking in the State. Even *The Leader* in its Christmas number makes a plea for a greater participation of the Christian as such in politics. 'Perhaps more audacity on the clergy's part would be no bad thing', writes Lansdale Hodson. But he goes on to say that the world needs religion of *one sort or another* and suggests that it is wrong to put dogma above friendliness and so to condemn divorce—which all goes to show how urgent is the need of the true Christian understanding of *person* and of that person's part in politics.

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THE CHRISTIAN'S PART will never be sufficiently clear, however, and he will never be able to make his principles felt effectively until certain fundamental points of politico-economy are elucidated. *The Tablet* has recently taken up the defence of Capitalism as being at least *de facto* the basis of Christian action today. Douglas Woodruff (3 December 1949) takes French and Italian Catholic to task for condemning Capitalism, in particular disposing of the Editor of the *Osservatore Romano*, whose article on the subject was translated in the October issue of BLACKFRIARS. The latter had supported his rejection of the capitalist organisation of society by frequent quotations from papal utterances, but Mr Woodruff attempts to undermine the Catholic's until now rather superficial acceptance of those papal social encyclicals by such remarks as: '*Quadragesimo*

Anno appeared in 1931 and was prompted by the Wall Street crisis of 1929.' He would have his readers regard the Church in America which is consciously and proudly capitalistic in its economic structure.

The Catholic Church is being put in a false position and a false light while at one and the same time these things are being written in Rome, and elsewhere Cardinal Spellman, and the American bishops generally, praise so very warmly the American way of life which is in its economic activities the supreme example of capitalist society, and one for whose wealth and help all Italy, including the Church, is very grateful.

Such an attempt to ally the Catholic Church with American capitalism will indeed put the Church in a false position. It is certainly of the greatest urgency to clear up those confusions about the meaning of the word 'Capitalism' but to identify the true Christian with the Capitalist when that word is almost universally accepted to mean the evil abuse of property which has come to power with industrialism would be treason to the Church.

Happily the American Catholics themselves are not so blind. *America* of 10 December 1949 devotes its first editorial to the feat of Fr G. F. Dunne, S.J., who was invited to speak to the Arizona Banking Association and spoke his mind as a Catholic priest.

Fr Dunne told the Arizona bankers that business men have contributed largely to the emergence of the 'welfare state'. They themselves have played the major role in transforming the United States from an agricultural to an industrial society. In the wake of this transformation have come overcrowded cities, with their ugly and unhealthy slums. In the wake of mass employment has come mass unemployment and job insecurity. Instead of coping with these by-products of their own handiwork by 'coming up with constructive ideas', most business men have chosen to ignore the social evils their own achievements have bred. More than that, too often they have taken a purely negative, obstructionist posture when others have proposed slum clearance. . . .

These things have often been said before, but perhaps not so freely to American bankers; and the significant thing is that the *American Banker* devoted a special editorial to the analysis of his remarks. Fr Dunne had gone on to say that the only way to avoid this present 'welfare state' would have been the way of increased distribution of ownership. In other words he was opposing American capitalism as we know it with the Catholic view of ownership, and he had none of the complacency attributed to the American clergy by the editor of *The Tablet*.

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CRITICISM of Americans by Americans themselves on these lines is

very constructive and brings new hope, for this numerically and potentially great portion of the Catholic Church holds the future of the world in its hand. Englishmen are often afraid to criticise their American brethren because they suspect them of being over-sensitive. It is amusing then to read in *The Commonweal* (2 December 1949):

Most Americans like to think that no matter what a foreign visitor to this country may say or think about us, we can take it. Taking abuse from visitors with an air of nonchalance is, in fact, considered a national trait. Over the years Europeans, principally, have come here and gone home again leaving word that life in the new world is mostly mad, vulgar and culturally sub-standard. Usually, this sort of thing has just rolled off Americans.

We would not have thought so; but then we feel that such nonchalance is an English characteristic. It is extraordinary that the outsider's view should be so different from the insider's; but that makes it almost impossible for the criticised to 'take it' from the outsider. American self-criticism then will eventually have an important effect on world affairs. *Temoignage Chrétien*, whose information and statistics, particularly on the Catholic and missionary situation round the world are of the greatest use, showed recently (23 December 1949) how the United States and Canada have taken the lead in Catholic affairs.

Bursting with young vitality, health and optimism, conscious of the part it has to play in history, the American Church possesses a great self-assurance. As an Englishman summarised it: 'There is a great difference between us and them. Where we say "Why?" the Americans say "Why not?"'

These 27 million Catholics have the future of the Church in their hands and it is time we learnt that their language is not necessarily capitalistic.

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LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE (December) deals with the American tongue which has by now become a distinct language. In France 'American spoken' has become the natural sign on shops etc., though the English still regard such signs with amusement.

LA VIE CATHOLIQUE ILLUSTREE (18 December) is justly proud to announce that its average circulation is 450,000 and that it expects to sell 900,000 copies of its Christmas number. This Catholic illustrated weekly of general interest is quite up to the standard of the best illustrated weeklies that we know; and it is militantly Catholic at the same time.