

of the 'Birdcatcher' which were amongst the modern French tapestries at the Victoria and Albert. It is an encouraging sign.

Is it too much to hope this dynamic inspiration will spur on the other arts to greater activity—that the enlivening freshness will succeed in fanning the smouldering fire into a welcome blaze? Today abstract art is encumbered by too many followers practising the exterior forms and ignoring the need for the inner content and purpose that gave life to the original instances of this art. The urgent necessity of renewal has been apparent for some time. Perhaps it is unduly optimistic to believe that Lurçat is indicating the direction but I do not think so. Let us not be discouraged by an absence of immediate response, impatience would only encourage a spate of spurious imitators. What is wanted is the inner reality and the road to spiritual and aesthetic maturity is long and arduous.

M. SHIRLEY

OBITER

THE STRUGGLE FOR EUROPE is, according to the latest *Contact Book* (5s. 0d.), one between Russia and America. That this is not the whole story is, however, acknowledged by the inclusion of a discussion between Ernst Fischer, leader of the Austrian Communists, and August Knoll, professor in the University of Vienna and a distinguished Catholic sociologist. 'Can Catholics be Marxists?' is the frank subject of their debate, which takes it for granted that Catholicism and Marxism are today the strongest intellectual and moral forces in Europe. Are they irreconcilable enemies? And is the conflict between the World Powers identical with that antagonism? The second question is perhaps the more searching. Professor Knoll does well to avoid identifying the Catholic opposition to Marxism with any particular social philosophy. He emphasises that

the Church does not wish to issue any political manifesto. Only after a system has been observed in its practical functioning and for some considerable time can the Church say whether its reality corresponds to or conflicts with divine revelation. You cannot say that the Church opposes all revolutions. The Church has both a conservative and a revolutionary function. Its conservative function is proved by the fact that it recognises whatever situation has established itself, irrespective of what it is like. The Church must do this in order to carry on its business which is the pastoral office. It holds no assignment, it has not been commissioned to start revolutions, it is not its task to create political and economic realities. If it were, then it could be accused of acting as a screen

for capitalism, as a defender of all existing power. Yet the Church has also a revolutionary function, a sceptical, questioning, critical function; it expresses its doubt that any order, any human order, can be perfect, because it is only human.

For Herr Fischer, it is up to Catholics and Communists 'to join forces to persuade Man to multiply life, not to sow death. It is up to us to help Man make himself a true image of God'. Professor Knoll has the last word:

Good luck to you. You will not save Man from his sin. You may save his body. You cannot save his soul.

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES is the subject of what was probably Ananda Coomaraswamy's last address, now reprinted in the second number of *The Mint*, that discerning miscellany edited by Geoffrey Grigson (Routledge, 5s. 0d.). It is a devastating examination of the influence of English and American culture on the East. His indictment of missionary activity is influenced by Jung's judgment (perhaps overlooked by some of his Catholic apologists) that 'to flatter oneself that Christianity is the only truth, the white Christ the only redeemer, is *insanity*'. But Coomaraswamy was too generous and integrated a thinker to rest content with a polemic advantage. His last words are, for the most part, a noble appeal for the consideration by the West of the immense wealth of Eastern culture *in its own right*. This he was well qualified to do, being, as he himself said, 'almost as much of a Platonist and Medievalist as I am an Orientalist' and one whose work was 'always directed towards an exposition of the common metaphysical tradition that underlies both cultures, European and Asiatic'.

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HERDER-KORRESPONDENZ gives an account of the *Katholikentag* held from October 1st to 5th, 1948, at Mainz. The Bishop of Mainz said Catholic Action is not an expression of the desire for power but is rather a readiness to serve. One of the most moving speeches was that made by Frau Cäcilia Schmauch on the subject of the refugees, and out of her personal experience in the 'diaspora' from Schleswig-Holstein. She cited cases of need such as that of a mother who carried her four children to church on her back, one after the other, because they couldn't get across the soaking roads in winter with their totally inadequate footwear. She indicated how badly organised Catholic help in this matter was, pointing out, by contrast, how when Italy was making war on Abyssinia gold and silver ornaments, golden candlesticks, church fittings, marriage rings and even Episcopal rings and crosses were offered for the cause of the war. Appeals

for similar sacrifices on behalf of the homeless had not called forth the same response. She cited the anxiety of a woman in Flensburg who said: 'Send us priests. Are our children to be ruined? Where should our children address their petitions for priests?' Frau Schmauch says, 'We thought of those dioceses and countries where there are churches every three kilometres, and we also considered that if young priests were to come for two or three years to help. these young priests would gain incomparable experience'. She went on to ask whether it was not understandable for Catholic mothers, in their helpless anxiety, in their blind eagerness for their children to receive a religious education, to send their children to Protestant institutions, where, at least, they would hear about God and Christ. Often this disturbs their consciences, but, asks Frau Schmauch, how does it leave our consciences? New ways must be thought out; just one suggestion is that children could be invited in the holidays to spend some time in convents, schools or seminaries. During this time they could live in a Catholic atmosphere and receive some religious instruction. The best way in which to help the 'diaspora' is for parishes in Catholic lands to adopt families and youth groups of these refugees. In this way the bond of mutual responsibility and sympathy would be created.

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ORBIS CATHOLICUS reports that on the 25th and 26th of September representatives from all the Austrian dioceses held discussions on social work from the Catholic angle. The fact that nowadays the State was taking over such large areas of social activities should not lead Christians to limit their social activity to meetings and discussions. What was needed more than ever was to awaken the social consciousness and responsibility in small circles. Dr Max Pietsch (Graz) spoke of the inordinate desire for High School education, which was to be traced to a supercilious attitude towards manual work. Despite the low payments now current for academic work, intellectual work was still rated higher than manual work. A solution which he suggested, in order to overcome the danger of an academic proletariat, was that future men of learning should also acquire the capacity to work in some way with their hands.

Careful investigations by the Catholic Viennese weekly, *Die Furche*, has proved the baselessness of the accusation that Catholic schools were bourgeois institutions. It is noteworthy that the *Die Furche* went to the trouble of collecting very careful statistics on the subject and thereby produced an effective answer.

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CAHIER 3 AND 4 of *Russie et Chrétienté*, published by the Dominicans of Byzantine rite at Paris, includes some very valuable notes and

documents concerning the Russian Orthodox Church today. Among them is the text of an address by the Orthodox priest Nathanael Lvov, of the Russian Synod of Munich, in the course of which he says ' . . . in Podkarpatska Rus and the Galician Ukraine [and in Rumania] several million Greek-Catholic uniates [Catholics of Byzantine rite] have been transferred to the official and controlled Soviet Orthodox Church. Everybody understands the inner meaning of this performance only too well: and it is very characteristic of the present-day consciousness of both Orthodox and Catholics that it has not called forth a single manifestation of joy from any local Orthodox church that is really free, any more than it has provoked any condemnation of the Orthodox from the Catholic side. Everyone sees quite clearly that the Orthodox Church as such is not involved in this business'.

The criminality of Soviet politics is however emulated by the other side, in the murder by Ukrainian partisans (reported in *Irenikon* no. 4 of 1948) of Father Gabriel Kostelnyk, who was the principal 'stooge' of the Soviet government in the disruption of the Ukrainian Catholics.

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POVERTY has justly, if belatedly come to the fore in the Catholic conscience. BLACKFRIARS itself devoted its July (1948) number to the consideration of Christian poverty. Since then the ninth issue of '*Jeunesse de l'Eglise*' treated the question from many sides, including even a study on Charlie Chaplin as the figure of the small man, humble but happy. Now comes the December issue of *La Revue Nouvelle* with half a dozen articles on the First Beatitude, including an excerpt from a Bernanos journal written at the beginning of the war and soon to be published. Bernanos prophesies that the reign of the poor man, in the present days of disaster, will be short because the world will be full of men 'making good'.

There is nothing more brutish than a man of wealth, I will not say only ruined, but placed by circumstances outside the possibility of regaining what he has lost, of 'making good' to use his own expression. A being in process of 'making good' (*se refaire*) is hardly a being, a thing unformed, a larva in its silken cocoon. He is for the moment out of the game. But when I foretell that the reign of the poor will be short, I am certain that I make no mistake, for although I love the poor, I know only too well that theirs is not the power of domination, of making subjects, that their order and their justice are not of this world, that the rôle of the poor in human society is more comparable to that of the woman in the family, or better still of those old maiden aunts who often bring honour and prosperity to the house, as well as make expiation for the faults of each and all, and die remorseful at having been a burden to all.

Another article on poverty as a bourgeois virtue helps to point the moral of Bernanos's prophetic utterance. It is easy to speak of poverty and yet to remain on the level of the good pagan who has always recognised the need for remaining detached from even the best things of this world. The poverty of Christ, of the Cross, is informed by true charity which must wring the heart alike of the man with riches and the man without, sharing hardships as did the Philippians with St Paul. (Phil. 4. 10. sq.)

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PERE REGAMEY, who is a leading authority on religious art in France and is the Editor of the *L'Art Sacré* analyses the whole position of modern religious art in the December *Vie Intellectuelle*. After showing the causes of the breakdown of this form of art in the last century, he divides present-day faithful into the die-hard 'bien-pensants' who are a majority among practising Catholics, the real elite who seeks *value* in things and is alive to modern reality, and the pseudo-elite who has authority, money, and pseudo-culture. Unhappily the true elite has little influence in the choice of artists and their work, so that the greater part of modern religious art is directed by the 'bien-pensants' or the pseudo-elite. Consequently even the greatest sanctity has flourished amid bad taste and so encouraged 'l'art de Lisieux'. It is because in the last three centuries faith has become severed from imagination and sensibility, and through 'the abuse of obedience'.

It is beyond doubt that, for the mass of the 'bien-pensants', obedience is in practice the chief virtue which takes the place of all others. The effect of this is a general fear of all initiative, of all novelty, a progressive degradation of values, and these are the essential dispositions in the case of the artist. . . . So we hear of the 'abandon' to the divine will, the acceptance of social injustice, submission to the powers-that-be, respect for the accepted forms. This general passivity prevents artistic creation which demands alertness, invention, initiative—'poetry'.

Père Regamey goes on to speak of the negative and fearful piety which affects modern art and that sort of mortification of the sense which so easily leads to 'pruderie'. Opposed to this the elite is inclined to become involved in too much symbolism. And then again the same old sentimentalism is often hidden under a rather grotesque incompetence—the æsthetic sense of the 'nouvelle jeunesse de l'Eglise' remains still perverted. 'The pictures we see in the missals of "militants" are, in two senses of the word, a *treason* to their ideal. . . .' However, the author of this otherwise rather gloomy article finds plenty of good to look forward to. The christian revival is deep, diverse, and full in character, and these qualities will be

progressively revealed in the realms of art. And this hope centres in the liturgy, the matrix of all religious art, which is now coming into its own.

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THE PHAIDON PRESS has been celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, and has issued a handsome souvenir of the occasion.

PEOPLE AND FREEDOM announces that Professor George Catlin has assumed its editorship. The December number appropriately commemorates Virginia Crawford, whose death, with that of Wilfrid Meynell and Fr Maurice Watson, O.P., closes what may be called the Manning epoch of English Catholic history.

FARM STREET is a hundred years old, and a stream-lined brochure by Fr Bernard Basset tells the story, with illustrations ranging from twenty-shilling tickets for the opening Mass to the London blitz.

REVIEWS

APPROACH TO GREEK ART. By Charles Seltman. (Studio; 25s.)

In his preface the author says his new approach is not an attempt to go a little further than other studies of the subject but to start it somewhere else. The evidence being what it is, he is personally inclined to hold as a provisional hypothesis that fine art is either in the nature of poetry or of prose. But aware that his attitude may be unconsciously influenced by emotions or tradition, on the constructive side he has no intention of being dogmatic, though prepared to be dogmatic in combating lingering heresies for 'it is far easier to undermine outworn beliefs than to build certainties'.

Chapter I, 'The Cradle of European Art', points out that for centuries the usual approach to Greek art has given first place to sculpture, the second to painting, mainly as represented by drawings on vases, and the third to 'minor arts', grouping together the work of the die-cutters, gem-engravers, jewellers and metal-chasers, but it is questionable whether this accords with the view of the Greeks. Archaeology has now provided ample evidence of metal work in the Bronze Age civilisations of Crete and Greece, and here the author starts his approach. He shows that the early art of 'celature'—a comprehensive 17th century word for metal carving, chasing, etc.—permanently affected the whole Greek attitude to fine art. Behind the chryselephantine statue which brought immortal fame to Pheidias and Polycleitus lay a tradition going back to the Bronze Age, for such statues are the finest of surviving Minoan work, and the repute of the early art passed through the Homeric Epic to Greeks of the classical age. Evidence of the skill of the Minoan painter has only survived in frescoes on palace walls.