

Here then we have, I submit, the basis of a truly Catholic criticism. Appraisal of technical competence should always be accompanied by awareness of the philosophy underlying the work. Such ventilation of the subversive in art among a section of the public should pave the way towards a reconsideration of the nature of artistic creation. It could prove a timely check on the uncritical attitude of less thoughtful members of the community as to where heedless acceptance of books, pictures and films is leading them.

For he knoweth not that the dead are there: and that her guests are in the depths of Hell. (*Proverbs* iv. 18, A. V.)

JANET CLEEVES

PAUL HARRIS

PAUL HARRIS presents a new and very vivid approach to religious painting. He does not see the life of our Lord in the conventional way and his pictures are powerful in their originality. He has the gift of catching real light in paint and does not merely paint in lighter or darker shades. His style was greatly influenced by several years spent with the army in Iraq—many of his figures are brown and move with Eastern grace.

In his picture entitled *Adam and Eve* there is no angel with a flaming sword: Adam and Eve are driving themselves out of the paradise which their false choice has destroyed. Helplessly they stumble out of their realm, but behind them in the landscape there is no vagueness. It is clear that chaos has broken out. No longer is there an underlying principle of inviolable order, and the hills and trees are frightened. A horse rears and neighs in terror. Yet Adam and Eve still hope they are only dreaming.

The Holy Family is shown to us in a most delightful and unorthodox family group. Our Lady, wearing a brilliantly green frock, is hanging up washing in the garden. The child Jesus, playing at her feet, holds out a flower to her. Saint Joseph, in labourer's clothes, just stands and watches, resting on a spade and looking very solid and protective.

In *The Three Kings* we are given a beautifully devout group of brown people adoring in prayer, silence and awe. The magi are half afraid to offer their gifts, yet they are confident that they will not be refused. Our Lady looks at the Child restfully, and there is peace. This picture has a unity necessarily absent from some of the others which call for action or want to stir and wake us up. Here all of us forget our differences in our common love of the divine Child.

One feels rather ashamed of not having recognized at once why the

next picture is called *Whitsun*. We are so used to the traditional group, quietly praying in the Upper Room, with the Holy Ghost resting on each head like the parted flame of a candle, that this powerful interpretation comes with something of a pentecostal shock. There are two similar paintings on this subject. Grouping and movement are alike, but in one the Holy Ghost strikes each individual as a column of red fire and transforms at touch. In the other, the Paraclete is only known by its effects and we have not the help of seeing it in colour. So completely has the Holy Spirit taken possession of the Apostles that from now on they only live for, in, and through God. All human frailty falls away. The Strengthener fits them for the task of spreading Christ, and their work begins at the precise moment he touches them.

At the first glance, Paul Harris's paintings can be slightly disappointing. It is the same with many churches. One goes in and thinks—is that all? But then one grows quiet and begins to see. *Saint Paul on the Road to Damascus* is such a picture. It contains no padding; all details of scenery and background have been banned. The painter wants no distraction but projects us right into the canvas. A white horse stares down with unseeing eyes upon the Jew, Saul, it was to have carried to Damascus; but in a flash Saul is transformed and now lies in the road, blinded by beholding Christ's Divinity. Perhaps the message of this picture is best brought out by the two pairs of blind eyes: the horse's—worried because it has lost its rider and, being only an animal, it cannot understand why—and Saint Paul's, which have become unseeing because the superabundance of vision vouchsafed to him makes them unable to take in anything else.

In *The Healing of the Sick*, the painter has really caught Christ's healing power. Our Lord stands among a multitude of sick—some are lying helplessly on stretchers, mothers hold up their children towards him, cripples try to move closer. There is a twofold radiation: all the sick concentrate on the figure of our Lord, knowing He alone can help. They are in darkness, but from Christ healing light and power go out towards the sick; then there is light among their darkness and his wholeness enters into them, compassionately.

There was also a landscape. What has a landscape to do with an article on religious paintings? Perhaps this is the most catholic of all the pictures. The artist himself was unaware of what he has here achieved. We are brought into the presence of God, not through the medium of a scriptural parable; he is revealed to us more indirectly, yet all the more vividly, because, as it were, no words are used to tell us of him. A heavy barrier of stormy clouds recalls the awe-inspiring God of the Old Testament. Gentle hills speak of his mercy and patience—and then there is a tree which symbolises the perfec-

tion of Christian life. It is strong, free and beautifully balanced. Each leaf is highly individual in colour and could so easily upset the equilibrium of the whole; but there is no clash, no attempt at autonomy. Each leaf contributes to the tree and the whole becomes a song of praise—a burning bush.

These pictures were seen in Paul Harris's Birmingham studio and at the Leger Gallery in Bond Street. Some of them have been sold and are no longer on view. But what I have seen has whetted my appetite for more and I am looking forward tremendously to a painting of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. U.M.S.

O B I T E R

PILGRIM CROSS, an illustrated account of the Vézelay Peace Pilgrimage which so powerfully captured the Catholic imagination last summer, is more than a book. 'Little things are little things', said Fr Vincent McNabb once, 'but they may be the beginnings of great things.' The pilgrimage to Vézelay was a gesture, a showing forth of the power of the Cross to heal a broken world. Fr Gerald Vann, preaching at St Dominic's Priory on the return of the pilgrims, expressed the meaning of *Pilgrim Cross*:

'We are at a beginning. A little lamp has been lit in the darkness which is over the earth. But so small a trail in so great a darkness: and we are at a beginning because that gleam must be enlarged and widened and new paths must be cut through the gloom, new lamps must be lit and tended. . . . We are at a beginning because there must be other pilgrimages like the first: similar pilgrimages in our own country, to lighten our own darkness; similar pilgrimages perhaps in other and more distant countries, to bring them in turn our brotherhood in the love of Christ. People will not be convinced of the presence of love by fair words alone; but when you can say, I have trudged these many miles to come to you, and I have brought you this cross on my back, then they will be convinced and heartened; and the world that looks on may say once again as it said when the Church was young: see how these Christians love one another'.

A grateful word must be said about the technical excellence of *Pilgrim Cross*. It sets a new, and very welcome, standard for Catholic publications. The integrity of the pilgrims' intention deserved a worthy commemoration, and it has certainly received it.

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ROMANO GUARDINI is best known as the author of *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, one of the formative books of the liturgical revival. An article in *Etudes* (December) reminds us of his work as the first Professor of Catholic Philosophy at the University of Berlin, until his removal in 1939 as 'hostile to the state'. He lived in retirement