

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE NEW STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS*

SIR,—I am grateful to your reviewer for his kindly notice of my book, *How to Build a Church*. My idea in writing it was chiefly a practical one, to enable priests when instructing their architects to describe exactly what they wanted, especially in connection with altars, and the fittings of a church, about which architects often go astray simply through not knowing what the liturgical requirements really are.

In writing the book I felt it was essential to refer to the new style of architecture which is in course of development over the whole of Europe. I have been able to see the designs of a considerable number of churches either already erected or in course of erection in Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Holland, Belgium, etc., and it is surprising to see the general unity of idea which is manifested in countries so widely separated. Naturally local conditions modify the design just as in the Gothic period, when the architecture of Germany, France, England, Spain and Italy had well marked local characteristics, but at the same time a general unity.

The new style has not yet come to fruition; it is in its birth-throes, and naturally in a period of transition such as ours many aberrations appear not only in the matter of the subsidiary arts of sculpture, painting, metal-work, but also in the fundamental art of architecture itself, but all these will disappear when the new style has had time to develop. This has been characteristic of all periods of change. Each new style as it appears is a synthesis of all the preceding styles, while yet quite distinct from them, especially in its ornamental detail.

So far the new style has not yet produced any distinctive ornament of its own, although here and there we find signs of its appearance, notably at Lisieux. Some of my own work which was in advance of its time shows like indications which I have illustrated in the chapter on ornament in my book.

So, too, so far there is no true unity between Architecture and the subsidiary arts. Painters and sculptors have for so long worked independently of Architecture that it will take time to bring about this unity. In many churches of the new style, the painting and sculpture are in flat contradiction with the Architecture, and utterly destroy the proportions of the building. All these need to be properly inquadrate (forgive the word, but it is the only one which expresses what I mean) in their architectural setting.

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One has only to look at sculpture in Greek, Roman and Gothic art to see how perfectly it was in accord with its surroundings, the same is true of painting, and the art of the metal worker, etc. It is important not to fasten upon aberrations whether in Architecture or the lesser arts as if they were really representative of the new art which is springing into life. When the day has fully dawned, then architects, painters, sculptors, metal workers, and every other craft will *all be working in one style, and unable to work in any other.*

The characteristics I have noted as marking the development of the new style everywhere are solidity, dignity, proportion, and form, with so far little dependence upon detail. This does in certain cases give a crudeness to the designs which will be eliminated when the new style has developed its own decorative detail.

Yours faithfully,

BENEDICT WILLIAMSON.

## THE CATHOLIC FAMILY

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS*

SIR,—In view of the last paragraph of Mr. Gordon's letter, I feel obliged to point out that my article was nothing more than a personal attempt to find a solution for what is commonly regarded as a difficult problem: I involved no one else in its conclusions.

If Mr. Gordon had submitted an alternative solution, or advanced objections of a radical sort, I should have been greatly in his debt; for I am anxious that this question of the Catholic family should be faced, and all the possibilities considered. But his present criticisms are, I think, easily disposed of. If persons are surrounded by conditions which make a moral life impossible, and they are able to choose another milieu in which morality can be practised, then they are bound to choose the latter, even though it may provide less comfort. The real question before us is whether those alternatives now exist. There is no glory in needlessly remaining in a milieu which is morally dangerous, and there is no ignominy in seeking a milieu which is normally healthy. Most of us will admire the initiative which, for the sake of their religious beliefs, led Catholics under Lord Baltimore to Maryland, Puritans to New England, and Mormons to Utah; but on my part I suggested only a removal from town life to country life, which could certainly be undertaken if now or in the future it becomes a moral necessity.