

BLACKFRIARS

He commands His Apostles to convey that truth to others by *words*: "Go and preach." The fact of Christ, the truth of Christ and His salvation, has to be conveyed to distant nations and times, to you and me, and it is still by human words that it must be so conveyed. The Word is conveyed to others by words, the Truth by the enunciation of truths. This necessity was imposed on His followers from the first, at Pentecost. "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his *voice* and *spoke forth* unto them . . ." (Acts ii, 14). It was with a gift of *tongues* that the disciples were then endowed. "The multitude came together and were confounded, because that every one heard them speaking in his own language . . . Parthians and Medes and Elamites . . ." and the rest (Acts ii, 6-12).

It is still, therefore, in *words* that divine Truth is brought to us. On a future occasion we must discuss how it has come about that that Truth is contained in the doctrinal formulas to which we are accustomed. But we have already progressed far by recalling the great fundamental of our faith, on which all our faith and all our hopes are built, that "God in various ways and at various times has *spoken* to our fathers through the prophets, and then in these latter days has *spoken* to us by His Son" (cf. Heb. i, 1).

O. P.

PATRON AND ARTIST¹

THIS book consists of two lectures, the first on *The Normal View of Art*, the second on *Liberty and Discipline*. We wish it were possible to have them delivered and redelivered in every public place (not specially Art Schools) in the English-speaking world; for the principles they enunciate are precisely those which our civilization most completely flouts and most needs to know. Such a wish is, however, not only "crying for the moon," it would also be no more than "locking the stable after the horse has gone." It is much too late now to hope for any widespread and deliberate reform

¹ *Patron and Artist: Pre-Renaissance and Modern*, by A. K. Coomaraswamy and A. Graham Carey (Wheaton College Press, Norton, Mass.; \$1).

PATRON AND ARTIST

of our world; what we must expect is such a complete breakdown of our palpably inhuman and therefore doomed institutions as will place us again in a state of primitive simplicity and barbarism and thus make possible a new growth, and eventually a new flowering, of the human and humane spirit. Meanwhile the existence of such lectures is all to the good. It is, under divine providence, possible that some memory of them will survive to fructify the new dark age which is obviously upon us. "My words shall not pass away," and the words printed in this book are so clearly conformable to the Word which was in the beginning that we may hope for a like permanence.

To write a "review" of Dr. Coomaraswamy's lecture is in fact an impudence; the only proper review would be a complete reprint. It has a clarity of vision which amounts to holiness. Its contemporary freshness serves but to show how eternal wisdom is appropriate even in Boston or Birmingham. If we may be acquitted of impudence, we will simply quote the following:

. . . in the normal view of art, the activity of making is never thought of as having beauty for its aim or end. The work of art is always occasional; there is always some definite thing to be made, not just anything. Beauty, like goodness, is an indefinite concept: one might as well make up one's mind in a general way to "do something good" as to "make something beautiful"—the result will be "affected" or dilettante, not to say ridiculous in either case. One acts with some particular good in view, not in the interests of goodness for goodness' sake. In the same way only a madman will make for the sake of making, or talk for the sake of talking. The most enthusiastic cook does not cook for the sake of cooking but has guests in mind. It is not then an aesthetic urge or psychological discontent that sets a healthy man to work, but some specific problem, set by the patron's needs. . . The maker's point of view is that a thing can be well and truly or badly and falsely made . . . it is the philosopher who comes along and says "What you have made is beautiful"; to whom the workman replied, "I'm glad you like it" (p. 28).

. . . the beauty of the work is an accident in it, and not its *raison d'être*. What then is beauty for? The traditional answer is very definite. Beauty is a source of delight, but not an end in itself; it is a summons to action. The function of beauty is to attract us, not to itself, but to *that which* is beautiful. Beauty can be felt, but what beauty has to do with is cognition. Beauty is that aspect of the truth which attracts us to the truth. The value

BLACKFRIARS

of rhetoric is to adorn, not the statement for its own sake, but to attract us to the content of the statement. ("A speech," said St. Augustine, "seeking verbal ornament beyond the responsibility to its burden is called sophistic," and "About what does the sophist make a man so eloquent?" asked Plato.) No great artist had ever in mind only to please, but to conduct. Dante, for example, had no literary ends in view when he composed the *Divina Commedia*; he himself assures us that his whole aim was the practical one of leading men from misery to happiness. . . . The normal artist has but one concern, the good of the work to be done. He gives himself over to the theme, without reserve. It never occurs to him to sign his work, nor to exhibit [it] anywhere but in the place for which it was made. There could be no greater evidence of the unreality and superfluity of modern art than the ambition of the artist to be represented in a museum (p. 32 seq.).

In these passages is stated the thing which, above all else, needs stating to-day. Nothing is more characteristic of the worldliness of our bourgeoisdom or more indicative of its hellward direction than the prevailing conviction that beauty is the *raison d'être* of art. It is difficult to find words strong and clear enough to condemn this notion. It has not only poisoned our world from its beginning (the Renaissance was, indeed, nothing else but a manifestation of its working) but it poisons the politics even of reformers. Neither in Russia nor in Italy or Germany is there any sign that either people or politicians have expunged the poison, or intend, or wish to do so. The divorce of "art" from work and of beauty from use is the very mark of capitalist England and America; neither in communism nor in fascism is there any sign that any other gods are to be worshipped than those to which men of business bow down. In Russia, as they proudly advertize, they have "culture parks" and they have cleaned up the ancient Christian pictures that they may be better to *look at*. Neither in Germany nor in Italy have they destroyed the museums or closed the art-schools. What more can we do or not do in England? Nothing could show more clearly the superficiality of all our political jerrymandering and the futility of the bloodshed caused by our "revolutions." Nobody wants an essentially *better* world; the sole concern of reformers is simply the better or worse distribution of quantities.

Christianity is the revolution; but even Christians do not know it. Christ came that we might have life and might

PATRON AND ARTIST

have it more abundantly. But the abundance is not of material goods; for "he that loseth his life shall save it." Happiness is what all desire; but there is no possibility of obtaining it except by visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and keeping unspotted from the world. Beauty is what all men love; but there is no possibility of getting it except by undivided attention to the true and the good. So convinced are we that "art" is the work of special people and that ordinary people are only concerned with it in their leisure time, so convinced are we that the object of work is leisure and that sanctification is superstition or, at most, a thing reserved for Sundays, that the identification of art with useful work and of work with holiness will seem not only ridiculous but monstrous.

In this matter Catholics must obviously be the worst, because the most culpable offenders. For the most part we make no protest against anti-Christ (we notice it only when we are affronted in our persons or in our property) and we are as proud as any Pharisee to think that ancient Christian works are thought well of in our museums. In short, the bourgeois world is damned, not because it despises aesthetic appreciation, but because it isolates it upon a pedestal and worships it. And Catholics are to blame because we fail to see and to act upon the fact that Christianity is, and has been from the beginning, a revolution, a turning away from Solomon in all his glory. A bourgeois reader will of course aver that all this talk about "art and beauty" is unimportant compared with faith and morals and the revival of commercial prosperity. Naturally he will fail to see how faith and morals are concerned with right living and right working and that commerce is primarily dealings in *things* and not in money. Naturally he will fail to see that his worship of "art" is only a means of escape from his obligations in justice and charity.

The lecture of Mr. Graham Carey complements its predecessor and carries the argument on to the plane of practical advice to practical workmen. We might complain that he is unduly optimistic as to the possibility of a revival of sanity in our civilization and as to the efficacy of a reformed training in our art-schools, but his exposition of what he calls "the four artistic essentials," purpose, materials, tools and imagination, and of the need of *right purpose*, good materials

BLACKFRIARS

and technique and imagination freed from the shackles of academic conventions and worldly valuations, is both illuminating and stimulating, though we think he is not altogether right in supposing that imagination before the Renaissance was less disciplined than it has been since. In our view it was as much subject to discipline, but of a more intellectual and less materialistic kind, hieratic, not academic.

But the following has never been more neatly or more truthfully said: "[The workman must] be paid for his services, but the pay is not his end, but a means to enable him to keep on working. With the man of commerce, the reverse is the case. With him the work is not the end, but a means to enable him to keep on getting paid" (p. 65).

ERIC GILL.

CHANNEL CROSSING, 1838

"LONDON was a bumper," wrote old General Dyott in his diary for 1838, "foreigners in abundance." Here are some of them. Dr. Mathew starts with *Queen Adelaide*, 677 tons, a Deptford built schooner-rigged paddle-wheeler with the new feathering floats, riding alongside the stone quay at Calais, and tells of her passengers, most of them crossing to attend Queen Victoria's coronation. In previous works his treatment has been admired of the little Carthusian world before the Reformation, of the Celtic peoples about Queen Elizabeth, of the English Catholic minority in the seventeenth century. Now he evokes the decade after the Reform Bill: chokers and oysters and muffins and grog, fretwork iron verandahs, the London and Greenwich viaduct railway—"the enginemen are most judicious and the carriages are accompanied by guards in the livery of the company"—steamers so new-fangled that in rough weather it was feared the machinery might break loose.

The book is a delicate and allusive study of the different conventions and temperaments displayed when the vessel runs aground in a fog. Serene round the whist table

¹ *Steam Packet*, by David Mathew (Longmans; 6/-).