

as to help the natives of Timbuctoo. The Board is primarily concerned with financing engineers and contractors in the construction of large-scale hydro-electric schemes to export power to the industrial areas. As a sop, they have promised some smaller schemes for local purposes. They intend to flood arable land in parts where it is most scanty and valuable, to deflect the natural drainage of rivers, and to despoil much exquisite scenery—which itself is an important commodity as the stimulus to a tourist trade. Any schemes that were intended to serve the Highland people would be carried out on a small scale, far smaller than any of those that attract the promoters of the present schemes. The communities are small, and their requirements can best be met by generating power in modest units.

Besides legislation, there is a constant blare of propaganda exhorting scales of values antipathetic to those of the crofter, deep rooted as those are in Christian civilisation. The better life has become identified with suburban success. Even so, I know many young men and women who only leave the Highlands because there are no reasonable prospects for them here. It is hateful to see them leave, knowing to what cheapjackery they go, and how hard it will be for them to impart to their children the real values of living that they themselves have inherited.

These are values that put no premium on comfort, accepting work and suffering not as something to be legislated against but as essential concomitants to the happiness of living. In the remoter parts, entertainments of any kind are often rare, but when they occur everyone contributes to them, providing song and dance and music with a vigour and freshness amazing to those of us who have dwelt long amongst hardened latter-day hedonists. Good neighbourliness and a friendly interest go together with a proper respect for the individual in a manner that is also decreasingly common.

GEORGE SCOTT MONCRIEFF.

THE ART OF CATHOLIC SCOTLAND TODAY

PETER F. ANSON, in his article "Modern Catholic Architecture in Scotland" (*The Dublin Review*, April, 1937), and in his book "The Catholic Church in Modern Scotland", published in the same year by Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., has supplied with characteristic clarity and completeness an account of the heritage of ecclesiastical architecture and art upon which the Catholic artist of Scotland has to build. And, as he observes in the closing paragraph of

his article, it is not a very inspiring retrospect. For all that, it will one day have—already begins to have—a distinct archaeological value, not unlike that of those early Christian Sarcophagi executed in the late Roman manner. For this nineteenth century art had likewise been designed in a style borrowed from the past, and was executed in a technique long since rendered alien to its origins by adaptation to the servile requirements of the neo-classical style: our good Scottish Freestones, for example, polished to look like marble or stucco, by masons for whom “blind” uncomprehending precision was the best guarantee of a job. Such a combination of archaistic design, largely the work of aliens, and of debased technique, could only give birth, at best, to quaintness. We look upon these buildings, nevertheless, with gratitude and affection and venerate them as landmarks in the heroic task of bringing back the Faith to our country. Also, they provide a wealth of object lessons in “how not to do it”!

More recently Archibald Macpherson, Reginald Fairlie, LL.D., R.S.A., and Giles Gilbert Scott, R.A., have produced work of real distinction, and to these names must be added that of my Father, Robert Lorimer, A.R.A., R.S.A., who, though not a Catholic, was selected as architect, because of his unparalleled sense of the Christian tradition in Scottish architecture and the crafts, by the late Canon John Gray for the Church of St. Peter, Morningside, Edinburgh. It is a building of great distinction and it is now regarded by many as his finest work.

But from the point of view of the working Scottish artist of today, and it is only in this limited personal sense that I pretend to write, the men whose work and influence are most relevant to the prospect for art in Scotland today are Reginald Fairlie, and in his different and perhaps less immediately visible way, Peter Anson: Fairlie as architect, Anson as writer and draughtsman, both as tireless discriminating advisers. Both men, too, have done much to show the way of making the best of our somewhat ungrateful heritage of churches. The Church of St. Margaret, Dunfermline, is so notable an example of this that I think it is worth while to describe very shortly the problem and Fairlie’s solution of it. Built by Rowan Anderson, it had a most unhappy later addition of a Sanctuary. This Fairlie has transformed with real imagination and art from the ill-proportioned, maladjusted addition it was, into a lofty and glowing climax of this rather drab, overwrought Roman church. The new proportion he has affected by raising, behind the High Altar, a lofty rectangular reredos screen of Caenstone which shines the colour of ripe barley in candlelight. This screen, the top of which is canopied and illumined in blue and gold, rises sheer to a

height which leads the eye into the halfdome of the apsidal east end, which has been gilded. This lofty simplicity has the effect of eclipsing the old proportions and giving unity to the whole church, and leads the eye straight to the simple domical golden Tabernacle, with behind it the Crucifix, upon an altar of Roman stone of extreme dignity and simplicity. The plastered walls of this Sanctuary have been painted to match the stonework of the church.

Work on such a scale, it may be objected, costs money and is therefore seldom possible. But in many another church Fairlie, and also Anson, by the simple yet skilful use of colour, have transformed the most seedy looking interiors for very little cost. I have mentioned their work as being examples of the kind of thing that is bound to form an important branch of our work in the future. It will be a long time before these churches disappear, for they are generally well-built stone structures of a permanence such as we cannot hope to aspire to in the near future, and most of them already badly need this refresher treatment. And it is in the nature of the treatment—the straightforward contemporary approach to these difficult problems—by such men as Fairlie and, on a more modest scale (as he would be the first to admit) Anson, that its significance for the future seems to lie. For they, in Scotland, have been able to give for the first time since the breakdown of the great tradition of church building, a comprehensive architectural answer—faithful to the guidance given by the Church—to the demands of the full sacramental life that has to be provided for in such building. Perhaps the best example I know of what I mean is Fairlie's later addition of a Sanctuary to the Church of St. Agatha at Methil, Fife. The church was built with strictly limited funds in the difficult period immediately following the 1914-18 War. In size it had to be pared down to the minimum. The new Sanctuary is relatively spacious, built of freestone, austere (until this is relieved by the presence and movement of the vested Celebrant and acolytes), and has that appearance of inevitable rightness of proportion and emphasis one expects to find only within the full, confident stride of great tradition. The effect, kneeling among the serried rows of pews—the markedly horizontal lighting stretching out to one under the obscurity of the low open timber roof—as one looks out across the altar rails to the tranquillity of this perfect order, is unforgettable. This simple, humble response to the spirit of the Liturgy is not the result of the ambitious training of Schools of Architecture, nor of lavish expenditure, nor of delving into the history of the development of Christian Liturgy or Symbolism, but rather of the straightforward practice of his religion by an architect born with a sense, fastidious yet penetrating, of "fitness for purpose". Such

work as this, the best of Fairlie's, achieves "style as it were unintentionally, and the beautiful clean-cut economy of classical form".

In St. Mary's, Fort William, a granite church with a splendid concrete barrel-vaulted nave, he has carried this spirit through the design of the whole church: the result is most impressive, and a great example. The sculpture and paintings are, however, disappointing, and do not seem to have been contained in the original conception—giving the impression of being "appliqué". Yet the conception is so simple and strong and its liturgical character so unmistakable, that the sculptor or painter need only have apprehended them and, as it were extended them into his painting or on to his panel.

This work of Fairlie's, then, of all three kinds that it commonly falls to the lot of an architect to undertake, provides examples in each of that proper approach. And it applies with equal force to every kind of craftsman that co-operates in such work, irrespective of the materials we may be called upon to work in. He has provided us with a "tas de charge" from which our future work might well spring.

Since the building of St. Mary's he has been responsible for the opportunity of more than one craftsman to extend this spirit into sculpture and painting, within work of his design: the four Saints (Scottish, or with special Scottish associations, Andrew, Queen Margaret, Ninian and Serf), of his Caenstone reredos to which reference has already been made, and the striking altar-piece in the Church of St. Margaret Mary, Granton, Edinburgh, painted by R. H. Westwater, are examples of this.

But in Scotland generally we are only just beginning to be aware of the spirit. And whereas most educated people with an interest in such things have heard, and are carelessly satisfied by that vague and misleading description "the Bible in stone", of some of the greatest French cathedrals, they would find it strange indeed to be told, what is much nearer the truth, that the spiritual force of the immense conviction, vitality and tradition that raised them, flowed from the Mystery of the Mass—that "popish superstition"!—and that in form and character they were but reflections of the form and character of the Liturgy. But the corollary would sound stranger still, that if there is ever again to be a great movement and tradition of Christian art, its inspiration must come, as before, from that same central source. The Mediaeval view of Art begins to be read more widely among thoughtful art students and amateurs: thanks to the work of that group of English artists of which Eric Gill, through his work as carver and engraver, as well as by his writings and lectures, is perhaps the chief apostle to the Gentiles. Dismissed

as primitive, after holding their interest and surprise for a time, by the general run of folk, we now find ourselves confronted fair and square by the antithesis of the mediaeval theory and the contemporary aesthetic: the one firmly anchored in the truth, the other a purely relative thing constantly adapting itself to the "evolution" of modern art. It is a difficulty that is not likely to be resolved, except in the patient practice of their arts by some such group as is already forming in Scotland, working and influencing, and learning from and exchanging ideas with, the majority who do not share our convictions. And we may well have to wait for the synthesis of the one and the other view before art can settle down to the kind of traditional development that seems proper to its nature.

Meanwhile prospects improve, and there are encouraging signs besides the influence and work of the men I have mentioned so far: the work of J. A. Coia, architect, for example: the increasing number of students of art who spend their three or four years in the liberal and possibly useful detachment of the Art School and who are destined, most of them, to teach our children. But the fascination for the young of that self-expression which is the one fixed characteristic of modern art is strong, and it is questionable how much attention the Catholic approach is given by them in their teaching. But the most important of these signs is the increasing interest of the clergy in the alternative being offered them to the stock in trade article to which they have so long been accustomed, and with which they have had to be content. The deepening of this interest into sympathy would, perhaps, be more likely than anything to bring about the conditions necessary for a general acceptance of a kind of "Church Art" of greater significance and integrity of design and workmanship.

At present, when the dislocation and fatigue of total war is still oppressive, when everything that an artist needs is scarce or rationed (and among these shortages let us include food), when many of the artists themselves are just returning home, when transport is still unpleasant if not difficult and meeting is therefore rarer than we would wish it, it is too early to perceive just what the results of renewed activity may be. But it will be surprising if, in the years ahead, we do not see remarkable developments in the art of Catholic Scotland: given peace.

HEW LORIMER.