

Spanish Chronicle

Ecumenism continues to occupy a prominent place in Spanish ecclesiastical affairs. Recently the auxiliary bishop of Badajoz, Dr Eugenio de Beitia, lectured at the Central Institute of Religious Culture in Madrid on 'Catholic Ecumenism and the Vatican Council'. After pointing out that unity was of the very essence of Christianity, Dr Beitia went on to say that if the problem of unity were not given its proper direction, it would be very difficult for missionary work to advance, because the divisions between Christians caused confusion among the non-Christians. The Church was conscious of having received a message that was for all times and all men and that was not affected by the ebb and flow of historical events or by changes in culture. Ecumenism, which was a state of mind, went back to the time of the Fathers. Its decalogue might be said to be somewhat as follows: to stress what unites different confessions, but not to close one's eyes to the differences; to look to the union, not of individuals only, but also of groups as such; to admit that the separated churches have retained some positive Christian elements; to encourage dialogue between groups on a psychological plane of equality; to avoid any attitude or gesture of superiority that might offend against charity; to point out that there is no question of coming to an agreement by mutual concessions; not to offend against truth by dissimulation, reticences or false excuses; to transcend from the outset the doctrine of the 'three equalities'; to admit that outside the doctrinal field there may have been tactical errors which have deepened the breach; to offer prayers and sacrifices for unity.

A hitherto unpublished *opusculum* of St John of the Cross has been discovered in Paris—a series of counsels on the religious life. It is claimed that the *opusculum* was written during the last years of the saint's life. An edition and study of this new manuscript, running into some 118 pages, has been prepared and published by two Spanish Carmelites in Rome, Fathers Simeon de la Santa Familia and Tomás de la Cruz.

What is considered to be the oldest Christian church in the Iberian peninsula—San Juan de Baños—has just completed its thirteenth centenary. Built in 661 by the Visigoth King Receswinth, who claimed to have been miraculously cured of a disease by drinking from a well on the site where he had the church erected and attributed his cure to St John the Baptist, it is situated quite close to Venta de Baños, the railway junction where the Irún-Madrid line crosses that going from the capital to Galicia. It is one of some eighty visigothic churches still standing in Spain. Though in the course of centuries the church has lost two of its original three naves and its two side-chapels, the nave still standing has suffered little change. Its pillars have Corinthian capitals with

double abacus and the arches are the horse-shoe arches characteristic of visigothic art in Spain. These according to some authorities, were at the origin of the Moorish horse-shoe arch. The apse is square in shape. At the entrance is a narthex with a simple façade and door crowned by a horse-shoe arch. It is thought that the church was probably designed by some architect of Toledo. Its outward appearance suggests strength and solidity rather than height, though it does not lack a certain gracefulness coming from the perfect harmony of its proportions. There is little ornamentation, but what there is is interesting, since there are geometrical designs—also characteristic of visigothic art, though exceptional in pre-romanesque European art as a whole. San Juan de Baños is not at present used for public worship, though on the occasion of its thirteenth centenary, the dean of the cathedral chapter of Toledo offered Mass there in the mozarabic rite.

The magnificent exhibition of Romanesque art held simultaneously in Santiago de Compostela and in Barcelona from July to October closed on 10 October. It was sponsored by the Council of Europe and organized by the Spanish Government. Both in the Montjuich Palace in Barcelona and in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and the Gelmírez Palace there, not only were Spain's priceless treasures of romanesque art exhibited, but valuable works of art lent by various countries to commemorate the early Middle Ages. The Vatican, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the U.S.A. all lent of their best. Among the French exhibits a capital representing the dream of the Magi and one representing the hanging of Judas, both Burgundian work of the twelfth century and now in the museum of Autun, were particularly outstanding. From Germany, a figure of the Virgin and Child from Hoven, carved in walnut wood in Cologne c. 1175 and originally polychrome, recalls in its austere lines Our Lady of Montserrat. Great Britain's most notable loan was the carved ivory knob of a staff, twelfth century work related to the Winchester school, from the Victoria and Albert museum. Ireland sent two twelfth century bronzes of exquisite workmanship, representing respectively the Scourging and the Crucifixion; also a bronze figure from a crucifix of the same date. All three are from the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin.

Perhaps one of the loveliest of the Spanish exhibits was a Descent from the Cross, carved in wood, twelfth century Catalan work from the parish church of Erill-la-Vall (Lérida). Byzantine influences have clearly been at work in the Nativity scene of the Master of Avia, a mural painting, and in the fresco of an apostle in the church of Santa Cruz in Maderuelo.

Not unnaturally the exhibition produced a large number of articles on romanesque art, among which 'La Moderna Pintura de hace Mil Años', by Pedro Rocamora in *ABC* for 13 August, 1961, draws attention to the similarity between the romanesque painting of the early Middle Ages and modern art. Chagall's imaginary fauna, for instance, are already foreshadowed in the fan-

tastic dragons of the mural paintings of the church of Santa Maria de Tahull (Lérida), and there is a marked similarity between the figures of the anonymous masters of the twelfth century and those of Rouault or of the Spanish painter Solona.

Perhaps it may not be entirely fanciful to see in the choice for this exhibition of both Barcelona on the east coast and Santiago de Compostela in the extreme west of Spain, the suggestion of an artistic pilgrimage, passing through Lérida whence we may visit Santa Maria de Tahull, on to Jaca with its eleventh century cathedral where the pilgrims from Barcelona joined those coming over the Somport from France, then by the main Chemin de St Jacques through Burgos, so rich in artistic treasures, past León with its gothic cathedral, on to Santiago, the crowning glory of Spanish faith and Spanish art.

KATHLEEN POND

Heard and Seen

THE MOORES EXHIBITION

Having stolen the London Group's thunder, the John Moores Exhibition in Liverpool is well on the way to becoming an institution. It attracts artists on a scale that puts it on a par with the great international art exhibitions in America. Its prizes really are prizes. As significant exhibitions go it seems already to have been going an immemorial time, with by now the reputation that here of all places you can see what the younger generation is doing. But already it is worth asking what is going to happen next. Has it got anything more to demonstrate other than the magnificent eccentric flair and generosity of the founder? Will it be possible to avoid Liverpool becoming an embarrassment?

The critics have put up a very good exhibition with the material they were given, and I feel that they were well aware of the problem of direction, though the idea of *invités hors concours* is not a good one to help solve the situation.

The beautiful placing and feeling for the sculpture only emphasized how little good sculpture there was. The few pieces that stood out (which emphatically included the prize-winning pieces) drew one's attention to the fact that most of the pictures were larger, flatter, more decorative, less three-dimensionally framed than before, less meaningful on the whole, too. I admired the second prize, F. E. McWilliam's *Resistance*, as a first-rate piece of sculptural expression, technically superb; the *Two Heads* by Evelyn Williams is an interesting original, with affinities to the things one sees in ethnographical museums, where the image expressed carries so much weight that its momentum bridges over large gaps in formal arrangement. This links it to practically all religious