

unpretentious, but which projected such an image of courage and charity that one was haunted by it. The jury must have had a difficult time deciding on their awards. The BBC's *Simone Weil*, which had shocked and surprised some of the delegates by the unconventionality of both subject and treatment, came away with one prize. The other went to a moving and disciplined German programme about work among the very poor in Calcutta, called *Weisser Sari – Schwarzes Kreuz* which was beautiful to look at as well as edifying. A second German piece won the press prize; this was *Franz Stock*, a biography of a German priest who had looked after the condemned men in Paris prisons during the Occupation. It was not only interesting in itself, but made a fascinating 'compare and contrast' item with the Dutch programme from the other side of the hill, *Navolger van Christus*, about a Dutch priest in Dachau.

After the completion of each section, there was a period of open discussion on the programmes shown, each item being introduced by a short summary of the aims and methods of the producer. It was exceedingly enlightening to hear the views of the different delegations, particularly on features that had perhaps seemed susceptible of only one interpretation. I had the tricky job, here, of interpreting from English into French and *vice versa*, when this was asked for; faced with technical terms unfamiliar even in English there were some terrible moments, and I grew to tremble at the inexorable *Traduction, s'il vous plaît*. It was clear, however, that these sessions, operated for the first time this year, were of the greatest value, and some uncommonly good suggestions were put forward; whether or not it was a good idea to hold them *before* the jury met for consultation, I am not so sure. One would have thought it bound to be a distraction. It was certainly a revelation to learn how much Catholic television, and of what generally high standard, is going out in the various countries: and as ever it was endlessly spell-binding to listen to the intelligent technical talk – shop is surely the best conversation in the world.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

FATHER COUTURIER AND PICASSO

Introductory Note. *When Father Couturier, a French Dominican, died in 1954, tributes were paid to him by many great artists who felt a deep sense of personal loss. Few men have been in such close touch with all that was most vitally significant, particularly in the world of painting. He was himself a trained painter and could possibly have been a great one, had he been able to reconcile it with what he considered to be his primary vocation as a friar preacher. For all his ascetic looks and the uncompromising way he led his religious life, he was completely open and sympathetic to all new movements. He had a genius for friendship; he consoled, encouraged, advised many great artists, regardless of creed or any other barriers. However he never allowed his ready sympathy in dealing with personal problems to prejudice the objectivity and*

integrity of his critical judgement in artistic matters. He was quite fearless in his criticism of generally accepted and reputedly orthodox examples of religious art. His criticisms and his enlightened teaching are chiefly to be found in the review *Art Sacré* which he founded and which still continues his work. It was through his influence and that of a few of his fellow Dominicans, that church decoration in France was rescued from the cloying clutches and effete, repetitive pietism of *St Suplice*. It was at his invitation that *Le Corbusier* was asked to build the surprising priory at *L'Arbresle*. The *Church at Assy* is another monument to his faith in contemporary art; *Chagall*, *Lurçat*, *Rouault*, *Braque*, *Bonnard*, *Lipchitz*, *Léger*, *Germaine Richier*, contributed to the decoration of this modest church at the foot of *Mont Blanc*. *Matisse* was advised and encouraged by him in building the chapel at *Vence*. These are but a few of his achievements which marked the beginning of a new and more hopeful era in church art. Only his closest friends know at what price he achieved so much. Glimpses of his intimate thoughts are revealed in his diaries (1947 to 1954) published under the title '*Se Garder Libre*' (*Ed. du Cerf, Paris*). The following extracts relating to *Picasso* are taken from this book.

I am often disturbed as to the true value of modern painters. I often fear that their perfection has only been achieved at the price of terrible limitations – chosen limitations or in fact imposed by terrible deficiencies: often these arbitrary simplifications arise from the fact that one just isn't capable of making a 'simple portrait' . . . Already in *Cézanne* one can detect it, in him, who was perhaps the most a painter of painters of all time, but who nevertheless had to sacrifice, shed so many things. *Braque* often seems narrow and *Picasso* superficial and acrobatic. *Rouault* terribly summary, *Matisse* light, in spite of successes which make them among the greatest of our painters.

Our fears for the great masters: *Picasso*, *Braque*, *Matisse*. Their works age quite well, yes, but . . . Dare we express these anxieties? Fearing to make a mistake. But fear also of hurting people who need a boundless confidence in what they stand for so that they can do their work. One daren't speak. What use would it be? If one has to break certain necessary enthusiasms. But maybe also the truth has to be said simply because it is the truth. We see, decade by decade, the human amplitude of art becoming restricted. A ransom for a certain perfection purely in the expression of volume (*l'ordre plastique*), yes, but maybe a too high price to pay. And on the other hand, others, those who stand for this 'human amplitude', even *Segonzac*, lose year by year their appearance of rigour and consistency.

7 July. *Picasso* to *Matisse* who recounts it to me on the way to *Raincy*: 'If one wasn't wretched, one wouldn't paint. One paints because one isn't happy'.

Matisse, 9 August. '*Picasso* was furious that I should be doing a church. Why not do a market instead? You could paint fruits and vegetables for it. I don't care a damn about that: I have greens, greener than pears, and oranges more orange than pumpkins. So what's the use? He was livid'.

(*Fr Couturier was with Picasso for long periods during three days on the occasion of the opening of the Museum at Antibes on September 7th, and for the reception of the medal of the Resistance on the following day.*)

Antibes – Picasso said to me at Vallauris: 'This deaf side of human nature is appalling'. He seemed so happy to be with us, to show us things, to laugh at everything.

He said to me laughingly while he took me by the arm: 'I ought to go to confession every day; I need this more than anything else in the world'. Sitting up in bed, after his investiture, he explained to us 'Perfection is what has to be sought after. For instance, you must want to make a perfect circle; but you can't make a perfect circle, the *involuntary* imperfection will manifest your personality. But if you want to manifest your personality in making an imperfect circle, *your* circle, you'll miss everything'. He insists greatly on this. In every work of art to strive only for absolute perfection. Personality will manifest itself by the *particularity* of the circle (imperfect) which will inevitably be produced, but instinctively and precisely on condition that it has not been sought after.

Marie Ruspoli reminds him of his famous saying: 'I don't seek, I find'. He answered laughing: 'I don't say that any more, I say: I refind'. 'I go back to the sources, but all the channels are blocked; they have to be unblocked'. He seems extremely solicitous about traditions.

Among great artists there is a certain contempt for 'Art'. A man like Picasso with his intimacy, his constant communion, passionate, with earth, with life. So little abstract. For artists of this kind art is above all communion with reality, with life.

I said to Picasso that Matisse was very fond of him, that he had his photo pinned to a pivoting stand next to his bed. 'Yes, he said, he is the only one who has a right to speak badly of me'. One day he heard somebody saying within earshot 'I've just seen a rather feeble Matisse'. He turned round brusquely: 'It isn't true. Matisse has never done anything feeble'.

'I don't need this or that presentation. I paint in such a way that my paintings can be exhibited in the open. They were once shown in a greenhouse in Paris, it was perfect. I don't need to have walls painted this or that shade'.

Thus, step by step, I will have verified in my meetings with Braque, Matisse, Chagall, Picasso, all that I've thought and said for so long about artistic creation: its irrational, involuntary character of pure spontaneity. The law of each work, specific to it, depending only analogically on a universal canon of beauty, itself inexpressible like the singular beauty of each work. 'In art, what can be put into words, counts for nothing' (Matisse).

Wednesday 2 March, 11 a.m. Visit to Picasso, simple and gay, so sure of himself, but ten people to see. Pelquet, Murlot and Ortiz the painter. A young man brings a canvas of the Negro period which Picasso signs. He shows us a first

edition of the *Bestiaire* of Apollinaire with woodcuts by Dufy in their original size, much larger than those I know and thereby much more beautiful. His copy is crammed with letters, documents, notes of Apollinaire. Among the last pages, a sheet of paper carefully wrapped in tissue paper. Picasso unfolds it: 'Ah, these are drawings of Cézanne'. I see at Picasso's the big lithograph he has just done. Once more I am struck by the evidence of his genius: at the first attempt he masters a medium which others have been working at for over a century. This infallible intuition of what is essential in a particular craft, and at the same time a prodigious (and meticulous) *science* of all the possibilities of that craft. As if his first intuition revealed to him, enriched him immediately with a whole experience.

But I admire also his marvellous intelligence in conversation, in his manners, in his sense of life, this complete lack of pose as an 'Artist' before people and things.

In this connection, I remember when I was at Le Saulchoir, I used to annoy certain of my brethren by the attitude I instinctively took in judging of things from the point of view of 'beauty'. But Picasso, never. One could completely overlook the fact that he is a painter: 'I'm not an artist, me, I just do what I can' he told me at Antibes. He evokes for me what I fancy Napoleon must have been like in real life.

On Saturday, at Mme Cuttoli's, Picasso also spoke to me of the Matisse incident over the chapel (at Vence) about which the latter had spoken to me several times. He smilingly expressed regret about it, saying that it was not at all nice of him to have reproached him about it. I can't remember his exact words, but his sorrow was sincere.

29 March, afternoon at Matisse's: 'I said to him, to Picasso: Yes I pray, and so do you, and you know it: when everything goes badly, we throw ourselves into prayer, to rediscover the atmosphere of our first communion. And you do it, you too. He didn't say no'.

I ask Matisse what touches him in a terrible Picasso that he possesses and which is at his antipodes. 'Oh, what touches me in that, is the anguish of that face, the terrible expression of that face'.

Matisse, Nice: 'Artists are made to interpret the events of their time, but they do it in signs which are not legible by all . . .'

He tells me how on the previous day some girls from Blanche de Castille Dominican Convent of Nice (of the same congregation as the Sisters at Vence) had been to see him and he had answered questions put to him in writing. At the end of the visit one of them blurted out: 'What do you think of Picasso?' I answered 'Young ladies, one must never laugh in front of the works of Picasso. One must treat him seriously. What he does, he does with his blood'.

On my last trip to Nice – Chagall at Vence – He tells me how he met Picasso at Cap d'Antibes; he said to him 'I'm as much a communist as you are'.

'There's only one way of being a communist' rejoined Picasso taking his membership card out of his pocket. 'Yes, but what happens on the day they try to make you paint in a way you don't want to'. 'They will never ask me to do that'. 'There you see, you are no more a communist than I am . . .'.

La Fresnaye – His retrospective exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne, quite without importance. This failure is instructive: he's had ideas, some daring, the same moral courage as the others, Picasso, Braque, Léger. But the temperament is lacking: nothing remains but praiseworthy, boring, academic exercises. Maybe one must see in this failure one of the results of the teaching of Denis: one can't learn to do good painting. When one doesn't know how to do it, one is lost for ever.

Rouault – Revolutionary in the representation of natural realities, that is to say, he takes liberties with regard to reality and its form, but he remains traditional and classical in the order of modelling (*l'ordre plastique*). His forms are traditional forms, some apparently derived from the Byzantine school, Michelangelo, Rembrandt. I mean by this that the forms themselves, as for instance the mutual relationships between colours, the values, the interrelationship of surfaces and lines. Whereas with Matisse and Picasso, it is all this that is called into question; the plastic language itself.

Baroque, 10 November. This evening conversation at La Tour Maubourg (*Dominican publishing house – Editions du Cerf*) with Father Roguet, on baroque art. One must be against baroque. Not let oneself be seduced. Everything that is great in modern art has been won against it and over it. Thus in returning to baroque, one turns one's back on true life. It is facility, the failure to choose, to prefer. What it has of generosity, of life, of abandon, deceives us. Baroque is the world, the spirit of worldliness. The naked bottoms of angels which portray 'amours'. Virtues as half naked women, half modest, half immodest. The sentimental provocation of these torsos, arms, legs, eyes raised to heaven, half opened lips, etc . . . Problem of baroque saints: answer of Father Régamey (*his successor as editor of Art Sacré*). The appeal of baroque sentimentality implicating in the psychological make up of saints these fringe areas which are the last to be purified and where sensuality finds certain occult compensations. Baroque is against everything that is purest in modern art: Picasso, Matisse, Braque. Baroque the constant sign of incipient decadence.

Marie Cuttoli told me recently that what Picasso liked most in the Chapel of Matisse, was the big designs of the ceramics and especially the Stations of the Cross. This doesn't surprise me, I agree with him.

Matisse on Picasso: 'He turns his back on the truth, he's a refined type, he tries to be like a yokel with big dirty boots'.

'Where is he now? Ah, it seems he's back in Paris. He's a "free man" he never stops hopping from one branch to another'.

The life of forms, which passes from one period to another, from one man to another, by reason of their movement, their own orientation, independent of conscious volition. The *Olympia* of Manet, engenders in Matisse, or in Picasso, other forms, which in their turn, thirty or forty years later engender in other men, still more forms. Races are thus transmitted and evolve mysteriously through individuals who are apparently unrelated.

Saturday 14 – at Marie Cuttoli's, lunch with Picasso: 'It's so simple what the big Boss told us and everybody does the opposite . . .' (you must love one another).

He is very concerned about what Matisse does, thinks and says: 'I believe he is fond of me'. He said to me: 'At the beginning, when he started working on the Chapel, he used to say frightful things to me.'

'Yes, I said, but little he got caught at his own game'.

He agreed, and said that what was finest in the chapel was the chasubles and the stations of the Cross. He also said: 'He may be religious, but he isn't a Christian. He's so hard. He said to me: When I've finished with a model I throw her away, like an apple or a bunch of flowers. But one can't do that, one can't treat a woman like an apple.' We speak of the Art Schools: 'It's absolutely essential that they should exist in order to form people who will fight against them'.

I said to him that, in opposition to the idea of reform of Laugier, I would like schools which would just be free studios, heated and without teachers. He answered: 'Not at all, there must be studios where one dies of cold, with very bad teachers: what has to be suppressed is facility'. Schools which force people to rebel.

Matisse, 18 August – I tell him that Picasso is going to come and see him. 'Yes, but he never comes. One day he said to me: "We must see one another often because when one of us is dead, there will be things we won't be able to say to anyone, but he doesn't come".'

19.1.52 – Mme Braque recounts to me how three years ago Picasso came and spent eight days with them at Varangeville. It was in order to convince Braque to join the communist party with him. He didn't want to join on his own. They didn't see one another again till this summer, where in the Midi, the Braques went to lunch at his place. During the meal Picasso had a sudden outburst of violent rage: suddenly grasping a neighbour (a common friend) by the front of his coat, he shouted, speaking of Braque: 'Oh! I'll kill him'.

BLACKFRIARS

Saturday, 8 March, at Matisse's – He tells me how recently, Olga Picasso, who was sick in some hospital, told him that Picasso was a most spiritually minded man (*mystique*). In his country place at Gisors, there was a XIII century chapel, and one day Breton and . . . came to see him, and he took them to see it, explaining that Mass was said there and that people from the district came to it. Upon which, apparently in the chapel itself, Breton lit a cigarette. Picasso was furious and horribly shocked.

Braque – On Easter morning at Varangeville he thinks that Picasso will come in the afternoon. Since they are reconciled: 'he can't do without me' he said to Mme Braque. Since her departure from Paris, a week ago, Picasso has called four or five times.

31 July – 4 August, at Braque's, Varangeville – As I spoke to him of the prophetic letter of Apollinaire ('in twenty years, Picasso, Matisse, Léger, Braque etc. . . . will all be in the Louvre') he said with feeling: 'He understood nothing about painting. Only he loved us, so he trusted us'. I find this admirable. The quality of a man in his eyes was sufficient to guarantee the value of his work and future.

Matisse: 'I've gone through life a hunted, tracked man. One day Picasso said a splendid thing to me. He said: "We must work like navvies". But as for the chapel, it's no longer this. Everything came from elsewhere, from above me'.

March 25. The other evening at Braque's, I asked him what he and Picasso had in mind when they started cubism. 'First of all, he said, we never did any cubism. It's others who came after us, who did'. I told him he ought to speak, say how things really happened. But he said it would be useless. 'Nothing can be done about it: history is made like that. Those who write history are not those who make it; and the latter are helpless against the former'.

(Introduction and translation by SIMON BLAKE, O.P.)