had become men, and 'for a religious art nothing remains after the humanization of the gods but decadence and death'. Classical artists 'had aimed at beauty of form and the form had destroyed the content'. The Christian artist invoked a transcendental world, but in doing so he used the instruments of this world. Already in the Theodosian period a more lavish art is discernible, but a long time was to elapse before form won the upper hand. In the meantime man had been toppled from his pedestal. Even in the Christian commemorative (largely funerary) art the emphasis was not on the glorification of man in the past, but on man suppliant and trustful of the future. Art had recovered its true function as an intermediary between man and God. Modern liturgists would be well advised to consider the art of the early Christians, and they could not find a better guide than Professor van der Meer.

EDWARD CORBOULD, O.S.B.

SACRED ART IN EAST AND WEST, by Titus Burkhardt, translated by Lord Northbourne. *Perennial Books*, London, 1967. 160 pp. 35s.

THE DESECRATION OF CHRIST, by Richard Egenter, with an epilogue by Nicolette Gray. *Compass Books, Burns & Oates*, London. 1967. 154 pp. 18s.

To some extent these two books are complementary. One describes the basis of religious architectural expression through the East and West, and the other describes and decries the last stage of popular Catholic devotional art. It is almost as if, when one goes away from the principles involved in the first book, one lands in the degradation denounced by the second.

Titus Burkhardt's book is well worth reading. Some parts of it are very sensitively written, particularly the chapter on the Islamic ideal in art, which might be new ground for those who have hitherto only been concerned with Christianity. Islamic art might be the condition towards which all sacred art and architecture is moving. At the same time, there is an implication of syncretism in the book which I think is untenable. After all it is not only a question of religious thought, but of whole systems of civilization that arose in places far apart, under quite different circumstances, and these cannot, obviously, be reconciled beyond a certain extent. The most serious reservation regarding the book is whether one can in fact apply its learning to the present day. Mr Burkhardt may be himself wondering the same thing judging from the unsatisfactory last chapter. In this sense the book, though highly informative and stimulating, remains academic. The fact Mr Burkhardt has not faced squarely is that all the higher religions are in the same position, i.e. of having outlived their own cultural expression—this, at any rate, they have in common. One might say that we are not so much Christians living in a post-Christian civilization (shades of self-pity and inverted Triumphalism) as, ourselves, post-civilized Christians. This is quite a new phenomenon.

In the growth of religious culture and art it seems to be necessary for someone at the centre of power to make, or make use of, an important secular discovery, which is both valid in itself and analogous to a spiritual truth. The implementation of such a discovery for religious reasons feeds back to the religious stimulus, vindicating it, and giving it a mandate and authority. Of course, it all depends on the 'secular' efficiency of the action, but when effective one might describe the whole process as working out in practice of a secular para-sacrament on a widespread social level. I realize that I have over-simplified to a ludicrous extent, but I am convinced that without a complicated and subtle interaction between material progress and spiritual analogy, the conditions do not exist for a religious culture to arise at all. This explains why primitive cultures are religious and 'late' cultures tend not to be; in the latter case, not only the credibility-gap but the communication-gap and the implementation-gap become too wide to be straddled. By way of example, the first historical movements of this sort might be those connected to astronomy and irrigation all over the world, but possibly the last discovery that had a decisive influence on a major cultural pattern was the new-found ability to concentrate and discipline certain mental faculties which enabled the Jesuits to dominate the educational system of Europe for two hundred years. I do not see movements of this sort today. Certainly attention to sacred geometry in the construction of churches seems remote and beside the point—one simply could not reassemble the combination of seriousness and delicacy, awe and discovery, that gave these measures psychological and spiritual validity. This is not to say that such do not exist, but nowadays I am inclined to think they

exist in the spheres of higher medicine and biology, such as brain surgery and transplantation.

The book by Richard Egenter, a good translation of the German *Kitsch und Christenleben* (a far better title because it emphasizes the incompatibility between the two), is concerned to denounce those little sins of religious fantasy and self-indulgence that lead to an art so banal it ceases even to be charming. I wonder if, in fact, this has not been translated ten years too late, the situation having changed since it was written (P*p* J*h* and t*e s*c*nd V*t*n C*nc*l, etc.), but a glance at the popular devotional shops or through the *Catholic Building Review* indicates I am wrong. Kitsch is, of course, the smile left hanging in the sky when the Cultural Cat has faded away, but I feel that the sweeping case Mr Egenter presents against such trash is really oversimplified, and the Church is wise in dealing with Kitsch in the same way as it deals with sex, that is, to have definite moral ideals allied to an infinite sensitivity in individual application. I am against the kind of moral indignation that used to be aimed at sex being switched to art. Incidentally, Mr Egenter uses the word Kitsch at least six hundred times in the course of the book but does not emphasize that it is primarily a social phenomenon, or even an economic one. I feel that this side of life, nauseating as it may be, is not really very important and will clear up of its own accord when deeper matters of social importance, such as education, are emphasized in our spiritual lives. The epilogue by Nicolette Gray ends this book on an optimistic and hopeful note.

PATRICK REYNTIENS

'.....As we become increasingly aware of living conditions in Africa, Asia and Latin America, our own lives change. Instead of "two worlds" we find ourselves living in one world in which we are aware of the needs of others. We become aware of a new dimension in our lives:

a whole world's cry for help:
the hungry crying for food
to those who have too much,
the brother crying in pain
to the brother whose duty is love.

This new world is a place in which "all men together are called to grow together". It is a place in which we recognize that our previous ignorance has stunted our lives, made us inward-looking and unaware of the needs of others.

'The transition from an old world of ignorance and indifference to a new world of commitment is a difficult and painful one. Some understanding of the needs of others can be gained by reading, watching television and talking with those from other nations. But even this new awareness and understanding is not enough to ensure action. Each one of us has to decide in what ways we will commit ourselves to the needs of others. Each one of us has to find the means within our own lives of broadening our sense of concern and responsibility beyond our present circle of family and friends in order to reach out to the needs of people living in other countries. . . .'

—from *A World in Need—the challenge of poverty*, a new pamphlet published at three shillings by the Catholic Institute for International Relations, 38 King Street, London, W.C.2.

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