

## *Religious Art*

**WE WRITE** abundantly about peace, justice, understanding, because these are both highly desirable and, in our world today, most deplorably absent. And throughout the years that this magazine has been published there have been repeated discussions in its pages

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concerning the nature of religious art, something which also is highly desirable and at present sadly deficient. In the treatment of this subject one point at least has been settled for us if not for all, and that is that the Christian art of our day, if it is to be real and living, may not be archeological. The artist may not, simply because he is painting a religious subject, content himself with copying the religious painting of the past. His technical equipment results from the accumulated experience of all artists of all the ages: his vision must be his own, fresh and direct. Analysis of the relationship between the artist and the Christian, as of that existing between the scientist and the Christian, is useful and necessary and can lead to a definition of what the relationship should be. Yet it cannot create the Christian artist.

Jean Charlot is showing now in New York the work he has done in religious painting. We visited his exhibition and it was a wonderful relief to see the synthesis of art and religious subject and feeling realized for once otherwise than in words—in life and fact after so many efforts to describe it in theory. Here a contemporary artist has painted the Stations of the Cross in a style entirely related to his own artistic development. He has told the story in his own language: his meditation on the scenes to be presented has been deeply serious, profoundly Christian. With undeniable devotion it is a man of our times who has spoken. In the other work shown he makes manifest his deeply Christian preoccupation with the problem of human persecution. Thus his numerous "Flights into Egypt" are constant symbols for all the refugees in the world. The French Dominican, Father Couturier, has said that Charlot's painting "illustrates with tenderness all that, in the eyes of God, remains childlike even in the most cruel of our human dramas—or again, all that is hidden of pity and tears behind the joy and laughter of average Christian life."