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Sketches of the History of Christian Art

Alexander Lindsay (1812–80) was the head of an aristocratic family who owned vast coalfields in Lancashire, generating enormous wealth. Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, he spent the majority of his time travelling in Italy, collecting, and writing on a variety of subjects, including art, the Indo-Aryan race and the Etruscans. This important work, published in three volumes in 1847, surveys Christian painting and sculpture. Addressing Romance literature of the Middle Ages, iconography and legends of the saints, the book's historical narrative is infused with the author's strong moral approach to the subject. Volume 1 covers philosophical method, Christian symbolism and mythology, Roman art, and Byzantine art, which Lindsay sees as having stimulated the Western revival. Though derided by John Ruskin, the work strongly influenced aristocratic collecting, and remains relevant to readers interested in the Victorian construction of morals and artistic taste.

Sketches of the History of Christian Art

VOLUME 1

ALEXANDER LINDSAY

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SKETCHES

OF THE

HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN ART.

BY LORD LINDSAY.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1847.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE three volumes now published comprise a portion only of my projected work on Christian Art; I publish them separately in consequence of the interest newly awakened in the subject, and in the hope that, however imperfect, they may be found useful both to artists and amateurs at the present moment.

I had intended prefixing a General Introduction, but, after much consideration, have postponed it till the work shall be concluded, under the conviction that this will be to the ultimate advantage of all parties. I feel the less scruple in thus postponing it, inasmuch as the reader will find a series of Memoranda respecting the Ideal, the Character and Dignity of Christian Art, and the Symbolism and Mythology of Christianity, preliminary to the work itself, and also a General Classification of Schools and Artists in accordance with the principle on which the work is based,—and these may to a cer-

tain extent supply the place of the Introduction in question.

With regard to the principle alluded to, I feel myself in rather an embarrassing position. Even if published complete, as a whole, under existing circumstances, the 'Sketches' would labour under the disadvantage of being the fragment merely of a scheme too extensive for any single hand to execute, and dependent moreover on a Central Principle as yet unrecognised, on the perception and recognition of which by others I rest my sole hope of seeing it accomplished in detail. No portion, it is evident, of such a scheme can be rightly and fully comprehended without due apprehension of that Central Principle; and I take the liberty therefore—in the hope of creating a clearer mutual understanding between the reader and myself, and of anticipating various objections that may collaterally arise—to refer the reader to an Essay lately published by me, entitled 'Progression by Antagonism,'* in which the principle in question is set forth and illustrated.

I will only add, that these 'Sketches' are addressed in letters to a young amateur artist, pre-

* *London, John Murray*, 1846.

sumed to have recently started for Italy,—and that, in spite of an insensible transition into the ideal in my view of the character thus addressed, I cannot forego the pleasure of inscribing them to the friend in whose society I have spent many a happy day in exploring the pictorial treasures of Umbria and the Apennine, and for whose use they were originally designed,

SIR COUTTS LINDSAY, BART.

Haigh, November 1st, 1846.*

* I have been urged to expunge the word 'Sketches' from the title-page of these volumes, and term them at once a History. Two reasons oppose themselves to this: First, that a history of Art, worthy of the name, would require a knowledge of the details of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting far more intimate and scientific than I possess; Secondly, that the documentary evidence on which alone such a history could be based is as yet very defective, although every day is adding to the store. The reader will therefore receive these volumes as 'Sketches' merely—an attempt to prepare the way for something better.

Before concluding, let me acknowledge a debt of warm and affectionate gratitude to Mlle. Félicie de Fauveau, of Florence —the friend of the very dear relatives to whose suggestion and encouragement this work mainly owes its origin—whose society added the charm of enthusiasm and genius to the happy company with which, six years ago, I revisited many of the most interesting cities and districts of Central Italy—whose suggestions, let me add, have since been most useful to me in

guiding my researches and qualifying my judgment—and whose kindness will, I trust, absolve me for thus introducing her name without having sought the permission which her delicacy might have withheld. As a sculptress, Mlle. de Fauveau's fame is firmly established by her 'Francesca da Rimini,' [a] her 'S. George and the Dragon,' [b] and other works, among which I may specify a recent bust of H. R. H. the Duc de Bordeaux. She is also about to execute another of the beautiful Grand-Duchess Olga, of Russia, the Emperor having visited her studio and commanded one during his recent visit to Italy.—It is to be regretted when the noble in birth as well as spirit are compelled through political reverses to depend on genius for their bread, but human nature is exalted by it and Art is a gainer, for the spirit of reverence which inspires the Jacobite or the Carliste is precisely that which wings the Artist to the gates of heaven.

[a] In the possession of M. le Comte de Portalés, Paris. It is described in Count A. Raczynski's 'Histoire de l'Art Moderne en Allemagne,' tom. ii, p. 623.

[b] In the possession of Lord Ellesmere.

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Page li, line 21, *lege* 'reeds. Which.'—P. lii, lowest l., *l.* 'sickness. Which.'—P. cvi, penult. l., *l.* 'as Dionysius.'—P. cxlviii, l. 20, *l.* 'her caresses.'—P. clxxx, l. 3 from bottom, *dele* 'the.'—P. cxci, l. 6 from bottom, *lege* 'more.'—P. 100, l. 18, *l.* 'of the Patriarchs and of the Israelites.'—P. 108, l. 7 from bottom, *l.* 'work.'—P. 124, l. 19, *l.* 'compositions.'—P. 137, l. 10, *l.* 'stiff.'

CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

SKETCHES OF THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN ART.

INTRODUCTORY.

ROMAN AND BYZANTINE ART.

PERIOD OF PREPARATION.

I.

THE IDEAL,

AND

THE CHARACTER AND DIGNITY OF CHRISTIAN ART.

* * * * *

The perfection of Human Nature implies the union of beauty and strength in the Body, the balance of Imagination and Reason in the Intellect, and the submission of animal passions and intellectual pride to the will of God, in the Spirit.

Man was created in this perfection, but Adam fell, and with the Fall the original harmony ceased, the elements of being lost their equipoise; Spirit, Sense and Intellect, with the two elements of Intellect, Reason and Imagination, have ever since been at variance, and consequently every production of man partakes of the imperfection of its parent.

Nevertheless the Moral Sense, although comparatively deadened, still survives, witnessing to what is pure, holy and fitting; and the struggle between Imagination and Reason (marvellously overruled) still reveals to the calm intelligence the vision of Truth immortal in the heavens—of Truth in the Abstract or Universal, inclusive both of particular truth and of that beauty which, being antithetically opposed to it, is falsely deemed its enemy—in a word, of the Ideal, that point of union between God and Man, Earth and Heaven, which, crushed and crippled as our

nature is, we can recognise and strive after, but not attain to. Nevertheless it is in thus striving that we fulfil our duty and work out our salvation. So long as we keep the Ideal in view, we rise—from Sense to Intellect, from Intellect to Spirit. But the moment we look away from it we begin to lose grouud and sink—from Spirit to Intellect, from Intellect to Sense—with this difference, that whereas we ascended slowly and with difficulty, yet bearing with us everything worth retention that we had culled in the regions we had left behind—the breezes of a purer and yet purer atmosphere ever fanning our brow—so we sink more rapidly, our backs once turned to the light, and the gross vapours from below overpowering us more and more with their stupifying influence.

This is an universal law of humanity, exemplified in every walk of life, and by the personal experience, more or less, of every individual.

But the history of Man in the aggregate—or, to speak at present more restrictively, of the human race from Noah downwards—affords the most striking and instructive illustration of it; and an inquiry into its operation is the surest test whereby to judge of our progress towards perfection, and to refute the calumny that we stand no higher in the scale of being now, than we did in the days of Pericles or Sesostris.

Man is, in the strictest sense of the word, a progressive being, and with many periods of inaction and retrogression, has still held, upon the whole, a steady course towards the great end of his existence, the re-union and re-harmonizing of the three elements of his being, dislocated by the Fall, in the service of his God.

Each of these three elements, Sense, Intellect and Spirit, has had its distinct development at three distant intervals, and in the personality of the three great branches of the human family.

The race of Ham, giants in prowess if not in stature, cleared the earth of primeval forests and monsters, built cities, established vast empires, invented the mechanical arts, and gave the fullest expansion to the animal energies :—

After them, the Greeks, the elder line of Japhet, developed the intellectual faculties, Imagination and Reason, more especially the former, always the earlier to bud and blossom ; poetry and fiction, history, philosophy and science alike look back to Greece as their birthplace ; on the one hand they put a soul into Sense, peopling the world with their gay mythology, on the other they bequeathed to us, in Plato and Aristotle, the mighty patriarchs of human wisdom, the Darius and the Alexander of the two grand armies of thinking men whose antagonism has ever since divided the battle-field of the human intellect :—

While, lastly, the race of Shem, the Jews, and the nations of Christendom, their *locum tenentes* as the Spiritual Israel, have, by God's blessing, been elevated in Spirit to as near and intimate communion with Deity as is possible in this stage of being.

Now the peculiar interest and dignity of Art consists in her exact correspondence in her three departments with these three periods of development, and in the illustration she thus affords—more closely and markedly even than literature—to the all important truth that men stand or fall according as they look up to the Ideal or not.

For example, the Architecture of Egypt, her pyramids and temples, cumbrous and inelegant but imposing from their vastness and their gloom, express the ideal of Sense or Matter—elevated and purified indeed, and nearly approaching the Intellectual, but Material still ; we think of them as of natural scenery, in association with caves or mountains, or vast periods of time ; their voice is as the voice of the sea, or as that of "many peoples," shouting in unison :—

But the Sculpture of Greece is the voice of Intellect and Thought, communing with itself in solitude, feeding on beauty and yearning after truth:—

While the Painting of Christendom—(and we must remember that the glories of Christianity, in the full extent of the term, are yet to come)—is that of an immortal Spirit, conversing with its God.

And as if to mark more forcibly the fact of continuous progress towards perfection, it is observable that although each of the three arts peculiarly reflects and characterises one of the three epochs, each art of later growth has been preceded in its rise, progress and decline by an antecedent correspondent development of its elder sister or sisters—Sculpture, in Greece, by that of Architecture—Painting, in Europe, by that of Architecture and Sculpture. If Sculpture and Painting stand by the side of Architecture in Egypt, if Painting by that of Architecture and Sculpture in Greece, it is as younger sisters, girlish and unformed. In Europe alone are the three found linked together, in equal stature and perfection.

You will not now be surprised at my claiming superiority for Christian over Classic Art, in all her three departments. If Man stand higher or lower in the scale of being according as he is Spiritual, Intellectual or Sensual, Christian Art must excel Pagan by the same rule and in the same proportion.

As men cannot rise above their principles, so the artists of Greece never rose above the religious and moral sentiments of the age. Their Ideal was that of youth, grace and beauty, thought, dignity and power; Form consequently, as the expression of Mind, was what they chiefly aimed at, and in this they reached perfection.—Do not for a moment suppose me insensible to Classic Art—the memories of Greece and of the Palatine are very dear to me—I cannot speak coldly of the Elgin marbles, of the Apollo, the Venus, the

Dying Gladiator, the Niobe, the Diana of Gabii, the Psyche of Naples—which comes nearer the Christian ideal than aught else of Grecian growth. But none of these completely satisfy us. The highest element of truth and beauty, the Spiritual, was beyond the soar of Phidias and Praxiteles; it is true, they felt a want—they yearned for it, and this yearning, stamped on their works, constitutes their undying charm. But they yearned in vain—Faith, Hope and Charity, those wings of immortality, as yet were not.

Herein then lies our vantage—not in our merit, not our genius, but in that we are Christians, that we start from a loftier platform, that we are raised by communion with God to a purer atmosphere, in which we see things in the light of Eternity, not simply as they are, but with their ulterior meanings, as shadows of deeper truths—an atmosphere which invests creation with the glow of love, and its human denizens with a beauty and expression of its own, a ray of heaven beaming on the countenance, especially of woman, which mere beauty of intellect or feeling, the highest charm attainable by Greece, can never rival. It is not, in a word, symmetry of Form or beauty of Colouring, apart or conjoined, that is required of us and that constitutes our prerogative, but the conception by the artist and expression to the spectator of the highest and holiest spiritual truths and emotions,—and in this the vantage of the Bible over the Iliad is not more decided than that of Christian over Classic Art—than the depth, intensity, grandeur and sweetness of the emotions at the command of Christian artists, as compared with those elicited by the ancients. Few will dispute this who have ever soared into the symbolic heaven of a Lombard or Gothic Cathedral—renewed their vows of chivalry before the S. George of Donatello—or shared the cross and the palm, the warfare and the triumph of the Church of all ages in the sympathy of the Spirit, while contemplating the old Byzantine heads of Christ, the martyrdoms

of the Lombard Giotteschi, the Paradises of Fra Angelico, the Madonnas of Perugino, Leonardo and Bellini, the 'Dispute' of Raphael, and the Last Judgments of Orcagna and Michael Angelo.

And yet these too are but aspirations after the Ideal, glimpses of that truth and beauty which the soul seeks after, and of which the prototype exists but in heaven. The Ideal is to us as a bright particular star which we fancy we shall grasp if we reach the top of the mountain, and so we still toil on, up and still upwards for ever, love, if it be true love, supplying the motive to persist, even though the higher we ascend the more distant it appears, the more hopeless our pursuit.

Such is the Ideal, such its influence on the Artist. No work of genius has ever been produced apart from that influence, and nothing in either of the three branches of Art has ever come fully up to its requisitions. Woe to the artist or the man when he begins to be satisfied with himself, when he ceases to exclaim, "Ancora imparo!"—And as for the union of the sister arts in one glorious pile, in that peculiar perfection, harmony and interdependency which the mightiest artists have dreamed of and longed to realize, it remains, and must ever remain a dream—unless it indeed be, that, in the life to come, our intellectual as well as our moral faculties are to receive their full expansion in the service of our Maker, and Michael Angelo, Leonardo and Donatello be destined to build, paint and sculpture temples to God's glory, with the materials of that brighter world, throughout Eternity.

Meanwhile we may at least observe—with the deepest reverence—that the three Arts, considered in a Christian sense, as a manifestation of the Supreme Being through the Intellect of Man, his Image, present a sort of earthly shadow of the ineffable and mysterious Trinity in Unity, in Its relations with the Material Universe,—Architecture symbolizing

the Father, known to us chiefly by the harmony and proportion of what we term his attributes—Sculpture the Son, the Incarnate Form or Outline (so to speak) of the Invisible and Infinite—Painting the Holy Spirit, the smile of God illumining creation; while the Three Arts are One in essence, co-equal and congenial, as manifested by the inseparable connection and concord observable throughout the whole history of their development, and by the greatest artists in every age of Christendom having almost invariably excelled in all three alike.—There is no impiety, I trust, in vindicating this analogy.

II.

TABLE OF SYMBOLS,

PARTLY OF NEW, PARTLY OF PRIMEVAL SIGNIFICANCE,

THE

HIEROGLYPHICAL LANGUAGE OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH DURING THE EARLY AGES.

[I have merely noticed those of more frequent occurrence, and in their simplest and primary meaning. For fuller information the reader may consult the 'Roma Subterranea' of Aringhi, *Rome*, 2 tom. fol. 1651, the 'Osservazioni sopra i Cimiteri de' SS. Martiri' of Boldetti, *Rome*, fol. 1720, and the 'Sinnbilder und Kunstvorstellungen der alten Christen' of Dr. Fred. Münter, *Altona*, 2 tom. 4to, 1825.—The volume entitled 'Iconographie Chrétienne —Histoire de Dieu,' by M. Didron, lately published at Paris, 4to, 1843, is the commencement merely of a series of similar works which will probably exhaust the subject of early Christian symbolism and personification. See pp. 20 *sqq.* for the scheme contemplated.]

HEAVEN is symbolized by the segment of a circle, sometimes of pure blue, sometimes edged with the three colours of the rainbow :—

The Universe—by a globe or sphere, usually of deep blue :—

God the Father—by a hand issuing from the preceding symbol of Heaven, *Ezek.* ii. 9 ; viii. 3 :—

God the Son—by the monogram ☧, formed of the initial letters of the name Christ, in Greek ;

—by the Cross, although more correctly the symbol of salvation through the atonement ;

—by a rock, 1 *Cor.* x. 4; *Exod.* xvii. 6;

—by a lamb, *Isaiah*, lvii. 7,—frequently with a glory and carrying a cross;

—by a pelican, *Psalm* cii. 6;*

—by a vine, *John* xv. 1, &c.;

—by a lamp or candle, as "the light of the world," *John* ix. 5;

—and by the 'piscis,' or 'vesica piscis,' as it has been ungracefully termed—a glory encircling the whole body of Our Saviour, shaped like a fish and suggested by the word ἰχθυς, acrostically formed from the initial letters of the titles of Our Saviour, Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, Θεοῦ υἱὸς, Σωτήρ,—'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour:'—

God the Holy Ghost—by the dove, usually bearing the olive-branch;

—by water, either issuing from the beak of the dove, or rising as a fountain from a vase, as the "well of water springing up into everlasting life," *John* iv. 14;

—and by a lamp or candlestick—seven of which, ranged to the right and left of the altar, in the old mosaics, signify the gifts of the Spirit, *Rev.* i. 12; iv. 5:—

The Holy Trinity—by the three-coloured rainbow encircling Our Saviour, the visible Form or Image of the Deity, and

* The mediæval interpretation of this symbol is given as follows by Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, Lion King, (nephew of the poet,) in his MS. 'Collectanea,' preserved in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh:—"The Pellican is ane foule in Egipt, of the quhilkis auld men sayis that the litill birdis straikis thair fader in the face with thair wingis, and crabis him quhill [till] he slayis thame. And quhen the moder seis thame slane, scho greitis [weeps] and makis grit dule thre dayis lang, quhill scho streikis hirself in the breist with hir neb [beak,] and garris the blude skayle [flow] vpone hir birdis, quhairthrow thai restoir and turnis to lyf agane. Bot sum folkis sayis thai ar clekkit swownand, [hatched swooning,] lyk as thai war bot [without] life, and that thair fader haillis [heals] thame agane with his blude. And this maner haly kirk beiris witnes, quhair our Lord sayis that he is maid lyk the Pelican."

who sometimes is represented seated upon it, *Ezek.* i. 28; *Rev.* iv. 3;

—by three beams of light radiating from the head of Christ;

—and by the extension of the thumb, fore and middle fingers of Our Saviour's hand, as held up in giving the benediction:*—

Paradise—by a mountain, in conformity with the traditions of almost all nations:—

Satan—by the serpent:—

The Obedience and Atonement of Christ—by the Cross, sometimes plain, sometimes richly gemmed, occasionally with roses or flowers springing from it:—

The Course of Human Life—by the Sun and Moon:—

The Church, in her Catholic or general character—by a mountain, as typified by Paradise, and in allusion also to *Dan.* ii. 34:—

The Church Militant—by a female figure standing, with her hands raised in prayer;†

—by the vine, as "brought out of Egypt," *Psalm* lxxx. 8; *Isaiah* v. 1, &c.:—

—and by a vessel in full sail—an emblem originally heathen, but naturalized and carried out into the most minute and fanciful particulars by the ancient Fathers:—

The Church Triumphant—by the New Jerusalem, the City of the Apocalypse, *Rev.* xxi, and *Ezek.* xlvii,—frequently identified with the original Paradise in Eden:—

---

* This is the Latin or Western form of blessing; with the Greeks, as described by M. Didron and constantly seen in the works of Byzantine artists, "L'index s'allonge comme un I, le grand doigt se courbe comme un C, ancien sigma des Grecs, le pouce et l'annulaire se croisent pour faire un X, et le petit doigt s'arrondit pour figurer un C. Tout cela donne IC-XC, monogramme Grec de Jésus-Christ, (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.)" *Icon. de Dieu*, p. 212.

† This was in later times identified with the Virgin.

The Two Covenants, the Old and New Testament—by the "wheel in the middle of a wheel," *Ezek.* i. 16 *sqq.* :—

The Sacrament of Baptism—by water poured on the Cross by the dove :—

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—by ears of corn or loaves, and grapes or vases of wine :—

The Apostles—by twelve sheep or lambs, usually represented issuing from the cities of Our Saviour's birth and death, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and approaching a central lamb, figurative of Christ, standing on the Mount of Paradise :—

The Evangelists—by the four mystic animals, described in *Rev.* iv. 7 ; *Ezek.* i. 10, x. 14,—the angel being usually assigned to S. Matthew, the lion to S. Mark, the ox to S. Luke and the eagle to S. John ; and by the four rivers issuing from the Mount of Paradise, "to water the earth," *Gen.* ii. 10 :—

The Faithful—by sheep, as under the charge of the Good Shepherd, Christ, *John* x. 14 ; xxi. 15, 16, 17, &c. ;

—by fish, as caught in the net of the Gospel, *Mat.* xiii. 47, *Mark* i. 17, *Ezek.* xlvii. 9, and new-born in baptism ;

—by doves or other birds, denizens of a loftier and purer element, either eating grapes or ears of corn, as figurative of the Eucharist, or drinking from the vase and fountain, emblematical of Christ, or holding branches of olive in their beaks, and reposing on the Cross ;

—by stags at the well or water-brook, *Psalm* xlii. 2 ;

—by date-trees or cedars, trees of righteousness planted by the waters and bearing fruit in their season, *Psalm* i. 3, xcii. 12, *Isaiah* lxi. 3, *Jerem.* xvii. 8 ;

—and by little children or genii sporting among the vine-leaves, or plucking the fruit,—and after death, with the wings of Psyche, or the butterfly :—

Sanctity—by the *nimbus*, a circlet of glory round the head, a most ancient symbol, being common to the religions of

India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, from the latter of which it was adopted by the early Christians; in the case of ordinary Saints the nimbus presents a plain gold field, but within that of Our Saviour the three bands of the rainbow were frequently introduced, in concentric circles—as also the monogram ☧, but this was gradually reduced to the three rays, symbolical, like the rainbow, of the Trinity, as I have shown *infra*, p. 103,—and these were continued long after the nimbus had shrunk to a thin line of gold and disappeared :—

Faith—by the various emblems, above noticed, as symbolical of the Faithful :—

Hope—by the anchor, *Heb.* vi. 19 :—

Charity—by a heart :—

Purity—by the lily :—

Incorruptibility—by the rose of Sharon :—

Watchfulness—by the cock :—

Victory—by the palm-branch, *Rev.* vii. 9, or a wreath or crown, such as was given to the conqueror in the arena, 1 *Cor.* ix. 25, &c. :—

Peace—by a branch or leaf of olive, borne by the dove, symbolical either of the Holy Spirit or of the believer, according to circumstances :—

The Resurrection—by the phœnix, and the peacock, which loses its rich plumage in winter and recovers it in spring :—

Eternity—by a ring or circle, of peace, glory, &c., according to the emblematical import of the material of which it is composed, and within which are frequently inserted the symbols of Our Saviour, the Church, &c. :—

And finally, Eternal Life—by the mystic Jordan, the "river which maketh glad the City of God," formed by the junction of the four evangelical streams, descending from the Mount of Paradise, and in which souls, in the shape of children, are sometimes seen swimming and sporting,

precisely as they figure in the mystic Nile, in the tombs of the Pharaohs,—*Ezek.* xlvii, and *Rev.* xxii. 1, 2.

The preceding symbols were varied at pleasure, in endless combination, as may be seen *passim* on the tombs of Ravenna and of the Catacombs, in the old Byzantine mosaics, &c. They were superseded, in great measure, more especially in Europe, towards the sixth and seventh centuries, by a new description of symbolism, of Persian and Teutonic origin, the parent collaterally of our modern heraldry. The ancient symbolism revived, in more than its original depth and complication of meaning, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but only for a moment, and although a few of the symbols have been perpetuated to the present time, the majority are now totally forgotten, West at least of the Adriatic. The Transfiguration, in the church of S. Apollinare in Classe, at Ravenna, described at page 105 of the present volume, may be referred to as an example of the early style, and the great mosaics of S. Clemente and of S. Giovanni Laterano at Rome, (*infra*, p. 119, and vol. ii. p. 60,) as specimens of the comparatively modern revival.

In connection with Christian symbolism I may mention the mystical value and appropriation of Colours as a very interesting subject, as yet insufficiently illustrated. More has been asserted on this question than (I fear) can be fairly proved, but I have little doubt that a distinct system had been defined and generally accepted previous to the Confusion of Tongues and the general Dispersion,—at least, the correspondence and agreement on this point between nations very widely apart from each other in race and residence is too close occasionally for explanation otherwise. Nevertheless but little of this symbolism (although largely sanctioned in the Mosaic writings) appears in early Christian

art. White indeed, as the colour of innocence, specially fixed (as it were) in the Bible, is the prevailing garb of Apostles, Martyrs, &c. in the ancient mosaics, and blue and red that of Our Saviour—but even these are frequently varied; and although the colours used by the Roman Catholic church in the vestments of her clergy are of very ancient prescription, it does not appear that in Art, properly so called, any fixed law or tradition, founded on symbolism, controlled their distribution. It was in later times only, and when the influence of the Teutonic and Scandinavian blood had asserted itself in Europe, that this symbolism was introduced, and even then but partially,—and it seems ever to have been closely connected with heraldry, in which indeed it still survives at the present day.

The symbolical language of the hand, or of signs, is another interesting subject, the investigation of which on an extended scale (which should include America) might throw perhaps more light on ancient art than that of the symbolism of colours, since examples of it may be noticed in many of the old mosaics, and even occasionally (if I mistake not) in the works of Giotto and the Giotteschi—and it extensively prevailed among the ancient Greeks and Etruscans. I may refer, in proof of this, to the volume of the learned Canon Andrea de Jorio, entitled 'La Mimica degli Antichi investigata nel gestire Napoletano,' *Naples*, 8vo, 1832.*

Another most interesting work might be written on the symbolism and legendary history of mute nature, mute but

* The 'Arte de' Cenni, con la quale formandosi favella visibile, si tratta della muta eloquenza, che non è altro che un facondo silentio,' by Giov. Bonifacio, *Vicenza*, 4to, 1616, is (in spite of its alluring title) a mere commonplace-book of the conventional language of the poets—although far from destitute of merit as such.—A curious series of woodcuts, representing the combinations of the fingers by which numbers were expressed by the Orientals, from one to nine thousand, may be found, with illustrative observations, at p. 268 of Pierius' 'Hieroglyphica,' *Basil.* fol. 1575.

animated—of flowers, plants and trees,—a subject, however, only collaterally and in a minor degree associating itself with Christian art. It forms, in fact, a department by itself, distinct alike from art and from poetry, strictly so called, and well worthy of exploration. And this exploration too should be a comprehensive one, including the symbolism of the ancients* and of the extra European world,—and Christendom need not shrink from the comparison. In nothing, indeed, is her superiority more manifest. The rose, for instance—the flower of Venus, blushing with the blood of Adonis, the darling of the Graces, the symbol of worldly pleasure and of the frailty of a life too brief for its enjoyment—

> "Cogliam la rosa in sul mattino adorno
> Di questo dì, che tosto il seren perde,—
> Cogliam d' amor la rosa, amiamo or quando
> Esser si puote riamato amando!"

—what is it but a weed in comparison with the rose of Christendom, the type of the freshness of maiden purity, that sprang up out of persecution, when the holy maiden of Bethlehem, "blamed with wrong and sclaundered with fornication," as narrated by Mandeville, "was demed to the Dethe, and as the Fyre beganne to brenne aboute hire, sche made hire Preyers to oure Lord, that as sche was not gylty of that Synne, that he wold helpe hire, and make it to be knowen to alle men, of his mercyfulle grace. And whan sche hadde thus seyd, anon was the Fyer quenched and oute, and the Brondes that weren brennynge becomen red Roseres, and the Brondes that weren not kyndled becomen white Roseres, fulle of Roses. And theise weren the first Roseres and Roses, bothe white and red, that ever ony man saughe. And thus was this Mayden saved be the Grace of God." †

* This has been treated of in a learned work by M. Dierbach.

† 'Voyage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile, Knight,' p. 84, edit. 1727.

And this is but one among many Christian legends of the rose, once the theme of universal song, sweeter far than that which hushed the very breeze into attention in the gardens of Armida.

Admitting all that has been said, and truly said, and rightly insisted upon, respecting the adoption of Pagan rites and ceremonies into Christianity, it is equally true that our ancestors touched nothing that they did not Christianize; they consecrated this visible world into a temple to God, of which the heavens were the dome, the mountains the altars, the forests the pillared aisles, the breath of spring the incense, and the running streams the music,—while in every tree they sheltered under, in every flower they looked down upon and loved, they recognised a virtue or a spell, a token of Christ's love for man, or a memorial of his martyrs' sufferings. God was emphatically in all their thoughts, and from such, whatever might be their errors, God could not be far distant.—It would be well for us could we retain that early freshness in association with a purer and more chastened creed, but this may scarcely be. The world rolls on, and the Universal, like the Individual man, grows in years and in experience, and at fifty he offers God a service more acceptable than at twenty-five, inasmuch as it is a "reasonable" and a comprehensive one,—but, there is no denying it—as Reason ripens, the flowers of Imagination fade, the freshness of morning dies away, and as he nighs the Western Ocean, he looks wistfully backward, and sighs for the breeze of Eden which he has left behind. But still his course is forward—his good steed, Hope, bears steadily on, and the shadow of his lance, the legacy of his wisdom, lengthens as he moves,—and still, as he descends towards that far-spread Ocean, the Islands of the Blest rise loftier and distincter to his view, as the sun of his career sinks behind them. We must allow no turning back, then—no compromise of the ground we have won; we are men, not

children, we tilt with spears, not straws—and yet it may be pardoned if we remember with a tender yearning the days of our youth, when life was love and the waters of the heart were sweet within us, and thus remembering, we should humbly pray, that, with the experience and fixed purposes of manhood God may yet preserve in our hearts some tincture of that childlike faith and simple earnestness which Our Saviour loved, and in which our fathers, the objects too often of our scorn—to whom the rose and the lily were dear, not for their mere beauty and fragrance but as the types of that love and innocence which accomplished our salvation—were such proficients.