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## RELIGION AND MUSIC

by DR. HOWARD MITCHELL, *Conductor, National Symphony Orchestra*

Someone once said, "The principle of art is the incarnation of God's eternal beauty; the principle of religion is the incarnation of God's eternal human heart. Neither can do the other's work." Yet this work is complementary and many times I have wished the divorce between them, art and religion, were more nearly healed. I wish the artists felt more of the need of religion—something which art can never fill, and I wish the religious felt more of the need that art alone can give.

John Harrington Edwards, in commenting on a subject similar to mine, expresses himself beautifully in the words, "Christianity is the religion of spiritual song. Outside of Christendom, religious music has hardly shed the primitive, animistic character of rhythmic noise, and children's songs are almost unknown. But the Christian religion found in music a congenial ally, ready to aid its progress in the individual heart, and in the world's history. The thought of God, of Christ and His Cross, of the Christian Graces, and of Immortal Life is entirely consonant with musical expression.

"Music is not mere expression of feeling. It calls for the cooperative activity of the imagination, understanding and of purposive will. Nothing but soul can put soul into music, and the soul is God's work. The more of God there is in the composer or performer, the loftier and purer the strain, and the real author of melody and harmony keeps these priceless boons in their best forms for the special favor of those who take the giver with the gifts."

God has manifested Himself, in part, in the beauties and wonders of nature and in human life; and man has responded with the fine arts. For all the arts are but the stammering efforts of the finite mind to think God's thoughts after Him, and to commune with the inventive, creative, teaching, inspiring mind which is at the center of all good. It seems to me that we are so accustomed to thinking of expressed beauty, whether in nature or in music, as merely decorative and ornamental to our lives, that we often forget that beauty—in its comprehensive and definitive meaning, is a moral necessity.



*Dr. Howard Mitchell presented an address, "About Architecture and Music" to the AIA Centennial Convention in Washington in the Spring of 1957. His presentation and material were widely acclaimed throughout the architectural profession. Your Chapter Secretary heard Dr. Mitchell's speech, and was so profoundly impressed, that during his 1957-58 tenure as President of the Lutheran Layman's Fellowship of Washington he negotiated with Dr. Mitchell's staff and the National Symphony Orchestra President (a Lutheran) to fit into Dr. Mitchell's extremely strenuous schedule a companion address "About Religion and Music", for the annual "Pastors' Night Banquet", which took place on October 2, 1958.*

*"Religion" and "Church Architecture" are synonymous because the one requires the product of the other in which to worship; while the other tends to dictate or represent the type of worship to take place therein. In this article, Dr. Mitchell traces the architectural imprint on religious service.*

God brought beauty into the structure of the universe, and this universal love of beauty is one of the resources of human life that Christianity has pervaded with its spirit. One, in fact that—musically speaking—it can almost claim as its own.

Right now I must contradict myself to tell you that even the Greeks knew about the moral need of the beauties of music long before the coming of the Savior. In ancient Greece—of course—the word "music" in its broadest sense meant any of the arts and sciences that came under the patronage of the Muses, and like the Muses themselves, music was considered to be a creation half divine and half human.

In the long ago of Christendom, it is well to remember that art rendered early Christianity an incalculable service. Back in the days when the populace was for the most part illiterate, the sacred story of the Christian religion was told in the universal language of the arts. And for the masses, art taught the story of Christianity more convincingly than the pen of the theologian. We might say that for years, works of art were the peoples' Bible.

Our knowledge about church music of the first few centuries of Christendom is conjectural, with Hebrew, Greek and Latin sources providing the only known basis for early Christian music. Out of these heterogeneous elements, and with many original ideas of their own, the early Christians worked out a synthesis over the centuries which resulted in a musical art of great power and beauty. And by the close of the 6th century, a phase of their musical art found official codification in the body of music known as the Gregorian Chant.

In its various transmigrations and restorations, as well as in its theoretical aspects, this system has remained the official basis of Roman church music up to the present time. Closely



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related forms are still in use throughout Christendom, and free adaptations of its melodies have enriched the hymn books of nearly every Christian denomination.

Speaking of hymns, St. Augustine in his confessions gives us a first hand account of how Saint Ambrose introduced congregational hymn and psalm singing into the western division of the Orthodox Church.

In the 4th century, when Bishop Ambrose was engaged in one of his doctrinal disputes with the Byzantine Empress Justina, he and his followers at one point had to barricade themselves in a church for protection.

"The pious people kept guard in the church, prepared to die with their bishop," wrote St. Augustine. "At the same time," he continues, "was it here first instituted after the manner of the eastern churches, that hymns and psalms should be sung, lest the people should wax faint through the tediousness of sorrow: which custom being retained from that day to this, by almost all congregations throughout other parts of the world."

More than six centuries pass before any major musical innovations or changes appear on the scene, and it was not until the 10th century that a most important event took place, something destined to bring great change for music's future. Odo of Cluny, a priest, brought the monastery its earliest musical distinction through his active fostering of choral music. His great success in teaching choirs made it necessary for his teaching methods to be written down, and from this fortunate circumstance came the arranging of the tones of the scale into an orderly progression of A to G. By

thus assigning to them a system of letters, he was responsible for the earliest system of western musical notation. Now, for the first time, singers could be taught to read notes, and it is said "with the passage of not many days, they were singing at first sight and without a fault anything written in music, something which until now ordinary singers had never been able to do, many continuing to practice and study for fifty years without profit."

I have always found it interesting to compare relationships between the sister arts and—perhaps even more—their influences upon each other. In one particular case of architectural influence, not only music was affected, but the liturgy as well. I speak of the ever-increasing area of enclosed space within the churches. As the cathedral grew into such a vast auditorium, the spoken word in sermons and the like was intelligible only in the immediate area of the pulpit, which for this reason was placed in the middle of the nave. The acoustics, however, were found just right for solo and choral song, which resounded and reverberated most agreeably through the entire resonant space. So we find the Gothic churches designed with enormously increased choir space for larger and ever larger choruses, who participated in the most elaborate liturgy known to history. Just as the Gothic churches of France has been the source of the most significant developments of the 12th and 13th century in architecture, they were also the scene of the most important musical innovations. Specifically, this was the development of polyphonic, or many-voiced music, in contrast to the still universally practiced monophonic, or one-voiced art of Gregorian Chant.

The ever changing architecture of churches again showed its influence on music three centuries later. As history takes us through the Gothic period into what we refer to as the Baroque styles—we will use St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice for our example.

The architectural plan of St. Mark's predisposed the choir toward new developments distinct from those formerly used. In this cathedral a choir was placed on both sides of the transept, in two distinct groups, and each was supported by its own organ. These broken choruses added the element of spatial contrast to Venetian music and new color effects were made possible by them.

The resultant principle of duality is the basis for the concertato or concerting style, both words being derived from "concertare" meaning to "compete with" or to "strive against." It is in this era, IN THE CATHEDRALS, that composers first called for such combinations as violins, trumpets and trombones, and their work thus lays the foundation for our modern orchestra.

While Venice reached the climax of her cultural hegemony in the 16th and early 17th centuries, her influence in all directions was

facilitated by the highly developed printing industry that flourished there. For instance, the printing of musical scores assured Venetian composers of general fame and prominence in other countries. This new Venetian musical invention found ready acceptance in secular circles because of its greater freedom from the liturgy, and precisely because of its deviation from orthodox Roman models, it was welcomed by the new Protestant faith. Two very famous foreign contemporaries of that time, Jan Sweelinck, who was to become the Netherlands' foremost organist and composer, and Heinrich Schutz of Germany, were both fellow students in Venice.

These two outstanding musicians were responsible for bringing Venetian musical forms to their respective countries and largely through their influence a style was to develop with a distinctively northern character. I speak now of the keyboard literature, whether for organ, virginals, spinets, clavichord, or harpsichord. Sweelinck had absorbed both the Venetian and English traditions, and his organ playing attracted to Amsterdam students from all of northern Europe. Through Sweelinck and Schutz and their many students, their influence was widely extended, especially over the Protestant parts of Germany.

A direct line thus extended from Schutz and Sweelinck, who coordinated the Venetian and English schools, and through their pupils who in turn transmitted these traditions to northern Germany, down to the time of Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Friedrich Handel, both of whom were born in this part of Germany in the year 1685.

In the discourse on "Thoughts About Religion and Music" I need go no further attempting to explain what these two names mean to religious music. Suffice it to say that the name Johann Sebastian Bach alone represents the personification of what the great composer should be and the noble purpose to which musical talents should be dedicated. Art is, or at least should be the interpretation of the great eternal realities of life, and as soon as the composer or artist tries to embody the greatest and noblest aspirations of the human soul, he gets on religious ground, for there is no really important interest or aspiration of man which the Christian religion has not treated. It is for this reason that great composers and artists have dealt so largely with biblical themes. Music and the Bible could not be kept separated. In fact, they are congenial companions, because they have one common characteristic: both deal not only with the immediate and sometimes the material, but with the eternal and the spiritual. The function of religion is to help man to discover that his soul is eternal. The function of art is to embody the universal and the eternal.

So the chief characteristic of religion and art being so nearly the same, they have—and always will—belong together.



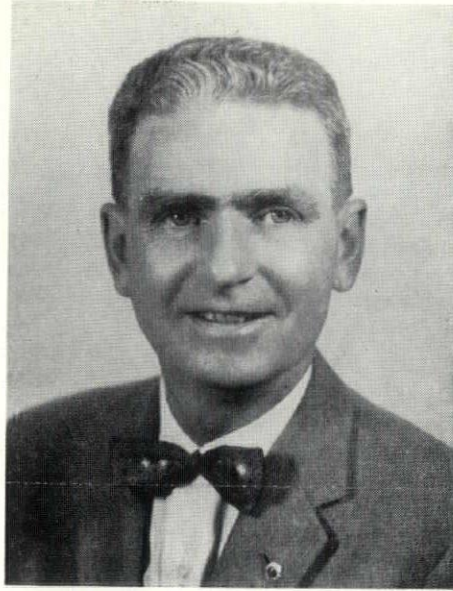
# Civil War Lore Intrigues Trad Thomen, Our New Executive Committee Member

A visit with Director "Trad" Thoman otherwise known officially as James T. gives one the impression that here is a gentleman who has enjoyed every day of his twenty-two years in the architectural profession.

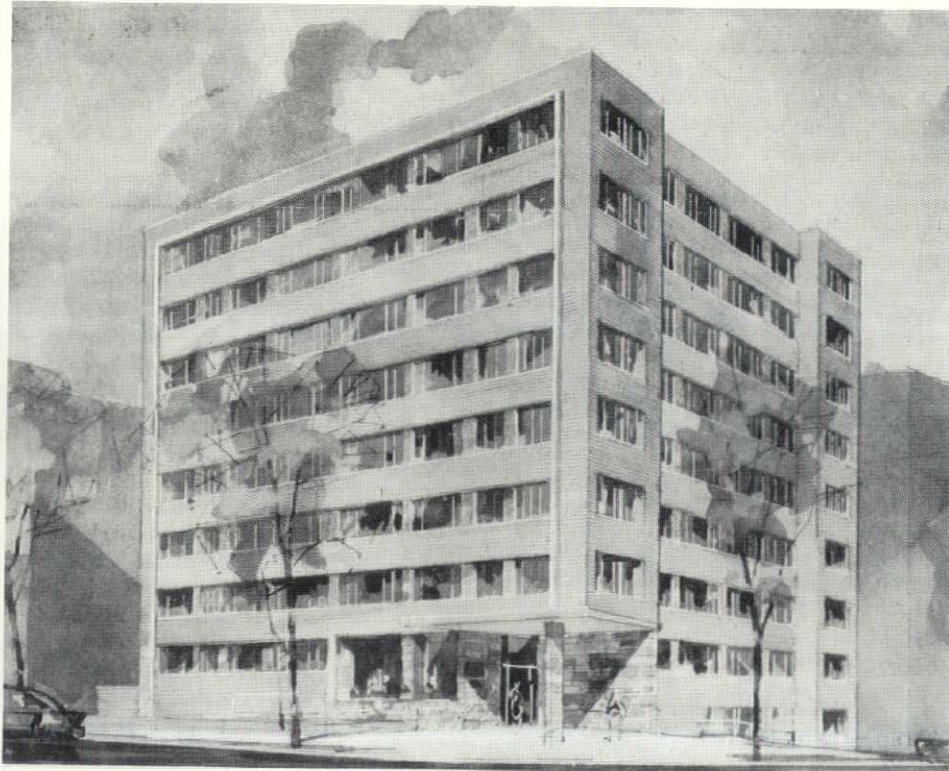
With a twinkle in his eye he recalls his birthplace, Greenup, Illinois, from whence he came at an early age to Washington to pursue his education at Central High and George Washington University. It was in 1936 that he received his certificate and started on a career which has featured many fine apartment houses and commercial buildings.

He is particularly pleased with his move to Silver Spring in January, 1957, which brought him into close contact with "a wonderful group of men", namely, the members of the Potomac Valley Chapter. Just a few blocks from his office (8226 Fenton St.), Trad and wife Grace live at 718 Dartmouth St. Daughter Mary Lynn is recently married and living happily at Salina, Kansas. Ask Trad what he does during his spare time and he lights up and quickly replies: "Civil War History." Yes, he's a devoted convert to that ever growing fraternity of Civil War Round Tablers. There's nothing Trad enjoys more than to probe around Gettysburg or Antietam adding to his collection of Civil War relics. He also has a formidable collection of Civil War weapons.

He's not alone in the architectural fraternity with his hobby so if your driving around these historic battlefields some weekend don't mis-



take the presence of Ted Englehardt, Bill Blocher, Cliff White, Frank Beatty, Tim Quinlan, Trad's partner, Ted Cromar, and Trad for a rump outing session of the Potomac Valley Chapter. Chances are they will have a metal detector to help add to their collection of belt buckles, shot, canteens, and other fascinating trappings of the great war. Trad is an active member of the Silver Spring Lions, Silver Spring Board of Trade, Washington Board of Trade, Washington Building Congress, and as affiliate member of the Montgomery County Real Estate Board.



The Regent House, 3201 Wisconsin Avenue—Thomen & Cromar, Architects

## HERE and ELSEWHERE

### Don Burke Retained as Public Relations Counsel

The Executive Committee has retained the services of Don Burke of Rockville as Public Relations Counsel to the chapter.

Burke who has been in the public relation field in Montgomery County for the past two years has a ten year background of writing and public relations experience in the Washington area. He is also Executive Director of the Rockville Chamber of Commerce.

### Montgomery Educator Lauds AIA Booklet

Dr. C. Taylor Whittier, Superintendent of the Montgomery County Board of Education, recently wrote Ben Elliot of the Public Relations Committee requesting seventy copies of the AIA Booklet, "Designing a Better Tomorrow". The booklet which the Chapter had forwarded for review would be placed in Junior and Senior High Schools.

Dr. Whittier reports a review of the booklet which was made by the Assistant Superintendent in Charge of Secondary Education as follows:

"This is a fine publication. It sets forth attractively and concisely the work of the architect, the possibilities for specialization in the field, and the manner in which one operates within the profession after he has attained the status of an architect. These factors should serve to attract students with potential in the field.

"The booklet also affords counselors a very fine basis for working with students in that the amounts and types of training necessary are clearly defined and the lists of schools is given on the last three pages of the booklet where recognized schools of architecture are organized."

A similarly encouraging response from the Prince Georges County Board of Education was reported in the October issue of PVA.

### PV COMPETITION CITED NATIONALLY

Take a second look at your current AIA Journal and note the beautiful two-page center spread given our POTOMAC VALLEY COMPETITION. This recognition demonstrates the importance of such a chapter undertaking as far as its own public relations are concerned plus being a source of gratification for those members who worked so hard to put the project over. It was a big job for a chapter of our size but it has surely paid off.



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