

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

Gothic Accent at Holiday Is Habit

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Uncritically, we expect Christmas to be mainly Gothic.

We expect color reproductions of art works to brighten the pages of our favorite periodicals at Christmastime. Thousands of editors will see to it that we are not disappointed. This year, once again, they have searched museums and venerable churches for art works to reproduce. Most frequently, these will be Gothic.

Why? We rarely ask ourselves this question, as obvious as it is. The superficial answer, of course, is that the "Gothic" of Christmas is a matter of tradition. This is not true. A tradition has roots or else the word means nothing. Our Christmas tradition is the Gothic or the early Renaissance art is recent—too recent to be called a tradition. It is merely a recent habit. As such, it deserves to be examined.

Images, Symbols

Man always sustains his faith with images and symbols. He thinks in images and symbols. When lacking such of his own making, he sees the world as image and symbol. He lifts his eyes to the hills from whence cometh his help, looks to the lily of the field, mentally watches the progress of a bright star across desert and olive grove.

This dependence on imagery is a universal. It is part of man. He thinks only in images even in his highest flights of creativity. We speak of his imagination and forget the root of the word. Even the mathematician calls his art the manipulation of symbols, neglecting to define this as a manner of seeing.

Those of us who are remote from the sciences and their application have faith in the space age and the space scientist because the "artists' conceptions" of space vehicles which we have seen show us that there is a step beyond our gravity-bound rockets.

Religious Festival
Predictably, then, a great religious festival will be accompanied by profuse imagery, as at Christmas. Modern techniques will multiply such profusion, will mass-produce the imagery.

It could not be otherwise. One may ask, however, why the space age seeks out the bulk of this imagery mostly in those arts which were "modern" before Columbus or among the masterpieces of what we call the Golden Age of Painting, starting before it was generally accepted that the earth was not flat.

No single, simple answer will be satisfactory. Only sev-



GOthic MOOD—Madonna and Child of the French 14th Century, an example of the Gothic mood which we associate most easily with Christmastime. Strangely, no art of our time seems equally eloquent. Courtesy of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, Md.

eral interlocking answers can be adequate.

In the English-speaking world, of course, there is the matter of our attachment to the King James version of the Gospel, told with the vocabulary of A.D. 1611.

In Living Language
Archaic language, however, is not the answer for, elsewhere in Christendom, the Glad Tidings are most frequently read in a living language of our times. Nevertheless, even in Germany, France or Italy it is safe to say that, this Christmas, the great color magazines will be reproducing mainly Gothic and early Renaissance art. This should surprise us but it won't, because of habit, thus leaving our question largely unanswered.

The medieval arts which we call Gothic had an audience with which we have practically nothing in common. For this early audience the statue, the painting, the miniature was a presence. It was not, merely, as for us, a

Some Social Security Benefits Will Be Expanded in 1961, Jacobson Points Out

Beginning in 1961, an additional 450,000 people will be able to draw some social security monthly benefits while they are working, Edward B. Jacobson, manager of the Medford district office said Friday.

Jacobson pointed out that a

provision of the new social security amendments changes the rules for determining how earnings from work affect a person's right to receive monthly benefits.

He explained further that the following rules remain unchanged:

—Anyone earning \$1,200 or less during a year still will be entitled to receive his full social security check for every month of the year.

—Anyone who has reached his 72nd birthday still will be able to receive his full social security check for every month no matter how much he works and how much he earns.

—A person will not have any deduction from his social security check for any month that his earnings are \$100 or less or, if he is self-employed, any month that he does not do substantial work in his business.

—For earnings from \$1,200 to \$1,500 he will give up \$1 in social security benefits for each \$2 of earnings. For any earnings over \$1,500 he will give up \$1 of social security benefits for every \$1 of earnings.

Independence Short Of Councilmen

Independence—(UPI)—Mayor Ray Dunckel said today it appears Independence has only four city council members instead of the six that were elected.

Dunckel moved Thursday to reappoint two councilmen who were found to be serving illegally. Clarence Thomas, it was learned, was not a registered voter and Dr. Robert Hjort had not been a city resident for one year.

But Thursday Dr. Hjort's full year was up and Thomas said he was now a registered voter.

But the reappointments were blocked because it takes four council votes to make appointments and one of the four members, Kenneth Cooper, dissented.

The status of Thomas and Hjort was learned Wednesday night when Dunckel tried to dismiss Police Chief George Utley. Utley was fired as of January but Dunckel was prevented from putting him on immediate vacation because of the two councilmen's status.

Manslaughter Charged To Warm Springs Man

Portland—(UPI)—Otis Phillip Eyle, 34, Warm Springs Reservation, Thursday was indicted for manslaughter by a federal grand jury here.

Eyle, a Yakima Indian, was accused of strangling Alvin Polk, 34, "during a sudden quarrel" Nov. 23.

glass window and the color of Florence as the Gothic dies and leads to an age of New Learning.

Is it, perhaps, that we feel our own times can produce no style worthy of sustaining our faith? Or is it, more gravely, that having divorced the artist from our society, we find he has accepted the separation and has, for the first time in history, relinquished his function as prophet, as seer, as priest in the holy place?

If color pages in your favorite periodical prove, this Christmas, that this is, truly, what has occurred, some thought seems called for.

By rights the artist is the symbol-maker, the interpreter of the universals which blind men together and lead them to their Source. Thirty thousand years of "art" history prove this. When the past along sustains our prayer, some grievous betrayal has befallen both artist and public.

Spirit, then and alone, can fill the vacuum.
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Straub Visions Senate Coalition

Salem—(UPI)—Oregon Democratic Chairman Robert Straub said Thursday night the Democratic split in the state senate could result in liberal Democrats losing "credit" for their programs because of a coalition of conservative Democrats and Republicans.

He addressed the Marion County Jane Jefferson club here.

Straub favors Sen. Alfred Corbett (D-Portland) for Senate President. But it appears that Sen. Harry Boivin (D-Klamath Falls) with GOP support has the presidency assured.

Straub said that in the fields of education and salary increases, Gov. Mark Hatfield's 1961-63 budget is "realistic."

Hatfield Having Shelter Built

Salem—(UPI)—Gov. Mark Hatfield revealed Thursday he is having a fallout shelter built in his home here.

Hatfield said the Unit Masonry association, a labor management group, would construct the shelter. Some time ago New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller urged all governors to build them and Hatfield agreed it was a good idea.

The governor also said he is recommending to the 1961 legislature a plan whereby Oregon citizens who build shelters in their homes could get tax write-offs on the cost.

ings. Under the old rule, which remains in effect until the end of 1960, a person is required to give up his entire monthly social security check for every \$80 or part of \$80 by which his earnings go over \$1,200 a beneficiary.

"The change in the new law eliminates the possibility that a person may lose considerably more in social security than he earns from his work—a possibility that existed under the old law," Jacobson said.

Monthly Benefits

He further stated that there are 11.1 million people of 65 years of age or over who are either receiving regular monthly benefits or would be receiving them if the family

breadwinner was not working. Of these, about 2 million will be affected by the change in the law on the payment of social security checks to people who are working.

About 1.4 million of them have not applied for payments because they are making more than \$2,080 a year, the annual earnings figure that generally prevents a person from receiving any social security checks under the old law.

Jacobson advised that anyone who may be eligible for social security benefits but who has not yet made a claim for them because he is working should call at the social security office to inquire about the effect of the new change on his rights.

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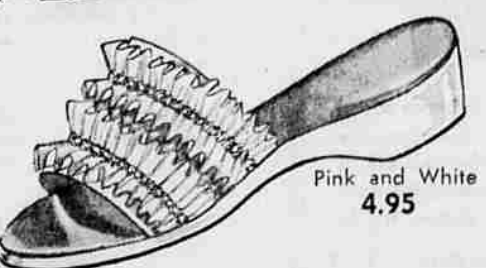
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