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The Symbolism of the Christian Temple

By Jean Hani

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That sacred art scarcely exists today is all too clear. We can perhaps speak of a “religious,” but certainly not a sacred art. True sacred art is not sentimental or psychological, but ontological and cosmological in nature. Sacred art cannot be the result of the feelings, fantasies, or even “thought” of the artist—as with most modern art—but rather the translation of a reality largely surpassing the limits of human individuality. Sacred art is precisely a supra-human art. The temple of former times was an “instrument” of recollection, joy, sacrifice, and exaltation. First through the harmonious combination of a thousand crafted symbols, then by offering itself as a receptacle to the symbols of the liturgy. For the temple and the liturgy together constitute a prodigious formula capable of preparing man to become aware of the descent of Grace, of the epiphany of the Spirit in corporeity. It is a matter of urgency, then, to recall what is true in sacred art, especially since in the cultural wasteland of our age signs of resistance to its anarchy and subversion manifest themselves, and a pressing call is felt to recover the traditional conceptions that must form the basis and condition of any restoration.

“Through his research into hidden or lost meanings, Jean Hani has revealed and restored to our attention the most ‘initiatric’ dimensions of the Christian religion.” Jean Borella, author of *The Secret of the Christian Way*, and *The Crisis of Religious Symbolism* (forthcoming from Angelico Press)

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jean Hani (1917–2012), former professor emeritus at the University of Amiens, was the founder of the Centre de Recherche sur l'Antiquité Classique and a frequent contributor to the journal *Connaissance des Religions*. After writing his PhD thesis on the influence of Egyptian thought upon Plutarch, he produced annotated translations of the latter's writings for the well-known Collection Budé. Later he became known for his mastery of traditional hermeneutics and exegesis, and his broad knowledge in the field of comparative religion. Hani's writing is sensitive to the predicament of those moderns who seek a firm foundation in traditional Christian values, while striving also to integrate into that foundation whatever of value can be salvaged from the contemporary world. His findings were presented in four important works now available from Angelico Press in translation: the present volume, along with *Divine Craftsmanship* (Preliminaries to a Spirituality of Work), *The Divine Liturgy* (Insights into its Mystery), and *The Black Virgin* (A Marian Mystery).

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