

TH
B 256

SUFFERING
IN THE LIVES OF
MICHELANGELO AND REMBRANDT
AS
A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR
IN
THEIR WORKS OF ART

BIBLICAL SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY LIBRARY
HATFIELD, PA.

19835

TH
B 256

SUFFERING
IN THE LIVES OF
MICHELANGELO AND REMBRANDT
AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN
THEIR WORKS OF ART

By

Sarah Ann Barnard

B.A., Roanoke College at Salem, Virginia

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of
the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
in the
Biblical Seminary in New York

New York, N. Y.

1942

BIBLICAL SCHOOL OF
THEOLOGY LIBRARY
HATFIELD, PA.

19835

This Thesis

Is

Dedicated

to

Mrs. L. M. Wood,

the candle of art

in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Gift of author

Jan. 2, 1943

22712

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Statement of the Problem.	Page 2
B. The Delimitation of the Subject.	2
C. The Importance of the Problem	3
D. Method of Procedure.	4
E. Sources of Data	4

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF SUFFERING

A. Definition of Suffering	6
B. Consideration of the Aspects of Suffering	7
1. Physical	7
2. Mental	7
3. Spiritual	7
C. Relationship of Suffering to Individuality	8

CHAPTER III

SELECTION OF STANDARDS

A. Critical Qualifications	12
B. The Artists to Be Considered	14

CHAPTER IV

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

A. Biography	17
B. Works.	21
1. "Moses"	21
2. "Pieta"	22
3. The Sistine Chapel	24
C. Relationship of Suffering	28
1. Physical.	28
2. Mental	30
3. Spiritual	33

CHAPTER V

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN

A. Biography	37
B. Works.	41
1. "Titus"	41
2. "Sortie of the Banning Coeq Company"	42
3. "Christ at Emmaus"	44
4. "Christ on the Cross"	46
C. Relationship of Suffering	48
1. Physical.	48
2. Mental	49
3. Spiritual	50

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Relation to the Religious Development of the World. . .	53
--	----

B. Conclusion	54
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Page 57

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

SUFFERING IN THE LIVES
OF
MICHELANGELO AND REMBRANDT
AS
A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR
IN
THEIR WORKS OF ART

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Statement of the Problem

Many books have been written on the life of almost every great artist, giving an adequate picture of him and of his work: the date and place of his birth, the kind of a child he was, his education, his struggles for recognition, his home life, his eccentricities, and his contributions in the field of art. Some of these books have dwelt especially on the hardships and sufferings of the artist, but few if any have a relationship to this particular aspect. The problem is: in what way has suffering effected the art of these men? Has it limited their greatness or has it increased their genius? What has been its effect on their contributions to great art? It is the purpose of this thesis to determine whether or not great art has been effected by the suffering of great artists.

B. The Delimitation of the Subject

To exhaust this field of study every great artist would necessarily be a subject of study. This could not be done in twenty ponderous volumes much less in one paper. Therefore the need for delimitation is apparent. To have a wholly accurate conclusion every field of art should be included, music, poetry, painting, but the concern of this thesis is in the field of painting with the inclusion of two statues, and in that field with the lives and works of only two representative painters, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Rembrandt van Rijn. They are chosen because of the place which is theirs in the world of art.

C. The Importance of the Problem

"Strictly speaking, the problem of suffering is intellectually insoluble."¹ Then why attempt to explain it? Why consider it at all? Why not say, "What's the use?", and give up? But there is a reason for not disregarding this problem. It is this: men have always suffered- good men and bad men. Great and small have bent beneath struggles which have been heavy on their shoulders; faces have become haggard and sallow because of suffering of one kind or another. But what difference has it made? Has it been valuable or has suffering always tortured and killed its victims as if in vengeance and left nothing to comfort or repay? The importance of this thesis is to determine whether these men have contributed any more to the religious development of the world by their suffering than they would have without it. It is important to every man because

* * * * *

1. John S. Whale: The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil, p. 12.

each man must suffer and, suffering, wonders why.

D. The Method of Procedure

This investigation follows the procedure of the analysis of suffering leading to the discovery of the relation of suffering to art by a study of the lives of the selected artists and, in turn, the discovery of what contribution this suffering has made to great art as shown in the works of these painters: from analysis to exposition to evaluation.

E. The Sources of Data

For the most part the sources to be used in the composition of this thesis are secondary sources dealing with the lives and works of the two selected artists, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Rembrandt van Rijn. The only primary sources available are some letters, a few of which reveal the place of this problem. In addition to these, books on the aspects of suffering contain necessary and valuable material.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF SUFFERING

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF SUFFERING

Thomas Aquinas said, "Evil is evil until a man rises to that width of vision which reveals the transcendent power of God transforming evil into good."¹ Suffering cannot be understood in any other relationship than as an aspect of evil. That suffering is evil is undeniable, but only confusion results from the idea that suffering is the necessary consequence of the narrower concept of evil, sin. Christ refuted this when he said, "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay."² A great portion of the world's suffering is a result of the sins of men but there is much suffering that has no connection with wrong-doing.

To paraphrase Thomas Aquinas and to lay the foundation of this thesis: it is the transcendent power of God transforming the suffering of an individual in such a way as to strengthen his creative ability.

Suffering is that state or experience resultant in pain and anguish, wherein the individual is the recipient victim, physically, mentally, or spiritually, of circumstance or his own acts.

To achieve a clearer understanding it is necessary to

.

1. Whale, op. cit., p. 89.
2. The Holy Bible: Luke 13:4-5.

consider its aspects individually. Suffering is universally known. Every man, woman, and child, has experienced it in some form and in some degree. A cut finger, a broken arm, a crushed foot, all result in physical pain. No one escapes it.

Mental pain is not quite so easily differentiated. C. F.

D'Arcy says:

"We are prone to underestimate the extent to which pain is of mental origin. Anxiety and disappointment, fear and regret, humiliation and remorse, the sense of desolation and despair, constitute the main burden of civilized men, and all of these are of the mind."¹

And every physical suffering is conditioned by mental attitudes. Thus it is important to approach pain from the side of the mind as well as from the physical side.

Spiritual suffering is hard to draw out from mental suffering, yet there is a distinctive element in each. As mental suffering is that of the mind, and physical suffering that of the body, so spiritual suffering is anguish of the soul. In this realm it is impossible to estimate the mass and magnitude of the agonies which are the lot of mankind. Consider the suffering of a man, who, praying faithfully and diligently, cannot hear the voice of his God. What of the lover standing desolate beside the lifeless body of his loved one, or a mother standing helpless by the bed of her ill child. These reveal the heart of spiritual suffering. The agony of the cross was not primarily the broken physical body, but the spiritual burden of the sins of the world. Thus it comes that

.

1. Charles F. D'Arcy: God and the Struggle for Existence, p. 156.

spiritual suffering transcends the other aspects of suffering. It goes deeper into the heart and life of the individual and it is out of spiritual suffering, although sometimes originally developing from either physical or mental, that there comes either destruction of the individual or the creation of new good.

However, the aspects of suffering effect different people in different ways. There are those whose bodies cannot bear the slightest physical pain yet whose souls have turned a life of spiritual agony into a tower of strength and endurance. Consider him to whom physical anguish is nothing but whose mind is torn by the slightest inconsistency. What of the one whose mind is at peace in a world of ignorance but whose soul is ever-longing? Or what of him who out of continued physical suffering could find spiritual peace?

How different are these cases, each conditioned by the personality of the individual as well as by the varied aspects of the suffering: Robert Louis Stevenson, whose body was continually racked with pain, wrote the following lines:

"If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:-
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake!
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin
And to my dead heart run them in!"¹

* * * * *

1. Caroline Miles; The World's Great Religious Poetry, p. 314.

Sara Teasdale could write:

"Life has loveliness to sell,
Buy it and never count the cost.
For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well-lost."¹

and in a relatively short time afterwards take her own life, thinking of immortality in such terms as these:

"But, oh, my frail immortal soul
That will not sleep forever more,
A leaf borne onward by the blast,
A wave that never finds the shore!"²

What mental confusion must have been hers, and she could not bear it. George Matheson, to cite another example, was the victim of a combination of physical and spiritual sufferings. Blinded, forsaken by his loved one, he could still write:

"Oh love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee...
Oh joy that seekest me through pain...
Oh Cross that liftest up my head..."³

What triumph over suffering. And again, Polycarp, in the face of death at the claws and teeth of a hungry lion, said the famous words, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I speak evil of my King who saved me?"⁴ and as a result, still faithful, he died from the cruel flames at the hands of an incensed mob. What victory over suffering. Think on Helen Keller, deaf, dumb, and blind, from the age of nineteen months, yet she radiates joy and peace beyond compare. And John Milton, who in the midst of his greatest composition, lost his eyesight, but in

.

1. Sara Teasdale: Collected Poems, p. 115.
2. Ibid., p. 92.
3. The Church School Hymnal for Youth, p. 165.
4. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 17.

spite of that he is ranked today as England's second greatest writer. What of Job, considered a sinner by every friend he had, and afflicted with every suffering Satan could devise, yet through this time in his life when he could not hear God's voice he endured and remained faithful.

From these examples it is clear that there is a difference in the sufferings of people and each personality responds in its own individual way. "The cross is the supreme instance of the fact that the worst suffering faced in the right way can be made to yield some good not attainable in any other way."¹

1. Whale, op. cit., p. 89.

CHAPTER III

SELECTION OF STANDARDS

CHAPTER III

SELECTION OF STANDARDS

For the purpose of this thesis the selection of the works of art must be on a basis of their merit in accordance with the accepted standards in the field. With these standards in mind, and a working idea of the underlying reasons for them, there may be achieved a selection which will not only be conformative but representative.

Rabindranath Tagore teaches the meaning of art. He says, "The building of man's true world - the living world of truth and beauty - is the function of art."¹ And having given a picture of its function, Tagore proceeds to portray man's relationship to the art:

"Man feels his personality more intensely than other creatures, because his power of feeling is more than can be exhausted by his objects. This efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression. Therefore, in art, man reveals himself and not his objects. His objects have their place in books of information and science, where he has completely to conceal himself."²

So much for the spiritual bases. There are legalistic definitions, in so far as creative work may be considered in such a light, but at best any definition of a relationship such as the creation of art necessarily must be, is more or less abstract. There is no need here for a judgment of works on a purely technical basis. This must be left to those, who, trained to judge, and in themselves artists, can rightly say concerning another's technique.

* * * * *

1. Rabindranath Tagore: Personality, p. 31.
2. Ibid, p. 12.

Frederick Ruckstull, writing under the name of Petronius Arbitor, gives a working definition and a series of standards which conform to Tagore's relationship and meet the purpose of this thesis:

"All philosophers, moralists and best aestheticians from Plato down, have agreed; that the main aim of the artist should be first- to express his own emotions; and second- to stir the emotions of his fellow-men. This was crystalized by Descartes when he said: 'Art is an emotion passed through thought and fixed in form', the best definition of art in the abstract ever made. That is; the expression and the stirring of emotion are the basis of all effective art; the highest thinkers of the world have agreed on this."¹

Then Ruckstull goes on to explain his use of the word spiritual, "By the word spiritual; we mean whatever is poetic and exalts the soul above the crassly material, the carnal and the earth-² earthy."

This is Ruckstull's set of qualifying standards. They meet any ideas underlying this thesis better than any more technical analysis could, yet they are sufficient to the extent that any work of art which meets them will meet the standards of any other test:

"The greatest work of art in the world is that one in which we see manifested: first, a subject which is socially the most beneficent, of interest to the greatest number of people, and the noblest in conception. Second, in which the expression on the faces of the figures, in the details, and in the work as a whole- expresses profoundly that which the work is supposed to express. Third, in which the composition is the most sublime. Fourth, in which the drawing of all forms is the most true and effective in rendering life- above all- ideal life. Fifth, in which the color is the most varied and rich. Sixth, in which the surface technique is the most vigorous, appropriate, and unoffensively individual; the whole work of such a quality, and so coordinated, as to insure a result, in which a subject is expressed with the

* * * * *

1. The Art World and Arts and Decorations, May 1918, p. 78.
2. Ibid., p. 80.

greatest completeness and harmony; so as to stir the highest emotions of the largest number of cultured people for the longest period of time."¹

This article is followed by a qualification on the part of Ruckstull, writing as the editor of the magazine rather than as Petronius Arbitrator:

"Our principles and standpoint were neither made nor discovered by us. They are the principles which have guided the great artists of the past and will guide the great artists of the future. We simply adopted them as our own, after forty years of study, and after communing with many of the greatest artists of Europe and America. We adopted them because we believe them to be the soundest and most universal, and therefore, the most enduring."²

Michelangelo and Rembrandt, stand as peaks in the mountain range of artists. Considered in their entirety, the works of either of these men constitute a truly great production. Eugene Delacroix makes this statement concerning Michelangelo:

"Art will never overstep the bounds that Michelangelo has traced for her. He leaped at once to limits that cannot be surpassed. Into whatever deviations she may be led, by caprice or the desire for novelty, the great style of the Florentine master will always serve as the magnetic pole to which all must turn who would rediscover the road to true grandeur and beauty."³

Emile Michel said this of Rembrandt:

"Rembrandt belongs to the breed of artists which have no posterity. His place is with Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and Beethoven. An artistic Prometheus, he stole the celestial fire, and with it put life into what was inert, and expressed the immaterial and evasive sides of nature in his breathing forms."⁴

They are the masters, and the relationship of their art to

.

1. The Art World and Arts and Decorations, op. cit., p. 17.
2. Ibid.
3. Masters in Art, May 1901, p. 26.
4. Masters in Art, June 1900, p. 28.

their lives, and correspondingly, of their lives to their art, is the basis of this thesis.

CHAPTER IV

MICHELANGELO

CHAPTER IV

MICHELANGELO

Michelangelo Buonarroti was born in 1476 at Caprese, Italy. He was the second child of five boys. His father was very conservative and extremely egotistical and Michelangelo himself was headstrong and self-willed. As a child he was sent to live with a neighboring stonemason in order to make room for a third son in the Buonarroti family. Later he was apprenticed to two inferior artists but because of his unusual abilities, after three years, he was invited by Lorenzo de Medici to study in the school of sculpture which Lorenzo had established in his palace gardens. It was there that Michelangelo studied under Bertoldo who had been an associate of Donatello. From Bertoldo Michelangelo learned much of the sculptor's craft. He worked diligently at his art, seemingly attempting to absorb all that he could from the now-aged sculptor. Lorenzo provided Michelangelo with a real home and all the things he needed to carry on his study, and it is probable that some of the happiest years of Michelangelo's life were spent in Lorenzo's house.

After three years of intense work and application on the part of Michelangelo in the Medici palace, Lorenzo died and because his son was not interested in Michelangelo's work, the artist found it necessary to leave. This change seemed to develop Michelangelo's native shyness to an extreme degree and he became more and more morose.

About this same time Michelangelo's oldest brother became a

monk and Michelangelo was left to take care of the family, and in his attempt to provide for them he set up a shop of his own. A spirit of family duty and family pride was a ruling principle in his life and "during the best years of his life he submitted himself sternly and without a murmur to pinching hardships and almost super-human labor for the sake of his father and brothers,"¹ the former being too proud of his family tradition to work.

In 1501 Michelangelo returned to Florence. He worked relentlessly, often only resting in his clothes for a few hours during the night. He did several great statues during this period for until 1504 his field of labor and accomplishment centered in sculpture. But in that year he turned, somewhat unwillingly, to painting. When he was commissioned to paint one of the vast walls of the Hall of the Great Council at Rome, Leonardo da Vinci had already started the opposite wall, and Michelangelo hoped by this opportunity, to vanquish his most powerful contemporary. It was during the time previous to his receiving this commission that he began to write poetry.

For his part of the wall, he chose the Battle of Pisa, for in it he could use his talent in painting the nude figure and also present a dramatic scene. To him, this was an open attack on Leonardo. He painted furiously, all his ambitions and jealousies spurring him on to untold heights.

It was while Michelangelo and Leonardo were painting the Great Hall that Raphael came to Florence. He was young, genial, attractive, and he found in Leonardo a friend, but in Michelangelo

* * * * *

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 15, p. 411.

a foe. Leonardo's studio reeked with culture and refinement, beauty, charm, music and literature, while Michelangelo's studio housed one lone, passionate man, jealous and ascetic. He subjected himself to the most gruelling self-discipline, eating and sleeping very little, and not allowing any social diversions to intrude upon his monastic regime. He even lost the few friends he had by giving them such cool receptions that they did not return. Alone, with one purpose in mind, this determined passion-driven man worked on with his art and his thoughts.

Before this work was finished the Pope called Michelangelo to Rome, but after two years of work, on a great piece of sculpture, Michelangelo returned home leaving that unfinished also, because the Pope had lost interest. He began again on the Battle of Pisa and took a jealous delight in the fact that Leonardo was having many trials as a result of some experiments he had tried.

But again the Pope sent for Michelangelo to come to Rome, and he set him to work on a bronze statue. Some of the letters he wrote home during this time are extant. Finlayson describes them thus:

"These show him to be a man filled with filial devotion and deep faith in a Divine Providence. The strong hold that duty to his family had on him drove him to submit to the whims of unreasonable and unjust patrons, to subject himself to the most sordidly penurious mode of existence, and kept him from leading the free full life his contemporaries enjoyed. In order to provide for his brothers he denied himself the comforts of life, social recreations and perhaps even matrimony."¹

After finishing the bronze statue he returned home and just

.

1. D. L. Finlayson: Michelangelo the Man, p. 77.

as he was getting settled Julius again called him to Rome, this time to paint the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo did not like to paint and he said as much to the Pope but was forced to do it anyway. There were some people in Rome who were jealous of him and many who deeply disliked him and they hoped this would cause his artistic downfall. But this opposition only acted as a stimulus to Michelangelo and he determined to succeed in his hated task.

The story of the painting of this chapel will be taken up in another connection. Suffice it to say that in less than four years he covered the ceiling of the chapel with a design of many hundred figures embodying the story of Genesis from the Creation to the Flood, with prophets and sibyls between scenes, and adding the forefathers of Jesus.

The Sistine Chapel completed, Michelangelo resumed work on the marbles he had begun when first in Rome, but after only four months Julian died and his heirs made a new contract with Michelangelo to execute the same on a smaller scale. During the next three years, Michelangelo finished at least three of the promised figures, "Moses" and two "Slaves". This was work that Michelangelo loved but in 1516 it was again stopped when Leo X became Pope.

Only a comparatively small amount of work can be shown for the years 1518-1522; four "Slaves" were blocked out in the rough and a statue of the "Risen Christ" was made in which the finishing touches were added by pupils.

Michelangelo did more paintings and carved many more statues than are mentioned here, such as the "Last Judgment", the "Entombment of Christ", and the "Holy Family"; the "Pieta", "David", "Cupid", "The Madonna and Child", and the "Crouching Boy".

It was in the late years of Michelangelo's life that he wrote most of his poetry. "It was not until towards his sixtieth year that the springs of feeling were fairly opened in the heart of this solitary, this masterful and stern, life-wearied and labor-hardened man."¹ From some of these sonnets is revealed his high esteem and perhaps love for Vittoria Colonna, the only woman for whom he ever seemed to care.

In his last years he did much as an architect also, but this work was of less value and endurance. The wonder is that he was able to work on in any field, as he did, up to his ninetieth year.

The first of Michelangelo's works of art to be considered is the statue of "Moses", of which it was said that this statue "would alone have sufficed to make its sculptor forever glorious."²

In the light of the standards of Arbiter, "Moses" is perfection itself. What subject could be more socially acceptable or beneficent or of interest to "an innumerable multitude" than "Moses"; that same Moses, who, after he was eighty years old:

"Humbled the pride of the mightiest government on earth; emancipated three million bondmen; organized them into a republic; led an army of six hundred thousand men for forty years through the Wilderness of Sinai to the borders of their inheritance."³

As far as the expression on "Moses'" face, the details and the work as a whole are concerned, the careful observer or the Biblical scholar may well ask, whether the man Moses is more clearly de-

* * * * *

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 15, p. 414.

2. Masters in Art, April 1901, p. 40.

3. H. L. Hastings: Remarks on the Mistakes of Moses, p. 10.

pietied in the Pentateuch or in Michelangelo's masterpiece. What higher praise could be given this work, than to say that it is indeed Moses?

As to the sublimity of composition and the effectiveness of the technique, the statue is compact for all its massiveness, and it stands today, in San Pietro in Vincelli, a veritable "Rock of Ages". This statue comes from a period in Michelangelo's life which in itself was relatively free from trouble and suffering.

Michelangelo was happiest during the time when he was free to work with the chisel rather than with the brush. In the creation of this statue Michelangelo could in no way have expressed so adequately the suffering and strength of character which were Moses' unless he had known and himself gone through kindred pain. Even as Moses gave up the comforts and luxury of Pharaoh's court to lead his people to freedom, so Michelangelo devoted his entire early life to ceaseless toil in the attempt to support and in a measure raise the fortunes of his ungrateful family.

The critic may say with reference to "Moses" that the head is too small for the body, that the drapery across the knees is impossible but that same critic concludes his article by saying:

"In all the world there is no statue, no work of art like the "Moses". Its super-human energy, its absolute unambiguity, the infinite daring of the artist's genius, the unwontedness of his thought, all put it in a class by itself and lift it to a place which our minds in their highest flights but seldom attain."¹

In a consideration of the "Pieta", the approach must be made from an entirely different viewpoint. Here there is no

* * * * *

1. Harry H. Powers: Mornings with Masters in Art, p. 356.

triumphant leader, ready to spring from his chair, no giant of brawn and mind, triumphant in power; but rather the broken body of the Son of Mary. Shakespeare's phrase "Grace in all simplicity"¹ is the key to the "Pieta".

The chief glory of the great St. Peter's is the "Pieta", a work which Powers says was "congenial to Michelangelo's temperament."² This work comes early in his life and from its creation "it has been a hardy critic...who has dared to challenge Michelangelo's claim to supremacy in the world of art."³

Only Michelangelo himself has surpassed this statue and it is in the light of "Moses", the "Bound Captive", "Il Pensieroso", that the "Pieta" may be critically viewed.

An interesting observation on the creation of the "Pieta" comes from a realization that Michelangelo's first great masterpiece deals with a subject which is so typically one which youth would choose. The intense youthful pride which he had in this work is seen when it is noted how, overhearing the work ascribed to Christoforo Solari, a Lombard sculptor, Michelangelo shut himself by night in the chapel where it stood, the old basilica of St. Peter's, and engraved his name upon the cincture of the Madonna's robe. Never did he again put his name on any work. That was Michelangelo, impulsive and jealous; knowing his own ability, how it tore his heart to hear his work ascribed to some inadequate artisan.

* * * * *

1. William Shakespeare; Complete Works, Vol. 9, p. 446.
2. Powers, op. cit., p. 333.
3. Ibid., p. 340.

This work has been criticized formally but here again each critic, after pointing out the technical faults, turns about and acclaims it. This statement by M. Guillaume is quoted in Masters in Art, "The ensemble is impossible and from every point of view the mass is excellent."¹

It has been said of the "Pieta" that it is connected with the art of the past by its devotional spirit whereas, by its precision and masterly treatment, it foreshadows the future.² History shows that the creation of this statue came at a time when papal standards had reached their lowest ebb. The Borgias had turned the Vatican into a den of thieves and harlots. It was in that atmosphere that the ascetic Michelangelo, scorning the social life of the times, maintained within himself a purity of mind which is seldom equaled or approached, a purity which enabled him to produce two medallions of the Madonna, the "Holy Family of the Tribune", and the greatest of all and the purest of all, the "Pieta". At the end of this period in Michelangelo's life, the name of no man, not even Leonardo da Vinci, stood in higher esteem.

The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, containing some ten thousand square feet in area was covered with approximately three hundred and forty-three figures, of which more than two hundred are important, and with the exception of a slight amount of preparation for the work, this Michelangelo did, flat on his back on a scaffold, driving himself at a task he hated, driven to do his best

* * * * *

1. Masters in Art, April 1901, p. 35.
2. Ibid., p. 35

because he was so made that he could do none other, and driven to outdo himself because he feared Raphael and failure. This is the story of the Sistine Chapel.

Just when Michelangelo was getting settled at home the Pope recalled him and ordered him to paint the Sistine Chapel, despite his aversion to painting.¹

He chose five men to help him but soon saw that he must do the work alone. He then ruthlessly scrapped all that had been done so far and began alone. He was attempting the sublimely audacious—to paint ten thousand square feet of fresco unaided.

After ten months of ceaseless labor, in November, the first panel was unveiled. All the prominent people of Rome flocked to the ceremony. With wonder and admiration they gazed at the colossal accomplishment of one man's ceaseless toil. This completed part was immediately and unanimously acknowledged as the greatest achievement in painting so far made in Rome. He had done more than establish a reputation in an unfamiliar field, he had made himself not only one of the foremost painters of the Italian Renaissance, but one of the giants in painting in any age or country.

It was sometime later that Michelangelo was able to finish this task. His health did not permit him to continue so strenuous a work and it was only after a period of recuperation that he was able to return and late in the autumn of 1512 the whole of his vast achievement was displayed. Symonds, quoted in Masters in Art, says, "The whole is covered like the dusky, tawny, bluish clouds of thun-

* * * * *

1. Ante, p. 20.

der storms."¹ He speaks of the vaulted arches and the narrow oblong space, and of the network of human forms as "sombre and aerial, like shapes condensed from vapor, or dreams begotten by Ixion upon mists of eve or dawn, the phantoms evoked by the sculptor thronging the space."²

It is the Sistine Chapel which stands today as the chief achievement of Michelangelo in the field of painting. How Michelangelo was able to paint so great a work of art, running the gamut of human emotions and the span of human history might well be cited as an argument for the theory of recapitulation. During this period Michelangelo was painting from his soul and with a spark of spiritual understanding fanned by a wind of suffering into a creative flame.

In the Sistine Chapel when the observer places himself flat on the floor to better contemplate the ceiling the center panel claims his attention. There Michelangelo with a marvelous understanding of spiritual things, has pictured God's creation of man. It is an amazing attempt at a subject which the ordinary painter would be unable to conceive to say nothing of execute. That Michelangelo has done both here is obvious. He has conceived this subject in such a way that while it is not circumscribed by the Scriptural account neither does it transgress upon it.

Of this relationship Powers says, "He seems never to have hesitated to be wise above what is written, though all unconscious,

* * * * *

1. Masters in Art, May 1901, p. 35.
2. Ibid.

perhaps, of the audacity of his interpretations."¹

The general opinion of the critics concerning this picture is that the figure of Adam is the most beautiful of all the examples of the nude in Christian art. Yet it is a beauty which comes through the sense perceptions of the observer rather than through a process of critical analysis.

Aside from the figures the point of attraction in this picture is in the hands through which the current of life is passing. Of these hands Powers says, "Were this work to perish and leave us but these two hands, the whole story of the giving and receiving of life would still be complete."² Above the hands and to the right is the shadow of God, acknowledging the Scriptural account of the breathing into Adam of the breath of life. In any other than Michelangelo such an attempt would be artistic trickery but in the hand of the master it is inspiration personified.

As to the conception of God here portrayed, who can say? Few men have dared to picture the Creator and Michelangelo has succeeded as well as any. He shows three attributes of God, the intellectual in His ability to plan, the creative in His fulfilling that plan, and the emotional in the spirit presented. If his picture of the Creator is inadequate that need not detract from the greatness of the picture as a whole for there can never be a picture of the Living God which will truly represent Him.

In the life of Michelangelo and in the consideration of his works, there was pointed out a relationship between the exist-

.

1. Powers, op. cit., p. 381.
2. Ibid., p. 384.

once in his life of suffering and its place in the resultant creation of his works. Here there must be a consideration of the different aspects of that suffering with reference to, and in a measure substantiated by, the works previously mentioned.

Of the physical suffering in the life of Michelangelo, the first example comes from his receiving, at the hands of a bully, a broken nose. Whether or not Michelangelo deserved this blow is not to be considered here. But the resultant mutilation of his face colored, inevitably, his life. It has been suggested that this blow benefitted Michelangelo to the extent that it taught him a lesson in tact but on the negative side it resulted in his being driven within himself because of his wounded pride. There have been other cases in literature of similar blows wherein the effect upon the recipient was of long duration. Thackeray is, perhaps, the best known example.

Later in life, when it devolved upon Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel, the physical suffering of the conditions under which he was forced to labor was terrific. Imagine, if it is possible today with the custom of a forty hour week prevalent, imagine working oftentimes eighteen hours a day, in a cold stone building, high on a scaffold, flat on his back, a candle stuck in his cap so he could have both hands free to work and besides all this, working at a task he did not like. What physical tortures he knew. How his body must have ached, how his eyes must have torn at their sockets. After ten months of this he had become so debilitated, that, when the unveiling of the first panel was over he was forced to rest. Finlayson speaks of this period in these words, "The

record of these distressing months is to be found not in the man's correspondence, but in his painting.¹ Lacking friends, he convalesced as best he could alone and unattended. This is a poem he wrote at this time:

"I've grown a goitre by dwelling in this den-
As cats from stagnant streams in Lombardy,
Or in what other land they hap to be-
Which drives the belly close beneath the chin:
My beard turns up to heaven; my nape falls in,
Fixed to my spine; my breastbone visibly
Grows like a harp; a rich embroidery
Bedews my face from brush-drops thick and thin.
My loins into my paunch like levers grind:
My buttock like a crupper bears my weight;
My feet unguided wander to and fro;
In front my skin grows loose and long; behind,
By bending it becomes more taut and straight;
Crosswise I strain me like a Syrian bow:
When false and quaint, I know
Must be the fruit of squinting brain and eye;
For ill can aim the gun that bends awry.
Come then, Giovanni, try
To succor my dead pictures and my fame,
Since foul I fare and painting is my shame."²

Much of Michelangelo's personality must have found its source in his physical life. Withdrawn within himself as he was, virtually without friends, these are the conditions which frequently come from an unhealthy physical life. The robust extrovert may have no real friends but he is at least unconscious of it. Slight and frail Michelangelo wanted no friends who could not conform to his ideas and ideals. Such friends were scarce and it is easily understandable when Michelangelo is seen in relation to his surroundings. There could not have been five people in his century, or the whole Middle Ages, who could have stood on common ground with him. How much Michelangelo's art benefitted from his nature and that, deriva-

.....

1. Pinlayson, op. cit., p. 131.
2. Ibid., p. 130.

tive of physical suffering is the point of this thesis. Michelangelo suffered physically. As a result of that suffering, either directly or indirectly, his artistry and creative ability were heightened. Had the painting of the Sistine Chapel not demanded so much physically, had Michelangelo's previous physical life not conditioned his nature to such a degree, who knows how ineffectual the result might have been. The whole work of the man shows that he worked best under pressure and the physical suffering was one of the chief aspects of that pressure.

In a consideration of the mental suffering which was Michelangelo's, first, there must be an understanding of the time in which he lived. Knowing Michelangelo, the suffering which was his is seen in its mental aspect in his relationship to his surroundings. How a man of the intellectual honesty which was Michelangelo's must have deprecated the environment in which he ofttimes found himself. The Papacy of the Borgias,¹ or his family problems,² must have certainly caused him mental anguish. Michelangelo typically portrayed his feelings by his numerous productions of "Bound Captives". During the period of their production Michelangelo felt that he himself was the living model for his art. Bound by the Papal domination, limited by his own lack of knowledge and the inabilities of his own contemporaries, it is no wonder that the soul of Michelangelo expressed itself in his "Bound Captives". He knew mental suffering as well as physical. His worry about affairs at home is evidence of this. One of his younger brothers was a

* * * * *

1. Ante, p. 24.
2. Ante, p. 18.

source of continuous aggravation to him necessitating several special trips to Florence. In one of the letters which is extant he says to his brother:

"I cannot refrain from adding two lines. It is this: I have gone these twelve years past, drudging about through all Italy, borne every shame, suffered every hardship, worn my body in every toil, put my life into a thousand dangers, solely to keep the fortunes of my house. And now that I have begun to raise it up a little, you alone choose to destroy and ruin in one hour all that I have done in so many years and with such labors. By Christ's body this shall not be, for I am the man to confound ten thousand such as you whenever it be needed. Be wise in time then and do not try one who has other things to vex him."¹

A man with the mental attitude of Michelangelo, measuring everything by standards which he set up for himself and attained so far as there is record, must have been continually dissatisfied with his surroundings and in a state of mental anguish as a result of that dissatisfaction. Perhaps his insight into this condition is best revealed in his picture of Jeremiah. High in the Sistine Chapel sits this prophet of Despondency, who came to a people not prepared for him, a man who was ahead of his time, a man who knew himself to be unappreciated and his message unheard and unheeded. Even so was Michelangelo and he has revealed this in eternal record in the picture of Jeremiah, still bowed with his message and absorbed in his gloom, a prophet of mental anguish. Michelangelo's mental suffering is revealed in his art in this picture as in many others.

At the opposite end of the Chapel from Jeremiah sits Jonah, Jonah who did not want to obey, putting his will in opposi-

.....

1. Finlayson, op. cit., p. 104.

tion to his God's. Perhaps Michelangelo felt as Jonah and in placing the rebellious prophet in the position of prominence slyly told the Pope that while the Pope could force him to the task, yet he, Michelangelo, did it unwillingly.

Among the other noteworthy figures in the Chapel are the sibyls. Alternating with the prophets they form a circle around the entire Chapel, filling in the arches between the clerestory and the central panel of the ceiling. These prophets and sibyls are supposedly foretellers of the coming of the Saviour. In many of them Michelangelo's attitudes and sufferings are revealed. The distraught positions, the furrowed brows, the distorted faces, all make these solitary figures the reflection of their creator.

In each of the four corners there is a Bible scene depicting some well-known incidents; however, Michelangelo's originality has served him in the details of the remainder of the Chapel much more than it has here. "The Brazen Serpent" and "David Slaying Goliath" are rather grotesque. However, Michelangelo's genius was such that he was capable of doing anything he set about and in both of these pictures he has given an interesting and original treatment. The little boy David perched on Goliath's back, wounding a huge sword, one hand firmly planted in the giant's hair, and obviously about to sever the huge head-- is to say the least an interesting picturization. It is seemingly accurate with the Biblical account but somehow not quite the usual portrayal, nor does it meet in conception or import any of the other scenes. "The Brazen Serpent", diagonally across from "David Slaying Goliath", is but little more serious. These pictures do not carry in the same way the bur-

den of the artist, they are more filling-in as an afterthought or additional project than as some carefully thought-out and painstakingly executed center panel or prophet.

Vittoria Colonna, the woman whom Michelangelo loved, said, "What was in Michelangelo's work was as little beside what was in his soul."¹ This man bore the spiritual burden of the world. Perhaps because he was a human being and knew his own power he was jealous, jealous of those to whom the world might foolishly accord an equal place with him. Jealousy is a disease of the spirit and Michelangelo was a sick man. His heart and life were continually eaten and his work transcends his sickness only because he was so great that he was driven to newer heights rather than broken to despair as has been the case with so many lesser spirits. Besides the jealousy in his spirit he suffered spiritually with each of his creations. There is no technical proof for such a statement but the exceptions seem to prove the rule that the creative artist must live his creation; however, Michelangelo is not one of these exceptions. For example, Michelangelo could not have made the statue of "Moses" unless he had known Moses, but Frank Harris could write "The Miracle of the Stigmata" with no real religious experience. Could a man whose soul and spirit were enclosed by the strictures and the bonds of medieval life create the "Pieta"? Not unless he himself had in some measure experienced, either in imagination or spirit, kindred suffering. It is hard to say, and would probably be untrue, that Michelangelo had suffered as Mary, but to one who had not

.

1. Masters in Art, May 1901, p. 33.

known spiritual suffering, the "Pieta" could only have been the farcical conjure of an abused mind.

During the latter part of Michelangelo's life, when he had received the plaudits of the crowd, he painted the "Last Judgment" and it reveals the lack of suffering at that period in his life. His artistry was superb in many respects. He still maintained the mastery which he had possessed all his life. Perhaps he was seeking for an effect rather than to create the best that was in him as he had previously done. Michelangelo was a perfectionist during most of his life and he drove his restless spirit to lofty flights of perfection which have never been equaled. He suffered spiritually and created the world's greatest art.

There is an interesting statement made in Vasari's "Lives" to the effect that:

"In all that he did was seen a mighty force, struggling, enceladus-like, to upheave, as if he felt that every creature which came from his brush or chisel needed its giant shoulders to support the burden of man's fate. In its supreme technique his achievement became all-powerful, the tyrant of sixteenth century art; but in his spirit as artist, in his ceaseless struggle against human limitations, Michelangelo the man is an incarnate protest."¹

The spiritual suffering which was Michelangelo's involves much of the mental and physical aspects and is conditioned by them. It must indeed have broken Michelangelo's spirit to have never been allowed to complete any of the great works which he started and in which he was vitally interested with the exception of the Sistine Chapel which he didn't want to do. To a man of lesser stature these continuous spiritual blows might have proved fatal; to Michelangelo

* * * * *

1. Giorgio Vasari: Lives of the Painters, Vol. 4, p. 189.

they were a spur to new heights. Had he been allowed to work as he pleased over an uninterrupted period of years it would have been a great test of the divine spark which burned so brightly when Michelangelo was harried from pillar to post. It is hard today to think that the trials and temptations which must be borne bring good, but the example of Michelangelo stands like a beacon on the shores of fate, a signalling testimony to the merit of suffering in the making of a man. In the book of Hebrews when it says, "to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering," it can be seen how Michelangelo likewise was perfected through suffering and as the suffering of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross was excelled only by the spiritual burden which the Saviour bore, so Michelangelo bore the spiritual burden in his soul and through that burden working in him he has given to the world its greatest art.

CHAPTER V

MEMBRANDT

CHAPTER V

REMBRANDT

Rembrandt van Rijn was born in Leyden between 1606 and 1608, the date of his birth being given variously between those times. It is only in the past fifty years that the public has come to know anything of Rembrandt's real history. Fables once presented him as ignorant, boorish, and avaricious, but now there is real authority for our knowledge of him.

He was the fourth son of Gerrit Harmens van Rijn, a well-to-do miller and he was sent to school to learn a profession but he soon determined to be a painter, setting a precedent in the family history, for so far as is known he was the first member of the family to have artistic ability. Finally his parents were persuaded to put him under Swanenburch, an architectural painter, where he remained for three years. Then he went to Peter Lastman in Amsterdam for six months, after which he returned to Leyden and remained there from 1626, the date on his earliest picture, to 1631.

These years he spent studying, painting, and etching, the people around him. Life, character, and above all, light, were the aims of these studies. His mother was a frequent model. She had spent many hours reading to him from the Bible and telling him the stories which influenced his selection of subjects. There are eleven existing portraits of his father, many of one of his sisters, and sixty-two of himself, most of them painted in youth and old age.

Rembrandt's earliest paintings are chiefly single figures,

and the prevailing tone of all of them is a greenish gray, the effect somewhat cold and heavy.

In 1631 he moved to Amsterdam for many lovers of art in the great city were urging him to do so. Immediately he was the first portrait painter of the city and he received numerous commissions. This was the period of many portraits.

There are different estimations as to the number of paintings Rembrandt did, "Smith in his 'Catalogue Raisonne' (1836) lists 614 pictures;... Bode's 'Catalogue' (Paris, 1897) lists some 550; Hofstede de Groot's 'Catalogue' (1916) has 988 numbers."¹

In 1634 Rembrandt married Saskia van Uylenborch. Until her death in 1642 she was the center of his life and art. She bore him four children, the only one that lived after infancy being Titus, whose portrait will be considered later. There are still many good portraits of Saskia. From 1634 until 1640 he painted such pictures as "Marriage of Samson", "The Bather", and "Christ as a Gardener". During this time Rembrandt's abilities became finer, he lost the coldness and his pictures show power and clearness of conception. His self-portraits, done in the period from 1640-1654, show him to be strong and robust, powerful, firm and self-reliant. During this period he gathered a large collection of pictures which were later sold for much less than he paid for them.

In 1642 Rembrandt painted one of his best known pictures, erroneously called "The Night Watch", but correctly called the "Sortie of the Banring Coeq Company". It was also in this year

.....

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 19, p. 118.

that Saskia died and with her death his life was changed. One of his favorite subjects at this time was the Holy Family, which he painted over and over again, and in which he united realism and idealism. In all of Rembrandt's religious pictures it is the profound perception of the story which is most apparent, making them true to all time and independent of local circumstance.

Rembrandt was lavish with his money and his gifts, and, although he should have had enough to allow him to live modestly for the rest of his life he soon found himself borrowing money and selling some of his beloved pictures to secure money which he needed in order to live. In 1654 he had another child by a woman whom he seems never to have married but who lived faithfully and unselfishly with him even though she was put out of her church on that account. It is impossible to judge what he would have done without her for he had no business sense at all and she managed the affairs which he would have been forced to cope with had she not been with him. She also cared for Titus during his childhood, relieving the distraught Rembrandt of the burden of both maternal and paternal responsibility, and he was left to paint and work even when things were at their worst. His son Titus, now grown, also helped to manage the household affairs. There are a number of pictures of this woman, Hendrickje Stoffels, which remain today.

The year 1656, in spite of money troubles, stands out prominently as one in which some of his greatest works were done: "Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph", "John the Baptist Preaching", the "Lesson in Anatomy by Johann Deyman", and "Adoration of the Magi". His colors became more subdued and dull during this period

and his handling of his subjects became more broad and rapid.

During this time he painted himself much, with the same self-reliant expression though broken down by age and the cares of a hard life.

In etching Rembrandt stands out by universal confession because of his unrivalled technical skill, his mastery of expression and the lofty conceptions of many of his great pictures as "Death of the Virgin", "Christ Healing the Sick" ("The Hundred Guilder Piece"), the "Crucifixion", and others. The great period of his etching lies between 1639 and 1661. In these years were produced his greatest works in portraiture, landscape, and Bible story. They bear the impress of the immortal genius of the man. His line, apparently haphazard, is extremely suggestive, expressive, and sure, and by a few strokes of the pen he suggests scenes full of life and feeling.

In 1668, Titus died and left the elderly Rembrandt with only a daughter and a granddaughter as links with his past life, Hendrickje having passed away shortly before Titus. His own death took place about thirteen months later in 1669, and there has been found only one document referring to it, the death register of the Werterkerk of Amsterdam in which this entry occurs, "Tuesday, October 8, 1669, Rembrandt van Rijn, painter, on the Roze-graft, opposite the Doelhof. Leaves two children."

Time Magazine speaks of it this way:

"When... painter Rembrandt himself died, the art salons of Amsterdam had forgotten him. His paintings (now valued as

.

1. Masters in Art, June 1900, p. 22.

high as \$1,000,000 a piece) sold for as little as 6¢ and his passing was noted only by a handful of bearded Ghetto Jews who hunched their shoulders and whispered among themselves that Rembrandt van Rijn had once been a great man."¹

In reviewing the Metropolitan ^{Museum} exhibition of Rembrandt's works, Time Magazine makes this statement:

"The exhibition proved again that Rembrandt was far and away the greatest of those few painters in history who have rivaled writers like Balzac and Dostoevski in their ability to delineate the individual human soul."²

To attempt to understand Rembrandt through the medium of his pictures is difficult because of the range of the experience which they cover. From his portraits of the solid burghers and soldiers to those of the gnarled faces and baggy clothes of rabbis, sailors, and Portuguese refugees; through it all Rembrandt plumbed the heights and depths of human experience.

First of all, Rembrandt was a portrait painter. Through this medium he achieved his renown and financial success. It is essential to consider a picture from this period in any study of this man's work. From the point of view of understanding the suffering which came later into his life, perhaps in the picture of Titus there can best be seen a fleeting premonition and a glimpse into the man's soul telling of the possibility of the trouble to come. Rembrandt has lavished on this picture some of the most beautiful expressions of father-love of all time. Through the eyes of Titus shines the reflected love of his adoring father. Rembrandt had lost three children and how easily understood it must be that in Titus he placed his life and hope and planned for him in dream

* * * * *

1. Time Magazine, January 26, 1942, p. 64.
2. Ibid.

and fantasy. As far as the picture is concerned Titus is apparently a beautiful child with kindly eyes and clear features. His father has dealt generously with him beyond a doubt, but the boy, as portrayed, shows best of all the father's love. Perhaps Titus deserves some thought from the point of view of being a famous man's son. His was a difficult position at best and the historical accounts reveal that he never enjoyed good health. However, from all that is known about the matter, it seems that Titus was considerate and kind to his father whether the family fortunes were up or down.

Titus died in 1668, his father was at that time living in poverty. Perhaps when Titus died the "aged but upright painter Rembrandt stamped in proud sorrow to the graveyard, dressed in his best: a moth-eaten fur-lined overcoat, spattered with paint",¹ seeing in retrospect the little boy whom he, so lovingly and carefully, had made eternal with the hope of his full heart spread on the canvas; and now he may well have wondered if even the picture would endure. But it has endured and was recently proudly exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, one of its greatest treasures.

The picture "The Night Watch", or as it is more correctly named, the "Sortie of the Banning Cocq Company", represents a turning point in Rembrandt's art and consequently in his life. This picture, in the mind of Rembrandt, was to bring to him reputation sufficient that he would be enabled to enjoy a perfect freedom to experiment and work as he would. But he was unfortunate. Selfish soulless men, interested only in their own portraits and knowing

.....

1. Time Magazine, op. cit., p. 65.

nothing of art, were angered. Hendrik W. VanLoon, who speaks of this picture as "perfect", tells this story concerning its reception:

"Here was a man that dared to think a new thought and tell a new truth. Proudly he had turned to his fellowmen saying these noble words, 'Behold, a little yellow, a little black, and a little green, and ochre and red, and presto, I change them into an idea', and the crowd had roared and made fun and refused to pay him for his work...and from that moment on Rembrandt was doomed."¹

Rembrandt's idea was new and like any great man making an innovation, he had to pay for his genius and originality. His idea had been to do away with the stereotyped style wherein a group of men sat around in a formal portrait setting and substitute for it portraits of these men in a scene portraying action and reality. He thought he had something and indeed he did but it is the way of the world that it will not receive the novel as great and it is human nature throughout the years that self-interest and lack of insight go hand in hand. Michel treats this picture with understanding and appreciation. He says:

"Though we shall not urge its claim to be entitled Rembrandt's masterpiece, it is certainly one of his most interesting works and one before which the student is most disposed to linger, attracted by that strange commingling of fact and poetry so stimulating alike to appreciation and criticism. It holds a place apart in the history of corporation pictures, alike by virtue of originality of treatment and beauty of execution... the master's intention is to show a call to arms of the civic guard; the captain gives orders to the lieutenant and the drum beats the alarm, the ensign unfurls his standard. Every man snatches up a weapon of some sort, musket, lance, or halberd. Basing his work on the direct study of nature, defying all convention, he had brought the features essentially characteristic into strong relief...this work invites us to overstep the limits of actuality on which it was based, it speaks to us of the ideal; it is not only a landmark in a great career, but an evidence to that superiority over all his predecessors which we claim for the master."²

1. Hendrick W. VanLoon: Rembrandt van Rijn, p. 97.
2. Emile Michel: Rembrandt, His Life, His Work and His Time, p. 291.

In this connection most of the commentators similarly attribute to the creation of this picture the beginning of the end for Rembrandt. How he must have suffered within himself as he saw the fame which he already had and the position which accompanied it fleeing out ^{of} the window when he himself knew he had created a masterpiece and that that masterpiece had been responsible for the catastrophic blows which followed. Michel, quoted in an article in *Masters in Art*, ends his paragraph on this picture with this sentence:

"The painter, disregarding established positions of portrait groups, had sacrificed their personalities to aesthetic considerations. His first care had been to compose a picture... after such a blow to their vanity the civic guards bestowed their patronage elsewhere and Rembrandt's commissions fell off from this time forward."¹

In the consideration of the work of the artist it would be unfair and incomplete to omit his great "Christ at Emmaus". Almost every painter has given a conception of Christ. He has been deified, humanized, and transfigured. The story of His passion and of His death, the events of His early life, and His glory, have been spread across the canvas of the ages, but when Rembrandt's picture of "Christ at Emmaus" is considered the student of art may question where else has the Lord been so imagined. Look at Him, pale, emaciated, dressed in the garb of a pilgrim, breaking bread as on the evening of the Last Supper, on His blackened lips there are still traces of torture, the dark gentle eyes widely opened, raised heavenward, about His head for a halo there is a phosphorescent light which seems to envelop Him in a sort of indefinable glory, yet there is on His face a look passing human understanding and yet the look of

.....

1. *Masters in Art*, June 1900, p. 32.

a living, breathing, human being, a being who has gone through the valley of the shadow of death. In places the features are undefined and the expression is given by the movement of the lips and the upward glance. Who knows what inspired Rembrandt or how? There is no art which recalls to us such an insight. No one before Rembrandt, and no one after, has so drawn the Christ.

This picture has drawn forth the comment of many great critics. Michel says of it:

"Henceforth, it seems hardly possible to conceive of the scene but as he painted it. What depths of faith and adoring reverence he has suggested in the attitude of the disciple, who, his heart burning within him, at his Master's words, recognizes Him in the breaking of bread and clasps his hands in worship while his companion, unconvinced as yet, leans upon the arm of his chair, his questioning gaze fixed on the Saviour's face. How truthful again is the expression of ingenuous curiosity in the features of the young servant, amazed at the sudden emotion of the two apostles. But more admirable than all is the conception of the risen Christ, the mysterious radiance that beams from His pallid face, the parted lips, the glassy eyes that have looked on death, the air of beneficent authority that marks His bearing. ... By what strange magic of art was Rembrandt enabled to render things unspeakable, and to breathe into our souls through the medium of a picture insignificant in appearance, without any beauty of accessories or background, subdued in color, careful and almost awkward in handling."¹

It is in this picture that there is found one of the finest examples of Rembrandt's greatest characteristic. The magnificence of his chiaroscuro goes beyond the meaning of the play and opposition of light and shadow, rather as Fromentin says in *Masters in Art*:

"Let us admit (and it is undeniably true) that this idealist, this dreaming Rembrandt, was more than a mere master of chiaroscuro,- that he was the greatest master of it that has ever lived, and that because it was so intimately adapted to his

.

1. *Masters in Art*, June 1900, pp. 11-12.

genius, he developed it into a means of expression of which it had never before, nor has it since, been capable. Admit that under his hand, misty, veiled, discreet, it lends a charm to half-hidden things, invites curiosity, adds an attraction to moral beauty, and finally, partakes of sentiment, of an emotion, of the uncertain, the indefinite, of the dream and of the ideal, - in a word, lives a double life, the life it has by nature and that which comes to it through communicated emotion. And yet, admitting all this (and though it is clear that in thus broadening the meaning of the word 'chiaroscuro' we are nearer and nearer to the secret), we have not solved the mystery, nor quite lifted the veil which hides the supreme greatness of Rembrandt the dreamer, the idealist, the painter of the 'Christ at Emmaus'.¹

Perhaps the veil cannot be lifted by a study of Rembrandt's art, nor yet by a knowledge of his life, but this light can be given; the greatness of Rembrandt, while not dependent upon his suffering, was undoubtedly conditioned by it and the master of chiaroscuro, in painting the "Christ at Emmaus", has put his own soul and its suffering on the canvas as well as his Master's.

One of the least known of Rembrandt's works, and until recently rather unrecognized, is the simple "Christ on the Cross". In 1642 Rembrandt's beloved Saskia died and following her death this picture was painted. Critics of this picture are almost non-existent. If words can in any way portray a picture this is the lonely Christ. The figure hangs in utter simplicity, head bowed, arms stretched to the nails overhead, the cross standing in stark nakedness in the barren surroundings. There are no other figures in the picture, there is no landscape of note, and the sky is but a cheerless augury of the coming dawn. The master, in this picture, has portrayed his soul in a much different manner than in the "Christ

* * * * *

1. Masters in Art, June 1900, p. 24.

at Emmaus". There, it is meticulous mastery of chiaroscuro in the eyes and light of the Christ, in the "Christ on the Cross", the brush of the master has served the brutal purpose, the harshness of the strokes, the lack of sympathy evidenced, all testify to the torn and crucified soul of Rembrandt. The basic idea of the picture is the presentation of a single thought. There is no face, there are no thieves on either side, there are no mourners at his feet, there is no city in the background, there is no friendly hand of God reaching towards Him, there are not soldiers guarding; He is at oneness with the sin of the world. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows", ¹ was the prophet's word; Rembrandt has spoken again, in 1642, and told the same story with equal beauty. What greater tribute could a picture receive?

In submitting this picture to the standards, the first question is with reference to its social beneficence. Surely the heart of the world's greatest religion meets this adequately. Its interest to the greatest number of people- to three hundred million- the Cross is the way of salvation; the nobility of its conception is only seen in realizing the scope and the magnitude of Rembrandt's dominant idea in its construction. This picture meets the second standard on a different basis than the other pictures do. Here there are no facial expressions, no minuteness of detail, rather this picture belongs to that school of art which has been called the Impressionistic School. The work as a whole expresses profoundly one idea, it qualifies to the second standard perfectly. The sub-

* * * * *

1. The Holy Bible, Isaiah 53:4.

limity of the composition is unquestionable; there is no problem as to the arrangement of the figures or the reality of the setting, it is simple and sublime. As to whether the drawing of all the forms is to be considered true and effective in rendering Ideal life, certainly this picture does not represent the usual idea. It isn't a pretty picture, it transcends the ideal and encroaches upon the divine. The last standard demands a surface technique, vigorous, appropriate, and unoffensively individual. Ruckstull has simply been describing this picture for no better words for it are to be found. It is indeed so coordinated that there is made certain a result expressed with completeness and harmony which could not fail to stir the highest emotions of intelligent mankind forever. Christ on the cross, alone, and dying,- the Bible says that He died that man might live; Rembrandt speaks again of the death and foreshadows the resurrection.

The man Rembrandt has been thought of as a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. In his character as Dr. Jekyll he was a great portrait painter, the toast of Amsterdam, a success. He enjoyed health, physical fitness, a good home, a wife. As Mr. Hyde, he bore the burden of hunger and cold, the loss of his wife and his mistress and his children. And he painted the tortuous tragic human faces and figures of the people he found about him in place of the fat burghers. The physical suffering in the life of Rembrandt, was, relatively slight. In comparison with Michelangelo he was not forced to a task he hated, he knew no Papal authority driving him to an unwelcome duty, rather he gave his message unhindered as the pictorial spokesman of bourgeois democracy. Of course, it must be

taken into account that in painting he bore the censorship of stolid respectability. The burghers who self-centeredly refused to accept his masterpiece, "The Sortie of the Banning Cocq Company", foretold and in a sense assured his economic downfall; therein lay the beginnings of his mental suffering.

There was Rembrandt. He knew in his heart that if he would conform to the desires of the petty people whose pictures he painted, give them a little more color, but keep them as dull and inactive and unimaginative as they were and thought their God had meant them to be, that he could maintain for himself a surety of reputation and success, of financial ease and respectability. But such was not to be. It was within the man to paint as he was made, he was "dream-driven". He was Calvinistically predestined as were his good Dutch surroundings, and he suffered as a result of his mental honesty and artistic selfishness. He, Rembrandt, was going to paint, to paint what he saw fit and as he saw it, and neither the Dutch burghers nor the fear of failure could stop him.

No man can maintain his ideals in the face of opposition without suffering for them. Rembrandt beat his head on the stone wall of Dutch conservatism and respectability. He, too, like Michelangelo, was out of place in the world in which he lived. He was a spirit free in its essence and so long as the human race has existed there has never been a time when humanity has been ready to accept at their true value, and accredit, the Michelangelos, the Rembrandts, the Miltons or the Bachs; instead they are condemned to an eternal spiritual suffering, for within themselves they have the assurance, unhesitating and supreme, that they must follow their star and

create their art as it has been born in them. When the world sees that resultant creation and acknowledges as great some lesser work from the artist's brush, or the writer's pen, or the musician's score, and the artist knows within himself the true values of his work, he is spiritually torn. The head of Rembrandt was bloody and bowed under the bludgeonings of circumstance but the brush which he wielded spoke its poignant message through it all. Perhaps the Mr. Hyde in Rembrandt painted the better for it all, perhaps his art became worthy of its place once he had known the purifying fire. No one can say flatly that the great master Rembrandt painted his masterpieces directly as a result of either physical or mental or spiritual suffering in his life; art isn't like that and neither are human beings. It is impossible to analyze the soul as well as the creative ability, it is only possible to observe and study and deduce; this much and no more. Rembrandt himself could not have said, "Because I suffered I painted the 'Christ on the Cross'", but within his soul there is seen a groping and a growth coming from the suffering and expressing itself through the artist's medium.

When Hendrickje was thrown out of her church for bearing his illegitimate children it wasn't a rough and boisterous Charles Laughtonish Rembrandt who could easily tell her to forget the whole matter. Even if such had been the case the man's pictures reveal that in his spirit he must have known with her the stigma and the shame. There is no record of Rembrandt's being a consistent or dutiful church-goer, but there is spread on canvas for the ages a truer record of the deep spirituality and the religious nature of the man.

Such a man could not have lightly passed by the sufferings around him; such a man must have known with his Saviour the loneliness of the cross. Rembrandt could not have painted the "Christ on the Cross" unless he had felt himself alone and crucified. As he lavished on "Titus" the loving care and adoration of an earthly father, as he put into "The Sortie of the Banning Cocq Company" the intelligent construction of a master painter; as he made the "Christ at Emmaus" at once risen and transcendent; as he placed Christ on the cross in solitude and despair, so Rembrandt, so his life. A critic might say that the portrait of "Titus" excelled the "Christ on the Cross" in artistic merit; it is only necessary to hold before the critic the standards and the picture. Like Michelangelo, Rembrandt found in his suffering a means of grace. He, too, was "perfect through suffering".¹

1. Ante, p. 35.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The creations of these men stand at the pinnacle in the field of art. As to what place art has in the religious development of mankind, it can only be said that it has inspired and drawn mankind throughout the ages to loftier thoughts and higher ideals. Did these pictures not so do they would not qualify in the standard of art and in meeting the qualifications as they have; they have had a beneficial, indeed even an inspiring and heart-lifting effect, on the beholder. Whether or not there has come a more complete revelation as a result of the religious pictures considered, or of "Moses" and the "Pieta", it cannot be said. Perhaps their chief contribution in the field of religion and their ultimate place therein, is that they are in one way or another the expression of the supremely human understanding of their original. What more adequate concept of Moses could be gained than that by Michelangelo? It is the sum total of humanity's experience of Moses. So with the "Pieta". Michelangelo, in picturing it, has understood not only Mary but the feelings of those who must, in beholding it, understand.

Rembrandt, in the "Supper at Emmaus" has made his Christ completely in the essence of humanity's knowledge. There is a limitation of words to describe how these two men have held up before the world the very conception which nestles snugly and oft-times beyond reach within the heart of every living soul. In the "Christ on the Cross", Rembrandt has taken the theme which lies

closest to the heart of the Christian, and in speaking of it he has given an expression of the very innermost understanding, lacking as the word is, of the Saviour and His death.

So much for the place of these pictures and their effect. To many individuals they will remain unknown and art beyond their ken; so it must be, but that lies within the realm of the weakness of humanity rather than with the art. When someone says he does not appreciate or like Bach, a musician shrugs his shoulders and dismisses the matter; if the individual cannot find in these pictures beauty, truth, knowledge, sincerity, or love, the blame is not the artist's for the testimony of the ages commends them to eternity.

The suffering of humanity grants to the individual the right to understand and to feel akin to the artists who have so expressed themselves.

This is the conclusion. Michelangelo and Rembrandt, in their lives and in their art, bore testimony to the experience, worldwide and eternal, of mankind. Through their knowledge and ability, conditioned by their suffering, they have given to the needy world a breath of life and light. It was the purpose of this thesis to show the place of suffering as a contributing factor in their creations. To know these men, to understand their art, the individual must understand and know their sufferings; then it can be seen how and to what extent their work was conditioned by it. Michelangelo, giant, genius, and artist, inspired to create the greatest works of art in existence, did so through a life fraught with suffering, and in the expression of his soul his greatest art

came about. Rembrandt, master, and man, bearing in himself, as did Michelangelo, the burden of human understanding, he too, through suffering, created great art. Michelangelo and Rembrandt, "perfected through suffering."¹

1. Ante, p. 35.

CHAPTER VII

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER VII

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Buonarroti, Michelangelo: The Work of Michelangelo Reproduced in 169 Illustrations. Brentano's, New York, 1921

Rijn, Rembrandt van: Masterpieces.
Frederick A. Stokes Co., New York, 1900

SECONDARY SOURCES

Aitken, J. R.: The Christ of the Men in Art.
T. and T. Clark Co., Edinburgh, 1915

Armour, John M.: The Divine Method of Life in Nature and in Grace.
J. P. Armour Co., Philadelphia, 1887

Bell, Malcolm: Rembrandt van Rijn.
Bell and Sons, London, 1901

Bell, Wilbur Cosby: Sharing in Creation.
Macmillan and Co., New York, 1925

Bishop, Henry: The Art of Rembrandt.
Macmillan and Co., 1919

Black, Charles C.: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Sculptor, Painter, Architect. Chautauqua Press, Boston, 1885

Bradford, Amory Howe: Age of Faith.
Houghton, Mifflin & Co., New York, 1900

Brookes, James H.: The Mystery of Suffering.
Fleming H. Revell, New York, 1890

Conti, Augusto: The Soul of Michelangelo.
Macmillan and Co., 1931

Crauford, Alexander: Enigmas of the Spiritual Life.
Thomas Whittaker Bible House, New York, 1895

Duppa, Richard: The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti.
W. Bulmer and Co., London, 1816

- : Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volumes 15, 17, and 19.
Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., New York, 14th Edition
- Farrar, Adam Story: Science in Theology.
Sheldon & Co., New York, 1860
- Finleyson, D. L.: Michelangelo the Man.
Thomas Crowell Co., New York, 1935
- Gower, Lord Ronald G.: Michelangelo Buonarroti.
G. Bell & Sons, London, 1903
- Grinn, Herman: Life of Michelangelo.
Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1865
- Hastings, H. L.: Remarks on the Mistakes of Moses.
Marshall Bros., London, 1896
- Hevesy, Andre de: Rembrandt.
Pyrmin-Didot et Cie, Paris, 1935
- Hind, Arthur M.: Rembrandt.
Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1932
- Hoffman, Frank S.: The Sphere of Religion.
G. F. Putnam's Sons, London, 1908
- Holmes, C. J.: Notes on the Art of Rembrandt.
Chatto and Windus, London, 1908
- Hubbard, Elbert: Rembrandt.
G. F. Putnam's Sons, London, 1911
- Hurl, Estelle M.: The Bible Beautiful.
L. C. Page & Co., Boston, 1905
- Jackson, C. D.: Suffering Here, Glory Hereafter.
E. F. Dutton & Co., New York, 1872
- Ludwig, Emil: Three Titans.
G. F. Putnam's Sons, London, 1930
- MacFarland, C. S.: The Spirit Christlike.
E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1930
- Merzhkowsky, D. S.: Michael Angelo and Other Sketches.
G. F. Putnam's Sons, London, 1930
- Michel, Emil: Rembrandt, His Life, His Work, and His Time.
William Heinemann, London, 1894

- Muther, Richard: Rembrandt.
E. P. Dutton & Co., 1907
- Nash, Henry S.: The Atoning Life.
Macmillan & Co., 1908
- Pierson, Arthur T.: The Bible and Spiritual Life.
Baker and Taylor Co., New York, 1905
- Powers, Harry H.: Mornings With Masters in Art.
Macmillan and Co., New York, 1912
- Robinson, Henry W.: Suffering Human and Divine.
Macmillan & Co., New York, 1939
- Royce, Josiah: Sources of Religious Insight.
Scribner's Sons, New York, 1914
- Schofield, Alfred T.: Knowledge of God; Its Meaning and Its Power.
D. T. Bass, New York.
- Staley, J. E.: The Charm of Rembrandt.
T. C. & E. C. Jack, London.
- Stewart, George: God and Pain.
George Doran & Co. New York, 1927
- Sweetster, M. F.: Rembrandt.
J. R. Osgood & Co., Boston, 1878
- Symonds, J. A.: The Life of Michelangelo.
Macmillan & Co., New York, 1911
- Tagore, Rabindranath: Personality.
Macmillan & Co., New York, 1921
- Tillett, Wilbur F.: The Paths That Lead to God.
George Doran & Co., New York, 1923
- Valentiner, W. R.: The Late Years of Michelangelo.
Privately Printed, New York, 1914
- Van Loon, Hendrik W.: Rembrandt van Rijn.
The Literary Guild, New York, 1930
- Van Loon, Hendrik W.: Rembrandt van Rijn, Last Years and Death.
H. Liveright, New Amsterdam, 1930
- Vasari, Giorgio: Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects.
Volume 4. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1927
- Ward, John W. G.: Problems That Perplex.
George Doran & Co., New York, 1923

Whale, J. S.: The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil.
Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York, 1936

Weatherhead, Leslie: Why Do Men Suffer?
Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York, 1936

(var.) : The Holy Bible.
Oxford University Press, New York

PERIODICALS

Art World and Arts and Decorations.
Hewitt Publishing Corporation, New York, May, 1918

Masters in Art.
Bates and Guild Co., Boston, June 1900, April 1901, and
May 1901

Time Magazine.
P. I. Prentice, New York, January 26, 1942



MOSES (Detail, Tomb of Pope Julius II)
S. Pietro in Vincoli, Rome

THE UNIVERSITY PRINTS
BOSTON

MICHELANGELO. 1475-1564

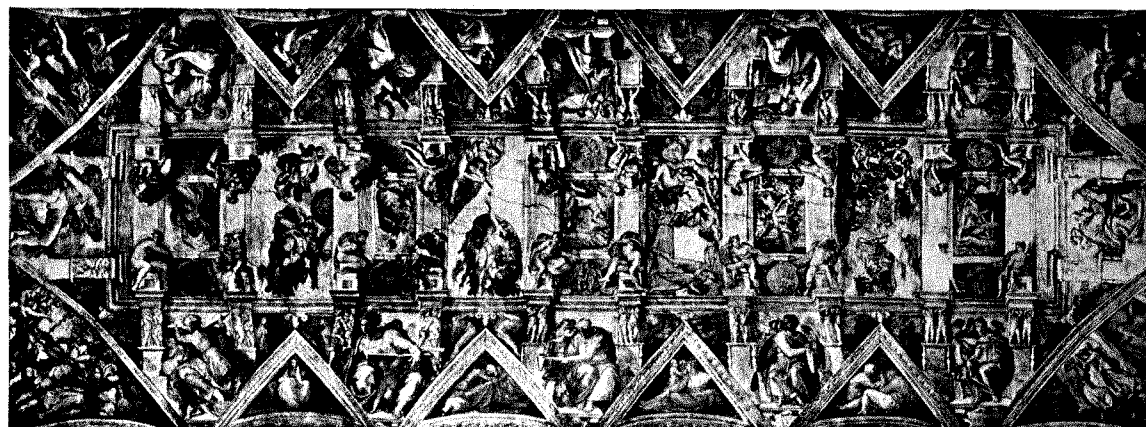
O 444



PIETÀ
St. Peter's, Rome

THE UNIVERSITY PRINTS
BOSTON

MICHELANGELO. 1475—1564

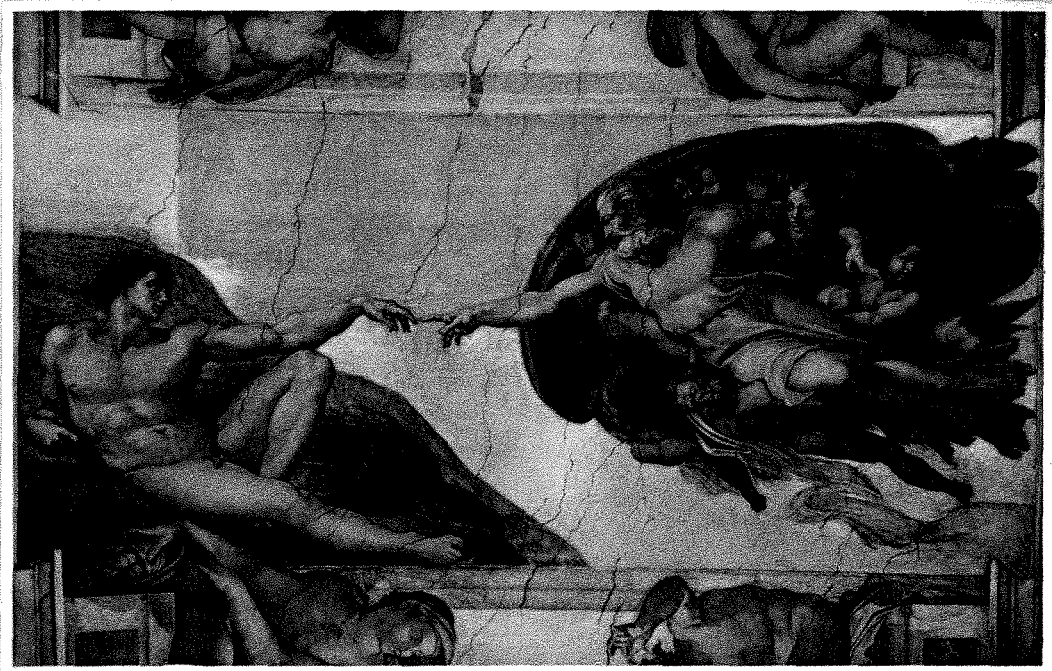


CEILING
Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome

THE UNIVERSITY PRINTS
BOSTON

MICHELANGELO. 1475—1564

MC 9



THE CREATION OF ADAM



THE LAST JUDGMENT
East Wall, Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome

**THE UNIVERSITY PRINTS
BOSTON**

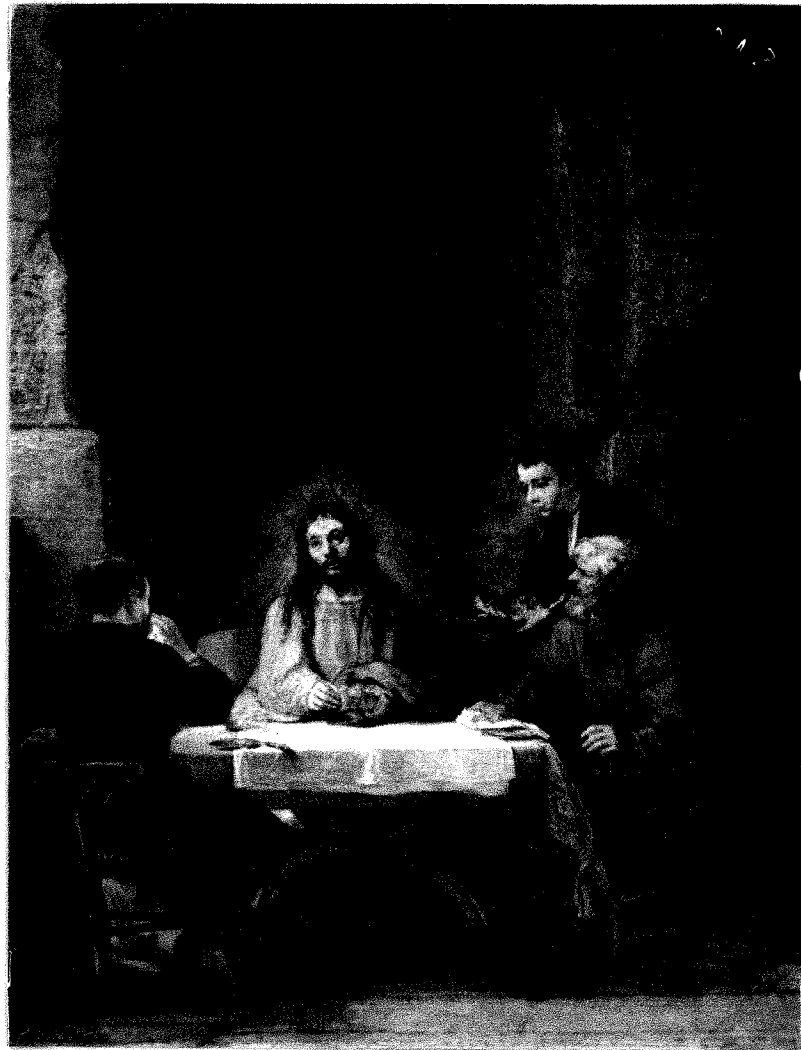
MICHELANGELO. 1475—1564



REMBRANDT. THE ARTIST'S SON TITUS. THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.



THE SORTIE OF THE BANNING COCK COMPANY



THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS



CHRIST ON THE CROSS