

it was no sin to represent the Redeemer under the form of the good shepherd or of Orpheus, or to symbolize His miraculous birth, His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension by episodes of the old, prefiguring those of the new, testament.

The painters of the catacombs, whose works afford the earliest examples of Christian art, were but too evidently under the influence of pagan models and customs to give their subjects that depth of feeling, that Christian type which marked the period of the great revival. They twined the Christian theme in garlands of pagan flowers. Cupid fluttered in the vine leaves around the figure of the good shepherd. The chlamys and tunic clothed the forms of the Virgin, the pallium that of the prophets; whilst the Phrygian dress and cap covered the heads and frames of the shepherds or the Magi. The attitude, motions, forms and distribution were those of the classic time, the degenerate imitation of the greatness of past ages. Whilst the face of the Redeemer distantly revealed the features of the Olympian Jove or of Apollo, the prophets were but too frequently reminiscent of the Greek Philosopher. Labouring in the dark and intricate passages or vaults in which the first Christians held their conventicles, the semi-pagan artists boldly stained the rough coated walls with light and lively tinted water-colours, hastily defined their animated figures with dashing lines, and left the spectator to imagine the details and modelling of the form. Their representations had something classical and bold in movement. Their groups closely resembled those of the pagan time, and their execution was naturally rude, hasty and slight.

Such, from the remains that are now visible, was the character of the paintings of the second or third century in the catacomb of S. Nero e Achilleo<sup>1</sup> in the vault vulgarly called Stanza dei Pesci, where the Redeemer is seated in the centre of the roof in the attire of a shep-

---

<sup>1</sup> Of old S. Calixtus.