

Jeremy Maas. Holman Hunt and The Light of the World. London and Berkeley, Scolar Press, 1984. Pp. 240. 1 color and 35 black and white plates. £12.50. \$25.00.

The work of art, in the contemporary world, is seen to function primarily as an object valuable for its ability to evoke aesthetic responses. Although it may also act as a status symbol and a financial investment, these functions rest on its relation to artistic taste. In the past, works of art have served other functions as well: portraits preserved the physical appearance of people for posterity, historical works commemorated important events of state, and paintings taught moral lessons. The role of works of art in religious worship, although taken for granted for most ancient, medieval and Renaissance works, has not been a function claiming much attention from contemporary art historians. The book under review, Jeremy Maas' Holman Hunt and the Light of the World is a commendable exception to this rule.

Hunt's painting has won art-historical comment for its place in the history of Pre-Raphaelitism, but its far more unique career as a religious icon has attracted little attention before this book. Yet many more people have viewed the Light of the World or reproductions of it as a devotional painting than have enjoyed it as an aesthetic object. Jeremy Maas traces its strange history from the inspiration gained by the young Holman Hunt from the reading of his father's illustrated Bible to the installation of the large replica of Light of the World in St. Paul's Cathedral.

The Light of the World exists in three versions, each with its own history as a religious painting, but the large version which toured Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in 1905 through 1907 is the one that the greatest number of people have seen. The discovery of an album kept during the Australian and New Zealand tour provided the impetus and much of the material for this book. Numerous newspaper clippings from the album document the extraordinary popularity of the Light of the World, especially in Australia where, it is estimated, four million people, or about four-fifths of Australia's total population, came to view the picture. They came, sometimes two or three times, to stand for a few moments in the presence of the painted Jesus Christ. Some of these millions of viewers were drawn by artistic interests, some by the chance to see a memento from their homeland, and others by curiosity about the latest show; but for many it was the religious dimension of the work that drew them to its exhibition. In Australia where most of the population were affiliated with the Church of England, the attendance was high. In Canada, on the other hand, where the population consisted of many Catholics, with their own traditions of religious imagery, or Presbyterians, with their suspicion of all religious imagery,