

'biblical' type of play; but these plays introduce outside people to quite good advantage—after all, the shepherds did go out to tell the glad news, and it is good to be reminded of the people who heard, and to imagine how they reacted to it.

The idea of the old toymaker giving the Gift of Love, through God's hungry children, to the Christ Child, and the rewarding joy of the vision of the Nativity which she received, is charming and gives valuable moral point to the story. But these plays should have some 'grown-ups' in the casts, to give them dignity and reality. They are well worth time and trouble in casting and production; there is certainly atmosphere in them; and if well produced, they will 'get over' to the audience in an effective way.

I recommend them, especially the first two, to people looking for worth-while plays of short duration.

MARJORIE LEECH

EXTRACTS

EVANGELISER for May-June gives the text of a conference given to seminarians in 1946 by the late Père Sertillanges. His subject was loyalty to the Church, which he had the courage to show as something absolute yet quite other than a hidebound clerical conservatism. One of the classic examples of a Catholic firm in his loyalty, despite unjust attack and condemnation, and finally vindicated in our own day is, of course, the great biblical scholar Père Lagrange. This and other examples are given by Père Sertillanges, not in any party spirit or to dwell on old sores. Rather he draws from them the useful moral that we must be constantly on our guard to sharpen our appreciation of both the divine and the human elements in Catholic teaching and indeed in the Church itself, or we shall confound them. Submission to authority must be unequivocal; at the same time we must not be guilty of the scandal of denying or attempting to disguise the human side—with its human failings—of the Church. Though this conference was given eight years ago its appositeness at the present day and particularly in his own country will not be missed. But it is well for us too to ponder the same truths while enjoying perhaps a calmer atmosphere in which to do so. Then we shall be less likely to be caught unawares in times of greater stress.

PÈRE J. BONDUELLE writes in *La Vie Spirituelle* for July on the subject of Christian consolation. He points out that whereas the Bible, both Old Testament and New, is full of references to the consoling of creatures by God, there is no question here of a consoling by creatures of God,

or even of the suffering Christ. The same is to be said of the treatment of consolation to be found in the liturgy and in the great spiritual writers. Not that the Christian is only to receive, and never to give, comfort. For he quotes II Cor. I, 3-5 to show our duty to our neighbour in this respect. This text he finds particularly instructive as showing that we can only accomplish this duty of consoling by reason of the consolation given to us by God and by his Christ. 'In the Christian who brings consolation, it is Jesus himself who consoles.' This mystery is followed by the further one that Jesus is not only the consoler in those who console; he is also the one to whom consolation is given in those who are consoled.

'What, then', he continues, 'are we to think of those who seem to have another idea of Christian consolation, describing it above all as a comforting of Christ in his human nature, his physical being, his created body and soul?' This he shows to be impossible in any strict sense. Jesus is risen in glory, and can no longer suffer or be the object of consolation. He finds a legitimate meaning for such expressions in the fact that, as Jesus suffered in his earthly life for our sins which then lay in the future, so too he rejoiced in acts of love and generosity still to come and experienced their consolation. If this is what is meant, however, it calls for careful statement, lest an erroneous impression be given, for it can easily be confused with a theologically unsound and sentimental attitude to Christ. P. Bonduelle ends on a note of protest against writers whose expressions support this false sentimentality. This is a valuable article, containing all the elements of a balanced view of its subject. It is perhaps a pity that the author could not have cleared away his *bête noir* at an earlier stage and ended on the more positive aspects which, though given, are in danger of being overlooked for lack of development and emphasis.

THE FRIENDS' QUARTERLY in its July issue has an interesting article by Eric G. Wyatt on symbolism among the native South Africans.

As the sun sets the house-wife prepares the main meal of the day. Children have brought water from the river and some is boiling in the cooking pot. The woman takes the cassava-flour from the basket and adds it slowly to the water. . . . If you watch carefully you may notice that whilst transferring the first handful to the cooking pot she lets a little fall through her fingers to the ground. She always does it; it was not just an accident on that one occasion. Again, a party on a journey comes to a river. It is, of course, hot; and whether the journey entails crossing the river or not the men enter and drink copiously. But the first mouthful they spit out.

That again is a regular practice. . . . The spilled flour and the ejected water are offerings to the departed. More than that—water from the river meant refreshment and comfort to their kinsfolk all down the ages and that same food sustained and imparted strength to their people throughout generations. Here are the symbols of life and strength and symbols of a bond with the unseen members of the tribe, a great, powerful, unseen host.

The writer goes on to tell how the Europeans have regarded all this as crude and superstitious and he laments the fact that the education they have attempted to give has aimed at obliterating these symbols without putting anything in their place. It is interesting to note that a member of the Society of Friends who believe in no sacraments whatever should have discovered their necessity among the more primitive peoples he lived with. He is certainly correct in criticizing the Christian churches who have simply attempted to impose a new form of symbolism without reference to the one they found among the people and who discountenance the natives' reliance on dreams which makes them so appreciative of the prophets and other figures of the Bible. He asks pertinently at the end of the article: 'What happens when an integrated society loses its cohesive symbols?' That is the question which we should face not only abroad but at home. They are to hand for us in the sacraments and the liturgy, but they have largely ceased to exercise a function of cohesion in modern society.

In the July *Integrity* A. P. Campbell in a lively essay seeks to reintroduce these symbols through Drama. And surely he has something to say here.

It should not be a matter of adapting and re-hashing the medieval scriptural plays; what we need is the scriptural theme written by twentieth-century man, for twentieth-century man.

He says rightly that people are hungry for the good religious play; but they are seldom if ever given it. Perhaps it will not come until we allow it to enter into our spirituality and cease to be suspicious of the external symbol which has such power.