AS WE SEE IT

By DAN PATRICK

We wonder how many readers of this newspaper digested the text of the Pope's Christmas message printed in last week's issue.

The sad fact probably is that the number was far from legion. Yet that message is destined to rank with the great documents of all times and embodies an equitable and just solution for our current ills without resorting to the political nostrums we have been fed lately by the leaders of the United Nations.

All the fault for this lack of interest cannot be placed on the general public. The secular press, perhaps unintentionally, underplayed the story. Editorial comment was sparse. As a matter of fact in some of our periodicals, the Soviet attack on the message received a bigger play than the message itself.

As we see it, and we are far from qualified to analyze the text—the Holy Father has carefully analyzed the functions and responsibilities of a government under which the people have a voice in the selection of their leaders, i. e. a democracy. To some this oblique papal blessing of democracy came as a surprise but it shouldn't have come as a shock to those who recall the age-old papal dictum that the state is the servant of the people and not vice versa as the Fascists, Nazis and Communists contend.

What prompts this observation is general is a chance remark of a Dutch refugee the other day. She asked our opinion of the papal message and we gave a somewhat vague reply. Then she countered with the flat declaration that the document embodies the real answer to a stable system of governments in the various European countries.

From one who has seen her native land devastated by the sword and fire of the Nazi hordes, this opinion came as a refreshing breeze amidst the smoke of words, half-promises and utopian theories which are being brewed in the international cauldrons of diplomacy at the present moment.

It also started us thinking about the proper method of propagandizing this message. Certainly we can't admit our ignorance regarding papal pronouncements on an inept secular press. It behooves us to know and understand such pronouncements down to the last detail despite rather than vent our wrath on the secular press because of periodic dereliction of duty.

Within a very few weeks we will embark on the Lenten season. This, it seems to us, would provide an excellent opportunity to dissect the papal Christmas message, bit by bit under proper guidance, absorb it and exert its doctrine into our everyday lives.

Before any military operation in the present war, there is a period known as "briefing" when those who are undertaking the leadership of a mission are informed of the nature of their task and the reasons underlying it.

It's high time the Catholics both clergy and laity were "briefed" on this papal message. It might go a long way toward clearing away the shroud of doubt and suspicion which clouds a clear-cut and God-given approach to a lasting solution of the problems which have already rent so far too much blood, sweat, toil and tears.

If W. L. White's forthcoming book, "Report on the Russians" can be judged on the basis of the enemies it already has made, it must be a humdinger.

Never have we heard of an opus so universally damned by the so-called liberal element who generally travel a "little left of center" in their intellectual excursions. Some even make sharp detours in the same leftish direction.

Now W. L. White, a famous newspaper son of a famous newspaper father, certainly can't have suffered the overnight mental collapse which some of his critics imply. Good reporters don't fold up that fast.

You must recall some of Mr. White's previous works — "Journey for Margaret" which was made into a good movie; "They Were Expendable" and "Queens Die Promptly."

Each and every one of these tomes drew critical applause from the same book critics and so-called leaders of intellectual thought who now condemn the author for his latest undertaking.

White accompanied Eric Johnson, president of the United States Chamber of Commerce on his recent tour of Russia. On this trip he had an ample opportunity to study the Russians and give a pretty factual report on what he saw.

Apparently that is exactly what he has accomplished in his "Report on the Russians." The only fly in the ointment is that he doesn't go into a literary swoon over Marshal Stalin and his associates. He paints a rather factual picture of Russia and it is none too flattering.

Now that the book is being roundly denounced by the "little-to-the-left-of-center" lit you might want to read it. Excerpts will be found in the December and January issues of "Reader's Digest."

Feast Days

Sunday, Jan. 14 — SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Monday, Jan. 15—ST. PAUL, FIRST HERMIT.

Tuesday, Jan. 16—ST. HONORATUS, ARCHBISHOP.

Wednesday, Jan. 17—ST. ANTHONY.

Thursday, Jan. 18—ST. PETER'S CHAIR IN ROME.

Friday, Jan. 19—ST. CANUTUS.

Saturday, Jan. 20—ST. SEBASTIAN.

YOU MAY hear it said of me that I am prejudiced and illogical. Then believe me, I hope let us have my own way quickly in everything with all about me patiently or I will call it stubbornness; stubborn does not exist. Thomas Carlyle.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Reassurance to the American people is contained in the declarations made by the President in his message on the condition of the country. It summed up in many a paragraph war conditions and home conditions as they exist today. It spoke of the needs of the present, needs for greater war production. It spoke of the battles of the present on all fronts, of the victory that surely lies ahead.

Recent pronouncements and recent activities of our allied leaders, along with their actions in Poland and Greece, have aroused many a doubt in the minds of those who welcomed the Atlantic Charter as a true statement of our war aims. Britain and Russia owe it to the United States that they were not worsted in this war with the Nazis. Perfectionism is not within our reasonable demands in making a just peace; but any peace that forgets human rights, that enslaves Poland and overrunes Greece, that forgets the high purposes of the Atlantic Charter, and banishes the Four Freedoms as ideals no longer useful or necessary, can not be the peace we have fought for. Our Lend-Lease surely was never intended to help any nation become an oppressor of sovereign nations.

Opposition to the proposals of the Holy Father comes with bad grace from the controlled press of Russia. The "Pravda" is especially virulent in its attacks upon Him and His teachings. President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill have shown their deep respect for all the Holy Father stands for in this war and in the approaching peace. The Pope's principles are those set forth in President Roosevelt's latest message. Russia must understand there can be no true peace, no lasting peace, if the support of the Pope and the principles of religion are kept out of the peace deliberation.

May we not hope that the new reassurance given to us by the President will be developed into action by a conference between the Allies that will grow into a workable union to prevent future wars.

The Literary Cavalcade

A Trip to the Past

By John O'Connor

For a few hours the other evening the past two years faded into the limbo of the future. Young Gilbert Chesterton and the serious, brilliant Hilaire Belloc argued in the little Italian restaurant in London. Maurice Baring listened. Wilfrid and Alice Meynell reigned supreme in the field of Catholic journalism. Cardinal Newman was not gone long to his final resting place and Francis Thompson was living in the slums of London and writing some of the most living poetry since Crashaw.

To anyone who has enjoyed and profited by knowing Thompson's work, that series of immortal efforts so tied in with so tragic a life Francis Thompson: In His Path by Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S.J. (Bruce $2.75), is a "must" book. It is the most delightful book on the figures of the "Catholic Literary Revival" since Calvert Alexander's work of the same name.

Goes To Source

Most of literate America and England knows that Father Connolly, after the Meynells, been the chief authority on Francis Thompson. After years of collecting Thompsoniana, editing his poems and those of his contemporary, Coventry Patmore, Father Connolly at last received an opportunity to go to England. He determined to see the 88 year-old Wilfrid Meynell, without whom Thompson might never have given such riches to the English tongue and to universal poetry. He made his literary and personal pilgrimages to Ushaw, where Thompson had gone to school; to Storrington Abby, where the gaunt, emaciated poet found peace at last; to visit Thompson's sister, an octogenarian nun, alert and at the present writing still teaching in the parish school. He stood at the Thames Embankment where Thompson's guardian was arrested by a vision. And like all who honor the story of the mystical poet's life, he visited the slums of London and spurned not a little as the "swift and tireless footsteps" the woman of the street who befriended Thompson when he was near starvation and drunk and who disappeared abruptly when Thompson started to achieve some recognition.

These things Father Connolly had wanted to do and his account of his pilgrimage is a series of absorbing chapters. He says he appreciates Thompson and the more long immersion with the days will fall to enjoy this book.

Talks With Meynell

Father Connolly's interest in the poet was sparked by the fact that Meynell said that F. was "simply the greatest poet of the last generation." The last meeting of the young Jesuit with the venerable editor of the Dublin Review and father of the Catholic Revival was especially filled with memories, literary impressions, and anecdotes of technique.

"Interest in Thompson's work," Father Connolly quotes Meynell, naturally to a study of the life—a proposition that has taken years of schooling in Rome, Paris, Louvain and London. Meynell's judgment is quoted for the prime reason that he proved Francis Thompson's genius when it was not popular to do so. Meynell's own work, the "Poems" with which the eighteen-year-old Thompson was in the streets of London, rescued by Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, and the period of poetic productiveness in the distinct peace of Storrington and Pantasaph. As this poignant life drama unfolded, it revealed how intimately Thompson's life was interwoven with his poetry."

Many of the people Thompson knew well are still alive and active in England today. The author's thorough and touching chapters on the aged Wilfrid Meynell constituted some of the finest human writing of recent years. Thompson devotees and the uninitiated alike will enjoy this book, and veteran or novice, you will agree with the aged Archbishop Kennedy when he told Father Connolly: "The taste of the world has been corrupted. Francis Thompson is the antidote."

Autobiography of Eric Gill Draws Censure

The widely acclaimed AUTOBIOGRAPHY of Eric Gill, British convert who died in 1940, is censured as unworthy of Catholic literature by the Rev. Dr. Francis J. Connell, C.SS.R., distinguished theologian of the Catholic University of America, writing in the current issue of The American Ecclesiastical Review.

There are two forms of the AUTOBIOGRAPHY, one expurgated, the other unexpurgated. The latter, entitled the Catholic Book Club edition, attained the distinction of being a "Catholic book of the month," and received the Catholic Literary Award" from the Calvary of Catholic Authors as the outstanding book of the year 1941.

Dr. Connell's statements are in answer to the query of a parish priest who expresses astonishment and disedification concerning the Gill book which he explains many of his parishioners are reading.

Rebuking the "supposed judgment of good Catholic literature" for their approval of Eric Gill's AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Dr. Connell states: "Unfortunately, there are some Catholics who seem to think that the literary production of any Catholic is to be lauded provided the author is a convert and an enemy. The inference, and even sometimes expressed, seems to be that the manifestations of the 'independent thinking' of a convert."

Answering the "unsolicited question" directly, Father Connell has the courage to say that the book is "[illegible] and [illegible] of a convert [illegible] of a Catholic [illegible] the Catholic Church."

Truth for Truth's Sake

WASHINGTON, [illegible]

Liturgy Symposium By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

JANUARY BOOKS IN REVIEW

Holy Mother Church gives the whole first part of January to her celebration of Jesus Nativity, especially in its manifestation to the Magi. Epiphany is the great Feast which dominates the January horizon, just as the star of old which brought the Magi to Jerusalem. The first few days of the month lead up to it, and an octave of days carries on its solemnity, so that it is the 13th of January before the Church takes up again the full liturgical observance of a Saint's feast, that Saint being the great St. Hilary (Hilaire Belloc's patron Saint).

For this reason, the first part of January is a good time to devote to some book about the incarnation. For instance:

1. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 of Abbot Marmion's "Christ in His Mysteries" . . . Nothing better could be chosen for a substantial, intimate meditation upon the great thoughts that occupy the Church during the Nativity cycle.

2. Caryll Houselander's "The Bread of God" is especially good on the Finding of the Child in the Temple, which the Church assigns as the Gospel for the Feast of the Holy Family.

3. Sigrid Undset's "Christmas and Twelfth Night" is a short but solid and genuine statement of the central meanings of the Holy Season.

Or, taking a cue from the observance of the Holy Family Feast, one might place resulting emphasis upon the study of the Christian family, with such material as Pope Pius X's Encyclical on marriage and on Christian Education. These are available in collection of sixteen which is at hand in the Catholic Evidence Library (as are the other books mentioned here). There is also Monsignor Toth's fine book on The Christian Family; Dietrich von Hildebrand's on Marriage; Wingfield Hope's Living Together; Fr. Bede Jarrett's House of Gold; Fr. McDonough's Christ Comes Way to Bethlehem. One of the most penetrating writers of our time on the subject of marriage is Sigrid Undset. Witness the very fine Letter to a Parish Priest in her book called Stages on the Road; but particularly her novels, especially The Wild Orchid and its sequel, The Morning Star. This recommendation must be made with a certain reservation in view of the fact that some parts of Fru Undset's novels are over-explicit in the depiction of romantic splendor. This does not make these novels obscene, or even immoral to read. If such episodes prove disturbing to the discriminating reader, they should be skipped. But we are seriously in Fru Undset's debt for her grand apologia in behalf of Christian marriage and family life in the face of an unfeeling and adulterous generation.

January can fairly be called also a month devoted to the Faith. The Epiphany Feast celebrates the vocation of the Church to the Faith, the Magi being the first of the Gentiles called to the Christ. On January 18, there is the Feast of St. Peter's See in Rome, and on the 25th, the Feast of St. Paul's Conversion; between the two dates, a recent custom, now given full approval by the Church, places what is called the Church Unity Octave. Then, too, the occurrence in January of the Feasts of such Doctors of the Church as St. Hilary, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Francis de Sales, accentuates the emphasis which the observance of the Church places on Faith.

There is a fine chapter on Faith in Abbot Marmion's Christ the Life of the Soul. There was perhaps no keener analyst of the act of faith in modern times than Cardinal Newman. In our modern way of speaking, we would call him a master psychologist of what goes on in the mind and heart of a person making an act of faith under the influence of divine grace. Not as they subject of [illegible] Cardinal Newman makes the motion of the relation between God's action of grace and the man's response of faith luminously clear. A good companion Fr. O'Connell's collection of Newman Selections to his writing on the subject may be made with more or in the series called (plainly enough) Discourses to Mixed Congregations. A Newman Synthesis, by Fr. Pruyser, S.J., presents a fine series of short excerpts under various headings relevant to faith.

For the Church Unity Octave, Bishop Sheen's Life is a Best Fight gives a masterly picture of the divided Christian groups for whom the Church prays at that time; very quickly, those of the abundant "[illegible]" literature would be appropriate reading during the Octave; for example, [illegible] The Long Road Home, Bishop [illegible]'s Prison Diary, [illegible] Path to Peace, Cyril [illegible] Wise Men Still Seek Jesus, and [illegible] Pilgrimage.

As for the Saints, if the month of January [illegible] Hilary, [illegible] Chrysostom, [illegible] Francis de Sales, [illegible] Vincent, [illegible] Bosco, [illegible] Agnes, [illegible] Paul, [illegible] Peter, [illegible] Thomas Aquinas, [illegible] Bede, [illegible] Gregory Nazianzen, [illegible] Fabiola, [illegible] Fathers of the Desert, [illegible] Lives of the Saints, [illegible] Saints Speak, [illegible] Saints Speak, [illegible] Saints Speak