

Balancing the Books

'Easter People' A Book for Future

By Father John S. Kennedy

Josephine Massingberd Ford and Ralph A. Kiefer have written "a commentary for the time of resurrection" which, borrowing from St. Augustine, they entitle "We Are Easter People" (Herder and Herder, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016, \$6.50). They express the hope that it "will be helpful to those who wish to understand more fully the spirit in which the Church worships."

The centrality of the Resurrection in Christian belief, and of its continuous celebration in Christian liturgy, is frequently asserted, but seldom concretely demonstrated. Such demonstration is needed, since for generations, and indeed centuries, Easter has been hardly more than a comet in the liturgical year.

When people have been habituated to an inadequate focus on Easter, it is not enough simply to tell them that they must now regard this feast as sovereign and all-pervasive. There must be a long and effective process of conversion.

This book will prove immensely helpful to that end. The authors say that it is "not a technical study, nor a working model for the preacher or catechist, nor a series of meditations." Yet it certainly can be useful to preacher and catechist, and is source material for fruitful meditation.

It is good in its historical sections, and offers much in explication of the scriptural passages to be used in future during Lent and at Easter. Reading of it now, in preparation for the year and years ahead, would be an excellent idea.

An unusual and fascinating book is "Lies and Truth" (Macmillan, 866 3rd Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022, \$5.95), which is the work of Marcel Eck, a French psychiatrist. Dr. Eck makes it clear that this is not a treatise on morality, and that its principal concern is with truth.

You might suppose that lying could be easily defined, and the subject quickly exhausted. But Dr. Eck will show you that the subject is wonderfully complex. Through its intricacies he makes his way surefootedly, and the reader is drawn on bug-eyed.

Dr. Eck touches on the archaic sense of truth, the equivalent of success (as witness the puzzling episode of the dying Isaac and his two sons); a child's sense of truth; the lie as an attack on loyalty; the relationship of lying and freedom; pathological lying; lying and professional secrecy; promises and fidelity to them, and much else.

This glancing catalogue may make it appear that the book does not fulfill Dr. Eck's intention of concentrating on truth. But the reviewer would be lying were he to say that truth is not the overriding concern here, and the book ends with a stirring call for witness to the truth.

Robert Benchley has been dead for almost 25 years, yet his humorous writings have not died. Pick up today one of his several books, and almost anything you chance on is likely to afford you delicious amusement. Much of the detail is dated, of course, but Benchley had an uncanny eye for the human foibles which are among the constants in our history, and the fun he wrought with them is still contagious.

Babette Rosmond has now written a book about him, "Robert Benchley: His Life and Good Times" (Doubleday, 501 Franklin Ave., Garden City, N.Y.

11531, \$6.95). It is a patchy affair, and one has to be middle-aged to recognize many of the names which occur in it and many of the allusions. By no means does the author reconstruct or make vivid the times and circles in which Benchley lived and moved.

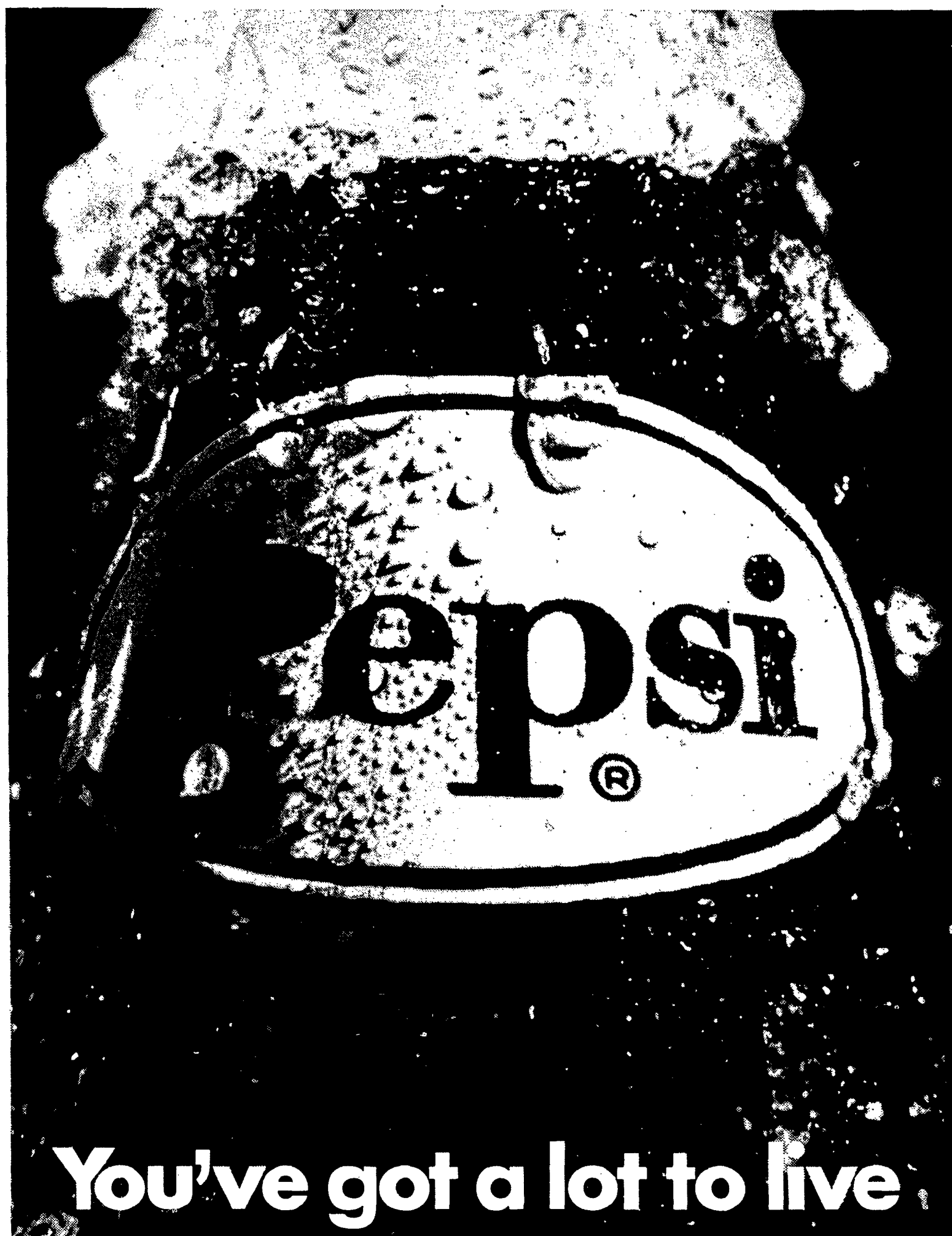
Among the book's more interesting aspects are the passages which, despite inadequacy, deal with Benchley's writing methods. His pieces gave the impression of effortlessness, but the fact is that the spontaneity and ease which they had on the printed page were the result of slow and sometimes anguished work.

The text is marred by some peculiar punctuation and some fractured French.



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