

Hemingway has described men and women as dumb oxen it is worth remembering that St Thomas Aquinas was also called an ox. The Scriptures are full of descriptions of men as strong as oxen; Christ's stable at Bethlehem was watched over by an ox. Yet the Scriptures and psalms—the whole Bible—hold faint memories in the conscious mind of the modern world. To a billion listeners every Sunday 'The Book' remains anybody's guess; and the network of broadcasting stations on both sides of the Atlantic are anxious to keep it this way. So one speaks again of the apostolate of the novel. For in its breadth *Christ Recrucified* links not only psalmist and crooner, but the psalmist's lament over Sodom with Christ's tears spilt over Jerusalem for Hiroshima.



POINTS OF VIEW

PEACE OR WAR

THE December issue of your periodical—a copy of which has recently come my way—is devoted almost entirely to the question of peace, and much emphasis is placed upon the theory that wars are the product of personal delinquencies; one after another your contributors return to the theme of individual strife and reiterate the familiar scholastic notion that peace is 'of the spirit'; there seems almost a contempt for regarding the term 'peace' as the mere absence of international slaughter. Yet it is in this latter sense that the word is normally understood in everyday conversation, in newspapers and in public utterances, and we are entitled to suppose that prayers in the Mass for 'peace in our days' and 'security from all disturbance' were, if not exclusively, at least primarily concerned with the 'mere' cessation or absence of wars. The elimination of international war may be held to be the most pressing of modern problems. In view of human imperfections, it is perhaps fortunate that the possibility of abolishing this curse is not dependent upon the supernatural inner peace stressed by your writers, as the

problem is political. Anyone who doubts this should consider the vast areas of Brazil, U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. *within* which wars—of normal type—do not occur; religion has certainly not been the factor in this development.

JOHN NIBB

THE SCRIPTURES AND THE SPIRIT

I HAVE much appreciated your double number on the Scriptures and the Spirit, and it made me more than ever regret that I was unable to attend the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT Conference at Bishton Hall in September 1953. We all have at heart the fostering of a yet greater love of the Scriptures, knowing well that these 'were written that we might believe, and believing have life in his name'.

Let us note, however, that what we yearn for and need is a greater love of the Scriptures simply. Two points, I feel, should be urged: (a) the English word 'spiritual' is too often used in these contexts, equivocally; (b) in the minds of many, the literal sense of Scripture is something arid and jejune, compound of grammar and criticism, giving nothing of spiritual nourishment. Many commentaries on Scripture might give grounds for such a thought; we must pray, and look for, better commentaries: they do exist!

Yet if, as we should, we take 'literal' in the sense of 'literary' (as Fr Vincent McNabb used to say), then we are much nearer the truth. The Scriptures are a whole library, written in many varying literary styles. But, whatever the style (poetic, narrative, dramatic, proverbial, etc.), that which is expressed by the words and intended by the human author is the literal (or literary) sense. The words may be woven into plain prose narrative, or expressive of colourful, daring imagery, and so we have a plain literal (or literary) sense. It can hardly too much be emphasized that symbols, images, figured speech are not necessarily expressing anything more than the literal (or literary) sense of Scripture.

As some articles in the double number have admirably pointed out, we do need to know the vivid imagery, mind pictures and symbols of the biblical writers; we shall never understand the Scriptures sufficiently until we do—but (and