

THE BIBLE FOR CHILDREN, by Hamish Swanston. A series of ten booklets. *Burns & Oates Ltd.* 1968. 3s. 6d. each cardboard covers, 10s. 6d. hardback.

I GO TO MASS WITH GOD'S FAMILY, by Christiane Brusselmans. *Burns & Oates Ltd.* 12s. 6d. (13s. 6d. with First Communion slip case).

The Bible for Children is made up of five books of stories from the Old Testament and five from the New. Each book of 24 pages is written in simple narrative, illustrated with large colour pictures and is probably suitable for 3/8-year-olds. My own children, 3 to 11 years, did not like the people's faces which are rather weird and sometimes frightening. Nature is dealt with more successfully and 'God makes the World' (Book 1) is particularly good, dealing with the Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel and Noah's Ark. The serpent is not mentioned at all in Eden. Is this a modern teaching trend? . . . 'Adam and his wife knew that it was wrong to disobey God and eat the fruit from this tree . . . but they did eat the fruit. . . Then they were ashamed of themselves.'

The passage of the Red Sea in 'Moses receives God's Law' (Book 3) is credibly described as a 'squelchy marsh' across which the pedestrian Hebrews jumped from tussock to tussock while the Egyptian chariots 'could not get across at all'. The author deals with the New Testament by dividing Christ's Teaching, 'The Good News is given to us' (Book 7) from his Miracles (Book 8) which seems better than dealing with the Gospels chronologically. The series ends with 'The Church Begins' (Book 10) which is a good summary of The Acts divided into sections on different people like 'The Crippled Man', 'Stephen', 'Philip'—delightfully described and illustrated. 'In the carriage sat the Prime Minister of the Queen of Ethiopia . . . reading aloud to himself from the book of Isaiah.'

It would be helpful to the teachers and parents who are likely to make full use of this series if the number of each book was printed on its *outside* front cover.

The other book under review is a new type of children's Mass book designed for 6 to 10-year-olds with the idea that 'offering them the same Mass prayers as their elders helps them to a deepening understanding of the Mass'. An 8-page leaflet by the author for parents and teachers is issued with the prayer book to explain its uses at home, at Mass and in the classroom. The book has four main features: *Visual Aids* (pictures from the Mass and the world outside, and photographs of pictures stuck in by the children themselves on the 'Activity Pages'); *Biblical quotations* (At the Kyrie: 'The Lord is my Shepherd. He leads me by safe paths. Nothing shall I fear'); *Catechetical themes* printed on yellow bands across the top of the page (At the Consecration: 'The Lord renews his covenant. The Lord gives his life for us'); *Commentary* to explain what is happening at any particular moment in the Mass and how the child should associate himself with it ('We approach the table of the Lord to share in the meal of the Lord').

It is a beautifully produced book that certainly tries to interpret the wishes of 'The Constitution on the Liturgy' where this says that Christ's Faithful when at Mass 'should not be there as strangers or silent spectators'. But, as a family, we wondered whether the author had tried to do too much in one book. Would this one be best used at home or at school as a preparation for Mass and Holy Communion, with something simpler for little ones and more detailed for older ones to use in church? In our experience, from seven years on our children refuse to follow with anything except a small missal which gives the exact words of each proper.

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