

form of a series of dialogues. In literary genre, the author considers, this gospel closely resembles the Greek *mimesis* or Dialogue, while its verse-forms are those of traditional Hebrew poetry—a fusion of exactly the two traditions which might be expected to have influenced an apostle-bishop of Ephesus. Mr Chavasse makes his point in the most compelling manner possible, by simply presenting us with the rearranged text and allowing the results to speak for themselves. The effect is most arresting. The chanting of St John's Passion in the Good Friday liturgy comes to mind—as if the same dramatic method had been developed and extended to cover the whole gospel. It reveals to a remarkable degree how much of this gospel is in fact dialogue, and how subordinate a part the purely narrative sections play. Mr Chavasse's suggestion is constructive and important, and he presents it impressively.

JOSEPH BOURKE, O.P.

CRISE DU POUVOIR ET CRISE DU CIVISME. *Compte rendu de la Semaine Sociale de Rennes, 1954.* (Chronique Sociale de France; 1,000 fr.)

The forty-first *Semaine Sociale de France*, here reported *in extenso*, upheld the high standard of its predecessors both in the actuality of the subjects treated and in the high level of competence of the speakers, jurists, historians, economists, statesmen and theologians. A consideration of the State in its varying roles, discussed both theoretically and in practice, led to intensely practical conclusions on civic education. As usual the tone of the whole week was set by the letter addressed to the President by His Holiness the Pope who, while stressing the civic responsibility of Christians, called attention to some of the most notorious failures in this regard: disinterestedness in public affairs; tax frauds; sterile criticism of authority along with a selfish defence of privileges which are detrimental to the general interest. The *Semaines Sociales* were founded in 1904 (the fact that this was the forty-first is accounted for by their suspension from 1914-18 and from 1940-44) and not the least interesting contributions in this volume are the speeches, reminiscent, witty and not without justified pride, made by M. Jean Guilton and M. Jacques Turret at the great public meeting held to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary and to pay tribute to Marius Gonin and Eugene Duthoit, the two master architects of this 'pontifical university'.

J.F.

CALLED UP. *The Personal Experiences of Sixteen National Servicemen Told by Themselves.* Edited by Peter Chambers and Amy Landreth. (Allan Wingate; 10s. 6d.)

Conscription has by this become so accepted a part of the national life that some account of its working, in terms of those who have to

undergo it, was overdue. *Called Up* is an intelligently planned anthology of personal experience, and includes contributions from such varied sources as an illiterate who learned to read and write in the Army, an East End boxer, an actor, a journalist, and a medical student who was a conscientious objector.

The military necessity for conscription is for the most part taken for granted (there are indeed serious reasons for questioning it, but they lie beyond the scope of this book). The general conclusion seems to be that National Service is a useful solvent of class distinctions, enables young men 'to see the world', improves their health and teaches them nothing at all. Over all these contributions there hangs a cloud of futility and waste, of stupid regimentation. Naturally enough the inherited traditions of regular NCOs are a constant burden of complaint from these young conscripts—'the prolongation of adolescence continues among the men in uniform until they reach the grave', remarks Gabriel Woolf. 'These belligerents have a lifetime of time to spare and no genuine idea of how to fill it.' It is this pointless waste of time that most affects the more intelligent conscript, for with it goes the crudity (the drunkenness and boast of sexual prowess) that in fact reflects uncertainty and the desire to conform. 'I did not like to be the odd man out', says Walter Fink, when he found he was the only non-smoker in his hut, 'so I started too.' One feels that this must be true of much else besides smoking. The problems of the conscripts who 'have the courage to preserve their ideals in an innocent state, and do not take refuge behind expressions of hatred and contempt' are well stated by Peter Wiles. But the detachment of the boy of sensibility, who has a sense of humour too, cannot be expected of the mass of conscripts. Yet there is frequent stress on the real comradeship of life in the Services, and it is plain that many boys who have never before left home do acquire—however painfully—'an education in getting on with people'.

The really serious question raised by this book, if it is indeed representative of present-day conditions in the Services, is the apparent impotence of all religious and moral training. Only two of the sixteen contributors so much as mention religion—one, who liked Padre's Hour because it was the same as the cinema and gave him a chance to relax, and the other, Gerry Lynch, a practising Catholic, whose essay on many counts is the best in the book. Brought up in the East End of London, an ordinary working-class boy, an experienced boxer, he at once recognized that 'the world looks upon people like myself as a weird species of human being, to be either completely ignored or else shot at until torpedoed'. But his unequivocal stand as a Catholic, free from moral superiority or prudishness, evidently earned for him the

respect and indeed the affection of his fellow Servicemen. 'You came to regard the men in your barrack-room as brothers more than anything else.' His simple conclusion is that 'if you are a religious man and profess certain principles of conduct, then you are expected to live up to them. . . . They may not agree with your religion, but they will respect you for sticking to it.' Gerry Lynch's contribution shows that a well-instructed Catholic can do much to influence his fellows, and it raises again the perennial problem of providing a Catholic education—at home and school—that really fits a boy for the hard facts of the world he finds outside. One must hope that the virtual absence of the chaplain in these varied accounts of Service life does not altogether reflect a true picture. The opportunity to transform National Service into something more than a two-years' military interval, so often pointless as it seems, and to use its discipline as a positive education for responsible adult life, is obviously worth making, and nothing less than this can justify the Christian tolerance of its continuation.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THE SINGULAR HOPE. By Elizabeth Sewell. (Chatto and Windus; 12s. 6d.)

Joan Crusoe is deformed, and for her the painful process of growing up has its special anguish. Sent to a special school, she has to learn much more than to correlate her body's movements: intelligent, absorbed in a private world, her need for love is terribly real. She finds it, in the person of a cousin thirty years older than herself, a casual visitor to the school whose kindness becomes for her the understanding love she has needed. But it is otherwise interpreted, and tragedy seems near. It is averted, and Joan has learnt how much the sacrificial meaning of her life must now involve. She has grown up indeed.

Miss Sewell's novel is a sensitive treatment of a theme that could so easily turn to the sentimental or the pathologically awry. Written with a purity of style that matches the singleness of its purpose (no novel was ever better named), *The Singular Hope* is altogether serene. We find ourselves so identified with Joan's generous yet troubled acceptance of her own situation, that to read this novel is a purification of the mind and of the emotions that happens very rarely in usual fiction. But apart from the inspired understanding of suffering which gives such light—and such joy—to the novel, Miss Sewell brings an acute and humorous observation of place and person. Bylands Cross comes to life with all the acute and intriguing detail of all schools everywhere. The Principals—High Church, professionally arch and understanding; the crippled children—so individuated, with their deformities not stressed but made significant all the same; Cécile, the assistant mistress,