

whether he was one or two writers, and historical details of little import have killed the spirit of his witness. This little book, intended as an introduction principally for senior schools, restores the balance and follows the prophet and his message from the word of God in Scripture. The author hopes that it will reach those who seek to deepen their own personal lives with Christian doctrine, going back to the sources in order to encompass a wider and deeper sphere of life. The book will take the reader back to the Scriptures with a greater appreciation of their worth to himself and to the world. If the prophet's history occupies two-thirds of the book, it is all based on the text and leads on to analysis of the rhythm and style of his work and so to the doctrine, leaving the reader equipped and anxious to sink once again into the pages of Isaias himself.

P. C.

THE NEW TESTAMENT, newly translated into English by Ronald A. Knox. (Burns Oates, 6s. and 10s. 6d.)

Mgr Knox's translation of the New Testament has now received official authorisation, so that a reviewer is not concerned with any question of accuracy as a rendering of the original text. But more than faithfulness to the original is required if the present version is to take its place among the very small number of translations which have achieved lasting popularity; and it may be supposed that this will be determined, in the last resort, by literary considerations.

The whole atmosphere and context of the use of the Bible demand that the translation satisfy an informed judgment of the use of the English language: if it will not endure the scrutiny of literary criticism, it is hardly likely that it will ever pass into such common use as to become a formative influence upon the language and thought of the community in which it is current. The Authorised Version at once springs to the mind: it is well known that English Catholicism has suffered deeply from having no version of the Bible comparable with that noble book. The question here is not one of accuracy of rendering; it is simply that English culture has been shaped and English religious life influenced by the Authorised Version as by few other books, if any at all. And it was deeply to be hoped that the new version would give us something which might, in time, exert a similar influence upon Catholic life and culture.

It does not seem that this hope will be realised. The version is new; and it would be astonishing indeed if a scholar of the distinction of Mgr Knox did not stimulate new interest in the text, and, by the interpretative side of his translation, provide much help in its understanding. In particular, in the Epistles we now have a rendering which is consistently intelligible. Whether or not the meaning which emerges is on a deeper or more superficial level of exegesis is a matter for the biblical expert; as are allied questions such as the use of imagery, and consistency or inconsistency in the rendering of the

same word. But when one turns to examine the prose in which the sacred text is presented—and this is a task for literary criticism and not for exegesis—one finds passages of slack and rhythmless English; and the reading aloud of a passage from the pulpit should convince anyone that its pastoral use will be difficult indeed. Not infrequently the new differs from the old in places where accuracy of rendering is not in question, and where the changes merely irritate. This applies more particularly to the Gospels. And in his desire to produce a modern English, Mgr Knox sometimes allows his language to lose dignity: ‘And here the proverb fits, which is true enough, one man sows, and another reaps’.

It is, perhaps, this notion of *modern* English which establishes the real critical point. We live in a time when there is no longer a living tradition of English prose, as part of which a translator can present to his own age the timeless Scriptures. If this version, apart from its use in private study and meditation—which is no small or valueless contribution to the Catholic life—must be regarded as indefinite, the fault is not so much that of the translator as of English letters in general. And it will not be until the tradition of the language has been restored—supposing that to be possible—that there will exist the essential vehicle of translation. One has only to compare any sentence of the *Preface to the Reader* of the original Douay Version of the Old Testament with any sentence of the new translation to see that the earlier workers were part of a tradition of writing in a sense that no modern writer is: their sentences have a balance and rhythm which is common to the prose of their time and is a development of the language they inherited. The modern world has cut loose from tradition; and its deracinate condition is reflected in its inert and shapeless sentences. But surely it is for those of us who are part of the religious tradition which was decisive in the formation of English style, to apply ourselves to the reintegration of the language?

L. T.

THE EPISTLES AND GOSPELS FOR SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS in the version authorised for public use by the Archbishops and Bishops of England and Wales in the year MCMXLV. (Burns Oates and Washbourne: Buckram, 10s. 6d.; Niger, 25s.)

The appearance of the Pulpit Edition of Mgr Knox's new translation marks, as it were, the canonisation of what has up to now been a private cultus. The austere volume, with its warning note, ‘Printed for private circulation only’, gives place to an official book for public reading, produced with all the dignity that such a purpose demands.

Consideration of the merits of Mgr Knox's achievement must obviously belong to his New Testament as a whole. The present book is confronted with two formidable obstacles: it consists of the most familiar passages of the Bible, about which popular feeling may