

Blackfriars

THE PSALMS. A Revised Translation. By F. H. Wales, B.D., Oxon. (New edition, 1931. Oxford University Press; pp. 281; 6/-.)

This is a most welcome translation and the result of long years of work on the Psalter. No mere paraphrasing has been resorted to, but an honest attempt has been made to render the original strictly and in nervous English. The alternating speakers—the Psalmist and God, or at times the Psalmist and the worldly man—are indicated by different type. At times this may seem excessive, for instance in Psalms 50 and 81 (49 and 82); still one has to be consistent. The refrains, too, stand out in a different type, e.g., in Psalms 39, 42, 43, 46. The key-words in Psalm 119 are also printed in heavy type, e.g., statutes, 'Law,' precepts, etc. Psalm 19 falls into two parts, and Mr. Wales has made this clear by using a different metre, with striking effect.

Everyone has his own predilections about the precise rendering of certain words, and it is a moot question how far account should be made of traditional renderings. For instance, no one who is accustomed to the age-long rendering, *foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*, will welcome Mr. Wales's, *They bind my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones*. Yet St. Jerome will support him: *Fixerunt manus meas et pedes meos; numeravi omnia ossa mea*. He will hardly support, however, in Psalm 23: *Surely goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me*. St. Jerome makes it a prayer, *Et habitatio in domo Domini in longitudine dierum*, a point not so well brought out in his correction of the Latin Psalter by the Septuagint, where the Roman Psalter has, *Et ut inhabitem*, and the Gallican—the one in use in the Breviary—simply *ut inhabitem*. Nor will St. Jerome support Mr. Wales's somewhat ambiguous rendering in Psalm 45: *Therefore God, thy God hath anointed thee*. We term this ambiguous because the absence of a comma after *thy God* leaves it uncertain whether the person addressed is also God Himself. St. Augustine is most emphatic on this: 'Note how he says, *Propterea unxit te, Deus, Deus tuus*. *Deus ungitur a Deo*. For whereas in the Latin it reads as though the same nominative case was repeated yet in the Greek the distinction is patent, for one noun is used for the person addressed, another for the one who addresses: *Unxit te, Deus*, that is, "O Thou, God, Thy God hath anointed Thee." That is the way to read it and understand it, for that is perfectly plain in the Greek. Who, then, is this God anointed by God? Let the Jews answer!' (*Enarr. in Ps. 44. P.L. xxxvi, 505.*)

Book Reviews

However familiar we may be with the Latin text of the Psalter we shall certainly gather much that is helpful in the recitation of our breviary if we study this excellent translation, even though we may cavil at certain renderings, e.g., the translation of *praeclaris* in Psalm 16 by *loveliness*.

H.P.

THE SCHOOL OF JESUS CHRIST. By Père Jean Nicholas Grou, S.J. Translated by Mrs. Rodolph Stawell. With an Introduction by Dom Roger Hudleston, Monk of Downside Abbey. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; 10/6.)

Père Grou's holiness, described in the interesting biographical Introduction, is the best of all recommendations of a book written, Dom Hudleston tells us, towards the end of the author's life, when, exiled by the French Revolution, he was living with the Weld family at Lulworth Castle in Dorset. The chief aim of these explanations of the Gospel lessons is, he says, to maintain 'that man's happiness here and now is the necessary fruit of his perfection, and that the degree of the former is in the most exact proportion to the degree of the latter.'

Although we cannot wish that a book so full of good things had been abridged, there are many reasons for desiring a separate reprint of the most valuable parts, the chapters, for instance, on *Humility* and *Prayer* filling about one hundred pages, and such others as *Peace in the Heart*, *The Spirit of Faith*, and those on fraternal charity. In these hurried days when people are loath to swallow instruction save in meat-lozenge form, many will hesitate to tackle a quarto volume of four hundred and fifty pages. Least of all will it be read by the worldly Christians to whom so much of it is addressed. This is a pity, because while the most prevalent spiritual ills of the Church to-day are not those deplored by Père Grou, the spirit of the world is perennial, and varies less than its outward fashion. How eternally needful, for instance, is the cry echoed through the Church from the first centuries onwards: 'If God have given you much and your neighbour be without the necessaries of life you are obliged, in virtue of this petition [give us this day our daily bread] . . . to use your abundance for the relief of his need . . . When your brother asks you in God's name for his share, which happens to be in your possession, and you refuse it to him . . . you are not only being cruel and inhuman, but are keeping something that is not your own.' (*Thief* is the word used by St. Basil).

In speaking of suffering Père Grou makes no mention of its redemptive value when united to Christ's Passion. This apostolic