

After a short and very general introduction, one is plunged straight into notes on the actual texts of the gospels: 'the footnotes', as we are told on the dust-cover, 'which Monsignor Knox would like to have written' to his translation of the New Testament.

It is a serious disadvantage in so brief a book that so many distinct and technical questions should have been mingled indiscriminately with the exegesis. Such questions, while they prepare the way for the final elucidation, are not of primary importance to the ordinary reader. In his mind the one vital question is: 'What do the gospels really mean?' Yet in spite of his preface, the author is too often occupied with the synoptic problem, or with manuscript variations, or with historical reconstructions, or with the writer's personality, or with the sources of his information at any given point, to concentrate on that one vital question of the evangelist's meaning. Moreover, it is essential that the reader should perceive not merely the events recorded in each gospel but also the writer's own interpretation of those events. The evangelist's insight into the facts is part of the inspired truth. And since in this book Monsignor Knox never explains the formal structure of any gospel or indicates its characteristic themes, he tends to give the impression that he regards the evangelists as mere recorders of the material facts of our Lord's life. His estimate of John is frankly quite unacceptable. 'The reminiscences of a very old man, who has an old man's tricks of narration. He will recall, as if conjuring them up with difficulty, details . . . which have nothing much to do with the story. He will give us little footnotes, as if to make sure we are following; often unnecessary, often delayed instead of being put in their proper place.' Does the phrase 'detached reminiscence' really describe the literary character of the fourth gospel? In spite of the vigorous unity of theme underlying it, there is, it is true, some superficial lack of coherence, some strangeness, and some obscurity in this gospel. But surely that is to be ascribed, not to the tricks of an old man's memory, but to an insight into the Incarnate Word too deep and holy to be easily expressed in the words of this world.

However, where these notes are exegetical they do help the reader over many, though by no means all, of his difficulties. The promise of brevity and candour is certainly fulfilled. For these reasons the book, when used with the author's New Testament, will probably prove moderately helpful to those who cannot cope with a full-scale commentary.

J.B.

FAITH AND PRAYER. By Vincent McNabb, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 13s. 6d.)

Blackfriars Publications have done a considerable service in making available in a single volume these two works on Faith and Prayer as a

memorial to Fr Vincent McNabb and to mark the tenth anniversary of his death. All royalties derived from the sale of this book will be devoted to the Vincent McNabb Memorial Fund. In his Preface, the English Dominican Provincial indicates that this 'masterly series of conferences' are as fresh and alive as when they were first delivered at the turn of the century to university audiences at Oxford, and subsequently published with revision by the author under the general title of 'Oxford Conferences' in two separate volumes.

As he expresses himself in his preface to 'Faith', the author's intention was to provide an introduction to the teaching of St Thomas and the decrees of the Vatican Council. Father Vincent wrote with non-Catholic readers explicitly in mind, for whom he prays at the end of his introduction: 'May their communion with us in prayer lead to that further visible communion in faith and life which was the last prayer of the Master whom we, alike, believe and love'.

We hope that in the future it may be possible to bring out also a smaller and cheaper edition in two volumes. Nothing would be lost by the omission of Greek texts, which are full of misprints. There is no point in printing 'cosmos' in Greek characters. There are printers' errors also in the Latin on p. iv, and p. viii.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

HOLY MASS: APPROACHES TO THE MYSTERY. By A.-M. Roguet, O.P.  
(Blackfriars Publications; paper 5s., cloth 7s. 6d.)

In this book we have a distillation of what P. Roguet, as director of the *Centre de Pastorale liturgique*, has been saying about the Mass for the last ten years. The result is a book of peculiar richness, in which numerous aspects of the Mass are dealt with in a short space, and with a firm grip on theological foundations.

Yet the book is not strictly a theological one. Nor does it fit into the categories of history or 'spirituality'. Rather it is wholly 'liturgist', in that it deals with the Mass such as it presents itself to be: a sacred and sanctifying action whose meaning is determined by concurrent words, carried out in the presence of a group of Christians by their representative, an ordained priest. It is with the aspect of Mass as a *synaxis*, a gathering together of the Christian people to pray, that P. Roguet begins. But, immediately, even in this apparently quite external setting of Mass, we reach mystery, since this congregation of human beings is also the Body of Christ. And thus it is with every aspect of the Mass considered liturgically. We begin with the outward circumstance, gesture, or word that meets our senses, and thereby we are led directly into the Mystery of Christ which sanctifies us. The author's aim in this book is so to sharpen our perception of and response to the signs and words of the liturgy that we may learn both to live the Mass and to live by the Mass.