

Professor Stace is 'quoting' from the prologue to St John's Gospel. The teaching of this Gospel is that we are faced not only with Light and Life but also with this Life and Light in human flesh and blood. This always tends to be a stumbling-block for philosophers; but since philosophizing is a part of what it means to be human, even philosophy is within the scope of the Redemption.

J. M. CAMERON

THE ENGLISH PRIMERS (1529-1545). Their Publication and Connection with the English Bible and the Reformation in England. By Charles C. Butterworth. (Pennsylvania University Press, \$6; London, Geoffrey Cumberlege; 48s.)

Considering that the early sixteenth-century primers formed both the first reading manual (whence their name) of a child's impressionable years, and also the adult layman's most widely used spiritual book, it seems obvious they should repay study. Now for the first time a group of these primers, the output of only sixteen among the almost four hundred years covered by Hoskins' great catalogue, has been fully analysed and related to the historic context which produced them. Researches made public in 1941 in *The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible* led Mr Butterworth to undertake this further study, which illuminates the years immediately preceding the first authorized English Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, with material which will interest alike students of history, literature, liturgy and bibliography.

It is ironical that a Catholic Bible in English might have appeared a century earlier than the Protestant version first officially sanctioned, had not Lollardy provoked the Constitutions of Clarendon (1408) to forbid anyone translating any text of holy scripture into English *on his own authority*. Under this ban (with the Church still delaying any official translation of her own) the early printers, including several abroad who for other markets were pouring out official French, Dutch or Spanish *horae*, for the English market had to print all scriptural passages in Latin and only non-scriptural sections in English. First to defy the ban were some extremist reformers who turned this most popular lay prayerbook wholly into English and forged thereby a weapon for doctrinal attacks against the Church. Aside from credit for attacking real abuses, which devout Catholics had long been attacking, the reformers probably won whatever popularity was theirs by championing the free circulation of the vernacular scriptures. The reasonableness of this demand in an age of rapidly spreading literacy, masks, perhaps even today, the real issue. What the reformers claimed was not simply vernacular scriptures but freedom to translate and interpret

them in their own way, an altogether different thing and the core of Protestantism, which for the Church as the divinely warranted interpreter of Scripture substituted private interpretation without guarantee.

When sanction came for an English Bible and primer, Cranmer was primate and the Reformation Parliament had done its revolutionary work, so that orthodoxy was determined henceforth by the royal pope and his counsellors. Doctrinal shifts could make proscribed texts into prescribed ones. It is fascinating to watch the author trace the political events and the struggle between tradition and innovation as they affected, and were reflected in, the editing and printing of these prayer books, which can sometimes even have their dates established by reference to Henry's current wife. Occasionally, apparent unfamiliarity with the Catholic sources leads the author to attribute Lutheran origins erroneously, e.g. to the grace (p. 33), still used today in monasteries, and to the prayer of Jonas (p. 37), a standard feature in earlier Latin Sarum primers. But a work so painstaking as Mr Butterworth's, built on close study of original material now scattered in a dozen libraries in two continents, stands in no danger of being superseded.

DAVID ROGERS

A HISTORY OF FRANCE. By Lucien Romier. Translated and adapted by A. L. Rowse. (Macmillan, 30s.)

To write a complete history of a great country in one volume is a noble and very difficult task, the difficulty lying in the proportions chosen between narration and commentary. A mere factual record would be dull, but if one generalizes over the features of a period, one has to presume that the reader has at least a bare knowledge of the facts one is generalizing about. M. Romier has, rightly, not hesitated to take this risk, and to assume that the reader has a basic knowledge of French history, and as a consequence this is, as a whole, a very readable book and M. Romier's comments are lively, balanced and enlightening. Perhaps he is happiest in his description of the evolution of Roman Gaul into Capetian France, with a valuable emphasis on the social changes brought about during this period. Mr Rowse read this book in manuscript and made it a labour of love to translate and complete it after the author's death. His translation, after a shaky start, gains in pace and idiom as the book proceeds, and the part he has written himself, the later chapters, are a very useful summary of France's immediate historical background. It may sound ungenerous to say that Mr Rowse occasionally writes as an Englishman, but one feels sure that M. Romier would be as grateful as all the readers of this book will be for this act of piety.

P.F.