

the Christian command to bear our cross is not an extraneous solution but something deeply rooted in our nature.

In looking at Landsberg's heroic life and death, we cannot doubt that he discovered Christ. It is for this reason that he is included in Fr Oesterreicher's book, along with Bergson, Husserl, Reinach, Scheler, Picard, and Edith Stein. Never in large numbers, but steadily, through the ages, God has received back into the kingdom his 'Israel according to the flesh'. It was a magnificent idea to trace the pattern of this return, slow, not always complete, but certainly never sham, in a study of the lives and writings of these seven philosophers. The book, with its close on a thousand references, its compressed versions of so many major works, is a monument of patient study. Unfortunately its total effect, on one reader at least, is to produce an acute mental indigestion. Fr Oesterreicher has here collected the material for at least seven books, and it is to be hoped that he will one day write some of them. Cardinal Newman, to whom he has had the happy idea of dedicating his book, is a proof that for full control of one's material, constant writing and rewriting is necessary.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

GHOSTS AND POLTERGEISTS. By Herbert Thurston, S.J., edited by J. H. Crehan, S.J. (Burns & Oates; 16s.)

In the fourteen years which have elapsed since Fr Thurston's death two other volumes on Poltergeists have been published (by Sacheverell Sitwell and Harry Price), but such was the richness of the material he left behind that the present collection of reprints from *The Month* and other journals does not overlap with either volume. Nor can either author compete with him in scholarship or in the easy skill with which these astonishing tales are presented. If a modern poltergeist so far forgets itself as to bite, or tease, or raise fires or get into the law courts, Father Thurston was able to range the centuries and to show, often from recondite contemporary sources, that this had happened before and in strangely similar fashion. Most of the stories will be familiar to amateurs of the occult, but many of his examples are here made available to English readers for the first time. For example, in a delightful essay we are given the original report to the Pope on the 'gristly ghost of Guy', most famous of medieval spectres, who manifested himself to the Dominican Prior of Alais and his brethren in 1323 in a singularly convincing manner.

In view of the author's reputation as a ruthless sceptic, it is noteworthy that the book lays itself open to some criticism, on a charge of lapses into credulity. Not (as Father Crehan points out) that Father Thurston was ever betrayed by mere newspaper reports or by pseudo-scientific

jargon (his silence on some much-publicized modern cases was eloquent), but he does seem to have accepted too readily highly dubious stories sent him by Catholic correspondents, no doubt in all good faith. One suspects he was over-compensating for a tendency to be excessively critical. One of these narratives (an Irish case) is in my view worthy of study, not as an example of poltergeist activity, but as an example of the unreliability of testimony which results when a parent becomes mentally unbalanced and the children's imaginations are stimulated to run riot; the episode has a distinct relevance to certain stories of pious visions.

On the very obscure subject of the causation of these phenomena (assuming that they are genuine), Father Thurston has no definite theory to offer, but in his final chapter he brilliantly summarizes all that can usefully be said, in the present state of our knowledge. We seem to be confronted by some unknown force which influences matter in a way which transcends the known laws of physics. Is it operated by a non-human intelligence? And, if so, what sort of intelligence is responsible for such senseless and chaotic manifestations?

On ghosts other than poltergeists, who may not be ghosts at all, the book hardly touches, but an extremely interesting appendix on the 'exorcism of haunted houses' should not be overlooked. It shows that, contrary to general belief, the Church is little interested in ghosts and has never made any provision in its official ritual for the exorcism of *places*, though it has always recognised the duty of exorcism of *persons* alleged to be possessed. 'There seems to be no recognition of ghosts or the spirits of the dead as such and there is no suggestion that the souls of men are likely to return to haunt the scenes amidst which they formerly dwelt on earth', though the possibility could not have been wholly rejected, as the tale of the 'Ghost of Guy' clearly shows. After long search, Father Thurston found what he was looking for, a form of ritual for 'a house troubled by an evil spirit' in an edition of the *Rituale Romanum* published in Madrid in 1631. Was this dignified and beautiful ceremonial ever used, and with what results? This is the least of many questions raised, but left unanswered, by this fascinating book.

LETTITIA FAIRFIELD

RELIGION AND THE MODERN MIND. By W. T. Stace. (Macmillan; 21s.)

Professor Stace rejects the fashionable empiricism which denies the possibility of metaphysics and he thinks there are good reasons for rejecting subjectivism and relativism in ethics. But he is equally dissatisfied with what is—in the United States—the traditional alternative position, that of Idealism; and he does not take seriously the claims of neo-Thomism. Further, it seems to him that the theistic religions are