

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

committed to a theology which is incoherent and self-contradictory; and yet he cannot rid himself of the notion that religion in some general sense is important and even 'true'.

Professor Stace deals first with what he calls 'the medieval world-picture'. His treatment is not really founded upon much knowledge of the Middle Ages—at least, Professor Stace does not use such knowledge as he may have. He seems unaware of recent work on medieval science and cosmology; and it is hard to suppose that an attentive student of Aquinas or Scotus could write that for the men of the Middle Ages 'this psychological being, God, created the world at some time in the past'. The only two points in which he seems really interested are that in the Middle Ages men believed in the validity of teleological explanations and in the existence of an objective moral order. These two beliefs have tended to decay with the rise of the natural sciences. Professor Stace inquires whether belief in the validity of natural science logically necessitates disbelief in teleological explanations and in an objective moral order. Here he has many excellent things to say; and he concludes that the connection between the rise of natural science and these trends in ethics and metaphysics is psychological rather than logical.

Next, he discusses the modern world-view—Naturalism—and the various philosophical reactions to it. He sees no prospect of the reign of Naturalism being overthrown, though he seems not to approve of it and he thinks it 'has brought despair into the world'.

Finally, he discusses the problems of religious truth and of morals. Very briefly, and stripped of the nuances present in the text, his conclusions are that religious doctrines are salutary myths but do not have the kind of existential import which they carry for the believer; and that the solution to both the religious and the ethical problems is to be found in the experience of the mystics. This experience is the same in all religions. God is neither subjective (a feeling or an idea) nor objective (a mind existing over against finite minds); existence can be neither attributed nor denied to him.

Professor Stace is very much on the side of the angels, but he has written a naïve and at times tedious book. If he were more familiar with the writings of Christian philosophers and theologians or even with the writings of such a Buddhist scholar as the late Ananda Coomaraswamy he would not so readily assume that they profess doctrines so confused and silly as those he attributes to them and demolishes with such vigour. He ends very finely by saying that in the history of the Cosmos can be seen 'not merely the futile . . . efforts for survival or pleasure of an animated piece of clay, but an influx into the darkness of such a life of a light which has its source in that which is eternal'. We would respectfully suggest that, perhaps unconsciously,

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