

The interesting, if slightly confusing, chapter on the condemnation of Anglican Orders emphasizes the importance of this partnership, for it was Bishop's initial discovery of the Marian documents which provided Gasquet with the ammunition to flatten the Abbé Portal and the other 'Frenchers'.

Sir Shane Leslie, who on the first page of his book in confusing a monk's cowl with his hood shows a certain understandable lack of familiarity with the intimacies of monastic life, wisely allows Gasquet to speak for himself as a monk and religious superior; but it is a pity that the autobiographical fragment, which forms the third chapter of the book, says little or nothing about the revolutionary changes in the structure of the English Benedictine congregation at the turn of the century. Abbot Gasquet played no inconsiderable part in those monastic excitements, and an account from his pen would have added an interesting specimen to the other cats which Sir Shane has let out of this guinea bag.

WILLIAM PRICE, O.S.B.

THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH; and THE MORAL PROBLEM OF SUICIDE.

By P. L. Landsberg. (Rockliff; 8s. 6d.)

WALLS ARE CRUMBLING. By J. M. Oesterreicher. (Hollis & Carter; 30s.)

The idea of death must have been always vivid to Paul Landsberg throughout his short life. A Jew, he fled from Germany on Hitler's rise to power, and died eventually in a concentration camp. Perhaps this accounts for a lucidity and freedom from jargon unusual in a German philosopher. These essays reveal a character attractive in its sincerity; yet philosophically they remain somewhat ambiguous. In the first essay, the pagan philosophers' attitude to death is examined with considerable acuteness of judgment; he concludes of the stoic solution that 'this marriage of reason and death conveys a note of hesitation', and of the Platonic, that the answer is shown forth, as by the death of Socrates, rather than argued convincingly. To a pagan world 'the person was not yet disclosed, and the sense of death remained hidden'. Yet when he comes to the Christian solution, Landsberg somehow seems to be expecting too much from it, perhaps because he was still standing outside it. The mystical experience of St Theresa, with which the essay ends, is not brought into relation with what has gone before.

The same discontinuity between natural and supernatural can be felt in the essay on suicide. Landsberg is dissatisfied with St Thomas' arguments for its unlawfulness (II-II, 64, 5) for the curious reason that they would not deter a man determined on taking his life. This was scarcely the audience for whom they were intended. If Landsberg could have accepted them more completely, he might have seen that

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