

the Church's mission in a dechristianized society, and he now—with the collaboration of an experienced Jesuit preacher—returns in detail to this theme. He has many criticisms to make of the sort of sermon that simply reflects the preacher's own interests, and has an amusing summary of such types as the liturgist, the scholastic, the church historian, the biblical and the sentimentalist: every subject proves grist to their particular mill. But the book, however severe its judgments on so much superficial and inappropriate preaching, is far from being a negative list of complaints. The second part, for which Père Varillon is responsible, is a useful handbook for the preacher who is anxious to make his sermons alive and articulate. There is much practical advice on method and vocabulary, style and illustration, but above all a constant reference of preaching to the total work of the Church and to the liturgical action to which it is essentially related.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

L'Occultisme devant la science, par Réginald Omez, O.P.; Cerf; 4.80 n.f.

Diabolical Possession, True and False, by Jean Lhermitte, translated by P. J. Hepburne-Scott; Burns and Oates (Faith and Fact); 9s. 6d.

The strange phenomena now generally called Psi or ESP (extra-sensory perception) continue to interest theologians and psychologists as well as the general public. The two books under review are addressed to the latter and are both admirable in their lucid exposition of a very difficult subject. The one by Père Réginald Omez is wider in its scope, comprising practically all the extraordinary phenomena from telepathy to magic. Perhaps the most valuable part of the volume is the chapter on the natural factors in the explanation of 'occult' phenomena, particularly the author's very clear explanation of the subconscious and its amazing powers, which even today many people are still reluctant to accept.

According to Père Réginald Omez the subconscious is not limited to the Freudian concept of it, but comprises an almost unlimited number of phenomena of all kinds, which differ from the other phenomena of our life only in that they are in varying degrees outside our consciousness. The receptive power of this subconscious is prodigious and can explain a vast number of phenomena formerly accepted as praeter-natural. The author mentions for example the widely publicised case of the American Ruth Simmons, who under hypnosis appeared to re-live a previous existence in Ireland as 'Bridey Murphy' with a wealth of factual details which seemed inexplicable—until a far less widely publicised parapsychological investigation revealed that as a girl of five Mrs Simmons had been friendly with an old Irish lady, Bridey Murphy, who had been in the habit of telling her stories of her youth in Ireland. Under hypnosis this memory rose from the unconscious into the conscious sphere.

Very carefully and charitably the author examines cases of unconscious fraud, giving the extraordinary story of a pious lady in hospital, believed to live only on Holy Communion, 'in conditions that seemed to make any fraud absolutely impossible'. After a year it was discovered by accident that, having possessed herself of the keys to kitchen and larder, she went every night into the hospital kitchen and fed herself. The book also deals in masterly fashion with subjects like telepathy, divination and clairvoyance and would certainly merit being translated into English.

The author of the Faith and Fact book is the well-known French neurologist Jean Lhermitte. His very delicate subject, which is only touched upon in the work of P. Omez, is treated with telling examples. Only a few pages deal with cases of real possession, which is extremely rare; the main part of the book is concerned with abnormal states caused by nervous disorders. It gives a number of interesting case histories, some of them well-known, like those of the nuns of Loudun and the convulsionaries of the cemetery of Saint-Médard. He gives convincing psychological explanations of the extraordinary feats so-called possessed people are able to perform, and of the phenomena of split personality they exhibit. Like P. Omez, Lhermitte, too, considers that such phenomena, present for example in the Jesuit Péré Surin, can co-exist with the highest virtue, because the deceit involved in these manifestations is frequently either completely unconscious or due to diminished moral responsibility.

It is to be welcomed that books on these subjects written by experts are now available to the general public at a reasonable price, as they will serve, it is hoped, to lead to a more objective appreciation of extraordinary phenomena. The devil certainly exists, but he generally uses means more profitable to achieve his nefarious ends than just annoying pious men and women by making odd noises, uttering blasphemies or even striking them. The science of parapsychology is of recent origin and frequently despised by those still accustomed to attribute strange phenomena either to God or the devil. It has, however, made considerable progress in the last thirty years. It can now give irrefutable psychological explanations of a number of cases which Father Thurston, for example, was still content merely to record without attempting to explain.

HILDA GRAEF

BUDDHIST MONKS AND MONASTERIES OF INDIA, by Sukumar Dutt; Allen and Unwin; 50s.

The *saṅgha* or community of Buddhist monks originated in a curious way. It was the custom of the wandering religious of ancient India to seek a rain retreat during the three months of the summer monsoon: these religious were known as *Bikkhus* which means literally 'almsmen.' A *Bikkhu* was distinguished from the common beggar by the sacramental character of his begging which was an outward sign that he had renounced the world. The earliest followers of Prince