

became degraded through stagnation when in contact with the challenge of a new spirit.

That there was much of great value in the old practices and beliefs is apparent from the evidence of this work—to instance only the knowledge of the properties of herbs (which could be used for good or ill) and the lovely releasing dances. Dr Murray claims that our oldest folk dances are a survival from pagan times and your reviewer can vouch for the delight to be experienced in dancing the 'Flurry' or 'Flora' still celebrated in Cornwall at the end of the week devoted to feasts following St Peter's day in June. So all has not been lost, but the failure to absorb more of the vital elements and to transform the destructive ones without wholesale and brutal extermination make a doleful page in the history of the Church.

Mr Pennethorne Hughes' work is a far slighter treatment of the subject. He offers an historical survey which is useful to the reader approaching the subject for the first time. But he has very little that is new to offer in either material or presentation. The constant reiteration of his thesis that witchcraft is a survival of palaeolithic religious practices becomes irritating before the book is finished.

DORIS LAYARD

THE TRUE VOICE OF FEELING. By Herbert Read. (Faber and Faber; 25s.)

At a time when the critical way is most hard to find between dull professional analytics and the thesis generalised, Germanic, half-baked, we should not be much put out that Sir Herbert Read inclines a little towards the second. Coleridge is his point of departure; and Coleridge was certainly the greatest English exponent of post-Kantian Idealism, following Schelling in his development of the imagination into an answer to the traditional Cartesian dichotomy of matter and mind: in the work of art, Schelling said, 'an infinite contradiction is resolved in a finite product', and Coleridge echoes him many times. But Coleridge's metaphysical enquiry is not the same thing as Keats' search for artistic sincerity, for a poetry that shall be, in the phrase that gives this book its title, 'the true voice of feeling'. And the connection between these two and modern relativism in history, physics and biology, or even—to stay within aesthetics—the imagist background to Mr Eliot's poetry, must be at best a loose one. At the end of the eighteenth century there was a great European revolution in all matters religious, intellectual, artistic: this he tells us; but we need more than a reminder of what we must all know. And may we not be anxious for the sacrifices made to panoramic visions such as this? A personal tragedy may be overlooked. Thus, Coleridge has his place in the German School, as Sir Herbert insists; but we

would like to know about the other side; about his Christian and transcendental revolt against Schelling's theory of imagination, which, Coleridge says, confuses 'the creaturely spirit in the great moments of its renaissance with the deific energies in deity itself'. The book is still to be written that will show how Coleridge's thought was at once so energetic, so resourceful, and so broken-winded.

Nevertheless this is a good book because the hand of theory rests in fact very lightly on it: the essays on individual poets—for this is what the chapters really are—reveal Sir Herbert a better empiric than he knows, and it is scarcely relevant that he has little new to say on the question of 'Classic and Romantic', of 'Shape Superimposed' and 'Form Indwelling'. These essays show variety and vitality of interest. He writes most educatedly, almost learnedly, about Byron, about Hopkins with sensitive understanding, with justice and even temper about Pound and Eliot, yet without that smugness common in the up-to-date. The author of many books, he can still think freshly, and with a rare, questioning humility. Only his long defence of Shelley fails to hold the attention. Eliot and others have called Shelley immature, neurotic, self-centred, intellectually incoherent. Sir Herbert Read attempts to turn this argument on its head, maintaining that these very qualities—his choice of words is not quite theirs—make Shelley's lyrical talent what it is. Of course this may be so; but the point cannot be argued at large: we could have done with some practical criticism.

There is nothing unreal about the general problem which this book poses; nor, since it is real, can it be wholly new: but there has taken place, in the last two or three decades, a decisive shift of emphasis that makes it dangerous to look back in philosophical history. The working of non-discursive symbolisms is being much discussed, both in the theory of art and of sacramental religion: 'there is indeed the inexpressible; this shows itself'. The way ahead is hard to see.

JOHN JONES

THE WEeping AND THE LAUGHTER. By J. Maclaren-Ross. (Rupert Hart-Davis; 12s. 6d.)

It might be suspected by the cynical that when an established writer turns to his memories of childhood he is either cashing-in on fame or running short of original material. In neither respect does the first volume of Mr Maclaren-Ross's autobiography deserve criticism. He has learned to write the hard way, and his curiously abrupt and 'documentary' work hitherto had scarcely prepared one for the distinguished and contemplative style he has now achieved.

The world of the first war and after, seen through the extraordinarily watchful eyes of a small boy in Bournemouth and in France, is brilliantly recovered. His parents are perhaps a little blurred, but his brother (who