

the undergoing of the caesarian section more than three times is not necessarily dangerous. The explanation of the 'Rhythm' method and the accompanying chart is not without its value, and may help to correct unrealistic assumptions adopted by some moralists. There may possibly remain some debate among experts regarding the existence of an absolutely sterile period.

The outline of Psychiatry seems only useful for those who need to know the elements of the subject, though there are shrewd judgments valuable to priests and others. Psychiatry is described as 'the branch of the medical profession dealing with abnormal conditions or diseases which affect adversely the mental functions of man'. Since this is so, 'a Psychiatrist is a physician, that is, a Doctor of Medicine, who has added to his fundamental medical education the further education and training necessary to qualify him as a specialist in this field. No one else can call himself a psychiatrist without exposing himself to suspicion of quackery.' Every priest should learn from psychiatry how to help those in need during the course of his work: 'but he should never allow himself to think he is a psychiatrist or allow others to think so, unless, of course, he really is an M.D. with the necessary psychiatric training'.

Commentaries on Baptism and Extreme Unction give the book added usefulness. Comparison of a sacrament with a unit of paper currency (p. 190) explains its efficacy in terms rather less than thomist.

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

**THE GOD OF THE WITCHES.** By Margaret Alice Murray. (Faber; 21s.)  
**WITCHCRAFT.** By Pennethorne Hughes. (Longmans; 21s.)

Dr Margaret Murray in her second book on witchcraft has elaborated her original thesis and has presented further material in its support. Her contention that witchcraft, as known from the records in the historic Christian era, is the remnant of a once-flourishing pagan cult which was given a demoniac flavour by its rival, Christianity, has much to support it. Readers would do well, if they want to get the most out of this stimulating study, not to react to its somewhat vehement and aggressive presentation.

The first five chapters offer us the material: the horned god, the worshippers, the priesthood, the rites, the religious and magical ceremonies. In these sections the reaction of the Christian legal authorities to the cult are given, including many extracts from the records of the witch trials. In the two last chapters on the function of the witch in social structure and the divine victim, Dr Murray allows herself a little imaginative licence and her reconstruction of the lives and deaths of William Rufus, Thomas à Becket, Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais, all seen as 'divine victims', makes fascinating reading.

Rivalry between the recently introduced Christianity and old-established pagan beliefs does not perhaps go deep enough in an analysis of the tragic events she records—tragic for both the persecuted and the persecutors—although this was undoubtedly a factor. Was there something inherently insufficient in the pagan attitude? Certainly by the seventeenth century what had been a fertility cult concerned with fostering creation and growth had become destructive. In 1661 a suspected witch admitted that she with others had ‘trampled down Thos. White’s rye in the beginning of the harvest, 1661, and that she had broad soles and tramped down more than any’.

The fear of the Christian Church of the witch cult (and only fear can inspire such brutality) was more likely to be based on its knowledge that its beliefs and practices, such as the dances, Sabbaths and the physical relationship between the Master of the Coven and his twelve female adherents, were the expression of very basic needs. The forms they took were no longer suitable to a people with an increased consciousness and therefore of increased personal responsibilities. The failure of the Church to deal with the witch cult in a more adult way was its refusal to recognise consciously the more primitive side of human nature and by this inability her adherents committed grosser brutalities and indecencies than the ones they were attempting to eradicate. The only way to deal with the dark destructive side of human nature is to know that it is there. By denying it the stoutest pillars of the Church and State became overwhelmed by it and committed atrocities of the kind with which we have again become familiar in the German concentration camps.

Dr Murray’s treatment of the survival of pagan customs and their incorporation in the forms of Christianity seems again to show a certain superficiality. If Christianity had nothing in common with paganism and did not use many of the same symbols, it would make the history of human endeavour meaningless. An annunciation, a virgin mother, a divine victim are all familiar features of pagan religions. They take on a fuller and deeper significance in the revelation of Christianity. I think that Dr Murray does not give sufficient value to this aspect of her subject.

The deadly struggle so pitifully fought out on the bodies of helpless women and young girls was, I think, the inevitable battle between partial awareness and the inertia and backward pull to outworn but repetitive attitudes. The tragedy of the more conscious was that they were so unsure of being able to hold what they had, that they tried to repress the crude primitive desire and energy which they had not learnt to harness to the new religion. The tragedy of those clinging to the old forms was their inability to experience their inadequacy: their blind instinctive faith in what had been sufficient did not suffice in a changing and expanding life, with the inevitable result that the practices themselves

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