

Catholic moral teaching rejects, not merely because of a 'certain immutability in human nature', but because 'nature' constitutes an order divinely established with its own ends and purposes, of which man is not the unqualified master, but the servant and the instrument. The ends of nature are many, and unequal in value and importance, but it will be granted that the generation of human life is among the highest of nature's ends and purposes. When we shave our faces we act contrary to nature's purposes, but we do so without sinning because we act in pursuit of a higher end than nature's vegetative purposes. But the use of contraceptives is a sin against nature, and the natural law, because sexual intercourse has for its *dominant, natural and divine purpose* the procreation and conservation of the human species, and here man has only that limited mastery which the exercise of a *virtuous* free will gives him. The difficulty which the Church's teaching on this question presents to most modern parents is, it may be observed, just another of those 'historically contingent elements' which the Church refuses to 'incorporate into the general norm'. Dr Niebuhr makes the just and timely observation that there is a clear development in papal doctrine on the subject of private property, between the time of Leo XIII and Pius XI, the latter admitting the expedience of state ownership of certain forms of property, which the former had seemed to condemn outright. But it seems a little less than generous to blame Leo XIII for not foreseeing the rise and spread of Marxism, and the full development of the industrial revolution into the mass society of the 20th century. Not all encyclicals are creative documents and Popes are doubtless men of their time, taking many of its assumptions for granted. It is the papal function to record and give authority to a development in doctrine, which must establish itself to some extent in open debate. It is the lack of that debate among us at the present time which is to be so much deplored. A perpetual waiting on papal initiative is a sign of inferior Catholicism, as it would also be not to recognise in Dr Niebuhr's book the work of a profound mind and a deeply sincere Christian spirit.

R. VELARDE.

RITUAL MAGIC, by E. M. Butler. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

Dr Butler's latest work traces the history of ritual magic—by which is meant the attempt of men to impose their will on the spirit world through the medium of rituals. Dr Butler is not so much concerned with anthropological data and psychological theory, as with the interpretation of ritual texts. The great merit of her work is that from it an impartial reconstruction can be made of the functions and purpose of the magician, which are distinguished rather by their selfish folly, than

by inconceivable horrors. This mode of treatment frees the subject from that romantic and credulous aura which both its devotees and so many of its foes impart to it. In itself ritual magic appears—at least in the texts, which of course, represent the magic of the sophisticated—as a compound of superstition and greed productive of futility. The silliness of the magician is only exceeded by the dead dullness of his art.

Dr Butler, however, relieves the boredom induced by the study of the texts by introducing a series of interesting sketches of historic magicians.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

THE BUGBEAR OF LITERACY, by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, with an Introduction by Robert Allerton Parker. (Dobson; 7s. 6d.)

This is a collection of essays by the late Dr Coomaraswamy, dealing in the main with the relationship between the traditions of the East—particularly India—and of the West. They exemplify the fundamental approach of the Doctor to this problem. The purpose of 'Am I my Brother's Keeper?' the first of the essays is to dissuade Western missionaries from 'barging in' upon the Indian world. The reason seems to be that it is impolite and the Indians already have a perfectly good tradition of their own. *The Bugbear of Literacy* is really an attempt to show that because the East cannot read, it does not prove that it is inferior to the West which can. This makes good reading for any Westerner over-satisfied with our educational system and the expenditure upon it. Yet it must be admitted that this essay has a cranky atmosphere and the reviewer for one would have preferred it much modified.

The third essay is the real meat of the book and is an old theme in a new dress. We are accustomed to our Protestant friends saying, after discussion of our differences, that we are all really going to the same end only by different routes. Here is the same idea only this time it is not Protestants and Catholics, but Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems, who are all going up the same mountain from different sides. This is fundamentally an attack on the exclusiveness of the Catholic Church, but put so gently and persuasively that one is almost led to feel that the Church perhaps agrees with him. That is the danger. The Church emphatically does not agree with him. History has immense importance, because the truths taught by Christ were not only theories of how to go up the mountain. The truths he taught were also things he *did*, e.g. he died for all men, he gave himself as their spiritual food. The failure to realise this is the fundamental error of Dr Coomaraswamy, and his books must be read with caution.

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