

MYTHS, DREAMS AND MYSTERIES. By Mircea Eliade. (Harvill Press; 18s.)

This collection of essays forms an important, if perhaps not indispensable, supplement to the author's major works in the field of comparative religion. The general unifying theme of the book is that the dream-world of western man, as explored and attested by the depth-psychologists, shows that he is still radically a participant in the basic myths of all mankind. These myths, particularly when they are enacted in a liturgy or a ritual ordeal, however unspeakably brutal and obscene it may seem to our sensibilities, are to be regarded not as mere superstition but as genuine encounters with divine realities, as 'mysteries'.

Mircea Eliade speaks from an orthodox faith in the person of Jesus of Nazareth as the supreme 'mystery', as the definitive self-manifestation of the living God, and it is only because of this that he can begin to organize the data of all the manifold epiphanies of the divine in human record into significant patterns—into patterns which illuminate the Christian mystery itself. There is little of this illumination here, at least explicitly, which is why this book is not the best introduction for anybody who wants to benefit spiritually from Eliade's work.

Benefit *spiritually*—from comparative religion? One can see the faithful clutching their rosaries more tightly and shutting their eyes. But in fact it is not out of place to notice this book here. Our religion is not a complete rejection of all that went before. The most significant acts of Christian worship—washing and eating—had a symbolic value in religious practice long before they became the raw material of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. It is this kind of value, transformed in the new dispensation but not destroyed, that Eliade can help us to discover.

The concept of a sacred time is perhaps his most suggestive contribution to the ordinary Christian's piety: it certainly squares well with our renewed sense of our religion as primarily a history, and not a doctrine. He has shown how persistent and archetypal is the human desire to live *in illo tempore*, to be contemporary with the great deeds of a heroic past. What happens in the time of the mass is precisely that we fulfil this desire. We become contemporary with the exploit of our redemption: we are privileged to enter the sacred *time*, as well as the sacred place, every day.

The incarnation used sometimes to be called the *humanatio*, the 'humanization', of the Word of God. We are still a long way from seeing all the implications of that, but it is largely thanks to Mircea Eliade that we can now see something of the significance of the original

religions which have entered into the texture of our earthly celebrations of the mystery of the incarnate God.

FERGUS KERR, O.P.

THE CATHOLIC DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION. By Justus George Lawler. (Newman Press, Maryland; \$3.95.)

Self-examination is a salutary exercise, for institutions as well as individuals; but American education sometimes seems to suffer from scrupulosity. Not the Catholic colleges, though, according to Professor Lawler. Confident in their theological orthodoxy and their intellectual inheritance, they have until recently been more in danger of complacency. ('We give thee thanks, O Lord, that we are not as these others—materialists, pragmatists, instrumentalists, as that John Dewey there; we read our catechism twice a week. . . .') But in fact the academic standards of the Catholic colleges are comparatively low, as objective outside assessments have recently shown. This book seeks to diagnose the underlying causes.

Mr Lawler has five substantial criticisms to make. First, Catholic colleges too often idealize the one historical period (the middle ages) and the one philosophical synthesis (scholasticism) which are thought of as uniquely Christian, and—what is worse—depreciate others. (This attitude is neatly summed up as 'metaphysical ultramontanist'.) Secondly, some religious congregations, even among those working in higher education, have an anti-intellectual tendency: their constitutions often describe education as a 'secondary end', and the French tradition of spirituality, with its 'other-worldly' emphasis (and perhaps also the condemnation of 'Americanism'), has led to a mistrust of the humanities and of the intellectual virtues. Thirdly, graduate education, especially that of future university teachers (lay or religious), should be undertaken at the best place, whether or not it is under Catholic auspices. And laymen should have a responsible role in teaching, so that may bear witness both to what they believe and to the intellectual context in which they believe it. ('. . . a school which restricts or cramps the layman's role in its own life will inevitably fail in forming Christians competent to engage in any meaningful dialogue with authority; and this failure will be as detrimental to legitimate authority, which may find its decrees contemned and scorned as unrealistic, as to the body of the laity. . . .') Fourthly, the influence of 'a rationalist and crypto-Cartesian scholasticism' has exalted strict discursive reasoning at the expense of imaginative vision, not least in religious education. Too often, 'the faithful seeking the bread of doctrine are handed the stone of apologetics, and no matter how valuable this latter may be in assaulting the strongholds of heresy, it is not very nourishing to a hungry soul.'