

for the integrity of scientific workers and for a maximum of human effort at perfection, should be thus spoiled. A modern approach to the study of primitive religion, with an appreciation of the works of von Hugel, Maritain, and Christopher Dawson, would make possible an exceedingly useful work with the same object on sounder lines.

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WITCHCRAFT. By Charles Williams. (Faber and Faber; 12s. 6d.)

When the vulgar trappings of the romantic witch have been put away with Grimm's Fairy Tales and the Ingoldsby Legends, there remain innumerable approaches to the study of the cult: the metaphysical, the anthropological, the medical, and the severely rational. Mr. Williams is content to study witchcraft in relation to the Church, and does not attempt any precise definition of the origins of the machinery of magic adopted by the Satan against whom the Church contended. He outlines the mysteries which terrified the Roman world, but does not bother to analyse them as the degenerate forms, themselves, of Egyptian and palaeolithic sources. Perhaps, even, he does not feel that they were this. He acknowledges his debt to the masterly scepticism of Charles Lea, and the prodigiously informed credulity of Dr. Montague Summers. But Professor Margaret Murray and the Dianic cult are not even given space to be dismissed. Miss Murray is obliquely mentioned in a footnote, but, like Egypt, entirely escapes the index.

After a study of the classical world and the magic which faced the early fathers, Mr. Williams shows the development of the idea of the Devil, and the fight of the Church through the Dark Ages to combat 'malice'—a fight which intensified after the Crusading era and the battle against the external enemy, which meant (though this point is not made) that more attention could be paid to the oldest of the internal heresies. He gives accounts, fascinating and horrifying as they must always be, of the trials and the Sabbat. He examines the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Sprenger and Kramer's text-book of the proper conduct of the trials of witches: trials so sincerely conceived and in the majority of instances justly conducted, and so hideously lacking, in fact, in opportunity to allow innocence to escape. There is a separate chapter about England, emphasising the point that in law torture was not applied there (almost the only recorded instance is in fact the trial of the Templars) and that English witches, contrary to popular belief, were never legally burned, although he does not examine

the curious fact that domestic familiars were a peculiarly British aberration. Spain, however, provides a surprise, and the interesting point is very clearly brought out that it was here that the Church first deliberately worked to discredit a belief in witchcraft as a magical power, and was so successful that 'from 1614 onwards witchcraft practically disappears from the formal religious courts of Spain.' And there is much else of interest.

It may be doubted, however, how far it is possible to tell the connected story of witchcraft, however able and informed the treatment may be in detail, whilst ignoring so much. For the machinery of diabolism is largely that of the palaeolithic cults, crossed with that tradition of Egyptian magic which recurred constantly in the history of the Mediterranean. To leave out consideration of either makes much of the data inexplicable. Witches and fairies were often spoken of in the same breath, and finally decline together into folk-lore on the one hand and the excesses of psychical societies and soul-sick degenerates on the other. But neither contemporary witchcraft, as folk-lore, nor nineteenth-century diabolists and their followers, are dealt with. Contemporary evidences of the witch, both as parodist of Christianity and repository of traditional magic, in Africa, Haiti and elsewhere, are not mentioned at all.

So that in this sense Mr. Williams's book remains incomplete. Yet it is always distinguished and scholarly, and, which is a major virtue, the treatment is not a sensational one.

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### MEDIAEVAL STUDIES

THE WRITINGS OF ROBERT GROSSETESTE, BISHOP OF LINCOLN, 1235-1253. By S. Harrison Thomson. (Cambridge University Press; 21s.)

Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, was undoubtedly one of the most eminent masters in thirteenth-century Oxford. As professor and as chancellor he took a prominent part in the events of university life; as Bishop, he enriched the University with new regulations and confirmed its foundation. His interests were many-sided; in addition to numerous sermons and other pastoral and devotional writings both in Latin and in Anglo-Norman, he translated works from the Greek, commented on the Bible, on Aristotle, and on the Pseudo-Dionysius, and composed treatises on philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and the natural sciences. Some of his writings are lost or untraced, while others, as often happened with famous mediaeval