

# Reviews

**CREATION**, by Claus Westermann. Translated by John J. Scullion SJ. *S.P.C.K.*, London, 1974. x + 124 pp. £1.50.

Dr Westermann is engaged upon a great commentary in the German style on the book of Genesis. We are here offered a very readable translation of his study of the first three chapters. It must, however, be recognised at the start that one of his basic convictions is that the first eleven chapters, for all the diversity of origin of their material, form a carefully integrated whole and that much harm has been done by assuming that all the theology is to be found in the first three. For him, man's relation to his neighbour and to nature are as central as his relation to God.

Westermann finds the creation material not only in near-Eastern religion but in the consciousness of mankind as a whole. And, he tells us, 'it can be shown that the narrative of the creation of man is older than that of the creation of the world. The present state of our knowledge tells us that the stories of the creation of the world were formed first in the high cultures, while the stories of the creation of man everywhere stretch right back into the primitive cultures' (p. 71). Without any attempt at demythologising in the common and crude sense he maintains that modern anthropology, psychology and cosmology make the old type of conflict between science and Christianity irrelevant. And he gives an original exposition of the relation between creation and redemption in the Old Testament. 'The creation of the world is not an object of belief, but a presupposition for thought. God's saving action can

be an object of belief; Creation cannot' (p. 114). And again: It is essential for understanding the Old Testament that the relationship between Creation and redemption consists in a polarity. The attempt is nowhere made to bring both under the one notion. And so there is no all-embracing notion of revelation or belief. One must speak of them side by side. They cannot be brought under the one label; or, in other words, what is common to Creation and redemption is not a notion of belief or of revelation; it is God himself. The work of the Creator both in the Old and in the New Testament has its own setting; it has a different origin and history from the work of the saviour' (p. 117).

Whether the somewhat involved chapter in which this passage occurs amounts to a Biblical (or even perhaps a German Protestant) exposition of the distinction, more common to Catholic than to Protestant theology, between natural and revealed knowledge of God I am not altogether sure; if it does it would seem to provide the basis for an irenic and fruitful ecumenical dialogue. We are told that the tenth and concluding fascicule of volume one of Dr Westermann's Commentary, covering the first eleven chapters and consisting of eight hundred pages, is just about to appear in German. As it is unlikely to be read in its entirety by many English students, Fr Scullion's rendering of the author's presentation of the earlier part is particularly welcome.

E. L. MASCALL

**PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF**, by Thomas McPherson. *Hutchinson University Library*, London, 1974. 132 pp. £3.50 (also available in paperback).

**A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION**, by W. Donald Hudson. *Macmillan*, London, 1974. 200 pp. £4.95.

Professor McPherson has written a useful book for those who wish to become acquainted with philosophical ways of examining the nature of religious belief. This volume is a good exposition of the issues an undergraduate could be expected to find in a course on the Philosophy of Religion. The author writes only of Christian religious belief and focuses his attention on topics such as the nature of religious belief and how it might be attained,

doubt and scepticism in relation to religion, and reductionist accounts of religious belief. He also looks at the traditional theistic 'proofs'; the problem of evil, and Freudian criticisms of religious belief. Terms that are characteristic of Christian theism, such as miracle, soul, Christian virtue, sin and grace all come under his scrutiny, before the work ends with a comparison between science and religion and an examination of the possibility of offering