REVIEWS

PATTERNS IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION. By Mircea Eliade; translated by Rosemary Sheed. (Sheed and Ward; 25s.)

In this book, skilfully translated from the rather inventive French of the author by Rosemary Sheed, Professor Eliade gathers together and studies a number of basic symbols and myths of all religions, from the most primitive past and present to Christianity itself, abstracting for the time being from the question of historical fact. The bulk of the book is a series of chapters, magisterially organized and compressed, each with its own copious bibliography, devoted to Sky, Sun, Moon, Waters, Stone, Earth, Vegetation, Sacred Place and Sacred Time. His purpose is not to trace the development and re-interpretation of each area of symbolism in successive stages of religion, but to lay bare as far as possible the interior structure and basic form of the sacred as it reveals itself in these ways: the last two chapters are concerned with the structure and function of myth and symbol in general.

All this is fascinating and not too difficult reading in itself, and since it should no longer be a scandal to Christians that some of the basic truths of their religion were revealed in the language and imagery common to ancient mythologies, this book can be read as a kind of companion to the Bible, at least to the earlier strata of the old testament. Indeed, since *Divino Afflante Spiritu* we have a duty to explore the mind of the sacred author, and from this book we can begin to realize something of the mind of that even more remote oral tradition which is recorded, for example, in the earlier chapters of Genesis. This deeper understanding of myth is beneficial both to the theologian in his work of demythologizing, and to the prayerful who wish to use the scriptures as a way of contemplation. Again, much that Professor Eliade has to say is relevant to a living assimilation of the liturgy: the obvious example is the chapter on the Waters in its relation to the sacrament of baptism. Western theology has far too long been concentrating on an abstract presentation of truth; if the power of symbol and rite can be restored, we should understand better the experience of the sacred in our own final, unique, and universal religion. In this Professor Eliade's work is of great importance, and his English translator and publishers are to be thanked for making it more generally available.

BENET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

CREATION AND FALL. A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

Christ is the end of the old world; he is the 'new'. But he is also the beginning, before the start of the fallen, old world. Fallen man is in

the middle and cannot see the beginning for himself any more than he can see the end: 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?' (Job. xxxviii, 4.) Being in the middle, we cannot make a leap back into the world of the lost beginning. We can only see the beginning (like the end) through God's given Word, which is Christ. 'But the serpent said to the woman . . . You will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Man *is* 'like God' in the very possibility of his knowing good and evil beyond God's given Word, of going behind the Word and procuring his own knowledge. But we can only know about the beginning from Christ, the new middle, as those who are freed in faith from the knowledge of good and evil and from death, and who can make Adam's picture their own only in faith.

That is, I hope, some sort of summary of the theological framework in which the author's interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis is set. The book is actually a series of lectures delivered in Berlin as long ago as 1932–3, and only now appears for the first time in an English edition. We should have had it before.

One of the subsidiary themes that I have found of particular interest is that of man's relations with man, though I cannot treat it adequately here. Briefly, the author discusses this theme in the context of two different questions. First, how is man the image of God? God in freedom creates man free, free that is for the worship of his Creator; for only an image in freedom would fully praise him. No man can be free as such, as he might for example be musical or intelligent. Freedom is a relationship between two persons; one is *free for* the other. God's freedom has bound us to itself: we are free for him. The relation of creature with creature is a God-given relation because it exists in freedom and freedom originates in God. The image in the first man is man's being free for God and for the other person.

The second question is: How is Eve a helper to Adam? Adam knew that he was limited by God's prohibition in the garden; but he only knew this in the positive sense that it was unthinkable to pass the limit. To help Adam carry the limit God gave him a companion who would be the embodiment of the limit and whom Adam would love. In paradise there is knowledge of the other person as a creature of God, and as standing next to me, limiting me and yet a piece of me; and there is love for each other. The other person is the limit placed upon me by God. I love this limit, and therefore I shall not transgress it. That is paradise; but where love towards the other person is destroyed, man can only hate his limit and revolt against it. He appeals now to *his* contribution, *his* claim upon the other person. That is our world, the old world. The other person is now the one on whose account we can no longer live before God. The other person is our judgment.

But of course this is only one of many themes in the book, which, by the way, contains only ninety-six pages all told. Physically, the book is uniform with the same publishers' Studies in Biblical Theology series, bound with thick paper. Catholic readers will note that the author's Protestant theology appears in places, particularly in his rejection of the possibility of reasoning to any knowledge about God from our experience of creation. W. H. Auden has an amusing reference to this viewpoint of our author's in his recently published poem *Friday's Child* (in memory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred at Flossenburg, April 9, 1945):

Since the analogies are rot
Our senses based belief upon,
We have no means of learning what
Is really going on,

And must put up with having learned
All proofs or disproofs that we tender
Of His existence are returned
Unopened to the sender.

R.S.

St Odo of Cluny. Edited by Dom Gerard Sitwell. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

Students of the history of spirituality will be grateful to Dom Sitwell for his pains in giving us an agreeable volume of translations of John of Salerno's life of St Odo, the great tenth-century abbot of Cluny, and of Odo's own life of a holy layman, St Gerald of Aurillac. This is the kind of reading it is so easy to put off indefinitely unless one is given so convenient and enjoyable a way of doing it. The phrase in which John of Salerno speaks of the youthful Odo crossing 'the great sea of Priscian' will perhaps already have been familiar in quotation, but the whole of this opening section on Odo's early formation, with its emphasis on the importance of the connection with Tours, and its account of the virtues and difficulties of the young student, is particularly rewarding. Although neither author answers many of the questions about the inner life of his subject we should so like to ask, each conveys something of the temper of mind of a holiness that was profoundly humanizing in the barbarous society in which it flourished.

A.S.

The Holy Rule. By Dom Hubert van Zeller. (Sheed and Ward; 35s.)

The Rule of St Benedict was one of the great formative influences in the civilization of medieval Europe. In Toynbee's *Study of History*, it is 'one of the main foundations of the new social structure which was