

thought; at the same time he cannot but be encouraged to enter into the universe of the Bible here so invitingly laid out to view before him. And *The Christian Approach to the Bible* is rare among introductions in that it can be re-read with profit again and again. The translators and publishers are to be thanked for this handsome, and modestly-priced, English version of a most useful book.

RONALD TORBET, O.P.

SPECULATION IN PRE-CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. By Richard Kroner. (Longmans; 16s.)

This volume is the first part of a projected series on 'Speculation and Revelation in the History of Philosophy'. It is a history of ancient philosophy, and let it be said at once, a very readable, stimulating and, for its size, on the whole reliable, history. But it is history with a difference. Its approach to Greek philosophy is determined by the perspective of the larger work of which it is to form the first instalment.

It is refreshing to find the author begin his task with the insistence on the gulf between Greek philosophy and Christianity. Much of recent writing on this topic has been marred by a too ready acceptance of Greek thought as a *praeparatio evangelica*, and too much Greek philosophy has been pressed into a strait-jacket imposed by this concern. Speculation, Dr Kroner holds—and no Christian will wish to disagree with him here—can never be a substitute for revelation. But although revelation was absent from Greek speculation, this had within it 'a kind of substitute for revelation, namely, intuition as contrasted with analysis' (p. 57). Thus there was a gap within Greek speculation itself: on the one hand Greek thinkers were prompted to pass imaginatively beyond the reach of their philosophical insight, on the other their work provided a means for philosophic self-criticism. Thus the outstanding respect in which Dr Kroner concedes the claim of Greek speculation to having been a 'preparation of the Gospel' is by its critical approach to popular religion and mythology. 'From the perspective of the entire development of Western history the mission of Greek speculation was to bring about the destruction of the popular religion, thereby paving the way for the recognition of the Lord of the Bible' (pp. 53-54). This is probably true, with some reservations about the deep philosophic piety in much of Greek reflection.

The importance of such a reservation—and parallel ones could be made in relation to other, less central, topics—cannot be exaggerated. Its neglect may be, in part, responsible for the unsatisfactory treatment Dr Kroner gives to the central question raised by his essay. On the relation of speculation and revelation Dr Kroner makes some interest-

ing remarks. The trend of these is to suggest that he is unwilling to concede to human intellectual activity at work on the content of revelation, accepted in faith, a vital and extensive rôle in Christian contemplation as this has been classically understood. To the present reviewer it seems that some of Dr Kroner's remarks (cf., e.g., pp. 7, 24, 56-59) imply a misunderstanding of the task of theological thinking, and of the relation of *datum* (revelation) to the means of deepening insight into this *datum* (speculation, reflection) in its exercise. The second volume of this interesting study should confirm or dispel these suspicions, and is to be eagerly awaited.

R. A. MARKUS

MEISTER ECKHART: An Introduction to the Study of his Works, with an Anthology of his Sermons. By James M. Clark. (Thomas Nelson; 25s.)

To put first things first, we have here twenty-five sermons, the greater number of those composed in German which can still with confidence be attributed to Eckhart, superbly translated into a living English which yet has scrupulous regard for the letter of the text. One could not wish to see this part of the work better done; nor should Professor Clark's easy, happy style make his readers forget the great labour that has been spent.

Yet every page of the English versions bristles with difficulties. One may take as a single instance the opening sentences of Sermon II, *Intravit Iesus in quoddam castellum . . .*: 'I have quoted a text taken from the Gospel, first in Latin. When translated, it runs thus: "Our Lord Jesus Christ went up into a small town, and was received by a virgin. . . ." "Virgin" simply means a person who is free from all strange images, as free as he was when he did not exist.' To these words the editor has had to supply three footnotes to indicate the play in the German on *empfangen*, with its double meaning 'received' and 'conceived', the sense in which 'images' is used and the implication for scholastic philosophers of statements concerning man's nature before his existence. This is no extreme example, and it serves to show that Eckhart neither thought nor spoke in generally comprehensible terms. The editor touches on the necessity always of remembering the highly specialized audiences for whom he preached, though the point still needs elaboration and emphasis: and yet we know from Tauler's words to the same audiences that they had not understood aright what Eckhart tried to teach. It was perhaps his tragedy and his undoing that he was so greatly gifted as a preacher, that he employed a manner as complex and difficult as his doctrine. Clark remarks on his fatal propensity to paradox, and writes of him as 'the victim of his own