

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