

warmly recommended, for it shows how the ideal of the monastic life was in the closest connection with Aelred's teaching in an abbey where his warmth and sympathy made him a true father and teacher of his large community.

ADRIAN WALKER

MYTH AND REALITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. By Brevard S. Childs.

The author starts his work by presenting us with a finely pointed and well-balanced picture of myth as an understanding of reality. Over against this in contrast he sets the Hebrew use of similar and analogous forms of expression. In considering a series of such passages he shows the way in which the mythical form has been used by the biblical author, and the way in which this form has been distorted. He shows that there is always, not only a satisfactory adaptation of the form which enables it to be used in the context peculiar to the thought of Israel, but also an unresolved element remaining in opposition. It is by seeing the interaction between these two aspects of the form as it is found in biblical hands that the thought and intention of these passages is revealed. The consistency of attitude in the progress of thought which is thus shown is remarkable, and in the light of this the author is able to present a systematic comparison of the old testament's concepts of time and space with those of mythical thinking. Throughout this he is at his best when he is considering those cases where the mythical form is most prominent and the duality most significant (e.g. Genesis i, 1-2; iii, 1-5). This forms the main part of the work and herein lies its greatest value; but a conclusion of some sort is needed. This the author attempts in an appraisal of Israel's sense of her own reality and significance. We do not think in fact that this is possible unless there is taken into account at this point a consideration of the unique quality of the meditation upon her origins to be found in the prophetic movement. This would admittedly be going beyond the original intention of the work, but there is another factor which prevents this conclusion from maturing. The author has a violent distrust for and dislike of 'abstraction'. This distrust is insufficiently critical and his idea of 'abstraction' is insufficiently developed. He is unable to distinguish between abstraction in a narrow and literal sense and abstraction as transcendence. This leads him to reject the relevant thought of Bultmann, Cullmann and Barth, which he considers, as merely unreal 'abstraction'. This is a pity; and it leaves him able to say little more than that Israel saw her reality in terms of remaining faithful to her origin as a chosen people.

The awareness of Israel's reality to herself has indeed a transcendental nature, and thus her history is pointedly significant from within. This

is amply witnessed to by the prophets. The old testament is indeed meaningless apart from the new testament, but the point is that it cannot be separated from it 'ontologically', and thus although the meaning as such could not be seen, Israel was able to see that her reality was forwardly meaningful. This is ultimately contained within her expression of reality which has been so successfully brought to light and shown to us in the main part of this work.

It is to be repeated that what the author has succeeded in doing here is indeed both stimulating and of great value. It is to be hoped that his thought will develop at a philosophical level, which will enable him to present to us eventually, in all its fulness, the kind of conclusion which he has, on the whole, unsuccessfully attempted here.

GILES HIBBERT, O.P.

THE DISCOVERY OF GOD. By Henri de Lubac. Translated by Alexander Dru. (Darton, Longman and Todd; 18s.)

This is a translation of the third edition of *Sur les Chemins de Dieu*. The French title probably gives a clearer idea of the book's intention than the English. Fundamentally it is a meditation, and the goal is ultimately, but not directly, God. The work does not however lie within the strict context of theology; the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ is nowhere examined. All that is said here is in a sense prior to and open to the Christian revelation, and nowhere is this fact forgotten. It might seem at first sight that the work would fall under the heading of natural theology—the chapter titles would seem to suggest it: 'the affirmation of God', 'the proof of God', 'the knowledge of God', etc. It does not have the systematic nature however that this would imply, nor is this its intention. It is a meditation, and a meditation not so much about God as about the nature of man. It helps the reader to unfold and penetrate man's metaphysical and transcendent nature—that by which he has a capacity for God. It helps him to realize those potentialities in himself, in the very nature of mind and thought, which make possible the fulness of Christian life. 'Grace perfects nature', but unless nature is able to recognize that possibility of fulfilment which community with God in Christ implies, and indeed demands, that Christian life is unlikely to flower and propagate. It is in his capacity for God that man is himself 'somehow God', and it is for this reason that he is 'somehow everything' (p. 75). The possibilities and their significance are here suggested and meditated upon; and the thought of the author is supported with, and developed in terms of, a wealth of quotations drawn from 'the double treasure of the *philosophia perennis* and Christian experience'. Not only is this work of value to the reader because of the vision that it can open up for him, but also as a