The biblical teaching on creation in modem Christian theology: a study of the relation between certain old testament scholars and certain theological writers of the twentieth century

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The Biblical Teaching on Creation in Modern Christian Theology

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One problem faced by modern Christian theologians in expounding a doctrine of creation is the relationship between the biblical material relating to creation and modern scientific understanding of the universe. It has been claimed that biblical scholars have provided the necessary insights for overcoming this problem and forging fruitful links between the biblical reflection and scientific conclusions, but their work has been ignored by theologians, to the detriment of the doctrine of creation. In this enquiry the various parts of this claim are tested. The work of four twentieth century theological writers is examined to see what use they make of biblical material in discussing the doctrine of creation; then the work of four twentieth century biblical scholars is examined to see what insights are offered into the biblical reflection on creation. Drawing the results of these two studies together, it is shown that there is a close correspondence between the theological writers' and the biblical scholars' views of the biblical material on creation, and that the dominant theme of the common view is that the biblical interest in creation is secondary to the biblical concern with man and his salvation. It is further shown that this view ignores important features of the biblical reflection on creation, and a presentation of the biblical reflection is given which takes account of these neglected insights. A doctrine of creation based on this representation of the biblical material is developed in outline and it is claimed that such a doctrine offers a basis for mutually beneficial discussion of creation and related topics between scientists and theologians.

The Biblical Teaching on Creation in Modern Christian Theology. A study of the relation between certain Old Testament scholars and certain theological writers of the twentieth century.

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M. Litt. Thesis

University of Durham

Department of Theology

1981

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Declaration: None of the material in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree in the University of Durham or any other University. The work is based on the author's own research.

Chapter 1 : The Problem

The Christian doctrine of creation is one of the most troublesome doctrines of the faith for modern Christians. On the one hand it is inescapably part of Christian belief: the great creeds of the church begin with references to God as Creator, the Bible begins with a reference to God as Creator, and much of Christian theology needs the doctrine of creation as its basis. At the same time, the doctrine poses great difficulties for the faithful, especially in the light of modern science, which seems to be discovering more and more about how the universe reached its present form by natural rather than supernatural means. Modern science has apparently disproved beyond reasonable doubt the story of the making of the world found in the biblical book of Genesis.

In more recent years, since about 1960, a new problem has arisen to focus attention again on the doctrine of creation. Interest in the environment, in conservation, in ecology has grown rapidly, and Christians feel obliged to say something about these issues which is related to their faith. To do so, they look to the doctrine of creation for their theological insights. Thus the group which reported to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1974 on "the relevance of Christian doctrine to the problem of man in his environment" (1) placed the doctrine of creation in an important place in their report "Man and Nature". Unfortunately the members of the committee found, as others have done, that it is difficult to relate the traditional doctrine of creation to these modern problems.

Part of the difficulty must lie in the fact that these environmental problems are modern problems. Theologians of past generations cannot reasonably be criticised for their failure to give answers to questions which had not been asked in their day, and the same is true

of those who produced the material we find in the Bible. However, both the Bible and theological work of bygone days might be expected to yield insights and hints which could be followed up to advantage by modern theologians grappling with modern questions.

But on what sort of modern questions can a doctrine of creation be expected to yield insight? The exact role of a doctrine of creation in modern theology is a matter of dispute. Leonard Hodgson in his Gifford Lectures for 1955-57 spoke of the idea of creation as

> "a hypothesis, a hypothetical postulate postulated in the hope that it may help us to move toward an understanding of the world we live in and our life within it" (2);

the report to the Archbishop of Canterbury mentioned above states

> "The Christian seeks to answer the question 'Is there a reason for the world's existence?' by the doctrine of creation" (3);

while Helmut Thielicke writes:

> "the mystery of creation is not the object of a question as to the whence; it is the object of a question as to the whither" (4).

We see that the doctrine of creation is expected to answer a range of questions, but interestingly, this range of questions does not include the question of how the universe came into being, once the only question for which an answer was sought in the doctrine of creation.

This fact immediately draws attention to a major problem facing the exponent of a Christian doctrine of creation in the modern world, the problem of the relationship between the Christian doctrine and the findings of modern science. There has been a great deal written about science and religion, much unfortunately by scientists who are theologically naive or theologians who are scientifically illiterate. A few with qualifications in both disciplines have tried to bring the two together, an example being A.R. Peacocke, whose Bampton Lectures

for 1978 are a recent bold attempt to link together modern science and a Christian doctrine of creation. However, even such brave and enlightened efforts as those of Peacocke find themselves struggling with the special problem of relating the biblical material on creation to modern scientific work or even to the conditions of modern life. An attempt must be made to relate the biblical material to modern scientific understanding and modern conditions, if the Bible is to continue to be seen as a major resource for the Christian theologian. Unfortunately, on the face of it the Bible both gives a picture of the making of the world which flatly contradicts modern knowledge of the universe, and asserts man's dominion over the earth, to the apparent embarrassment of Christians who are aware of the destructive nature of man's dominion.

"On the face of it": there is the rub, for biblical studies have advanced a long way in recent decades. Few Old Testament scholars now accept Genesis, chapter 1, as a detailed account of the making of the universe, preferring to think of it in other ways, and in the same fashion other biblical material relating to creation has come under scrutiny and the ideas of past exegetes have been challenged. Have these fresh biblical insights helped the theologians? Apparently not, according to the Swiss Old Testament scholar, Claus Westermann.

In the Introduction to his little book "Creation", Westermann takes modern theologians to task. He claims that there is a tremendous interest in the doctrine of creation in modern times, which he refers to as

"the second phase of the technological age" (5),

without delimiting the period more precisely.

The first phase of the technological age, says Westermann,

"gave rise to arguments for questioning the belief in creation" (6)

but the triumph of sending astronauts to the moon in this second phase

"provides the occasion for the recitation of the Creation story" (7).

Christian theologians, claims Westermann, have simply failed to respond to this renewed interest in creation on the part of those outside the church, because the theologians have no relevant doctrine of creation to offer.

Westermann traces the theologians' failure through the controversy over the theory of evolution back to the rise of the natural sciences. He claims that these sciences changed the picture of the world which was acceptable to educated people, and began especially to challenge the picture of the world used and presented by theology. In the face of the challenge, according to Westermann, theologians went on the defensive and eventually allowed the doctrine of creation to slip quietly into the background of their theology and preaching in order to avoid battles which could not be won by theology.

Westermann claims that the theologians retreated too far too soon. They have, he says, taken up defensive positions based on a view of the biblical material on creation which has not kept pace with modern developments in biblical studies. The implication of Westermann's remarks is that if theologians paid more attention to what biblical scholars are saying, they would be in a better position to provide a doctrine of creation which is relevant to modern man. A further implication of Westermann's remarks is that a doctrine of creation which is firmly based on a proper modern understanding of the biblical material will be able to say something to and about modern science, thus helping those like Peacocke who want to talk as

Christian inhabitants of the modern scientific world.

In the course of his complaints about theologians, Westermann identifies various characteristics of the presentation by theologians of the biblical reflection on creation. We may pick out four leading characteristics.

1. The theologians' presentations of the biblical reflection on creation have been based almost entirely on the narrative of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, and on biblical texts concerned with praise of the creator: according to Westermann, these are the texts required for the teaching of salvation, and this selection ignores other important biblical material relating to creation.

2. The theologians' presentations have concentrated on the position of man within creation. This, Westermann claims, has happened because theology, especially since Schliermacher, has become concerned chiefly, even solely, with man, his existential situation, and his salvation; has forgotten that the Reformation discussion of man and his salvation had its roots in an unshakeable belief in divine creation; and so has distorted the biblical teaching on Creator-creation by reading it through tinted spectacles which filtered out some aspects of the biblical teaching.

3. Theologians have taken up a defensive position in relation to science and have failed to build bridges between scientific explanations of the world and man and biblical reflection on these subjects, erroneously maintaining that creation accounts in the Bible have nothing to do with modern scientific knowledge.

4. Theologians have offered no new, vital presentation of the biblical reflection on creation which is relevant to modern man, that is, which takes account of modern man's awareness of the complex life around him on the earth or the immensity of the universe of which Earth is part. This particular characteristic is crystallised by Westermann into the thought that if God is to be relevant to modern man, then God must be

> "concerned with a worm being trodden to the earth or with the appearance of a new star in the Milky Way" (8).

These four characteristics play an important role in Westermann's challenge to the theologians. On the one hand Westermann claims that these are leading characteristics of the presentations of the biblical reflection on Creator-creation by modern theologians and that those presentations are unacceptable. On the other hand, Westermann claims that a proper use of the insights made available by modern biblical studies would help the theologians to make a more adequate presentation of the biblical reflection and so to correct the errors pinpointed in these leading characteristics. According to Westermann a review of the doctrine of creation in the light of modern biblical studies will provide a doctrine of creation which takes proper account of all the biblical material, makes the discussion of salvation more aware of its real roots in the doctrine of creation, builds bridges between modern science and biblical reflection on the world, and is relevant to modern man in his awareness of his environment.

These are large claims, both about modern theology and modern biblical studies, and they raise a number of questions. Does the state of affairs exist of which Westermann complains? Are his four characteristics really characteristics of modern theological presentations of the biblical reflection on Creator-creation? Are

the theologians misrepresenting the biblical reflection? Have the biblical scholars provided insights which have been overlooked or ignored? If so, would these neglected insights significantly change the theologians' presentations of the biblical reflection? Would such a changed doctrine of creation meet the demands for relevance and bridge-building made by Westermann?

The present enquiry springs from these questions. Clearly it is impossible to review the entire works of modern theologians and biblical scholars in detail, so we shall content ourselves with a less ambitious project.

We assume to start with that the doctrines of creation presented in modern theological writings are unsatisfactory, at least in that they leave the large gap already mentioned between a modern scientific understanding of the universe and Christian theology. This may of course simply be due to the fact that no Christian doctrine of creation can be satisfactory for the modern world, but for the present we shall assume that it is theoretically possible to formulate a satisfactory modern doctrine of creation. Our broad questions then become:

> "Are the deficiencies of the present doctrines of creation due, at least in part, to an insufficiently subtle handling of the biblical reflection on creation by theologians?"

and

> "Would a more subtle handling of the biblical reflection help to formulate a more satisfactory doctrine of creation, as Westermann implies?"

We begin the enquiry with an examination of the work of four modern theological writers who have written substantially on the biblical reflection on creation, and we shall see whether Westermann's four characteristics are found in their work. Then we shall examine the work of four leading modern biblical scholars, to see how they have

presented the biblical reflection on creation and what insights they have offered to the theologians. Drawing the results of these two sets of reviews together in Chapter 4, we shall see how well or badly the theological writers and the biblical scholars agree in their presentations of the biblical reflection on Creator-creation, how that biblical reflection as presented is used in the presentation of the Christian doctrine of creation, and in what ways the resulting doctrines of creation are unsatisfactory. Finally, in Chapter 5, we shall ask whether there are insights in the work of the biblical scholars which have been neglected, what sort of presentation of the biblical reflection on creation might be made taking into account such neglected insights, what doctrine of creation might be based on that presentation, and whether such a doctrine is more satisfactory than the doctrines of creation available at present.

Chapter 2: Four Theological Writers

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter we examine the work of four theological writers and enquire whether in these four cases Westermann's strictures are justified. Clearly it is impossible to examine the work of all theological writers of the twentieth century, because there is insufficient time and space for such an enterprise; equally clearly, many factors will influence the choice of writers whose work is to be examined. Not the least of these factors will be availability of material, which in the present work has two major aspects. On the one hand, the works of the writers to be scrutinised must be readily available to the scrutineer, in a language spoken by the scrutineer. On the other hand, the writers in question must have produced relevant work.

Of these two considerations, the second has proved most critical for the present work, and has provided an unexpected limitation on the work available for consideration. For a theological work to be relevant in the present enquiry, the theological writer concerned must have written about the doctrine of creation with some, preferably extensive, reference to and discussion of the biblical material. Large numbers of twentieth-century theological writers make some reference to the doctrine of creation, but only a few discuss the doctrine in any detail, and even fewer make more than a token reference to the biblical material. This fact might in itself be seen as support for Westermann's contention that no new presentation of the biblical reflection on creation is being offered to the modern reader. Certainly the paucity of presentations of the biblical material limited the material available for examination.

Within the limits of the available material, other criteria come into

play in the selection of material for examination. A range of work was required which would provide examples from different theological positions and approaches. Labelling theological writers is a pleasant but difficult and contentious task, but eventually four writers - or perhaps more accurately, four works - were selected for examination, as follows.

Karl Barth's volume "The Doctrine of Creation" in his "Church Dogmatics" almost selected itself for this undertaking. Running to four part-volumes, requiring more than 2000 pages in the standard English edition, Barth's work is a massive outpouring of words on the subject of creation from one whose avowed intention was to base himself solely on the Word of God. Barth has devoted more space to discussing the doctrine of creation and the biblical material connected with it than any other theological writer of the twentieth century, and he is of course one of the giants of twentieth-century theology, whose influence has been and continues to be enormous.

Professor John Macquarrie's book "Principles of Christian Theology" is included partly because it is one of the few modern books of systematic theology from an English theologian. In addition, Macquarrie starts from a very different theological position from Barth, and his theological methods seem different, so his work provides a contrast to that of Barth. It also has the distinction of trying to connect an existential approach to the doctrine of creation with the biblical reflection on creation: while others discuss the doctrine of creation from a claimed existential standpoint, none, so far as I am aware, makes any effort to link the doctrine with the biblical reflection on the matter. Thus Macquarrie's book is an important source for our investigation. Besides the book, we shall

also look at Macquarrie's Inaugural Lecture in Oxford University, a lecture entitled "Creation and Environment", which appears to summarise much of his thought on the subject.

The volume on the doctrine of creation by Michael Schmaus is included as an example of a modern Roman Catholic approach to the subject of creation and the Bible. Often the Roman Catholic Church has been accused of crude literalism in this area, and of presenting the biblical reflection on creation in an old-fashioned way which ignores the scientific advances of the last two centuries. Whether these charges are true or not, Roman Catholic theologians have continued to write on the doctrine of creation, and Schmaus presents what is claimed to be an up-to-date version of orthodox Roman Catholic teaching on the subject, giving us a third distinctive approach to the subject of our enquiry.

The fourth work chosen for review is "Creation and New Creation" by John Reumann, and it is included partly because Reumann, as an American Lutheran, brings yet another theological starting point to our assembly. His work is also included because it is claimed to be a study in biblical theology, examining the concepts of "creation" and "new creation" in the Bible in the light of modern scholarship and research in not only biblical studies and theology but also in other disciplines. As such it seems to be attempting exactly what Westermann claims is not being attempted, and so must be included in our study.

For each of the four works to be examined, we shall first give a brief survey of the relevant parts of the work, paying particular attention to the author's approach to the biblical material, and to the range of biblical material discussed or used and then we shall try to measure

the author's work against the four characteristics drawn from Westermann's work and distinguished in Chapter 1. We note that in considering the range of biblical material discussed or used by a particular author we must have regard not only to the material directly utilized by way of quotation or exegesis of biblical texts, but also to the material indirectly utilized by means of discussion of or allusion to ideas drawn from the biblical material but without specific biblical reference.

2.2 Karl Barth

As already noted, Barth's "The Doctrine of Creation" runs to four part-volumes. The structure of the work is both interesting and informative. Part-volume one, subtitled "The Work of Creation" is built around an exegesis of the two creation stories in the biblical book of Genesis, while the other three part-volumes are more concerned with working out the implications of Barth's exegesis. In part-volume two, "The Creature", Barth expounds a doctrine of man and then in the next part-volume he writes of the dealings of God with man under the heading "The Creator and His Creature". The fourth part-volume is entitled "The Command of God the Creator" and is really a theological ethic, a theologian's comment on man's dealings with man. Thus the very structure of Barth's work on creation demonstrates his oft-stated intention to base himself solely on the Word of God, since the basis for the whole work is the exposition of the Genesis stories, given in the first part-volume.

As is well-known, Barth's "Church Dogmatics" is strongly Christocentric, and "the Word of God" for Barth included most importantly the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. This emphasis is as clear in Barth's work on the doctrine of creation as elsewhere, for he writes

> "From every angle Jesus Christ is the key to creation" (1)

and he considers that the exposition of the doctrine of creation entails

> "the simple exegesis of the fact indicated in the name Emmanuel, namely, that God has accepted man in Jesus Christ, that in Him He has become man and that He is revealed in His unity with this man" (2)

The simple exegesis is of course only possible to those who have faith. According to Barth, the doctrine of creation can only be perceived and understood through faith; in the case of this doctrine, Barth's motto

credo ut intelligam means

> "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son our Lord, in order to perceive and to understand that God the Almighty, the Father, is the Creator of heaven and earth" (3)

and Barth comments

> "if I did not believe the former, I could not perceive and understand the latter" (4)

To put it another way, in Barth's view a Christian doctrine of creation begins from an acceptance of the Word of God in Jesus Christ and simply listens to what that Word is telling forth. Hence, all scientific discussions of the origins of the world or philosophical disputations about first causes are irrelevant to the exposition of the Christian doctrine of creation. Barth is ready to allow science a place in the world:

> "There is free scope for natural science beyond what theology describes as the work of the Creator" (5)

but

> "theology can and must move freely where science which really is science, and not secretly a pagan Gnosis or religion, has its appointed limit" (6)

In his four part-volumes, Barth appoints the limits of science by staking out the area which he claims for theology.

Eschewing then the aids and insights of science, at least in theory, Barth points to the work of the Creator primarily through an exegesis of the first two chapters of the Bible. He claims that his exegesis is radical, and certainly he goes back to the original words and expounds each verse in great detail. However, the whole exposition is overshadowed and shaped by his prior conviction of the link between creation and Christ, a link which Barth forges by the use of the concept of covenant.

According to Barth, God has made a covenant with man

"which has its beginning, its centre and its culmination in Jesus Christ" (7)

but this covenant is made possible by the work of creation, which sets the stage for the covenant of grace. Without creation there would be no man with whom God could make a covenant, indeed no need for a covenant of grace. Without Christ the covenant is unconsummated and the work of creation is incomplete. Thus creation, covenant and Christ are indissolubly linked, in Barth's view; creation is the first in a series of acts of grace whose whole purpose is the fulfilment of the covenant of grace in and through Jesus Christ.

From this basic viewpoint, Barth sets out on his exegesis of the first two chapters of Genesis. Immediately, he is faced with a problem, because these two chapters contain two accounts of creation, and the two accounts are not at first sight easily reconcilable. Barth's solution to the problem is to maintain that the two stories are describing the connection between creation and covenant from different angles: in the first story, the creation, Barth claims, is seen as the external basis of the covenant, while in the second story, the covenant is described as the internal basis of creation.

The first Genesis story, on this view, tells how in the act of creation the theatre was provided in which the history of the covenant was to be enacted, and the stage was peopled with the creatures who were to feature in the history. It is of great importance to Barth that the first Genesis story proceeds majestically through the creation of all things to the creation of man,

"the summit of creation" (8)

According to Barth, the first creation story

"describes creation as it were externally as the work of powerful but thoroughly planned and thought-out and perfectly supervised preparation" (9).

In other words, the act of creation has a definite purpose. That purpose, on Barth's reading, is clearly revealed in the fact that God rested on the seventh day, after the creation of man on the sixth day. God's rest marks the end of the work of creation, claims Barth, but it is also a sign of the covenant of grace in that God invites man to participate in his rest. Creation stopped because God

> "was satisfied with what He had created and had found the object of His love" (10);

but, according to Barth, in stopping and resting God not only showed his satisfaction with man as the creature with whom he could enter into a relationship of love, and covenant grace, but also gave man the opportunity, the time, to enter into and enjoy that relationship of love, before even man became involved with the work set out before him in the world. This in Barth's view is the sign of God's free love reaching out to man, and a demonstration of the fact that the love of God for man moves towards fulfilment.

If the first creation story in Genesis is an external view of the work of creation, showing creation as the external basis of the covenant, the second story deals, according to Barth, with a history of creation from the inside. In his view, the second story is cast in the form of a history which provides the background to the story of the fall which follows it in Genesis; Barth writes that the second creation story

> "describes the coming into being of the world, and supremely of man as that being in whose nature and mode of existence there is prefigured the history which follows" (11).

Thus the story expresses the fact that man was created to receive the free love of God. It is this free love of God which is central to the covenant of grace, and so the second creation story, in Barth's view, shows how the covenant of grace is the basis for the creation of man.

Given the connection between covenant and creation as the pre-supposition of his exegesis, it is not surprising that Barth's exposition relates everything in the two Genesis creation stories to the relationship between God and man. Thus in his exposition of the first story, Barth again and again refers to the significance for man of the different acts of creation: for example, talking of the blessing by God of the fish and the birds, Barth claims that what is revealed here

> "is that there is to be a God-like creature ordained for fatherhood and sonship and continuing its existence in the relationship of fatherhood and sonship" (12).

In the exposition of the second story, Barth is deeply concerned about the pre-figuring in the creation story of later events concerning the relationship between God and Israel or God and the Church; for example, he writes

> "why did the first man have to fall into that deep sleep when the work of God was done in which the woman had her origin? From the standpoint of the New Testament it is because the Church of Jesus Christ was to have its origin in His mortal sleep and to stand complete before Him in His resurrection"(13).

We see then that the pre-supposition of a connection between creation and covenant imparts to Barth's exegesis a definite shape and the influence of the supposition is found again and again in the exegesis. It is worth noting two other points about Barth's exegesis of the two Genesis creation stories. First, there is the difference in the treatment of the two stories: the exegesis of the second is only two-thirds of the length of the exegesis of the first. This might be due to avoidance of repetition, with ideas already expounded in the exegesis of the first story being merely referred to in the second exegesis, but duplication of comment is abundant. Moreover, there is a certain air of strain about the exegesis of the second story, as though Barth found it much more difficult to fit this story to his

pre-conceived pattern than the other. Certainly the idea of creation as providing a stage for salvation is much easier to grasp and work with than the idea of the covenant as any sort of basis for creation, and Barth seems to have found this.

We should also notice the place of man in Barth's exegesis of both stories. As already noted in his exegesis of the first creation story, Barth describes man as the summit of creation, even though he describes God's Sabbath rest as the crown of creation. Quite frequently in this first piece of exegesis, Barth refers to "the creature" when he actually means "man": other creatures only get a look in when Barth is forced to refer to them because the biblical passage under consideration describes their creation. The same is true of his exegesis of the second story, in which the words "creature" and "man" are almost interchangeable. Certainly Barth claims that man is distinguished from animals in that man becomes a living soul as God breathes the breath of life into his nostrils and

> "It is man, and man alone, who becomes a living soul in this way" (14)

but this is just another way of emphasizing the pre-eminence of man among the other creatures. In both stories Barth finds man as the supreme object of creation, with whose creation God becomes satisfied and for whose benefit all else is provided.

Once the exegesis of the two Genesis creation stories is established to his satisfaction, Barth moves confidently on to deal with other matters. He affirms the goodness of creation on the grounds that creation is the act of a perfect God, who because he is perfect cannot will anything bad. Then on to the doctrine of man, a creature whose humanity has been distorted by sin, but who has been shown true humanity in Jesus Christ. Responding to that vision involves entering

into relationships with God and with our fellows. It also involves recognising God's care for his creatures as he preserves, accompanies and rules them, and recognizing man's responsibility to God in freedom. All these themes are taken up by Barth at great length in the second, third and fourth part-volumes of the volume on the doctrine of creation. However, they are not expositions of the doctrine of creation itself, rather they are expositions of related themes, and so they fall outside the scope of the present enquiry.

We turn then to Westermann's complaints about theologians and ask whether they are justified in the case of this particular work by Karl Barth. First, of what biblical material does Barth make use in his exposition of the doctrine of creation? As we have seen, the kernel of his first part-volume is an exegesis of the first two chapters of Genesis, and the other part-volumes lean on that exegesis: we should therefore expect many references to these chapters in the work, and indeed we are not disappointed: of 2009 references to the Old Testament in the first four part-volumes, 383 are references to Genesis 1 and 2. What we might not expect is that there are also 392 references to the Psalms, and 229 references to the book of Isaiah: in other words, more than half the references to the Old Testament in Barth's work on creation are drawn from Psalms, Isaiah, and Genesis 1 and 2. If we examine the first part-volume, on the work of creation, we find that these three parts of the Bible account for 506 Old Testament references out of a total of 920 in the volume. It is interesting to note that the first part-volume is the only one in which Old Testament references out-number New Testament references: in total in the four part-volumes there are 2670 references to the New Testament against the 2009 references to the Old Testament. Since almost every book in both Testaments gets a mention somewhere in the

complete volume, it is difficult to accuse Barth of exploring only a narrow compass of Scripture. However, we must note that many of the references are left without exegetical comment, with the verses being simply quoted as (allegedly) obvious props for the argument. Furthermore, whilst Barth draws on the whole range of Scripture, the concentration on the three Old Testament sections already noted together with the proliferation of New Testament references does suggest that Westermann's complaint is justified. Barth does seem to lean heavily on biblical material concerned with the teaching generally considered necessary for the adequate teaching of salvation, from both Old and New Testaments. However, a more detailed study of the actual references would be needed to establish Westermann's point beyond doubt. We note that in the case of Barth the distinction between biblical material directly used and biblical material indirectly used is superfluous, since whenever he discusses ideas drawn from the Bible a reference, and often a quotation, is supplied.

Westermann's second alleged characteristic is certainly present in Barth's work, for there is no doubt that Barth is concerned chiefly with man and his salvation. Creation is very definitely subordinate to salvation in Barth's view; he accepts that belief in God as Creator is the first article of the creed and is prepared to grapple with it because it is there. He is even ready to say that it is part of the essential faith of the Christian. But for Barth, creation has no meaning apart from the history of God's covenant with man: in other words, without the covenant of grace leading to salvation, creation would not matter.

Barth is also unrepentantly dogmatic in the face of talk about the relationship between science and the doctrine of creation. He is quite clear, as we have already seen, that science and theology move

within their own spheres. Certainly he is ready to allow that the boundaries are not clear, and others following in his footsteps may need to pause to examine those boundaries, but Barth himself is not interested in building bridges between science and theology, or even between biblical accounts of creation and scientific theories about the world. For him, the biblical teaching is the revelation of God, to be accepted as such, and simply has nothing to do with any other knowledge. Barth seems to see no necessity for even considering what science has to say about the world or man's place in it, maintaining that God has already said all that needs to be said.

Finally, what of the star on the Milky Way or the worm trodden to the earth? Barth is not concerned with them. He says that God cares for all that he has made, he agrees that man has a responsibilty towards other creatures, but Barth's main concern is for man in his relationship to God. For him, the presentation of creation is the presentation of man in relationship to God in Jesus Christ; it is not the presentation of God's relationship to the world, or of God's interest in anything outside the context of the redemption of sinful man.

Thus we see that in the case of Karl Barth's "The Doctrine of Creation", Westermann's four characteristics are clearly present.

2.3 John Macquarrie

Professor John Macquarrie approaches the doctrine of creation through his understanding of the triune God, for he regards the doctrine of the triune God as the cardinal doctrine of Christian theology. According to Macquarrie, in order to expound a Christian understanding of that triune God, we must speak of the relationship between God and the world, for

> "the God of the Christian faith is a dynamic God who goes out into a world of beings" (15).

The world of beings is inevitably a world of particular beings, or creatures, so we must consider the relationship between God and the particular beings: the obvious starting point for such consideration, according to Macquarrie, is the traditional doctrine of creation.

However, Macquarrie does not intend to expound a traditional doctrine of creation. In his view the traditional doctrines of creation thought of creation as a relation between the world (or its constituents) on the one hand and God on the other, and then fell into the trap of thinking that

> "a doctrine of creation is intended to tell us about the production of beings that belong in the world by a being who is outside of the world" (16).

For Macquarrie, a doctrine of creation is rather

> "an attempt to describe the characteristics of creaturely beings" (17)

and is concerned with beings who are subordinate to and dependent on Being (God), which lets them be. To describe these beings as "creatures" or "creaturely beings" is to raise the question "what does it mean to be a creature" and, Macquarrie claims,to ask

> "How does it affect our understanding of ourselves and our world to believe that we and it are creations of God" (18).

For him, the answer to the first question is that

"the basic characteristic of creatureliness is dependence" (19)

and the answer to the second question is that to know oneself as a creature is to see oneself

> "as a being who is at once answerable for his being and empowered to fuller being, at once the subject of a demand and the recipient of grace" (20).

Given Macquarrie's understanding of the content of a doctrine of creation, it is not surprising that he takes man as the paradigm of creaturely beings. This existential approach is justified partly by the claim that

> "it is in man alone, that is to say, in ourselves, that we have any first-hand knowledge of creaturely being" (21)

for which claim Macquarrie quotes a supporting text from the words of the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner; and partly by a brief consideration of the two creation stories at the beginning of the Old Testament. Macquarrie points out that the second, older story begins with the creation of man, round whom an environment is built up: accordingly

> "the motive of the story is to find an identity, a self-understanding, and the world of nature comes into the picture almost incidentally" (22).

The first Genesis story on the other hand is more concerned with the ordered creation of nature, says Macquarrie,

> "yet the existential interest is still strong, for man is represented as the culmination of God's work" (23),

and the earth and everything in it is thus to be subdued by man.

Among the advantages of such an existential approach to creation, claims Macquarrie, is that it avoids the possibility of clashes with natural science, for it gets away from questions about the origins of the world. Such questions are properly the domain of natural science and will be settled by natural science, according to Macquarrie;

theologians, he says, have nothing to say on such questions and conversely no answers produced by natural science can possibly affect the doctrine of creation as expounded by Macquarrie. It is not clear whether Macquarrie intends to make the same claim about the results of social science, nor is it clear whether the term "natural science" includes sciences such as biology, which might be expected to have something to say about the characteristics of creaturely beings.

Macquarrie also claims that his approach to creation enables him to take a proper view of nature. In his view, we form our understanding of nature by reduction or abstraction from our own first-hand understanding of creatureliness; in so doing, we recognise that

> "in nature we see a form of creatureliness in which answerability for the being that has been conferred is absent and there is sheer dependence and contingency" (24).

Man, according to Macquarrie, is answerable for his being, and is therefore a higher grade of being than other creatures. The idea of grades of beings leads naturally to the idea of a hierarchy of beings, an idea which, Macquarrie claims, has always been known to man. Indeed, he claims, this very idea of a hierarchy of beings is domonstrated in the first of the creation stories in Genesis, in which creation is exhibited as an ordered sequence of acts

> "rising through the varied froms of living organisms to man" (25).

Macquarrie does not claim that man is the highest grade of being, only that man is

> "the culminating point of the hierarchy of beings that can be seen on this earth" (26);

there is no reason, according to Macquarrie, to suppose that the series ends with man, and he discusses the existence of higher beings such as angels. While admitting that we cannot know how such higher

beings might be constituted, he claims that the concept of angelic beings both sets limits to man's aspirations and being and reminds man of the richness and variety of creation.

Although man is not the highest point of all creation, he is the apex of earthly creation, according to Macquarrie. On the one hand, Macquarrie says, there is continuity between man and nature, with man being

> "a creature, brought forth by nature and remaining subject in many respects to nature's laws" (27).

On the other hand, man is distinct from the rest of nature in having an openness which allows him the potentiality of

> "somehow participating in God's life" (28).

This very potential, coupled to man's continuity with nature, produces in Macquarrie's view a dangerous tension between man's temptation to exploit nature and his guardianship of nature, his responsibility with God for

> "shaping that still unfinished creation in which his life is set" (29),

and responding to the endless possibilities opened up before him as he participates in God's letting-be. In other words, there is risk in creation, there is the possibility of failure, there is, according to Macquarrie, the chance that

> "beings may get lost in nothing" (30).

It is important to Macquarrie that God himself is involved in the creation, so that the risk of creation matters to God. This idea of the immanence of God is found, says Macquarrie, in the use of the notion of "emanation" as a model for creation. He admits that this particular model of creation is not very biblical, but he insists that it can be found in the Bible, and in his inaugural lecture, in

which he calls his emanation notion the "organic" model of creation, he refers to some of the psalms which

> "frankly delight in the natural world and see God there" (31).

Macquarrie agrees that another model of creation, that of "making", has more biblical support, but he argues that both models must be used to get a complete understanding of creation, since in his view neither model is adequate. There is no doubt however that he prefers the organic or emanation model, in spite of its lack of biblical support, for according to him the organic model

> "allows the world a dignity" (32)

which it does not have on the other model.

The so-called organic model of creation is also important to Macquarrie because he sees creation not as a once-for-all act in history, but as a continuing activity, with a purposeful character. According to Macquarrie, creativity is

> "an ordered movement into ever fuller and richer kinds of being" (33);

this ordered movement is going on all the time, not only through God's creativity but also through man's creativity. Creation is an open, unfinished process, according to Macquarrie, in which man participates as a co-worker with God as

> "a guardian of Being to whom has been entrusted the capacity to let-be" (34).

From the above it is clear that when we turn to Westermann's complaints about modern theologians, Macquarrie is in a different position to Barth. Macquarrie makes no attempt to back up his doctrine of creation with scriptural exegesis, despite his statement that Christian theology

> "must maintain close and positive relations with the Bible" (35).

In his chapter entitled "Creation and creaturely beings", there are 35 references to the Bible. These cover 13 books of the Bible, only four of them from the Old Testament. One verse (Genesis 2:7) is referred to three times, three verses are referred to twice, and there are 12 references to the book of Genesis, all to the first two chapters of that book. None of the verses referred to is given very much by way of exegesis, and indeed most of them are simply quoted in illustration of some point of the argument. As for indirect use of biblical material, Macquarrie does mention ideas present in the Bible without quoting supporting texts, for example the ideas of God's control of history and man's unity as a creature; however most of the material used in this indirect manner is drawn from the parts of the Bible also referred to by direct quotation, and this indirect usage does not significantly extend the range of biblical material used by Macquarrie. Thus one can certainly say that Macquarrie's doctrine of creation has a very narrow biblical base. It would be fairer to say that Macquarrie boldly puts forward his doctrine of creation with scant regard for the biblical material, using biblical material where it fits in with his argument and ignoring it otherwise. Given the paucity of scriptural references in his work on creation, no conclusion can be drawn as to whether or not he concentrates on the biblical material necessary for the teaching of salvation.

It is true to say that Macquarrie is chiefly concerned with man and his existential situation, though whether he is chiefly concerned with salvation is another matter. We have noted that Macquarrie discusses nature and creatures other than man, allowing the earthly creatures positions in a hierarchy whose highest point is man; but his chief concern in his doctrine of creation is the exposition of the potential of man in creative letting-be, and when he talks of the

doctrine of creation as an attempt to describe the characteristics of creaturely being, there is little doubt that he really means an attempt to describe the characteristics of man.

As already noted, Macquarrie attaches great importance to the idea of the risk inherent in creation, a risk which

> "issues in sin and evil which threaten the creatures with dissolution and distortion" (36).

That man is not destroyed by sin and evil is due, in Macquarrie's view, to reconciliation,

> "the activity whereby the disorders of existence are healed, its imbalances redressed, its alienations bridged over" (37)

and to salvation

> "the making whole of man" (38).

However, according to Macquarrie, reconciliation is continuous with, indeed the highest example of, God's continuing activity in creation. Thus to some extent Macquarrie's understanding of salvation is grounded in his understanding of creation as a continuing process in which creatures are responding in freedom to the letting-be of Being.

The freedom is both necessary to the value of creation and to man's response to the offer of salvation, and it is this idea of man's freedom which links creation and salvation in Macquarrie's book. Thus while he undoubtably concentrates on man and his existence, Macquarrie has not entirely lost sight of the grounding of belief in salvation in a doctrine of creation, albeit in a decidedly different fashion to the Reformers.

As far as science is concerned, we have already noted that Macquarrie accepts that there are questions proper to science on which theology has nothing to say. In the Introduction to his book, he seems quite

clear that theology must maintain contact with both the sciences of man and the natural sciences, but he seems to see the contact as indirect rather than direct. Thus he maintains that theology must take into account what the sciences of man say, but writes

> "all these sciences abstract from the full concreteness of human existence, and miss out on precisely what is "existential" in man" (39).

The extra dimension, the bit the sciences miss, is apparently the subject matter of theology. This seems to suggest a separation of realms, and the same impression is given in relation to the natural sciences when Macquarrie suggests that the theologian

> "renounces the world of empirical fact to the scientist" (40)

whilst dealing with

> "the convictions of religion, which do not seem to belong within the world of empirical fact" (41).

In keeping with this approach, Macquarrie writes

> "The theologian of today would say that the statements in the Bible that conflict with the findings of modern science are not part of the revelation to which the Bible bears witness, but simply reflect the current scientific thinking of biblical times" (42)

and, consistently, he makes no attempt to connect his exposition of the doctrine of creation with modern scientific findings. The implication is that he is concerned with the characteristics of man which lie beyond the reach of the sciences of man or natural science, and with that delimiting of areas he is content.

Finally we must ask about Macquarrie's attitude to the downtrodden worm and the new star in the Milky Way. He would undoubtably maintain that God is interested in them, since they, no less than man, are part of the creation in which Being is immanent and creatively letting-be. On the other hand, Macquarrie is better at talking of man's responsibility for shaping nature as God's co-worker than at

suggesting what difference it might make to man's existence that God is immanent in creatures other than man. The concept of God's continuing creative activity might go some way towards suggesting what God has to do with man outside the special relationship of co-worker, but Macquarrie concentrates too much on the possibilities lying before man; he does not discuss the possibilities (if any) lying before the rest of creation. In sum, it seems that, of earthly creatures at least, man is the only one which can actually develop to participate in God's life.

Thus in the case of Macquarrie, two of Westermann's leading characteristics are clearly present, while the other two are less clear. Certainly Macquarrie's work is based on only a small range of biblical material and makes no attempt to build bridges between the biblical material and science. While obeisances are made in other directions, man and his relationship with God are the chief concerns, and little real concern is shown for any part of creation other than man.

2.4 Michael Schmaus

Michael Schmaus regards belief in God the Creator as a prerequisite for the understanding of Jesus Christ as Saviour, and his treatment of creation is accordingly avowedly intended to help bring out the Christocentric structure of the Christian faith. Discussion of creation, and indeed discussion of God, is included because, Schmaus claims, one cannot talk of Jesus Christ without talking of God and the world. Thus Schmaus gives the volume under consideration the title "God and Creation" but the sub-title "The Foundations of Christology". In Part I he deals with the Old Testament concept of God, then in Part II he turns to the idea of God the Creator, first discussing the biblical material and then going on to expound the doctrines concerned.

Schmaus makes his approach to the biblical material quite plain at the very beginning of his chapters on "God as Creator". The second sentence of the section on "The Scriptural Data" reads

> "The primary interest of the people of Israel was not in the origin of the world; their interest was centered on Yahweh's actions in salvation history, and those biblical texts which deal with the origin of the world from God and with God's sovereignty are to be placed in the context of salvation history" (43).

A few sentences later he remarks that the matter can be put "simply" by saying that

> "the Old Testament story of creation serves to support the scriptural account of the divine plan of salvation" (44),

a formulation for which he gives the credit to G. von Rad.

Thus from the start Schmaus allows the biblical material on creation only a supportive role; he sees the material as being primarily intended to strengthen the people's confidence in Yahweh their God,

in the face of disaster and destruction. In support of this view, Schmaus points primarily to Deutero Isaiah, but also to isolated verses or passages a few verses long elsewhere in the Old Testament.

In keeping with his overall view, Schmaus sees the two creation narratives in Genesis as arising from the response of thoughtful men to threats to faith in the one loving God. According to Schmaus, these threats arose because the people of Israel lived among worshippers of other gods and found that the other gods seemed to keep their promises while the Israelite God did not; hence there arose questions as to whether Yahweh really was a mighty ruler and also questions as to where evil and destruction came from. The two creation narratives in Genesis are claimed by Schmaus to be intended to answer these questions.

The first creation narrative, the so-called priestly code, is seen by Schmaus as an assertion that God has complete sovereignty over the world because the world came from God. It is not, says Schmaus, an attempt to describe how the world came into being, rather it is a reaching back to the cause of the world's existence, the will of God which issued in the creative act. The fact that the story claims that God created by his word is, for Schmaus,

> "expressing the fact that dialogue constitutes the basis of the relationship between God and the world" (45)

which

> "has meaning only if we see man as the essential element in creation" (46).

Thus already the position of man in creation is seen as of vital importance: later on, when discussing man, Schmaus refers to the creation of man as the inauguration of history. This first account of

creation in Genesis is the introduction to salvation history, in Schmaus' view.

The second creation narrative is not given such detailed treatment in the section on God the Creator, but rather brushed aside as simply an account of the origin of evil and sin. Schmaus claims that the first Genesis creation narrative does not bother to talk of evil because the authors had before them the second narrative. Indeed, according to Schmaus, the first creation narrative in Genesis deliberately stresses the goodness of the world created by God, a goodness consisting in being

> "capable of achieving what God wanted it to achieve" (47).

In this achievement of course, man will have a special role, a creative function, though not, Schmaus insists, as an absolute creator: rather man's task is that of

> "form-giving activity" (48)

as he sets out to master the earth according to God's commission.

Whilst Schmaus insists that the creation of man is the goal in the first Genesis narrative, he admits that in the second narrative the cultivation of the earth is the goal, but then states

> "man has of course a significance that goes far beyond that, for in being designated for the cultivation of the earth he is at the same time installed as master of the earth" (49).

Thus both creation narratives in Genesis are seen by Schmaus to point to man's position as the high-point of creation. However, Schmaus notes also that man is seen as closely connected with the earth, formed of the dust of the earth, coming from the earth and returning to it. All these things are evidence in Schmaus' eyes of man's frailty and dependence on God, but here too he insists that man is different from the rest of creation, for

> "only into man has God breathed life" (50).

Furthermore, the statement that God breathed life into man is seen by Schmaus as an expression of the nearness of God to man, an equivalent to the statement in the first Genesis creation narrative that man is made in the image of God, and a necessary part of the statement of the love of God towards his people.

The idea of the love of God towards his chosen people was of course challenged by the experience of the Exile in Babylon, and Schmaus sees this as a link between the Genesis narratives and the creation passages in deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel. For, Schmaus claims, the first creation narrative in Genesis is an attempt to draw out of the distant past something that will turn the attention of the people to the salvific future, and he claims that deutero-Isaiah is engaged in the same work. Schmaus writes of Isaiah

> "we can even say that the author searched into the past only to find there the joyful future God has promised then, a future which will not forever remain unfulfilled, but will indeed become a reality" (51).

This notion of becoming is important to Schmaus, who claims that the biblical material from Genesis, the Psalms and the prophets

> "expresses faith in God and his continuing creative activity" (52).

No actual texts are quoted or indicated in support of this statement. Schmaus goes on to talk of creatio continua, which he understands as the idea that God

> "continues to bring about all that occurs in nature and history" (53),

and then to admit that the wisdom books contain passages which stress

> "static existence rather than this continual process of becoming" (54).

Such passages, according to Schmaus, show the influence of Hellenistic thought and are attempts at demythologisation. However, he insists

that even the wisdom books stress that the world was created, in opposition to the Greek tendency to worship order and beauty and the world itself: thus, says Schmaus

> "if the creation texts in the wisdom literature emphasize cosmology, they do not disregard salvation history" (55).

Turning from the Old Testament to the New Testament, Schmaus claims that

> "here too the creation of the world is understood as the beginning of salvation history" (56)

and he also claims that the New Testament stresses the

> "eschatological orientation of the divine act of creation" (57).

This is expressed in the New Testament in a variety of ways, according to Schmaus, but he focuses particularly on Paul's

> "application to his contemporary situation of Old Testament thought concerning creation history" (58)

in asserting the Christ-centredness of creation. For Schmaus

> "creation is really the beginning of the Christ-event" (59)

and further

> "The Christ-event is not something added to the divine plan for creation; it was the core of the divine plan from the very beginning" (60).

Thus close does Schmaus find the connection between Creation and Christology in the biblical material.

Moving on from the biblical material, Schmaus considers briefly the development of the doctrine of creation within the church. He points out the ways in which various of the Church Fathers developed different aspects, and even different doctrines, of creation and he gives a very brief mention to other writers such as Augustine, Aquinas and Duns Scotus. Schmaus then goes on to direct attention to the creeds and what they state, and to various doctrinal statements of the

Roman Catholic Church. These are stated but not discussed, although Schmaus outlines the various worldly ideas and movements which he thinks forced the Roman Catholic Church to pronounce on these matters. In particular, in connection with the question of the incompatibility of the biblical statement of the creation of the world and modern scientific ideas, Schmaus quotes the Catholic Biblical Commission statement, which allows that the Genesis material conveys truths necessary to salvation in a language suitable to a less developed period, and then he adds

> "To understand these assertions of the Church we must be aware of its fundamental concern for the salvation of man and for truth. The forms in which this expresses itself are, however, capable of change" (61).

In developing the doctrine of creation, Schmaus notes

> "the doctrine of creation requires to be analysed with an eye to a diversity of contemporary issues" (62),

these issues being raised by science, philosophy and history. He insists

> "that a constructive relationship exists between science and theology is implicit in the belief that God created the world" (63)

although, he says, theology cannot claim to have the answers to all questions and must stay within its own bounds. The bounds are not delimited by Schmaus.

The main emphases of Schmaus' development of the doctrine of creation are God's freedom in creating something distinct from himself and the love which can be tentatively advanced as the reason from creation, with scriptural support from the Book of Wisdom and Proverbs. For Schmaus the idea of love as a motive for divine creation includes the notion that God's love desires a response, which comes in the relationship with men and their turning to him. Thus for Schmaus

> "dialogue with God is the meaning of the divine creative action" (64)

and this dialogue takes place along a set course, along which the world proceeds to fulfilment.

It is, in Schmaus' formulation, the world which proceeds to fulfilment, not just man. According to Schmaus, the creatures of this world are both dependent on God and independent of God, and the independence is both a valid reason for the making of non-theological statements about creatures and a guarantee of the individual value of each creature in the sight of God. Man is sought by God as a conversation partner, asserts Schmaus, and man is able to enter into dialogue with God directly, whereas the rest of creation can only enter into dialogue with God through man. Schmaus maintains that the importance of man over against the rest of creation is clearly shown in the Genesis creation stories:

> "both accounts are interested in bringing out the distinct position of man in the whole of creation" (65).

The distinct position of man involves of course mastering the rest of creation, and also the creative activity of man in helping to form the world under God.

Schmaus notes that the biblical claim that man was formed from the dust of the earth is in keeping with scientific claims about the rise of man from the animal kingdom insofar as man's body is concerned. He is also prepared to accept a moderate doctrine of evolution, that is, a doctrine which accepts a theory of evolution as a description of the physical and biological occurrence of man, but insists that there is something about man which is the result of God's creative will and cannot be adequately explained by any theory of evolution. Schmaus claims that such a doctrine traces the process of evolution to the

creative word of God and is consistent with scriptural material, since, according to Schmaus, scripture is concerned with testimony to the creative will of God rather than descriptions of the process of creation. But even a moderate theory of evolution

> "clearly indicates the orientation of the non-human world towards man" (66)

because, Schmaus claims, man could only have evolved if God had given things the power and impetus to transcend themselves and develop to higher forms of life. Man is, for Schmaus, the highest form of life possible on earth because Jesus Christ was a man.

Under the heading "God as Creator" Schmaus also deals with divine providence, and such matters as monogenism and the generation of the spiritual soul, of particular interest to Roman Catholics. However in these sections he adds little to the main lines already drawn. We turn therefore to consider his work in the light of Westermann's complaints. As far as biblical material is concerned, Schmaus makes direct use of a very small range of material indeed. No passage is expounded in detail, though the two Genesis creation narratives are examined to draw out their statements of the important place of man in creation. 16 passages are listed as supporting the claims that the Old Testament proclamation of creation is intended to support the proclamation of salvation, and these passages are drawn from various parts of the Old Testament. There is a list of passages from the wisdom literature which are claimed to support the thesis that the wisdom literature is concerned with salvation as much as with cosmology. Other than this, the majority of biblical references are to the New Testament. It seems clear that Schmaus does draw his direct biblical support from passages which are relevant to the teaching of salvation, and indeed his approach to the biblical

material would lead us to expect this.

Indirectly Schmaus draws on a wide range of material. He refers to "prophetic" and "priestly" ideas, without giving specific sources; he talks of the way people in Israel looked at their history, clearly drawing on the historical books of the Bible as well as the prophetic books and the Pentateuch; and in his discussion of evolution he draws on ideas of the work of the Spirit found most clearly in the New Testament. Not all the material thus alluded to can be described as necessary for the teaching of salvation, but the treatment of the ideas drawn from it emphasizes the salvific work of God at the expense of the creative. It is clear that Schmaus concentrates on man and his salvation. He quite clearly sees creation as looking forward to salvation, and is really interested in creation insofar as creation reveals God and particularly looks to God in Christ.

As far as science is concerned, Schmaus seems happy to accept the findings of science, where they do not conflict directly with biblical texts. He also talks of the author of the first Genesis story as

> "using all the scientific and cultural knowledge he possessed" (67)

and so appears to acknowledge that scientific knowledge has advanced since biblical times. However, Schmaus also maintains that the Genesis story must be read as a statement of faith in the creative will of God, not as an account of how the world began: in other words, it is not in conflict with scientific knowledge because it has different objectives from those of science. While he is prepared to let science have free rein in its own (undefined) area, and is prepared to accept those findings which fit in with biblical teaching as interpreted by

the Roman Catholic Church, it cannot be said that Schmaus attempts to build bridges between science and theology: rather he remains on the defensive, ready to tolerate science until one of his positions comes under attack.

Finally, Schmaus is quite definite that God is only interested in the world within the context of the history of the salvation of man. Fulfilment is found in dialogue with God, but the world can only enter into dialogue with God through man. Thus the fulfilment of the world depends on man, and the importance of the world to God is less than the importance of man.

We see then that in the case of Schmaus, three of Westermann's four alleged characteristics are quite clearly present. It is not true that Schmaus draws only on biblical material required for the teaching of salvation, although it is true that the other biblical material he uses is neither necessary for the teaching of salvation nor specially concerned with creation.

2.5 John Reumann

John Reumann's book on creation is entitled "Creation and new Creation" and subtitled "The past, present, and future of God's creative activity". What he seeks to do, Reumann says, is to examine what the Bible means by "creation" and "new creation", and how Israel went about making statements on creation, in the modest hope of getting

> "some hints as to how we today and our children, in a changing universe, may engage in the same process of speaking about creation, as ongoing affirmation of that "radical transcendence", God, whom we have come to know especially in Jesus Christ" (68).

The quoted sentence occurs in the penultimate paragraph of Reumann's first chapter, before he has examined any of the biblical material, and indicates the approach he adopts to the biblical material: he sees the biblical material on creation as primarily statements of faith, and he asks what is their connection with the theme of redemption in Christ.

Thus Reumann's chapter headings are significant: "Faith speaks about Creation", "Creation continues - redemptively" and "New Creation - Hope and new existence now" are the headings of the chapters in which biblical material is examined in detail, with the strands being drawn together in a final chapter entitled "Some conclusions about creation and new creation". From the very start, Reumann assumes a connection in the biblical material between the themes of creation and redemption, and at least part of his stated intention is to clarify that relationship. In view of that, one might expect an exhaustive study of the two themes through the Bible, but this is not Reumann's way. Instead he choses certain biblical passages to be examined in depth. He is quite open about his selectivity in this matter, claiming only

to be looking at examples of what the Bible says about creation and new creation. Unfortunately he gives no indication of the criteria used to select his particular examples, and although he lays a good deal of stress on the varities of biblical reflection on both his themes, he fails to indicate the differences between his chosen varieties and others. In the same way he mentions a large number of questions which he might have tackled but has not considered: but his reasons for leaving these particular questions on one side remain obscure.

Before getting down to the examination of the biblical material, Reumann sets out what he himself call an

> "evangelical hermeneutic" (69).

He begins with the claim that

> "more than fifteen different "creation theologies" in the Old and New Testaments can be identified" (70)

and he also claims that there are further variations to be found in the literature of the Intertestamental Period. He lists some of the biblical sources of these different creation theologies: we may note that while some of the different "theologies" discovered by Reumann would be generally accepted as different creation theologies, not everyone would accept all Reumann's claims. For example, it is not clear that the Book of Amos has a distinctive view of creation, as Reumann claims, and in this and other possibly contentious cases Reumann gives no grounds for his claim.

However, he does claim that all these different creation theologies can be identified, and that what is generally called "the biblical doctrine of creation" is actually a composite of the various biblical strands. Reumann draws attention to the tradition history approach to biblical studies which seeks, he says, to set biblical statements in

sequence, and also he draws attention to the fact that the so-called biblical doctrines have undergone reworking through the centuries of Christian theology. Thus, Reumann claims, the average Christian has the option of selecting the way in which he wishes to repeat the truths of the faith, while the systematic theologian has the task of re-interpreting all the varieties of witness in the language of his own day. Of course, says Reumann, the systematician works within limits, among them those confessional formulae which have become regulative in the life of the church, and

> "A theological approach reserves the right to judge the content of each statement in the scriptures by the heart of the scriptures, the gospel of Jesus Christ (or whatever else has been decided upon as criterion)" (71).

In the absence of other stated criteria, we must assume that for Reumann himself, each statement is to be judged by "the gospel of Jesus Christ".

Having set out his "evangelical hermenutic", Reumann also draws attention to the need to set biblical passages

> "squarely within their context in the history of religions generally" (72)

both to help us discover sources for and analogues to a biblical writer and

> "to help us see what is unusual about his words and where he speaks against his environment, as well as when he expresses himself in light of it" (73).

With this in mind, Reumann says, one ought to trace all Israel's statements chronologically through the Old Testament and the New Testament and the Intertestamental Period, to see how each one developed and was altered, but for reasons of space, he says, he cannot go into such detail. Instead he selects just two passages for examination as examples of Israel's statements on creation, without giving any reasons for selecting these two passages rather

than any others, and without justifying the claim that these two passages count as "Israel's statements on creation". The two passages chosen are I Corinthians 8: and Genesis 2: 4b - 4: 26, and they are discussed in that order.

In I Cor. 8, Reumann sees verse 6 as a pre-Pauline Christian credo, giving Christ a place in creation and its continuance. Reumann thinks that this particular credo is related to Stoic views about nature, perhaps as a Christian polemic against the Stoic views, a Christian way of insisting on the worship of God rather than nature. The early Christians, according to Reumann, would naturally bring the cry of acclamation "Jesus Christ is Lord" alongside their acclamation of God, and so quickly the credo would gather, and

> "then, by the year 50, Jesus has been given a place in the making of things, as agent of creation, this one through whom we exist" (74).

Reumann then draws attention specifically to the fact that in the credo

> "we have spotted Stoic language, Old Testament phrases, Jewish and Hellenistic ideas. Faith speaks in the tongues of men" (75).

He also points out that the credo talks in terms of man, being a confession for us, and then suggests that in this one verse creation and redemption are related and, in particular, that the verse sees

> "Christians as holding a particular place eschatologically in God's plan" (76).

How this concept of redemption is derived from the verse is not clear.

The next passage considered is Genesis 2:4b - 4: 26. Reumann gives a very brief survey of differences between the two Genesis accounts of creation, claiming that the first has the creation of man and woman as its pinnacle and is concerned mainly with combating pagan

myths and deities and the notions of chaos and disorder, while the second account has man and woman at the centre of its description and is concerned with combating fertility cults. In this connection, it is important for Reumann that the writer of the second Genesis story was a loyal follower of Yahweh: Reumann sees this anonymous writer as someone trying to come to terms with the changed world of Israel following the establishment of the monarchy, a man trying to tell Israel where God was and what God was doing in that generation. In particular, according to Reumann, this writer was faced with the fact that the Israelites lived among people with their own gods, their fertility rites, their own pagan myths of creation; the writer of the Genesis story, on Reumann's reading, wanted to insist that Yahweh is the source of fertility and

> "Yahweh in his love, not Baal, is the source of good" (77).

In the course of writing his story to show this, Reumann claims, the Genesis writer used ideas from his own time, myths and statements drawn from his pagan neighbours, but always bending them to the service of his own ends. Those ends are ends of faith, displaying the graciousness and magnificence of Yahweh. Thus, insists Reumann, this unknown writer (who might, according to Reumann, have been Nathan or Abithar!) has related creation and redemption by his insistence that sinning is not a cosmic principle but comes from human disobedience and is forgiven by a gracious God.

Reumann then goes on to draw conclusions from his two examples. He admits that there are

> "dozens of other biblical creation accounts which call for similar treatment" (78)

but claims that nevertheless some general conclusions can be drawn from his two chosen passages. He writes

> "Our findings may be expressed thus: in the pluralism of scripture's witness, faith - employing materials from the world of the day, reshaping them in the light of belief in the God of the exodus who has sent his son Jesus Christ to redeem - faith speaks of the God it knows, as the creator, munificent in his purposes and good, in terms of what his gracious work of creation means for man and his world" (79)

The next stage of Reumann's investigation is an excursus on the Christ hymn in Colossians, an excursus which is really a protest against a Hindu take-over of Christ. Reumann then moves on to consider more biblical passages under the conviction that creation is not concerned just with origins, but also with the dependence of man and his world on God. From this notion it follows, Reumann claims, that God's love will again and again break forth redemptively, and this leads him on to the question of the relationship between creation and redemption in Israel. Outlining the possibility of creation material circulating separately from redemption material, Reumann nevertheless quotes as the most widely accepted judgement, von Rad's statement to the effect that creation was subordinate to redemption in Israel. To see where the truth lies, he says, Reumann examines first some passages from pre-exilic prophets, then some psalms, then some material from Isaiah, chapters 40 - 66.

Reumann points out that there are very few references to creation in the pre-exilic prophetic material, and claims that what references there are support the idea that Israel knew a creation myth, drawn explicitly from pagan neighbours, in which Yahweh bested the dragon of the sea. Reumann supports his theory with references to three passages in Amos and one passage in each of Jeremiah, Habbakuk, and Ezekiel, though only the Amos passages are discussed in any detail. He also points out that the chaos-battle imagery is often transferred to the future tense, which means, he says,

"we are here on the verge of the apocalyptic mood, where creation-redemption was to take a new turn" (80).

Turning to the Psalms, Reumann insists that here the emphasis is on the creation of Israel, rather than the creation of the world. Though the Psalms reflect the thought-world of the day, says Reumann, all the images have been "Yahwehized" (81) and made to refer to God's work in the history of Israel. This work is a continuing work, Reumann asserts, and he claims that the Psalms reflect this factor as well. All these ideas are supported by a few references to Pss. 100, 89, 8, 74.

Next Reumann turns to Deutero-Isaiah. Here he is categoric: he states

"Deutero-Isaiah presents us with the most massive and amazing use of creation language in the entire Bible. But the primary purpose of it all is to get across a message of redemption" (82).

Following Stuhlmueller, Reumann sees the message of redemption in Deutero-Isaiah as stressing

"Yahweh's present creating, his continuing redemptive power" (83).

The main support for this claim comes from reference to Stuhlmueller's work, particularly on the use by Deutero-Isaiah of speech forms appropriate to temple worship. According to Reumann, this use of forms of temple worship would remind the exiles to whom the prophet was speaking of Jerusalem, and would revive their hopes of returning to praise Yahweh there again. This, Reumann claims, is a hope of redemption, and it is in this context that second Isaiah uses creation imagery to illustrate the lordship of Yahweh.

Finally in this chapter, Reumann turns to Third Isaiah, whom he sees as putting forward a new hope in a dark time. The new hope in Reumann's view is based firmly on the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. Reumann relates the promise of a new heaven and a new

earth to the promise of a new Jerusalem and a new people of Israel: thus while he claims that in Isaiah 65:25 we have

> "an important principle: the great time to come when Yahweh changes things will be like the golden age of creation when he first made the world" (84)

he also claims that the reference to new heaven and new earth in Isaiah 65:17

> "turn out really to refer to people, transformed, under God, God's people, the faithful in Israel" (85).

These claims are supported by a brief exegesis of Isaiah 65:16-25.

From these considerations Reumann turns to the meaning of new creation in the New Testament. This, he claims, is not to abandon New Testament views on original or continuing creation but to concentrate on what is new. Reumann claims to have shown in the two previous chapters some similarities between Old and New Testament discussions of creation, with the major difference between the two Testaments in this area being that the New Testament gives Jesus Christ a place in the work of creation. He notes various ways in which creation imagery is employed in the New Testament, but his attention is concentrated on the apocalyptic application of creation themes.

In this connection, Reumann looks first at Revelation 21, in which he finds a link between the talk of making all things new and the description of the new Jerusalem, a link which, he claims, shows that

> "creation/new creation imagery thus serves redemption" (86).

On Reumann's reading, the same use of the idea of a new heaven and earth is found in 2 Peter.

He then goes on to consider Paul's use of the phrase "New Creation". Reumann believes that Paul inherited not only Jewish ideas on creation

but also Christian claims about Jesus' role in creation. He also claims that Paul's use of creation imagery is typified in the apostle's account of his own conversion in 2 Corinthians 4, where we find, according to Reumann

> "creation is here the category which leaps into Paul's mind as analogy to what has happened to him in becoming Christian" (87).

With this key made, Reumann unlocks the passages in which Paul speaks of new creation. While noting that there are various views on what the phrase "new creation" means and on its origin, and claiming that the phrase probably means slightly different things in different places in Paul's writings, Reumann nevertheless reaches the firm conclusion that the thrust of Paul's statements on new creation is that new creation means

> "the new creaturehood of Christian believers, not a cosmic day-dream" (88).

In other words, just as Paul used creation language to talk of his own experience, so, Reumann claims, Paul uses creation language to talk of the experience of all Christians.

From his brief examination of the various passages from Old and New Testaments, Reumann draws a number of conclusions. He claims that the Bible talks of creation always in the

> "language of the day, including the world's terms and current scientific thought and theories" (89).

Further, the idea of God as Creator is related as a statement of faith to the idea of God as Redeemer, and this is also connected with the idea of continuing creation, which has a future thrust. According to Reumann, the formulations of the Bible have an existential thrust:

> "man and his existence are the concern" (90)

and Reumann's final conclusion on the relationship between creation and salvation is summed up as

> "the believer who has experienced redemption confesses the One who has delivered and made him what he is, through the action of creative redemption, which experience is then extrapolated back to the beginning of time, is confessed continually, and is hoped for in the time to come." (91).

If we now consider Reumann's work in the light of Westermann's complaints, what do we find? First, Reumann covers only a very small range of biblical material. Necessarily, in view of the method and plan of his book, Reumann's use of biblical material is almost all direct use, that is, with quotation and exegesis. Indirect use by allusion is infrequent, and the allusions are so fleeting that this indirect usage is insignificant. It is certainly true, on Reumann's own presentation, that all the passages he considers are part of the teaching of salvation. Reumann's approach is to start with a view and then to give illustrative biblical examples: thus his choice of biblical material is very much determined by his original view.

Reumann starts his work from the specific standpoint that speaking about creation is part of an ongoing affirmation of the God known in Jesus Christ. Less explicitly, he starts from an understanding of creation as somehow subordinate to redemption: the whole thrust of his work is that the biblical material on creation points primarily to man and his salvation.

There is no attempt in Reumann's work to build bridges between modern science and biblical views. He states, with little supporting evidence, that the biblical writers use the science of their day; he states too a conviction that the Christian of today

> "needs to avail himself of all knowledge about God and the world available through the natural world, common sense, and science, and through salvation" (92).

However, nowhere in Reumann's work is there any attempt to relate modern science to the biblical material: rather, it is as though the

two are explicitly divorced and cannot be expected to meet.

Finally, Reumann's conception of new creation does not lead, as one might expect, to a new presentation of the biblical material on creation. Rather his emphasis is on mission, the making of everyone into a Christian, on the grounds that only by becoming part of the redeemed community can one enjoy the new creation. There are a few hints in Reumann's work about stewardship of the earth, but perhaps Reumann's approach is summed up in this cry:

> "Creation! It belongs to God but is entrusted to all of us, as mankind, who are the creatures and climax of God's creation" (93).

In other words, the worm trodden to the earth or the star in the Milky Way are of no interest to Reumann, or to God.

We see then that all four of Westermann's characteristics are present in Reumann's work in a very clear way. Indeed Reumann's work could be seen as an attempt to justify three of the four as proper characteristics of the modern theological approach to creation, the relationship between theology and science being the odd man out. Thus Reumann implicitly denies Westermann's claims about what is needed in a modern, relevant, biblically respectable doctrine of creation.

2.6 Conclusion

If we try to draw together in summary the results of our brief look at the work of four theological writers, the overwhelming impression is that Westermann's strictures are entirely justified. The range of biblical material considered by the four writers under review varies, but in all four cases we have seen that the biblical material used is that appropriate to the teaching of salvation. In each case, the approach to the biblical material has been clearly shaped by prior admitted theological considerations, and in each case those prior considerations have included a strong emphasis on man, his situation, and his salvation. The overall impression is that the theological writers are much more concerned with man than with creation, and it is perhaps significant in this respect that the creation of man is in every case seen as the main point of one or both of the Genesis creation stories.

None of the four writers examined makes any real attempt to build bridges between modern science and theology or the biblical material, despite some lip service to the need for theology to take account of modern science. None of them seems to think that the biblical material on creation has anything to offer modern science; the general impression the four writers give is that, while the biblical material has its uses, those uses are restricted to areas not yet overshadowed by the definite pronouncements of science. All four writers agree that the biblical reflection on creation is not concerned with how the universe came into being, and all four agree that no doctrine of creation should be concerned with that question.

Finally, none of the four theological writers reviewed makes any attempt to offer a new, vital presentation of the biblical reflection on

creation. They are not concerned with the world apart from its role as a stage for man, and they do not seem to think that God is much concerned about anything in creation except man.

So the four characteristics of modern theologians' presentations of the biblical reflection on creation which we drew from Westermann's work seem indeed to be leading characteristics of the works examined. Westermann implied that these four characteristics are characteristics of presentations of the biblical reflection which misrepresent the biblical reflection. He also implied that the biblical scholars had done better and had provided material and insights to correct the errors of the theologians. To this claim we now turn.

Chapter 3: Four Old Testament Scholars

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we consider reflection by some modern biblical scholars on the biblical material on creation. All four scholars selected for this enquiry are Old Testament scholars, a fact which reflects the lack of material on creation in the New Testament. New Testament scholars discuss the meaning of "new creation" and the theories which link Jesus Christ with the work of creation, but the discussions assume an understanding in New Testament times of a doctrine of creation arising from the Old Testament. Thus, while an alleged Hebrew understanding of creation is present in the background, there is little or no discussion of biblical material on creation among New Testament scholars. We therefore turn to Old Testament scholars and their discussions of biblical material on creation.

The sources for the investigation are commentaries on the books of the Old Testament, commentaries on the books of the Apocrypha, and Theologies of the Old Testament. As one would expect, every writer of a Theology of the Old Testament has something to say about the biblical material on creation, so there is no shortage of material. Since the works of four theological writers were examined in the previous chapter, the works of four Old Testament scholars have been chosen for examination in this chapter. Once again, attention has been paid to schools of thought, so that a range of starting points and approaches to the Old Testament could be examined.

Gerhard von Rad is a giant of twentieth-century Old Testament study as Karl Barth is of twentieth-century theology, and indeed the two giants have undoubtably influenced one another. Von Rad's work has drawn the main lines which have been the basis of much of modern Old Testament

study, and his two volume work "Old Testament Theology" is a classic and standard work; in addition he has written a detailed commentary on the book of Genesis, and a major work on the Wisdom literature. Thus von Rad almost selects himself as a subject for this enquiry.

The work of C. Westermann on the biblical material on creation also almost selects itself for our study, since it is Westermann's complaints about modern theologians and their approach to the biblical material on creation which provide the starting point for our study. In addition, Westermann is also recognised as a giant among twentieth century Old Testament scholars, so his detailed reflections on the biblical material on creation are of interest.

J.L. McKenzie is included because he is both an American and a Roman Catholic, and thus begins his study of the Old Testament from a background different to that of the predominant Protestant scholars from Europe. McKenzie's "A Theology of the Old Testament" has a rather different approach to that of von Rad, at least at first sight.

Finally W. Zimmerli is included as an Old Testament scholar of note whose approach and emphases are sufficiently different from those of von Rad and Westermann to provide a fresh look at the biblical material.

In each case we shall examine the writer's discussion of the biblical material on creation, noting exactly what biblical material is considered as relating to creation. We shall try in each case to draw out the main lines of the writer's view of the biblical reflection on creation, to ascertain what material has been offered by the biblical scholar to the theologians to aid the theologians in their reflection on creation.

3.2. Gerhard von Rad

Gerhard von Rad's approach to all the Old Testament material relating to creation is dominated by his view that

> "the Yahwistic faith of the Old Testament is a faith based on the notion of election and therefore primarily concerned with salvation" (1).

This statement occurs in the opening paragraph of his essay on the theological problem of the doctrine of creation, and is echoed in slightly different form at various points in his Old Testament Theology. We must note that for von Rad, the theologian of the Old Testament is concerned with

> "Israel's own explicit assertions about Yahweh" (2),

and von Rad sees the relationship between Yahweh and Israel as shown in the Old Testament in only one way, namely as

> "a continuing divine activity in history" (3).

The assertions made by Israel about this continuing divine activity were assertions that changed and went on changing, according to von Rad; he writes that Israel told the story of the acts of Yahweh in history and then

> "she thought the whole thing through again and called fresh concepts to her aid to re-tell it, in order to come to a better understanding of her experience and a more adequate realisation of her own peculiarity" (4).

The "experience" of Israel and her "peculiarity" come together for von Rad in the notion of election, and, more specifically, in the fact that

> "because of special historical experiences, Yahwism in Ancient Israel regarded itself exclusively as a religion of salvation" (5).

This claim is supported by appeal to the very old confessional formulae of Israel, in particular the one which von Rad refers to as the "Credo", found in Deut. 26: 5-9. Thus we have two themes, Yahweh's action in self-revelation and salvation history, which in von Rad's

view dominate and shape the work of the Old Testament writers and editors.

Turning more directly to the Old Testament material on creation, we find that for von Rad there is no doubt that the same twin themes have shaped the material, with the theme of salvation the more prominent of the two. He is convinced that in Israel the doctrine of creation was always subordinate to the doctrine of redemption, and he writes

> "we regard this soteriological interpretation of the work of creation as the most primitive expression of Yahwistic belief concerning Yahweh as creator of the world" (6).

The

> "historical problem of the origin" (7)

of Israel's beliefs about creation is not for von Rad a very important question: of greater importance is the relationship between Israel's beliefs about creation and her beliefs about the saving acts of Yahweh in history, and in particular the way in which Israel worked out the relationship between the two. Von Rad considers the making of a connection between the creation beliefs and the saving history as theologically

> "a great achievement" (8)

and something only achieved at a fairly late stage in the history of Israel.

This does not mean that Israel had no thoughts about Yahweh as creator at an earlier stage in her history, and von Rad says that there are

> "some decidedly old passages referring to the belief in creation" (9),

citing Gen. 14: 19 & 22; Gen. 24: 3; Ps. 19: 2ff. Furthermore, he writes

> "It is hard to imagine that, in the environment of Canaan, whose religious atmosphere was saturated with creation myths, it would not have occurred to Israel to connect creation - that is, heaven, earth, the stars, the sea, plants and animals - with Yahweh" (10).

However, von Rad points out that the old cultic credo contained nothing about creation, and he claims that the more comprehensive statements about the creation of the world by Yahweh are only found in texts of a later time. He puts the late emergence of a doctrine of creation in Israel down to the difficulties of bringing into a proper theological relationship the old beliefs about creation and the tradition of the saving acts of Yahweh in history which, according to von Rad, was peculiarly Israel's own.

Though he does not explicitly say so, von Rad seems to accept the view, explicitly stated by others, that Deutero-Isaiah was the first in Israel to put together a theologically coherent doctrine of creation. Certainly von Rad regards Deutero-Isaiah as one of the chief Old Testament witnesses about creation, although

> "the allusions to Yahweh as the creator are far from being the primary subject of Deutero-Isaiah's message" (11).

In fact von Rad finds the soteriological understanding of creation very marked in the work of this prophet. He claims that whenever Deutero-Isaiah mentions creation, he also mentions salvation or redemption; further, von Rad claims that the allusions to creation are always parallel to or subordinate to the soteriological references.

Thus, on von Rad's reading, the references to Yahweh as creator in Isaiah 42: 5 or 43: 1 are subordinate clauses, intended to aid the passage to a principal clause referring to redemption. Similarly in Isaiah 44: 24b - 28, the allusion to the creator is subordinate according to von Rad, and in Isaiah 40: 27ff, the doctrine of creation, he claims is introduced simply to provide a foundation for faith in Yahweh as redeemer. In Isaiah 44: 24 and 54: 5 the ideas of redeemer and creator are found side by side, and in Isaiah 54: 9f the ideas of Yahweh as creator of the world and creator of Israel are brought

together: for von Rad, in view of the cultic credo, the ideas of creator of Israel and redeemer are the same, so here again he claims that creation and redemption are brought together. Thus he claims we can see that in Deutero-Isaiah the doctrine of creation is never found as an independent belief appearing in its own right. Rather the references to creation are intended to support belief in Yahweh as Redeemer and

> "to reinforce confidence in the power of Yahweh and his readiness to help" (12),

which they can do because

> "Deutero-Isaiah obviously sees a saving event in creation itself" (13).

In other words, according to von Rad Deutero-Isaiah regards creation as the first of the saving acts of Yahweh.

As already noted, von Rad sees the soteriological understanding of creation as a primitive form in Israel, and it is from this standpoint that he considers the material on creation in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. According to von Rad, these two chapters are part of the primeval history of Israel, built out of all kinds of traditional material and added to the divine history as a prefix. The addition of the primeval history to the divine history was, says von Rad, part of the process of widening the theological base of the story of the saving acts of Yahweh. In von Rad's view, the divine history expanded from the story of the creation of the people of Israel and their entry to the Promised Land, as represented for example in the cultic credo, to include such stories as that of the call of Abram, and this expansion was made for theological reasons. However, the theologically expanded divine history needed a base which the old credo could not supply, says von Rad; so, he claims, the

beginnings of the divine history were pushed back in time to the creation:

> "presumptuous as it may sound, creation is part of the aetiology of Israel" (14).

However

> "this pushing back of the beginning of the saving history was only possible because creation itself was regarded as a saving work of Yahweh's" (15).

In other words, the first two chapters of Genesis are, for von Rad, the work of writers or editors who started from a conviction of Yahweh's saving activity on behalf of Israel and boldly pushed that activity back in time as far as they could go, so that the testimony to Yahweh as creator undergirds their faith in salvation and election.

Von Rad does not deny that the first two chapters of Genesis contain very old material, and he agrees with the general concensus of Old Testament scholarship in dating the second creation story in Genesis earlier than the first (and therefore earlier than the work of Deutero-Isaiah). However, von Rad insists that the difference in age of the two stories must not be used too much as a key to their interpretation: though he accepts that the second story is more "simple" than the first and uses a more "pictorial" method, yet he insists that the second story is still of great theological substance. For von Rad, the difference between the two stories lies not just in the way they present their material, but also in the subject of interest; the first story, on von Rad's reading is mainly concerned with the world and man in it, while the second story is more concerned with man's relationship to his immediate environment. Both stories, however, have the creation of man as their chief end, according to von Rad, and both understand

> "creation as effected strictly for man's sake, with him as its centre and objective" (16)

and here we see the soteriological note emerging again.

The presentation of creation in the first chapters of Genesis is only one side of Israel's speech about creation, though for von Rad it is the more important side. Another way of speaking of creation found in the Old Testament involves the use of the concept of a dramatic struggle between Yahweh and the powers of Chaos, and is connected in some way with other creation material found in neighbouring peoples, such as the Babylonian story of Marduk's battle with Timat. Von Rad accepts that there is some connection, but he does not want to make too much of it, insisting that a

> "direct connection, amounting to a "borrowing", cannot be assumed" (17).

Moreover, he insists that the use of the struggle concept is restricted to

> "incidental apostrophisings, and this clearly in contexts where no value is laid upon exact theological statements" (18)

and he claims that

> "it is the poets and prophets who unconcernedly and casually make use of these more popular ideas" (19).

That these popular ideas expressed something of the belief of Yahwism, von Rad accepts, but he insists that in these popular ideas the same soteriological understanding of creation is at work. All that has happened, in his view, is that the popular expression of Israel's faith in the creator occurs in a form which has absorbed, purified, and re-used images from sources outside Israel.

Most of the references to the struggle of Yahweh with Chaos occur in the Psalms, and it is in the Psalms that we find another element in what von Rad calls "Israel's witness to creation", the element of praise. There are statements, sometimes only by the way, about creator and creation whose main purpose is to glorify the creator, says von Rad, and he sees such statements as resting on a doctrine of

creation, but not intended to teach anything about it. Consequently, he claims

"we have only the right to make indirect use of them" (20),

and he also points out that the sheer number of such instances compared with the small number of theological and didactic passages should make us beware of over-estimating the didactic element in Israel's presentation of the doctine of creation.

Even used indirectly, the material of praise of creator and creation in the Psalms is seen by von Rad as supporting a more soteriological understanding of creation. According to him, one great theme of the Psalms is the activity of Yahweh in nature: in early Psalms, a miraculous and sometimes destructive activity, but later an activity directed towards ordering nature for man. Thus for von Rad, the Psalms gradually moved away from more "mythological" concepts to an understanding of the world's dependence on Yahweh and its openness to him, an understanding which is more rational, yet still bound firmly to faith in the saving god.

Another element found in the Psalms is the praise of Yahweh by nature. On von Rad's reading, the Psalms acknowledge that the created world has a splendour of its own from which praise of Yahweh arises. He points out that in the later Psalms this praise is seen as arising from the remotest places, but he also claims that this theme of the praise of Yahweh by nature is found in pre-exilic times, and he quotes Isaiah 6:3 as supporting evidence. Psalm 19 is an example in von Rad's eyes of an old song witnessing to the praise offered by nature, and it is also for him an example of the way in which later generations of Israelites became conscious of the

theological problem of the double witness to Yahweh of history and nature. For, von Rad claims, vv 8ff of this Psalm are a later addition, appended for theological reasons and designed to show that whatever the witness of the created world, it must be a silent witness, so

> "Israel's praise is directed by Yahweh's historical self-revelation given peculiarly to herself" (21).

These various elements found by von Rad in the psalter material on creation are all consistent with his view of the Psalms as a major part of Israel's answer to Yahweh, and her response to Yahweh's saving acts in history. Thus in his view, the material relating to creation must be understood as referring to creation as one of Yahweh's saving acts.

As already noted, von Rad sees the later Psalms as reaching for a more rational understanding of creation as part of salvation, and he sees them taking a greater interest in the mechanics of creation. The rational approach becomes more pronounced in his view when we turn to the Wisdom literature. Von Rad writes that a characteristic of the theological reflections of the Wisdom literature is

> "the determined effort to relate the phenomenon of the world, of "nature" with its secrets of creation, to the saving revelation addressed to man" (22).

According to him, interest among the Wisdom teachers in the traditions of the saving history had grown weak, and they had become more interested in creation and sought to understand it. However, says von Rad, the search for understanding involved finding a connection between creation and the saving history, working with a thesis which ran

> "in order to understand creation properly, one has to speak about Israel and the revelation of God's will granted to her" (23).

Elsewhere, von Rad asserts that this task of making a connection between the salvation history and creation was a second operation for the Wisdom teachers: at first, it was kept in the background by a more urgent task, that of expounding the self-revelation of creation. This task was undertaken outside the sphere of the cult, von Rad says, and he notes the diminished importance of the cult for the Wisdom teachers. More important for these teachers, he claims, is the "call of Wisdom", uttered out of secular life, and he notes that this call

> "does not legitimate itself from the saving history, but from creation" (24).

The call of wisdom, an

> "invitation to let oneself be guided in all the decisions of life by the instructions of the primeval order" (25)

is close, in von Rad's view, to the witness of creation mentioned in the Psalms, a witness to the ordering and regularity imposed by Yahweh, which should lead men to worship the creator. According to von Rad, the major difference between the Psalms and Wisdom here is that the witness of creation in the Psalms is directed towards God, whereas in Wisdom it is directed towards man. The call of wisdom to men is not directly a call from Yahweh, von Rad admits, but he insists that it is seen as part of the revelation of Yahweh, another way in which Yahweh reveals himself to men, for

> "creation not only exists, it also discharges truth" (26).

Thus it was that the witness to creation in the Wisdom literature could be united eventually with the traditions of the saving history: for, says von Rad, in the Wisdom teaching

> "the primeval order (wisdom) sought a dwelling among men and was directed by God to the people of Israel" (27).

Here again we have the two notes of revelation and salvation united in von Rad's discussion of the doctrine of creation in Israel.

We may sum up von Rad's approach to the doctrine of creation in the Old Testament thus: he sees the doctrine of creation in Israel as a late development extending Israel's understanding of Yahweh as Saviour by the use of earlier beliefs to incorporate creation as one of the saving acts of Yahweh in history, but always in subordination to the doctrines of election and salvation. For von Rad, the doctrine of creation in the Old Testament speaks primarily of the dependence of man on God, of the goodness of God to man, and especially of the creation as being for the benefit of man.

3.3. John L. McKenzie

In his book "A Theology of the Old Testament", J.R. McKenzie deals with the biblical creation material mostly in the chapter entitled "Nature". McKenzie writes under the conviction that the task of an Old Testament theology is

> "the analysis of an experience through the study of the written records of that experience" (28);

the experience in question is an experience of

> "the reality of Yahweh" (29)

as recorded in the writings of the Old Testament,

> "the sole literary witness to that reality as the record of the experience of Israel, the sole historical witness" (30).

The analysis in McKenzie's case is based on an investigation of ways in which Israel experienced Yahweh, and one of those ways according to McKenzie is nature.

Before discussing how Israel experienced Yahweh through nature, McKenzie has dealt with Israel's experience of Yahweh through cult, revelation, and history. It is too much to read into the ordering of these categories any signs of a hierarchy or suggestions of the importance attached to each category by McKenzie: however, he does write

> "the priorities of the Israelite experience direct us to study the Israelite experience of God first in history; the Israelites also experienced God in nature" (31)

and this seems to suggest that to McKenzie Israel's experience of God in nature is of less importance than Israel's experience of God in other ways. McKenzie also says

> "the encounters of Israel with Yahweh revolve round two poles: salvation and judgement" (32),

but quite definitely, carefully and specifically states that he has not

> "classified creation as a saving act of history in the same sense in which other acts have been so classified" (33);

again, there is the suggestion that for Israel, experience of God through nature is of less importance than what are called "saving acts of history". However, McKenzie nowhere explicitly sets down a view of the relationship between creation and the so-called "salvation history".

One reason for McKenzie's refusal to see creation as a saving act in history is that he understands the Israelite belief in creation

> "even though it historicizes the mythical, as remaining basically mythical" (34).

He begins his chapter on Israel's experience of God in nature with a section on mythology and mythological thought which is intended to explain what he means by his description of the Israelite belief in creation as mythical.

According to McKenzie, myth

> "can be a symbolic way of expressing the truth" (35)

and

> "formulates in an acceptable way that unknown which man recognises but cannot define" (36).

Myth, McKenzie claims, is concerned not with explaining the phenomena of life, but with enabling man to live with those phenomena, and as new techniques and skills for examining phenomena become available, so there is a natural process of demythologizing. Yet, McKenzie claims, there are always phenomena which seem to transcend experience, and he instances the origin of life, which he claims is not yet analysed by science and is still viewed in a mythological way.

McKenzie insists that all myths are stories, and regards the characteristics of mythological thought as a description of reality

in terms of an archetypal event and an understanding of phenomena in terms of personal realities. He claims that myths become historicized

> "when the mythical event is seriously given a once-for-all character, the particularity of the contingent historical event" (37).

Thus, for example, McKenzie sees as historicization of myth the statement in the first Genesis creation account that God rested from the work of creation on the seventh day, a statement which, according to McKenzie, is intended to make it clear that creation is not annually renewed.

However, even though in this respect, and apparently in other respects alluded to but not explicitly described, McKenzie sees the first Genesis creation story as the historicization of myth, he nevertheless insists that it is still myth, because

> "the intellectual and linguistic frameworks are mythological" (38).

By this, he seems to mean simply that this creation story uses ideas and language shared with, perhaps even drawn from, other peoples who lived in the same area as the Israelites and who had creation myths. The same thing is true, on McKenzie's reading, of other material in the Old Testament referring to creation.

The "other peoples" referred to above are the Egyptians and Babylonians specifically and other, unspecified, dwellers in Mesopotamia and Canaan. According to McKenzie, these peoples all had myths which told of creation as a cyclic event, probably with an annual cycle, which is

> "the defeat of the forces of death and chaos and the production of new life" (39).

The earthly cycle of life and death, seen normally in vegetation

and on a larger scale in animals and mankind, was perceived, McKenzie claims, as the earthly counterpart of the cyclic struggle between the two powers of

> "light and darkness, life and death, good and evil, or order and chaos" (40).

If order, light, life win in each cycle, there is always in the background

> "the awareness that the monster of chaos would again have its turn" (41),

for, says, McKenzie,

> "man did indeed live on the fringe of chaos, and nature smote him often enough to keep him reminded that the victory of the creator over chaos was cyclical at best" (42).

It is even possible, McKenzie suggests, that the creation myths of these ancient peoples masked a fear that chaos would be the ultimate victor; certainly McKenzie sees the creation myths as a cultic recital to be used as part of a cultic ritual reassuring men of the annual victory of order and the recurrence of the cycle of life.

McKenzie finds that for the non-Israelite peoples

> "sex as a principle of life was prominent in the myth and ritual of creation" (43)

and he refers to a Canaanite myth in which the god is slain, rises, vanquishes his slayers, and restores the cycle of life by

> "his sexual commerce with the goddess". (44).

In this myth, as in others, according to McKenzie, we find united the ideas of strife and sex among the gods which are common in the creation myths of the peoples among whom the Israelites dwelt.

Such ideas may have been acceptable among other peoples, says McKenzie, but

> "orthodox believers in Yahweh could not discuss creation in terms of strife and sex in the world of the gods" (45).

He agrees that the people of Israel knew these ideas, that the Old Testament has many allusions to the adoption of Canaanite fertility cults in Israel, and that there are places in the Old Testament which reflect a combat between Yahweh and his adversaries very like the battle described in the Canaanite myths. However, McKenzie insists that when Israel came to tell the stories of creation,

> "it seems unlikely that orthodox Yahwist scribes would easily have incorporated mythical allusions which they could recognise as allusions to an idea of the deity completely out of harmony with Yahwism" (46),

and that any Israelite myth of combat between Yahweh and other forces probably

> "simply narrated a victory over the monster of chaos without any allusions to chaos as the primal source of being or to the function of sex in the cycle of life and death" (47).

Why Yahwism should thus accept certain parts of the surrounding creation myths and reject others is not explained by McKenzie; he merely claims that the biblical material together with evidence from other peoples shows that it was so.

In fact, on McKenzie's reading, the people of Israel did not bother with creation until they were forced to create myths in response to the myths of other people. According to McKenzie, the Israelites had no interest in the origins of the world, and no terms other than those of divine sex and strife in which to talk of creation, so they simply rejected all creation myths. Then eventually they had to respond to the creation myths of others and so created their own myths; why they should find it necessary to respond to the myths of others, McKenzie does not say.

Nor does he attempt to actually reconstruct the Israelite creation myth or myths, though in places he implies that the first creation story in Genesis is a refined form of a creation myth, refined because

it is historically late in the history of Israel, it is historicized myth, and it is largely anti-mythological. The comparative lateness of this creation story is relevant because there is, on McKenzie's own admission, much very old material relating to creation in the Old Testament, though again he does not explicitly say which material is in this category. Of course, much of that ancient material does seem to refer to strife and even perhaps sex as part of the creation myth, but all these ideas have been removed, McKenzie claims, by the time we reach the clear doctrine of creation expressed in Genesis. We have already touched on McKenzie's claim that the first Genesis story is historicized myth in that it drops the cyclic aspect of other creation stories. Going further, McKenzie claims that the Genesis story is anti-mythological because in it the sun, moon and stars have no relation to gods and goddesses:

> "they have been depersonalised and depotentiated" (48)

and thus the story becomes

> "a counterstatement to known myths of creation" (49).

However, the first Genesis creation story is not totally demythologised, it remains a myth, and this, according to McKenzie, is very important, for, he claims, it is only by retaining some mythical allusions that the Israelites were able to make room for the idea of creation as a continuing activity of Yahweh. This idea was very necessary to the Israelites, says McKenzie, because the Israelites were keenly aware of the acts of Yahweh in nature, in the storm and the wind, and the provision of sun and rain, and for the Israelite the regularity established by nature was part of the

> "assurance that Yahweh's creative power was constantly active to prevent nature from relapsing into chaos" (50);

thus the notion drawn from the creation myths of continuing creative

activity gave the Israelites a security which cannot be found in the Mesopotamian and Canaanite myths.

Another thing lacking in non-Israelite creation myths, according to McKenzie, is any position of importance for man; indeed in the Canaanite myth man does not appear at all. By contrast, says McKenzie, the creation myths of the Old Testament give man a prominent place. He writes

> "even in the more properly mythological forms of creation in the Old Testament, the victory of Yahweh over chaos makes the world habitable for man" (51),

and he claims that the second Genesis creation story is not an account of the creation of the world at all, but an account of the creation of man and woman, and that in the first Genesis creation story

> "man, far from an afterthought, is the climatic work of creation, described with a peculiar solemnity and at greater length than any other work" (52).

Not only does the biblical creation material, on McKenzie's account, give man an important place, it also assures man of his dominion over the whole of creation and of his special place in the eyes of Yahweh:

> "because man is the chief of the works of Yahweh, man can be assured of Yahweh's concern for him" (53).

McKenzie notes that modern man has lost this confidence in a power able to maintain order in the immense universe known today. He also notes that modern man has lost any feeling for the moods of nature and any sense of the power of the creator in nature. This is all to modern man's disadvantage, implies McKenzie, and he seems to be suggesting that a return to an idea of creation as he outlines it would be beneficial to modern man, and would help modern man lose his fear and despair in the face of the universe. Certainly, McKenzie claims, the biblical writers would not have had such a fear, and he instances

particularly second Isaiah, for whom, he says, the magnitude of the universe

> "would have been even more ample evidence of the power and will of Yahweh to save" (54).

Creation as an example of Yahweh's power to save is, for McKenzie, the key use of the myths of creation by second Isaiah. McKenzie agrees with many others in stating that in the work of this prophet we have the first developed doctrine of creation in the Old Testament, though McKenzie rejects the idea that the Israelite belief in creation originated with second Isaiah. In McKenzie's opinion, this prophet views history on a cosmic scale and sees the restoration of Israel after the Exile as an even more marvellous work than the creation of Israel through the Exodus, an event which can only be compared with the original creation of all things. So second Isaiah

> "invokes the arm of Yahweh to show again its creative power" (55)

and for this purpose employs, claims McKenzie, the imagery of the mythological combat between creator and chaos; but

> "the mythical account of creation did not show with desired clarity the absolute supremacy of Yahweh" (56)

and so the prophet was forced to develop explicitly a doctrine of creation. According to McKenzie, the first Genesis story was developed in response to the same need. Thus the first Genesis creation story and the material in second Isaiah relating to creation are seen to be part of the account of the mighty acts of God, serving to support the faith of Israel in the saving power of God.

In McKenzie's work, only the creation material from Genesis and from second Isaiah is treated in any depth, though McKenzie says explicitly that the first Genesis creation story is only one of the Old Testament versions of creation. Material from the Psalms and other places is quoted in illustration of the account of ancient mythological material,

but it is not analysed at all. Wisdom literature is not touched on in the chapter on nature, because Wisdom has a special chapter in McKenzie's book; however, in that special chapter, McKenzie merely notes that the wisdom of God is attested in creation, in a personified form, and that in the book of Job

> "the speech of Yahweh asks that one have faith in the demonstrated wisdom of the creator" (57).

The implication is that for McKenzie the role of creation in the Wisdom literature is simply to manifest the power or ingenuity of Yahweh.

Indeed, for McKenzie, the creation material in the Old Testament as a whole serves primarily to emphasize the absolute power of Yahweh, the god who had chosen Israel. On McKenzie's reading, the Old Testament material has been shaped by the encounter between Israel's particular montheistic faith in Yahweh and his saving acts, and the creation myths of surrounding peoples, with their claims to divine power, especially during the period of the Exile. Not only does the Israelite response deny the power of other gods, according to McKenzie, it also removes the fear and despair felt by other peoples in the face of potential chaos by assuring the Israelites that their Yahweh has created a good world for the benefit of his people.

3.4. Claus Westermann

C. Westermann approaches the Old Testament material relating to creation principally through a study of the material in the book of Genesis. He states that the explanation of this material needs to be supplemented by a consideration of material from the Psalms, Deutero-Isaiah, Job and the Wisdom literature, but has not himself published detailed examination of these other sources of material on creation. He has however indicated the lines along which such examination might proceed, and some of the work has been done by his pupil R. Albertz. We shall take brief note of Albertz' work in the appropriate place to help in getting a proper picture of Westermann's work.

Westermann claims that in Israel there never was one accepted presentation of the reflection on Creator and creation. He states

> "The Old Testament has no definitive teaching on creation" (58)

and insists that we can detect notable changes in the reflection on Creator-creation in the Old Testament. The first evidence for this claim is the widely recognised fact that the first two chapters of Genesis contain two distinct and separable accounts of creation, which are commonly assigned to different sources and dated in different centuries.

However, Westermann goes on to insist that there were not just two accounts of creation in Israel, but many,

> "a long series extending through the whole history of the tradition (59).

Nor did these accounts of creation simply build on one another, becoming ever more complex, but, Westermann claims,

> "there were successively and side by side several presentations of the story of Creation in ever new forms" (60).

As an example of this process of presentation and re-presentation, Westermann points to the first Genesis creation story which, he insists, is not the work of one author, in the sense of being an original composition by one man. According to Westermann the author

> "was at the same time one who received tradition and one who shaped what he received into a new form" (61),

and in doing so, he was just one of a long chain of people doing the same thing. In support of his claim, Westermann cites the conclusions of the study of the tradition of the material, claiming that

> "the texts which have come down to us have had a long oral tradition" (62)

and that traces of pre-history of the narrative can be readily discerned.

The oral traditions traceable in the Genesis material on creation are not according to Westermann, just Israelite oral traditions: they include material drawn from surrounding peoples. For Westermann it is quite clear that there is something common to all mankind in the stories of primeval history found in different parts of the world. Israel, he says, had knowledge of the beliefs of other nations and to some extent shared their convictions.

Westermann is adamant that the Old Testament has no belief in creation or in God as Creator, nor even knows a doctrine of creation, but has only reflection on the subject and story-telling about creation. In this, he claims, Israel is at one with other peoples, sharing

> "the common conviction that man must be understood as a creature of God and the world as a creature of the divine." (63).

According to Westermann, the people of the Old Testament and their contemporaries simply accepted that the world was created by some god or gods, because for them there was no alternative; the fact that the world was a creature of the divine was a presupposition of their

thinking. Westermann also insists that because these Old Testament folk had no alternative to the idea of a creator, their creation stories show no interest in how the world came into being or where the world came from. The history of the tradition shows, on Westermann's reading, that these intellectual questions are a later stage of development than the creation stories. In the creation narratives, both those of Israel and those of other peoples, Westermann finds an existential background, rather than a background of intellectual enquiry:

> "it was not the philosopher inquiring about his origins that spoke in the Creation narratives; it was man threatened by his surroundings" (64).

It is Westermann's conviction that both the story of the Flood, found worldwide, and what we know of the recital of the creation myths at the Babylonian New Year feast, serve as pointers to the fact that the creation myths

> "had the function of preserving the world and of giving security to life" (65),

and he sees this happening in Israel as much as elsewhere. He advances no specific evidence for this in the case of Israel, citing no textual support; but he claims that Israel naturally shared many of the pre-occupations of other peoples, and that those pre-occupations in the earliest periods are mainly to do with man's survival in the present.

Westermann sees myth as an important way of coping with the present by representing in the present what happened in the past. He insists that

> "to oppose myth and history in such a way that history presents what actually happened, while myth presents fiction is wholly unhistorical" (66);

rather

> "myth must be regarded as a reflection on reality, as a presentation of what has actually happened" (67).

Thus the biblical creation stories are, for Westermann, reflection on the past arising out of the present with a meaning which must be again and again rediscovered and re-presented in each generation.

Turning to the Genesis creation stories, Westermann insists that these stories must be set in the context of the whole account of origins given in Genesis 1 - 11. He isolates a number of motifs present in the various sections of these chapters, but insists that the eleven chapters must be regarded as a coherent unity. They deal, Westermann claims, with the beginning of the world and the community, the beginning of agriculture, urban life, the working of metals, and so on; with the defection of man, and man's alienation from God. According to Westermann, the stories of creation and flood hang together, because the flood preserves the memory of the possibility of the destruction of all that is created. Tied in with this is Westermann's claim that passages which deal with the defects of individuals are subordinated to the stories of the creation of man, while passages dealing with the defects of mankind as a whole are subordinated to the narrative of the flood.

The idea of two dominant strands among the many Old Testament presentations of the reflection on creation is important for Westermann's work. He separates out as the dominant strands the creation of the individual and the creation of the whole world, with the former being the older tradition; for Westermann, man came to think of the creation of mankind or the whole world only after becoming secure in his own existence:

> "Before man looked at the world as a whole and was able to stand off and ask how it came to be, he had already come to a global understanding of his own existence so that he was able to ask how he came to be and to tell stories about the origin of man" (68).

The first strand, that of the creation of the individual, Westermann

finds quite clear in the second creation narrative in Genesis. Not that this story is a simple narrative; on the contrary, Westermann finds in the present story two main narratives. One tells of the creation of man, the other of man's first defections: but both, on Westermann's reading, are concerned with man as an individual. The individual is presented, Westermann agrees, not as a lone individual but as a member of a community and in a relationship to God; but nevertheless Westermann insists that the focus of interest is man in his state as an erring individual on his way to death and a return to the earth. However, the community and man's relationships are very important on Westermann's reading, for he claims that in this creation story man is seen as a whole in all his existential relationships.

This is contrasted with the way in which, according to Westermann, the sciences divide and sub-divide the study of man and his world, becoming so specialised that they lose touch with each other. For Westermann, this specialization is dangerous and needs to be opposed, and he sees the biblical creation stories as a starting-point for opposition. On Westermann's account, the story of the creation of man from the earth in this second Genesis narrative demonstrates the unity of man as a creature; moreover, the fact that man made from dust becomes a living soul indicates, for Westermann, that man can only be studied in his vital existence, which includes his relationships with God, other men, and the world.

In the second Genesis creation story, Westermann finds points of significance for man's relationship to the animals and to woman. Not only does the story show an awareness of the fact that man once stood in a close relation to animals, but also claims Westermann, it has a very humanistic quality in that man is required to name the animals, that is, to accept them and decide how they will help him, a role

which is part of his dominion over the earth. Man is also required to accept woman, which he joyfully does, because she is the helper he needs: for Westermann, this is the climax of the story, as it expresses man's need for community.

On the other hand, the first creation story in Genesis is claimed by Westermann as part of a strand of tradition concerned with the creation of the whole world, though he does admit that there are signs in the story of an attempt to bring together the two traditions which Westermann has isolated. According to him, the material in Genesis 1 stands not at the beginning but in the middle of the sweep of history: before the story as we have it lies a long period of primitive myth and polytheistic myth, while after it come the periods of philosophical-theological and scientific reflection, in the latter of which we live. On Westermann's reading, the material in Genesis 1 shows traces of the primitive myths and at the same time gives

> "the first indications of a scientific understanding of how the world came into being" (69).

Westermann draws attention both to the similarities between the Genesis story and other non-Israelite creation narratives, and to the unique points of the Genesis story. One unique point which Westermann stresses is the structure of the story which, he claims, suggests the coming into existence of the world in several stages as a process which is moving towards a goal which transcends the work of creation. Similarly, Westermann finds the separation of light and darkness and the precedence of light to be points which indicate clearly that the story of creation

> "contains within itself yet another history" (70)

The creation of light, in Westermann's view, is different from the creation of the heavenly bodies: the creation of the latter is

described, he claims, so that they can be stripped of any idea of divinity, and simply become creatures created by God. In the same way, plants and animals are presented in the story, according to Westermann, as part of the Creator-creation relationship, for the plants and animals are created according to species, as part of a whole in which every part is important and has a function.

The same idea of function is found, claims Westermann, in the account of the creation of man in the first Genesis creation story. According to Westermann, the story emphasizes what was created and the purpose for which it was created by mentioning only the species man, as opposed to individual man, and man's status as a creature before God in the world. Here again Westermann finds a difference between the Genesis story and non-Israelite creation narratives, for he finds the non-Israelite narratives presenting a view of man as intended for the service of the gods, while he finds the Genesis story presenting a view of man as intended to civilise the earth.

Civilization of the earth on this view is the same as having dominion over the earth. Westermann draws attention to two points. First, he draws a parallel between the ancient concept of kingship and the idea of man's kingship over the earth, pointing out that the ancient king was not only responsible for the realm but also

> "bears and mediates blessings for the realm entrusted to him" (71);

thus for Westermann, the blessing of man by God in the first Genesis story is of special significance. Second, Westermann insists that the fact that the creation story gives man dominion over animals shows that man has learnt from his relationship with animals that dominion can be a relationship of trust.

Westermann then goes on to insist that the story's claim that man is made in the image of God has nothing to do with man's dominion. Rather, says Westermann, it means simply

> "that mankind is created so that something can happen between God and man" (72)

and that man's life may thereby be given meaning.

Finally in dealing with the first creation story in Genesis, Westermann deals with the suggestion that everything created is good. He claims that man cannot pass judgement on the world, because what the story says is that the created world is suitable for what God intended, whatever that may be.

In the last chapter of the small work "Creation", Westermann deals with what the intentions of God might be, as he discusses creation and redemption. He claims that in the Old Testament

> "the relationship between creation and redemption consists in a polarity" (73)

and that the two notions must be seen side by side. However, Westermann admits that the confession of Israel's salvation is at the centre of the Old Testament in the story of the Exodus. This account of God's saving-action, he claims, is then extended back to the very beginning of the world, so as to both base Israel's story of salvation on what had gone before and show that God's concern embraced all mankind, and not just Israel. Thus

> "the constricted history of a small people is presented as the leading, saving, preserving action of the same God who created the world and man" (74).

An important part of the Old Testament reflection on creation, according to Westermann, is that those who produced the biblical creation material

> "were deeply concerned to throw up a bridge between what others had been saying for thousands of years and their belief in Yahweh alone" (75),

linking their own concerns about life in the world with those of others. This leads him to point out that the types of creation account are limited, within the Bible and outside it, there being only a few basic forms which are found world-wide. According to Westermann this brings out more clearly what is special about the biblical account, namely that

> "it belongs to man's very state as a creature that he is defective" (76)

and that his defectiveness is many-sided. On Westermann's reading, the biblical material also shows that

> "man estranged from God by his defectiveness and transgressions is not, however, deprived of God's effective blessing" (77):

rather the blessing perseveres as God's saving act continues in the present.

Westermann points out that a link between God's saving act in the future and God's saving act in the past may be found in the work of second Isaiah, who

> "binds firmly together creation and redemption" (78).

While Westermann himself does not explore this idea any further or explicitly draw out the connections between creation and redemption in second Isaiah, his pupil R. Albertz has explored second Isaiah, Job, and the Psalms in the light of Westermann's work. Albertz finds in this material the same two dominant strands isolated within the Genesis material by Westermann, the strands of creation of the individual and creation of the whole world. He assigns to the former strand material from individual laments and divine oracles, claiming that these are concerned with Yahweh's dealings with the individuals he has created. On the other hand, according to Albertz, there is much material, in Psalms particularly but also in Job and second Isaiah,

which is concerned with praise of God the Creator, and this material he sees as part of the tradition concerned with the creation of the whole world, since in this material he finds a stress on the world-embracing power of Yahweh. It is this idea of the world-embracing power of Yahweh, according to Albertz and Westermann, which forms the main link in the biblical material between creation and redemption:

> "Israel expresses her praise of God in the polarity of God's majesty and his penetration down into the deep. God looks down into the deep in order to raise up from the deep; from man's point of view this raising up means salvation" (79).

3.5. Walther Zimmerli

Walther Zimmerli examines the biblical material on creation in his book "The Old Testament of the World" as part of an attempt to discover the attitude of the Old Testament to nature and the world, presented originally as lectures to students of all faculties in the University of Göttingen. He looks not only at the Genesis creation stories, but also at other material from Psalms, the Wisdom literature, and elsewhere.

Zimmerli notes immediately that, although one might expect to find the basic lines of Israel's approach to the world set out in the Genesis material, we do not actually meet Israel in the early chapters of Genesis. In these chapters Israel

> "is addressed in a broader context than that of God's own people" (80)

and the biblical chapters are more concerned with the world. However Zimmerli insists that we cannot adopt what he sees as our normal approach to the question of the origin of divine instruction, the way of setting out broad principles and judging the particular in the light of those principles; rather he claims that we must recognise that the faith of Israel is established before the wider investigation of the world. He points to the way in which the name Yahweh is understood, and claims that the Old Testament

> "remains bound to the experience of its own history" (81),

an experience which sees the Exodus as an act of divine salvation and the rest of history as the story of Yahweh's dealings with his people. Zimmerli writes

> "Faith encounters Yahweh in concrete events of history and binds man ever to these same events" (82)

and he then goes on to consider how the Old Testament speaks of the world and the beginnings of the world in this context.

Although Israel is not mentioned in the early chapters of Genesis, God is, and Zimmerli insists that these accounts are speaking of the same God who begins to deal with Israel in the time of Moses. Zimmerli claims that the group which experienced God's action in the departure from Egypt articulated its faith in Yahweh in the light of that experience and passed that faith on to other groups. When these believers in Yahweh entered the land of Canaan, according to Zimmerli they

> "entered a world of spiritual experience which already had much to say about the beginnings of the world and the world-orientation of belief in God" (83).

As evidence, Zimmerli points to texts from Ugarit, and he links them up with the story of Abraham and Melkizedek told in Genesis 14. The significant thing about this episode for Zimmerli is the blessing given by Melkizedek to Abraham, which refers to

> "God most high, creator of heaven and earth" (84);

according to Zimmerli, this blessing

> "demonstrates beyond doubt that before ever Israel took possession of Jerusalem under David, there was honoured in the city a god with the name El Elyon, of whom it was said that he was creator of heaven and earth" (85).

This in turn shows Zimmerli that Israel, on entering and settling in the land of Canaan, must have encountered claims on behalf of local deities which could not be accommodated easily alongside what Zimmerli sees as Israel's exclusive belief in one God. That some accommodations between deities were made in the ancient world Zimmerli accepts, but he insists

> "one expects something quite different from Israel's exclusive faith" (86)

and goes on to claim that when faced with the problem of the creator of the world, Israel could only make one statement: the creator is Yahweh. In support of his claim, Zimmerli points to the continuation

of the story of Abraham and Melkizedek, in which Abraham

> "quite calmly and naturally ascribes to Yahweh not merely the attributes but also the very name of the God of Melkizedek" (87).

According to Zimmerli, this shows that Yahweh has become the divine Lord and creator long before he was faced with the claims of Jerusalem's El Elyon when David took the city and made it his capital; elsewhere however, Zimmerli says that Israel actually formulated her faith in creator and divine creation fairly late in her history.

On Zimmerli's reading, the declaration that Yahweh is creator does arise in opposition to the claims of deities acknowledged in the surrounding world, though he also thinks that it is now impossible to determine against which deities the Genesis creation stories were formed, or even whether different deities were involved in the two different stories. That the Genesis creation stories are very different in form and detail, Zimmerli acknowledges and he suggests that the striking difference arises from the fact that Israel never developed a unified presentation of the creation of the world, in marked contrast to the presentation of the account of the Exodus, which has almost credal unity. Another marked contrast between the presentation of creation and the presentation of the Exodus is to be found, according to Zimmerli, in the language used in the presentations: for the confession of Yahweh who led them out of the land of Egypt, Israel, Zimmerli implies, had to develop her own linguistic forms and images; while for the presentation of creation the surrounding world had already provided much of the necessary linguistic material and

> "Israel had no need to create the language in which she had to speak" (88).

However, Israel's use of the linguistic devices and imagery adopted

from surrounding peoples is distinctive, in Zimmerli's view. He draws attention to four ways in which the origin of the world is approached among other ancient peoples: creation through generation, creation through struggle with chaos, creation as the work of a craftsman, and creation through words. These elements are all apparently found in the Genesis stories on a hasty inspection, but, according to Zimmerli, a more careful examination will establish that these ideas are used in a very different fashion in Genesis from the way they are employed by other ancient peoples. In the second, older Genesis story, he claims, there is no attempt to present Yahweh as a self-generator, nor any attempt to describe the subordination of other gods to the creator; instead

> "it is simply and solemnly taken for granted that the Lord God is there and that whatever else is there, be it world, earth and heaven, comes from him" (89).

For Zimmerli, the highlight of the second Genesis story is the creation of woman from man, the final fulfilment of God's intention to gear the world to man and make it good for man. With the creation of woman, Zimmerli says, man

> "may be a complete man of the world in the enjoyment of what he has received" (90).

The first Genesis story is dominated on Zimmerli's reading by the notion of the Word of Yahweh. According to Zimmerli, this word in creation is carried on through the history of Israel and the story of the covenant, unlike the word of creation in the stories of other nations, in which the word of creation reveals the word and command of the god. In this first Genesis creation story, Zimmerli finds the revelation of a decisive will which calls everything into being, including the powers of nature which were given awesome respect among Israel's neighbours, like the sun and the moon, and he is sure that this Genesis

story is part of a polemic against these foreign nature deities.

Zimmerli also draws attention to the fact that both Genesis creation stories insist that the world is not self-contained or self-sufficient, over against what Zimmerli sees as the Greek idea of the cosmos, an ordered whole. In the Old Testament, Zimmerli claims, the whole is simply the sum of the parts which have been created, and "the world" must be understood simply as "heaven and earth".

However for Zimmerli the main interest of the Genesis creation narratives, especially the first, lies in what they have to say about man,

> "the great question of our theme" (91).

He finds two things held in balance: on the one hand man is part of the created world, on the other man is different from and elevated above all other creatures. Man, says Zimmerli, is

> "bound to the world in two different ways: he is incorporated in it, and he is to rule over it" (92).

The other stories in the first eleven chapters of Genesis are seen by Zimmerli as illustration of this double-sided relationship, for they show on his reading both the unique freedom conferred on man by the creator, and man's misuse of that freedom.

Zimmerli goes on to consider more fully the relationship between man and the world in which man is set. First he notes that the first Genesis creation story proceeds from bare foundations to ever richer furnishing of the world, and he points out that the fish and birds and beasts as well as man are told to be fruitful and increase, but only man is told to subdue and rule. Zimmerli sees this blessing by God as an important part of the story, injecting something extra into the midst of the world.

The same blessing, in Zimmerli's view, is extended to the plants. He sees the first Genesis creation story's account of the creation of the plants as related to Greek and other ideas of "mother earth", but points out that in the biblical story, the earth is fruitful only because God commanded it to be so:

> "it is the divine creative word that has opened up those hidden powers" (92).

Zimmerli notes especially the wonder shown in both the Genesis accounts and the Psalms with reference to nature.

Against this background, Zimmerli claims, the biblical material sets man as united with the fertile animal kingdom. Man too is fertile, and Zimmerli makes much of the Old Testament understanding of sexual relationships. He claims that

> "The man of the Old Testament knows that marriage is his normal state" (94)

and that the man of the Old Testament saw in his family God's blessing and expected to take pleasure from it. The man of the Old Testament, on Zimmerli's reading, also expected to enjoy his wife, and attention is drawn to Old Testament passages such as that in Deuteronomy freeing a newly married man from military service or public duty. Zimmerli also draws attention to the Song of Songs, which he sees as

> "a collection of artistically arranged love songs" (95)

and which, he claims, should not be given an allegorical or even religious interpretation or setting, but should be seen as worldly and secular and at the same time as saying

> "of love and sexuality, something which is quite in the Spirit of the Old Testament" (96).

The spirit of the Old Testament in this sphere, as Zimmerli sees it, is quite at home with physical love, but sees in that love both power and blessing. The power is shown for Zimmerli by the insistence that

in marriage the man, rather than the woman, must leave his family

> "quite contrary to patriarchal practice" (97);

the blessing lies in the pleasure and fertility found through the sexual relationship. For Zimmerli too, it is because marriage is regarded as a blessing bestowed by God that the Old Testament has strict rules to protect marriage against both adultery and sexual perversion.

Zimmerli points out that the Old Testament also recognises the other side of the coin, that the blessing can be called back by God and that the blessing can be distorted by man's behaviour. Evidence of the first is found by Zimmerli in the story of Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac, while Zimmerli produces several examples of the dreadful distortion of the blessing, ranging from David to Proverbs. However he insists that in spite of all these possibilities of distortion, nowhere in the Old Testament

> "is there the slightest sign of any admonition to turn from the blessing which God has given to the world" (98).

From the blessing of fruitfulness Zimmerli turns to the other side of the blessing of man, the command to subdue the earth. In Psalm 8 he finds

> "man's sense of awe at this privilege within the world of creation" (99)

and he talks of the priestly writer of Genesis as

> "aware that there is a shadow falling across the light of the world of creation" (100)

but without developing a clear idea of how the shadow is connected to man's dominion over the earth. Zimmerli also talks of the

> "dark shadow of fear which the dominion of man spreads over the lower creatures" (101)

and links this to the change in God's provision of food for man: in

Genesis 1, plants only, but in the blessing after the flood, animals as well.

For Zimmerli, it is important that this blessing of the dominion of man is an imperative:

> "Man is not called to withdraw diffidently from the world; he is sent into it with a commission" (102).

However, Zimmerli points out that the Old Testament writers had no idea of modern means of mastering the world. According to Zimmerli, they saw hunting and fishing as necessary for survival, and did not reflect on what would happen if man's power over the world did not have to be expressed in that particular way.

From this Zimmerli goes on to consider

> "a still more subtle way of exercising power over the world" (103)

to be found in the Wisdom literature. Wisdom, Zimmerli claims,

> "thought resolutely within the framework of a theology of creation" (104)

and is concerned in part with curiosity after knowledge. Zimmerli cites the lists of created things from Israel's neighbours, and draws comparisons with the opening chapter of Genesis and other passages which, he says, exhibit the same characteristics; and he quotes from Proverbs to show awe in the face of something not accessible to human understanding. For Zimmerli

> "the limits of what man can do as he sets out to subdue the world are here clearly laid down" (105).

However, there is also for Zimmerli another side to Wisdom, which is concerned with what is very close at hand. He points out that in the Old Testament craftsmen are regarded as being among the wise, instancing the woman skilled in weaving the material for the holy place as well as the clever farmer, but he also insists that "counsel" is a key word in the Wisdom literature. Politics of course affords the best example of

this, but Zimmerli says

> "also in everyday life it is important to take good advice, to know the way the world functions, if life is to go on successfully" (106)

and he claims that the Wisdom literature uses the world of nature as a source of advice for man's practical life. This leads him on to consider the concept of order in the Wisdom literature, which in Zimmerli's view shows a direct influence on Israel from Egyptian Wisdom.

Order in the Wisdom literature of Israel, according to Zimmerli, is not just a world order, but includes order in the life of man. He points out that such a concept might seem to have connections with the Greek concept of the cosmos, with perhaps Yahweh accepted as a rather superior factor to be taken into account in man's planning. According to Zimmerli, this is not the view of Israel's Wisdom literature: rather, he says, Wisdom speaks clearly of God's freedom which can always overrule man's plans. Wisdom

> "is an attempt to come to terms securely with the order of the world, which man wants to understand" (107)

but remains aware of

> "the danger of excessive self-conceit and of security in one's knowledge" (108).

Zimmerli then goes on to a more careful examination of Qoheleth and Job. In Qoheleth, he finds

> "one of those whose wisdom has allowed him to go out into the world with the confident belief that life can be mastered" (109)

but nevertheless one confronting the uncontrollable, faced with a world which remains closed to man's attempts to grasp it. However, in the face of this world, Zimmerli claims, Qoheleth neither retreats into himself nor retreats into scepticism, but instead is ready to enjoy the good things that God has given him

"in the midst of this world which he cannot comprehend" (110). Zimmerli sees this as evidence that Qoheleth is a very strong reminder that man is called to subdue a world over which God alone rules.

Similarly, in Job Zimmerli finds an insistence on the incomprehensibility of God, in the face of those like Job's comforters who insist that they can understand God and so control the world. The book of Job on Zimmerli's reading, insists that man must stand firm in the face of his suffering and must not try to explain away his suffering or the world's riddles. At the same time, however, Zimmerli claims that the book of Job insists that man is in a world over which God rules.

Thus we return to the idea of Yahweh as divine Lord and Creator, belief in whom is formulated and held in response to and in the face of the claims of Israel's neighbours for their own gods and the challenge of what actually happens in the world. According to Zimmerli, although Israel

> "used cosmogenic material from its environment in formulating its faith in creation" (111)

and formulated that faith fairly late, nevertheless

> "Israel's faith must understand the creation of man by God as an event in which God bestows on man a great gift" (112).

3.6. Conclusion

Drawing together the results of this look at four Old Testament scholars and their work on the biblical material on creation, we are struck by the convergence of their views. There are differences between the scholars, differences of approach and emphasis, but there is a great unanimity among them concerning the main lines of Israel's belief in Yahweh as Creator. The main points of the consensus are as follows. Israel's belief in Yahweh as Creator depended on her belief in Yahweh as the God who had acted in history to choose and use Israel and who would tolerate no other gods. The belief in Yahweh as Creator was developed in opposition to the beliefs of surrounding nations, but drew on material, particularly imagery, used by the surrounding nations, as well as on Israel's own collection of ancient traditions concerning creation. Collecting, assimilating, and reflecting on all this material took a long time and a clear doctrine of creation only emerged at a comparatively late stage in Israel's history. In the doctrine, the main emphasis was on the dependence of all created things on Yahweh, the goodness of Yahweh to man in creating for man's benefit, and the idea that creation was the first saving act of God in Israel's history. The doctrine was not intended to answer questions about how the world came into being, but rather to assert that the God whom Israel encountered in history and in nature was also the God who created all things and was praised by his creation, and thus the doctrine was intended to encourage Israel to trust in the promises of Yahweh.

This then is the material presented by the biblical scholars to aid the reflection of the theologians. We now turn to set this material beside the work of the theological writers, to see whether and how the theological writers have made use of the insights offered by the biblical scholars.

Chapter 4: Theological Writers and Old Testament Scholars

4.1. Introduction

Setting side by side the summaries of the results of our examination first of four theological writers and then of four biblical scholars, we are struck immediately by some clear similarities in the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation. We noted that all four theological writers emphasise man, his situation, and his salvation, while all four Old Testament scholars agree that Israel's belief in Yahweh as Creator was secondary to Israel's belief in Yahweh as Saviour. All four theological writers agree that the biblical reflection on creation says nothing about how the world came into being, and has nothing to say to modern science; the four Old Testament scholars are unanimous in their claim that Israel had no interest in the question of how the world came into being, no science as we know it, and no real interest in nature. The four theological writers regard the world as the stage for man's salvation, and the four Old Testament scholars agree that the biblical reflection on creation emphasizes that creation was the first act of the saving-history and that creation showed the goodness of Yahweh to man.

Even in this very brief summary form, we can hear the two sets of writers echoing each other's themes. However it may be that the echoes are misleading, that the two sets of writers diverge much more in the detailed presentation of the biblical reflection on creation. To see whether or not this happens, we look again at the four leading characteristics of modern theological presentations of the biblical reflection on creation identified by Westermann, and we ask how these characteristics relate to the biblical reflection on creation as presented by the Old Testament scholars.

4.2. Comparison

Westermann's first characteristic of the modern theologians' presentations of the biblical reflection on creation was that the material used (in the presentation of creation) was drawn entirely from the texts needed for the teaching of salvation. In dealing with the four theological writers, we noted that the biblical material which contributed to the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation was of two kinds, direct and indirect. Direct material in our usage was material referred to by quotation or exegesis, while indirect material was other biblical material from which ideas were drawn without explicit quotation or exegesis of the biblical text. We found that the range of material was very narrow, covering only Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and the Psalms, with some references to the work of Deutero-Isaiah.

When we turn to the Old Testament scholars we find a similar usage of direct and indirect material, but with the presentation of the doctrine of creation based on a much wider range of material. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are supplemented by Genesis 3 to 11 (Westermann) and Genesis 14 (Zimmerli). The Psalms get a lot more attention, especially from von Rad, and Deutero-Isaiah contributes much more than in the case of the theological writers, partly because the Old Testament scholars are unanimous in their claim that the Israelite doctrine of creation was first formulated in a systematic fashion by Deutero-Isaiah. However, the Old Testament scholars also draw on other parts of the Old Testament to establish a picture of how Israel viewed the world. Thus the book of Deuteronomy is invoked to show the connection between the land and Yahweh, and the polemic of the prophets against those who seize land from others is recalled. In the same way, Deuteronomy and the prophets are called as witnesses to the unanimous rejection by

Israelites of non-Israelite deities and their fertility rites, a rejection which is claimed by the Old Testament scholars as significant both for the development of the doctrine of creation in Israel, and for setting limits to that doctrine, showing what Israel could or could not accept in a doctrine of creation.

By far the greatest extension by the Old Testament scholars of the range of biblical material under consideration comes in their use of the Wisdom literature. There is reference to Job in Macquarrie's work, and there are a few references to the Wisdom literature in Barth's work, but otherwise the theological writers leave the Wisdom material alone. The Old Testament scholars on the other hand discuss passages from Job, Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon in detail, because of the way in which this material handles the doctrine of creation, from an allegedly secular point of view. Zimmerli has written

"Wisdom moves resolutely within a framework of creation" (1)

and the other Old Testament scholars seem to agree. Nevertheless, there appear to be no attempts actually to bring to the light the alleged creation framework, and in the end this extension to the range of biblical material under consideration adds little to the picture developed from the rest of the Old Testament material.

Thus the range of material used as a basis for the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation by the two groups is not, in the end, so very different. The Old Testament scholars add colour to the picture, add details drawn from other places, but the main lines of the teaching are established using the same range of material as that used by the theological writers. Only the stress is really different, with the theological writers more inclined to make use of material

from Genesis while the Old Testament scholars make heavier use of passages from Deutero-Isaiah.

Turning from the range of biblical material used, we recall that Westermann's second characteristic was that the theologians had concentrated on the position of man in creation. One thing that became very clear in our review of four theological writers was indeed their great interest in the existential situation of man and their concentration on the salvation of man. We noted that all four theological writers expounded the doctrine of creation in the light of an understanding of salvation. This was most marked in the work of Karl Barth, with his emphatic statement that creation must be viewed in the light of Jesus Christ, as the first act in the series of acts of saving grace whose fulfilment is found in Jesus Christ. Michael Schmaus too insisted on a close link between creation and what he called "the Christ-event", seeing creation as the beginning of that event, with all its implications for human salvation. John Reumann concluded his work with the claim that the doctrine of creation is a confession of faith arising out of and extrapolated back from the believer's experience of redemption in Jesus Christ. With this view of creation from the view-point of salvation, we should link the idea common to these three writers, that creation provides the stage on which the drama of salvation is to be played out. For each of these three writers, the provision of a stage for the entry of Jesus Christ and the salvation of mankind is one of the reasons for the creation of the world by God. Only John Macquarrie departs from the Christo-centric view of creation: but he sees salvation as the making whole of man, and links salvation and creation through the idea of the freedom given to God's creatures. The importance of creation for Macquarrie lies in its being the basis for that freedom in letting-be.

Macquarrie is the one of our four theological writers who is most explicitly concerned with man and his existence in the world, and Macquarrie is the one of the quartet who is most explicit about the role of man in creation. This emphasis arises partly from Macquarrie's insistence on the fact that we can only understand the meaning of creatureliness by abstraction from our own existence, but is also related to his claim that man is the highest point on earth in a hierarchy of beings. The idea that man is the high-point of earthly life-forms is shared by the other theological writers, all of whom insist with Macquarrie that the creation of man is the main point of the first Genesis creation story. We have noted above that three of the quartet see one purpose of creation as the provision of a stage for the salvation of mankind. The same three regard man as created for some form of relationship with God in dialogue, a dialogue which has its best expression in the redemption of mankind in Jesus Christ. Macquarrie approaches the same point, though without the explicit Christology of the other three, when he talks of creativity as the ordered movement into richer kinds of being through God.

It is clear that our four theological writers all see creation from man's point of view: to them, creation is for man's benefit, to use Barth's blunt phrase. All four writers talk of the goodness shown by God in creating the world for man's benefit, of man's dependence on God, of God's provision for man's needs, and so on. Of course, the provision of Jesus Christ and the message of salvation are seen as the highest examples of the goodness of God, but salvation is seen as of one piece with the rest of God's goodness to man.

All these ideas are backed up in the work of our theological writers by reference to the biblical reflection on creation. The claim that

man is the high-point of earthly being is supported by reference to the Genesis creation stories, and the claims about the goodness of God in creating the world for man are backed by references to God's promises to man. Similarly, the concentration on creation from the point of view of salvation is backed in each writer by the insistence that the biblical material views creation from the point of view of salvation. Thus Reumann insists firmly that Deutero-Isaiah is primarily interested in getting across a message of redemption and that the prophet uses creation imagery for that purpose. Similarly, Schmaus sees the same prophet as pointing to a salvific future, reshaping traditions from the past and drawing on the Genesis material which, according to Schmaus, arises from the need of man for salvation in the face of challenges to faith. Barth goes even further, seeing all the Genesis material as being primarily about the connection between creation and the covenant of salvation between God and man. To read the four theological writers one would imagine that the biblical reflection on creation is guided throughout by the need to declare a message of salvation.

However, as we noted in looking at the work of each of the four theological writers, their approach to the biblical material is governed by theological considerations and by ideas formed before they approach the biblical material. Thus Barth declares that creation is the basis of the covenant before he begins to examine the biblical material, and Reumann is quite open about his careful selection of appropriate biblical material and his conviction that the biblical material must have something to say about God's redemptive dealings with mankind. Schmaus too makes his attitude clear by talking of God and Creation as one of the foundations of Christology, and by his forthright declaration that the biblical texts on creation must be

placed in the context of salvation history. Only Macquarrie takes a different line: he does not support his approach with much reference to the biblical material, and he claims that the biblical reflection on creation is concerned with man in the face of threats to his existence. However, here too we can see the influence of pre-conceptions, and a willingness to look in the biblical material for that which will support a theological idea, rather than asking what the biblical material is saying.

Such an approach may be a perfectly reasonable way of working for theologians, who are concerned with expounding doctrine rather than biblical exegesis, though when a theologian claims to be basing his doctrine on a radical exegesis of biblical passages, as Barth does, the reader is entitled to question the validity of the exegesis and look askance at eisegesis. When we turn to the Old Testament scholars, whose claim is apparently that they are presenting what the Bible says, we might expect to find a presentation which starts with the biblical material and no preconceptions. Whether this is a reasonable expectation, and whether it is a true picture of what actually happens, are questions to which we shall return later in section 4.4 below.

First however we must note that the picture of the biblical reflection on creation as seen by the theological writers, with the emphasis on salvation and creation viewed from the point of view of man, receives strong support from the work of the Old Testament scholars. Concerning salvation, perhaps von Rad is the most explicit, and it may be significant that he is quoted with approval by three of the four theological writers. Von Rad claims that the Genesis material on creation is a projection back into the past of Israel's understanding of Yahweh as a god of salvation, and he states firmly that in the Bible

creation is subordinate to salvation. We saw in reviewing von Rad's work that he finds the relationship of subordination of creation to salvation right through the biblical material, even though he has some difficulty in making the relationship clear when he turns to the Wisdom literature. Thus von Rad's work undoubtably supports the view of the four theological writers.

The same is true of each of the other three Old Testament scholars reviewed, though not to the same degree. McKenzie talks of Deutero-Isaiah's use of the idea of creation as an example of Yahweh's power to save, and he puts the Genesis material and the material from Deutero-Isaiah together as part of an account of Yahweh's saving acts. Westermann prefers to see creation and redemption in Israelite thought as a polarity, linked together in the work of Deutero-Isaiah but present in all of the Old Testament; like von Rad, Westermann sees the Genesis creation stories as a projection back to the beginnings of the world of Yahweh's concern for Israel, though he sees the projection somewhat differently from von Rad. Zimmerli too links creation and salvation in the Old Testament, though he sees the link coming mostly from an understanding of the Exodus. Thus all the Old Testament scholars reviewed agree that the idea of salvation is the vital factor in Israel's history and that the biblical reflection on creation is based on the Israelite experience of a god of salvation, and so the Old Testament scholars and the theological writers are united in their insistence that the biblical reflection on creation is to be seen in the light of an experience of a Saving God.

The four Old Testament scholars and the four theological writers are also united in their claim that the biblical reflection on creation speaks of man as the high-point of creation and of the goodness of God

to man. Zimmerli is perhaps the most explicit of the Old Testament scholars in this respect, with his insistence that any biblical reflection on creation must see God's creation as a blessing and in particular as a blessing on man. It is Zimmerli who sees the creation of woman from man as the sign of man's fulfilment! Von Rad too claims explicitly that creation is effected for man's sake, McKenzie talks of man as the chief of the works of Yahweh, and Westermann talks of man being created so that something can happen between man and God. The chorus here is completely together, and when added to the work of the theological writers it mounts to a deafening clarion call: the biblical reflection on creation sees the world as created for man and his benefit. Thus the theological writers can point to the work of the biblical scholars to support their claims about the concentration of the biblical reflection on creation on salvation.

Linked with the emphasis on salvation is an interest in man's existential state. This is found most clearly in Macquarrie among the theological writers and Westermann among the Old Testament scholars, but it is present to a varying degree in all eight writers. They are agreed that the biblical reflection on creation is related to man's concern for himself in his environment, and in some way to threats to man's existence. According to the unanimous verdict of the four Old Testament scholars, the Israelites used the imagery of a battle between their god, Yahweh, and Chaos to represent the power of Yahweh to contain the threat to human existence posed by Chaos, though it is claimed insistently that the imagery used never allowed Chaos divine status. The four theological writers are on the whole too busy describing the goodness of God to man in creation to worry about threats to human existence, but Macquarrie does talk of the risk of creation.

It is clear that neither the theological writers nor the Old Testament scholars see much importance for modern man in this part of the biblical reflection on creation, even though the Old Testament scholars agree that the threats to human existence were important in forming the biblical reflection on creation.

From the concentration of the biblical reflection on salvation, we turn to the connection between the biblical reflection on creation and modern science. The third of Westermann's characteristics was the lack of efforts to build bridges between the biblical material and modern scientific explanations of the world. A lack of connection between the doctrine of creation and modern science was a problem to some of our theological writers (Macquarrie, Reumann), but not to the others, Barth and Schmaus. The latter two simply sidestepped the problem by maintaining a gap between the proper work of theology and the proper work of science. Macquarrie and Reumann seemed to want to have some dialogue with science, but when it came to the doctrine of creation, they both found themselves in some difficulty. In the end, all four theological writers were of the opinion that the doctrine of creation is not concerned with the same things as the modern physical or natural sciences. In particular, the doctrine of creation, according to all four theological writers, is not concerned with how the world came into being or even with the details of how man came to be as he is.

Following this line of thought, the four theological writers were happy to accept that the biblical reflection on creation was also not concerned with how the world came into being. We have already noted the consensus of opinion which sets the biblical reflection firmly in the light of salvation, but the four theological writers go further than this. They claim that the biblical reflection on creation shows that

Israel was not interested in nature and had no concept of science as it arose for example among the Greeks. Macquarrie in particular draws attention to this phenomenon, and finds its basis in the concern of Israel with salvation. At the same time, all four theological writers claim that the Genesis material in particular uses the cosmology of the day, and Macquarrie even talks of the biblical writers reflecting the science of their day. In other words, ancient Israel had no science of its own, but knew of the science of other nations and used the knowledge gained by others. No explanation is offered as to why this should be so.

An explanation is however offered in the work of the Old Testament scholars. They endorse the conclusions that Israel was not interested in science as we know it, and that Israel knew and used at least the cosmology of surrounding nations in talking of creation. However the Old Testament scholars claim that Israel simply assumed that Yahweh had created the world, and had no need to ask any further question. Westermann claims that none of Israel's neighbours would ask questions about how the world came into being, for in his view they too would assume that the world was created by some god or gods. We note in passing that while both theological writers and Old Testament scholars refer to the "cosmology" of nations surrounding Israel, the theological writers speak of "the science of the day" as something shared by Israel and her neighbours, while the Old Testament scholars prefer to talk of myths held in common by Israel and her neighbours.

It is not clear what the "cosmology of the day" or the "science of the day" actually amounted to. The implication of these phrases is that there were observations of some kind linked to some sort of systematic arrangement of knowledge of the material universe, but only in connection with cosmology is there any attempt to spell out the

"scientific knowledge" of the day. Even here, the word "belief" is used by our writers more readily than the word "knowledge", and this may be connected with the preference among the Old Testament scholars for the description "myth". Recent discussion of myths and their uses has given the word "myth" a range of meanings, and it is not easy to determine in every case precisely in what sense the word is being used by the various scholars. This makes it even more difficult to check that in connection with a biblical interest in science, theological writers and biblical scholars are talking about the same thing under different names.

The Old Testament scholars are agreed that at some point Israel did begin to ask intellectual questions about the world and nature, these questions being reflected in the Wisdom literature. The main characteristic of this questioning, as presented by the Old Testament scholars, is a search for order and regularity in nature. Westermann even refers to this idea of order in the first Genesis story as the beginnings of a scientific understanding of the world. There is no attempt in the work of the Old Testament scholars to put a date on the development of this "scientific understanding", though one might do so by trying to date such material as the Wisdom literature, but it is implied that this intellectual questioning is a late development in Israel, and a development that is not entirely welcome, at least to Old Testament scholars, because it reflects an interest in the secular world rather than the saving acts of Yahweh.

It is noteworthy that none of the eight writers reviewed seeks to actually build bridges between the biblical reflection on creation and any modern scientific understanding of the world, even though such bridge-building was one of the things demanded by Westermann, as we saw

in chapter 1. Perhaps this lack of bridge-building is partly because Israel had no science as we know it, so that making any link between the biblical material and modern science is likely to be difficult. Whatever the reason, the fact that none of our eight writers makes the attempt to build bridges does raise the question of whether it is possible to make links between the biblical material and modern scientific understanding, or whether we should simply accept that the two have no useful connection: to this subject we shall return in section 5.4 below.

For the present, we turn to the fourth of Westermann's characteristics, and the question as to God's interest in or concern for the world apart from man, and we find that on this subject our four theological writers have little to say. This should not surprise us in view of what has already been said about the theological writers' emphasis on man and his salvation, and on man as the pinnacle of creation. Barth is perhaps the most extreme in this respect, seeming to say that the creation apart from man has no value without man and his covenant of grace with God. Schmaus represents perhaps the other extreme in our quartet, with his claim that each creature has a value for God; but even Schmaus reckons that man is supreme, and seems to suggest that the earth can only fulfil its purposes for God through man. Macquarrie claims to give a proper place to nature with his analysis of creatureliness, but the effect is spoilt by his taking man as the paradigm of creatureliness. Reumann simply says that creation is entrusted to man's care.

For this set of related views, the theological writers draw on the biblical reflection on creation; as we have already seen, they think of the biblical reflection as being primarily about man and his salvation,

with not much to say about the world in which man lives. Certainly the theological writers give no hint that the biblical material reveals a God who is concerned about worms on the earth or stars in the heavens.

The Old Testament scholars agree with this conclusion. They point out that the biblical reflection quite clearly places man as part of the animal kingdom, at one with that kingdom, and Zimmerli even talks of the blessing bestowed on plants and birds; but there is no doubt that for the Old Testament scholars man, not the world, is the focus of the biblical reflection. Von Rad talks of the praise of nature for God, but then he says that nature's praise is silent, the only true praise of Yahweh being Israel's praise, so that again it is man rather than the world which matters before God.

Only at one point do the theological writers and the Old Testament scholars hint at a link with modern man's awareness of the universe in which he lives, and this occurs when reference is made to man's awe in the face of the grandeur and glory of God as shown in his creation. Clearly such awe requires appreciation of the created world which goes some way towards a more modern awareness. However, our eight writers simply draw from the biblical material the idea that Israel was properly full of awe in the face of Yahweh's omnipotence. Presumably modern man is expected to similarly stand in awe of the Creator, but the link is never made.

We have now looked at each of Westermann's four characteristics in some detail, and having done so we can see that the agreement between theological writers and biblical scholars concerning the biblical reflection on creation is very close. Of course, individual writers, both amongst the theological writers and the Old Testament scholars

depart from the consensus in places, but we can easily identify a basic core of ideas which are unanimously held to be the biblical teaching on creation. The main emphases of this "core" are on man and his salvation.

However, there is not total unanimity among the writers about the biblical reflection, and we have already noted some of the divergences between theological writers and biblical scholars. We have seen that the Old Testament scholars make much more of the Wisdom literature and the work of Deutero-Isaiah than do the theological writers, and we have seen that the theological writers are more inclined to talk of the science of the day in the biblical material, while the Old Testament scholars prefer to talk of the use of common mythological terminology and ideas. But these are minor differences, differences of emphasis rather than anything else, which can readily be ascribed to the different interests of the two groups of writers. Thus for Old Testament scholars the use of myths in Israel is an important topic, and it is proper for them to be concerned about the correct historical development of doctrines in the life of Israel: the theological writers are more interested in the foundations given to Christian theology by the doctrines of the Israelites.

More important than such minor differences and the various differences of emphasis are ideas which are regarded as important by the theological writers but find little or no support in the work of the Old Testament scholars, and ideas which are regarded as important by the Old Testament scholars but which have no vital place in the writings of the theologians.

From the side of the theological writers, the main point raised is Macquarrie's attempt to find biblical material to support the idea of

"emanation" or what he calls the "organic" model of creation. This is not developed in any detail, but Macquarrie does claim this model as part of the biblical reflection on creation: we note that he seeks to construct this particular model because it fits in with his notion of creation and becoming more easily than other models used in the past. However, the same sort of idea lies behind the insistence of the theological writers on God's involvement with his creation. The theological writers are not happy to talk of God just as wholly different from his creation, because for philosophical reasons they want a God who is immanent as well as transcendent. The idea of the immanence of God in creation is of course linked with the theology of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. However, the Old Testament scholars find ideas of immanence in one place only, in connection with the role of Wisdom in creation, and their verdict is that this is a non-Israelite idea, taken over and used with perhaps less than the necessary caution by the Israelite Wisdom teachers.

A linked idea which exercises the theological writers but not the Old Testament scholars is that of creatio continua. For the theological writers it is important that the act of creation was not a once-for-all act, but that God is continually at work in creation, and this is especially stressed by Schmaus and Macquarrie. It is claimed that this idea is to be found in the biblical material on creation, but the Old Testament scholars do not seem to find it there. According to the latter, Israel knew only of Yahweh's continuing activity in history. Many Old Testament scholars, including the four reviewed above, accept now the suggestion that there was in Israel at some point some form of New Year Festival in which Yahweh slew the dragon of chaos and reasserted his power over the earth. However, even where this idea is accepted, the Old Testament scholars are at pains to point out that

such a ritual activity would not, and could not, have been construed in Israel as a re-creation of the world, or even as a means of securing Yahweh's favour for the year which lay ahead. Rather, in Israel any such ritual, according to the Old Testament scholars, would be a celebration of Yahweh's power and an opportunity for a renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and his people.

At first sight then in these two cases the theological writers are going beyond what can be found in the biblical material on creation, and certainly beyond what the Old Testament scholars find in the biblical material. However, the biblical scholars are trying to present the doctrine of creation as it was known in Israel, and it may be that notions like these two figured only on the fringes of the Israelite doctrine, perhaps in a rather vague form which was never crystallised, but that nevertheless there are hints about them in the biblical material, waiting to be drawn out by those who can recognise them.

When we turn to look at the material which the Old Testament scholars regard as important but which is not used by the theological writers, we find that four points stand out. First, the Old Testament scholars agree that the reflection on creation in Israel arose in response to the threat posed to the people of Israel by other gods or by nature. Westermann talks of man in his threatened existence, McKenzie talks of the threat to order from chaos, and all four Old Testament scholars note the existence of traces of primeval myths about Yahweh overcoming the sea of chaos and so on. Schmaus is the only one of the theological writers to make any mention of the idea of threat, and the theological writers seem to see nothing significant in the fact that the doctrine of creation in Israel arose in response to something: they seem to

think that a doctrine of creation is a natural thing to have, over against the Old Testament scholars who are careful to point out that a doctrine of creation was only formulated comparatively late in Israel's history, and was not something that arose naturally but required a stimulus from outside Israel. It is perhaps worth noting again at this point the theological writers' insistence on the goodness of God in creation, which perhaps leads them to play down or ignore ideas of threatened man.

Second, all the Old Testament scholars emphasize the diversity of strands which went into the making up of Israel's reflection on creation. All four talk of very early material incorporated into later formulations, while Westermann talks of creation stories told and retold. This diversity does not prevent the Old Testament scholars of talking of the doctrine of creation in Israel, nor is the diversity reflected in the work of the theological writers. Reumann refers to it and notes that he is selecting from within a variety of strands, while Macquarrie notes the diversity almost in desperation as he seeks his organic model of creation: but all the theological writers reviewed are content to draw out in the end "what the Bible says" about creation, as though there were one and only one major, clear strand.

Third the Old Testament scholars make a great deal of Israel's monotheism as a great influence in the formation of the Israelite reflection on creation. They are unanimous in declaring that Israel could not accept the ideas of surrounding nations about gods at battle or divine sexual activity simply because Israel believed in one God who was known through his activity in history. The theological writers all start from the assumption that they are talking about the one and

only God, and therefore the idea of Israel's monotheism has no significance for them, being only relevant in an environment in which the possibility of other gods is admitted.

Fourthly, the Old Testament scholars claim that the most important function of the doctrine of creation in Israel was that of bolstering the nation's faith in the power of Yahweh and encouraging the people in the praise of Yahweh. These ideas find no echo in the work of the theological writers: for them, the purposes of a doctrine of creation are many, but bolstering faith in the power of God is not among them.

It is fairly easy to suggest why these four ideas are important to the Old Testament scholars but not to the theological writers. All four points are of importance in the history of the religion of Israel, in tracing how certain ideas came to be part of Israel's collections of beliefs about Yahweh; but apparently these four points add nothing significant to the biblical reflection on creation itself. They therefore seem of no importance to theological writers.

We have thus identified some ways in which the presentations of the biblical reflection on creation by theological writers and Old Testament scholars are the same, and some ways in which they are different, and we have suggested some reasons for the differences. We have seen that there are no major disagreements between the two groups of writers. From this detailed comparison, we conclude that the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation by the theological writers is in accord with the presentation of that reflection by the Old Testament scholars. In other words, the biblical reflection on creation is not misrepresented or even misunderstood in the work of the theological writers.

4.3. A composite doctrine of creation

In chapter 1 we outlined Westermann's complaints about the presentation of the doctrine of creation in modern theology, and in particular his claim that the inadequacies of the doctrine of creation as presented are due in part to the failure of the theologians to pay sufficient attention to the biblical reflection on creation as presented in modern biblical studies. We have now seen that the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation in the work of the four theological writers we have reviewed is remarkably similar to the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation by the four Old Testament scholars whose work we have reviewed, including Westermann himself. It follows from this that if Westermann's claim about the sources of the inadequacies of modern doctrines of creation is correct, then either the theological writers have not used the biblical reflection in a sufficiently subtle manner in formulating their doctrines of creation, or the biblical reflection on creation as presented is itself inadequate. This latter alternative might arise in two ways: either adequate material is simply lacking in the biblical reflection on creation, or the material is there but the presentations of it do not do it justice. If the latter is true then, according to our findings, in the previous section, both theological writers and Old Testament scholars have failed to present the biblical reflection in an adequate fashion. Clearly Westermann does not believe this, since he claims that proper attention to the biblical reflection as presented by the biblical scholars would improve the doctrine of creation of the theologians; similarly, Westermann clearly believes that the biblical reflection on creation is a sufficient basis for a satisfactory modern doctrine of creation.

For the moment we shall assume that Westermann is correct in this, that the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation by the

Old Testament scholars is adequate as a basis for the doctrine of creation, and hence, according to our findings, that the theological writers have and are aware of a firm foundation for their doctrines of creation. This implies that the handling of the biblical reflection by the theological writers has not been sufficiently subtle, and we now turn to examine this implication. We shall conduct our examination by first developing a doctrine of creation in outline based firmly on the biblical reflection on creation as we have found it presented by our eight writers, and asking how satisfactory that doctrine is for modern theology. We shall then compare our doctrine in outline with the doctrines of creation we have found in the work of our four theological writers, to see if the deficiencies in the various accounts are the same. If the deficiencies match, we shall have to ask why this is so, and whether those deficiences can ever be overcome by a doctrine of creation based on the biblical reflection.

An attempt to develop a doctrine of creation based on the biblical reflection as presented by our eight writers may be seen simply as an attempt to present the biblical reflection in a new and vital way, to use Westermann's words, and we note that such a re-presentation is quite in keeping with the character of the biblical reflection. Our Old Testament scholars assure us that the biblical reflection itself is built up from many strands over a long period of time as Israel again and again reflected on the traditions handed down through the centuries. So for us to reflect again on the material is perfectly in accordance with the biblical reflection.

We must note that if we are to be consistently true to the biblical reflection as presented to us by our Old Testament scholars, we must find some gods to pose a challenge to us, or some other doctrine of creation which is claiming to set up another god in opposition to our

Creator. This particular requirement we shall ignore, taking the impetus of our enquiry as sufficient stimulus for the development of our doctrine of creation.

Next we note that in our reflection on creation we must begin with the assumption that there is one God, and that one God created everything that is: not just the earth as we know it, but the entire universe of which our Earth is part. This is not something that is to be argued or demonstrated in any way. If we are to be true to the biblical reflection we have received, then we must simply say that God created all that exists.

When we use the word "created" in this context we mean, according to the biblical reflection, that God made all that exists, but we do not mean that every individual item that we know sprang ready-formed from the mind or hands of God, nor do we people of the twentieth century need to accept the scientific notions of the centuries before Christ. Rather, again in keeping with the traditions of the biblical reflection, we look to the scientists of our day to explain the details of the processes by which the various forms of life reached their present form. Our doctrine of creation is not interested in such details, it merely claims that God is the originator of the whole process. We may even draw on the statements of our scientific colleagues for details to incorporate into our picture of God making everything, but we shall be clear that we are only telling stories about a process which is essentially mysterious and lost in the mists before time.

Our doctrine of creation does not tell us how God created the world, and nor does it tell us why God created the world. God's reasons are for God alone to know, not only in creation but in everything. Why has God

chosen certain people to be his own possession, why has he guided them in particular? God alone knows: our doctrine of creation assures us only that God made the universe for some purpose of his own which involves those who know themselves to be his chosen people. That his purposes are not limited to those chosen people we can also assert, for we can see that when God created the world, he created mankind as the high-spot of his work, and he gave mankind the world, both as man's benefit and as man's task. On the one hand, the benefit is to be seen in God's provision of fertile land and well-stocked seas, the never-failing round of the seasons, appropriate climatic conditions for fruitful plant life, and so on. On the other hand, man has an inescapable duty to use the resources of the world according to God's will. Man has been given dominion over the created world but that dominion is to be exercised according to God's commands, and man must never forget that he, like everything created, is dependent on God for everything, including life itself.

Man has not been created just to dominate the earth, nor simply as a labourer to bring forth the fruit of the earth: he has been created to enter into a covenant relationship with God. The creation of the world was the first sign of that covenant of grace, and the first of a series of acts of grace in which God has shown his love and care for mankind. In his creation we can see that he is consistent, that what he has done in calling and redeeming his people is just following up what he did in creating the world. What God has done in redeeming his people is of course much clearer now than it was before the time of Jesus Christ, for we know now that the coming of Jesus Christ was the culmination to which the act of creation looked forward. We must also note that God's people now are the followers of Jesus Christ, the new Israel, rather than the Israel referred to in the biblical creation material.

Creation was not only the first demonstration of God's love for his people, it was also a demonstration of his power over all things. Because he both loves us and has this power over everything, we can trust him and believe that he will fulfil his promises. We can also enjoy the goodness of the earth, for God has made the earth good and he has given man dominion over the good earth, and only God can take the earth and its goodness away from man. Hence, we should praise and trust God, and in our praises we shall be joined by the whole of nature. We note that it is difficult for modern man to understand and accept the concept of the praise of God by nature, and we also note that modern man lacks the awe in the face of nature felt by Israel, perhaps because modern man, at least in the technologically advanced societies, is now much more able to control and exploit nature.

This then is a doctrine of creation firmly based on the biblical reflection on creation as presented to us by our eight writers. Let us now see how this doctrine fares under the criticisms of Westermann and others about modern doctrines of creation. First, are the four characteristics present which Westermann identified and which we found in the work of the four theological writers we reviewed?

We have not quoted biblical passages in support of the elements of our doctrine, since they can easily be found by reference to the writers reviewed and the repetition would be tedious. What we have done is draw on the biblical reflection on creation as presented by our eight writers, and this means that our source material is the same as theirs. Hence, our biblical support will be drawn from the early part of Genesis, especially the creation stories in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and the story of Noah in Genesis chapter 8; from the Psalms; from Deutero-Isaiah; and from the Wisdom literature. To these passages which deal directly with creation, we shall need to add texts referring

to the covenant and New Testament texts which point to Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the covenant. Thus, while our range of source material is rather wider than the range of any of the theological writers reviewed, it still remains true that much of our biblical material is more concerned with salvation than creation. The doctrine of creation as we have presented it is almost a part, and an essential part, of the doctrine of salvation.

In our outline doctrine it is clear that much of the attention is focussed on man in his relationship to God, because God's purpose in creation is seen in terms of what God has done for man and what God demands of man. We have perhaps made more of God's faithfulness than our theological writers, for our outline doctrine sees the creation of the world as a demonstration of God's power to achieve his purposes; but even then, we have seen creation primarily as a sign of God's power to save man whom God wills to save. Like the theological writers, we have declared man to be the chief of God's creatures, the high-point of creation, and we have noted the powerful and dominant role given to man. Of course, in keeping with modern trends as well as biblical ideas, we have noted that man's power must be exercised according to God's will, for the benefit of mankind as a whole rather than man as an individual. Similarly we have noted that man is dependent on God for his very life, and remains one of God's creatures, at one with the earth he inhabits. Nevertheless, our doctrine of creation emphasizes the position of man as the creature intended to respond to God in a covenant relationship and to share in the creative processes of God. Thus, our doctrine has Westermann's second characteristic, that it concentrates on man and his salvation.

When we turn to Westermann's third characteristic, the relationship

between the doctrine of creation and modern science, we find ourselves in a strange position. On the one hand our doctrine offers openings to modern science, in that we have taken up no firm position on any of the questions about how the universe came into being: we have neither accepted nor rejected any of the current scientific theories. Instead we have specifically declared that science can help us by filling in the details of the process of creation, in a fashion similar to that in which the biblical writers drew on the knowledge of their day.

At the same time we have made a declaration of faith, that God made the universe. Being a declaration of faith, this statement is not open to the kind of challenge which science can mount, since there are no laboratory experiments which can be mounted to test a declaration of faith. Hence our doctrine of creation has been lifted out of the realm proper to scientific enquiry, and we have made it unnecessary to build bridges between the biblical reflection on creation and modern science. Not only is such an attempt impossible because of the un-scientific nature of the biblical material, it is also pointless because science cannot affect the basis of our doctrine of creation.

The fourth of Westermann's discovered characteristics concerned the lack of a new, vital presentation of the biblical reflection on creation which would be relevant to modern man. Our doctrine in outline notes that man must exercise his power with care in the world in which he lives, but it tells us little else about that world or about the universe of which the Earth is part: certainly our doctrine of creation in outline shows little concern for the worm trodden to the earth or for the new star in the Milky Way.

Thus we see that the doctrine of creation we have outlined, drawing on the biblical reflection on creation as presented to us by our eight

writers, shares the characteristics of doctrines of creation criticised by Westermann. Admittedly we have only given the doctrine in outline, and no doubt in developing the doctrine in more detail we could be more subtle, and perhaps go some way to meeting Westermann's criticisms, particularly as regards the relevance of the doctrine to modern man. However, subtleties will not alter the main lines of the doctrine, nor significantly alter its basic characteristics. It seems therefore that this biblically based doctrine will fall under Westermann's criticisms and be unacceptable in his eyes.

What of other critics of modern doctrines of creation? Those who demand that a Christian doctrine of creation should provide encouragement for environmental conservationists will take some comfort from the insistence that man's power over creation must be exercised in accordance with God's will, though we note that even then they are left with the task of showing that God's will includes environmental conservation. Equally those who insist that the resources of God's earth are there to be exploited by man will find support in the way our doctrine of creation emphasizes that creation is for the benefit of man and that it is man's God-given destiny to draw fruit from the earth. Those who look to the Bible for an account of the mechanics of creation will be disappointed in our doctrine, as will those who look to modern science for the mechanics and to the Bible for the reasons for creation. In short, our doctrine of creation in outline is subject to all the criticisms levelled at other efforts to produce a doctrine of creation, and it is hard to see how it might be developed to overcome these deficiencies without destroying the basic lines of the biblical reflection as presented to us.

All this of course has a familiar ring, and understandably so, for if we compare our doctrine of creation in outline with the work of the

four theological writers reviewed, we find many similarities. The fact that Westermann's four characteristics are common to their work and ours is alone sufficient to suggest that there will be no major differences between them and us. However, there are some differences.

One difference lies in our willingness to let science provide material for our picture of creation. None of the theological writers reviewed made use of the science of today in the way that the biblical writers made use of the understanding of the world of their day. We have at least allowed the possiblity of doing this, although we must note that one strong reason for theologians' failure to draw on science in this connection may simply be the theologians' lack of detailed knowledge of the scientific material.

A more important difference between our doctrine in outline and the work of our four theological writers is that we have carefully avoided saying why God created the world and man. We have said that God created the world for man's benefit and he created man to enter into a covenant relationship with God: but why should God want to create anything? The four theological writers all tried to give an answer to this question in their different ways, and at the heart of all their different answers was the idea that God's love requires something which can respond to love. We have stuck more closely to the biblical reflection as it has been presented to us, in saying simply that the world is, and that it exists because God made it, we do not know how or why. Israel, we are told, made the same assumptions, because they would not think of questioning these assumptions: we made our assumptions because we do not think that a doctrine of creation based on the biblical reflection can provide answers to questions of the how or why of the universe. Indeed we have stated that it is not the purpose

of our doctrine to answer questions, rather the doctrine is intended to encourage human beings to trust God and look for the fulfilment of his promises. Here again we are more true to the biblical reflection than were our theological writers, for the latter made very little of creation as a basis for trust in God. Of course, we too have moved away from the biblical reflection in that our call to trust in God is not apparently made in the face of claims for the over-riding power of other gods, but perhaps rather in the face of the claim that there is no purposive power behind the universe, only randomness.

We see then that there are some differences between the doctrine of creation we have outlined and the work of the four theological writers reviewed above. However we have already noted the great similarities between their work and ours, and we have also noted that the deficiencies of our doctrine are just the deficiencies of other modern doctrines of creation. Yet our outline doctrine started from the biblical reflection on creation as presented to us with remarkable unanimity by our eight writers, and we have tried hard to be both faithful to that biblical reflection and yet produce something relevant to modern times. We have failed in so far as we have failed to meet the more telling criticisms levelled at modern doctrines of creation. This suggests that, contrary to our assumption at the start of this section, the handling of the biblical reflection by our four theological writers was not particularly unsubtle, and perhaps even that they made a good job of it. Thus it appears that Westermann is wrong in his claim that more attention to the biblical reflection would produce a more satisfactory doctrine of creation.

However, as we noted at the beginning of this section, there are two possible reasons for the inadequacy of biblically based doctrines.

One is that the biblical material has been handled in an insufficiently subtle manner, the other is that the necessary material is not available, either because it is not present in the Bible or because it has not been drawn out of the Bible. We have now established that the biblical reflection on creation as presented to us by our eight writers has been used by the four theological writers in a way which, while not immune to criticism, is nevertheless reasonably subtle and acceptable. Therefore we must now turn to examine the other alternative, that the biblical material is deficient in content or presentation. This means that we must step aside from the eight writers reviewed and try to look at the biblical reflection on creation afresh, to see whether there are strands of material and insights which have been overlooked but which are significant for a modern doctrine of creation. Before undertaking such a task, it is useful to try and see whether there are any good reasons for thinking that the task might be successfully accomplished.

4.4. Limitations

Reasons for thinking that a fresh look at the biblical reflection on creation might pay dividends are of two kinds. First there are the hints of insights in the work of the biblical scholars which have not been developed or exploited: it may be that none of these neglected ideas will yield anything fresh, but nevertheless their very existence suggests that there may be something worthwhile to be garnered from the biblical material still.

Second, fresh impetus will be given to a renewed interest in the biblical material if it becomes clear that the approach to the biblical material adopted hitherto is limited and limiting in some way, for in that case it would be reasonable to suggest that the limitations of the approach have led to ideas being overlooked or not given their due importance. Limitations of approach might, of course, arise in several ways: there might be constraints of time, of knowledge of relevant languages, of background knowledge provided by other disciplines, and so on. However, the most important limitation of approach in relation to the biblical material on creation is the self-imposed limitation of a pre-conceived theological strait-jacket. By this we mean that an exegete comes to the biblical material with certain definite theological ideas in mind, ideas which inevitably shape the way in which the exegete sees the material, what he regards as significant within the material, and what he draws out of it.

It is, of course, impossible to approach any literature without some pre-conceived ideas, and it is certainly impossible for any Christian to come to biblical material, on creation or on any other topic, without some definite notions about the material. However when we talk of pre-conceived theological ideas, we are not referring to the

theological bric-a-brac acquired by any Christian, rather we are concerned with the carefully weighed theological choices which are made before an exegete turns to the biblical material.

That such carefully weighed theological choices are made becomes clear as soon as we turn to the four theological writers whose work is reviewed above, for as we have already noted, the theological writers make no secret of approaching the biblical material from definite standpoints. We have noted Barth's insistence that Jesus Christ is the key to creation and Schmaus' claim that creation is part of Christology. Inevitably an approach to the biblical material from such a standpoint will affect what is found. Of course, it may be that the writers concerned reflected on the biblical material, discovered what the biblical material was saying, and then rearranged the sequence of ideas for a more satisfactory presentation of the doctrine. However, the divergence of the doctrines of creation presented by our four theological writers from the model doctrine built on presentation of the biblical material, suggests that the process was more one of trying to work out how a doctrine of creation might fit into modern theology, and then trying to find links between the resulting doctrine and the biblical reflection. This suggestion is strengthened when we recall the different reasons among the theological writers for having a doctrine of creation, reasons very different from those which led to the formulation of the doctrine in Israel. Inevitably, such a process of formulating a doctrine and then linking it to the biblical material, would mean that the doctrine of creation became subordinate to the doctrine of salvation so dominant in the work of the four theological writers, and it would not then be surprising if the theological emphasis on man and his salvation led

to a corresponding emphasis on those parts of the biblical material which express the dominance of man.

Given both these admitted influences in the work of the theological writers and the unanimity between Old Testament scholars and theological writers concerning the importance of salvation with respect to creation in the biblical reflection, it is pertinent to ask if the Old Testament scholars have also been affected by theological ideas. Clearly the fact of working in an intellectual environment in which salvation is a major topic of interest is likely to make one more conscious of the hope of salvation in the Old Testament, but we can be more specific still. Von Rad is quite clear that the Old Testament is the record of the saving-history of Israel, and he starts work from that basis. Anything which does not fit into that framework is moulded until it does fit. While others are not quite as categorical as von Rad, the same trend is to be found in all our Old Testament writers. In other words they have come to the Old Testament material expecting to find mostly the record of Israel's faith in and dealings with a God who saves. Given such a starting-point, it is not surprising that creation comes to be regarded as the first of the saving acts of God. Thus it is likely that the Old Testament scholars have been influenced in their work by the theological emphasis on salvation.

This raises again the question raised earlier as to whether it is reasonable to expect Old Testament scholars to come to their study of the Old Testament without pre-conceived ideas about what they will find in the biblical material. Clearly our four Old Testament scholars have come with particular pre-conceptions, as we have noted in reviewing their work, and this fact is related to their conception of

their task, that of presenting the doctrine of Israel and tracing its development. Necessarily this implies some ideas about "Israel" and "Israel's faith" before the biblical material is examined. Furthermore, we must note that all our writers come to the Old Testament as avowedly Christian scholars who expect the Old Testament to point forward to Christianity. While we cannot here go into the philosophical question in detail, it does seem unlikely that after so many centuries of Christian study of the Bible and so much interaction between theology and biblical studies, any scholar from a Christian background can come to the biblical material without some pre-conceptions. An interesting, but for us extra-territorial question is just how the pre-conceptions of biblical scholars have shaped the presentation of the history of Israel religion in Israel. A related interesting but extra-territorial question is concerned with what Old Testament scholars are supposed to be doing: is their role simply to describe the history of Israel's religious institutions? Leaving these interesting by-ways to others, we simply note that, in practice, in the work of the four Old Testament scholars reviewed, pre-conceived ideas about the role of the "saving-history" in Israelite religion have affected the scholars' approach to the biblical material on creation.

We further note that the Old Testament scholars and the theological writers alike talk of "Israel's doctrine of creation", as though there were only one form of the doctrine of creation held by the nation Israel. A quick look at the work of the four theological writers reviewed above should make us pause here: for even though we have detected certain ideas and characteristics common to all four, we cannot say that the four present the same doctrine of creation. Why then should we expect and assume that there was only one form of the doctrine of creation in ancient Israel? We are told by the Old

Testament scholars and theological writers that the biblical material on creation includes some very old material, and we are told, most definitely by Westermann but also by others, that the biblical material has been worked over again and again: we are told by all our writers that Deutero-Isaiah was the first to actually formulate a doctrine of creation in Israel, and he worked during the Exile, some four hundred years after David's Kingdom of Israel and far longer than that after the entry of Israel into the Promised Land. In the face of this we are asked to accept a reconstruction of the doctrine of creation in Israel - not Deutero-Isaiah's doctrine of creation, not the doctrine of the wanderers in the wilderness, not the doctrine of David's or Solomon's time, but the doctrine of creation in Israel.

Another, related problem arises over the use of the word "Israel". The word is used indiscriminately by Old Testament scholars and theological writers alike. Thus "Israel" can refer to the wanderers entering the Promised Land, to David's Kingdom, to the people in the time of Elijah when there were actually two kingdoms, or to the people in Exile at a time when there was no kingdom or even state of Israel. It is not sufficient to claim that the name refers to a people, for the people within the boundaries of the kingdoms at different times were a diverse lot.

These problems are connected with the idea, apparently shared by theological writers and Old Testament scholars, that it is both possible and desirable to isolate a "core" of Old Testament teaching on the doctrine of creation. This means that we are isolating a core stretching over hundreds of years but only properly developed during the Exile; such a project may be possible, but it has its dangers. The procedure assumes that everything must hang together in a way

logically acceptable to modern minds - in spite of the fact that such coherence is not even a hallmark of modern theological systems. This approach tends to lead to something of a canon within a canon, with ideas being accepted into or rejected from the "core" on the basis of whether or not they fit with the pre-supposed trend of Israelite ideas. This may mean that useful ideas are excluded because they do not fit into the "core". For Old Testament scholars, this may not matter: for theologians the rejected ideas may be of great importance.

Is there any evidence of this selective approach in the presentation of the doctrine of creation? From our reviews of the presentation of the biblical reflection some clear pieces of evidence emerge. The first lies in the material used to develop the doctrine of creation. One of the characteristics identified by Westermann and found clearly in our review of the work of four theological writers was that the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation had used only material from passages associated with salvation. We found that the same thing was true, though to a lesser extent, of the Old Testament scholars: the range of material used was quite small and there was a heavy concentration on material drawn from Genesis and Psalms. All the Old Testament scholars however point out that there is other material relating to creation, notably in the Wisdom literature. We shall come to the Wisdom literature in a moment; first we ask why this other material receives less prominence in the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation. Two reasons suggest themselves: one is that the extra material adds nothing to the picture of the biblical reflection on creation, and the other is that the extra material adds nothing significant to the picture. Clearly the first reason is a question of fact, while the second involves decisions about what is significant and what is not. Such decisions can only be made in the

light of an understanding of the content of the biblical reflection. We note that none of the writers under review makes any attempt to justify the ignoring of this other material, so we cannot decide which of the two reasons is the more likely one.

However when we turn to the Wisdom literature, the position becomes rather more clear. The Old Testament scholars are unanimous and quite definite about the role of creation theology in the Wisdom literature. We recall Zimmerli's statement that Wisdom moves resolutely within a framework of creation, and a similar claim by von Rad. However, nowhere is the creation theology of the Wisdom literature spelt out in any detail, and the treatment of the material on creation in the Wisdom literature was rather brief in all our four Old Testament scholars. At the same time, one can sense a certain embarrassment as the Old Testament scholars come to grips with the Wisdom literature, and the reason for this is not hard to find. All four Old Testament scholars are agreed that the Wisdom literature has very little interest in the saving-history, or even in Yahwism, but is much more secular than the rest of the Old Testament material; the Old Testament scholars therefore have great difficulty fitting the Wisdom material into their salvation history mould. In general they try to get round the problem either by explaining the Wisdom material away as an aberration in Israelite thought, or by somehow baptising the material into the alleged mainstream of Israelite thought.

With the creation material in the Wisdom literature, neither of these approaches is particularly effective, but both are tried. For example, as we saw in our discussion of his work, von Rad admits that the Wisdom literature is interested first in the self-revelation of creation and only secondarily in the connection between creation and the saving

history, and yet he also claims that the Wisdom teachers believed that to understand creation one had to speak of Israel and the revelation she had received from God. This seems to be a clear attempt to absorb into the alleged mainstream of Israelite thought something which, on von Rad's own admission, is outside that mainstream. The difficulties of the approach are shown by the fact that von Rad's view has the Wisdom teachers both lacking in interest in the saving-history and at the same time trying to link creation with the saving-history; if they had no interest in the saving-history, why should they bother to try and make the link with creation?

McKenzie on the other hand insists that Israelite scribes simply took over the secular wisdom of Egypt and Mesopotamia and tried to give it a theological cast. For him, the only distinctive Israelite contribution to the wisdom tradition was a form of "anti-wisdom", which attacked the received conventional wisdom and emphasized Yahweh as the source of Wisdom, and McKenzie quotes the book of Job as an example. We noted in discussing his work that McKenzie sees the role of creation in the Wisdom literature as that of manifesting the power and ingenuity of Yahweh. The claim that creation shows the power of Yahweh is, according to McKenzie, a peculiarly Israelite claim, but not even he tries to put the creation material into the category of anti-wisdom material: thus the creation material in the Wisdom literature becomes both distinctively Israelite and also not part of the distinctive Israelite contribution to the Wisdom literature. McKenzie's embarrassment in this respect arises because of his simple division of the Wisdom literature into Israelite and non-Israelite streams according to whether or not the material refers to a God who is concerned about man. This simple criterion puts talk of Yahweh the Creator in the wrong stream.

Another example of the embarrassment of theological writers and Old Testament scholars alike in the face of material which does not fit into their framework is the treatment accorded to the two Genesis stories of creation. It is universally agreed that the second story is the older of the two, but it is always the first story which gets the fuller treatment. One reason for this is that the younger story, with its steady progression through the days of creation and its refrain "and God saw that it was good" fits more easily into a picture of divine purposive creation than does the older story with its earth-bound vision and its concentration on man's position in the world. That is, it is easier to fit the first creation story into the framework of a series of divine acts of grace than to bind the second story to that framework. Indeed, the embarrassment of Barth as he tries to make something salvific out of the second, older creation story is plain. At least Barth tries: others merely pass over the second story quietly.

Connected with this discrepancy in treatment is the curious fact that none of the eight writers reviewed attempts to explain why it was Deutero-Isaiah who first actually formulated a doctrine of creation in Israel. That he was first is generally accepted. It is stated by several writers, for example McKenzie, that "Israel" had no need of a doctrine of creation at first because Israel had no beliefs in gods other than Yahweh, and so just assumed that Yahweh had created the world. The implication, never made explicit, is that this state of affairs lasted until the time of Deutero-Isaiah. A quick glance at the history of the Kings of Israel and Judah or the polemics of the prophets will show this to be nonsense, for it is quite clear that the Israelites knew of and worshipped deities other than Yahweh. Furthermore it is universally agreed that the older creation story in Genesis was written

down long before the Exile and Deutero-Isaiah, so the people of Israel clearly had some doctrine of creation centuries before Deutero-Isaiah, whether they needed one or not. Again it is generally acknowledged that Deutero-Isaiah made use of old traditional material in formulating his doctrine, which at least means that someone had produced some creation material long before the time of Deutero-Isaiah. In the face of all this, why was no doctrine of creation formulated until the time of Deutero-Isaiah?

Our note above about the older creation story in Genesis suggests that the very question is nonsensical, for if a doctrine of creation existed in the older creation story, quite clearly Deutero-Isaiah was not the first in Israel to formulate such a doctrine. When we examine more closely what is meant by the statement that Deutero-Isaiah was the first formulator of the doctrine of creation, we find that what it really means is that Deutero-Isaiah was the first to formulate a doctrine of creation in a way that is acceptable to modern Christian scholars. Our attention is therefore focussed on the differences between Deutero-Isaiah's formulation of the doctrine and earlier efforts, and a cursory examination reveals what for our purposes is the significant difference: the doctrine as formulated by Deutero-Isaiah has none of the undertones of mythical conflict which are found in some earlier formulations. Thus the older Genesis story hints at the overcoming of chaos, and the Psalms contain allusions to battles reminiscent of the creation myths of other nations. Deutero-Isaiah however proclaims one God who creates and thus has no room for other gods. Deutero-Isaiah is therefore acceptable to those who want us to believe that "Israel" always worshipped Yahweh and only Yahweh, while the earlier creation material raises the possibility that Yahweh was only part of a pantheon. This

latter possibility is unacceptable to most Christian exegetes, even though it fits the available evidence that other gods were worshipped and also accounts for the way in which Deutero-Isaiah's formulation of the doctrine of creation stands out. For Deutero-Isaiah stresses the power of the one God particularly in opposition to the claims of the gods of the conquering Babylonians. Until the Exile it was perfectly possible for Yahweh to co-exist with other gods, but for the exiled Hebrews in Babylon, either Yahweh was all powerful or Yahweh was nothing, too weak to defend or help or save his people. Thus, as all our Old Testament scholars stressed, monotheism was important in formulating Deutero-Isaiah's doctrine of creation, precisely because monotheism had not been dominant in Israel before the Exile. We have therefore a perfectly satisfactory account of why Deutero-Isaiah was the first to formulate a doctrine of creation acceptable to modern scholars, that is, a doctrine of creation with no polytheistic nuances; but this account depends on accepting that Israel was not always mono-theistic and totally dedicated to Yahweh. Since our Old Testament scholars cannot accept this, they cannot satisfactorily account for the contradictory information they give us about the doctrine of creation in Israel. This is a clear example of how the exegetes get into difficulties simply because they insist on treating "Israel" as somehow special and different, an island of mono-theism in a sea of poly-theism.

The same insistence on treating "Israel" as special in the face of the evidence is seen if we examine the attitude to nature of the Israelites, as presented by our scholars. It is a universal contention among our eight writers that Israel had no interest in nature, apart possibly from the authors of the Wisdom literature. This seems a very strange contention. To begin with, the Psalms contain many poems about the glory of God in nature. If we look at

such stories as the Elijah miracle stories of II Kings it is clear that the writers of the Old Testament at least knew the difference between what might be expected to happen naturally and what might not - for example, they knew that axe-heads do not normally float on water. Similarly, the crossing of the Red Sea which plays such an important part in the story of the Exodus, is only a miracle of salvation if you know that waters do not normally pile up in this fashion. Furthermore, can it really be true that a people who included nomads and farmers had no interest in nature? We can agree that they did not have what we call a scientific interest in nature, that is, an interest in analysing nature and seeking answers to questions about how things happen; but a lack of interest in "how" questions is not the same as a lack of interest in nature. Interest in nature covers such things as recognising the regularity of natural events, knowing what is likely to happen, knowing when to plant and when to reap, and so on. All this sort of knowledge is evident in the Old Testament, but it is ignored by the Old Testament scholars and theological writers alike.

A clue to the reason for this blindness is perhaps given by McKenzie's flat statement that Israel's faith would not permit any idea of sex and fertility rites in creation. To allow the Israelites an interest in nature might lead to allowing that they took an interest in nature gods or participated in fertility rites. Again this does not fit into the accepted pattern of Old Testament religion, but there is nothing in the Old Testament to rule it out, and there are various hints that suggest that the worship of some of the gods worshipped in Israel did involve some form of fertility ritual. Yet the idea is so abhorrent of Israelites being involved in anything inimical to westernised Christian ideas of a-sexual montheism that to avoid any suggestion of the possibility of such involvement, our writers go to

the other extreme and deny an interest in nature to farmers and hunters and herdsmen. This is just perverse. It is also all pervasive as far as the biblical reflection on creation is concerned, another example of how a pre-conceived theological idea has limited the vision of those who have looked at the biblical material.

Thus we see that there are several pieces of evidence which suggest that the writers have approached the biblical material in a selective fashion, taking only the pieces which fit their pre-conceived ideas of Israel as a composite nation, worshipping one god Yahweh, with a core of distinctive doctrine which can be unearthed and displayed. Now, such an approach may be perfectly valid for those who are seeking to present the theology of the Old Testament. For them, the final forms of doctrines are perhaps more important than the varieties of Israel's religious experience, and there can be no doubt that such notions as monotheism and the saving work of Yahweh in history were important in shaping the people who became known as Israel. However, for those not involved with the history of religions, such an approach may be too narrow. In particular, for theologians such an approach is far too narrow.

Christian theologians are concerned with formulating doctrines about God and his activity, and for them it is important to recognise first that our ideas of God did not appear ready-made in a pure monotheistic form, and second, that our theologies are not perfectly simple logical structures, but rather a complex mass of interwoven doctrines. Recognition of the first point means taking seriously the fact that Christian ideas about God emerged from Hebrew ideas about Yahweh which had been shaped in a very complex multi-cultural environment over centuries: in other words, we must not expect the Hebrews to be twentieth-century Christians, or their faith to be free of imports

from the religions of those among whom they lived. The second point above implies that we must take the Bible in all its complexity as our source book, rather than scholarly reconstructions of the central tenets of the faith of the Hebrews, and we must look for significant contributions from all the strands woven together in our Bible.

For the doctrine of creation this has not been done. Attention has been limited, as we have seen, to certain strands of material, and we have seen reason to believe that the biblical material accepted as significant for the Christian doctrine of creation has been carefully selected. In other words, we have seen that the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation, by theological writers and Old Testament scholars alike, has been narrow in scope, deficient in content, and insufficiently subtle for the needs of theologians. It is therefore possible that Westermann is at least partly correct, and that a fresh look at the biblical reflection would help to provide a more satisfactory doctrine of creation. In order to show this, we must demonstrate that the biblical material contains insights which would significantly affect for the better the presentation of the doctrine of creation in modern theology. To this task we now turn.

Chapter 5 : A Fresh Approach

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter we first look again at the biblical material on creation, to see what insights are available which may be useful but are as yet unexploited. We then draw together the various strands of creation theology in the biblical material, to see what sort of complete picture we get. Finally we suggest in outline a doctrine of creation which utilises all the biblical insights, and we ask how well it meets the various criticisms directed at modern doctrines of creation.

5.2. Unregarded insights

It must not be supposed that in taking a fresh look at the biblical material on creation we can start by simply ignoring all that has gone before. To do so would be absurd folly. Our criticism of the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation by the eight writers studied has been not that they have been totally wrong in their presentations, but that they have laid too much emphasis on certain strands of teaching and too little on other strands. Not wishing to err in the opposite direction, we note first those strands of material already well-worked which must not be under-valued.

One very important strand is that of salvation-history. There can be little doubt that the final editors of the Old Testament, as well as some of the writers contributing to it, saw it primarily as the record of Yahweh's dealings with his chosen people, the people of Israel. Nor can we disagree with the judgement that editors have selected and arranged their material with a view to showing Yahweh's care for his chosen people. We must therefore take account of the fact that at least late in the editing of the Old Testament material, material

relating to creation is placed in conjuction with material relating to salvation, and Yahweh's creation of the world is related to Yahweh's saving grace to his people.

Alongside the concern of Yahweh for his people, we must place the idea of the goodness of Yahweh to man. There can be no doubt that this is a definite feature of the Old Testament material on creation. Yahweh has provided for man's needs, Yahweh has promised that man's needs will always be met, and Yahweh's promises are fulfilled. The earth and the sea do bring forth fruit, the animals do live and multiply and give man food: all this, according to the Old Testament is a sign of the goodness of God, and this strand of belief cannot be set aside.

A third point which must not be forgotten is that the focus of the creation stories in the book of Genesis is man. In our criticism of the various presentations of the biblical reflection above, we have noted that the different writers all make too much of the position of man within the creation material. However, alongside our criticisms, we must note that in both the Genesis stories of creation, the creation of man is a very important point. This we might expect, since the stories were produced, told, written down, and edited by men, but there may also be greater significance in the position of man within these stories. In either case, we cannot ignore the prominent position accorded to the creation of man.

These insights we carry over to add to the results of a brief look at the biblical material again. We note that in what follows we are only taking up and developing insights which we have noted in the work of our eight writers.

To begin with we look again at the attitude to nature of the Hebrew people. It has been noted above that the eight writers reviewed, and many others, agree that "Israel" had no interest in nature; we have also pointed out the absurdity of this claim in the light of the Old Testament. However, we can now go further, and say something positive about the attitude to nature of at least some of the Hebrews, by looking at the very many references to nature in the Old Testament, and especially at those references in the Wisdom literature. We are not concerned here particularly with the role of creation material or creation theology within the framework of the Wisdom literature, but rather with the use within the Old Testament of imagery drawn from nature.

Even a casual reader of the Wisdom literature notices the number of times in which examples are drawn from nature as illustrations of the argument. Thus the sluggard is pointed to the example of the ant (Prov. 6:6), kind words are compared to dripping honey (Prov. 16:24), and strong wine is said to sting like a cobra (Prov. 23:32). In all these cases, two things are clear: first, these examples demonstrate a close observation of nature, for someone has clearly watched the ant at work, tasted the sweetness of honey, and seen how a cobra can strike. Second, these illustrations assume that there is a regularity in nature, that, for example, the antics of the ant are repeatable and may be observed by anyone prepared to take the necessary trouble. In other words, those who produced these examples had more than a passing knowledge of the world about them.

Lest it be argued that the Wisdom literature is a special case within the religious literature of the Hebrews, let us note some examples in similar vein from elsewhere in the Old Testament. Samson's riddle

betrays an accurate knowledge of nature, Hosea's comparison of Yahweh to a devouring lion, third Isaiah's talk of the highway of the Lord, first Isaiah's use of the imagery of the vineyard, and the tremendous pictures of Psalms like Psalm 104 and Psalm 65, all betray an awareness of the world of nature, and in particular an awareness of the order of nature, the regularity on which farmers and nomads depended.

However, nature is not used in the Old Testament just as a set of illustrations. There is also evidence that the people of the Old Testament were well aware of the power of natural forces, and compared the grandeur of nature with the insignificance of man. Part of the point of Job 38 is the stress on the magnitude of nature and the powers of Leviathan over against man. God points to the fact that man cannot control the great beasts, while God can. Similarly, the theophanies are accompanied by the signs of great power: thunder and lightening. The prophets talk of the hills falling on people. It is stressed again and again that both floods and desert are a threat to human beings. Thus it is clear that the people of the Old Testament knew about the forces and powers of nature.

It is clear too that over against the natural powers, the Hebrews set the power of Yahweh their god. We have already taken note of Job 38. Here, Job is not answered by God. Job's questions are swept aside and ignored. He is simply presented with a picture of the power of Yahweh as compared with the power of man. While man is helpless in the face of great natural forces, God is not, God can and does control them. While man can be broken by the might of great creatures, God controls the creatures. While man is frightened by the sea, God controls it. The claim of the Old Testament is clear: there are many things in nature which are more powerful than man, but Yahweh is more

powerful than any of them.

This idea of the power of Yahweh is linked with the idea of creation as the controlling of chaos. We noted above that some of the Old Testament scholars recognise this idea as an element in the creation material of the Old Testament but rather underplay it, because it opens the possibility that the Hebrew people were not always monotheistic. We can see no good reason for denying polytheism in Israel at various times, since the Old Testament is quite explicit about gods other than Yahweh being worshipped in Jerusalem and elsewhere. In the same way, there seems to us a great deal of truth in Westermann's contention that the people of Israel knew themselves to be living on the verge of chaos, a chaos which might break out at any time if the powers of the natural world were set free. Hence, Yahweh is praised for keeping the sea within its bounds, and the irrigation of the desert is seen as one of the acts of Yahweh's favour. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the bringing of order out of chaos should be seen as one of the roles of Yahweh, since the order is necessary for human beings to live.

Further support for this idea is given by the oft-remarked but little exploited connection between Genesis 1 to 3 and Genesis 4 to 11. The connection between the two groups of chapters appears to lie mainly in that Genesis 1-3 talks of the establishment of order and the way of life associated with order, while the succeeding chapters talk of the destruction of that order by the disobedience of man, and the releasing of chaos as a result. The covenant with Noah (Gen. 8: 21-22) can be seen as the promise that chaos will never again be allowed to overwhelm mankind: but that promise depends on the power of Yahweh to actually pen the waters at will.

We see here a link with von Rad's claims about the connection between creation and salvation. While his formulation, that creation is simply the stage for salvation, is too crude, nevertheless his insight that the act of creation can be seen as an act of salvation is worthy of note. For the act of creation is seen as the bringing of order out of chaos, and there is little doubt that the process of salvation requires such order.

The link between creation, order, chaos, and the power of God leads us on to a fresh look at the idea of the goodness of God. Yes, Yahweh is good, the earth is good, the earth is fruitful, and so on. But the Old Testament is very well aware that the earth is not always good. The people of the Old Testament clearly knew about drought and its dreadful consequences - see, for example, the Elijah story of 1 Kings 17 - as well as about floods and their destructive capabilities. These people of the Old Testament must have had some idea of the failure of crops and the destruction of herds, and hence their gratitude when these disasters do not occur. There are several references to the damage done by locusts, and we have already noted that animals like the lion were known to be unfriendly to man. Clearly, though they gave thanks to Yahweh for the goodness they enjoyed, the people of the Old Testament were also aware that it could all go sour.

Furthermore, the people of the Old Testament knew that the sourness, as well as the goodness, was unpredictable. Hard though the biblical writers try to find a theological reason for the disasters which overcame individuals or nations, the book of Job is an eloquent tribute to their failure to find a satisfactory theodicy. It is perhaps too much to claim with Westermann that the Israelite lived in a permanent state of insecurity, but certainly the Israelite knew that all would

not automatically be well, and that from time to time Yahweh apparently needed placating. Thus we cannot talk glibly of Israel knowing that Yahweh had given the riches of the earth to be exploited by his chosen people: those riches had to be won in the face of many great odds.

It must also be noted that the winning of the riches of the earth was expected to be hard work and often dangerous. The famous passage in Genesis 3, in which God apparently condemns Adam and Eve to a life of drudgery is one example. Another is the passage from Job 28: 1-11, which clearly indicates that the difficulties and dangers of mining were well known, and yet another is 1 Sam. 17: 34-36, which shows that a shepherd's life was no romantic idyll. It seems too that much of the Wisdom material is about how to live life as easily as possible. We are dealing then with material that knows of good and bad in the natural world and tries to cope with and explain both. It is noteworthy that the good as well as the bad must be accounted for.

We are also dealing with material which is conscious of an ambivalence in the position of man in the world. The dominant position of man on earth has often been noted, and indeed we have accepted that man is the focus of the two Genesis creation stories. There is no doubt that man is seen as a figure of power, able to control and rule, even to give names to the animals, and this powerful aspect of man is often expressed in terms of man's dominion over the world. At the same time, there can also be no doubt about man's position as a powerless creature, at the prey of natural forces which he cannot control. Much of the Wisdom literature with its proverbs can be seen as an attempt to come to terms with these two aspects of man's life, and certainly the Old Testament is well aware of the ambiguity of one who is dominant

yet often helpless. Thus it cannot be simply declared that the earth is given to man for his exploitation, for man is equally given to the earth.

One of the clearest examples of the recognition of this ambiguity comes in the second Genesis story of creation. The story is generally agreed to be the older of the two stories and, from our reviews above, it seems to be the story that causes the greater difficulty for modern writers, theologians and biblical scholars alike. It has often been pointed out that in this story man actually takes part in the creative process by naming the animals, and also that in this story man is created from the dust of the earth. Otzen has pointed out that the creation of man is almost a condition for the fruitfulness of the earth, for without man there is no tilling of the soil. Thus, as Otzen also said but with insufficient force, the story presents man in the middle: man is both part of the earth which is being shaped and part of the shaping process. The earth without man is inconceivable in this old story (written by men!), but at the same time this powerful creature man is still recognised as being one with the earth he is supposed to work. Man is both powerful and powerless, dominant in some things but definitely dependent in other respects. Here we see in stark form a theme which runs through all the biblical material which prevents us from simply talking glibly of man's dominion of the earth, while at the same time making us conscious of his role as a user of power.

Turning from the second Genesis creation story to the first, we note again that man appears to be the focus of the story. Some, like Barth, have tried to lay emphasis on the statement that God rested on the seventh day, but this stress seems unnecessarily forced. We note two

things. First, the theme of order out of chaos is certainly present here. The very structure of the story is carefully ordered, albeit with eight works of creation in only six days, and there is a definite progression through the story from the primeval chaos to the ordered world inhabited by man.

Second, this first creation story in Genesis tells of the power of God: this has often been said, but the full import of the statement has rarely been brought out. We accept the idea that this Genesis story in its present form dates from a period after the Exile, perhaps even reaching its present form during the Exile. The story must therefore be set against the backdrop of the message of Deutero-Isaiah, who is widely claimed to be the first person to formulate a doctrine of creation in "Israel". Whether or not he was first is perhaps arguable, but it is clear that he, possibly with others, formulated a doctrine of creation which saw Yahweh as the creator of everything. As we have noted above, little or no explanation is offered for this state of affairs, but it is claimed, for example by von Rad, that Deutero-Isaiah made use of creation motifs to support his declaration of the salvation on offer to God's people. Let us link with this two other ideas: one, that creation ideas among the Hebrews were formed sometimes in opposition to the creation ideas of other nations; two, that at least part of Deutero-Isaiah's message is polemic directed against the gods of Babylon, whose devotees were claiming their supremacy over Yahweh on the strength of Babylon's victory over Judah. Deutero-Isaiah refutes these grandiose claims, partly by stating that Yahweh actually created the materials from which the Babylonians made the idols they worshipped. It is surely but a short step from that to the first Genesis creation story, which shows Yahweh making all the things that mankind has worshipped, apart from Yahweh himself:

plants, trees, animals, even human beings. At least part of the message of the first Genesis story is that none of these things, animate or inanimate, in which men put their trust, are of any value - only Yahweh the Creator of them all is able to carry out his promises. But more: one of the ways in which Deutero-Isaiah attempts to meet claims on behalf of the Babylonian gods is to say that a true God is one who announces what he will do and then fulfils what he has promised. This links with the repeated refrain "and God saw that it was good" of Genesis 1. Many commentators have pointed out that "good" can mean "suitable for a purpose" here, so one of the things that the Genesis story is saying is that Yahweh has a purpose for all these created things, including man, and that Yahweh's purposes will be fulfilled. Yahweh can only rest on the seventh day because he is sure that his purposes will be fulfilled. Again we note the position of man as the last created being: if there is any significance in this, it is, according to our analysis above, that man has his part to play in fulfilling the purposes of Yahweh - just as, according to Deutero-Isaiah, Cyrus the Persian had his part to play in fulfilling the purposes of Yahweh. Thus again man's position is ambiguous, a creature but a creature with an important role in creation. We see then that the link between Genesis 1 and the work of Deutero-Isaiah adds to our understanding of the Genesis creation stories.

The same link also suggests why it was only during the Exile that this particular strand of creation theology, concerned with demonstrating the power of Yahweh over all things, should surface. It would seem that until the Exile, Yahweh was seen as a god with many rivals; he was worshipped as the one who had power over natural forces, the chaos which threatened his people, as well as the one mighty in battle who led them to victory. During the Exile however a direct challenge to

the latter aspect of Yahweh's power appeared, and he was challenged as a god who is capable of caring for his people. In other words, before the Exile it was possible for Yahweh to co-exist with other gods. Once Jerusalem had fallen and the temple had been destroyed, there loomed the possibility that not only was Yahweh unable to protect his own people against human foes, but that he might be unable to protect them against chaos. He had lost control. To reassert the power of Yahweh, it was necessary to assert his power over everything. Thus it is important to note that the first Genesis story arises in the context of an assertion of Yahweh's power to fulfil his promises. Given that recognition, we can see how majestically the writer asserts, "God rules - OK".

In this connection, attention must be drawn to Westermann's distinction between the creation of the individual and the creation of the nation. We recall that he assigns the second, older creation story in Genesis to the strand of the creation of the individual, and the first, later story to the strand of the creation of the nation. This would fit in with what we have noted above about the two stories. For the older story, we have seen, is concerned with man in his ambiguous position in nature, a position in which each individual exists as both powerful and powerless. The other story, as we have seen, displays the power of Yahweh as bringer of order out of chaos and as the one who has power over everything - and consequently as the one who can create a nation, bringing an ordered group out of a collection of individuals. The state machine of Babylon could easily have seemed like a mighty force in the world, and Yahweh, controller of forces, must have the power to create such mighty machines.

Finally we notice an overlooked insight of W. Zimmerli, which is

connected with the creation of the nation. Zimmerli has pointed out that the giving of the Promised Land to Israel is only possible because Yahweh the creator owns the land. Since the idea of the Promised Land seems to reach right back into the history of the Hebrews, this fact alone argues for decidedly old ideas about Yahweh the creator in Israel. More than that, the idea provides a link between the idea of Yahweh as creator and Yahweh as redeemer: it is in Yahweh's hands to give or take away.

We see then that there are available insights into the biblical material which provide additional strands for the tapestry of the biblical reflection on creation. It becomes clear from this that the presentation of the biblical reflection on creation by the eight writers reviewed above has not been subtle enough. The writers have presented the biblical material as though there were only one clearly defined "biblical doctrine of creation": we have seen not only that this is a mis-representation of the biblical material, but also that the nuances and insights which have been ignored add something of value and importance to the picture. We must now link these strands with those already isolated by the writers reviewed above, to create a fuller picture of biblical ideas about creation; we can then go on to see what sort of modern doctrine of creation is consistent with this wider biblical base.

5.3. The biblical reflection on Creator and creation

At the end of chapter 3, we summarised the consensus on the main lines of Israel's belief in Yahweh as creator, as that consensus emerged from our review of four Old Testament scholars. In chapter 4, we attempted to construct a "biblical doctrine of creation" from the material supplied by the Old Testament scholars and modern theological writers, and we saw that this followed closely the summary outline of chapter 3. We have now seen that this "biblical doctrine of creation" is deficient in several respects, and we have noted some of the insights to which more attention must be given. Now we turn to an attempt to bring these neglected insights into the picture already presented. In so doing, we are compelled to move away from the idea of a single "biblical doctrine of creation", for reasons already given. Instead we shall try to find some main strands of the biblical material which will show the main approaches to the idea of Yahweh as Creator among the Hebrew people over the centuries. We are not concerned with allocating a place in the development of Hebrew religion to each idea, but with painting a picture of the various ideas which are present in the biblical material, irrespective of when they actually arose or were used. In this way we can make use of material old and young and the insights of different cultural patterns. Consonant with this we shall, following Westermann, talk of the biblical reflection on creation rather than the biblical doctrine or doctrines of creation. We shall proceed by modification of what has gone before.

The first modification concerns what the biblical material is thought to be telling us. In the past the creation material in the Bible has been seen as telling us something about the relationship between God and man (dependence) and the relationship between man and the earth

(the dominance of the former over the latter). Our look at other insights suggests that this is only a partial truth, and that a very important part of the biblical material on creation is concerned with the relationship of Yahweh to all nature. Put simply, the biblical material on creation claims that Yahweh is a god of power whose power is greater than the power of natural forces, living creatures, or the gods of other peoples.

The fact that Yahweh has this power over everything is logically basic to much else in the Old Testament. Crucially, unless God has this power, there is little point in trusting his promises, for without power he cannot fulfil them: this is surely one of the reasons for the importance of creation motifs in the work of Deutero-Isaiah as he calls people to trust a god who seems to have been defeated and discredited. Thus the claim that salvation and creation are intimately related is true, but it is not true that creation is simply a projection back into primeval history of salvation: if there is a relation of dependence between these doctrines, it goes the other way. The idea of God's power in creation is necessary to the idea of salvation for God's people.

This idea of Yahweh's power is also necessary to the carrying out of other promises, for the biblical material sees Yahweh as one power among many acting on Israel. First, Yahweh's power is necessary to the promise that he would give the land of Canaan to his people, and would make them be fruitful and multiply. He can only carry out these promises if the land is his to give and if life is his to give. Thus both these promises, records of which are ancient, presuppose that Yahweh has power over natural things.

Second, Yahweh promises his people that they will have a land flowing

with milk and honey. Here we see the notion of Yahweh as a sort of fertility god in an agricultural setting. No doubt the nomadic tribes expected their god to keep their flocks healthy and fruitful, just as the farmers expected their god to give them good crops, and sun and rain at the right time. The Hebrews made the change from being nomads to being farmers, and their god had to be good for both - so he must be very powerful.

Third, it is part of the promises of Yahweh that he will protect his people against natural forces, against the animals that threaten them, and the sea and desert that threaten to overwhelm them, and so on. God can only have the power to do these things if he is a power greater than all these natural forces: as Creator, he is of course, the greatest.

Here we have a link which should be noted, with the idea of the power of Yahweh over the forces which threaten Yahweh's people. We see again the link between creation and salvation: clearly a trust in the future promises of God depends in part at least on evidence that Yahweh has kept his promises in the past. The Hebrews saw this evidence in Yahweh's dealings with Israel in history and in Yahweh's control over nature, his provision for his people and his protection of them against natural forces.

We note in passing that this idea of the power of Yahweh does not require either monotheism or the idea that a doctrine of creation is developed in opposition to the claims of other people on behalf of their gods. The claim that Yahweh has power over various natural forces can co-exist with the idea of other gods with their respective spheres of influence: monotheism and opposition only come into play when other gods, or their devotees, try to extend their spheres of

influence. This reinforces the idea that the biblical material on creation is as much about the relationship between Yahweh and the natural forces as about the relationship between Yahweh and man or the relationship between man and the world.

These latter relationships do figure in the creation material because man is seen as one of the powers or forces in the world. Like all the other forces, man has some power. In the case of man, this power is expressed in the idea of dominion over the fruit of the earth and the sea, as well as in the idea of man's participation in the creation of the world through his labour in tilling the earth and naming the animals upon it. However, again like all the other forces in the world, man is seen as bending to the power of Yahweh: just as Yahweh puts the sea in its place and directs the wind, so Yahweh allows man his power, or life, but can always simply take away that life. Again we see that man is regarded as one of the powers in the world in **that** he, like all the other forces, must work with the other powers of the world. Hence his relationship to the world is of great importance. The balance of the powers within the world is also very important, and man needs Yahweh to maintain that balance, because man himself is unable to do so.

This brings us to the idea of order which is an important constituent of the biblical material on creation. The manifestation of Yahweh's power as Creator is partly in the ordered framework within which man is set. Thus not only is there regularity in the cycle of day and night, of seasons, of weather patterns, and so on, so that man can depend on this regularity: there is also an order and regularity in the world which allows man to look ahead on the assumption that the past is in some measure repeatable. This gives the sort of security in which man can live.

In the same way, the power of Yahweh as Creator ensures that the chaos of flood, drought, earthquake, and plague is kept in check most of the time. This is seen as a sign that Yahweh actually cares for his creation, in that he does not allow it to be destroyed. For the Hebrews in particular, the idea that Yahweh cares for his creatures is reinforced by a national understanding of Yahweh's concern for his people shown in his mighty acts in history. We see again the close link between creation and salvation, and the importance to the understanding of Yahweh as Creator of the idea of Yahweh, Saviour of Israel. Without the latter idea and its emphasis on Yahweh's loving concern, the Creator could be seen as more than somewhat capricious in his dealings with mankind, giving them good crops one year and nothing the year after for no apparent reason.

Similarly, the idea that in creation Yahweh is good to man and that creation is for man's benefit probably owes something to the idea of Yahweh's loving care. However, the biblical creation material is aware of the goodness of Yahweh in creation and in nature and places this goodness firmly alongside the natural disasters and evidence of malign influence. In this connection, we must notice what it means to be good in the sight of God: it means to fulfil Yahweh's purpose, and the biblical material is clear that this may not always be to man's benefit.

However, it must be noted, against many writers, that the biblical material on creation is not primarily concerned with why Yahweh created the world. Nor, we agree with almost everyone, were the Hebrews too concerned about how the world came into being: though we must note that both questions seem to have been asked at some time somewhere in Israel. It seems that the biblical material accepts the

world as a brute fact and is concerned about how man can live in that world, in tension with all the powers, including God, which operate within that world.

We can now summarise our findings. There were several interwoven strands in the Hebrew ideas on creation, which developed in different ways at different times. The idea that holds the various strands together is the idea of the power of God. The doctrine of creation is seen as relating God as a power to the other forces at work on man, and claims that Yahweh is the greatest power of them all. Man is seen as part of the creation, one of the powers subservient to Yahweh and needing to co-exist with the other earthly powers. Man depends on God for his life. The earth is man's arena of power, but the arena is shared with other forces. Within this arena there is good and bad, but from other ideas, Israel has learnt to trust in the overall goodness of Yahweh, as well as his faithfulness. The doctrine of creation is mostly about trust in God.

5.4. A doctrine of creation in outline

Following the lines laid down by so many predecessors among the writers of the Old Testament, we now turn to suggest a doctrine of creation which utilises the insights of the past but adapts them to meet present day needs.

Meeting present day needs demands first some knowledge of the background against which our doctrine must be set. This is especially necessary in dealing with a modern doctrine of creation if we are to avoid barren conflict with science and its theories of how the world came into being. We must first then see what role a doctrine of creation might play in modern theology. Such a doctrine does not tell us how the world came into being, in the sense of giving us a detailed description of the mechanics of the birth of the universe - that is the proper work of science. Nor can a doctrine of creation tell us why the universe was created, for the answer to that question depends on an understanding of the purposes of God. A doctrine of creation may suggest something about those purposes, but that is a secondary task.

The primary task of a doctrine of creation is to say something about the triangular relationship whose three participants are God, the universe, and mankind. Thus the doctrine of creation is concerned about the following relationships: God and the universe, God and human beings, human beings and the universe. Clearly these categories overlap, for man is part of the universe. However, since the relationship between man and the universe is important, it is easier to separate out the special relationship between man and God. Furthermore this separation suits our natural inclinations, since human beings are doing the work and are likely to be interested in the relationship between God and man.

We have stated what a doctrine of creation is about. How do we reach this claim? We do it by looking at how a doctrine of creation arises, and here one of the strands of the Old Testament comes to our aid: for one of the factors we have seen in the shaping of the Old Testament material is the position in which human beings found themselves. On the one hand they made claims about a god who loved them and cared for them and was powerful, even omnipotent. On the other hand, human beings found themselves living in a world containing forces which affected their lives in no uncertain manner, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. The doctrine of creation did not arise, as popularly supposed, in answer to the question, "how did we come to be here" or, "why did we come to be here": the doctrine of creation arose from the attempt to make sense of the power of the world about man and man's claims about God.

In the same way today, the doctrine of creation arises in a very simple fashion. From one side, any believer in a deity believes that that deity has some power or influence in the natural world in which the believer lives; we should note that the idea of power and influence is necessarily included in the notion of "a god". On the other side, human beings know themselves to be influenced by many natural forces. So the question arises, "What is the relationship between these natural powers and the power of God?". Either these powers must co-exist on equal terms, or there must be a hierarchy. To a monotheist, this inevitably means that the power of his god must be the greatest. As the writer of Genesis 1 and Deutero-Isaiah found, if God is to be the greatest power there is, God must be the creator of all other powers. Thus the doctrine of creation is not about the how or why of the universe, even as a hypothesis (Hodgson): it is

about the relationships between the various forces at work in the universe. We are thus in the same position as the people of the Old Testament, and can expect Old Testament insights to help us in coming to terms with our position.

We note here how inextricably Christian doctrines are entwined. Undoubtedly, one of the things that drives the Christian to claim that God is the most powerful force in the universe is a bit of self-interest, based on the belief (and hope) that God loves and cares for human-kind. We hope therefore that as the greatest power of the universe, he will act to restrain the other forces which affect mankind, particularly those that are detrimental to man. Of course, the belief that God loves man is not actually part of the doctrine of creation itself, but is derived from ideas about salvation.

However, we must also notice that this approach to the doctrine of creation does not depend on any idea of God's goodness. All this doctrine claims is that God has the ultimate power: how that power is used, for good or bad, capriciously or otherwise, remains to be discovered. Thus theodicy, for example, is put in its proper place, and not mixed up with ideas of evil in creation, for theodicy is concerned with facing the paradox that an omnipotent God cares for man and yet allows evil in the world. In contrast, the doctrine of creation merely recognises God as one of the powers which affect human beings and tries to set the power of God over against the other forces and powers. Thus following in the footsteps of Deutero-Isaiah, we simply claim that God is the greatest power of all.

This means that we are making a claim of faith. It is necessary to believe in one suprene god if one is to talk about a creator of everything. Interestingly, our claim that God is the greatest power

allows God to be both transcendent and immanent, creator of all things but still at work in the universe. To see this, we need only remember that electrical power somehow transcends the world, is definitely objectively quantifiable, and yet is available and at work in the world.

Next we note that this approach to the doctrine of creation allows science full rein to investigate and hypothesize, but does not commit the believer to any particular scientific theory. What this doctrine of creation does say is that whatever science finds out about the powers and forces of the universe, the power of God is still greater. Hence, the more we find out about the natural powers of the universe, the more we realise just how powerful is our God! Moreover, we are encouraged to join in dialogue with science so that we may discover more about this power of God which lies behind all other powers. It is not only possible but positively useful and even necessary to make links between the biblical material relating to creation and modern scientific understanding.

Power is the ability to do things. What has the power of God achieved? Again combining our modern experience with the insights of the Bible, we say that God has used his power to create an ordered environment in which man exists. We do not assume that this environment was created for man's benefit. That there is order in the environment is a condition of life, even today, or perhaps especially today. From time to time there is disorder - for example natural disaster or atomic explosion - and then a form of chaos results. We share the ancient idea of living precariously between order and disorder, though some of the disorder which threatens us is a result of our scientific and technological sophistication, for example industrial pollution or nuclear war.

We note that our idea of order is precisely the idea of order which is basic to the pursuit of modern science. For without order and regularity, experiments could not be repeated and what are called "natural laws" would have no validity. We are told much about "scientific enquiry", but "how" and "why" questions make no sense without some underlying concept of order. So our doctrine of creation backs and encourages science in the search for order and regularity which can be described and codified.

Disorder occurs in the universe when some power or force breaks its normal bounds. While every force is kept within bounds, harmony reigns. We note that our doctrine of creation does not claim that disorder is necessarily unnatural or not a proper part of the universe. For example, the wind reaches gale force and causes damage, thus bringing a perfectly natural, if unpleasant, disorder. In other words, order is not the same as harmony or benefit. Order simply means that each component fits into the total picture in its own special way: thus each element of the universe is important as part of the whole. Whether or not the present ordering of the universe is good or bad may depend simply on the position of the observer.

Within this ordered universe, human beings exist. They exist as creatures, but they exist too as one of the powerful forces at play within the world. Thus humans can harness other forces, they can affect other parts of the creation, they can do things. Like all the other forces in the natural world, man is liable to create disorder if he breaks his natural bounds: hence, if he upsets the equilibrium of other forces, he must expect trouble. Upsetting the equilibrium covers such things as triggering nuclear explosions and over-farming to produce infertility in the soil. The relationship between man and

the universe is one of co-existence, which may or may not be for mutual benefit. Man is just one force among many, and must seek to dwell in harmony with the other forces. If he destroys the harmony, there will be problems.

Finally we turn to the relationship between God and man. In one way, this is a special case of the relationship between God and the universe. Human beings are creatures subject to the over-riding power of God. In humans, this power of God is perceived most clearly in the fact that each individual human has a comparatively short life. However, from other evidence, Christians believe that God loves and cares for human beings and wants the best for them. The universe in which we live is good: if utilised properly it keeps us alive, and provides for all our needs, and this good world is the creation of God.

In addition man has special abilities - he can reflect, he can appreciate and explore the order of the universe, and crucially he can exploit and harness other powers of the universe, thus extending his own power. Thus his relationship to the creator is necessarily more complicated than the relationship of other creatures, because man's ability to create disorder is so much greater. Part of the goodness of God to man is the freedom which God gives to man to exploit the resources of the universe. This particular act of grace on the part of God is only possible because God is in a position to allow the exploitation of the universe, that is, God is the creator of those resources. We should note that this freedom may be part of God's goodness to man, but it is not necessarily good for the rest of the universe. We note also that in spite of his special position in the universe, man is not actually necessary to the universe, or even to

the earth: life on Earth could quite easily continue without human beings.

Finally we notice two things about our doctrine of creation in relation to modern theology in general. First, on this view of the doctrine of creation, the idea of a creator is necessary in Christian theology. Without such an idea, there is no reason to believe that God has the ability to save anyone.

Second, on this doctrine of creation it is possible to discover something about the nature of God from the universe he has created. God's created world tells us that our God is a god of order and regularity and beauty, he is not totally capricious, he is abundantly generous, and he has great power. However, this doctrine of creation tells us nothing about the purposes of God, or even whether God is purposive in nature: for all our doctrine of creation reveals, the creator may have had no specific end in view in creating the universe.

5.5. Conclusion

We see then in outline how some of the problems about doctrines of creation mentioned in the Introduction can be overcome. We saw that the problems arose in part through rather unsubtle use of the biblical reflection on creation, conditioned by certain theological assumptions, particularly about the relationship between creation and salvation. We saw that strands of material in the biblical reflection had not been exploited, and making use of these we have developed a doctrine of creation which gives man a full, but not central place, which offers scope for contact between science and theology, and which presents a doctrine of creation which takes account of man's awareness of his own position in the world and his awareness of the extensive universe about him.

This suggested doctrine is of course shaped by the perceived needs of modern times and by currents in modern thought. It will need to change and adapt as theological fashions change and theological thought advances. However, the basic idea of the power of God needs no adaption, merely explication in a new environment. Thus again and again theologians are able to continue the process begun centuries ago in ancient Israel as human beings reflected on God the Creator.

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