

CREATION & COSMOLOGY, by J. V. Peach. *Burns and Oates (Faith & Fact)*, 9s. 6d.

'Ryle proves *Genesis*.' The appearance of this headline in a newspaper some few years ago is proof of the popular interest in one of the supposed areas of possible conflict between science and religion. On the one hand, we are sometimes told, are ranged the Big Bang theorists, among whom a Catholic priest is prominent, and for them the Bang follows on the first creation by God; on the other hand (they continue) are the supporters of an eternal Steady State universe, the most eloquent propagandist for which believes religion to be a comforting illusion. Hence the keen interest with which the latest observations with the Cambridge radiotelescopes are received: the question is always, Has the Steady State theory, formerly advanced with such arrogance, been slain at last?

In the interval between the writing and the appearance of this splendid little book, support for Steady State has dramatically crumbled. But, as Mr Peach explains, for religion this is of little consequence either way. 'Our conclusion must be the perhaps disappointing one that cosmology and a theology of creation can

have little to contribute to one another However the science of cosmology should develop in the future, a person's belief in the truth or falsity of the *Genesis* account of an initial creation, properly understood, will be unaffected.' The confusion, he tells us, has arisen partly through the use of ambiguous phrases like 'age of the universe' with its different scientific and theological connotations and partly through failure to appreciate the powers and limits of science.

Mr Peach's conclusion should surprise no one and is unquestionably correct; that some men distinguished in physics think the contrary is an indictment of our educational system which studies the sciences but not science. Mr Peach's achievement lies rather in the care and authority with which he presents the scriptural and scientific data necessary for an informed discussion of the problem and in the essential sanity of his analysis of the issues. To have compressed so satisfying a treatment in so short a compass is a remarkable feat and his book deserves the widest circulation.

MICHAEL HOSKIN