

THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, by Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. by Francis Mc Donagh, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1976. 458 pp. £9

THE WORLDS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION, by Don Cupitt, Sheldon Press, London, 1976, 116 pp. £1.60 paper.

In the Middle Ages theology was known as the 'Queen of the Sciences' which seems now to have been an absurd suggestion because in Britain and North America the sciences are restricted to the natural sciences with the social sciences of sociology and economics somewhere on the fringe. But in the Middle Ages *scientia* as knowledge was appropriated by the *scientiae*, academic disciplines. On this basis any form of systematic study which led to the acquisition of knowledge had a right to be known as a *scientia*, and so St Thomas asserted that theology was a science because it appropriated knowledge of God through God's revelation of himself. The natural sciences, moreover, had not in the Middle Ages acquired their present status and up to the time of the Enlightenment were still considered to be a part of philosophy. The natural sciences gained their independence in the eighteenth century, and later Hegel introduced the distinction between, as we would say, the sciences and the humanities or, as Hegel put it, *die Naturwissenschaften* and *die Geisteswissenschaften*. The distinction in German has preserved the idea that the sciences of nature and the sciences of the human mind can each lead to knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) and truth, which is not true of the English equivalents. With the emergence of scientific positivism under the influence of Comte and Mach there has been an attempt to relegate the human sciences to something less than academic disciplines aimed at the systematic appropriation of knowledge and the establishment of truth. Theology felt the challenge of scientific and logical positivism (which was emphasized by the collapse of metaphysics) more keenly than other disciplines, and theology was charged with using 'non-scientific' and non-verifiable language. Various notable replies have been made on behalf of theology to this charge: theology has been reduced to talk about man, traceable in different forms to Schleiermacher and Feuerbach; theology has refused to talk about the divine reality which purports to lie behind religious traditions and has

applied a form of scientific (or scientific) method to what remained, namely biblical studies, church history, phenomenology of religion and so forth; theology has been limited to language about faith as a means of individual self-understanding as in Bultmann; and a positivism of divine revelation has been proposed by Barth in his unsubstantiated claim on behalf of an authoritative theology of revelation. All these attempts to map out a space for theology are similar in that they either withdraw theology from scientific studies or from the divine reality which lies behind religious traditions.

Three years ago Wolfhart Pannenberg published a major study entitled *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie* which tackled the problem of the 'scientific' status of theology head on by discussing the problem of knowledge and truth in the natural and social sciences, by forming a model for the study of theology, and by re-assessing the status of the traditional disciplines which make up theology as a whole. This work has now been translated as *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*. Its translation must have been a major undertaking and although some phrases read a little oddly (I have not been able to compare it with the German) the translator seems to have coped with the problems very well. It should be noted, however, that Pannenberg's book has little to do with the philosophy of science as we understand it in Britain and the translation of the book's title is positively misleading. Pannenberg is discussing the status of theology as a science in the Latin sense of *scientia* and the German sense of *Wissenschaft*, not in the English sense of 'science' which it clearly is not. *Wissenschaftstheorie* in the German title would be better rendered 'Philosophy of Knowledge'. *Caveat lector*, especially if he teaches philosophy of science.

Don Cupitt's book in the series *Issues in Religious Studies* poses no such problems and is designed to introduce an area of discussion primarily to sixth form groups. Cupitt very imaginatively presents

a number of issues which illustrate the very real problems in reconciling a scientific world outlook with the Christian tradition, problems such as determinism and free will. The book, however, is in no sense comprehensive as it omits any reference to such crucial areas as the claims of scientific positivism—except for an attack on Jacques Monod—the clash between Galileo and Church authority, Darwin and biblical fundamentalism, Einstein and Teilhard de Chardin. As such Cupitt's book can be recommended for stimulating group discussions and individual enquiries but it would be inadequate as a basis for research.

Pannenberg's book, as one would expect, covers an incomparably wider field without bothering with natural scientific problems as such, in order to integrate theology into the universe of 'scientific' meaning. His first task is to push positivism to one side and he uses Popper's critical rationalism to do this. He shows that the positivist principle of verification will not work even with the natural sciences. Popper, together with Hegel, Habermas and others, makes it clear that all general laws are provisional statements of meaning. New evidence may falsify them. Laws can only be verified in the future at the close of history when all states of affairs have become known. Any natural law, or for that matter any scientific or historical statement or judgment is assumed to have meaning and to be true only as an anticipation of the still future totality of meaning. If God is understood to be that which determines the totality of reality it can be seen, Pannenberg asserts, that the scientist (whatever his discipline) works with a model of reality which includes the concept of God even if the scientist does not use God-language.

Pannenberg goes on to say that so far as theology is concerned 'God' is a hypothesis which is used to understand meaning and reality in its totality, but whether God exists as the one that determines all reality can only be verified in the future when the whole of reality is made present, at the end of history. Pannenberg comes close here to Hick's eschatological verification of God's existence. In the meantime we have to decide whether present experience confirms or falsifies the hypothesis that God as the future totality of reality is to be identified with the God of relig-

ious tradition. Pannenberg's discussion covers the Frankfurt school of critical sociology, chiefly Jürgen Habermas, and hermeneutical theories of meaning, and his principal aim is to overcome the separation of the natural and human sciences.

In the second part of his book, Pannenberg outlines his model of theological study. It is illegitimate to begin with an assumption of the truth of the Christian tradition. God is recognized as that which determines all reality in all the developed religions and Christianity cannot have any prior authoritative claim at the outset. Christian theology must take its place in a general theology of religions. Because God is not yet a fully existent being for us he can only be known in a hypothetical anticipation of total meaning or in God's self-giving in revelation. One sign of the strength of Christian tradition is that it is able to adapt its tradition to new historical realities, whereas a moribund mythology would remain fixed and unhistorical. Theology, however, must not be no more than an anthropological study of religion like a psychology or sociology or phenomenology of religion, but must look to the divine reality which claims to lie behind religious tradition and to see whether the God of religious tradition emerges as the power to overcome the evil and suffering of present experience.

Because Pannenberg sees theology as the examination of the divine reality which claims to legitimate religious traditions, he tries to overcome the customary divisions within theology. Biblical exegesis should incorporate a theology of biblical traditions (making the distinction between a study of the Old Testament and the New Testament superfluous), church history should be a theology of Christian tradition and each should take over some of the ground which is at present occupied by systematic theology. Similarly practical theology should be a theology of religious action rather than a convenient means of training the clergy. In this regard, isolated and inward-looking seminaries can have no theological justification. If one accepts Pannenberg's concept of God and his model of theology, little sense can be given to a division between Catholic and Protestant theology (German universities still have separate denominational theological faculties) and Church authority has no

place in the study of theology.

This long review is only a bare outline of a complex book and the publishers are to be congratulated (despite a few misprints) on having made available a work

which is addressed to professional theologians and as such to a rather restricted readership.

GEOFFREY TURNER

THE IMPROBABLE PURITAN, A LIFE OF BULSTRODE WHITELOCKE, by Ruth Spalding. Faber & Faber, London, 1975. 318 pp. £4.50

If Bulstrode Whitelocke does appear as an 'improbable' Puritan, the fault lies entirely with us. One is so accustomed to having such responsible and thoughtful men as Selden, Whitelocke, Fairfax and Hampden dismissed as dry, sanctimonious kill-joys, that it is a real pleasure to come across a book like this one. Miss Spalding takes Whitelocke out of our stereotyped historical categories and shows him as part of the rich and varied society of mid-seventeenth century England.

The son of a judge and a highly respected lawyer, Whitelocke was elected to the Long Parliament and became an important figure in the Parliamentary party. He was sent as a peace delegate to the king on three occasions and, although he managed to avoid being implicated in the trial and execution of Charles I, he was twice appointed a Commissioner of the Great Seal under the Republic and Protectorate, and was a highly successful ambassador to Sweden for the Republic, (1653-4).

Always at the centre of government, then, Whitelocke was important not so much for his leadership as for his respectability; his firm upholding of the rule of law and—against the Royalists and the Presbyterians alike—of religious toleration under that law. Like all the high-principled men of his generation, he was overtaken by the speed of events and had to do the best he could in an unprecedented situation. The theme throughout his varied career was to preserve the rule of law. But how was one to be consistent when the ground of the law—King and Parliament—were swept away? By 1653 Whitelocke

had come to believe that sovereignty lay with 'the people of England', and that the form of government—monarchical or republican—was purely a matter of 'acceptability'. He held similar views on church matters and one of his favourite sayings was that men could no more be expected to believe or worship alike than all to have the same faces or the same taste in food.

The great charm of Miss Spalding's biography is that, basing herself on Whitelocke's diaries, annals and published works, she allows public and private matters to merge and overlap. In 1634, at the age of twenty-nine, Whitelocke was charged with being 'disaffected to the Church', but his main preoccupation when summoned to London was not the threat of Laudianism, but changing his hair-style and buying new clothes to advance his courting of Frances Willoughby, with whom he later eloped. Similarly, when advising Cromwell on his Scottish campaign, his mind is on the wooing of Widow Wilson (his third wife) and as he was only able to spare five days after waving Cromwell goodbye, he 'made use of his time', as he records in his diary. Above all, it is in Sweden that we see our 'Puritan' as an educated and cultured man, quite at ease as ambassador to the sophisticated Queen Christina. Here, more than anywhere else, his diary, through this fascinating book, sheds a new light on the personalities and events which go to make up our historical categories and text-book histories.

JOHN FARRELL, O.P.

ERRATUM

In Brian Davies's *Theology and Natural Theology* (June 1977) part of a sentence was unfortunately omitted. Page 262, Line 5 et seq. should read:

It might be said that human reason does not make this claim, that it is actually part of Revelation; but then, in order to recognise a revelation one must employ some rational criteria not themselves derivable from Revelation. This may be denied . . .