

THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE, by Thomas F. Torrance. *Oxford University Press, 1969. 84s.*

Contemporary theological writers have tended to suffer from uncertainty as to what they were writing about; the abandonment of the medieval world of the cosmos as mirroring the divine ideas, and the development of the natural sciences has led to considerable confusion as to the nature of theological thought. Are we constructing a transcendental anthropology, using the language of inner experience or simply making sense, if any, of a quaint old-world dream? Lack of certainty has never been Professor Torrance's defect, and when one heard that he was producing a work on *Theological Science* one expected that he would present a clear and unambiguous statement of the Reformed position and that his well-known antipathy towards the *analogia entis* would play a large part in his exposition. It is true that in the present work he has some interpretations of St Thomas that might bear closer inspection, but it is also true that he recognizes that St Thomas' subtle use of analogy is very different from the neo-Scholastic doctrine. Again one cannot help but feel that the importance of Bacon is rather overstressed and that the story of the rise of the natural sciences, as at present understood, is rather oversimplified.

It would, however, be quite wrong to insist on these minor points for one has been given

THE QUESTION OF GOD, Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century, by Heinz Zahrnt. *Collins, London, 1969. 398 pp. 63s.*

Die Sache Mit Gott (The Question of God), of which R. A. Wilson has made an excellent English translation, became a best seller in Germany; 17,000 copies were sold in the year of publication alone (1966). And rightly so. The author, Heinz Zahrnt, is the theological editor of the *Hamburger Sontagsblatt*, and his journalistic experience, together with his understanding of the central problems of contemporary German theology, have enabled him to give a brilliant, short and comprehensible account of the theological discussions among the great German-speaking thinkers of the twentieth century.

He starts with the Liberal theologians (Schleiermacher, etc.). They had sought an impermissible synthesis between God and world, grace and nature, and threatened to efface completely the boundary between the two. Barth is the dominating figure in the renewed emphasis on the 'Protestant Principle',

what one did not expect: a major work of theological inquiry. It sets out a theology that rests on a basis wholly given and trans-subjective, which throws human thinking of God back upon him as its direct and proper object and which is consistently faithful to the concrete act of God in Jesus Christ. What, in other words, we reach by argument cannot be equated with the living God, so that natural theology cannot be a foundation on which positive theology can rest, as it can arise only when a person can see or hear the reality to which its existence statements claim to refer. Theology is submission or reasonable response to the primordial reality given in Christ, God's Word, and is Christological in that we look with Christ and by him are directed to the Father.

From beginning to end the thesis is sustained by strenuous and powerful argumentation, and it draws on a wide and deep philosophical reading. On almost every page there is something stimulating for the philosopher and the theologian, and each section calls for careful consideration and discussion. Without doubt this book is a must for anyone seriously interested in theological discussion, and one has the feeling that it may prove to be a classic.

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the principle of justification by God alone. The central theme of his *Dialectic Theology* is therefore the rediscovery of the deity of God. This implies a radical criticism of any form of religion as man's own attempt to bring God nearer to him. Barth's total rejection of Brunner's idea of the 'contact-point' shows, however, that he himself does not draw the conclusions from his own principles, inasmuch as his theology remains a form of supernatural positivism which in fact is another form of religion. And so we are led to appreciate the contribution of Gogarten and Bonhoeffer, namely that the rediscovery of God means the rediscovery of the world as secular. What then is the practical relevance of the Christian faith for secular (political) action? How far is the political action of Christians already determined by the laws of life in the Kingdom of God, and how far is it still bound by the structural laws of this world? This, says Zahrnt, is