

The Canticle of the Rose in 1949. A few years later she wrote: 'when I was a very small child, I began to see the patterns of the world, the images of wonder; and I asked myself why those patterns should be repeated — the feather and the fern and rose and acorn in the patterns of frost on the window — pattern after pattern repeated again and again. And even then I knew that this was telling us something. I founded my poetry on it...' There is a guide for a critic.

The strongly phrased negative reactions to the Second Vatican Council at the end of the book leave little preparation for the third millennium of the birth of Christ.

A few repairs to the text are needed. Prinknash is a Benedictine *abbey*, not a priory, near Cranham not Winchcombe (220). The French version of the Jerusalem Bible was done by Dominican Fathers (257). The theological texts of St Thomas Aquinas were translated by Father Thomas Gilby, without an 'e'; Father Alfred Gilbey was another character (301). Stonyhurst is spelled without an 'e' (308). Siegfried Sassoon did not select the thirty poems that compose *The Path to Peace*. He wrote to me on 23 January 1961, two months after its publication: 'Mother Margaret will have told you about this lovely book. The selection was thought of and made by Dame Felicitas, the organist at Stanbrook... Even now I can hardly believe that such a wonderful thing has been awarded me. But its significance needs no comment from me — the unity of editor, printer and poet — and the message which it conveys.' The 'late Mother Margaret Mary' is still alive. Siegfried's epigraph 'To Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, in whose keeping was given Mother Margaret Mary, Religious of the Assumption' means that she was given into the keeping of the Mother of God when she became a Religious of the Assumption.

GERARD MEATH OP

THE SHAPING OF RATIONALITY: TOWARD INTER-DISCIPLINARITY IN THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE by J. Wentzel van Huyssteen *William B. Eerdmans, Cambridge, 1999. Pp. xii + 303, £22.99 hbk.*

Wentzel van Huyssteen's latest book on science and theology is strikingly different from those written in England by scholars like John Polkinghorne and Arthur Peacocke. Instead of dealing with individual areas of supposed disagreement between the subjects, like the origins of the universe and the evolution of species, van Huyssteen aims at a much larger goal. Rather than refuting the prevailing view of theology's antagonism towards science, a subject which has been held up as the model of rationality in modern times, he aims at defending the rationality of both scientific and theological research as different but complementary 'reasoning strategies' which can bring us better understanding of the world and others.

The book accurately describes the modern attack on theology by

a philosophical culture where natural scientific modes of reasoning were taken as the defining norm of rational discourse. Postmodernism reacts against this 'foundationalist' world view with a suspicion of a desire for foundations and an attack on 'meta-narratives', attempts at descriptions of reality which are universally valid. The natural sciences and most theologies will provide excellent examples of such meta-narratives. Postmodernism rejects modern understandings of rationality, but van Huyssteen argues that rationality itself can be rescued without returning to a modern, foundationalist notion of it. He gives a description of rationality which will turn out to be common to both science and theology. Rather than embrace the standard postmodern, relativist, anti-foundational approach or return to a universalist, foundationalist system, van Huyssteen develops his own 'post-foundationalist' account of rationality, which he argues is a multi-faceted ability which is about 'optimal understanding' of the world, and compassion in dealing with it and with others, a sophisticated survival skill which has appeared in humans through evolution.

Part of one's reaction to the book will undoubtedly be determined by how seriously one takes postmodernism. Van Huyssteen takes postmodernist arguments to have established that theology in the twenty-first century cannot depend on revelation, tradition and inspired texts, an approach he would, I think incorrectly, label fideist. He repeatedly asserts that both theological and scientific knowledge are 'first of all rooted in local know-how' and specific to the communities and even individuals who produced it. He does not think that this means knowledge is never universal, but that its becoming so is always as a result of effort, a complex process of 'standardization'. What he does not seem to address is why this standardization of local knowledge is possible at all. The fact that there is not a German physics, different from and incommensurate with English physics, points to the idea that perhaps this local know-how is not so local after all.

That said, much of what van Huyssteen has to say is extremely sensible and interesting and certainly not uncritically postmodern. His observation that the modern understanding of rationality was too rationalistic is well made; he points out the great range of ways in which humans grapple with different aspects of their experience. His description of the current state of affairs in the relations between science, theology and postmodernism shows a wealth of understanding and an intelligent judgment. He also has a compelling account of his own to offer in his arguing for what he calls a positive postmodernism. The book is not easy — it is too full for my liking of academic jargon — but there are many insights to be had for those who persevere.

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