

Preface

The best way to introduce this book may be to explain how I came to write it. The seed was planted during my years of graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, where I had gone to study philosophy of science with Paul Feyerabend. Incidentally I learned there, for the first time, that Christian belief had fallen on hard times among the intelligentsia—a big surprise to a Nebraska ranch kid just emerged from the Catholic school system. It wasn't long before the question of the status of religious knowledge came to seem to me both more interesting and more pressing than that of scientific knowledge. The philosopher of science must answer the question "In what does the rationality of science consist?" Few besides my teacher Feyerabend would question whether science *is* rational. The philosopher of religion, on the other hand, must in these days provide an apologia for the very possibility of religious knowledge.

Philosophy of science has made great strides in this generation by careful study of science itself—as opposed to arm-chair investigation of the 'logic' of science. It seemed to me, therefore, that philosophers of religion needed an equally thorough knowledge of the cognitive aspects of religion. Thus upon completion of my work at Berkeley I immediately undertook a second doctorate, in theology, at the nearby Graduate Theological Union, where I concentrated on the history of theology and philosophy of religion.

During that time, the present volume began to take shape. I saw that Scripture, history, and the church's ongoing encounters with

God in community life and worship could be the data for a scientific theology. Theology itself (doctrine) could be accounted theories in a theological "research program." The analysis of the relations between data and theory, and criteria for acceptance of theories, would come from the philosophy of science of the late Imre Lakatos.

Lakatos put forward a revised version of a Kantian motto:

Philosophy of science without history of science is empty; history of science without philosophy of science is blind.

I propose a motto that expresses a similar attitude regarding the relation between philosophy of religion and religion's content:

Philosophy of religion without theology is empty; theology without philosophy of religion is blind.

Although this book is published in a philosophy of religion series, the reader will see that it is by no means empty of theology. I apologize to any theological readers who may find my recounting of the history tedious. Lakatos himself has been much criticized for failure to take history seriously enough.

The list of those to whom I am indebted has grown along with the book. First, I express my gratitude to Paul Feyerabend. I hope some day to emulate his thorough and creative scholarship.

I also thank the following friends and acquaintances who have read and commented on my manuscript or helped me with the project in other ways: William Alston, editor of this series, Ian Barbour, Donald Gelpi, Michael Goldberg, Philip Hefner, Gonzalo Munévar, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Arthur Peacocke, Ted Peters, Robert Russell, Kay Scheuer, senior manuscript editor at Cornell University Press, David Schultenover, Terrence Tilley, and Claude Welch.

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Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning

