

## Preface

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT rationality and knowledge, philosophical and theological . . .

I am aware, of course, that concern with knowledge and epistemology is still derided in some quarters today. I have been stubborn enough to pursue such a project over the years in spite of its bad press, at least in part, because I felt that there was some truth in the old Greek adage that “happiness consisted in the pursuit of knowledge.” Beyond instrumentality and control, there is something profoundly meaningful about knowledge, which makes us who we are, humans created in the image of God, finite and fragile to be sure, yet always wanting to know more, always aspiring “to know the truth” or “trying to imitate the gods,” as Aristotle had it.

I have also felt that although we presently have an unprecedented access to information, an immense amount of data available at our fingertips, just a “mouse click away,” more often than not, that doesn’t make us more knowledgeable but rather more confused . . . Information needs to be organized, evaluated, measured. We need rules and standards, intellectual and moral. Having information is not the same as having knowledge . . . And people are still being “destroyed from lack of knowledge” (of both God and the world, it should be added, as the two cannot be really separated). Whatever bad connotation epistemology may have, we still need to learn “to read the signs of the time.” That is to say, the problem of rationality and knowledge must be restated and corrected rather than ignored or abandoned.

I am also aware that this is a peculiar subject, one that doesn’t lend itself easily to direct analysis. Because of its elusive nature, our investigation is predominantly carried out in an “indirect” way. In other words, we will talk about a number of other things, about self and hermeneutics and about God and the world. Moving within such large spaces has

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its perils, of course, but also its rewards, as my analysis will hopefully indicate. Moreover, I seek guidance in this grand inquiry, lest my project would not spiral into an hopeless wandering into the “totality of the real.” I follow Ricouer’s hermeneutical journey in the first part, Hegel’s speculative one in the second, in order to anchor my concerns historically and thematically. In the last part I engage a number of philosophers and theologians from both the continental and the analytical tradition and make use of theological insights from both the East and the West. My purpose is to bring hermeneutical philosophy/theology in direct confrontation with Trinitarian theology with the specific purpose of evaluating the present state of theological rationality. The result, as I hope it will become apparent, is a unique take at tracing the contours of a theological rationality freed from both modern and post-modern (hermeneutical) anxieties. The Christian knows, no doubt, that “the Lord is the Spirit,” and that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Of course, this is the same Lord “who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” That is why, as my friend Douglas Knight states in the preface of his book *The Eschatological Economy*, “the church must not take society’s claims and description of itself with too much seriousness.” In this respect, theological rationality can be genuinely free only to the extent it reconciles *philo-sophia* with Paul’s reminder that it is in Christ that we witness “the manifold wisdom of God.” From this perspective, reason always finds itself “under the sign of baptism,” as “love of wisdom” entails an unwavering exercise of uncovering a rationality that also proclaims the “folly of the Cross.” A Reason that comes against our consumerist society and its promises of well-being and success. But the church is also the place where “we rise” with Christ in order to embrace the world once again as God’s good Creation, a world that is being remade, transformed and perfected in Christ and by the Spirit. Since “speaking rightly” about both God and the world, necessarily requires access to such a “high place,” it necessarily entails not only knowledge but also virtues and intellectual duties. It requires vision but also obedience. Ultimately, as our analysis will show, when contemplated in its true theo-logical intention, epistemology is not really a human invention.