Process Theology

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and doctrines of the Priscillanists smacked of Manichaicism and sorcery. Matters came to a head when these charges were brought against Priscillian and some associates before the Emperor Maximus at Trier in 385. This led to their execution — the first and almost only occasion in antiquity when a heretic suffered this fate at the hand of a civil ruler. At the time the greatest indignation was reserved for those bishops who had pressed capital charges.

After these executions there was a temporary reaction in favour of Priscillian, who in some quarters was regarded as a martyr. A schism was threatened within the Spanish church, but this was avoided by vigorous action from the Council of Toledo in 400. At a popular level Priscillianism continued to exercise some influence right up to the 6th century.

process to the 6th century. The process view of God has been described as panentheism. It differs from theism in identifying God and the universe, but it differs also from pantheism in seeing God as more than, or existing beyond, the universe. Hartshorne and Ogden use the analogy of a person's relation to his body. I am my body, but I am more than it.

In Whitehead and Hartshorne, God's existence is necessitated by two different factors which produced a dipolar concept. God in his 'primordial', eternal, absolute nature as mind contributes the novel aims or possibilities to each succeeding event. God in his 'consequent' changing and growing nature physically experiences the process, knowing and loving it. But experiencing involves a real relation or union, hence the cosmic process is God.

For Whitehead God is conceived of as himself a single event who in one act is comprehending the whole process. More recently, John Cobb and others have developed a view of God as being like a human person, that is, a series of characteristically distinct events, identified by common characteristics which continue in the transition.

The doctrine of Christ (see Christology) has presented process theologians with a difficult problem. Every event in history is God's activity and being inserted itself. In this sense every occasion is incarnation, and process theology treats each single event as a causal event. Each event is autonomous not only in relation to all others in the series but also to God. It is self-determinative. Thus, it is also dependent on its own existential decision. I am what I am now deciding to be.

Process Christologies, as in David Griffin, Norman Pittenger and Lewis Ford, generally attempt to show that Christ's life was God's in the manner it was lived in complete obedience, that is, that Christ perfectly followed the 'lure' of God. Others have done so to a high degree, but in Christ obedience was so complete that a whole new subjectivity, a way of human living, is inaugurated.

The result of the life and death of Christ is the emergence of a new kind of community, the church. This is the meaning of resurrection: the body of Christ is born. For Ford this is seen as a major step in human evolution. Man is now radically different.

Add to this the view that the Holy Spirit is to be understood as God's contribution of initial aims, and we see that process theology is unitarian, not Trinitarian.

The twofold character of all events as both incarnational and autonomous also defines the process theologian's view of revelation. Because all events, including human actions, are given their moral design by God, they are each a revelation of his character. As a result the traditional distinction between general and special revelation breaks down. There is only special revelation; direct, intentional and conscious acts of God. But every event has this quality.

On the other hand, because every event is self-determined in its actuality, God cannot ensure that any revelation truly represents him. The future is never known, always free and open. Until it decides itself, it has no reality and cannot be predicted, even by God. Consequently revelation could never be inerrant. Some expressions will be more characteristic than others, but none can be guaranteed true.

Hermeneutics is seen as an attempt to retrace the revelational process to discover God's original 'lure'. Thus, it has both objective and subjective components, and is possible only in the interaction of the reader.

The general features of process philosophy imply a view of man that is very close, if not identical, to that of Heidegger, Hartshorne and Ogden and others have used this concept in Whitehead as a way of spelling out the biblical idea of eternal life and heaven. Nothing is forgotten to the love of God, all is preserved and continues to affect the future meaningfully. It should be noted, however, that this is not conscious personal continuance, and also that it is universal in application.

Ford, Cobb and others have done much to develop a general eschatology as well. It follows from their view of the church as the emergence of a higher state of human evolution (see Creation). This understands history as permitting us to look forward to a time when God's aims will finally overcome the individual evil events, and bring about a true community of love and peace. Hartshorne roots this in the biblical view of love as true union.

There is among process theologians wide diversity of concern to preserve a biblical Christianity. Some, like Lewis Ford and many Roman Catholics, indicate a strong desire to remain scriptural, but most are concerned only to remain within a broadly understood Christian tradition. Some, like Hartshorne, are impressed with many process-like insights in Buddhism and other religions and will explicitly reject some Christian ideas in their favour. Hence an evangelical response to process theology is bound to be varied.

In general, however, several major flaws can be indicated. First, its general metaphysics negates the biblical view of creation and providence with its radical distinction between infinite creator and finite cosmos. Some, like Hartshorne, have argued that the traditional view is not Hebrew but a Greek
addition and to be rejected. Others have attempted to modify Whitehead to allow for the distinction.

Second, its universal view of incarnation has so far prevented any ontological, rather than rational, concept of the deity of Christ. Likewise, it prevents any judicial or truly redemptive view of salvation. Finally, the hermeneutic of process theology eliminates any concept of inerrancy (see Infallibility*).

God cannot bring about such an event, neither could words have purely objective meaning (Harshorne).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


W.B.B.

**PROCESSION (OF HOLY SPIRIT), see HOLY SPIRIT; TRINITY.**

**PROGRESS, IDEA OF.** The idea most characteristic of 19th-century thinking was that of progress. There were many reasons for this. Britain's industrial revolution became the pattern for rapid economic growth and social development throughout the West. Scientific discovery and its application in such fields as biology and sociology were assessed. A classic instance is William Robertson Smith's *Religion of the Semites* (1889), which attempts to find revelation in a naturalistic reading of history. It was of course not new for a naturalistic explanation to be given to the biblical history, since from the first days of the church those who were sceptical of its claims had their own way of reading its Scriptures. Yet such was the absorption with evolutionary progress that in the mid- and later 19th century the church itself adopted such a reading of its canonical Scriptures.

The Bible does not speak of man's history as an evolutionary progress. It tells of an original perfection from which man has fallen (see Fall*), and the story which follows is that of failure to set matters right (e.g., flood, exile), with a constant regress on the part of man. Progress comes only from the side of God. The idea of a natural evolutionary progress is therefore the precise antithesis of the biblical picture of man and his religion, so the attempt thus to re-interpret the biblical history has to adopt the violent methods of Procrusteanism and subordinate the divine revelation – truth received, rather than truth achieved by autonomous human reason or experience. Thus, prophecy presupposes a transcendental world-view; that is, a creator and a spirit world, realities that are separate from but nonetheless impinge upon and communicate with the natural creation, specifically, with man. Prophecy is the mode and the content, and the prophet the human agent of that communication.

Prophecy not only represents a distinctive approach to truth but also, in the commentary on Scripture in 1 Cor 1:18-3:20, is given an exclusive claim to it. There Paul denies that autonomous human reason is a valid alternative way to find, and his argument against the wisdom of the Greeks must, in the context, have included philosophical thought (Grodet; cf. sophia, 'wisdom', in 1 Cor 1:19-21; 1 Cor 2:11-12). By this a redemptive natural revelation or insight is excluded (cf. O. Weber, *Barth*).

2. Prophecy has its source in the 'Spirit of God.' This is clear in the NT where it is represented as the gift or act of the Spirit (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:8; 1 Thes. 5:19f.) and the prophet is identified as 'a man of the Spirit' (pneumatikos = 1 Cor. 14:37; cf. Hos. 9:7). But it is also true of prophecy in the OT (1 Sam. 19:20; 2 Ki. 2:13; 2 Ch. 15:1; Ne. 9:30; Mi. 3:8; cf. 2 Pet. 1:20f.), even if in some books the role of the Spirit is obscured or undifferentiated from that of Yahweh (Lindblom, *Prophecy*). The hope of Moses (Nu. 11:16, 29; cf. Lk. 10:10) that 'all the Lord's people [might be] prophets' and the prophecy of Joel (2:28) that 'God will pour out his Spirit on all flesh' can find a fulfillment in the prophecy of the Baptist (Mt. 3:11) and their fulfilment in the post-resurrection church (Acts 2:16, 33).

3. The varieties of divine revelation are described in Je. 18:18 as 'the law ... from the mouth of the priest, counsel from the wise [and] the word from the prophet' (cf. Is. 28:7; 29:10, 14). While prophets might live together in communities or guilds (2 Ki. 2:3ff.; 6:1), others were attached to the temple and some