

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

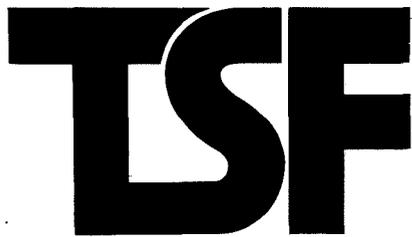
<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) Bulletin (US)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tsfbulletin-us.php



BULLETIN

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1984

Vol. 7, No. 3 \$3.50

Mark Lau Branson Editor
Thomas H. McAlpine Managing Editor

ADVISORY EDITORS

Clark H. Pinnock, McMaster Divinity College
Paul A. Mickey, Duke Divinity School

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ray S. Anderson, *Systematic Theology*
Fuller Theological Seminary

Stephen T. Davis, *Philosophy*
Claremont McKenna College

Donald Dayton, *News Analysis*
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary

Roberta Hestenes, *Christian Formation*
Fuller Theological Seminary

Robert L. Hubbard, *Old Testament*
Denver Seminary

Stephen C. Mott, *Ethics*
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Grant R. Osborne, *New Testament*
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Donald Tinder, *Church History*
New College, Berkeley

David Lowes Watson, *Evangelism & Missions*
Perkins School of Theology

PERSPECTIVES EDITORS

George Cummings Chicago Theological Seminary

Luis Cortes Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Nancy A. Hardesty Atlanta, GA

Thomas F. Stransky Mt. Paul Novitiate

Sze-kar Wan Harvard University

FACULTY CONTRIBUTORS

Bernard Adeney New College, Berkeley

Donald Bloesch University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

Geoffrey W. Bromiley Fuller Theological Seminary

Harvie M. Conn Westminster Theological Seminary

Charles Ellenbaum College of DuPage

Vernard Eller University of LaVerne

Elouise Renich Fraser Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary

David Gill New College, Berkeley

Larry Hurtado University of Manitoba

Susanne Johnson Perkins School of Theology

Richard Mouw Calvin College

Richard Lovelace Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

PHEME PERKINS Boston College

Bernard Ramm American Baptist

Gerald Sheppard Seminary of the West

Charles R. Taber Union Theological Seminary
Emmanuel School of Religion

Keith Yandell University of Wisconsin

Gregory A. Youngchild New Haven, CT

Jesus, Power, and Gender Roles
S. Scott Bartchy 2

**What is Distinctive about
"Evangelical" Scholarship?**
Donald A. Hagner 5

Reflections on the School of Process Theism
Royce G. Gruenler 7

Christopraxis
Competence as a Criterion for Theological Education
Ray S. Anderson 10

Children (and Others) and Money
Jacques Ellul 14

The Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Formation
Daniel Buechlein 16

**The Wholeness of Evangelism:
A Bible Study (Part B)**
Alfred C. Krass 19

**Christian Witness in the City:
An Annotated Bibliography (Part II)**
Clinton E. Stockwell 20

Recent Conferences:
Society of Pentecostal Studies, Wesleyan Theological Society,
Context and Hermeneutics in the Americas 22

Book Reviews (Itemized on back cover) 25

when it encounters data that do not conform to the hypothesis, can—apparently as often as necessary—engage in artificial and forced harmonizations or plead ignorance. In short, the deductive approach is virtually unassailable: Scripture is inerrant whether the “problems” can be explained or not. The inductive approach, by contrast, involves a degree of “risk” precisely because it cannot afford the luxury of ignoring the phenomena of Scripture. But this is precisely what the scholar is all about, what the evangelical scholar must concern oneself with, attempting to hold to a unified world view in the conviction that the truth of Scripture need not fear the truth of scholarship.

To sum up, we may say the following. As evangelical scholars we are convinced that we can remain faithful, evangelical Christians without a sacrifice of the intellect. Both as scholars and Christians we are called to be persons of integrity, who deal with the evidence as honestly as we can. We must always be true to our conscience; and we cannot see things one way and say them to be another. We

continue to learn to live in the tension between our commitment to the church and to scholarship. We must also continue to learn to live with the inevitable probabilities and complexities of scholarship. The true scholar knows how complicated reality is and thus will avoid simplistic solutions; he or she will learn to say both/and more often than either/or. And as evangelical scholars, we will, for example, learn to affirm both the unity *and* diversity of Scripture, infallibility *and* the phenomena of Scripture, normativity *and* cultural conditioning.

To be an evangelical scholar is a great responsibility, for which no one is fully or adequately equipped. The risk can be high and there are pitfalls to be avoided. But evangelical Christianity, if it is to remain credible and to survive in the decades that lie ahead, must produce and encourage a first-rate theological scholarship. And for these reasons, in turn, the evangelical scholar must go about one's work in an attitude of prayer and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide one into all truth.

THEOLOGY

Reflections on the School of Process Theism

by Royce G. Gruenler

I can still remember my first excitement in reading Schubert Ogden's explosive *Christ Without Myth* in the early sixties and the promising challenges which seemed to be opened by his synthesis of Bultmann's radical demythologizing and Hartshorne's Process philosophizing. It all seemed like a breath of fresh air to a young teacher trained in evangelical and neo-orthodox schools, who was looking for some new excitement as well as practical aids for teaching in the liberal academic setting. It was largely through our discussion of this book that my long-time colleague Eugene Peters, well known in Process circles, decided to join our faculty, and it was largely through his expert knowledge of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne that I subsequently undertook a patient and appreciative study of their view on God and the world and came to incorporate them in my own thinking.

What fascinated me most of all was (I thought) their brilliant solution to the old problems of the one and the many and being and becoming, which classical Christian theology had handled in its own way but seemingly to God's advantage as absolutely sovereign and to man's disadvantage as ultimately determined. Here was a bold new stroke, a daring claim by sheer empirical evidence and rational argument that God must partake of two poles at once: he must be primordial, absolute and changeless on one polarity (else all would be flux and relativity), yet engaged in the flux and relativity of time and space (else he would be irrelevant). God was accordingly to be seen as dipolar or bipolar, both primordial and consequent, both absolute and relative.

Now of course biblical and classical Christianity has been saying that for centuries—God as ontological triunity is eternally perfect, complete and changeless, while incarnationally in Christ, God is subject to the vicissitudes of time and space. But, says Hartshorne, it is logically contradictory to claim on the one hand that God can be absolutely perfect in all respects and yet experience time, for to have all possibilities as perfectly realized actualities eternally would be to erase time, with its flow from what is possible to what by choice is made actual. And it would be to erase the freedom of the creature to choose and become, since he or she would be exhaustively known by God from all eternity.

Royce G. Gruenler is Professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. This article originally appeared in Theology, News and Notes (December 1981) and is used by permission. It has been expounded in The Inexhaustible God: Biblical Faith and the Challenge of Process Theism (Baker, 1983).

No, argued Whitehead and Hartshorne, we can no longer put up with this old Jewish-Christian-Islamic notion of God as the oriental despot who is absolute in all respects. Let us conceive of God differently, as absolute in *some* respects and not in others, and as relative in some respects and not in others. Let us assume that God is changeless in his mode of being or character and in his primordial aims, but dependent on the universe (or some universe or other during his everlasting procession) for the content of his experience. Let us say (said Hartshorne) that God is AR: Absolute (A) in his mode of being, and Relative (R) in his actual existence. Or, alternatively, that God is ET: Eternal (E) in the abstract sense and Temporal (T)

Here was a bold new stroke, a daring claim by sheer empirical evidence and rational argument. . . .

in the concrete. Or more exhaustively, that God is ECTKW: Eternal (E) in his mode, Conscious (C) in his experience of the world, Temporal (T) in his inseparability from procession; Knowing the world (K) and including the World (W) in his experience.

This seemed to me an attractive improvement on the immobility and seeming frozenness of classical theism with its absolutely perfect and timeless deity. If one could not logically derive the relativity of God from his absoluteness (so argued Hartshorne), one could derive God's abstract character from his concrete temporality. Accordingly, while dipolar theism was proffered as a superior solution, it was necessary to give pride of place to R and T, since A and E respectively could be derived from them, but not the other way round (so went the argument). For a decade I applied this Process model to my biblical and theological studies, confident of its superiority and greater adequacy over the biblical-classical model. Of course it was necessary to make some adjustments. Biblical prophecy could no longer be taken at face value. While God might foresee and foretell with large brush strokes, fine detail could not be known even by him and must therefore be regarded as prophecy after the fact. Since salvation was no longer a radical matter of redemption from sin in the biblical sense, necessitating a divine-human Savior and the once-

for-allness of the cross, Jesus became for me the consummate representation of what God is to all persons everywhere as he seeks to lure them to maximum aesthetic feeling in the great creative synthesis and advance of the human race.

Persons were seen to be "saved" by cooperating with the divine lure to creativity, thus acquiring not only personal satisfaction for themselves but contributing to God's needs for fellowship in his own procession and self-surpassing. All religious and aesthetic impulses were seen as complementary paths to satisfaction for God and the world of persons. The narrowness of Christianity with its one Savior and infallible Scripture was modified to accommodate a number of points of view, and seen to be culturally relative as only one of God's many re-presentations of his love for the world.

A canon within a canon perforce emerged in my critical assessment of Scripture. I selected largely love passages as authentic and discarded difficult material on justice and judgment. That period in my thinking found expression in a booklength manuscript I am now glad I never published. It bore the title, "Love and Hate in the Bible," and attempted to show that the Old and New Testaments contain useable material on the theme of love which is compatible with Process metaphysics, but also much on holy war, righteous judgment, sovereign election, the wrath of God, blood atonement, and weeping and gnashing of teeth that is culturally relative and expendable.

The subtle and often not so subtle effect of my shifting my focus of authority from Scripture to the philosophical canons of Process theism was that I myself became the autonomous judge of what was acceptable in Holy Writ and what was to be discarded. For a fiduciary trust in the authority of the whole canon of Scripture I substituted the canon of "when in doubt discard."

All the basic beliefs of biblical-classical theology found modern substitutions. For the ontological Trinity, I substituted a modal or demythologized trinity (as Hartshorne once suggested, all of us contribute to the "trinity" or plurality of God). For the pre-existence and deity of Christ, I substituted a "divine" human figure who pre-eminently re-presented the love of God that is a possibility in fact for every person. For the vicarious atonement of Christ and the shedding of his blood for the remission of the sins of the world, I substituted a tragic event over which God had no control and before which Jesus himself may have emotionally gone to pieces (so Schubert Ogden). For the supernatural resurrection of Jesus from the dead, I substituted an existentialist rising of the heart and will in faith. For the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in the Church, I substituted the broader belief that God offers these to everyone and does all he can to lure each individual to maximum creativity regardless of their cultural beliefs. For the biblical hope of perfected life after death, I substituted a denial of conscious existence after death but an objective immortality of our earthly life in the everlasting memory of God. For the eschatological hope of a final judgment of evil and the perfection of creation by the sovereign God, I substituted an optimistic/pessimistic belief in an everlasting evolutionary creative advance—"till the crack of doom," as Whitehead once expressed it. And finally, closest to home and most comforting, I posited a denial of radical human sinfulness and a belief in the essential goodness and "salvation" of all if only they could be persuaded to follow God's lure to aesthetic enjoyment and creativity.

The re-construction of classical theology was thus complete and followed upon the de-struction of biblical faith. Every major doctrine of evangelical Christianity was redefined in terms of the philosophical norms of Process metaphysics, ostensibly to meet the demands of logical and existential adequacy, especially in terms of a modern scientific world. Accordingly, I thought I was radically improving on Christianity as it had been believed for nineteen hundred years. Whitehead and Hartshorne claimed such, and I was impressed by the challenge and rigor of their thought. Not only was the exploration and adaptation of Process literature exciting, but the whole approach made life considerably easier for a former evangelical on a secular campus where I no longer felt any compulsion to witness for Christ but could simply argue philosophically for a modest liberal universalism. So it went for a decade.

The real shock came when conversation with a like-minded colleague revealed a serious logical flaw at the very core of Process metaphysics. It began to become clear that Process theism is not really compatible with modern relativity theory after all because

it still insists on some important absolutes. God is absolute and unchangeable in his mode or character of being, and one of these is his ability, said Hartshorne, to embrace all of the grand and immense procession of emergent reality at once, simultaneously. But that doctrine contradicts two empirical data, one of which is incontestable. The incontestable fact is that if God moves necessarily in time he is limited to some rate of velocity which is finite (say, the speed of light, if not the faster rate of some hypothetical tachyon). This means, unfortunately for Process theism, that it is impossible for such a finite deity to have a simultaneous God's-eye view of the whole universe at once, since it would take him millions of light years or more to receive requisite data from distant points and places.

The other problem is peculiar to relativity theory. The doctrine is that no finite being (including God) could possibly embrace the whole universe simultaneously because there simply is no finite position that is not relative. Hence no possibility of simultaneity exists from any possible finite vantage point. Time does not advance along a well-defined front but processes in all sorts of relative patterns which cannot be correlated into any one finite system. That is what relativity means. There is simply no privileged position in the finite world.

When that point came clear it was as though the scales had dropped off my eyes. I now began to see as I had never seen before why it is so important to insist (with biblical faith and classical theology) that God is ontologically beyond time and space, for only as such can he then embrace the realm of time and space and each of us within it with his sovereign righteousness and love. If one insists on locating God's actual existence as necessarily in time, God becomes irrelevant, for he is then limited to some finite velocity and is necessarily locked out of any comprehensive experience of the whole universe. Since Process theism claims to be rational and to satisfy the canons of logic better than the biblical-classical view of God, it is not reassuring to discover a fatal logical flaw at the heart of the system. I am now more convinced than ever that every system of thought begins with some prior agenda to which it is committed by faith, as "faith seeking understanding," and then utilizes logic to develop the implications of its presuppositions.

***It began to become clear that Process
theism is not really compatible with
modern relativity theory. . . .***

As I began to examine the Process view with a more critical eye, other serious flaws began to appear. Eric Rust and Dallas High suggested I look more closely at the concept of persons in Whitehead and Hartshorne, and when I did I discovered that there really is no sense in which God in Process theism is vitally conscious and personal in his eternal state of being, but is only in that polarity to be conceived of as abstract possibility. In his actual concrete existence, according to Process metaphysics, God is forever processing and changing, since he is everlastingly surpassing himself and adding new data derived from the world and the universe. But God has no consciousness and no content of actual experience apart from what we supply him. In what sense, then, I began to ask, is he a person, conscious, willing and acting, in his noncontingent state of A (=Absolute)? The answer came clear that neither in Whitehead's system nor in Hartshorne's has God any conscious personality over and above the world. God's factual intent and consciousness is only in terms of this world, hence he is "relatively" (=R) dependent on us. On reflection, however, I realized that God is actually dependent on us, since in Whitehead's system God as primordial and logically prior to the world is pure abstract possibility without personal or conscious experience. Similarly, in Hartshorne's system God is greater than the sum of the parts of the universe only in an abstract sense. Since we comprise his "brain cells," so to speak (Hartshorne's im-

age), it is mystifying to comprehend in what substantial sense God is person apart from the world and can function as its chief lure for creative advance.

Since there is a problem in the system with God as substantial person apart from the atomic parts of the universe, we might imagine that there would be a similar problem with the Process view of the human person. And so there is, I discovered. For if, as Whitehead insists, the basic level at which creativity begins is the level of individual atomicity—that is, atomic occasions of feeling, emerging and forming more complex occasions—then we have to ask where the notion of identity comes into the picture. If, for example, I come into being as the result of the complex democracy of myriads of atomic and cellular occasions which are constantly emerging and perishing, and if I myself am constantly changing as the dominant “monad” of this complex democracy, what accounts for the perseverance of my personal pronoun “I”? Process metaphysics denies that there is any substantial self underlying the process of ever-emerging occasions and, like Buddhism, affirms that the only reality is processing relativity.

This, I came to see, is hardly an advance on Judeo-Christian views regarding the substantial and responsible self, much less an advance on the pre-Socratic flux of Heraclitus and the radical relativism of Protagoras. It simply will not do to appeal to something purely abstract to account for God’s identity, as Whitehead does with his primordial nature of God, or as Hartshorne does with his argument that God’s A is simply the abstract and enduring characteristics in R (as *a* is the identity abstracted from our *r*). What we want to know is, what accounts for that identity being there at all, if the self is not in some sense substantial? Who am I if I am constantly changing into another I? Who is God, and what independent ability to lure his creation does he possess, if he has no consciousness or ability to will apart from the atomic creatures who make him actually existent or “consequent,” as Whitehead described God’s factual and conscious nature?

I have searched in vain to find an answer to this unsettling absence of an enduring *I* in Process theism, either in regard to God’s *I* or our own. The system seems to fail at the same crucial point as Buddhism, for in both world views the self is assumed to be dependent on the co-origination of skeins or atomic occasions of experience which have no enduring identity in any substantial sense. The only difference is that Buddhism has a logical advantage in the sense that it views the recognition of the non-enduring self as a deep enlightenment, for the impermanence of the self means that it will not always have to suffer the anguish of desire, but is destined for Nirvana, the extinguishing of the flame of Process with its painful craving. Western Process theism, on the other hand, is based on desire and sees the process of creativity itself as the beginning, middle and end of reality—forever. Yet nothing actual endures, not even God. Identity and continuity are defined in purely abstract terms.

Perhaps the seriousness of the problem as it began to unfold before me can be better illustrated by describing what the stakes really are in the language game of Process theism. At heart, I am convinced, the system sets out not so much to defend God against the charge of evil (God could still destroy this little globe if he chose to); but it is designed to assure us that we are free from the despotic control of a sovereign God, such as Process theologians believe confronts us in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. In order to be really free to choose without outside compulsion from a sovereign God, other persons or other finite entities, the Process system requires that the individual emerging occasion (let us say you the reader) must be completely alone on the very edge of creativity where your willing self chooses one of a number of possibilities and makes it actual. In that moment you are, so says the system, all alone, like one of Leibniz’s windowless monads. That is, on the front line of the emerging moment of creativity no one, not even God, looks sideways at your immediacy, nor do you look sideways at their immediacy. Each of us, from God down to the sub-atomic particle, is quite alone in the moment of choice (of course in the case of descendingly lower occasions of feeling the choice is correspondingly of lower intensity).

Now we must total up the cost of this experience view of freedom. It means, first, that no one, not even God, experiences anything about anybody or anything else that is immediate. We have each other only as past and perished, although the proximity of the just-perished

frames as they speed up gives the illusion of other persons in their immediacy. Such is not the case, for even God has us only as perished data, since the system requires that in order to protect personal freedom, God too is locked out of our immediacy.

***Neither biblical faith nor classical
Christian theology really views God as
statically frozen in his absoluteness.***

This means, then, that God not only does not have the future as other than possibility, but he does not have any present except his own. He has the world only as perished and past. Think for a moment what that entails. It means that all of our immediacy as we process is forever lost. No one else, not even God, can ever know it. Hence, the Process substitute of the objective immortality for Christian resurrection entails not only the loss of any further subjective life on our part beyond death (it rejects the gift of eternal life), but it loses forever whatever subjective immediacy we experienced in this life. In other words, God is not perfect in his knowledge of the future, he is not perfect in his knowledge of the present, and he is not perfect in his knowledge of the past. He is a truly finite and defective God.

But we need to take the critical analysis of the Process view of persons one step further. If the conscious personal self is the *end* result of a previous self in the series I call “myself,” then my new emergent self comes only at the end of the democratic occasion of all the myriad feeling occasions of my body which contribute to it. I have, or am, my new *I* only for a fractional moment before it too perishes and becomes a datum for the next emerging *I*. In other words, there is a serious problem of self-hood and identity for the finite person as well since the “ego” (which is nothing substantial) is continually transcending itself. Hence the “self” lives into the unrealized possibilities of the future and has only a momentary immediacy in the present before it perishes as a dead datum into the past. A continuous series of substantially unrelated *I*’s constitute the “person,” with no enduring substantial self to remember the past or anticipate the future.

It all ends in enormous irony. What starts out as a brilliant venture in logic and a search for adequacy concludes in illogic and existential inadequacy. If biblical-classical Christianity is going to be discarded for something else, the something else had better be worth the cost. Process theism attempts to best the biblical doctrine of God’s sovereignty in order to protect human freedom; but in the process it renders the concept of God empty and even empties the finite self of any enduring personhood which would make “freedom of choice” a meaningful term. The irony of the situation is that the freedom of the very self-of-the-future for which the Process theist is concerned, is a different self from his present-and-about-to-perish self. Since Process theism has no explanation of the enduring self, and indeed denies the identical selfhood of the person from moment to moment, it is academic whether “I” have freedom of choice as “I” move into the future of possibility, since my present “I” will momentarily perish and be superseded by another “I” which has no substantial continuity with all “my” previous “I’s.” So serious is the absence of personal identity and continuity that Hartshorne can actually argue that “I” cease to exist in periods of unconsciousness, sleep, and only “pop” back into selfhood (though as another “self”) when I awake. Not only does this take us to the edge of absurdity and render the question of free will moot, but it brings into question the biblical doctrine that a person is responsible for his or her action which clearly assumes that one who speaks or acts in a certain way is responsible for that behavior as *the same person*.

What I saw happening before my very eyes, therefore, was the logical self-destruction of the Process attempt to define God and persons from a non-biblical point of view. If God’s sovereignty over time and space is denied, and if God is placed within time as necessary to his experience, God becomes time-and-space-bound and irrelevant because impotent, even though the ostensible reason for placing

him ontologically or necessarily in time was to conceive of him as a God who cares. God is hardly a deity who cares for much since he cannot care for everything and everyone, and he is able to care for others only as they are either some other selves they will presently become, or the past selves they have already become. God cannot care for others as they actually are in the moment of their emergent immediacy because that is the free and private domain of the present self. In other words, in the Process system *God does not have the world as present*, but only as future possibility or as past. But if God does not have the world as present then he has only the perished data of the world to work on. In fact, those perished data of the past are supposed to be the effects which give rise to God himself as conscious cause. The mind boggles at such logic; the system bristles with difficulties.

It is far better, I began to realize, to stay with the self-revelation of God in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures and take the hard facts with the soft. That God is absolutely sovereign over the universe and time and space as its creator and sustainer is reiterated in the Scriptures again and again. That God has created human beings to make responsible decisions is also a clear teaching of Scripture. The language is logically odd from a human point of view, but Scripture is full of logically odd events, proclamations, and persons (such as Abraham and his promise of offspring, Moses and the Exodus, the Son of God born in Bethlehem, and crucified on Calvary Hill, raised from the tomb and coming again). Biblical merismus (a part here, a part there) is a major pattern of divine revelation. What the creature must do is not contest the rules or rail against God's language-game, or complain about his or her rights, but worship the sovereign Lord, accept his grace by faith and be obedient to him. Our analysis of Process theism's attempt to improve upon biblical-classical Christianity has brought to light that the logically odd revelations of Scripture are replaced by the logically absurd when autonomous human reason tries its hand at explaining the universe and its unavoidable polarities.

Can Process theism teach the biblical theologian anything at all? I think the major challenge for evangelical theology is to make clear that neither biblical faith nor classical Christian theology really views God as statically frozen in his absoluteness. That criticism of Process theism attacks a straw man, or a straw concept of God. Perhaps Thomistic theology might appear culpable because of its attachment to Aristotelian thought, but even there it is questionable whether the charge holds. The classical view of God as *actus purus*, Pure Act, really attempts to say that God's activity as self-contained and self-sufficient Triunity is absolutely pure: God is pure activity.

Perhaps we need to say it in new ways and in other terms. I no longer have any difficulty conceiving of God as ultimate sociality, utterly inexhaustible in his love as archetypal Family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One in Many, and Many in One. As the primordial Family in Triunity, quite independent of created time and space and

inexhaustible in terms of his dynamic love, God is the Archetype who has left his creative signature on all he has created in the ectypal or derivative universe. Everything created reflects one-in-manyness, manyness-in-oneness, being in becoming and becoming in being. God in his own supra-temporal and supra-spatial eternity is dynamic and inexhaustible love and communion between the Father, the eternally begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit who issues from both.

We must not think for a moment that God as he is in his own Trinity is lacking in dynamic activity; but we must not circumscribe that archetypal dynamism in terms of finite time and space. We are not necessary to God. Analogous to the mystery of atomic occasions which stretch our imagination by appearing in the same and different places at once, now as waves, and again as particles, God's unity and plurality, his complementary changelessness and dynamic inexhaustibility simply stretch our imaginations to the breaking point. We understand the mystery of God's inner relationships best through his own appearance in human form as Jesus of Nazareth, who makes such astonishing statements as, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58); and prays, "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24); and assures his followers, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16 f.).

All the witnesses of Scripture, and consummately Jesus Christ incarnate, point to Someone inexplicably perfect and dynamic who is sovereign over us yet who is with us as Redeemer and Lord and who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Creative freedom is not some right independent of God, but a gift of his grace that we might worship him and become servants of one another in his name. This truth will never be realized as long as we contest the rules of the game. God sovereignly establishes the language-game, and we tinker with it at our peril.

SUGGESTED READING

Alfred North Whitehead. *Modes of Thought*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1958.

_____ *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.

Charles Hartshorne. *The Divine Relativity. A Social Conception of God*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.

_____ *The Logic of Perfection*. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1973.

John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965.

John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.

David Ray Griffin and Thomas J. J. Altizer, eds. *John Cobb's Theology in Process*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977.

Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*. The Library of Living Philosophers. New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1941.

Christopraxis: Competence as a Criterion for Theological Education

by Ray S. Anderson

Theological students are often perplexed over the criteria by which they are evaluated as future ministers of the gospel. Indeed, the faculties responsible for preparing students for the ministry of the church are often ambivalent over the same issue.

Is the graduate of a theological seminary a "product" produced by the curricular assembly line, or a "practitioner" whose qualifications remain to be verified? If it is the former, then the question of competence will tend to be addressed to the "maker" of the product. A qualified faculty and a quality curriculum will insure a good product.

On the other hand, if a Master of Divinity degree is meant to cer-

tify a practitioner, then the question of competence will tend to shift to the function of the person who is taught rather than to the form of teaching. This distinction is not meant to introduce an either/or situation. Obviously, the quality of competence revealed in the life of a minister of Christ reflects the quality of the faculty and curriculum by which the student was prepared for ministry.

However, if theological education is construed as the "making of a minister," then the graduate will tend to be viewed as a product, much as a house is the product of the act of building. Competence will then be expected of the builder, in the case of a house, and of the teacher, or mentor, in the "making of a minister." It is the thesis of this essay that the purpose of a theological education is to participate in a process of development through which a person becomes competent in the act of ministry. Thus, the criteria by which com-

Ray S. Anderson is Associate Professor of Theology and Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary.