

# 'LOVE NEITHER RULES NOR IS IT UNMOVED'

The Process Theology of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne

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## INTRODUCING A NEW THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

During the 1960's a breakthrough took place in theological thinking. In 1963 Bishop J.A.T. Robinson caused a minor sensation with the publication of his book Honest to God. Shortly after, the Death-of-God controversy was in full swing. While it seems that God has managed somehow to survive this particular school of theology, certain questions still remain. How are we now to think about God? What direction must theological reflection take today? Secularization theology cannot be easily dismissed. Like any other significant cultural event or growth stage, it cannot be reduced to a mere parenthesis in the on-going story of theological investigation. On the contrary, it has already made important contributions to our theological sensitivity.

Among the achievements of the secularization theologians is the distinction between secularization and secularism. Secularization theology posits both the 'autonomy' of the world and its profound dependence on God. Secularism, on the other hand, concentrates on the former but shows no appreciation for the latter. To the secularization theologian one must think of God and his relation to the world in concepts that recognize the autonomy and self-creativity of man and the world, while still doing justice to our profound dependence on God. God is not a being separate and 'outside', not a being among beings, not even a 'super-being'. Nor is God, to use a familiar phrase from the '60's, a 'stop-gap'. The necessity of thinking about God in a new way rises, rather, from the new self-evidences of our present theological situation. How, then, should one think of God? For the secularization theologian, he must be conceptualized not as existing alongside of, nor

above, but within reality itself. Is not this also St. Paul's concept of a God "in whom we move and have our being"?

In the current theological debate about the problem of God, some names reoccur with greater frequency. Both Schubert Ogden and John Cobb are disciples of Charles Hartshorne who, himself, is a student of Alfred North Whitehead, the Father of Process Philosophy. My own acquaintance with Process Theology began with Ogden's The Reality of God<sup>2</sup> that led me to make contact with Cobb.<sup>3</sup> In 1973, I had the opportunity to hear Hartshorne lecture at the Process Theology Institute in St. Louis, Missouri. This led me to enter a four-month study period at the Center for Process Studies in Claremont, California. My expectations were more than fulfilled. I found that Whitehead opened up for me a new world of thought which is not only contemporary but also rooted in the classical tradition of Western philosophy. His approach to theological thinking is metaphysical, while properly including the scientific findings of the modern age. His way of thinking about God and reality offers a creative and constructive alternative to contemporary theologians. And while his image of God is de-hellenized, moving us away from Aristotle's 'unmoved mover', it does draw us closer to the Biblical God of the Covenant.

An introduction to any new philosophical system has its own difficulties. However, my own experience has convinced me that a familiarity with the categories of Process Theology not only gives one a necessary background for much of what is being discussed in theological circles today, but also can create a new courage in faith. I offer this brief introduction to Process Theology not, however, as a new gospel or a solution to all our problems, but rather as a support for our efforts and responsibility to give an account for the hope that lives within us in contemporary society. Process Theology offers a way to speak easily about God, with flexibility and nuance, and about his relationship to this world. At the same time, and perhaps of more importance, a grasp of Process Theology can give new life to certain Biblical concepts, ways of speaking about God's care for the world, his relation to human history, and, in the literal sense of the word, his compassion.

### ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD

Alfred North Whitehead, who was born at Ramsgate, England in 1861 and died at Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1947, dedicated his entire life to the study of mathematics, logic and physics. He collaborated with Bertrand Russell in writing the three-volume work Principia Mathematica (1910-1913). At the age of 63, he went to Harvard as a professor of

philosophy. Although his primary field of study at that time was mathematics and science, he did not shrink from formulating a metaphysical system which he also called a 'cosmology'. This metaphysical system enabled him to think through and organize all his previous knowledge, both scientific and philosophical. Herein lies Whitehead's originality. Starting from what are in fact fundamental classical intuitions, he designed a system of thought, with exceptional acuity, that allowed him to incorporate and reflect logically on the whole of human experience. The language he uses to articulate this metaphysics is original and highly technical. Because of this, his book Process and Reality is not to be recommended as an introduction to his thought. The difficulties encountered by Whitehead's technical language, however, is more than compensated for by the richness of a thought-system that can be applied to such diverse fields as philosophy, physics, aesthetics, biology, the social sciences, and, more to our present purpose here, to theology.

### BASIC INTUITIONS OF PROCESS THEOLOGY

In order to understand a philosophical system, one has first to extract from it its basic ideas, its fundamental presuppositions. What then are the basic intuitions of Whitehead's philosophy? They may be summarized in the following five statements:

1. We live in an ordered uni-verse and not a chaotic multi-verse. This organic unity of all things that exist is the primary concept that must be understood. For this reason, Whitehead defined his system as an 'organic' philosophy.

2. We may assert that this unity is at least in part rational. When a scientist generalizes the individual data of an experiment, he is presupposing that such a step is scientifically admissable because of the very nature of things. Without this faithfulness of the universe to itself, there can be no basis for scientific generalization.

3. The Universe presents itself as a dynamic unity. Therefore, the philosophy of organism also appears as a philosophy of growth, of becoming. The term generally used to describe this concept today is 'process-theology'.

4. Dynamism, of its very nature, implies renewal. In the universe, real novelty can be found. What occurs is never completely determined by preceding factors. If this were not so, then nothing could 'occur' in the real sense of the word. Each new becoming absorbs into itself all

that has previously occurred. The universe remains at all times an incomplete synthesis and is always in the process of being re-created. Whitehead uses the terms 'creative advance' and 'creative synthesis' to express this idea.

5. Finally, this continual process of becoming is directed interiorly to the realization of harmony and aesthetic value. This harmony, this beauty, arises from the creative interaction of different elements as they adapt one to the other. Harmony is the result of a unified multiplicity.

From the above five basic intuitions, Whitehead has attempted to build a speculative system that enables him to conceptualize in a logical and coherent manner all that presents itself to our experience, be it of a scientific, aesthetical or religious nature.

#### THE RELEVANCE OF WHITEHEAD'S PHILOSOPHY FOR THEOLOGY

Whitehead is not primarily a theologian. When he speaks of God, he talks of him only because of the internal necessity that arises from within his own system. Whitehead is the first to admit that the term 'God' is used, first and foremost, in a religious context. It has clear religious connotations. However, he thinks that theology since Scheiermacher has taken a wrong direction by emphasizing, almost exclusively, the feeling of dependence or other such religious experiences. The affirmation of God, he says, is not to be dependent on the anthropological question alone. Whitehead sees this one-sided emphasis on man as an error, even from a strictly religious point of view. If the God of religion is not also the God of the cosmos, then he is not a true God but merely an idol for man's worship. No great religion, he contends, can do without a world vision, without a 'cosmology' in the sense that Whitehead uses the word. No matter how conscious one is of the specific, personal nature of the God of religion, Whitehead still makes a plea for the restoration of the secular function of God. Here he sees an urgent task for the modern theologian.

We share Whitehead's concern that it is most important for us to learn to speak of God again in a reasoned way which take the findings of science into account, if only for the good of religion itself. Otherwise, there is a danger that our faith might close in upon itself, creating a specialized language that has no reference to the positive scientific experience that dominates so much of modern man's attitude towards life.

To relegate the faith to some dark corner of human experience cut off from the common human world and to use a language, be it even the language of the Bible, which is unable to communicate its message to broad masses of people, this would, indeed, be to create a dangerous place of refuge.

### GOD-LANGUAGE IN PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

Let us now turn our attention to the concrete use of language about God as expressed in process philosophy. What finally led Whitehead to introduce theology into his cosmology was the patient and urgent search for the possibility of making rational sense out of the experience of the concrete, material universe. Once one has allowed for the authentic experience of a universe, it becomes impossible not to posit a principle of order and unity. It is significant that Whitehead speaks about God for the first time in Chapter XI of his book Science and the Modern World. In a remarkable text, Whitehead demonstrates that the creative becoming of the universe cannot be conceptualized in any concrete form without reference to a Principle that determines and orders the unlimited realm of potentialities, making this universe real and not just another possibility.

For Whitehead, God is the Lord of potentialities. God does not coincide with the universe; he is not the game-captain who makes decisions about everything that exists. Whitehead is of the opinion that an unfortunate habit was introduced into philosophy during the Middle Ages and continues on in modern times; namely, to offer metaphysical compliments to God. God was conceived of as the last metaphysical fundament of all activity in the universe. Those who dare to walk along this path must attribute to him not only the successes but the failures as well. When God, on the contrary, is conceived of as the ultimate fundament of definiteness or value, then, it becomes part of his very nature to divide good from evil. Whitehead recognizes that this concept offers only a very abstract vision of God and that further deliniation of this principle of definiteness comes about from specific human experiences -- for some it is Yahweh, for others it is Allah or Brama, Our Father in Heaven, the World Order, the First Cause, the Highest Being.

Going along with every religious or philosophical 'name' is a corresponding set of fundamental ideas and concrete historical experiences. Out of these, Whitehead gives primacy, from a religious point of view, to the brief Galillean vision. For Whitehead the true God of religion is neither the king of the world nor the inexorable God of

morality. Whitehead's God is a God who rules with the power of persuasion and the attractive power of love. God is the principle by which a multiplicity of creative forces are curbed or limited in order to enter into cooperation. One might say that all these creative influences are orientated by God's influence. By encouraging all moments of creativity, even by seduction -- 'luring' them into cooperating for the good of the whole -- there can be a world that is always original, always being re-created.

As Leibniz before him, Whitehead accepts a multiplicity of activity centers. (Leibniz's thought is helpful to a better understanding of Whitehead's. It might be said that if Leibniz is the Newton of process philosophy, then Whitehead is its Einstein.) An 'actual entity' or 'actual occasion' of experience is the ontological basic unit of Whitehead's philosophy. One can compare the actual entities with the monads of Leibniz, but adding to them doors and windows that open out to the world. The actual entities are centers of experiences. They unite, each in turn, and became the given in a new synthesis. For example, a psychological experience, an activity of the memory, is an actual entity or an occasion of experience. An object, such as a tree, a stone, is a whole society of actual entities. God, too, is an actual entity, or a personal series of actual entities. All what exists is an actual entity or is formed by actual entities. 'Actual entity' then, is that which really exists.

Once one has accepted this ontological pluralism, the problem of unity comes to the fore more sharply. How is the unity of the multiplicity possible? The unification of an unimaginable multiplicity of actual entities calls for an all embracing synthesis, a divine level of synthesizing.

#### CHARLES HARTSHORNE AND THE NOTION OF 'ALL-ENCOMPASSIVITY'

Charles Hartshorne, born in 1897 in Kittanning, Pennsylvania, has in a masterly way developed this idea of the unification of the multiplicity and has made it the cornerstone of his concept of God. Along with his students John Cobb and Shubert Ogden, Hartshorne is one of the foremost living representatives of the process philosophers. He sees himself as one closely related to Whitehead. (He worked as his assistant in Harvard.) For Hartshorne, even more than for Whitehead, the problem of God is the pivot of his philosophy. In even more convincing terms than Whitehead, he demonstrates that the universe is literally unthinkable without a unifying principle which is related to all reality.

'The highest relational agency' is another 'name' for God. The metaphysical notion of ultimate encompassivity does not seem as strange to religious consciousness as one might first assume. Its religious co-relative, according to Hartshorne, is worship. The highest religious expression of worship is, undoubtedly, summed up in the famous passage from Deuteronomy: "Hear, O Israel. The Lord, our God, is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut. 6,4-5). Hartshorne believes that a religious person must take this statement literally. How would it be possible, then, to love God with all one's heart if God, in one way or another, does not encompass all the finite realities which are the rightful objects of our love? Hartshorne shows us how we can love all things in God. All realities are literally in God, as known and loved by God. God is in all reality without exhausting himself fully in individual realities. The philosophical translation of this vision is not pantheism but panentheism. Scriptural references to this notion of panentheism are Acts 17, 28: "For in him we live and move and have our being", and, I Cor 15, 28: that "God may be everything to every one." In light of the latter text, I propose to speak of an 'eschatological panentheism',<sup>4</sup> where God will permeate all of reality - a stage which has not yet been reached, but has been promised to us.

#### THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD

The departure of process philosophy from traditional theism is found in response to the question: how is the relation between God and the world to be understood? The phrase 'to enter into relation' has for process philosophers another meaning, another weight, that makes it different from its use in scholastic philosophy, which was influenced by traditional Greek teaching where relationship implies deficiency. For process theologians, to enter into relationship is to enhance being, to enrich it and make it more perfect. The process theologians feel that their vision of God is much closer to the God of the Bible and the God of history than that of the unchangeable and unreachable God of Aristotle. Repeatedly, and not without a certain stubbornness, they have indicated that no reconciliation is possible between the God of the Covenant and the Unmoved First Mover of traditional theistic philosophy.

The supporters of Process Theology are not alone in formulating this kind of critique. The de-hellenization of God's image is forcing its attention more and more upon fundamental theologians as well. One needs only to refer to the works of Leslie Dewart and Jurgen Moltmann for confirmation of this. The advantage of Process Theology is that it not only affirms this necessity but also offers an alternative. If one had

to express in one sentence the essence of process philosophy concerning the relationship of God to the world, it would state that this relationship is reciprocal and real. However, it must be noted that God is not related to the world in the same sense as the world is related to God. In order to clarify this, Whitehead introduces a very important distinction between the 'primordial' and the 'consequent nature' of God. There is one aspect of God which is entirely independent from the world, namely, that God is the Lord of all possibilities and that he offers potentiality to every occurrence, to every actual entity, that it might-realize itself. If God did not offer a certain potentiality to every moment of creative becoming, nothing could then occur. In no case could the interaction of a thousand-million occurrences ever eventuate into one organic world.

The influence of God on everything that occurs is, for process philosophers, total and universal. The presence of an agency at the root of a universe capable of permanence and on-going novelty is an eternal characteristic of reality. This agency, which is always the same, Whitehead called 'the primordial, eternal, timeless nature of God.' While the 'primordial nature' of God is not unreal, it is, indeed, abstract. What we have to say about it must, then, also appear as highly speculative and abstract. Yet potentialities are not fictions. It is true that there is no imaginary museum in heaven where Rembrandt's Night Watch had hung until the time came for him to paint it, however, the colours and the forms - the potentialities - were not the personal creations of Rembrandt himself.

To the extent that God enters into relationship with this world, and with its people, he is a concrete God. The real God, the unique God known in religion - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and the God of Jesus Christ is a concrete God. The real God is not less great than the abstract absolute of the philosophers. If, however, the relationship between God and the universe is a real relationship, then God knows also the universe and he takes it into account. In his 'consequent nature' God gathers all what occurs, he evaluates it and preserves it. This consequent aspect of God is definite (because it is actual), but not complete, always being open to new stages of becoming. Because God in his consequent nature gathers all what occurs, this aspect of God is 'everlasting' and timeless, like the primordial nature. The consequent nature of God is his valuation and judgment of the world. He preserves what occurs and takes it into his own life. His judgment is characterized by an infinite tenderness, which allows nothing to be lost of what can be saved. Today it is generally accepted by theologians that the relationship between God and the world is reciprocal. This entails conse-



quences which are of decisive importance for theological reflection. One talks about a God who takes into account our freedom, about a God who suffers. But what is actually meant by that? Process philosophy makes it possible to elaborate on these generally accepted, but insufficiently defined, views of God.

Our world, one out of many possible worlds, is continually evolving. If God absorbs the world into his consequent nature (and the process philosophers see this absorption taking place in different ways), it follows that an element of God's consequent nature is finite and not predetermined. The everlasting God becomes the God of the Covenant. The God of Process Theology is a 'God of Becoming'; but, this expression must be understood correctly. It does not mean to create the impression that the God of becoming would not exist prior to creation in order 'to become' as a consequence. To have 'a consequent nature' is a necessary characteristic of God. This necessity, however, does not imply that what is now in question is a specific consequent nature. God is the God of this world, of these people. There could have been other worlds and other peoples. But in order for God to be real and actual, he does not necessarily have to relate to this world. Other worlds are possible, although we can hardly imagine another 'cosmic age'.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The way whereby Whitehead safeguards both the respective rights of God and the activity of creativity's finite movements, offers the following four corollaries of a positive advantage to theology:

1. the activity proper to the finite is taken into consideration and history again is given more weight;
2. the problem of God's omniscience and the contingency of the future are given a sound rationale;
3. the co-existence of God and evil is given a conceptual base;
4. it is possible to conceptualize a God that saves by absorbing all things into his own being.

### Man's Responsibility

The responsibility of man to face up to the world and his own history is undoubtedly one of the most generally accepted premises of

contemporary theology. A theology which does not place primary focus on responsibility to the world would have nothing to say to modern man. Whitehead gives full acknowledgement to the self-creating activity of the finite. But the autonomy of the world in no case may be conceived of as completely independent. Radical autonomy of creative forces could only end in chaos. Still, God is not to be conceived of as 'the great engineer' of the world or the 'architect of the universe'. The world itself is continually involved in a decision making process: to be is to decide.

God freely decides to enter into relation with the world. He chooses to become the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This step implies God's decision to enter into human history. He chooses a people with whom he goes along a definite path towards the still open future. Whitehead takes literally the typical Biblical language of the Covenant. On the other hand, if God is seen as the exclusive creator of all things, he who is responsible for everything, then there is nothing that now remains uncertain. There is nothing that could 'happen' or 'not happen'. In effect, there would be no room for authentic history. It has always been difficult, if not impossible, for traditional theism to reconcile the Unmoved - Mover of Greek philosophy with the God of the Covenant.

### God's Omniscience

The age old problem of reconciling God's omniscience with the possibility of free decision or future occurrences receives, in Whitehead's system, a rationale which is made technically solid by use of the key concept of the real and reciprocal relation between God and the world. Everything what happens 'moves' God. How could it be otherwise? That God considers everything in an extraordinary way is expressed by Whitehead in the following manner. All realities which have reached their due perfection are inserted in the consequent nature of God. "The world returns to God", says Whitehead. God knows or 'prehends' everything what happens. The perfection of God's knowledge consists in that he knows all actuality as actual and all potentiality as potential. Does such an affirmation overthrow everything what tradition has put forward concerning God's omniscience? It seems not. As Hartshorne has often emphasized, one could not grant to God the actual knowledge of the potentiality without bringing about a contradiction. For the potentiality, the contingent, not to be known as actual is not a deficiency in God; it is not an imperfection. It would be incorrect to say that God knows the potential as real, for this would mean that God would know the potential not as a potential but in another way, as if it actually

existed. A theory of divine omniscience that ascribes to God knowledge of the contingent future as well as the actual, is, in the eyes of Whitehead and Hartshorne, another 'metaphysical compliment' that can only end in contradiction. God knows all actuality as actual, and all potentiality as potential. One might ask why this solution of Process Theology has not been offered earlier. The reasons are basically of a religious nature. The religious man is little occupied with the differences between the order of the real and that of the potential. He tends to affirm the perfection of divine knowledge in the most absolute terms: "God knows everything". As a consequence, philosophical arguments are joined to an insufficiently nuanced religious language. To introduce a distinction between the knowledge of the actual and that of the contingent future moves the theologian to accept a change, a growth in divine knowledge. The scholastic tradition in affirming the classical Greek notion of the unchangeableness of God has, as a result, usually backed away from the consequences of such a position.<sup>5</sup> But one who asserts absolutely the omniscience and the unchangeableness of God, wanting to keep the divine omniscience in the framework of traditional theism, is forced to accept that God from the beginning of time knows all future contingent occurrences. Is this not too high a price to pay in order to preserve the coherence of a system of thought? How can one avoid the conclusion that if God has knowledge from the beginning of whatever will happen, then, everything has already been decided upon beforehand? The answer usually given in response to this is that time does not exist for God. But how can one reconcile this with a God who enters into history at a specific moment, and with the prayer of a Christian who says daily that 'Thy Kingdom come'?

### God and the Problem of Evil

The unfortunate habit of making metaphysical compliments to God ends in a dilemma of a moral nature. If God knows all things and decides all things, how can we 'exonerate him' from evil? The problem of evil is hard to resolve when raised in this traditional form because theologians want, at all cost, to preserve God's omnipotence. Does it not follow, then, that an omnipotent God is necessarily a guilty God? Why would an omnipotent God not eradicate evil if he had it within his power? Hartshorne demonstrates that it is impossible to affirm God's unqualified omnipotence and at the same time deny his responsibility for evil. For this reason Whitehead and Hartshorne refuse to accept a universal power solely responsible for decision. As has already been stated, every reality, every actual entity, every occurrence is creative, that is to say, provided with the power of decision. What ultimately happens in the

world is the result of the conjunction of an infinite number of circumstances all of which, in a real way, are free and creative.

When a great number of holiday-makers decide to take to the roads, at the same time, accidents are, statistically speaking, unavoidable. However, they can not be said to have been 'foreseen'. Alternatively, a completely automatized traffic system is a utopian dream. One can, in theory, prove that an absolute traffic control system which would remove effectively any chance for a traffic accident to occur would necessarily bring all traffic to an absolute standstill. Therefore, it is not reasonable to affirm an agency - even if that agency be divine - that would avoid all risk of accidents.

A world without contingency would be a world without possibilities. One has to concede that just as in the planning of a large city, so also our concrete world, in all its complexity, is ultimately not what the planners had originally designed. Our yesterdays are co-determiners of our real possibilities for tomorrow. It may happen that one wrong decision can block a whole series of possibilities. Given such a set of circumstances, the real possibilities which still remain open for decision are, thus, the best. Believers have to learn to accept the unavoidable contingency, even when they put their absolute trust in God. The position of faith consists in this: one holds on to the conviction that life makes sense, notwithstanding unavoidable, contingent, unwanted events. There are no easy solutions to the problem of evil. Let us not make the matter more complicated than it already is by adding to it the inadmissible presupposition that a resulting evil (failure, sickness, accident) could have been avoided. Hartshorne has said: "How much bitterness has been caused by the idea that somehow, somewhere, someone must be held responsible." And I agree with him. The passion to search out the guilty is a remnant of a primitive mentality. Whitehead thinks that too often Christianity has been wavering between a God-emperor, God as a moral power, and a God that is an ultimate philosophical principle. Only sporadically has the Galilean vision been expressed, a vision of goodness and humility.

This vision cherishes the tender elements of the universe which are ultimately the sacraments of love. A God who loves is a compassionate God, he is "a fellow-sufferer who understands." This concept of a suffering God is certainly not proper to Whitehead alone. It is a common theme among Christian philosophers and theologians, to mention only the work of two prominent thinkers, Varillon and Moltmann. In process theology, this specific Christian vision is integrated in an all embracing

vision of God's relationship with the world.

### LET NOTHING OF VALUE BE LOST

We come now to the final corollary to the concept of the reciprocal relation between God and the world. When God 'considers' what is decided upon by the forces of 'creative advance', then our deeds have a future consequence that reaches further than if they had been the acts of isolated beings living only for themselves. Nothing of value is ever lost. The concept that every event becomes an element of the ultimate future Whitehead calls 'objective immortality'. Immortality here is a characteristic of the real. Immortality is ultimately possible only because God 'prehends' each perfected value in his own consequent nature. One would be wrong to under-estimate this immortality because it is only 'objective'. Objective or real immortality still leaves room for what one ordinary understands by personal or subjective immortality. Whitehead claims that his system is entirely open on this point.

The position of Hartshorne is more radical. "We shall always live on in the active memory of God. With our death, the book of our life is closed, but not destroyed." What more could one wish for than an understanding and attentive reader, One who values our life for its authentic nature and preserves it for what it can become, and does so by absorbing it into his own life? The full significance of Hartshorne's thought is found in the example of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That God is the God of the Covenant does not have a bearing only upon Abraham and his descendants, it also moves God himself to become the God of Abraham. The finite life of Abraham 'determines' the infinite life of God. In God, Abraham is immortal, because the everlasting God will now be the God of Abraham forever. A question remains. Do the above assertions consider sufficiently the evangelical promise of a life in personal friendship with Christ? This cannot be decided upon the grounds of a thought system's coherence. As far as we are concerned, it is necessary and sufficient that a theological system remains open to this promise.

### CONCLUSION

During the last 15 years an impressive number of theological works have been inspired by the insights of Whitehead and Hartshorne. Although Process Theology opens broad perspectives, one cannot deny that the use of highly technical terminology poses difficulties for its proper understanding. It would be a tragedy, however, to dismiss process philosophy

as too complicated an instrument, and, therefore, to ignore the urgent need to revise certain traditional patterns of thought. Whitehead has written: "Those societies which cannot combine a reverence for their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows."<sup>6</sup> Such a statement need not be interpreted as a warning. Rather, for us, as theologians, it can serve to encourage and even inspire us in our efforts to balance a proper conservation of and respect for our traditions with the freedom to renew, revise and change.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. A.N. Whitehead, Process and Reality, Part V.
2. Shubert M. Ogden, The Reality of God and Other Essays, New York, Harper & Row, 1966.
3. John B. Cobb, J., A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1965.
4. J.A.T. Robinson, Exploration into God, Standford-Londen, 1976.
5. When giving this lecture before the Academic Canisius circle at Louvain on January 22, Msgr. Dandeyne informed me that several representatives of Neo-Thomism refute the pre-knowledge of contingent future events as quia non sunt.
6. Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect, New York, Capricorn Books, 1959, p.88.

Brochures giving a detailed Extramural Studies Programme of 1983-84 are available at Extramural Studies Office, 6 Welfare Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong. Tel. 5-530141.

To avoid possible misunderstanding that may result from an article in TRIPOD #14 (page 62) I would like to make clear that the Extramural Studies Programme is completely independent of the Holy Spirit Study Centre.

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