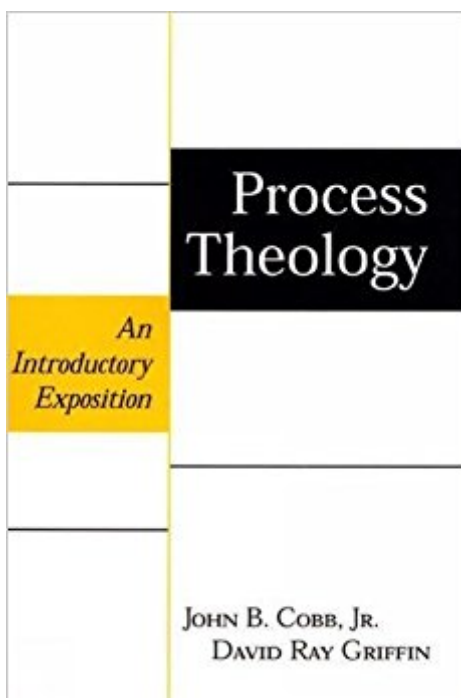


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Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition



Synopsis

Process Theology is an introductory exposition of the theological movement that has been strongly influenced by the philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. It offers an interpretation of the basic concepts of process philosophy and outlines a "process theology" that will be especially useful for students of theology, teachers of courses in contemporary philosophy, ministers, and those interested in current theological and philosophical trends.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

John B. Cobb Jr. has held many positions including Ingraham Professor of Theology at the Claremont School of Theology, Avery Professor at the Claremont Graduate School, Fullbright Professor at the University of Mainz, and Visiting Professor at Vanderbilt, Harvard, and Chicago Divinity Schools. His writings include *Christ in a Pluralistic Age: God and the World*; and, with coauthor Herman Daly, *For the Common Good*, which was cowinner of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order. David Ray Griffin is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Theology at Claremont School of Theology, Professor Emeritus of Religion at Claremont Graduate University, and Co-Founder of the Center for Process Studies. He is the author of *Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith*, and coauthor, with John B. Cobb Jr., of *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*. Author of numerous books in philosophy of religion, he has also published two popular books on the World Trade Center attacks: *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions About the Bush Administration and 9/11* and *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions*.

A clear exposition from two of the legends in the field. I assigned it for my Philosophy of Religion class, and they were very enthusiastic. In this area, few students are ever exposed to alternative theological perspectives, and it enabled me to challenge their assumptions about God. The book is extremely challenging for an undergraduate class, so I lectured extensively while they were reading, but the book really made an impression.

I'm really, really interested in process theology, which is the only reason why I am persisting in reading this book. It is the most densely-written exposition I can imagine; every word counts and every sentence is difficult. I do believe that trained philosophers could understand it; I am struggling. The whole subject must somehow be made more accessible.

This presentation is good, but highly academic. Example: I am a graduate student pursuing a PhD in psychology, in addition to being a long-time, well-read digester of theology and philosophy, and I had a lot of trouble reading this. Not because the concepts themselves are vacuous or unintelligible, but simply because this is written for serious philosophy students who have quite a background in the language being utilized here. It assumes quite a bit of foreknowledge (no pun intended). If you're desiring your first book on process theology, as I was, this is not the one to buy. A second and important note about this work is simply that it is old. That factor alone does not reduce value, but in this case, much new and important work has been done in the area of process philosophy and its interpretation since this publication. Another good reason to look elsewhere. A reader might want to look into a work by theologian Gregory Boyd, who has been a contemporary interpreter of Hartshorne. Boyd's Princeton dissertation on Hartshorne and process in general has been turned into a book (of sorts) called "Trinity and Process" which I am now reading and finding to be a good read. It can be found through interlibrary loan or on .

Life-changing book. Their world view fits my world experience in a transforming way. I had read it years ago and loaned my copy and found I need to have it for frequent review. I get something new each time.

Just as the seeds that germinated and bloomed after being dormant in a desert in Chile for 500 years due to rainfall caused by El Nino, so is A N Whitehead-initiated Process Theology in these parched times of ours: a most welcome surge of vitality and clarity and lucidity into our God-talk. Buy it

and read it; then, don't let the slowness of the first couple of chapters stop you. Next come chapters with some of the best theological writing ever: God as Creative Responsive Love, A Theology of Nature, Human Existence, Jesus Christ, Eschatology, and The Church in Creative Transformation.

This was one of the first comprehensive overview of process theology, grounded in the philosophical/mathematical work of Whitehead. It is still a fine introduction to the field and should be required reading for anyone wishing to follow the development of process thought. This underlies the phenomenon of de-construction as well as the evolutionary vision of the Cosmos and of all of us who are its children. This book avoids the jargon that often masks confusion. It is clear and concise.

Cobb Jr. and Griffin's "Process Theology" has been my introduction to process philosophy and its theology. Based upon a fast read, I judge my experience as pleasant - informative but not overwhelming. I recommend the book to anyone with a theological interest looking for an introduction to Whitehead's ideas.

Retired theologians and philosophers John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin (who has more recently become well-known for his views on 9/11: e.g., *Debunking 9/11 Debunking*) wrote in the Foreword to this 1976 book, "This book is an introductory exposition of the theological movement that has been strongly influenced by the philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne... Process theology speaks about God. Whitehead and Hartshorne have both used the word 'God' frequently and without embarrassment. However, they have been conscious that what they have meant by the term is philosophically and religiously opposed to much that has been meant by 'God' in metaphysical, theological, and popular notions... In the present book we have, besides explicating some of Whitehead's basic ideas, simply spelled out our own views. For this reason we have not called this 'an introduction to process theology' but 'an introductory exposition.'" (Pg. 7-8, 10) They point out, "Whitehead's analysis of basic features of reality has religious implications congenial to Christian faith." (Pg. 30) They add, "We have faith in the continued fruitfulness of returning to the first accounts of and reactions to Jesus' life for new insights because of the repeated fruitfulness on this return in the past... The present book is based upon the conviction that a return to Jesus for inspiration is still fruitful." (Pg. 40) They note, "Process theology sees God's fundamental aim to be the promotion of the creatures' own enjoyment. God's creative influence upon them is loving, because it aims at promoting that which the creatures experience as intrinsically good. Since God is not in complete control, the divine love is not contradicted by the great amount of intrinsic evil, or

'disenjoyment,' in the world. The creatures in part create both themselves and their successors." (Pg. 56) They assert, "Process theology also says that God is responsible for evil but not indictable for it... it does not deny that there is genuine evil... there are events that would have been better otherwise, all things considered... other events could have occurred then and there that would have been better. This is one of those universal convictions to which any philosophy or theology must be adequate if it is to be acceptable. Process theology distinguishes between divine responsibility and blameworthiness ... [because] the power of God is persuasive, not controlling. Finite actualities can fail to conform to the divine aims for them... evil is not necessary. But the possibility for the deviation is necessary; hence the possibility of evil is necessary." (Pg. 69) They continue, "God did not bring about creatures such as us ... simply because freedom is in itself a great value, but because beings capable of the values we enjoy must necessarily have these other capacities. The question as to why God did not make sinless robots does not arise. God is partly responsible for what we normally call evil... Had God not led the realm of finitude out of chaos into a cosmos that includes life, nothing worthy of the term 'suffering' would occur... God is responsible for these evils in the sense of having encouraged the world in the direction that made these evils possible... Hence, the question... reduces to the question as to whether the positive values enjoyed by the higher forms of actuality are worth the risk of the negative values, the sufferings. (Pg. 74-75) They argue, "Process theism... cannot provide the assurance that God's will is always done. It does affirm that, no matter how great the evil in the world, God acts persuasively upon the wreckage to bring from it whatever good is possible... God does not act ex machina to prevent the consequences of destructive human acts. Critics object that a being not able to guarantee a favorable outcome to the process does not have the sort of power that is essential to deity... The future is open and we are free because of god. The power to open the future and give us freedom is a greater power than the supposed power of absolute control, for a power effective over free beings is a far greater power than what would be involved in the manipulation of robots." (Pg. 118-119) This book---while, under its own terms, is not an "introduction" to process theology, exactly---is nevertheless a very helpful resource for anyone wanting to know more about this complex theology and philosophy.

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