



PROCESS THEOLOGY

PROCESS THEOLOGY EMBRACES PANENTHEISM

- God in all things, all things in God
- God is the soul of the world, always more than the evolving world
- Vs Pantheism - the idea that God and the world are one reality
- Vs. Deism - God creates the world and then steps back to watch
- Vs. Theism - God is unchanging and external to the world but miraculously intervenes

PROCESS THEOLOGY: BROADLY SPEAKING

- God grows the world, always in process
- God is unsurpassable except in future states, thus is constantly growing
- God does not have a predetermined plan for anyone, nor does God want anyone to fulfill a purpose determined in eternity
- Soul is not an unchanging substance that observes its experiences from a distance, but a stream of experiences always connected to God's stream

If God knows everything in advance then there is nothing new we can add to God's experience and prayer is for naught... it can't change anything if everything is predetermined. God gets to do "Ground Hog Day" all the time.

God has a vision but not an explicit unalterable agenda... God is constantly creating the universe.

God does not fully determine any moment of experience, nor is God's planetary or cosmic vision embodied in a precise or predetermined way.

PROCESS THEOLOGY TENETS

- Life is a process which involves the emergence of novelty, thus the future is not determined but open
- God is the most dynamic and ever changing reality
- Paranormal experiences, NDEs, spiritual healers, and complementary medicine are all data for theological and philosophical contemplation

PANEXPERIENTIALISM

- Things, e.g., rocks and tables, have experience, not necessarily conscious, though
- Panexperientialism, or the universality of experience, is the most difficult and most breath-taking and life-transforming aspect of process theology
- This mirrors the Vedantic idea of the unity of existence, that everything is part of the eternal oneness



NORMAN PITTINGER

- Affirms of God's universal quest for beauty, complexity and vibrancy of experience
- Embraces diversity in sexuality

John Cobb

- Connects process theology to ecology, economics, anthropology, theological education, spirituality, and interfaith dialogue
- Joins intellectual precision to openness, piety and mysticism
- Integrated Buddhism with Christianity
- Sees Christ as creative transformation



BERNARD LOOMER

- God is the living energy embracing all things
- God is the ambiguous energy of life, embracing both creative and destructive forces in the universe
- Relationships and experiences are central themes

David Ray Griffin

- Emphasis on interdependence of life, non-sensory experience, non-local causation
- It is impossible for God to have a monopoly on power in a universe in which existence implies some level of free will



PROCESS THEOLOGIANS BELIEVE

- The whole universe influences the emergence of each moment of experience
- The goal of life in an interdependent universe is to experience a widening, and not a dissolving, of self, such that the well-being of others and one's own well-being are intimately connected in the moment to moment and long-term process of self-actualization



MORE PROCESS THEOLOGY BELIEFS

- Process theology challenges tradition of Perfected God, God's sovereignty, and worshipfulness
- God's relationship to the world is intimate and continuous rather than distant and discreet
- God not the holy other, but rather the wholly present one whose existence cannot be contained by the world

Traditional God is independent of the world, giving but not receiving
Process theology says God is intimately related to each moment of experience, giving and receiving love

Traditional theology sees God's creative power as unilateral and all-determining
Process theology sees God creating through, in, and with all things. Thus divine power is relational not coercive.

Process theology affirms that divine power is relational and persuasive, not all-determining. This stands in contrast to orthodox view of God as having absolute and unfettered power.

SOME PROCESS THEOLOGY THOUGHTS

- “We can choose to follow God’s vision for the present moment and the immediate future or we can turn away from God’s ideal for us and focus solely on our own individual [desires]”
- In other words: We can raise our awareness to be in tune with a higher consciousness or we can relax and indulge in distractions that keep us in a lower conscious realm

“We can choose to follow God’s vision for the present moment and the immediate future or we can turn away from God’s ideal for us and focus solely on our own individual well-being.” Shouldn’t it be better to put this in another way, say... We can raise our awareness to be in tune with a higher consciousness or we can relax and indulge in distractions that keep us in a lower conscious realm. - Our individual well-being really has nothing to do with it. Our well-being can be enhanced via raising awareness and it certainly does not have to factor in to being distracted. Take the distraction of drugs or alcohol for example. This is not focusing on our well-being.

BRUCE EPPERLY QUOTE

- “God can be imagined as a intimate, creative, and freedom supporting parent, who says to her child, ‘Surprise me, do something that I had not fully expected, so that together we can bring about something new and exciting’”

God can be imagined as a intimate, creative, and freedom supporting parent, who says to her child, ‘Surprise me, do something that I had not fully expected, so that together we can bring about something new and exciting.’” It’s the atheist spirit in me, I guess. I don’t see the necessity for a God separate from the individual. We can tap into the universal consciousness and that fits the mold of process theology, but this representation, seen in the previous quote, just separates us from that Consciousness/God that we really are part of.

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

- Our moral duty is to promote the well-being of other creatures and insure environments that promote beauty of experience for others and us
- Actions, individually and corporately, should contribute to greater beauty in the world
- Moreover, our actions should give God a more beautiful world to experience



PROCESS THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

- PT sees ethics norms as relational, experiential, and contextual and avoids absolutes
- PT sees abortion as permissible when the potential quality of future life of the fetus and/or mother are of concern... not as birth control
- PT sees that euthanasia may create more beauty than living through a terminal illness

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRIST

- Process theologians affirm Jesus as God's chosen one and Beloved Son without resorting to a supernatural intervention that creates an unbridgeable chasm between God's presence in Jesus and humankind
- When Jesus says "I and the Father are one," it points to an experiential and volitional unity and not a metaphysical oneness that diminishes Jesus' humanity

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRIST

- Jesus must be understood in ways that emerge from causal interdependence of life and not on supernatural interventions or predestined outcomes
- Process theologians see Jesus as a reflection of God's aim toward creative transformation



PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRIST

- Jesus healed not through supernatural power but through but the flesh and blood of Jesus and his spiritual energy, akin to therapeutic touch, Reiki, acupuncture
- Process theologians deny that Christ's crucifixion was preordained and that Jesus sacrificed his life to appease God's anger toward humankind



PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRIST

- The cross of Jesus created a field of force that has endured through the centuries, calling us to personal repentance and transformation, ... and to embrace the pain of the world as God's healing companions
- "...cannot speculate on the mechanics of resurrection"



PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRIST

- PT invites us to see ourselves as part of the resurrection story, as partners in Jesus Christ's mission today
- God continues to act in our lives through Jesus' field of force, inviting us to claim our roles as embodying Christ's continuing transformation of our world
- Christ can be most fully present and effective when people believe in creative transformation, understand it rightly, trust it, and open themselves to be creatively transformed

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

- The Holy Spirit is God's energy and inspiration within us
- PT (as with the Eastern Orthodox church) view the Trinity as a lively, moving, interdependent, and intimate both within itself and within the world



PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

- Sinful behaviour means putting our self, local, or national needs above those of the world
- Sin is defined primarily in relationship to creation, whether to self or to others, and secondary in relationship to God
- In violating the well-being of the world we violate the well-being of God
- Grace is not a supernatural intrusion on human experience, but rooted in God's ever present tender care (??)

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

- The church should be open to change
- It should proclaim alternate visions
- The church cannot claim to be the only medium of divine revelation
- The church is intended to be a laboratory for holistic spiritual formation
- Salvation involves world-loyalty rather than world-escape



PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

- The Bible is not the only book for inspiration for Christian living
- Scripture is never the end of the discussion, but the starting point
- The church's vocation is to awaken people to God's presence and activity in their lives and in all of creation
- "Picket and pray" captures the spiritually-grounded activism of PT

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

- PT describe everlasting life by focusing on objective immortality - survival in God's memory and the impact of lives on the future
- Some PT are silent on life after death because of its focus on this world – they see after life as superfluous, or as detriment to social justice
- Life after death is seen as self-interest, therefore of no use – focus on contributing to the development of beauty here, not on whether we and how we survive death

PROCESS THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIANITY

- PTs who affirm life after death do not see it as a better place, just different
- Afterlife must affirm religious diversity and global revelation, and it must continue evolution of the person/soul
- The quality of the afterlife must correspond to the quest for justice in this life
- It must be a lively relational process, not a static individualistic state