

Christianity and Process Thought: Spirituality for a Changing World

Joseph A. Bracken

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"If someone were to ask, 'Where is God?' how would you respond?"

Joseph A. Bracken, SJ, uses this question as a springboard to introduce the process-relational metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead and other process theologians as he tries to reconcile the sometimes-conflicting views of traditional Christian doctrines and the modern scientific world. To present this material in an accessible manner to a wider audience, Bracken reworks Whitehead's "model" of the God-world relationship, showing that God is involved in an ongoing, ever-changing relationship with humans and other . He also discusses the work of other contemporary theologians to help Christians come to terms with their role in our multi-dimensional pluralistic society.

Bracken examines divine and human creativity, the collective power of good and evil, divine providence and human freedom, prayer, altruism, and the basic question, "What is truth?" He shows how Whitehead&rsqio;s process thought approach to these issues can in fact "harmonize" traditional Christian beliefs and contemporary culture, benefiting both faith and reason.

Understanding the God-world relationship subtly influences our attitude toward ourselves, toward other human beings, and indeed toward all of God's creatures, says Bracken. His revision of Whitehead's metaphysical vision in terms of a cosmic community shows how modern views of the world and God can be accepted and kept in balance with the traditional biblical views found in the Christian faith and how this balance can help Christians make better choices in a world shaped both by contemporary natural science and by traditional Christian spirituality.

"If we truly believe that in God we live and move and have our being and that as a result we share with the divine persons in a deeply communitarian way of life together with all of God's creatures, we may be more readily inclined to make the periodic sacrifice of personal self-interest so as to pursue the higher good of sustained life in community. In the end, it is simply a matter of seeing the 'bigger picture,' realizing what life is ultimately all about."

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