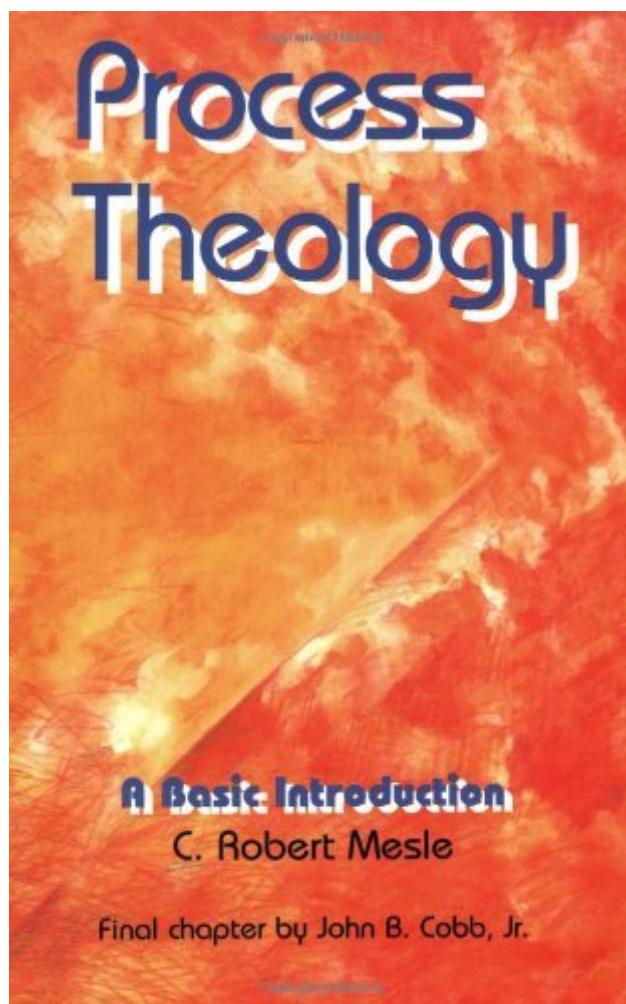


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Process Theology: A Basic Introduction



Synopsis

Where is God when a child runs in front of a car? This primer introduces the reader to a new way of understanding God that offers us a more meaningful and clearer vision of God and the world we live in.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the hallmarks of process theology, and the process philosophy that underpins it, is that it views all of actual reality as being in process, either becoming or decaying (which is, in fact, becoming something else), but that there is no static 'thing', that actual entities are in fact always in flux -- this is in keeping with modern science, philosophy, and culture, but also makes a sort of timeless sense. There are, to be sure, unchanging principles, but to be actual, to be real, is to be in process. The two primary philosophical leaders of process theology are Alfred North Whitehead (protege of Bertrand Russell) and Charles Hartshorne; Mesle and Cobb discuss their work, along with the work of other theologians and philosophers, as they develop the topics theologically. As things are in process, they are also in relationship with each other. There is an interdependence of all things, and things are relative to each other in creation -- here it is worth noting that Whitehead did

extensive work with Einstein's theory of relativity. Creativity is of primary importance, and the issue of novelty and unique character is very important for process. God is involved in all things, at every stage, but not in a controlling manner, but rather as a persuasive element, pulling all of creation toward God's ends, but permitting continued freedom of action within the current framework of time and history. It is probably beyond saying that process does not subscribe to any particular set of denominational doctrines or dogmas -- process ideas can inform and shape, and in turn be influenced by, the direct experiences and religious sentiments of people.

The title of the book should have been Process Theology according to Mesle, since in his own words "it describes the form of process theism that makes the most sense to me." Not being a theologian I cannot judge if this is an accurate description of process theology or not, although it does appear that there do exist conflicting views, one of which is appended at the end of the book. Technically, the book is a pleasure to read. It uses words and syntax that will not scare away even a high-schooler and breaks the subject matter into little sections and short chapters so that the reader can easily assimilate it. (A very minor annoyance is that occasionally the same idea is repeated a couple of sentences apart, as at the top of p. 63. An editor should have caught these.) As one turns the pages in the first two parts of the book the author's God is slowly defined and described:^{*} God has always existed and will always exist, and the world has also existed in some form (49).^{*} God is perfectly loving (15).^{*} God experiences everything that every human, animal, plant, matter, even electrons experience(2, 50).^{*} God by himself cannot do anything, but tries to persuade us (and everything else in the world) to do good; he cannot force us to do his bidding (20).^{*} God knows everything that can be known at a particular time, but he does not know the future since all creation has free will. Thus God's knowledge changes with time (50).^{*} The universe is the becoming of events that are self-creating, something which requires freedom, so nothing is preordained.^{*} God's guidance of evolution is limited to prompting radiation particles to move in the direction that might result in more favorable mutations.

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