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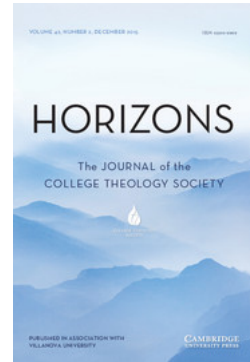
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***The World in the Trinity: Open-Ended Systems in Science and Religion.* By Joseph A. Bracken. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. x + 274 pages. \$39.00 (paper).**

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Schillebeeckx's work, and on the other to open a path to interreligious dialogue on the basis of creation-faith.

In sum, Poulson's philosophically nuanced study offers a much-needed classically oriented Schillebeeckian foundation for exploring the most controversial theological questions evoked by creation science today.

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The World in the Trinity: Open-Ended Systems in Science and Religion. By Joseph A. Bracken, SJ. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014. x+274 pages. \$39.00 (paper).

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Bracken continues his quest to bring a process-oriented understanding of the God-world relationship to the ongoing dialogue between science and Christian theology. As one who describes himself as neo-Whiteheadian, he argues that "some form of process philosophy is the best candidate for mediating between the rival truth claims of religion and science" (219, also 221). Critical to his quest is the goal of synthesizing the truth claims of the natural and the supernatural levels of existence and activity within the one coherent worldview elaborated in a comprehensive metaphysics that is compatible with the truth claims of Christian doctrine and with contemporary scientific understandings of physical reality.

Bracken argues that a commonly accepted philosophical worldview and a new common language intelligible to both sides are vital to fruitful dialogue. Critical to his case is a shift in focus from individual entities to enduring patterns or systems of their dynamic interrelation. He would persuade us that, notwithstanding appearances, reality consists not of individual things existing in their own right, and involved in contingent relationships to one another, but an ever-expanding network of processes or systems in which the patterns of existence and activity between and among constituent parts are more important than the parts themselves. "We do not live in a world of things, relatively fixed and unchanging material objects, but in a world of interrelated processes or systems in which the things that we perceive are the momentary byproduct or result of these processes both within us and around us that we cannot directly perceive but can only infer on the basis of rational reflection upon empirical data" (37).

Bracken proceeds to take this systems-oriented approach to the notion of panentheism (the notion of all finite things existing within God but retaining their own ontological identity, albeit in dependence on God as the ultimate

source of their existence and activity). Against the classical Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of the God-world relationship in terms of efficient, formal, and final causality, Bracken proposes a distinctly Trinitarian panentheistic scheme whereby the world exists in God but operates according to its own God-given laws and principles, with its own ontological integrity. From this perspective, the autonomy of the natural and supernatural orders is respected, while allowing for the Christian belief in a higher-order supernatural layer of meaning and value.

The mystery of the Trinity, when articulated in terms of a complex system composed of subsystems, with each subsystem corresponding to one of the divine Persons, serves as the stellar example of the philosophical paradigm and indeed as linchpin for this cosmology. The three divine Persons together co-constitute the higher-order system of a divine community that is the enduring structured field of activity for the interaction of its consistent parts, the divine Persons. As the *imago Dei*, the cosmic process is a complex system of subordinate systems, which in turn have still more lower-order subsystems. The set of processes proper to the universe are thus integrated into the ongoing process of the divine communitarian life but, contra the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding, the subsystems retain their ontological identity with their own mode of operation within the larger system. The God-world relationship as a whole is then an all-comprehensive system in which the divine system, the communitarian life of the divine Persons, serves as both the ontological source and the ultimate goal of the cosmic process which is itself composed of hierarchically ordered subsystems.

Having laid the foundations for a Trinitarian panentheism, Bracken examines some long-standing controversial issues in the theology-science debate—the doctrines of the Incarnation, ecclesiology, miracles, the problem of evil, resurrection, eschatology—engaging in the process, albeit necessarily briefly, with numerous scholars in the field (Rahner, Moltmann, Pannenberg, Kaufman, Jensen, and LaCugna) and seeking to demonstrate that key Christian beliefs can be rethought in a systematic systems-oriented approach to reality in a way that is logically consistent and consistent with church teaching.

Bracken suggests that “moving from a substance-oriented approach to a process- or systems-oriented approach to reality could well be a ‘game-changer’ both for the understanding of traditional Christian doctrine and, even more, for the status of the religion-and-science dialogue” (192). Whether “game-changer” or not, Bracken offers a well-honed argument that is worthy of serious consideration.

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