

Review: PROCESS AND COSMIC LOVE

Reviewed Work(s): Time Invades the Cathedral. Tensions in the School of Hope by Walter H. Capps; The Eternal Feminine. A Study on the Text of Teilhard de Chardin by Henri de Lubac

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is not so much propositional and rational as experiential and nonrational. This insight is not new. What is new here is the use of Otto's approach to religion as a basis for ecumenical unity.

My basic criticism of the author's approach to comparative religion is that the notion of religion used is still so narrow as to exclude Marxism and other atheistic ideologies. All forms of atheism are relative, that is, relative to a given theistic formulation, and for this reason, have a religious starting point. As Ignace Lepp, a Catholic convert from Communism,

observes, the Marxist humanist psychologically speaking has a 'subjective absolute' which though not an experience of the Holy as numinous (Otto's view) yet serves the same function as the experience of the Holy does for those who believe in a revealed religion. A comparative study of religion, then, would do well to choose a broader notion of religion and include Marxism as a religion. I believe that when this broader notion is achieved, the differences which now split the traditional religions would diminish in importance.

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PROCESS AND COSMIC LOVE

Walter H. Capps, *Time Invades the Cathedral. Tensions in the School of Hope*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972. \$3.75.

Henri de Lubac, *The Eternal Feminine. A Study on the Text of Teilhard de Chardin*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. \$6.95.

In the five years since the appearance of the English translation of Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, our thinking about the meaning of Christian existence has been profoundly altered by an abrupt turn to the future. We have rediscovered apocalyptic after half a century of various "realized" eschatologies; we have learned to rethink our theology in terms of *spes quaerens intellectum*; we have become even more painfully aware of the social and political implications of Christian faith and the need for a contemporary deprivatization of religious thinking and religious institutions.

As a newly emerging style of reflection, the theologies of hope inevitably felt compelled to a strongly polemical tone—they were as concerned to tell

us what they were against as what they were for. Naturally enough, from the very beginning the hope school (if indeed there is such a thing) was roundly criticized by theologians of differing persuasions who sought to resist the effort to equate theology with eschatology. While welcoming the novel and frequently brilliant insights of this new perspective, many theologians have had grave misgivings about its capacity to articulate Christian faith in all of its manifold complexity. Sensitive to these criticisms and yet sympathetic with the aims of hope theology, Walter Capps has produced an unusually judicious and perceptive little volume which attempts to probe some of the larger methodological issues raised by the introduction into theology of what he calls the "process" model as exemplified in the work of Bloch, Moltmann, and Metz. Capps is concerned with the change which comes about in perception and life style when the vertical imaging of the real (classically crystallized in the stately figure of the Cathedral which attracts both attention and aspiration upwards) is substituted for by hori-

zontal projection (appropriately symbolized in the movement of the ship which leads our vision *forward* to the distant horizon). In short, Capps would like to know what happens when time invades the cathedral. By utilizing the horizontal or process model the desire and need for change, and particularly for social and political change, are able to come to expression in a way which is not really possible in the substantial world of the cathedral with its pervasive interest in permanence. At the same time this model has difficulty in articulating successfully the enduring elements in experience. It also has difficulty in reckoning satisfactorily with the problem of self-identity and self-realization. Like all models, the process model has its strengths and virtues as well as its limits and liabilities. By way of conclusion Capps suggests that the theology of hope with its proclivity for the horizontal model will probably prove most fruitful in complementary tension with the vertical scheme, for in and of itself it is not capable of giving adequate expression to the whole range of Christian faith and experience. Nor is any other theology for that matter!

Speaking of the process model, we come next to the work of Teilhard de Chardin. Henri de Lubac has unquestionably been Teilhard's most prolific editor and commentator. In the work at hand he has selected for explication an essay entitled "The Eternal Feminine" and written by Teilhard during the First World War period (in 1918 to be exact). De Lubac traces the preparatory stages of the writing, comments on the text itself, and shows how the themes developed at this early date in Teilhard's career resonate throughout his later writings. De Lu-

bac also takes the opportunity to acquaint us in detail with Teilhard's analogical use of language (a particularly instructive chapter) and his adeptness at symbolism.

You would probably be well advised in advance not to approach this volume from the perspective of Women's Lib because you will either be disappointed or simply put off. The eternal feminine for Teilhard has much more to do with the power of cosmic love throughout the vast extent of the evolutionary process than it has to do with the feminine in any usual sense, even if this cosmic love is especially embodied for him in the figure of the *Virgo Maria* and the *Virgo Ecclesia*. Writing in 1931 Teilhard observed that "the most striking and at the same time the most profoundly accurate way in which to recount the story of universal evolution would undoubtedly be to retrace the evolution of love." This is precisely what Teilhard attempted in a highly poetic form in this early essay.

To these reflections on the role of love in the evolution process de Lubac has added a series of brief essays dealing with the post-conciliar situation of the Church in the light of Teilhard's concerns of a generation earlier. While acknowledging the need for the Church to have moved beyond the narrowness of post-tridentine polemics, de Lubac is more concerned about the extremists of the post-Vatican II period. Unlike a Maritain, however, he is able to discern in the figure of Teilhard an exemplary, if not always totally unexceptionable, blending of creative innovation with profound respect for tradition. This is a volume which will appeal largely to aficionados of French theology or devotees of things Teilhardian.

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