

understanding of the God–world relationship. But I am uneasy with his recourse to two metaphors whose systematic relationship to one another remains a matter of debate even among quantum physicists. In my view, what is further needed in this intriguing comparison of concepts from quantum theology and trinitarian theology is a master metaphor (akin to the Aristotelian understanding of substance) that would explain the dynamic relationship between relational holism and superposition in a more readily intelligible manner. Such a master metaphor might be the notion of system. Systems, after all, are composed of entangled or dynamically interrelated parts or members. Likewise, systems are normally ordered to one another hierarchically with the higher-order system superimposing its own mode of operation on lower-order systems while safeguarding the ontological integrity and intrinsic mode of operation of those lower-order systems as its constituent parts (for example, the reciprocal relation between individual molecules and the cells of which they are constituent parts). A possible objection to this proposal from proponents of Thomistic metaphysics might well be that the internal unity of the triune God is then not the unity of a transcendent individual entity or substance but the unity of a transcendent life system co-constituted by the three divine persons in and through their dynamic interrelationship. But, given the increased prominence of the category of relationship (as opposed to that of substance) within contemporary trinitarian theology, an imaginative leap to the new concept of system as master metaphor for understanding reality should not be insurmountable.

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The World in the Trinity: Open-Ended Systems in Science and Religion. By Joseph A. Bracken, S.J. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. Pp. ix + 274. \$30.

Science and religion are the two pillars of cosmic life that move the currents of life forward and upward; however, we have yet to find an adequate intellectual link between them. Tensions, if not outright conflicts at times exist between science and religion which, according to Bracken, are due to a difference in understanding reality itself. In this book B., a longtime student of Whitehead and an original thinker in his own right, seeks to establish a new conceptual relationship between science and religion by approaching reality as ontologically relational. He writes that we “need a new socially oriented worldview that emphasizes the ontological priority of relationships to entities, both individual and corporate, that are thus dynamically interrelated” (2).

Clearly we need a contemporary philosophy of nature, and B. argues that process theology is the best candidate for a systematic synthesis of science and religion, one that can transcend rival truth claims. B. undertakes a tour de force by using a systems approach to explain metaphysics, theology, the Church, miracles, and resurrection. As a philosopher, B. is keenly aware that without a new understanding of metaphysics, theology remains stifled; his metaphysics is deeply impacted by the new science, especially the areas of quantum physics and complex dynamical systems. Although there

is no explicit discussion of the physical sciences, B.'s new concept of reality reflects a new understanding of matter.

B.'s approach to reality gives priority to systems as socially organized realities rather than component parts, so that "reality is not constituted by individual things existing in their own right but also by contingent relationships to one another" (2). By emphasizing "things" as structured societies, B. sees the need for new language to describe the integral relationship between events and between nature and supernature, language that is more verb than noun. He writes that "reality consists in an ever-expanding network of processes or systems in which the patterns of existence and activity that exist between and among their component parts are more important than the parts themselves" (2).

B.'s process theology seeks to move beyond the Aristotelian/Thomistic categories of substance and accidents as well as primary/secondary causality, which continue to govern theological metaphysics. He develops a new "metaphysics of becoming" as a way to understand the God-world relationship which he describes as pantheistic. God and world are structured interrelated systems without confusion or conflation. B. then revisits the core doctrines of Incarnation and Trinity as interrelated processes. His organic approach to physical reality impels him to revisit the Chalcedonian "two natures" formula and suggests that "in place of 'natures' we substitute 'open-ended systems'" in the formulation of the Chalcedonian decree (129). Hence, the person of Jesus is not the union of two distinct natures but a constellation of open-ended systems in ongoing dynamic interrelation (130).

The author is aware that his systems approach to theological categories can seem rather impersonal at times, as if the Incarnation or Trinity are divine principles, symbolic expressions of a personal God. However, he indicates that "system" is not a univocal term but an analogical one, in the same way that "substance" is an analogical term (79–80). By developing a systems theology, the divine-created network of interrelated processes is a continuous flow and exchange of activities rather than ontologically distinct events. B. also applies his process thought of interrelated systems to Church organization, miracles, the problem of evil, resurrection, and eternal life, all of which are governed by a metaphysics of becoming.

Overall, I applaud B. for tackling the large issues of metaphysics and theology. I fully concur that without a new framework for explaining our core theological doctrines and the Church that embodies these doctrines, theology is bereft of transforming power. He brings his lifelong study of Whiteheadian societies into a more complete philosophical and theological explanation of God and world, although I admit that the language of "structured societies" can seem impersonal and uninspiring at times. In some places, his theological explorations are complicated by philosophical excursions (such as the chapter on the Incarnation) and in other places where an explicit discussion of relevant aspects of science would have been of interest. I am curious as to why he did not use the term "holon" or reconceive hierarchy in terms of "holoarchy" which are, in my view, more consonant with systems thinking and complex dynamical systems of reality. These comments, however, do not detract from B.'s superb effort to renew theology and philosophy in light of modern science. This is a book for all who

seek to open new doors to a new theology, a new church up ahead and a new social imaginary of God.

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Exploring Catholic Theology: Essays on God, Liturgy, and Evangelization. By Robert Barron. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015. Pp. xv + 250. \$24.99.

Robert Barron, newly appointed auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles, is probably best known for his acclaimed series of DVDs, *Catholicism*, with its accompanying book. The series has been successfully used in RCIA programs, in parish continuing-education programs, and in undergraduate classes devoted to Catholic theology. I, along with many others, can attest both to the aesthetic attractiveness of the series and its pedagogical effectiveness.

It soon becomes apparent that the accessibility of B.'s work does not come at the expense of theological substance. A coherent and compelling theological and philosophical vision animates the *Catholicism* series, as well as his other multi-media offerings. B. is not only a first-rate evangelist and communicator, he is a most impressive systematic theologian.

That comprehensive vision has been articulated in such fine works as *And Now I See: A Theology of Transformation* (1998), *The Strangest Way: Walking the Christian Path* (2002), and most fully in *The Priority of Christ: Toward a Postliberal Catholicism* (2007). Each of these displays B.'s ability to join seamlessly theology and spirituality, the intellectual and affective, as he draws richly from the classics of Christianity's theological, literary, and artistic traditions. These qualities are abundantly present in this new collection: *Exploring Catholic Theology: Essays on God, Liturgy, and Evangelization*.

The range and depth of B.'s theological ancestry, revealed in these essays, is noteworthy. Irenaeus and Augustine, Aquinas and Newman, Balthasar and Ratzinger, Lonergan and Dulles do not receive only passing mention. They are vital conversation partners from whom B. continues to learn and whom he cogently incorporates into his own theological synthesis. For him, as for them, *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* are inseparable and perennial dimensions of the theological task at the service of the Church's liturgy and life.

The present essays develop a number of the key insights and sensibilities that structure B.'s previous writings. The book's four sections display his primary concerns and commitments: the Doctrine of God, Theology and Philosophy, Liturgy and Eucharist, A New Evangelization.

B. draws upon Thomas Aquinas in his insistence that *Deus non est in genere*: God is not a member of a class, albeit the highest. God is *ipsum esse subsistens*, the personal power that brings into existence and undergirds all finite reality. In addressing the "New Atheists," B. assumes a mystagogical stance, seeking to lead beyond a