

5. Does this have anything to say to Process Theology? Our understanding of process as intra- as well as interpersonal means that process is "in" God as well as in creation, but subservient to Person and Power.

By the contents and shaping of his parables, Jesus tries to shock us out of "business as usual" and into awareness of the present Presence of God. The first is deliverance from dailiness with all its calculations (prospects, projections, plans, programs); the second is empirical deliverance into JUDGMENT on us (for weak faith and our wanderings off-Center to the idols our fears, angers, lusts, and greeds seduce us into worshiping) and JOY (the messianic advent of shalom, with radical changes of life-style and institution [e.g., L.5.27-39]--for all of which his holophrase was "malcuth [the Kingdom/Reign/Rule/Sovereignty/Realm] Yahweh"[of the LORD God]). This thinksheet uses two of his nature-parables--mustardseed (M.4.30-32, Mt.13.31f, L.13.18f, G.Thos.) and leaven (Mt.13.33, L.13.20f)--to contrast our present Western attention to *process-and-so-planning* with his and his contemporaries' attention to *the-Power-effect-and-so-the-present-response*.

1. Now, as a person whose psyche was first turned on to science and only after that religion, I'm impressed with the products of PROCESS, increasingly ambiguous though they are becoming. Hypothesis/model-making and -testing, a continuous process, has opened to us these past few centuries a new way of relating to (participating in, and controlling) reality. For a national church annual emphasis, I changed the G.E. slogan "Progress is Our Most Important Product" by substituting, for the first word, "Process." Especially in social psychology, we have fruitfully extrapolated process from the natural sciences to the human sciences. Nothing in this thinksheet should be read as detracting from my sense of awe at this recent human achievement, and my gratitude to God for it--for I cannot experience anything the creature does as any kind of threat to the Creator, or to my monotheism. And I find the Bible conscious of process, while subsuming it under the POWER and gift of God (e.g., (Gn.7f [God's promise to respect sequence] and 8.22; so the sow/reap process used for death/resurrection in 1Cor.15.35-44, where continuity/discontinuity jar each other, the gap bridged not by development but by miracle).

2. Here we face two types of consciousness/awareness/attention, the (biblical) *dual punctiliar* and the "modern" *linear or processive or progressive*. The latter is more impressed with the journey than either the start or the destination; the former, with the beginning and end. Some illustrations of the biblical mentality, in NT: in our two parables, the mustardseed is planted and behold! a tree! (whereas we'd put in between something like "and waited for it to sprout and grow up"); and the leaven is put in the dough and behold! the raised lump! (whereas we'd put in between something like "and she waited as through the night the lump gradually rose"--for the same idea, see J.Jeremias' THE PARABLES OF J. [Scrib./72], 148--where also these: Mt.27.8, 28.15; L.4.14; Jn.12.24; Ac.7.44f; Rev.12.5 [where Jesus is born and ascended, his earthly life passed over]).

3. For Jesus' mind on all this, a crucial passage is M.12.18-27, his response to Sadducees who'd addressed to him a case involving a choice involving the process(!) of a woman's having, serially, seven husbands. Now, power does not change, it only adjusts; and the Sadducees had grudgingly made such adjustments as were essential to their remaining in power; but the Pharisees had Jesus' sympathy and support against such intransigence--yet Jesus pressed beyond the Pharisaic mentality in saying to the Sadducees, "You don't understand the Scriptures or God's Power, for he's the God of the present, the living; your question is wrongheaded."

4. So, seen from Jesus' eye on the present Power of God and on the end of processes in nature and history, mustardseed and leaven are parables not of growth or development but of the startling contrast between beginning and end--told to disciples when their faith wavered and their energy flagged. Trust the God of small beginnings and hidden workings! The effects of his powerful Presence, now and always, are miraculous! Yes, process is inherent in parable because parable is *narrative* metaphor; but the Center is the Creator-Savior, not the processes of nature/history.