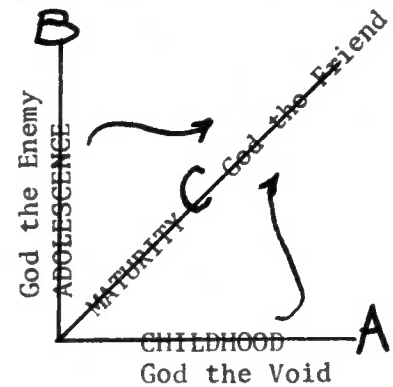


"The religion of the person" is the world's first universal religion. (Christianity is the first global religion, i.e. first to spread all over the globe.) "Universal" in that its stirrings, in the form of individual awakening to the human "more" or "the human potential"--in heightened expectations for personal life, and in conscientization toward liberation--, exist in hearts in all of the human heritages: except for a few pockets of remote aborigines, no tribe is undisturbed by the emergence of "the individual," and few are without advanced forms of individualism.

In the West, this religion takes the form of "the human potential movement," a secularized form of Jewish-Greek-Christian concern for "man," i.e. "men," i.e. the human being as singular (masc. or fem.). "The Movement" considers struggle toward human fulfilment inherently, uncritically, good and [among those who give the Movement a religious twist] divine. Renaissance-Enlightenment-Process thinking concurs: my great teacher of 1/4th c. ago, Henry Nelson Wieman, who theologized Whiteheadian process, carried the process process to a peak by absorbing God into it; and doctorates under him (Ogden, etc.) are still the leading promoters of this point of view, which very much later was taken up by Catholic thinkers, who applied it personally (e.g., Gregory Baum's MAN BECOMING) and communally (e.g., Gabriel Moran's RELIGIOUS BODY).

For the Wieman School, "God" is neatly identified with the universe's person-making forces/events/emergents. On my papers he would write "A, but must you believe in God as personal rather than as person-making?" That neatly puts the issue of the future of biblical religion, which holds that the struggle for human fulfilment is both divine (inherent in "human nature") and demonic (a perversion, apple-eating disobedience, rebellion, resistance to the divine will). "Process theology" fits well the mood and mold of two covering movements, viz. a militant ("liberation" movements) and a mystic (the "human potential" movement). Before the post-World-War-II emergence of these two "fulfilment" movements, process theology "me-too-ed" itself into various celebrations of secularism, losing the biblical metaphysics/morals. (The latter, beginning with the Wieman tragedy: his wife put a tail on him, caught him with the goods--person-making on another woman--and got him fired by a great biblical scholar [sic!], Colwell, then president of the University of Chicago. But I'm against straight-lining from metaphysics to morals: I've known some men of my own metaphysics to acquire an extra woman.)



Wieman's teacher, Whitehead, used to talk about "God the Void, God the Enemy, God the Friend." On the diagram I've taken this human-development model to display three religions, prejudicially-dialectically-imperialistically appropriating to my biblical religion the sanction of maturity. "A" is the Religion of Obedience (Shinto, etc.), P-C in Transactional Analysis. Both official religion (king-priest) and anti-official religion (prophet) tend to this type; and so does inner-hearing religion, such as Gen.12 (Abraham, and therefore Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). "B" is the Religion of Autonomy (Greek-philosophical, Renaissance, "Modern Man," "Post-Modern Man"). "C" is Conflate Religion: biblically, God both demands (and takes no for an answer) and invites (and uses yes for fulfilment of person/creation, in joy/praise). As I put it in the first quote of the 1975 Kirkridge Lectionary, "God is more than we are without overwhelming us to our undoing. I will that this God--the God predisposed to "make all things new"--overwhelm me, to my remaking."

NYTS' planning should be three-factor: the Bible (which we should be free in, through, and from), the mystic "person" movement, the militant "individual" movement. Since in biblical light the latter two are divine/demonic, we should both cooperate with and attack (critique?) them.