

(4) What most appealed to me about the Christian religion, and led to my conversion at age 17, was a Person, the person of Jesus as representative of [no matter the hermeneutic of metaphysics] God-as-Person. "Incarnation" means that the personal God has lived among us as human person, with [Luther] "hair and skin," the ultimate explanation of what most require explaining, viz. personality and goodness.

1. As the human rule 'round the world and through the centuries has been to relate to the divine-numinous-transcendent as personal, the exception being to relate to as other than, non-, or im-personal, simple logic would throw not the former but the latter on the defensive. Since the latter-day situation, however, has been the reverse, how come?

(1) The starry-eyed successism of natural science, celebrated in the religion of scientism, has given the forensic advantage to various forms of atheism, for the selective-attention principle in natural science works against personal and personalistic data and for impersonal-verifiable-repeatable data. [After writing that sentence, a recent book of high sophistication came to mind: Michael R.A. Chance (ed.), THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF ATTENTION (Wiley-Interscience/77); but see also the standard works on sociology of knowledge.]

(2) In addition to the above epistemological fact--i.e., how "truth" is "known" and "proved"--is a metaphysical fact, viz. that many otherwise-remaining-hidden realities open up to a step-by-step, process hereusis, a kind of left-brain-hemisphere analytic lineation, in contrast to the intuitive-personal-omnidirectional right-brain-hemisphere holistic encirclement of phenomena. As I took almost all of the courses of Henry Nelson Wieman, creator of process theology from his teacher Whitehead's process philosophy, I know how beguiling a religious feel for "Process" [capital "p"] can be. (On paper after paper he'd put, sardonically but gently, "A+, but must you believe in a personal God?")

(3) Enlightenment hubris about the human potential has provided to this day a humanistic elan that has blinded most of the intellegentia to problema perenniales, the philosophical questions which humans have normally found both unavoidable and unanswerable, and the process of responding to which has been productive of intellectual wonder in the presence of mystery, attendant with openness, modesty, humility, and feelings of gratitude and freedom and hope....qualities alike of saint and true scientist. The very phrase "the human potential" is both atheist and, for our species, self-congratulatory, with its covert and unexamined metaphysic, the doctrine of inherency of powers. Truth to tell, all we can say scientifically is that powers appear in human existence--not that those powers are inherent in humanity. The latter is one religious-mythic account; another, mine and the Bible's, being that "God gives" here-and-now gifts of energy-powers-relationships--to which gifts we are to respond with gratitude in freedom and hope.

2. Especially since World War II we've had, in this century, powerful books favoring theism [the technical word for God as person, the Creator-Provider-Restorer-Consummator Person]; but the century's best continues to be Abp. Wm. Temple's NATURE, MAN AND GOD [simplified in his MENS CREATRIX, Mac/35]. In the context of general philosophy of religion, the clearest statement I know of is Elton Trueblood's PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION [Harper/57].

3. While I've done a lot of thinksheets on and tangential to the subject of this one--e.g., 706, 648, 649, 590, 473, 211, 607A, 644, 559, 540, 659--I'm putting down here, for the rest of this thinksheet, a grabbag of thought-starters that root in recent experiences of mine....(1) Normal convergence of two facts ratifies theism, viz. the fact that the religious response-attitude is elative [the best-highest being attributed to the intimate-ultimate devotional Center] and the fact that the personal dimension is for me empirically the intimate-ultimate, the richest, the highest, the most potent-mysterious-hopeful, mysterium tremendum et fascinosum [= the Mystery that stops me cold-warm at attention between its threat and its promise]. ... (2) The abnormal, i.e. denials of God as Person, almost always help humanity by purifying vision, releasing the coopted god-of-the-tribe, reminding of the duty to doubt as an open door on the "more light" that "God has to break forth from his holy word." In short, I have found these folk more friends than enemies of the biblical God.... (3) But some antitheists are God-evaders, adolescent rebels against their religious heritage or mature antagonists presenting alternative faiths....