

THE REBIRTHING OF GOD

Recommended Reading

Al Gephart

JOHN PHILIP NEWELL / CELTIC SPIRITUALITY

Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul: Celtic Wisdom for Reawakening to What Our Souls Know and Healing the World,

Newell's latest book. He focuses on historic leaders of the Christian Celtic tradition. They similarity affirm the innate goodness of creation, the light that indwells everyone, and the inter-relationship of human beings with the earth. It is especially timely as we deal with pressing planetary crises. Some of the book has similar material to that in *The Rebirthing of God*, but it is expanded. Chapters are devoted to St Pelagius, St Brigid, John Scotus Eriugena, Alexander John Scott, John Muir, Pierre de Chardin, George McCloud, Kenneth White.

Echo of the Soul: The Sacredness of the Human Body

Throughout the years, many spiritual seekers have considered the human body to be a hindrance to Divine illumination, an enemy to be suppressed. Yet the most ancient texts actually challenge those assumptions as they focus on love, beauty, sexuality, creativity, learning, and power. By unifying the wisdom of the Hebrew Scriptures, Jewish mysticism, and the Celtic spiritual tradition, *Echo of the Soul* delivers a refreshing reminder: created as we are in God's image, it's okay to be human.

A New Ancient Harmony: A Celtic Vision for the Journey Into Wholeness

In a world that seems increasingly fragmented, John Philip Newell calls us to a vision of life's essential oneness. He invites us to be part of a new ancient harmony. In his previous book, ***Christ of the Celts***, Newell freshly expressed the ancient Celtic vision of creation's sacredness and unity. In that poetic treatment of the wisdom of Celtic spirituality, he pointed the way to a Christianity more integrated with the earth and with the rest of humanity. Newell explores the ancient harmony that is deep in the matter of the universe, the essential interconnectedness of all things. He confronts the brokenness of our harmony, as individuals and families, and as nations and species. He asks the challenging question: "What is the cost, both personal and collective, of releasing life's essential oneness in radically new and transformative ways?"

Books of Prayers:

Praying with the Earth, Celtic Treasure, Celtic Benediction, Sounds of the Eternal

I have used and continue to use Newell's prayers for worship, meetings, meal blessings, a personal meditation.

John O'Donohue, Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom

In *Anam Cara*, Gaelic for "soul friend," the ancient teachings, stories, and blessings of Celtic wisdom provide profound insights on the universal themes of friendship, solitude, love, and death.

John O'Donohue, Beauty: The Invisible Embrace

As a follow-up to *Anam Cara* and *Eternal Echoes*, John O'Donohue turns his attention to the subject of beauty—the divine beauty that calls the imagination and awakens all that is noble in the human heart—focusing on the classical, medieval and Celtic traditions, on art, music,

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literature, nature and language. Beauty in process theology is the deeply felt lure of God for the fullness of life within whole creation.

PROCESS THEOLOGY

Jay McDaniel, What is Process Thought?: Seven Answers to Seven Questions

Science and everyday experience increasingly demonstrate that ours is a dynamic, interconnected, relational universe. It was the great insight of Alfred North Whitehead that we need a philosophy to match this understanding. That he succeeded in this is hampered by the complexity of his ideas and the words he used to describe it. In What Is Process Thought, Jay McDaniel uses metaphor, imagery, and examples from everyday life to understand the basics of process thought. A great little intro book.

Catherine Keller, On the Mystery: Discerning God in Process, Fortress Press, 2008

I am a fan of Keller; she is one of the brightest theological lights in the world today. She teaches “Constructive Theology” at Drew University. She writes well, with tightness and clarity, and a more poetic style. She loves to pick words apart in order to get at their fundamental meaning. Again, she avoids process jargon. She is not afraid to challenge traditional theological views, and in her own way approaches each of the major theological tenets including views of God, Jesus and the Bible. She suggests that there are not just two options — the Absolute on one end, and the Dissolute on the other. She argues for the Resolute as a third option. There are questions for reflection on each chapter, found at the end of the book, along with recommended further reading.

Rabbi Bradley Artson, God of Becoming and Relationship: The Dynamic Nature of Process Theology

I like this book a lot. “Much of what you were told you should believe when you were younger forces you to choose between your spirit and your intellect, between science and religion, between morality and dogma: unchanging laws of nature vs. miracles that sound magical; a good God vs. the tragedies that strike all living creatures; a God who knows the future absolutely vs. an open future that you help to shape through your choices. This is an introduction to Process Theology from a Jewish perspective. It shows that these are false choices. Artson explains how Process Theology can break you free from the strictures of ancient Greek and medieval European philosophy, allowing you to see all creation not as this or that, us or them, but as related patterns of energy through which we connect to everything. Armed with Process insights and tools, you can break free from outdated religious dichotomies and affirm that your religiosity, your spirit, your mind and your ethics all strengthen and refine each other.”

C. Robert Merle, Process Theology: A Basic Introduction, by Chalice Press, 1993.

This is the book most often mentioned first as a beginning into to process theology. It is readable, doesn't use much, if any, of Whitehead's technical terms, and is well organized. It is built on the theme that God is love. I have one forewarning. Mesle grew up in the Christian church but had a negative experience. As a result, though he speaks from a theistic perspective, when you get to the next to last chapter he presents why he holds to process philosophy but not to process theology. That said, he gives John Cobb the last chapter to explain why he believes God was necessary to Whitehead and is necessary to his own process worldview. One thing about the process approach is that it holds open

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the possibility of theistic and non-theistic perspectives. I used this book for an intro class I led at University PC.

Bruce Epperly, Process Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed, t & t clark, 2001

Epperly, McDaniel, and Keller were each students of John Cobb about the same time, mid to late '70s. This book is organized, more or less, around basic tenets: God, Christology, Trinity, Humanity, Transformation, Ethics, Future, etc. Again, very little if any Whiteheadian jargon. It is written, as the subtitle suggest, for those for whom a traditional theology doesn't work. As I look at my copy I see underlining and marginal check-marks on every page. Bruce has written a number of other interesting books.

Rabbi Bradley Artson Renewing the Process of Creation: A Jewish Integration of Science and Spirit

Jewish Lights Publishing, 2016

Brings together Judaism, modern cosmology and process theology lifting up humanity's role as steward and partner in creation.

Richard Rohr The Divine Dance: The Trinity and your Transformation

Whitaker House, 2016

A perspective that sees union with God grounded in creation itself, and also in our own unique creation. Salvation is the call to dance with God, with each other and with the whole creation.

Diana Butler Bass Grounded: Finding God In The World - A Spiritual Revolution

HarperOne, 2015

A perspective on the change taking place in how people understand and experience God. The distant God of conventional religion has given way to a more intimate sense of the sacred that saturates the world. The shift is from a vertical God to a God found on the horizons of nature and human community.

Thomas Jay Oord The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence

IVP Academic, 2015

Draws from scripture, science, philosophy, and various theological traditions, seeking to relate faith to the whole spectrum of life, making sense of goodness and beauty alongside of tragedy and randomness.

Jay McDaniel Gandhi's Hope: Learning from Other Religions as a Path to Peace,

Orbit Books, 2005

A creative approach to process theology considering the insights of other religions and the challenge to find peace among religions

Marjorie Suchocki In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer,

Chalice Press, 1996

How we pray says a great deal about our theology. A distinguished process theologian probes the meaning of prayer.

Ann Pederson God, Creation, and All that Jazz,

Chalice Press, 2001

An approach to God's role in creation using jazz as a metaphor and process theology as a focus. Improvisation is a fundamental theme of process philosophy.

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HELPFUL LINKS

Open Horizons

<https://www.openhorizons.org>

Jay McDaniel presents a wonderful array of helpful articles, reviews and resources, aimed at exploring the depth and breadth of process philosophy / theology. Quite an amazing website I find myself often going using.

Process and Faith

<http://processandfaith.org>

This is an expanding site that will ultimately include multifaith expressions of process thought. It is a place for connecting with others on similar journeys, those dealing with similar questions and likewise exploring new perceptions. I am personally involved in the development of the Christian membership of this family.

Cobb Institute

<https://cobb.institute>

Named after John Cobb, foremost professor of process theology at Claremont School of Theology the Institute promotes a process-relational worldview to advance wisdom, harmony, and the common good. It engages in local initiatives and cultivates compassionate communities to bring about an ecological civilization. These aims will be accomplished by fostering creative transformation through educational development, community collaboration, sustainable practices, and spiritual integration. I often participate in the Tuesday zoom sessions led by experts focusing on a wide variety of relevant topics.

Center for Process Studies

<http://www.ctr4process.org>

As a faculty-based research center at Claremont School of Theology (CST), CPS conducts research and develops educational resources that explore the implications of these principles on a range of topics (e.g. science, ecology, culture, philosophy, religion, education, psychology, political theory, etc.) in a unique transdisciplinary style that harmonizes fragmented disciplinary thinking in order to develop integrated and holistic modes of understanding. The CPS mission is carried out through academic conferences, courses, and seminars, a robust visiting scholars program, the world's largest library related to process-relational writings, and an array of publications (including a peer-reviewed journal and a number of active books series).