

# The Doctrine of God's Immutability : introducing the modern debate

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## *I: The scriptural foundations*

The doctrine of God's immutability has a basis in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, it is generally accepted. But, as is usually the case with most descriptions of God found in these sources, the belief that God does not and cannot change is not developed in any great detail. Given the Semitic thought patterns and linguistic expressions, which are concrete, this is not surprising. Nevertheless, there are certain passages which seem to provide a foundation for regarding God as immutable. For instance, in Mal 3:6 Yahweh says, 'Surely I the Lord do not change.' In Ps 101:27 the Psalmist addresses Yahweh: 'Thou art the same and thy years have no end.' Moreover, Yahweh's revelation of himself as other than the world and man (Hos 11:9), Lord of all creation (Is 6:5; Ps 97:5), the almighty (Ps 135) who resembles nothing in the created world (Ex 20:4, Dt 5:8) and other similar descriptions apparently support that belief since God is unlike his creatures, who are subject to change. On the other hand, the Israelites experienced Yahweh as a living God (Jdg 8:19; 1 Kgs 17:1) who is actively and personally present to his people. Yahweh was *their* Lord and Master. In fact, the Old Testament is a record of that personal involvement of God with his people. The Old Testament, therefore, believed in a God who was utterly other but who despite this status listened, talked, wept, walked, judged and loved.

With the birth of Christianity this dual conception of God gains more significance. Although one finds a reference to the 'Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (Jas 1:17), the belief in God's immutability and transcendence posed certain difficulties in the light of the affirmation that the Word himself, who in the beginning was with God and is God, has become flesh and lives among men (Jn 1:1—14). For, if the Word is divine, how does one interpret his relationship with the Father and at the same time uphold God's oneness and immutability? Moreover, how should one explain the Word himself becoming man without introducing the notion of change in divinity? These were the kind of questions which confronted the early Church and, more particularly, the Fathers. But the immutability of God continued to be taken for granted because of its biblical basis. Hence, the early Christian debates centred around the reconciliation of God's immutability and impassibility with the reality of the Incarnation.<sup>1</sup>

## *II: Classical theism*

However, our concern in this introductory article is with the philosophical development of the doctrine of God's immutability in the writings of certain classical theists. So we shall look briefly at how these thinkers articulated and defended this doctrine.

*Philo (ca 20 BC—AD 54)* is regarded by some as the founder of classical theism. In his writings one will find the double insistence upon divine absoluteness and immutability and upon God's omniscient providence which puts God in a relation with all other beings.<sup>2</sup> Philo did not deviate from the Judaeo-Christian ideas of creation and providence, but at the same time he accepted the Aristotelian denial of all relativity, temporality, dependence, passivity and inner complexity in the divine. What results is a logical tension which became a characteristic of classical theism.

For Philo certain scriptural passages could be elaborated by using Aristotelian categories. Thus, the 'one God' of the Bible was translated philosophically into 'God is one entity', i.e. without complexity, and the revelation by Yahweh of his nature (Ex 3:14) was understood as the identification of essence and existence, i.e. God's very nature is to exist and his actuality exhausts all possibilities. The biblical prohibition of idols emphasised the unlikeness of God to creatures. Since Aristotle had equated mutability with corporeality, it was inevitable that God, who stands apart from everyone else, would be depicted as immutable and as having no corporeal or spatial characteristics. As Philo put it: 'God alone exists in a continual and unvarying existence. But those creatures which owe their existence to creation and generation all are subject to changes in time.'<sup>3</sup> Philo regards as the most evident proof for God's unchangeableness 'this world which is always in the same place and in the same condition', a view undoubtedly influenced by Aristotle's static cosmology.

In this thinker one will also discover traces of the teaching, to be explored further by other classical theists such as Boethius and Aquinas, that nothing is future to God. As creator of time, God has its very boundaries subject to him. There is neither past nor future to him, only present. Furthermore, Philo maintained that God does not benefit from anyone since he is not in need of anything but is continually and unceasingly benefiting all things. He accepts the reality of divine love as taught by Scripture, but he seems to stress more the majestic power of God. Even the statement 'I am thy God', which some would take as indicating a personal relationship between God and his people, is interpreted by Philo to be a certain figurative misuse of language rather than a strict reference to the living God who, Philo claims, does not consist in relation to anything.

Like Philo, *Augustine (354—430)* combines the vision of God

captured in Sacred Scripture (now including the New Testament) with Greek philosophy. He does not question that God is a wholly immutable or non-temporal actuality. However, he does realise that that view has to be reconciled with the scriptural account of creation. The Manicheans objected to the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* since, according to them, if one could speak of an absolute beginning, one could always ask what happened before something else. So the questions arise: What was God doing before the creation? Why did he create the world when he did and not sooner or later? Augustine's response is to explain that time is merely the order of the created. Thus, the problem would simply not emerge since God as Creator is outside the temporal order. Augustine writes: 'But if before *heaven and earth* there was no time, why is it demanded, what Thou then didst? For there was no "then" when there was no time.'<sup>4</sup> In another passage he says: 'God created the world not in time but with time.'<sup>5</sup>

And because God is outside time, he is totally immutable. Augustine expresses this point succinctly: 'God is unchangeable because of his eternity, without beginning or end. Consequently, he is also incorruptible. For one and the same thing is therefore said, whether God is called eternal or immortal or incorruptible or unchangeable.'<sup>6</sup> Time implies change and only the created, being temporal, are changeable. The apparent change, then, from non-creator to creator does not occur in God but on the part of creatures. This is an argument that will find its way into the thinking of later defenders of God's immutability.

*Anselm (1033—1109)* appears to accept the truth of God's complete immutability in his development of the idea of divine perfection. He holds that all of us, including the fool who has said in his heart that there is no God, have an idea of God. The fool understand what that idea means although he denies that it corresponds to an objective reality. For Anselm God is 'a being than which nothing greater can be conceived'. He equates this concept with that of an absolute maximum of greatness, 'a supreme Good requiring nothing else and which all other things require for their existence and well-being.'<sup>7</sup> God, therefore, lacks no perfection and is thereby self-sufficient. He is outside all time—no yesterday, today or tomorrow—since these have no existence except in time. God does not exist in space or time; but all things, which he created from nothing, exist in him. Unlike created reality, which has contingent existence, with the essential precariousness, dependence, derivativeness and non-eternity, and is imperfect, God as a perfect being exists necessarily, non-dependent and eternally. Any change is thus ruled out because it would deter from God's necessity and eternity. God in no way requires change or motion, nor is he compelled to undergo change or motion.

But if God lacks no perfection, must God be said to be compassionate? Anselm accepts that to be compassionate is to feel

sympathy. Yet God for Anselm is passionless, so how does one explain that God nonetheless is 'the source of so great consolation to the wretched'? Anselm resolves the difficulty by stating that God is compassionate in terms of our experience and not compassionate in terms of his being. That is to say, we experience the effect of compassion, but God does not experience the feeling. Thus, without compromising God's utter immutability, Anselm offers an explanation of divine love. But, once again, any change which takes place does so in creatures and not in God.

God's complete changelessness is also affirmed by the Jewish philosopher, *Maimonides (1135—1204)*.<sup>8</sup> Like Philo, he was influenced by Aristotle and was confronted with the task of showing the compatibility of Judaism with philosophical tenets derived from the Greeks. He is a highly systematic thinker, offering elaborate arguments for his assertions. In this sense he paved the way for that great systematiser, Thomas Aquinas.

Maimonides follows Philo in arguing that any positive predicates ascribable to God, who has absolute existence, could not possibly have anything in common with those accessible to our experience and thought. The most significant example of this is knowledge. God's knowledge of the world, in the opinion of Maimonides, is not comparable to any type of knowledge that we are aware of. Due to possible changes in the object of knowledge, non-divine knowledge cannot be infallibly accurate. Maimonides accepts that these changes are real. Hence, since he also believes that God's knowledge must be infallible, he concludes that the term 'knowledge' as applied to God has a completely different meaning. In other words, our use of that word is equivocal.

What is at the root of this assertion is the belief in the immutable perfection of God, or his utter simplicity. Maimonides cites the Aristotelian argument for an unmoved mover as philosophically establishing divine immutability. Furthermore, it shows God's simplicity because if there is composition in him, he could change. Religiously, Maimonides appeals to the belief that 'The Lord our God is One' as supporting the conclusion that God is one simple substance without any composition or plurality of elements. He adds that anything hinting of corporeality or passiveness is to be denied of God. All perfections must really exist in God, and none of them must in any way be a mere potentiality. He dismisses the view that God is related, despite his admission that having relations would not require a change in God's essence.

It has been said that *Aquinas (1225—1274)* is the most Aristotelian Christian and the most Christian Aristotelian. There is no doubting his achievement in fusing Aristotle's philosophy and Christian beliefs nor his eminent place in classical theism.

Aquinas's thinking on God's unchangeableness is summed up in question 9, article 1 of the first part of his *Summa Theologiae*. It represents a succinct argumentation considerably influenced by Aristotelian metaphysics. Aquinas provides three reasons for concluding that God must be altogether unchangeable. The first is based on the metaphysical principle that actuality precedes potentiality, that is, something must first be before it becomes. God as the first existent must therefore be regarded as sheerly actual and unalloyed with potentiality. Such a reality cannot change. The second reason is rooted in Aquinas' explanation of change: anything in change partly persists and partly passes as a thing changing from white to black. This is an example of accidental change, but the same applies to substantial change, namely, that change is possible for a reality if it is composite. But God is simple (Aquinas discusses this attribute in question 3); thus, he is not capable of change. Lastly, for Aquinas change implies perfection since anything which changes acquires something which it did not previously have. God, being limitless and perfect, cannot be said to lack nor acquire anything else. Hence, God does not need to change.

On the question of the relations between God and the world<sup>9</sup>—an issue which we came across in Philo and Maimonides—Aquinas states that a relation of God to creatures is not a reality in God but in creatures. It is in God in our idea only. Aquinas is here introducing the distinction between 'real' and 'logical' relations. (Later Thomists will make much use of this). Creatures are really related to God himself, but in God there is no real but merely logical relation. This is because the two are of different orders: God is outside the whole order of creation whereas all creatures are directed to him and not conversely. And yet Aquinas maintains that there is nothing to prevent us from predicating to God temporally terms which suggest a relation, e.g. knowledge, to creatures. But the change occurs not in God but in creatures. As an illustration, Aquinas refers to a column which is on the right of an animal. The column has not changed its position. It is the animal which changes its position. Similarly, God is spoken of relatively inasmuch as the creature is related to him.

Aquinas explains further that God knows himself through his essence. However, he knows other things not in themselves but in himself since his essence contains the similitude of things other than himself. Since God knows things not only in general but as they are distinct from each other, it must be said that God has proper knowledge. However, the term as applied to God is used analogically. This is because for Aquinas whatever perfection exists in any creature exists in God in an excelling manner.

But God's knowledge of created reality is from eternity. God knows all things, not only what is actual but also what is possible. The object of

his knowledge includes all contingent realities as they are in their causes and as they actually are in themselves. Contingent realities become actual successively; but, Aquinas explains, God knows them not successively but simultaneously. The reason for this is that God's knowledge, as well as his being, is measured by eternity. Eternity, being simultaneously whole, comprises all time. All things that are in time are present to God, therefore, from eternity. That is, he has the types of things present within him, and his glance is carried from eternity over all things as they are in their presentiality. Aquinas resorts to an analogy of someone looking down from a height at moving traffic. From that person's perspective everything is happening simultaneously although not so from the perspective of someone below. Aquinas thus denies that God's knowledge is variable although God knows the variability of things since whatever is or can be in any period of time is known by God from eternity.

As we have seen, God is considered by the authors whom we have surveyed so far to be utterly changeless. There is no relativity, temporality or passivity in God. The correlative of this teaching is that there is no suffering in God either. This is certainly the view held by *von Hügel* (1852—1925), who believed that the great Greeks, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, the Old Testament, even the sayings of Jesus, imply on the whole a purely joyous deity, free from suffering.<sup>10</sup> This classical theist rules out any suffering in God because suffering, as von Hügel understands it, is intrinsically an evil. Although suffering cannot be regarded as identical to sin, he thinks that they are sufficiently alike for it to be exceedingly difficult to treat sin as intrinsically evil if suffering is not treated as evil at all. Accordingly, fundamental religious experience and apprehension do not impute the presence in God of any evil, be it sin or even only sorrow, whether actual or potential. Von Hügel is also concerned to preserve God's transcendence. In his opinion religious considerations demand that we uphold this belief. God's otherness, seen in his utter sanctity and sheer beatitude, is as essential a part of the facts and of the power of religion as his likeness can ever be. There is an immense contrast between God and us, who are contingent, changing and transitory.

The wish to consider God one of us has been fulfilled in the Incarnation, says von Hügel, in that like us the human nature of Jesus Christ suffered. God, however, does not suffer. Does this mean that he does not sympathise with us? On the contrary, von Hügel affirms that God's omniscience puts God in a unique position to directly reach the human heart and will. But since God is bodiless and spiritual we cannot impute physical or psychical suffering to him. Thus, like the other classical theists before him, von Hügel defends God's complete unchangeability while trying to show how we are to interpret God's love for his creatures.

### III: Process theology

The challenge to the doctrine of divine immutability as formulated by classical theism has come mainly but not exclusively from process theology.<sup>11</sup> There are certain differences among the adherents of this school of thought, but on the whole they share a metaphysical vision of reality in terms of becoming and relatedness. The key figures are *A.N. Whitehead (1861–1947)* and *Charles Hartshorne (b. 1897)*. Their insights have been developed further and applied to various areas by John Cobb, Schubert Ogden, Bernard Loomer, Daniel Day Williams, David Griffin, Lewis Ford and many others.<sup>12</sup> Process theology encompasses a wide field, since its representatives have not only applied the process vision to traditional Christian doctrines but have also explored its applicability and relevance to some contemporary issues. Here we shall limit our attention to the question of God's immutability as discussed by Charles Hartshorne, since he has dealt with this extensively in his writings.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, he is recognised as the leading living representative of this movement.

God in Hartshorne's philosophical theology is dipolar: he has an abstract aspect (pole) and a non-abstract aspect which he calls concrete. Neither can be comprehended apart from the other. The abstract aspect of God is what is absolute, immutable and independent—here he is in agreement with classical theism—while the concrete aspect is what is relative, changing and dependent. The concrete aspect *includes* the abstract and not the other way round. This distinction and the asymmetrical relationship between the two poles or aspects underlie Hartshorne's discussion of God's immutability and mutability.

An analogy may be useful in understanding Hartshorne's metaphysical position. The universe keeps changing, yet we can refer to its changeless activity; namely, the fact that it is continually changing. We can also speak of a man being the same person as he was twenty years ago even though he has in the meantime changed in many ways. In referring to the changeless activity of the universe or to the man's identity, we are in fact pointing to the abstract element or pole of their realities. In their concreteness, however, the universe and the man change. The concrete realities of the universe and of the man, both of which are constantly changing, include the abstract which does not change. That is to say, the abstract 'changeless activity' of the universe does not exist apart from the universe which continuously changes, nor is there an 'identity' separate from the man who has undergone several changes. The abstract is something one arrives at by not paying attention to that fullness. The abstract is really a partial feature of concrete reality (and thus is not to be confused with the *suppositum* or *substance* as commonly understood in classical metaphysics).

What Hartshorne does is to use the same distinction between the

concrete and the abstract when describing God's reality. He does not mean a concrete way of talking and an abstract way of talking. He insists that the distinction is ontological: God *is* dipolar, not just our way of referring to him. However, the abstract aspect exists in the concrete; that is, the abstract is real only in the concrete. In the examples given above, the changeless activity of the universe is not real apart from the changing universe; and the man's identity is not separate from the man who changes in many ways. When Hartshorne says therefore that God is dipolar, he has in mind one entity but is taking into account the two aspects of the same entity. Although he is contributing contrasting predicates to the same individual, he is predicating them in diverse ways. When he states that God is immutable and changing, he means that God is immutable as far as his abstract aspect is concerned; he changes as far as his concreteness is the point of reference. Since Hartshorne is predicating these in different ways, he maintains that there is no contradiction. To quote him on this point: 'No rule of logic forbids saying that a thing has a property and also its negative, provided the positive and the negative properties are referred to the thing in diverse aspects.'<sup>14</sup>

Hartshorne makes distinctive use of his doctrine of God's dipolarity in his interpretation of God's knowledge, power and love. He explains that these two admit of an abstract as well as a concrete dimension. For instance, God's knowledge in its abstractness is unsurpassable knowledge and hence is clear, certain and adequate knowledge whose content is all that is, as it is, the actual as actual, the possible as possible. It is a different matter, however, if we consider God's concrete cognitive response because this depends on the object of his knowledge. Hence, his knowledge of the world is contingent, changing and temporal. But God's knowledge in its abstract form is omniscient and infallible. In similar fashion Hartshorne has recourse to dipolarity in his reconception of God's righteousness and power. When he says that God cannot be excelled in his goodness and power, he understands these to have been abstracted from the specific relations which God has toward a particular object or thing and defined without reference to any determinate factor or to any actual object. Thus, ultimate goodness, i.e. goodness taken to its ultimate or unsurpassable form, is regarded as the adequate taking into account of all actual and possible realities, no matter what, each given its due. Ultimate power is defined as power adequate to control the universe in the best possible way.

But as abstract attributes, they must somehow be actualised in concrete form. How and in what form or forms is a contingent matter. Admittedly, God is more knowing, more benevolent, more powerful than any other conceivable being; hence, there is a difference in principle between any divine attribute and the corresponding property in



creatures. As an omniscient knower he cannot increase in knowledge if by this is meant overcoming error or ignorance. As holy or righteous, God is never guilty of selfishness or meanness. Because he is all-powerful, he cannot be accused of being weak at any time. Nevertheless, all this leaves ample room for and even requires a relative aspect in the concrete forms of these attributes. God's knowledge, power and goodness, in other words, have also concrete forms. And in their concreteness they share the characteristics of any other concrete actuality.

Hartshorne is insistent that his position does not threaten the classical theistic belief in God's transcendence. In fact, he now prefers 'dual transcendence' to 'dipolarity' because the former phrase brings out more forcefully that God surpasses all possible rivals. God's nature as worshipful means that he can be admired, respected or revered without limit because he is superior to anyone, now or ever. This strict logical incomparability of God constitutes his worshipfulness. Because only God is unsurpassable, he is qualitatively different from anyone else. But God's transcendence must be spoken of in dual terms, as was already shown. Like classical theism, Hartshorne ascribes to God the usual predicates of absoluteness and immutability, which have traditionally been associated with the idea of God. However, he also attributes to God what have commonly been regarded as creaturely features like relativity and mutability although there is a difference in principle between God's relativity and mutability and ours. That is to say, God exemplifies these characteristics in a way which is in keeping with his nature while other ways of being relative and changeable correspond to the non-divine nature of creatures.

Granted that Hartshorne supports the belief in God's unchangeability so long as this is not understood as a reference to God's totality, why does he stress that we must also regard God as changing in some respects? Earlier on it was stated that Hartshorne wants to incorporate fully into his concept of God what religion says about God's social and personal nature. The classical interpretation of God's reality as absolute and consequently devoid of all change makes it impossible, Hartshorne points out, to derive any sense from the religious teaching that God loves us. Total immutability cannot be reconciled with the religious emphasis on God's concern for us and our duty to reciprocate that love. Religion teaches that what we do makes a difference to God. Because he cares for us, our actions and decisions matter to him. Hartshorne takes the statement that 'God is love' to mean literally that God shares our joys and sorrows. As a God of love he understands and sympathises. That can only mean, in Hartshorne's view, that he is truly and not merely apparently touched by our plight. But, of course, God will always be affected and will react in a way that is in keeping with his

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worshipful, i.e. unsurpassable, status.

Hartshorne objects to the identification of God's perfection with the concept of *actus purus*. He claims that the concept is contradictory because there are 'impossible values'. By this he means that the existence of certain values necessarily excludes other equally good options. Thus, 'red here now' contradicts 'green here now'. Or if a poet chooses to express a certain sentiment in a sonnet rather than in some other verse form, what is rejected in such a choice is as positive as what is affirmed. Actualisation, decision, is always exclusive of positive values. To say, therefore, that all possible values are actual in God, thereby ruling out all potentiality or change, is to make possibility and actuality completely co-extensive and for all purposes identical. This is to eliminate the very meaning of actualisation (or decision-making) which is precisely that one does or is this and therefore does *not* do or be that. Now, if the notion of 'all possible values actualised' is contradictory, then we cannot affirm it of God. Moreover, if all possible values were already actual in God, there would be no sense in our doing anything at all. In Hartshorne's view it would be meaningless to actualise possibilities if in the Supreme Being they are actual from the beginning.

#### *IV: Dialogue*

Hartshorne has worked out his metaphysics in dialogue with classical theism. This is quite evident when one reads his numerous writings. Consequently, he also calls his brand of theism 'neo-classical'. Classical theists too, particularly Thomists, have responded to his challenge, some of them reiterating views which in their opinion have been misinterpreted by process theologians, others modifying their position in the light of these criticisms. In this section we shall note some of the literature on this debate.

An early article written in response to the process theologians' criticisms of the Thomistic version of God's relations to the world was Walter Stoke's 'Is God Really Related to the World?', *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (CUA, 1965).<sup>15</sup> Anthony Kelly pursued this dialogue when he wrote, 'God: How Near a Relation?', *The Thomist*, XXXIV (1970). Joseph Donceel also contributed to the dialogue with his 'Second Thoughts on the Nature of God', *Thought*, XLVI, 182 (1971). Since then he has published *The Searching Mind* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1979), which develops his position further. These writings indicated a growing uneasiness with the traditional position. On the other side of the Atlantic, however, a number of books defended classical theism. For instance, H.P. Owen in *Concepts of Deity* (Macmillan, 1971) not only sets out the classical understanding of God but also offers a critique of, among others, the process concept of God. Another contribution was Eric Mascall's *The*

*Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today* (DLT, 1971). This author had been articulating the classical doctrine of God in his previous books, and in *The Openness of Being* he defends the changelessness and non-temporality of God and answers objections coming from A.N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne and other process thinkers. Hugo Meynell's *God and the World: the Coherence of Christian Theism* (SPCK, 1971) also takes a position in favour of classical theism.

In 'Process or history in God?', *Louvain Studies*, IV, 4 (1973), Piet Schoonenberg dealt with the issue of God and change. In a later article, 'God as Relating and (Be)Coming: a Meta-Thomistic Consideration', *Listening* XIV, 3 (Fall 1976), he again takes up the topic and engages in dialogue with process theology. William Hill in 'Does the World Make a Difference to God?', *The Thomist* XXXVIII, 1 (Jan., 1974), and in 'Does God Know the Future? Aquinas and Some Moderns', *Theological Studies*, XXXVI (1975), also tackles this issue within the context of criticisms of process theology. W. Norris Clarke in 'A New Look at the Immutability of God', in a book edited by Robert J. Roth and entitled *God Knowable and Unknowable* (Fordham Univ. Press, 1973), gave a creative 'Thomistically-inspired' response to the critique of divine immutability by developing the traditional distinction between the orders of real and intentional being. But in a later work, *The Philosophical Approach to God: a neo-Thomistic Perspective* (Wake Forrest Univ., 1979), he abandons this approach and makes important concessions to the process philosopher's position on a few precise points, notably God's real relation to the world. However, he also suggests constructive ways in which process philosophy could be rendered more congenial to Thomistic metaphysics.

David Tracy in *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Seabury Press, 1975) and Jean Galot in *Dieu souffre-t-il?* (Lethielleux, 1975) adopted a stance sympathetic to the views of process theologians. Galot later published 'La réalité de la souffrance de Dieu', *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 101 (1979), which contained a summary of recent literature together with replies to criticisms of his book. David Burrell, on the other hand, has been critical of process thought, as can be seen in his *Aquinas: God and Action* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1979) and more recently in the article 'Does Process Theology Rest on a Mistake?', *Theological Studies* (March 1982). While defending traditional positions, Ronald H. Nash in *The Concept of God* (Zondervan, 1983) nevertheless makes certain concessions to the process theologians.

John R. Stacer discusses points of contact between Thomism and process thought in his 'Integrating Thomistic and Whiteheadian Perspectives on God', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, XXI, 4 (December 1981), while James Keller explores their differences in 'Some

Basic Differences between Classical and Process Metaphysics and their Implications for the Concept of God', published in the March 1982 issue of the same journal. Two articles which give an overview of the debate between Thomists and process thinkers on divine immutability are: Barry L. Whitney, 'Divine Immutability in Process Philosophy and Contemporary Thomism', *Horizons*, VII (1980), and Norman J. King and Barry L. Whitney, 'Rahner and Hartshorne on Divine Immutability', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, XXII, 3 (Sept., 1982).

Robert Neville in several articles but especially in *God the Creator* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968) and *Creativity and God: a Challenge to Process Theology* (Seabury Press, 1980) brings important points to the attention of process theology. Hartshorne, Cobb and Ford responded to him in *Process Studies* X, 3—4 (1980). In a book co-authored with John Cobb, David Tracy in *Talking about God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism* (Seabury Press, 1983) contributes to the dialogue between neo-Thomism and process thought. Along with Hartshorne, Tracy was an invited speaker at the March 1985 conference which St. Louis University hosted and whose primary concern was to relate the two traditions. The major papers of this conference (by Hartshorne, Tracy and Leonard Eslick) were published in *Modern Schoolman*, LII, 4 (March 1985). A critique of these papers is offered by Mary Rousseau in 'Process Thought and Traditional Theism: a Critique', *Modern Schoolman*, LIII, 1 (Nov., 1985).

Iltyd Trethowan, who in his writings has been a champion of God's changelessness, deals directly with the challenge of process theology in his *Process Theology and the Christian Tradition: an Essay in Post-Vatican II Thinking* (St. Bede's Publications, 1985). In a book which I edited, *Process Theology and the Christian Doctrine of God*, Vol. 8 in *Word and Spirit* (St. Bede's Publications, 1986), Trethowan, Brian Davies, Santiago Sia and Charles Hartshorne discuss God's reality and change. The other essays in the book (by John Cobb, Joseph Bracken, John O'Donnell and Jan van der Veken) explore other aspects of the Christian doctrine of God either from a process perspective or in response to it. The classical understanding of God has been treated with varying degrees of agreement and disagreement in three recent books: Brian Davies, *Thinking about God* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), H.P. Owen, *Christian Theism* (T & T Clark, 1984) and Richard Creel, *Divine Impassibility: an Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1986). The last also responds to process thought's criticism of divine impassibility.

This survey is by no means exhaustive. There have been other books and articles (some of these articles have been appearing regularly in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, *New Scholasticism*, *Religious Studies*, *Theological Studies*, *Louvain Studies* and other journals) as well as dissertations comparing and contrasting the classical position with

process thought on the God-question, including God's immutability. An excellent source for the titles and abstracts of these writings is the quarterly *Process Studies*, which is published in association with the Center for Process Studies, Claremont, California.

- 1 For a historical and systematic study of the doctrine of God's immutability within a theological and christological context, see Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* Vol. IV in *Studies in Historical Theology* (St. Bede's Publications, 1985). Also, Heribert Mühlen, *Die Veränderlichkeit Gottes als Horizont einer zukünftigen Christologie* (Munster: Aschendorff, 1969).
- 2 *Works of Philo Judaeus*, trans. C.D. Young (George Bell & Sons, 1890).
- 3 *Ibid.* IV, 458.
- 4 St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. E.B. Pusey (E.P. Dutton & Co., 1907), p. 261. The idea that God is timeless was taken up and defended by other theists. Cf. Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970). See also, W. Norris Clarke, *The Philosophical Approach to God: a Neo-Thomistic Perspective* (Wake Forest Univ., 1979), pp. 93–96.
- 5 St. Augustine, *De Civitate*, XI, vi.
- 6 St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Bk. XV, ch. 5, sec. 7.
- 7 St. Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo; Cur Deus Homo*, trans. S.N. Deane (Open Court Publ., 1945), p. 1.
- 8 Cf. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. M. Friedländer (Trübner & Co., 1985).
- 9 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qq. 2–26. ET. T. Gilby gen ed., vols. 2–5 (Blackfriars, Eyre & Spottiswoode and McGraw-Hill, 1964–6).
- 10 Cf. F. von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*. Second Series (E.P. Dutton & Co., 1926).
- 11 Among those who have also dealt critically with God's immutability as traditionally formulated are: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, W. Pannenberg, J. McQuarrie, Karl Rahner and Jean Galot. See also Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (John Knox Press, 1965), Keith Ward, *The Concept of God* (Fount Paperbacks, 1977) and *Rational Theology and the Creativity of God* (Basil Blackwell, 1982), and Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Clarendon Press, 1977).
- 12 For a brief introduction to process theology, see David Pailin, 'Process Theology' in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* edited by Alan Richardson and John Bowden (SCM, 1983).
- 13 Charles Hartshorne is a prolific writer. Among his many writings which discuss his views on God's immutability see *The Divine Relativity: a Social Conception of God* (Yale Univ. Press, 1948), *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Willett, Clark & Co., 1941) and one of his more recent works, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (SUNY, 1984). In my *God in Process Thought: a Study in Charles Hartshorne's Concept of God*, Vol. 7) in *Studies in Philosophy and Religion* (Martinus Nijhoff, 1985) I present Hartshorne's idea of God systematically and in detail. This book also contains a bibliography of Hartshorne's writings as well as of secondary sources. A sequel to this book, which will contain critical responses from various perspectives by theologians, philosophers and others is in preparation.
- 14 Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (SCM, 1970), p. 233.
- 15 There were, of course, much earlier exchanges. See, for instance, John Wild, 'A Review Article: Hartshorne's *Divine Relativity*', *Review of metaphysics*, II, 4 (1948), pp. 65–77; Hartshorne, 'The Divine Relativity and Absoluteness: a Reply to John Wild', *Ibid.*, IV, 1 (1950), pp. 31–60; Wild, 'The Divine Existence: an Answer to Mr. Hartshorne', *Ibid.*, pp. 61–84.

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