« Being and Becoming » and « God and the World »: An Analysis of Whitehead's Account
of their Early Association

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In his introduction to the writings of William Ockham, Philo-theus Boehner speaks about « structural similarities » which trans-cend « identities in content ». Then, suggesting an aphorism to illustrate this distinction, Boehner writes : « a melody can be the same, though every note is different when played in a different key. »[1]

In the following essay we propose to employ Boehner's dis-tinction as a means of clarifying the relationship between philo-sophical patterns and religious affirmations as these are brought together in theological formulation. It is our contention that the theological ordering of religious affirmations is dependent upon philosophical structures, and that in the Christian theological tra-dition the relations of « Being and Becoming » and « God and the world » have been joined in a highly complex and provocative way. The philosophical pattern has provided the structure, or the scheme of order, according to which religious content is expressed. In ser-ving as structure, the philosophical pattern has also contributed a certain regulative function such that the transposition of the affir-mations into the scheme of order brings them also under the in-fluence of the characteristic dynamism of the formal system. Hence, the relationship between philosophical structure and religious con-tent is not accurately comprehended when the former is regarded as being strictly antecedent to the latter.[2] Nor can either be under-

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[1] Philotheus BOEHNER, Ockham, Philosophical Writings (New York: Nelson, 1957), p. XLI.

[2] It is an oversimplification, that is, to regard the Thomist theological syn-

stood simply as the product of the other. It is also more compli-
cated than any twofold identification of content and structure
would allow it to be. Instead, the kind of relationship which finds
that the same melody possesses different notes when played in
different keys would own that theological formulation depends
upon the patterns implicit in philosophical reasoning for the cohe-
rent expression of religious affirmations. It would also allow that
the respective patterns of « Being and Becoming » and « God and
the world » may be disposed in identical ways without implying
that the content of these two formative relations (or the elements
by which each is determined) be identical.

   We shall approach the subject of the relation of religious affir-
mations and philosophical structures by outlining, discussing, and
criticizing a recent attempt to penetrate its complexities. In his
Adventures of Ideas, the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead con-
tends that that which he regards as the metaphysical improvement
upon Plato was first achieved through the discoveries of certain
early Christian theologians. Of particular significance is the cor-
respondence for which Whitehead argues between his own notion
of « mutual immanence » and the goal of Christian Trinitarian dis-
cussion. Since Whitehead's approach to the controversy which
preceded and focused upon Nicea is primarily metaphysical, his
historical and theological interpretations of those confessional pro-
ceedings are dubious and highly incomplete. Nevertheless, his
methodological insight into the way in which « Being and Be-
coming » and « God and the world » are therein joined possesses
the ability to present the problem in a unique and fruitful focus.
It is to Whitehead's discussion of the way in which this philoso-
phical and theological « synthesis » can be regarded as having
occurred that we shall now turn. Our first task is to trace the phi-
losopher's account of the metaphysical significance of the theolo-
gical findings. Then we shall discuss its implications and weak-
nesses with respect to the problem to which it provides access.

thesis, for example, as the ordering of Christian content according to a prior
Aristotelian philosophical scheme. This overlooks the fact that the content must
itself possess a certain appropriateness to the scheme, and that that « fittingness »
can only be confirmed as the scheme is also shaped and altered by the formative
exigencies of the content.

I

On a single page in *Science and Philosophy*, Whitehead presents two assertions — the one, diagnostic, the other restorative — which purport to interpret the entire philosophical enterprise. For one, Whitehead attributes philosophy's « muddles » to the use of language appropriate to one domain for the doctrinal expression of « entirely alien concepts ». And, to submit a « key to metaphysics », the philosopher introduces his own doctrine of « mutual immanence ». [3]

Had Whitehead restricted elucidation of that « key » to its appropriate domain, his interpreter's task would be that of exposition and understanding. An additional complication is present, however, when in his *Adventures of Ideas* Whitehead contends that the discovery (coincident with that of « prime metaphysical import ») can be discerned not solely in his own thought, but also in the intuitive insight of certain theologians of Alexandria and Antioch in the first period of Christian tradition. These, because of the distinctive manner in which they reformulated « being and becoming », are given the notability of having « improved upon Plato ». [4]

Significantly, Whitehead does not offer further specification concerning the identity of the theologians to which he refers. It is quite probable, however, and entirely conceivable that his characterisation alludes to a tradition given formation under Clement (150-213) and Origen (185-254) of Alexandria, including also Lucian of Antioch (d. 312), Athanasius (296-373), the Cappadocian Fathers, perhaps St. Augustine (354-430), and a host of others. Indeed, if such be the advertence, the Antiochene-Alexandrian conversation (which provides background also for the Formula of Chalcedon in 451) might be included in its entirety.

By a certain manner of interpretation, the enterprises of the Antiochene and Alexandrian theologians can be regarded, at least in part, as being motivated by the concern to assess the place of philosophy in the divine economy. That is, in a hellenistic environ-

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[3] Alfred North WHITEHEAD, *Science and Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 126.

[4] A. N. WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 134.

ment, the theological task included an evaluation of the continuity
between the classical philosophical tradition (or some relevant por-
tion of it) and Christian revelation. The immediate problem con-
cerned the status and locus of the God made known through Jesus
Christ. Both Trinitarian and Christological formulation seemed re-
quired to safeguard the religious affirmation basic to both Judaism
and the New Testament, i.e., that the Lord-God is one God, while,
at the same time, providing foundation for the claim that the histo-
rical Jesus is in an essential way united with — and, indeed, in
some sense is — the one God. Origen, for example, attempted to
maintain a balance between a two-fold assertion : a) that the Son
owned an essential and eternal kinship with the Father ; and
b) that the Son as the agent of creation was in some sense subor-
dinate to the Father. The latter contention was stressed against
certain « Monarchianists » who failed to sufficiently distinguish be-
tween Persons in the Godhead, and, taken by itself, becomes the
position assumed by the Arians (i.e. that the Son was created :
hence, « there was when the Son was not ») in the controversy which
focused upon the Council of Nicea in 325. Against this position, as
one might summarize it, Athanasius and others championed an ela-
boration of the balance Origen intended which, against Arianism,
was written into the confessional statement of Nicea : the Son is
of the « same substance with the Father », and « begotten, not
made ».

A second chapter in the controversy, it has been assumed,
follows quickly upon the Nicene declaration. The problem concerns
the relationship between the Father and the Son, but, more speci-
fically and primarily, the relation between the so-designated Second
Person of the Trinity and Jesus of Nazareth. The perspective of
the school of Antioch (which exhibits a certain preference for a
literal reading of the Gospel narratives) was represented in ex-
treme by Nestorius (d. 428) who relegated any communion between
divine and human natures in Christ to *aspect* or *appearance* (and,
therefore, denied that Mary was in fact « theo-tokos »), and, more
moderately, by Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) who disavowed
any form of substantial or ontological union but preserved commo-
nality in terms of will, habit, bearing, direction, etc. The opposing
Alexandrian position (which alternatively allowed an allegorical
reading of Scripture which, in turn, stressed the latent expansion
present in such terms as Logos, Wisdom, Image, et al) is given

expression in extreme by Eutyches (d. 433) who beheld in Jesus but one divine nature, and is present more representatively in Cyril (d. 444) who advocated « one nature, and that incarnate, of the Divine Word ». For Cyril, Jesus is to be referred to as *Word-flesh* rather than *God-man*, the Word itself containing both of the latter characteristics. The settlement in this regard (at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, as prefaced by and based upon *Leo's Tome* of 449) decided neither in favor of the Antiochene « two natures » or the Alexandrian « one nature », but for « one person, two natures » (mirroring the Cappadocians and Tertullian in an attempt to maintain the balance).

> ... Our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in God, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin...

The question has often been considered concerning the extent to which the utilization of Aristotelian motifs by the Antiochene-oriented theologians (as these lend themselves toward literal interpretation and a special stress upon individuality) and Platonic strains by Alexandria (as these seem appropriate to allegory and archetypal reference) served to structure the entire discussion. But in Whitehead's interpretation of this discussion, the dependence of theological formulation upon philosophical orientation is of a more subtle and radical kind. It is his understanding that, though the Antiochenes and Alexandrians declared themselves to be giving expression to the *faith once delivered to the saints*, they were in fact « groping after the solution of a fundamental metaphysical problem. » [5] The contention is, therefore, that irrespective of the theologians' own individual or corporate awareness the mystery involved in understanding the historical Jesus as transcendent Lord (essentially related to God the Father) is of the same order as the metaphysical problem concerning Being and Becoming. Indeed, the identity is so close that the first problem can be discussed and hopefully resolved in terms appropriate to the latter. The problem of Christology is inextricably bound up with the issues of Being

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[5] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas, op. cit.*, p. 171.

and Becoming. Further, Whitehead asserts that the way in which these theologians provided an answer to the perennial problem was of such major philosophic importance as to establish the judgment : « the power of Christianity lies in its revelation in act of that which Plato divined in theory. »[6] The resolution of the metaphysical problem under theological auspices is of prime organic import both to the religious and to the philosophic traditions.

Whitehead establishes correspondence between Being and Becoming and the question of the relation between God and the world which is implied in both Trinitarian and Christological discussion in the following way. In *Process and Reality* we are told that the « true philosophic question is, How can concrete fact exhibit entities abstract from itself and yet participated in by its own nature ? »[7] And, in *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead discloses that the real question being asked by the early theologians was : « How does the Primordial Being, who is the source of the inevitable recurrence of the world towards order, share his nature with the world ? »[8] In some precise way, the post-apostolic reply to the second query constitutes a landmark in the resolution of the prior issue.

In Whitehead's terms, the alliance is created by a believed-shared dissatisfaction with the conception of Being as a realm quite distinct from the realm of Becoming (such that eternality would belong only to the one, and change to the other). Rejecting a radical bifurcation, and fostering an attempt « to base philosophic thought upon the most concrete elements in experience, »[9] Whitehead turns to a basic Aristotelian affirmation (which he calls « the ontological principle ») and defines Being in terms of the existence or being of *actual entities, actual occasions*, the « final real things of which the world is made up. »[10] In short, the Being of actual entities is constituted by its process of Becoming. Being itself is characterized by a process of change. Not only is Becoming dependent upon Being, but each must depend on the other. In this

[6] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 171.
[7] WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 30.
[8] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 134.
[9] WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality*, p. 27.
[10] *Ibid.*

way, Whitehead hopes to escape what he has called « the final platonic problem » : [11] the inclusion of illusion or mere appearance as fundamental metaphysical principles.

The realm of forms (with which Being is not to be equated) is associated rather with what Whitehead calls the *eternal objects*, i.e. the fundamental necessary ingredients of an actuality. The being of an actual entity requires a definiteness which is supplied and determined by the ingression of the eternal objects. Hence, the mode of existence of such ' form of definiteness ' is that of a component of an actual entity. The eternal objects themselves do not undergo a process of change ; yet they determine the definiteness of the process of Becoming of an actual entity. Eternal objects, in other words, « inform » the actualities in the process of Becoming. According to this formulation, Whitehead is able to give an account of how concrete fact can exhibit entities abstract from itself and yet participated in by its own nature.

The second question, the one Whitehead hears the theologians asking, is also given careful treatment. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead calls attention to Plato's final conviction « that the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive one, » [12] and looks upon this as one of the great intellectual discoveries in the history of religion. Basic to this affirmation is the conviction that the whole of activity (the Becoming of actual entities) has as its source a subjective aim. [13] Subjective aim, required from the beginning of process in order to direct the concrescing activity, cannot merely be something generated by that activity, but must derive from some actual entity. In short, Whitehead declares that a certain unique actual entity, i.e. God, is that from which all definiteness is ultimately derivable.

For Whitehead, therefore, God functions metaphysically by providing subjective aims for the ordinary actual entities. This implies that God's subjective aim (as a unique actual entity) is constituted by the complete envisagement of all eternal objects with a view toward their realization in the actualities of the world. God then can be called the « principle of concretion », the « com-

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 526.
[12] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 170.
[13] WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality*, p. 298.

plete conceptual valuation of all potentiality », the « ultimate, basic adjustment of the togetherness of eternal objects on which creative order depends », and the « inevitable recurrence of the world towards order ».

By receiving its subjective aim — which *telos* is constituted by a measured inclusion or exclusion of eternal objects — the actual entity is enabled to come into Being. God's *telos* is the entity's attainment of the highest intensity of experience, or its maximum actualization. But to God also, as the unique actual entity, does such a *telos* apply. That is, God's own purpose, and hence his being, is fulfilled in the « depth of satisfaction » or creative advance of a coordinated world.

Thus, as in the relation between Being and Becoming, God and the world stand together in mutual dependence. Each requires the other as metaphysical necessities. From God each actual entity receives its definiteness in the form of subjective aim ; the Being of God, constituted by the Becoming of every creative act, cannot fully be understood without reference to the world. Under divine persuasion, in that eternal objects 'inform' the actualities in the process of Becoming (as directed by a subjective aim derived from the unique actual entity) : 1) concrete fact is enabled to exhibit entities abstract from itself and yet participated in by its own nature ; and 2) the Primordial Being is enabled to share his nature with the world.

It is by virtue of their ability to correlate these fundamental questions (such that each can be answered in terms of the other) that the Antiochene-Alexandrian theologians become eligible for Whiteheadian praise. Such is implied in the judgment that the power (persuasive, not coercive) of Christianity in its inception lies in its incorporation of the doctrine of *mutual immanence* to replace the earlier dualism between an eminent and derivative reality. By an appeal to the life of Christ as the expression of the relation between God and the world, the Christians were in fact rejecting the Platonic bifurcation between reality and imitation, eternality and change, and were advancing the thesis according to Whitehead that permanence and process become two aspects of one reality, each necessary to the totality and to each other's actuality. Whereas Plato failed to bring God completely into the world, the theologians assumed a mutual immanence between the eternal and the

temporal by finding God in Christ and in the Third Person of the
Trinity. Whitehead, therefore, describes the Trinitarian formula as
the acceptance « of a multiplicity in the nature of God, each com-
ponent being unqualifiedly Divine. » [14]

Though he is unwilling to take responsibility for an account of
the historical and theological details in this regard — the Trinita-
rian and Christological controversies being rather chosen illustra-
tions of his own theory — Whitehead does trace the dominant
features in the development of this important insight. It began, as
we have observed, with Plato's latter years' awareness that the
divine element operates by persuasion rather than by force in the
world. A second phase consisted of the embodiment of this awa-
reness in Jesus of Nazareth and his message of love. The third stage
consisted of the effort of these Greek and Latin post-apostolic
Fathers to combine the Platonic insight with the life of Jesus in a
metaphysical notion of divine immanence. Though the initial insight
was not specifically proposed to illumine the ontological relation
between forms and particulars, the very depth of the combination
achieved by the theologians leads also to clarification of the prior
issue. Thus the background is established from which Whitehead
can assert that the theological statement marked a correction of
a Platonic mistake.

It is not within the basic purpose and scope of this paper to
determine whether or not — and in which areas, if possible — there
is a correspondence, or lack of same, between Whitehead's theo-
ries of God and those of traditional theology. It appears that White-
head himself would feel no compulsion that there be a correlation
or dependence, intent as he is instead to contend against unreflec-
tive supernaturalism (i.e. the assumption that God is wholly unaf-
fected by the world, and/or the sole determinant of the world. [15])
Our concern is rather the manner according to which categorial
schemes are made to relate to proper Christian insights regardless
of the absence or presence of an apologetic attempt on the part of
the author. Clearly, it is not Whitehead's intention to supply a
rational defense or elucidation of the faith. [16] The intriguing con-

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[14] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 172.
[15] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 173.
[16] Some of Whitehead's disciples, however, have attempted just this. See,
for example, Bowman L. CLARKE's, *Relation of Whitehead's Cosmology to the*

tention, however, is that one can provide a metaphysical account for the Trinitarian insight in the precise way which he suggests. This is more than a notation of an illustrative instance of mutual immanence in a preceding era of thought. It also is offered to transcend the mere idea that a possibility exists by which a religious insight might be given a conceptual reference. What is being asserted is that the Christian concern was not only appropriate to but was indeed a metaphysical issue (even in Whitehead's sense of the term), and that the identity between questions concerning 1) the status of the Word-made-flesh, and 2) the relation between Being and Becoming allows a single reply to clarify each. In other words, the theological problem, under differing guise, is an extension of the fundamental philosophic one.

To illustrate the sweeping implications of this assertion, we shall entertain the possibility that Plato had in fact rightly formulated and resolved the basic metaphysical dilemma. According to Whitehead's contention, had Plato been correct, it would have been entirely proper to equate God with the eminent reality which stands « over-against an entirely fluent world ». [17] The impropriety is not that the adequation violates the relationship, but that Plato himself was wrongly oriented to the problem of Being and Becoming. His was a mistaken notion (at least in earlier years) of the relation between the eminent reality and the world. In the same fashion, had Plato been correct, it would have been equally fitting (from a Christian's subsequent perspective) to place Christ in some mediating capacity between forms and particulars, perhaps as the agent in participation. Again, this is in fact objectionable, not on metaphysical or religious grounds as such, but solely because Plato was not accurate in describing the potential category. Had Plato been correct, then the Christian theologians could have given sup-

Christian Drama, in the *Journal of Religion* (July, 1959). Here, under Whitehead's ' dramatic structure of creativity ', the Christian understanding of the preexistent Christ is said to correspond with the « phase of conceptual origination, deficient in actuality, infinite in its adjustment of valuation », and the Holy Spirit is correlated with « perfected actuality as it passes back into the temporal world ». See also the Christological discussions of L. S. THORNTON, for example, his *The Form of a Servant*, in which process philosophy is used to renew a discussion concerning the status of Jesus' miracles.

[17] WHITEHEAD, *Process and Reality*, p. 526.

port to the Arian solution (which defined the Son, derivatively and subordinately, as being of mere « *like* substance with the Father ») of the Trinitarian problem. The basic rejection of this « orthodox Platonism but heterodox Christianity » [18] is established on grounds neither of doctrinal error nor of unjustifiable methodological procedure, but in that it propounds a metaphysical mistake. And this, Whitehead clarifies, is fundamental to the Nicene and Chalcedonian selection of a more suitable schematic foundation.

The conviction is presented, i.e., that God is first of all to be named and characterized according to his position and function within the categorial scheme. And its corollary follows, i.e., that the methodological procedure which calls « eminent reality » that which in fact is not the Primordial Being to whom honor is due invalidates itself. It is not a case of recognizing the presence or « awareness » of 'God', then seeking means of description. Rather, it is in the construction of a categorial scheme, issuing from a fundamental approach to Being and Becoming, that a status is assigned by which God is appropriately characterized. God, *ex hypothesi*, is equated with the eminent reality, characterization of which is dependent upon a recognition of his appropriate purpose and activity within the process of coalescence of permanence and change. This, in turn, is based upon an understanding of « the nature of things ».

These create the possibility in principle that, had Whitehead himself propounded a metaphysical mistake, a more accurate position might possess the ability — and, significantly, via an improvement upon Whitehead — to alter the activity and/or function of God. If it should have occurred that a strict Parmenidean, for example, or a Neoplatonist had more accurately formulated the relation of Being and Becoming, then, if one desires something other than a strictly-mythological deity, God must necessarily as eminent reality be equated with the One — just as surely as process philosophy utilizes God as the principle which regulates the flow. Further, the ability to equate God with the regulative principle depends upon the *reality*, and not mere *appearance*, of *change*. If change becomes the sole reality, such that there is nothing of permanence or order — or even a process itself — within change, then God — or « the gods » (if, indeed, there be such) — can be known primarily according to the quality of being unknowable or

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[18] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 172.

capricious. Knowledge of God seems to be dependent upon the recognition of order, therefore, and usually is based upon modifications of the following possibilities : 1) that God is to be equated with the order itself (if this be conceived as the eminent reality) ; 2) that God be equated with the principle of order if change is also considered real.

When the two possibilities are conjoined (as they are in Whitehead's doctrine of Becoming), it becomes more than slightly opportune also for Christian theology to name the adequation with the one « Father », and with the other « Son », while affirming that these two (together with the Holy Ghost) are co-eternal and consubstantial — as the Trinitarians were wont to do. This accounts in large for Whitehead's appreciation of the Antiochene-Alexandrian thinkers : he possesses a remarkable degree of commonality with them on the basis of fundamental insight. But, whereas for Whitehead, primary significance is accorded the discovery of the insight and not its application, the theologians would insist that, apart from an illumination of the basic metaphysical problem (occurring simultaneously, perhaps incidentally), their chief concern was to adequately describe Jesus of Nazareth and his relationship with God the Father.

Whitehead, therefore, might consider the enterprise valid (even from a theological perspective) to the extent that it conforms to the possibilities present to it by the economy of a controlling system. The theologians themselves would hope that the basic conformity might rather be with the *faith delivered to the saints*. Whitehead is well able to translate, then utilize, the significance of the insight, but without metaphysical compulsion to retain the creedal application of that insight, or, for that matter, the theologians themselves. His commitment is to the validity of the insight (i.e. that *mutual immanence* is the key to the reformulation and resolution of Being and Becoming, and describes the way in which the Primordial Being is conceived to share his nature with the world), and not to the insight itself. Admittedly, the criterion for the latter must be established an other than methodological grounds.

II

The preceding analysis has been offered as an illustration of a

way in which the categories of Being and Becoming might be con-
ceived to have been implicated during the confessional epoch of
Christian history to effect the transformation of a cherished body
of revelatory truth into a definite pattern of ordered statements.
The thought of Alfred North Whitehead has been kept in chief
focus not only because of the significance of his own interpretations
of the background of Nicea and Chalcedon, but also in that his
own contemporaneity does not destroy his philosophical rootage in
the classical past. What has been suggested is that theological con-
struction issues from the appropriateness of the utilization of con-
ceptual schemes for the transposition of religious affirmations into
systematic presentations. It is Whitehead's contention that a basis
of correspondence between the questions concerning the relation
of Being and Becoming and God and the world can be created in
that what is of prime organic import to the former is also funda-
mental to the latter. In addition, Whitehead's assertion possesses
the remarkable ability to locate the methodological place and
function of God in the categorial pattern : God is conceived to be
the eminent reality either as equated with Being or with the Prin-
ciple of Regulation in the event that reality is also attributed to
Change. But this appelation — as the interpretation of Whitehead
illustrates — does not itself require the inclusion of any additional
descriptive content which cannot also be established on the basis
of systematic self-definition.

    And, yet, Whitehead's analysis, if taken as an exhaustive
account, suffers from a certain short-sightedness. From a methodo-
logical perspective, it is to its credit to have noted the remarkable
dependence of « God and the world » upon « Being and Beco-
ming » in theology's employment of philosophical patterns for the
systematic expression of religious affirmations. But there is greater
flexibility in that dependence than Whitehead's instructive com-
ments would indicate. It is clear that as theologians, and, yet more
fundamentally, as Christians, the framers of the Nicene and Chal-
cedonian formulae own primary commitment to the faith of the
primitive tradition, apparently — at least on this basis — irrespec-
tive of its continuity with reigning philosophical schemes. In prin-
ciple, therefore, the advocate of a Trinitarian or one-person-two-
natures Christological position need not repudiate Platonism or
Aristotelianism simply on grounds that these provide inadequate
correlates for the Christian understanding or God or Christ, but he

must *on the basis of religious commitment* reject any Arian-oriented
explanation which subordinates the deity of the Son to the Father.
When the systematic expression of that confession is undertaken,
a certain fittingness for its association with a particular philosophi-
cal orientation is apparent. In the same way, the confession con-
tains a disposition which would render another particular philoso-
phical orientation unuseful. The systematic expression of the re-
lation between God and the world is indeed dependent upon the
categories already implicit in the formative relation between Being
and Becoming. But the double dependencies — 1) of systematic
theological expression upon a conception of the relation of God
and the world, and 2) of the conception of the relation of God and
the world upon the relation of Being and Becoming — need not in
themselves demand a simple identification of each aspect of these
two fundamental relations. A melody can be the same, even as it
proceeds from the respective keys of Being and Becoming and God
and the world.

But the melody cannot be the same unless a close relationship
exists between keys. It is at this methodological juncture that a
variety of interpretations is in order : 1) that any correspondence
between the systematic presentation of the primitive faith and pre-
vailing metaphysical orientations is a matter of utility, convenience,
transitional courtesy, rather than by assertion or intention ; 2) that
the evident correspondence is intended to illumine in « both direc-
tions », the categories having been provided by a specific philo-
sophic perspective upon which the doctrines themselves systemati-
cally depend ; and 3) that the intentional correspondence is to a
conceptual scheme which itself admits, or asserts, the possibility of
additional bases of correspondence with other philosophical orien-
tations. If the correspondence be of the first type, then religious
affirmations cannot depend upon the philosophical orientation with
which they are associated for confirmation or support, but must
provide their own substantiation or receive undergirding by the
authority of the Church, Holy Scripture, or through a potential
correspondence to some other-than-philosophic mode of human
experience. The second, which, with Whitehead, would understand
the Nicene and Chalcedonian rejections of Arianism and Eutychia-
nism on the basis of a recognition of metaphysical errors, esta-
blishes the context wherein religious affirmations achieve a kind

of confirmation and fixes criteria according to which they are
judged. It is quite likely that the strength and durability of the
emergent Patristic theology of the early centuries is based upon its
implication of the first alternative, its provision for the domination
of the second, and its inheritance of the flexibilities of the third.
As the philosopher suggested : « what Plato divined in theory,
Christianity revealed... », but not simply « in act. » [19]

That is, there is a specific mode of distinction between theolo-
gical formalization and the classical philosophical systems. Certainly
Christian commitment required the choice of a « theory of illumi-
nation », for example, over the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence.
Additional epistemological adjustments were implicit in the accep-
tance of the necessity of « auctoritas ». Even the opposition be-
tween the avowal of the Resurrection of the body and the immor-
tality of a soul rescued from the imperfections of the corporeal, as
well as that between the affirmation of the significance of old and
new creations (neither accidental nor trivial, but novel) and a neo-
Platonic theory of emanation, will be reflected in both the content
and structure of Christian theology. The Christian appeal to grace
as the « inexhaustible source of power for the apprehension of
truth and the realization of the good » [20] as well as the attribution
of evil not to the domination of a passional nature over a higher
one but to rational choice are additional examples of Christian
distinctiveness. And yet, beyond these examples is a specific prin-
ciple which creates a disposition toward a particular reflective order
which can be compared and contrasted with alternative philosophi-
cal orientations.

The pattern of Christian theological formulation is so conceived
as to safeguard the integrity of the created order in its dependence
upon the divine. This implies that the relation between God and
the world will be shaped according to specific affirmations which
are implicit in the primitive faith. As Augustine knew, the formal
and systematic presentation of the faith must find some means of
including the several necessary affirmations concerning the relation
between God and the world which the total and accurate account
requires. God is alone good, and, yet, in a certain sense, the world

[19] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 171.
[20] Etienne GILSON, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Scribner's, 1940), p. 284.

is also good. While the goodness of the created order is dependent upon its rightful reference to the divine, there is an additional sense in which the created order must be regarded as the possessor of an inherent goodness. The status of the world is derivative and conditioned, and yet the dependence of the created upon the divine does not spoil, nullify, nor in any way qualify its intrinsic reality. In one sense God is alone real. In another sense, God is alone real *and* the world is also real and good. This necessary *asymmetrical* relation between God and the world will appear in the formulation of the Christian doctrine of *creation*, and, as Whitehead seems to have been aware, it is also implicit in the conception of the relation between divine and human in *Christological* doctrine. In each instance, however, religious affirmations which are implicit in the primitive faith are not only safeguarded by means of the asymmetrical relation but also serve to fashion the conceptual scheme which is required by a systematic presentation.

The uniqueness of the theological system or « synthesis » which had taken its characteristic form by the time of the conclusion of the efforts of St. Augustine can be referred to the joining of the asymmetrical relation between God and the world (as prescribed by the Christian doctrine of creation) to the philosophical problem of Being and Becoming. Not only does this provide the context for a correspondence between tradition-become-authority and metaphysical perspective ; now the question « how behind the changing multiplicity of phenomena is a unitary and abiding Being to be thought ? » is amenable to correlation with the affirmation that the unchanging Being whose « essence knoweth and willeth unchangeably »[21] is both « the Trinity, my God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit »[22] and « that than which nothing greater can be conceived. »[23] The relation between Being and Becoming and the relation between God and the world are thus inextricably bound up with each other. Hence, the dialectic implicit in the prior relation also contributes a certain dynamism to the conceptual expression of the relation between the divine and the human. That is, if the relation between Being and Becoming provides the conceptual

[21] AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, XVI, 19.
[22] AUGUSTINE, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 7.
[23] AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, XIII, 6.

structure — and by adequation, not simply by analogy — then theology (as formal systematisation) must be shaped according to the finite number of schemes according to which that relation may be expressed. The form of the relation of Being and Becoming which can be utilized by systematic theological expression is one which honors the fundamental asymmetry which the Christian doctrine of creation prescribes. But asymmetry is itself a relation whose description requires a number of distinct starting points. No one consistent formulation possesses the ability to completely or adequately describe the manifold dependencies which the systematic expression of the relation between God and the world demands. In some more precise sense, the observation of Whitehead is true : « When Augustine died at Hippo in the year 430, the religion of the European races was in its main outlines settled. All its capacities for variant forms were already inherent in it. » [24]

One might venture a further suggestion that, given the dialectic which asymmetry seems to imply, the appearance of alternative systematic approaches within the Christian theological tradition is a kind of logical requirement. Some might, for example, be better equipped to save the humanity in the relationship ; others are peculiarly disposed toward emphasis upon the divinity ; some are better able than others to give expression to the many facets of asymmetry within their own confines. But the total picture will itself require a kind of rhythmic balance. as well as the inclusion of the major stresses of particular approaches. This is ably illustrated by the Nicene and Chalcedonian discussions.

The theological ordering of religious affirmations is, indeed, dependent upon philosophical structures, and, in the Christian tradition, the relations of *Being and Becoming* and *God and the world* have been joined in a highly complex way. The particular pattern to which religious affirmations have been referred has been created by the requirement that the Being-Becoming polarity be structured according to the asymmetrical relationship which is conceived between God and the world. The relation between the divine and the human in Christian theological formulation can conceivably be given Whitehead's term « mutual immanence » if that designation not only, in his terms, « brings God into the world » but also insures that the mutual dependence it implies will be fashioned

[24] WHITEHEAD, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 168.

according to the requirements of the asymmetry which the Christian doctrine of creation prescribes. But the adaptation of « mutual immanence » need not entail that the mode of relation between Being and Becoming and God and the world be conceived in the precise way that Whitehead depicts it. That is, the suitability of a term like « mutual immanence » to describe the asymmetrically-fashioned relation between divine and human need not depend upon the references which are supplied for that term in process philosophy. From a theological perspective, the same desire for systematic expression which had earlier associated the relation between God and the world with various classical patterns of Being and Becoming would also admit a theological association with the philosophical process orientation which Whitehead develops. But the possibility of that association would once again depend upon the ability of that philosophical orientation to honor the religious commitments which are implicit in the Christian confession. In other words, the likelihood is that such an attempted « synthesis » would require the same procedures of alteration and re-creation which the Christian formulation of asymmetry between the divine and the human had earlier required of other Being-Becoming orientations. The similarities between « asymmetry » and « mutual immanence » — indeed, Whitehead suggests mutual immanence as a form of asymmetry — would indicate the possibility that process philosophy could be utilized for systematic theological expression. And, yet, the evident difficulty in that philosophy's candidacy is its predilection to condition the Eminent Reality by time. Not only is the Christian form of asymmetry hesitant to admit that sort of condition ; it is also diametrically opposed to giving it the kind of prominence which Whitehead demands of it.

Christian theology has referred the relation of God and the world to the philosophic relation of Being and Becoming ; and yet, that association cannot rightly be described unless one employs and amplifies the distinction between *structure* and *content*. Being and Becoming provides the structure by which the systematic expression of the relation between God and the world is expressed. But, in its regulative, and, in a certain sense, constitutive, capacity, Being and Becoming is more than structure. And, yet, its being more than structure does not require a simple « *contentual* » identification of its determinative poles with the determinative poles of the God-

world relation. Whitehead rightly noted that the association of the primitive faith with the Being-Becoming scheme introduced it also to a fundamental philosophical issue. But there is a difference between the resolution of a logical problem and intentional metaphysical construction. God can be given the place of « eminent reality » without incorporating all that that appropriate designation brings with it from the philosophical orientation to which adaptation has occurred. In the same way, the equating of God with « eminent reality » in the Being-Becoming scheme might and often has demanded that what is included under that designation be altered or rejected by virtue of the content which Christian revelation implies or ascribes. The association between philosophic pattern and religious affirmations is not simply identical with that between *structure* and *content*. The point of correlation between the two is provided rather by the asymmetrical relation which is demanded of the philosophical pattern by the disposition created for it in the religious commitment. It is therefore the *form* according to which the respective relations of Being and Becoming and God and the world is determined which provides the basis of fundamental correspondence between altered classical philosophical orientations and the ordered expression of the Christian faith. There are similarities in structure which transcend identities in content. By virtue of the identical form of asymmetry, the respective keys of Being and Becoming and God and the world can proceed according to the same rhythm. And the harmony which results is not strictly equivalent to an identity in the content which proceeds from those two formative keys.

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