

God and the World: Sharing a Common Space?

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Jozef Zycinski, Archbishop of Lublin, Poland, with a double doctorate in theology and the philosophy of nature, is the author of a recent book in religion and science which was translated into English as *God and Evolution*.¹ In the introduction he makes the following programmatic statement:

In the still-popular attempts to find a Christian evolutionism, we most often find either appeal to St. Augustine's concept of *rationes seminales* or indications of the moments in which God had to resort to extraordinary interventions in order to introduce new qualities into nature. In the view proposed in this work . . . we will get, not a view of evolution in which the central role will be the classical concept of "plan," "project," and "order," but one in which God, participating in a cosmic *kenosis*, draws to Himself an evolving world, acting as a "Divine Attractor" in situations of chaos, bifurcation, and lack of explicit determination.²

While the terminology which Zycinski here employs is not quite the same as that used by Alfred North Whitehead in his major work *Process and Reality*, the vision of God as working in and through the evolutionary processes of nature rather than contravening those processes or temporarily suspending their normal operation is remarkably the same for both men. Accordingly, I will first provide a rapid overview of Zycinski's and Whitehead's world views and then

1. Jozef Zycinski, *God and Evolution: Fundamental Questions of Christian Evolutionism*, trans. Kenneth W. Kemp and Zuzanna Maslanka (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

2. *Ibid*, 5-6.

compare the results with my own Neo-Whiteheadian vision of the God-world relationship in which the three divine persons of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and all their creatures share a common space in which they can all be themselves and yet remain closely linked to one another as co-existing subjects of experience.

In Part One of his book Zycinski first takes note of Darwin's own ambivalent feelings about the role of Divine Providence in the process of evolution and then indicates how as a result two highly polarized views about the role of God in evolution came to center stage in the years following Darwin's death: on the one hand, Christian fundamentalism which argues that belief in evolution is incompatible with Biblical revelation; on the other hand, scientific fundamentalism which argues that belief in evolution logically precludes belief in God and the reality of the supernatural ("Nature is all there is"). Zycinski ends Part One with appeal to statements of Pope John Paul II and others about the need for "creative dialogue between contemporary biology and a theology free from fundamentalist distortions."³

In Part Two, Zycinski takes on several key issues in the understanding of evolution from both a scientific and religiously oriented perspective. He distinguishes carefully, for example, between methodological naturalism and ontological naturalism. Methodological naturalism only claims that scientific theories should make no appeal to divine intervention or other "non-physical" factors in the explanation of empirical data.⁴ Ontological naturalism flatly denies the existence of God and the reality of the supernatural.⁵ Zycinski also distinguishes between teleology and purposiveness within Nature. Teleology, as set forth in classical metaphysics,

3. Ibid., 74.

4. Ibid., 79-82.

5. Ibid., 81. Zycinski is citing here John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder, CO:

presupposes a conscious agent working toward a predetermined end; it thereby stands in opposition to the laws of “matter-in-motion” formulated by Galileo and Newton at the beginning of the modern era.⁶ But teleology is not the same as the purposiveness exhibited by Nature on a broader scale (e.g., within systems that exhibit not only moment-by-moment interactions between their parts or members but long-term development toward an end or goal not yet fully specified).⁷ What is ultimately at stake here is how one understands the term “laws of nature.” Are laws of nature simply observed regularities, or are they based on statistical laws of probability in which state A, to be sure, imposes with physical necessity state B, but only if and when it excludes at the same time the occurrence of states C, D, and E.⁸ Zycinski’s conclusion is that in many cases a physical process can be adequately described only in terms of both deterministic and teleological considerations.

Especially within non-linear thermodynamic systems, the classical distinction between order and chaos becomes more complicated: “States to which a thermodynamic system tends are often called *attractors*, since it is possible to say that, in a certain sense, they draw the evolution of the system to themselves, locally defining its directedness.”⁹ Zycinski will later describe God in the person of Christ as the Divine Attractor. But here he focuses on purely natural factors within a non-linear thermodynamic system which move the system as a whole unexpectedly in one direction rather than another. “Part of the energy which was previously used for incoherent thermic motions comes now to be used for the organization of the whole.”¹⁰ Order is emerging

Westview Press, 2000), 63-64.

6. Zycinski, *God and Evolution*, 98.

7. *Ibid.*, 111.

8. *Ibid.*, 115.

9. Zycinski, *God and Evolution*, 133.

10. *Ibid.*, 135.

out of apparent chaos in virtue of the inherent dynamism of a non-linear system far from equilibrium or a so-called “dissipative structure.” In principle, then, the movement from non-life to life within Nature can conceivably take place through the operation of purely physical laws, some of which are deterministic in character and others only probabilistic.¹¹

In Part Three of his book Zycinski sets forth different ways in which God may be conceived in relation to the world of creation. Scripture (the Hebrew and Christian Bible) proclaims that the glory of God is to be found in the works of Nature. In both the Middle Ages and the early modern period of Western civilization, God was conceived as the Creator and Sustainer of the laws of Nature. But, as Zycinski points out, this presupposes that the laws of Nature are deterministic, not probabilistic. What happens by chance is clearly a threat to divine omnipotence unless it can be explained as a miracle or some other form of divine intervention into the workings of Nature.¹² Yet, given new scientific understanding of indeterminacy at the quantum level and of stochastic processes bringing order out of apparent chaos at higher levels of organization within Nature, a new understanding of God’s activity within Nature seems to be required: “God is no longer an absolute ruler, forcing a necessary scenario on an evolving nature, but is one of the factors influencing the process of evolutionary transformations.”¹³ For Zycinski, accordingly, God must be immanent within creation as well as transcendent of it. But how is this to be imagined?

Zycinski indicates that he favors panentheism, the belief that creation exists within God but remains distinct from God in its own mode of existence and activity. Zycinski finds

11. *Ibid.*, 137.

12. *Ibid.*, 152.

13. *Ibid.*, 157.

precedent for this view in the writings of the late Medieval thinker Nicholas of Cusa. According to Cusa, the created world with its limited set of possibilities represents a “contraction” of the absolute potentiality of God. Thus God “is the Beginning in which ‘everything that in any way either exists or can exist is enfolded. . . And whatever has been created or will be created is unfolded [or extricated] from Him, in whom it is enfolded.’”¹⁴ Zycinski also makes reference to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and other process-oriented contemporary thinkers such as John V. Taylor, Bernard Meland and Arthur Peacocke in arguing for panentheism as a suitable contemporary model of the God-world relationship.

Yet, if God is truly immanent within the evolutionary process, why does that process involve so many dead-ends and so much pain and suffering along the way? Zycinski’s answer is initially philosophical. Human beings and other higher-order animal species are sensitive to pain and suffering because they have finely tuned nervous systems capable of great joy as well as great suffering.¹⁵ Likewise, in a finite world not all values can be simultaneously or perhaps even successively realized. Such inevitable limitations can also be a source of disappointment and pain to those forced to make hard choices. In the end, however, Zycinski appeals to divine revelation. God’s involvement in the cosmic process is marked by *kenosis*, the self-emptying of God as exhibited by Jesus in his willingness to suffer and die a painful death for the sake of his human brothers and sisters. Likewise, there is the *kenosis* of the Holy Spirit who keeps alive in human minds and hearts the hope of a brighter tomorrow amid disappointments keenly felt today.¹⁶ Thus the *kenosis* of God within the evolutionary process “gives a new dimension to

14. Ibid., 174.

15. Ibid., 183.

16. Ibid., 187-88, 191.

reflection on the cosmic meaning of suffering. The pain does not, thereby, become less, but it receives a radically different meaning.”¹⁷

Finally, in Part Four of his book, Zycinski reflects on the role of human beings within the cosmic process. The distinctiveness of the human species among the primates is to be found more in cultural differences than in genetics: e.g., “the aesthetic sense, abstract thought, creative language, and the moral sense.”¹⁸ Zycinski is critical of Christian fundamentalists who fear any linkage of the human species with chimpanzees and other primate species. But he also critiques scientists within the field of sociobiology who interpret evolution so deterministically as to exclude all reference to the spiritual dimension of human life and the activity of God within the evolutionary process.¹⁹ He concludes: “There are no substantive reasons for placing sociobiology and the Christian view of the world in opposition to one another. But our religious beliefs and our altruism could have genetic foundations without ceasing to express genuine truths and free moral choices.”²⁰

In a concluding chapter, Zycinski reviews the Biblical account of original sin and sees it as descriptive of an important stage in the moral development of the human species. On the one hand, the fall of humankind from its original moral innocence was a step forward in that human beings were forced to take responsibility for their free choices. But, on the other hand, the fall closed off an avenue of cultural development in which human beings could have used their freedom more sensibly.²¹ The role of Jesus in the world as it presently exists, accordingly, is to be the Divine Attractor, drawing human beings to make free choices more in accord with their

17. *Ibid.*, 194.

18. *Ibid.*, 199.

19. *Ibid.*, 211.

deeper instincts and desires, even though these same choices do not always confer immediate benefits in the struggle for existence. Guidelines for such free choices are to be found in the Beatitudes first proclaimed by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount and then exemplified in his passion and death on the cross.²² God thus offers human beings not a detailed master plan but a vision for the future, a new directionality for the ongoing evolution of the universe.

Throughout *God and Evolution*, Zycinski makes frequent references to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. He notes with appreciation, for example, Whitehead's resistance to strict determinism in the interpretation of the laws of Nature, his description of God as "the subtle Poet of the world, who directs an evolving nature toward His ideals of beauty and goodness,"²³ his prioritizing of future potentiality over current actuality, finally Whitehead's conviction that God works in the world through persuasion, not coercion. But, as noted above, Zycinski does not systematically adopt for his own use Whitehead's metaphysical scheme or that of any other contemporary philosopher or theologian. Yet there are problems of consistency with this eclectic approach. For example, if, as Whitehead claims, God works with creatures through persuasion, not coercion, then logically one should likewise affirm with Whitehead that "the final real things of which the world is made up" are actual entities, momentary self-constituting subjects of experience.²⁴ For only subjects of experience, not things, can be subject to divine persuasion in the form of "divine initial aims."²⁵

So, I will take up where Zycinski left off. That is, I will use Whitehead's basic meta-

20. Ibid., 214.

21. Ibid., 237.

22. Ibid., 242.

23. Ibid., 163.

24. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Corrected Edition, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 18.

physical scheme, albeit in a somewhat modified form to be explained below, to fill out what Zycinski seems to have had in mind with his presentation of God and evolution or Christian evolutionism. As already noted, Whitehead's philosophical starting-point was that not objects or things but momentary self-constituting subjects of experience are the ultimate units, the building-blocks, of physical reality. But why would he say that? After all, looking around the world we live in, we see things, some living but many others non-living. We do not see so-called subjects of experience that come into and pass out of existence with the rapidity of Christmas tree lights blinking on and off. As he explains in *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead was convinced that early modern science, fascinated by the obvious success of the mathematical theories of Galileo and Newton, had prematurely abandoned the notion of formal and final causality which Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas employed for study of the world of Nature. Instead they focused almost exclusively on material and efficient causality within Nature understood as "matter-in-motion." But, philosophically speaking, this new approach to science reduced physical reality to a cosmic machine with inert, purely mechanical parts.²⁶

To counter this "fallacy of misplaced concreteness,"²⁷ whereby one prioritized abstract mathematical formulae over the clear data of the senses telling us that Nature is alive, not dead, Whitehead postulated that the ultimate units of reality are not inert bits of matter (atoms) with purely mechanical or external relations to one another, but mini-organisms, momentary self-constituting subjects of experience able to sense what is going on around them in the environ-

25. Ibid., 244.

26. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 39-55.

27. Ibid, 50-51.

ment and to respond to it in a minimally self-creative way.²⁸ Equivalently, Whitehead was saying that physical reality is constituted by psychic events, or better yet quasi-mental processes, ever-changing systems of psychic events, with internal dynamic relations to one another. In Whitehead's own words, "nature is a structure of evolving processes," and "space-time is nothing else than a system of pulling together of assemblages [of these mini-organisms or momentary subjects of experience] into unities."²⁹

Precisely at this point in his exposition, however, Whitehead in my judgment faltered. He was apparently so enamored with his own insight into momentary self-constituting subjects of experience or actual entities as the basic components of physical reality that he never seriously asked himself about the deeper reality of their ongoing "assemblage" into a system or, in his words, a "society." For, if their component parts, these momentary subjects of experience cease to exist almost as soon as they come into being, does their assemblage into a system or "society" itself have any enduring value, any significance beyond the present moment? Is it too simply an event, a thing of the moment, destined to be replaced by still another "society" with new component parts in the next moment of the cosmic process? Predictably, Whitehead's answer was that a society or assemblage of mini-organisms must have a lasting character or enduring structure if it is to endure over time and extend through space.³⁰ But does his explanation of how this happens stand up to close scrutiny?

In his master work *Process and Reality*, for example, Whitehead offers this explanation for the origin and continued existence of "societies":

28. Ibid., 36, 79.

29. Ibid., 72.

30. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 204.

A nexus [assemblage of momentary subjects of experience] enjoys ‘social order’ [is a society] where (i) there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of its included actual entities [subjects of experience], and (ii) this common element of form arises in each member of the nexus by reason of the conditions imposed upon it by its prehensions [mental grasping] of some other members of the nexus, and (iii) these prehensions impose that condition of reproduction by reason of their inclusion of positive feelings of that common form.³¹

In more common sense language, Whitehead is saying that a “society” comes into being when a group of actual entities, momentary subjects of experience, that are physically near one another find themselves with almost the same pattern of existence and activity as a result of their individual processes of self-constitution. Equivalently, they feel their affinity with one another and bond together so as to constitute something bigger than themselves as individuals, namely, a society or assemblage of such actual entities. Furthermore, these “societies” correspond to what we human beings in common sense experience call people and things.

Thus you and I and everything else in this world are what we are because our constituent parts as momentary self-constituting subjects of experience feel their affinity with one another from moment to moment and bond together to make us up as this person or thing rather some other person or some other thing. This may seem a bizarre idea until one recalls that the human body is made up of cells, the cells are made up of molecules, the molecules of atoms, and the atoms of subatomic particles. So, no matter how you analyze it, human beings (and all other physical realities) are made up of multiple interconnected parts. All that Whitehead is claiming

31. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 34.

is that each of the parts, even the smallest like subatomic particles, is a subject of experience. Thus psyche or mentality has always been present within creation and in virtue of the evolutionary process simply became more complex or tightly organized.

But, to return to Whitehead's description of a "society" as a nexus or assemblage of actual entities with a "common element of form," what still remains unclear is whether that common element of form is nothing more than a simplification or a logical abstraction from all the analogous but still different patterns of self-constitutions within the component actual entities or whether the form is something new and different, pertaining to the society as a unitary reality, which heavily conditions the pattern of self-constitution for all subsequent actual entities thus grouped together. In simpler terms, do the parts by their ongoing interaction determine what is meant by the whole or does the whole in the end determine the meaning and interconnection of the parts? In many ways, this is inevitably a "both-and" or "chicken and egg" situation. There has to be reciprocal interaction between the parts and the whole at all times. But logically, if the parts determine the pattern for the whole, then the "society" in the final analysis is nothing but an aggregate of similarly constituted individual actual entities. The society has no ontological significance as an entity in its own right with a pattern of existence proper to itself. On the contrary, if the whole heavily conditions the self-constitution of the parts in the next moment of their co-existence, then that whole, the society as such, must be a new kind of reality, something other than simply an aggregate of component parts.

Whitehead may very well have grasped this problem but quite possibly was baffled how to solve it. For, if he called the society a "substance" and the component actual entities its "accidents," then he was once again involved in a substance- or thing-oriented metaphysics,

precisely what he wanted to avoid. But, if a Whiteheadian society is not simply an aggregate of actual entities as component parts and is not a substance or thing in the classical sense, what is it? For many years now, I have argued that a Whiteheadian society is an enduring field of activity or environment for the ongoing succession of actual entities as its component parts or members. By their dynamic interrelation at every moment, these transient subjects of experience give new structure and meaning to this field in which they come into being and momentarily exist. But, when they expire, go out of existence, they leave the field with its current structure intact for the next actual entity or the next set of actual entities in the case of a so-called “corpuscular” society which has spatial as well as temporal dimensions.

This may seem to be a fine point of Whiteheadian scholarship, something to be debated only by scholars, not by people like yourselves only marginally acquainted with Whitehead’s thought. But, as a matter of fact, this field-oriented approach to Whiteheadian societies has tremendous value for better understanding the God-world relationship, in particular, for reinforcing the notion of panentheism as the preferred model for the God-world relationship, something which Zycinski himself proposes. For it implicitly claims that subjects of experience in dynamic relation with one another co-create a common space for their interaction. In this way, they all share a common world; yet each subject of experience retains its independence, its personal space, even as it contributes with every other subject of experience to the co-creation of a common space, a community for their life together.

Because Whitehead himself did not think along these lines, he had trouble explaining the God-world relationship. In *Process and Reality*, for example, he conceived God as the counter-

part to the world within the cosmic process.³² But this seems to make God almost as much a “creature” or product of the cosmic process as all of us. His most celebrated disciple, Charles Hartshorne, tried to improve upon Whitehead’s scheme by saying that God is the “soul” of the world and the world is the “body” of God.³³ But this model or metaphor for the God-world relationship also has its problems. The relationship between God and the world then seems to be too tight. God needs our world, or at least some world, to exist so as to be God, the soul of the world. Likewise, within this scheme we creatures seem to be nothing more than God’s body-parts. Our only value is to contribute to the ongoing life of God. We have no reality proper to ourselves as finite subjects of experience able to make our self-constituting decisions.

But, if we think of Whiteheadian societies as enduring structured fields of activity or environments for all the myriad subjects of experience in existence at any given moment, then the God-world relationship takes on a dramatically new look, something much more appropriate for the notion of panentheism, the idea that everything and everyone exists in God and yet exists in and for itself at the same time. Allow me to explain. We can begin by thinking of God in Trinitarian terms as a community of three divine persons who from all eternity have shared a common space, structuring that infinite field of activity by their ongoing relations to one another. Then we can think of ourselves and all other creatures in this world as likewise co-constituting a common space for our existence with one another even as each of us retains a space proper to ourselves as a highly complex “society” of actual entities at any given moment. Finally, we think of creation in its entirety as a set of coordinated and hierarchically ordered fields of activity

32. Ibid, 348.

33. See Charles Hartshorne, “The Compound Individual,” in *Philosophical Essays for Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. F. S. C. Northrup (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936), 193-220, especially 218-20.

which come into being and always remain within the infinite field of activity proper to the three divine persons. There we have it. We exist in God's world and God exists in our world, but God remains God and we remain ourselves as finite subjects of experience who exist in virtue of their own self-constituting decisions. We need the power of God, to be sure, to make those decisions; but in the end they are ours, not God's.

In previous publications I have laid out the various details of this panentheistic model for the God-world relationship.³⁴ I would like to focus on just two points which in my judgment are key to converting Whitehead's metaphysics into a more credible version of Christian panentheism. Whitehead, after all, was a philosopher, not a theologian. Hence, he did not deal with classical Christian beliefs such as creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) or with eschatology, specifically life after death, resurrection of the body and the end of the world. Those who initially saw the value of Whitehead's metaphysics for a contemporary understanding of Christian doctrine were for the most part liberal Protestants, many of whom for different reasons were already conditioned to significantly modify or drop altogether adherence to these traditional Christian doctrines. What resulted, however, was that more conservatively oriented Protestants and most Roman Catholic theologians to this day have remained suspicious of "process theology" as bordering on heresy. Hence, if a field-oriented approach to Whiteheadian societies can rationally explain or justify traditional Christian belief in creation out of nothing, resurrection of the body and the recapitulation of all things in Christ within the context of Whitehead's metaphysics, then a major obstacle has been removed for a much broader acceptance of process

34. See, e.g., Joseph A. Bracken, *The One in the Many: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the God-World Relationship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); *Christianity and Process Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006), and most recently *Subjectivity, Objectivity and Intersubjectivity: A New Paradigm for*

theology in mainstream Christian circles.

To begin, then, Christian belief in *creatio ex nihilo* should be fairly easy to explain within this field-oriented understanding of the God-world relationship. For, if as noted above, the three divine persons of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity are interrelated subjects of experience, then they have a common field of activity for their ongoing interaction with one another. Since they are infinite in the scope of their existence and activity, the field which they co-constitute is likewise infinite or all-embracing. If so, then by a free decision on their part, the divine persons could choose to bring into being the world of creation as an extremely large but still finite field of activity within their own divine field of activity. Nothing other than God, after all, can exist outside of God as an infinite being. Yet this does not mean that the world of creation has no reality apart from God. For, as noted above, every society of actual entities or momentary subjects of experience has its own field of activity, its own space in which to be itself, even as it helps to co-create a common space, a common field of activity, for its membership in still larger societies (atoms within molecules, molecules within cells, cells within organisms, organisms within environments or communities, etc.). If this be true for societies of actual entities within the world of creation, then it should likewise be true of the world of creation as a whole in its relation to the three divine persons. There must be a common space, a common field of activity, within which the three divine persons and all their created subjects of experience can co-exist from moment to moment and by their mutual self-constituting decisions co-structure. This could very well be what the Bible describes as the Kingdom of heaven or the Kingdom of God. It is that “place” where the three divine persons and all their creatures live together and share a

common life. The three divine persons are thereby participant in the world of creation, and the world of creation is participant in the divine life, but without either God or the world being collapsed into one another.

Further details of how this can happen are, of course, available in my previous publications. For now, let us pass on to consideration of eschatology, how the world of creation will come to an end, in the light of this field-oriented approach to the God-world relationship. Here I rely partly on Whitehead's understanding of the "consequent nature" of God, God's ongoing experience of the world within God's own being. As he remarks toward the end of *Process and Reality*, in a process-oriented approach to the world the ultimate evil is "perpetual perishing."³⁵ Nothing finite endures as such beyond the present moment. Only God as the sole non-temporal actual entity with his all-comprehensive and never-ending process of self-constitution is in a position to integrate everything that happens in the cosmic process from moment to moment and preserve it for the future.³⁶ My adaptation of Whitehead's thinking here is, first of all, to claim that what happens in the world from moment to moment is preserved not within God's ongoing subjective experience of the world but within the objective space co-created by the three divine persons and all their creatures in their continuous dynamic interaction. Earlier I referred to this space as the Kingdom of heaven or the Kingdom of God. It is an objective reality co-constituted and co-structured by the divine persons and all their creatures in virtue of their self-constituting decisions from moment to moment.

Then in the second place I claim that God confers subjective immortality on the final

35. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 340.

36. *Ibid.*, 346: "The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life."

actual entity within the conscious experience of either a human being or some other higher-order animal organism with a central nervous system. That last moment of earthly existence is received into the Kingdom of God not just objectively as in the past but in its subjectivity here and now so as to see itself for the first time as a completed reality within the Kingdom of God. To be fully incorporated into the divine life, of course, it must accept itself for what it has become over the time-span of its earthly existence, and this naturally will be harder for human beings than for other animal species. But complete acceptance of the truth about itself will set it free to enjoy life with the three divine persons for all eternity.

Likewise, our bodies and all the other physical realities of this world will share in eternal life in much the same way. Since within this Neo-Whiteheadian scheme our bodies and all other material entities are ongoing societies of actual entities or momentary self-constituting subjects of experience, they too will have a final moment of existence in this life before dying or otherwise decomposing. These final moments of bodily or material existence will likewise be granted subjective immortality within the Kingdom of God, although not consciously so as with the final moment of consciousness for a human being or higher-order animal organism. Hence, for our bodies and other non-conscious physical realities there will be no moment of self-judgment at the end of existence in this world but only an enormously enhanced sense of well-being as they find themselves fully incorporated into the life of the three divine persons.

Finally, within this field-oriented approach to the God-world relationship, there is no need in principle for an absolute end of the world followed by the Last Judgment as described in the Bible. Actual entities, after all, only last a moment before expiring; and the societies to which they belong have only a limited duration before dying or otherwise falling apart. So the

equivalent of the Last Judgment is happening virtually every moment within the cosmic process to some actual entities and the societies to which they belong. Only the divine persons know when the cosmic process as a totality will come to an end, how this will happen, and whether or not another cosmic process, another universe, will originate and in dynamic interaction with the divine persons set up still another Kingdom of God lasting for the indefinite future. What the Bible describes, accordingly, is only an imaginative projection of how our human world could possibly come to an end, and nothing more.³⁷

All this, of course, is speculation on my part, albeit speculation grounded in a rational scheme which owes its inspiration to the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead but which consciously departs from Whitehead's own system of thought in key respects. Its deeper meaning and value, accordingly, is not to say how things are but how they could be within a world view that is both fully Christian and strongly process-oriented. In this respect, I hope that with my presentation I am continuing Archbishop Jozef Zycinski's line of thought in his groundbreaking work *God and Evolution*.

37. See here Kathryn Tanner, "Eschatology without a Future?," in *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*, eds. John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2000), 222-37.