

Cobb, John B., Jr. *God and the World*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969. 138 pp. Paperback, \$2.95.

The model for a viable understanding of God, one which permits an adequate understanding of the world as well (hence the title of the book), is subject rather than object. The latter leads to an unsatisfactory doctrine of transcendence, or alternatively to pantheism. Either God is not the world or he is identical with the world. On the one hand there can be no talk of God *and* the world; on the other, God is simply the sum total of the parts, or the parts lack self-determination. Cobb defends a version of pan-en-theism, believing that it permits both God and man (world) to be given due integrity.

This view, presented in unashamedly Whiteheadian language, it is proposed, provides the basis upon which a theology which is in harmony with the modern temper can be developed. It is also more adequate than others, and able to solve unsolved problems in traditional theology. For example, the latter disparaged man and discouraged his independence, when it talked of God; in addition, in speaking of God's power in a certain way, God was made responsible for everything that happened in the world, thus making impossible of solution the problem of evil and of faith.

So, if we start with the given reality of the world *as we know it* and with *what we think we know about the world because we cannot avoid thinking that way*, we then co-ordinate with this an adequate image of God based upon the Jesus Christ of Calvary—a God being edged out of the world, such is the powerlessness of his power. God, it is then confessed, works within the cosmic and historical process by being within it and providing the "lure" (a technical term) by which that process is drawn to its ultimate purpose. God, as lure, attracts the limited God within the totality of his own self-end.

Cobb sees process within the midst of history, the place where we now are. Such a vision of progress and maturity is based upon one aspect of man's development, namely the intellectual, where the cumulative nature of man's progress is most evident. The idea of development is then extended to the *cosmos* in the past, and to the future of human *history*. The metaphysical assumption, a "vision," is supported by data which indicate a teleological character within the world. We can then quite readily consider God. Cobb does so in four paragraphs (pp. 57-58): as unitary actuality, active, individual, and everlasting.

The basic problem with such a scheme is that it represents the coordination by comparing what are indeed quite diverse realities; namely, the reality of God in Jesus Christ, and the reality of "God" in the *cosmos*. Quite apart from the difficulty of giving meaning to the notion of God as "lure" in the *cosmos*, it is difficult to understand how a model of God *within*, but not identical with, *cosmos* can be spoken of in personal terms. Agreed that the task of theology, or perhaps philosophy of religion, is to coordinate religious with other phenomena and perspectives, it is difficult to see how the action of God in Jesus Christ can be brought under the same head as action of God in *cosmos* as lure or as process.

The following errata were noted: p. 29, "trancendence" for "transcendence"; p. 40, "tradition" for "traditional."