

linear power in its effect. The pastoral response is to help open up new subjective aims for the person, primarily by the pastoral carer becoming a trusted, significant other who channels those aims, very much in the relational sense Loomer describes. Jackson makes explicit, as Loomer does not, that the aims for new possibilities (and the grounding of relational power) is in God who is always in, or with, every situation. Thus the persuasiveness of God is both operative in and supportive of relational power in this view of pastoral care.

Finally, I would mention my own interest in developing a process theology of death and immortality to respond to typical pastoral situations which provoke theological questions. In one sense there may be no clearer example of linear power in human experience than death. It is unilateral, controlling, impersonal and universal. For me, process theology helps in responding to death precisely and ironically because it is unable to assert unequivocally subjective immortality. Conceptually at least, this enlarges the size of experience by initially relating death not to my continued existence but to God's and the world's. Within this context the hope for subjective immortality may be identified but only in a large relational sense. And the persuasiveness of God and God's becoming is rather baldly offered as the ground for sustaining hope, both in living and in dying.

These brief glances at some recent attempts to weave process theology into pastoral care are meant only to underscore the value of Loomer's discussion of power and to extend its relationality by at least one more size.

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THE PERSUASIVENESS OF DIVINE LOVE

The omnipotence of God has been a cherished Christian belief for many centuries. Yet in our own twentieth century the psychological motives for that same belief have been seriously called into question by Sigmund Freud and other psychoanalysts following his lead. In his controversial book, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud proposes that human beings, religiously speaking, remain children all their lives. That is, just as a child both fears its father and relies upon him constantly for support and protection, so human beings all their lives fear God as a somewhat tyrannical father figure and yet trust implicitly in his ability to protect and care for them in the midst of life's vicissitudes. Even though actual experience seems to give the lie to this belief in the divine omnipotence, human beings cling to it because it represents an instinctual wish-fulfilment rooted in the subconscious. Belief in an omnipotent father god is then for Freud an illusion. That is, it is not patently false; it could be true. But its value for the individual is in all likelihood as a coping mechanism against the superior forces of nature. Ultimately, human beings will learn how to deal with their subconscious fears and anxieties, and the need for an omnipotent father god will slowly disappear.

In my judgment, Freud's critique of traditional theism in *The Future of an Illusion* should be taken seriously, not to question belief in God altogether, but rather belief in God as omnipotent. It may well be true that belief in God's omnipotence is grounded in infantile wish-fulfilment, that it really does not cor-

respond to our human experience of God both as single individuals and as members of a faith community which has endured many trials and tribulations in the course of its two thousand year history. All the relatively unsuccessful attempts at theodicy, i.e., the explanation of God's ways with human beings in the face of overwhelming evil, give rise to the suspicion that perhaps it is a lost cause. God simply is not omnipotent after the fashion of our instinctual wishes and desires.

Here one might object that if God is not omnipotent there is no compelling reason to believe that good will eventually triumph over evil, that our lives both as individuals and as members of the Christian community will have a happy ending. At this point a distinction made by Jürgen Moltmann in his recent book, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), seems appropriate. Arguing that, contrary to Christian tradition, God is not impassible, that the three divine persons in different ways suffer with and for their creatures, Moltmann then distinguishes between active and passive suffering. Passive suffering would be unworthy of God, since the three divine persons presumably would be powerless to assist their creatures in coping with the effects of evil in this world. Active suffering, on the other hand, is entirely compatible with the biblical understanding of God, since it implies that the three divine persons are constantly at work among their creatures to convert evil into good, i.e., to transform the long-range effects of an initially evil action into something surprisingly good and worthwhile. Evil is thus not eliminated by divine fiat but rather overcome by the power of God's suffering love, the willingness of the three divine persons to suffer for and with their creatures in the service of a higher good.

Bernard Loomer's notion of relational power sheds light on this issue since it makes clear that active suffering for and with another is a legitimate exercise of power, even though one quite distinct from the traditional Western understanding of power as the ability to get things done, carry through a project, etc. In fact, I would argue that the paradigm for the exercise of relational power is to be found in the relations of the three divine persons to one another and that their exercise of relational power vis-à-vis their creatures should be seen as an extension of that same power as operative among themselves. I expand on this point in a forthcoming article for the *Journal of Religion*; in this context I offer only a brief summary. As I see it, among the divine persons the Father has the function of offering to the other two an option (in Whiteheadian terms, an initial aim) from moment to moment for their continued existence as one God. The divine Son has the function of saying yes to the offer of new life from the Father for that particular moment of their common existence. The Spirit, finally facilitates this exchange between the Father and the Son, prompting the one to make the offer and the other to say yes. In this way, the dynamic interrelationship of all three persons is needed in order to assure their continued existence as one God, i.e., a divine community, from moment to moment. The Father can only make a proposal; he cannot carry it through in virtue of his power as Father. The Son, to be sure, in saying yes to the Father's proposal converts possibility into actuality; but he can only convert into actuality what the Father has proposed as a possibility. Finally, the Spirit is indispensable for keeping the exchange between the Father and the Son going, but he has to accept whatever the Father proposes and the Son disposes, says yes to. All three persons then

both influence and are influenced by one another at every moment of their existence as a divine community.

Applying this paradigm to the God-world relationship, I would suggest that the Father provides an initial aim to all his creatures at the same time as he proposes an initial aim for the other two divine persons; the initial aim for the divine persons, in fact, encompasses the initial aims of the Father for all of his creatures. The creatures, in saying yes to the Father's initial aim for themselves, are equivalently saying yes to the Father's proposal of existence for all other creatures and indeed for the other two divine persons. It is the creatures' decision to convert possibility into actuality; the Father cannot coerce them into being anything other than what they wish to be in virtue of their own momentary "decision." But, to the extent that they say yes to the Father's proposal, they not only actuate their own individual existence but co-actuate the reality of all other existents. One and the same act of being, in other words, gives reality and existence to all existents, finite and infinite alike. The Father proposes what that act of being should be from moment to moment. The Son together with all finite entities says yes to the Father's proposal, in the case of the creatures, of course, with varying degrees of completeness. In any event, what the divine Son and all finite entities say yes to becomes the actuality of the moment for the universe. The divine Spirit, finally, prompts the Father to continue offering initial aims to his creatures and prompts the creatures to say yes to the Father's proposal and thus to unite themselves by their own decision to the Son's yes to the Father at that same moment. The Spirit, in other words, unites first all creatures with the Son and then unites the Son together with all creatures to the Father in a never-ending exchange of life and love.

Further details, to be sure, are needed to fill out this metaphysical scheme. But enough has been said already to make clear that relational power rather than unilateral power governs the relations of the three divine persons both to one another and to all their creatures. Hence the Father is not an omnipotent father-figure, as in conventional Western theology. Rather his creative power is exclusively exercised in providing initial aims, possibilities for existence, to both the other two divine persons and to his creatures. Creatures, in turn, exercise the power of converting possibility into actuality, but only in dependence upon the Father's initial aims and in conjunction with the decision of the divine Son and all other finite entities existing at that moment. Reductively, then, all genuine power is relational, since the entire universe comes to be at every moment only because of the interrelatedness of entities, finite and infinite alike, in one comprehensive act of being.

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