

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 7 | Issue 3

Article 13

7-1-1990

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Joseph Runzo

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Recommended Citation

Runzo, Joseph (1990) "McFague, MODELS OF GOD: THEOLOGY FOR AN ECOLOGICAL, NUCLEAR AGE," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 3 , Article 13.
Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol7/iss3/13>

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into a choice between 'strong predestinationism' and a coeval interdependent demiurge." So the metaphysical efforts to think an incomposite (or simple) being, whose uniqueness is rooted in that negative first-level assertion (168-73), and to do so from an analysis of existing things which leads one to recognize their existential composition, promises a rich theological payoff. Yet here one must attend to Braine's explicit "contrast between a rationalist metaphysics attempting to build...on certain univocal general principles bestraddling all subject-matters uniformly and an Aristotelian metaphysics utilizing structurally interrelated sets of analogous concepts" (210). What is at stake here is a crucial difference in the way one approaches human knowledge of generality: is it "*exhibited primarily in judgements about particular cases*" (257), and so "*realized in a spread of analogous applications of principle*" or is it expressed "*in some single univocal principle*" (262)? Braine, with Aquinas (213-19) and Wittgenstein, comes down decisively for the first, while "platonists," who play the lasting foil for his sustained argument, line up with Scotus and Leibniz (263) on the other side, carrying with them (I would suggest) all too many graduate students who are introduced into professional philosophy by way of *-isms* rather than by way of examples and careful consideration of the context and point of diverse philosophical arguments. In that respect, Braine's manner of proceeding, rigorous as it is, asks more than following its tight reasoning; or rather, the upshot of allowing oneself to follow the arguments will be a challenge to settled perspectives about philosophical argument itself. That is, I take it, the import of his insistence on the primacy of first-order over second-order considerations (225n.), and of an "*a posteriori* approach which considers the conditions of temporal existence" (378) over various *a priori* approaches associated with "platonism" and identified with Scotus. Braine shows better than anyone I know just how crucial such a difference is for philosophical theology, and since that difference cuts so deep, just how relevant other parts of philosophy are to executing a philosophy of religion which will be adequate to the demands of a theology faithful to the newness of Christian revelation—to say nothing of the newness of Jewish or Muslim faith as well.

Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age, by
Sallie McFague. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. Pp. xv and 224.

JOSEPH RUNZO, Claremont Graduate School and
Chapman College, California.

This is an important book. Addressing some of the most trenchant, current issues in philosophical theology, it offers an articulate and interesting exposition of "metaphorical theology" which not only challenges traditional theo-

logical assumptions and formulations but develops an alternative account, both evocative and provocative, of the world as God's body, and of God as mother, God as lover, and God as friend.

The first half of the book addresses meta-theological questions underlying metaphorical theology; within the encompassing framework of the "model" of the world as God's body, the second half develops the three "models" of God as mother, lover, and friend. Beginning with an understanding of theology as construction, McFague develops the notion of theology as metaphorical, comparing this form of theology to painting a picture. Thus metaphorical theology is "mostly fiction." Then, based on a conception of Christian faith as most fundamentally the claim that "there is a [personal] power...which is on the side of life and its fulfillment" (p. x), McFague suggests that we must now look for new models of God which are credible for our age. For she argues that the classical Western monarchical model of God both views God as too distant and uninvolved with the world, and leads to hierarchical, "dualistic" thinking which encourages cleavages that support oppression (e.g. rich/poor, white/colored, male/female, and Christian *versus* non-Christian).

Whatever our theological models, McFague says that we must avoid the "tyranny of the absolutizing imagination" and understand that rather than being true or false, our models are instead either better or worse for our faith *for our age*. A contemporary model(s) of God will be successful to the extent that it (1) is coherent, comprehensive, (2) encourages the preservation and fulfillment of the world, and (3) expresses a Christian understanding of "God as a Thou who is related to the world in a unified and interdependent way" (p. 19).

McFague first develops the model of the world as God's body. Emphasizing God's immanence, this model powerfully portrays a God in intimate and caring relation to the world, and correspondingly, McFague suggests, supports an ethics directed toward responsibility and care—an ethics which she sees as more female, rather than the more traditional (male) concern with "competing rights." This leads to three other models. God as mother—emphasizing a nurturing closeness more than the often disinterested God of father imagery. God as lover—since the deepest human relationships are between lovers, this, says McFague, should be a central model for the God/world relation, a model emphasizing the *value* of the other. And God as friend—an "astounding" model, says McFague, for this says that God *likes* you, desiring a "companionable sensibility."

McFague describes the metaphorical theologian as part poet and part philosopher: constructing imaginative models for contemporary Christian faith, yet needing to show the coherence, comprehensiveness, and systematic application of those models. Put in these terms, the position McFague stakes out is rich in metaphor and poetic evocation, but at times less successful philosophically. McFague holds that the essence of metaphorical theology is

the recognition that our concepts cannot directly refer to God. This indirectness of all talk of God is what she calls "metaphorical," and the task of metaphorical theology is to "identify primary metaphors and models [i.e. a metaphor with "staying power"] from contemporary experience ...[which]...express Christian faith for our day" (p. 35). There are three difficulties with this project of metaphorical theology.

First, consider McFague's seminal claim that "God-language can refer only through the detour of a description that properly belongs elsewhere" (p. 34). This claim is too strong. It seems to rest on a misunderstanding of the nature of metaphors. While a metaphor does not provide a direct description of its referent, a metaphor is only used properly and can only be successful if there *are* certain features which the intended referent, and the normal referent of the metaphor when it is taken literally, have in common. Thus to say "all the world's a stage" is in part to say that our lives have some qualities which are just like being on a stage—though of course the world is not a stage, just as, McFague notes, God is not a mother (or father). So while theological metaphors do not simply provide literal descriptions, the intent must be that they literally apply to something which, it is supposed, has important features in common with the intended referent, God.

A related, epistemological problem is McFague's insistence that traditional divine predication "properly" refers "only to our existence, not God's" (p. 39), that e.g. "knowledge" properly refers to human capacities, not to God's. Even if we cannot know that our theological constructions do successfully refer to God, we also cannot know that they *do not*, or *could not*, properly refer to God. It may be that no names—mother or father, creator or lover, judge or friend—"describe, define, or limit the divine nature," but I take it that it is part of the driving force of theology that we hope and expect that our language will in some measure succeed in referring to and partially, however imperfectly, describing, the divine. Otherwise theology will not even be poetry, and silence the wisest course of action. This danger becomes apparent in McFague's claim that we always see God through pictures, not directly. For if our "pictures" of the divine never properly refer to God (whether we can know this or not) then we have lost God: all we will have is our pictures.

A second difficulty arises when McFague develops specific models within metaphorical theology. Initially she states that the models of the world as God's body, and God as mother, lover, and friend are several among many possible valuable and instructive models for contemporary Christian faith. Yet McFague's later assessment of each suggests that these are superior models in an era of ecological awareness and nuclear threat: e.g. "all of us...have the womb as our first home, all of us are born from...[and]fed by our mothers. What better imagery could there be for expressing the most basic reality of existence: That we live and move and have our being in God?" (p.

106). Since she is offering models, and given her background assumption of the historicity of human thought, it might be better to state directly that *for her*, or for many, the models she proposes are illuminating; for others, different, even conflicting, models may be equally insightful.

Finally, conceptual clarity is sometimes sacrificed in the otherwise quite rewarding search for rich theological metaphors. To some extent, McFague accepts this, arguing that our beliefs and behavior are more influenced by images than by concepts, and that metaphors give "a precision and persuasive power to the construct of God which concepts alone cannot" (p. 38). But at times key terms are left unexplained and important conclusions reached with little argument.

McFague employs an analogy for the seminal model of the world as God's body: God is to the world as our self is to our bodies. She explains this at one point by saying that God's *body* is the entire universe; *God* is a self whose intentions are expressed in the universe. At other points she states that God's body "is not matter or spirit but the matrix out of which everything that is evolves" (p. 111), and that "in some sense God is physical (as well as beyond the physical)" (p. 112). While the metaphors of mother, lover and friend are well articulated and consequently more clearly theologically potent, this central "body" metaphor is problematic and confused.

The meta-theological problems we saw above surface again here. Contrary to McFague's general analysis of metaphor, the body metaphor seems to be meant literally; talk about the "matrix" of the universe appears to be direct divine predication. And while on her account we could not know it to be *true*, that God's body is this matrix, contrary to McFague's epistemology this appears to be a truth-claim about God. Additionally, though, the foundational relation of Godself to God's body is not explained. McFague denies any mind-body dualism. (Though she partially retracts this by saying that we are spirits that "possess" bodies.) If the Godself/world relation is not a form of dualism, is this for instance some version of the "double-aspect" theory of, say, Spinoza, or more recently, Strawson? We are not told.

McFague supports the notion of the world as God's body in part by suggesting that in view of the contemporary understanding of personhood as embodied, a disembodied God is less credible than an embodied God. However, McFague's line of argument for the theological use of metaphor rather than direct predication assumes that God is other, if not wholly other, than us. Why then should we suppose that the ontological status of God's personhood is like that of human persons? Further, McFague draws some puzzling geocentric and anthropocentric conclusions from this view of an embodied God. She says that we have "the responsibility to care for God's body, our world" (p. 73) and that humans, as "the only conscious ones among the beloved," have "ultimate power over good and evil" since in the throes of

nuclear insanity we can be the “uncreators of life” (p. 138). This raises a host of puzzles. Is God’s body the whole universe, or only the earth? If the former, then how significant would the destruction of life on earth be in the cosmic scale? If the latter, is it not rather egocentric to regard *our* home planet as *God’s* body? Isn’t it improbable that homo sapiens are the only “conscious beings in the universe”? And if there are other conscious beings, or even life forms throughout the universe, is it not hubris to suppose that *we* could be the “uncreators of life”? Just as McFague argues that the ethic of liberation theology should be expanded beyond concern for humanity to include all life on earth, the respect for life exemplified in this admirable global theology should be extended to responsible respect for any life in the universe.

The models of the world as God’s body, and God as mother, lover and friend conjointly imply that we are partners with God as a Friend of us and our world. This is a refreshing and powerful vision of the love and care of God, and of human interdependence and responsible action within and with the world. However, despite McFague’s disclaimers—that we cannot cure the world, that if some had perfect health, others would not—she offers a questionably optimistic view of humans as saviors of the world, mending its “fragmented body.” To exhort and encourage the goodness of humankind is a high theological calling; to imply that the human greed that pollutes the earth and seriously contemplates nuclear holocaust will be reformed by a vision of a world-wide community of equal persons with reverence for all life seems to ignore the very history that is our birthmark. Followers of Adam Smith may be wrong, but that does not make their calculating assessment of elemental human self-centeredness inaccurate.

McFague may fail in the task she sets to “unseat” traditional monarchical and trinitarian language. Much remains to be done to clarify the model of the world as God’s body. And she makes a stronger case for the models of God as mother, lover, and friend as illuminating *alternatives* to more traditional models, than as the best models for our time. But the excellence of this book lies in its bold exposition of faith in God as the belief that “The universe is neither malevolent nor indifferent but is on the side of life and its fulfillment,” and in its balanced and subtly detailed portrayal of a God who is both transcendent and immanent, neither too distant from, nor too subsumed in, the world.

McFague sets out to construct models of God which counter the self-annihilating posture of our race, models which encourage relationships and display our interdependence with each other, with the world, and with God. She succeeds. In *Models of God*, the world as God’s body, and God as mother, lover, and friend, become challenging, compelling theological models.