



To honor and celebrate the life and work of Joseph A. Bracken, S.J., co-editors Marc A. Pugliese of St. Leo University and Gloria L. Schaab of Barry University presented the *Festschrift Seeking Common Ground: Evaluation and Critique of Joseph Bracken's Comprehensive Worldview* (Marquette University Press, 2012) to Bracken at 6:15PM on Friday, June 8, 2012 at the 67th Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch. Bracken has been the foremost advocate of process thought among Catholic theologians during the last half century. With eleven monographs, several edited or co-edited volumes, over one hundred-fifty academic articles, numerous professional and popular conference presentations, and media appearances, Bracken has advanced a Whiteheadian vision of God and the world to Catholic and non-Catholic audiences in the academy and the Church. The presentation ceremony was well-attended, included an introduction to the genesis and development of the project by Gloria L. Schaab, as well as a summary of the importance of Whitehead and process thought's significance in general, the contributions of Bracken in particular, and a summary of the sections and essays of the *Festschrift* by Marc A. Pugliese. The volume includes contributions by several co-directors of the *Center for Process Studies*,

including John B. Cobb, Jr., Marjorie Suchocki, Philip Clayton and Roland Faber, as well as other important process thinkers such as Robert Cummings Neville and Catherine Keller. The presentation was followed by a reception sponsored by Liturgical Press to honor their authors, and Liturgical Press graciously offered to showcase the *Festschrift* published by Marquette University Press, as well as Bracken's new book with Liturgical Press, *Does God Roll Dice? Divine Providence for a World in the Making*.

On June 1, 2012, at the fifty-eighth annual convention of the College Theology Society, held at St. Mary's University of Texas in San Antonio, the Theology, Ecology, and Natural Science session, convened by Gregory Zuschlag of the Oblate School of Theology, featured a book panel and celebration of the *Festschrift*. Gloria L. Schaab opened the discussion with an overview of the model, background, themes, and authors of the collection of essays. A series of presentations on the specific sections of the volume by Mary Kate Birge, Mount Saint Mary's University; David Gentry-Akin, Saint Mary's College of California; and Anne Clifford, Iowa State University followed, with a response to each presenter offered by Bracken himself via Skype.

Focusing on the first section of the volume, "Whiteheadian Process Thought & Classical Theism: Retrieval & Revision," biblical scholar Mary Kate Birge focused on her experiences with undergraduate students' search for a reasoned faith. She emphasized her exploration with them of the metaphysical questions about creation, humanity, and God behind Genesis 1 – 3 as the doorways into Bracken's theological world. Quoting from essays by Robert Neville Cummings and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, Birge reflected on Bracken's model of God as creative, intersubjective existence, with profound ethical implications for human existence.

In his presentation on part two of the *Festschrift*, “Trinitarian Panentheism: Dialogue & Development,” David Gentry-Akin also retrieved his experience of teaching undergraduates in his call for a true initiation into the mysteries of God. In this initiation, Gentry-Akin invokes the God who is Being itself and, reflecting on the essay by Ilia Delio, OSF, celebrates the Divine who is the Source of human and cosmic being, who lures and beckons humanity into the adventure of becoming “ultrahuman,” and who orchestrates the “grand symphonic process” of “cosmic and human participation.”

From the third section of the volume, “Creative Union: Divine Action and Human Response,” Anne Clifford engaged the essay “The Infinite Ground and the Triune God in Interreligious Perspective” by Leo Lefebure. Clifford focused her remarks on Bracken’s description of the Christian Trinity in the *Divine Matrix* (63-65) as “three societies in intimate relation or as three intertwined finite fields of inter-subjective activity” and on Bracken’s emphasis on the similarities among religious traditions based on an ontological grounding in the Infinite.

The panel drew much interest and profited greatly from Joseph Bracken’s gracious presence and salient responses to each individual presenter.

