



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research is intended to defend Hartshorne's panentheism or neoclassical theism. Its main concern is essentially with analysis and justification. To accomplish it, the researcher provides the reader with arguments for panentheism and against its rivals. The defense of panentheism is done through three main objectives. First, the researcher analyzes and describes Hartshorne's view of God. Second, he discusses Hartshorne's arguments. Third, he justifies Hartshorne's view of God and refutes its rivals' criticisms.

It appears that one of the most important philosophico-theological tasks of Christian scholars today is to reformulate the concept of deity in a manner relevant to modern man.* What does the modern man's perspective look like? Briefly speaking, the point of view of the modern man is essentially historical and evolutionary. To respond to the thought pattern of the modern man, the Christian man should reformulate the concept of God. To formulate

*Buckley makes a distinction between revisionists and liberals. Whereas revisionists are those who try to revise Christian practices and doctrines in dialogue with modern philosophies, cultures, and social practices, liberals are those who try to liberate their "Christian heritage" from its weaknesses on the basis of those modern matters. See Buckley, James J. "Revisionists and Liberals." In David F. Ford. ed. 1997. The Modern Theologians. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., pp.327-342.

the notion of deity that would make him immanent to a universe, there is need for process thought. Among philosophies and theologies of process, Hartshorne's view is prominent. The researcher has decided to conduct a research on Hartshorne's view on account of the following reasons:

First, it seems to the researcher that Hartshorne's view is the most rigorous logical analysis. It is carefully developed after the long history of human attempts to understand God. Learning from others' mistakes, Hartshorne develops his view into the most consistent, the most comprehensive and the most intelligible.

Second, it seems to the researcher that Hartshorne's view of deity gets along well with modern physics. God, according to Hartshorne, is both abstract and concrete, absolute and relative. Hartshorne views God not as a substance but as an eminent process. He, like the modern physicist, sees all entities not as things but as events or processes.

Third, it seems to the researcher that Hartshorne's view is superior to its rivals in preserving and guaranteeing the values upon which religion insists. Whereas its rivals fail in preserving and guaranteeing divine love, divine goodness and human freedom consistently, Hartshorne's panentheism or neoclassical theism is able to guarantee and preserve all these values consistently.

Fourth, even though process thought is now on the move in Asia, yet in Thailand there is still nobody inquiring into it seriously. Thus the researcher would like to provide an opening in this country, hoping that someday it would be of interest among philosophers and theologians.

The content of the research is divided into three main parts: Hartsorne's panentheism, criticisms of Hartshorne's panentheism and a defense of Hartshorne's panentheism. Each part is divided into two main topics: God's existence and God's nature so that we may see the strong and weak points of Hartshorne's view.

In Chapter 2 before the researcher inquires into Hartshorne's neoclassical theism, he would provide the reader with a preliminary survey which would eventually lead to Hartshorne's view of God. After that he analyzes Hartshorne's concept of God and completes the chapter with the second form of the ontological argument.

In Chapter 3 the researcher presents criticisms of Hartshorne's panentheism from its major rivals, i.e., classical theism and pantheism. These criticisms center on the panentheistic concept of God first and on the second form of the ontological argument later.

In Chapter 4 the researcher argues against those criticisms and defends Hartshorne's view. The researcher tries to defend the second form of the ontological argument first and the panentheistic concept of God later.

In Chapter 5 the researcher concludes and provides some suggestions which may lead to further researches.