

For our meditation this morning, I'd like to take a step toward reclaiming a word we don't use too often here. It's been misused and abused in many places and times, but during my time away, going through some old papers, I came across a brief essay I wrote long ago, before I even know I was going into the ministry, as I was engaging with these issues. I'd like to share it with you this morning as a step toward reclaiming that word. The language and wording of this is the language and wording of someone much younger than me, today. So I chose not to rewrite it, and let it stand as a historical document. You may critique it from any perspective you like.

*Toward a New Definition of God (1994)*

by Don Garrett

The construct of God which has been handed down to us by the religions of the past is encrusted with the ideas, attitudes, and worldviews of societies long dead. We find much in these hierarchical and paternalistic worldviews to be repulsive, and even evil, in that they have been used to justify great cruelty and injustice.

When we react to this legacy from the point of view of our enlightened modern humanism, there is a strong impulse to simply trash the whole concept of God and do without. But I maintain that, though all prior definitions of God may be suspect, the fact of God may still exist. If we turn our backs on God in general, I fear we may be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

So instead of trying to understand God in terms of a paternalistic society consisting of lords and peasants, we might better try to understand God in terms of the scientific paradigm we use to interpret the world in which we live.

Through science, we have learned a great deal concerning the universe, but there is no way to explain how things came to exist in the first place. We understand the entropy which drives most reactions toward conditions of greater disorder, but have no concept for the force which drives things toward an increase in order. If this force toward greater order is constantly acting on all things, including the observer, there may be no way for us to identify and measure it from a position of objectivity.

We know how and why beings die, but we do not know how and why they come to life in the first place. We know a great deal about matter but have no viable theory concerning the origin of the highly complex energy relationships which bring it into existence. This unmeasurable force which causes these changes, these increases in order, is what I am calling God.

This God, the universal force toward greater complexity and wholeness would be involved in every action and reaction, in every observer and everything observed. This God would, therefore, operate on every level of organization and complexity, and would be responsible for all increases in complexity, inclusiveness and movement toward wholeness.

Therefore, God can be seen in physical creatures as life, and felt as health. God can be seen as acceptance and integration of personality and be felt as happiness and serenity. God can be seen in increasing our concept of self to include the egos of others and be felt as love. God can be seen as the ability to contain a complex universe within one's awareness and be experienced as consciousness.

So we can see that there are as many different definitions of God as there are points of view in the universe. Wherever there is movement toward wholeness, inclusiveness and increased order, there works the hand of God. God is not the thing experienced, but God is that which makes very thing and every experience possible.