

A God for the Ecozoic Era

By Alice Loyd

The New Story of creation calls for a new image of deity, one that confronts the culture's exploitation and offers a different model of being. While the creativity of the universe might be described without referring to a god at all, for me that view leaves a void. I commune with a source rather than only with its manifestations.

I think the telescopes we use to look at the universe tell us that God exists within rather than outside the body of matter. Deep inside the physical world is a non-apparent realm that is discerned rather than observed. I sometimes call it "Life," life itself, and someone else has called it evolution. It is a process that is inherent and comprehensive, existing throughout matter and inseparable from it. Occupying matter's space and participating in matter's fate, God is more than the body, but not less.

I call this small God, to establish the merit of this reality that goes unrecognized by those who worship the big God of force. Choosing to operate within human will, the inside God does not govern through domination. Acting from the least cell of the smallest inhabitant, it intervenes on a different level. Like an infant, it may wield a powerful influence on those who love it, but may not appear to triumph over an enemy. This is deity sharing power, emphasizing unity rather than difference. Its potency and genius exist outside a hierarchic scheme of values.

Advanced theories of science lend support to this theology, for they find intelligence at the cellular level. They find a stance of cooperation rather than force at work in life systems. Traits like strength in individuals are less important to ecologies than communication. Smaller members contribute, but they are not ruled. I think these discoveries say how God must be, and what humans are as well.

Wherever I look in the natural world, this is the God I see described. Only civilization fails to mirror its attributes, it seems, even though culture is an achievement of the physical venture. The potential of human beings, although unrealized, seems to be limited not by God, but by ourselves. What

God could do through our species—and what God may do yet—appears to be limitless. I fear that we won't evolve into co-creators of paradise, but I think our genes hold the possibility of ever moving toward the promise of fuller being.

Some people resist the thought that the creature participates in deity, interpreting it as equality with God. To be God, though, would require being the aggregate of reality. To say that I'm a demonstration is not to say that I am the whole. A more emotional objection is the theology's threat to the idea of God as parent. For me, there is parenting in this interpretation; and it

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comes through God's nearness. God is all that I need, supplied within my very being. With God resident in my body and in each molecule of the air, I cannot in fact be helpless or alone. Some may prefer a divide between divinity and whatever is mortal, but hierarchy is preserved in that arrangement. A God without embodiment supports civilizations based on domination. The subjugation of non-human species flows from the notion of their soullessness.

There are some occasions when the big God model might seem to fit, as when prayer is clearly answered. An outside force would be a less likely explanation, however, for a vitality that infuses everything would be a better source of miracles. The deity I'm describing is the force that moves the force that moves the oceans. Even a thought has strong momentum traveling the energy path of energy itself. Unafraid of sharing power, this God *is* the power it freely disperses.

I've thought about the likely morality of a religion based on these principles. Surely a God located within life would advocate actions that enhance life's liveliness. A sin might be to fail to notice flecks of light dancing on leaves. To spend many hours outdoors would have to be one of the commandments. A consuming lifestyle would be wrong because it replaces more life-enhancing activities. That it also depletes resources is only an additional indictment.

I think this understanding of deity is more marvelous than the conventional one because this deity continues to evolve. It is order emerging from chaos—and it is chaos. And it is the process. Both form and void, it is

particle alternating with wave. It is a wind that sweeps competitors as well as allies in its wake.

Microscopic and infinitesimal, yet infinite and immense, it incorporates rather than excludes. It is life, death, male, female, celibate, cohabiting and fertile. It is powerful because it is power. It is loving because it is love.

To say that common understandings about big God are not accurate is not to lay blame on the seers or the literature whose teachings have inspired us. No revelation came down into a society that already conformed to its standards. Mystics must receive images they can recognize, and teachers speak in the language of their hearers. Prophets spoke in words reflecting their cultures, using civilization's trappings as symbols of the ideal. Domination-oriented political systems were in place, and domination-oriented symbols were employed.

The science of today's frontier increasingly supports the concept of an inner realm. What we say about it must be informed by these findings and by the view in our telescopes. Who God is will be the same for us as for Abraham or for the ancestor of any people, but we must describe this mystery in words that reflect what we now know has been happening. Although it isn't easy to conceive or talk about an understanding of God through an unfamiliar paradigm, it is work that must be done. A paradigm shift is a spiritual event, which the first discerners will speak into history.