

## **Evolving Metaphors for Divine Mystery: God Images and Faith Formation**

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How we imagine God is essential for faith formation. It determines how we relate to God and whether we can believe in a God at all. As I wrote this, I met someone who told me she had been active in her church for as long as she could remember, but had left. Her closest friend had been diagnosed with cancer and was dead in three weeks, leaving three young boys. My friend was so angry that God had determined or allowed this to happen, or had not prevented it. Her image of God was One who controlled these things and made choices as to who should be sick or well and who received prosperity or poverty. Her God turned hollow, cruel and arbitrary in this situation, and she had no other God-image on which to draw. This story is repeated over and over as we perpetuate images of God without examining whether they are believable for the twenty-first century. By the way, I use G-O-D as a three letter symbol for however people imagine the Sacred, Universal One, Something More, rather than a particular doctrinal shape - it is also the term for that which some people do *not* believe. In another session today I spoke about doubt. Perhaps the biggest doubts for people are about God; how does God act; what does God think about me; does God care; is there a God at all? Traditional and churchy answers past their use by date in a scientific world no longer satisfy and many simply leave churches.

In the last several years, I have written two books on God - *Like Catching Water in a Net: human attempts to describe the Divine* and *Stepping out with the Sacred: human attempts to engage the Divine*. Both go across religions and start from human experience rather than conflicting doctrines. When we reflect on our shared humanity across religions, we realize that religions are descriptions of encounters with the Sacred in different contexts and cultures; and being more open to the faith stories of others gives us a broader canvas to receive new insights for ourselves. This is not

to replace our theological genes, but to expand, correct and refresh them. "All good theology" theologian Paul Knitter says "is a matter of discontinuity in continuity, creating something new that is rooted in and nourished by the old".<sup>i</sup>

In the past, books written about God usually described who or what God is, but many books today ask whether God exists at *all*. Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion*<sup>ii</sup> and Christopher Hitchens' *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*<sup>iii</sup> grabbed intense media attention when published, inducing nervous reactions in various religious camps. These self-declared atheists targeted the vindictive, bloodthirsty, genocidal God of monotheism, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim, claiming such a God obsolete in the Twenty-First Century. What they did not acknowledge was that many books are written today by *Christian* theologians who also reject this bloodthirsty, judgmental anthropomorphic God shaped in tribal deserts and medieval monasteries, finding more appropriate God images for today.

Anyone who writes a book has a thesis in mind, which is repeated through the book like a familiar melody, the rest of the book filling it out with explanations and stories. What did *I* want readers to grasp in two books on God and where did I hold my tour-guide umbrella high so readers would not miss something important? And, most importantly, what could I say about God that was *different*, in order to avoid the response of someone leaving a meeting to the question, "What's happening in there?" "Everything that needs to be said has been said", was the reply, "but it has not yet been said by everyone."

My particular emphasis about God had two parts. Firstly, anything we say about God are metaphors - constructions of language and concepts drawn from specific worldviews, knowledge and contexts. Secondly, our metaphors *matter* because, as I said before, how we describe the Divine determines how we act towards God and whether we can believe in a God at all. If God is imagined as a heavenly divine judge, punishing and rewarding, we live life cowering before such judgment. If God is an all-powerful ruler, we are powerless subjects who must accept what happens, just or

arbitrary, like my friend whose best friend died. If God is imaged as energy *within* an interconnected universe of constant flow, creativity and change, we are co-creators with this energy, protecting our earth and working for justice for all. It is as much anthropology as theology -- we live differently, depending on who we think God is. I hope what I say will offer ideas that might not have crossed your mind, or God-images that fit more comfortably in twenty-first century wineskins.

Ever since humans started taking notice, they pondered the bigger picture, yearning to encounter Something ticking away beyond their ken or an explanation for everything. They described this Something More in word-metaphors, drawing on their culture and experience. This was the beginning of theology, because theology is talking about God. There has never been only one way to imagine God, even *within* Christianity. My latest book, *Testing Tradition and Liberating Theology: finding your own voice* traces how theology has changed down the centuries as ideas waxed and waned, taking conflicting turns with changing leaders, worldviews and political forces. I wrote the book because I meet so many people who think they have to accept traditional beliefs of family or church, even if they do not make sense to their reason or experience.

Any descriptions of God are metaphorical. Metaphors are images and word pictures borrowed from culture and experience to illustrate the thing we are trying to describe. When the psalmist said God covered the Israelites with eagle's wings for safety (Ps. 91:4), they did not think God was an eagle but recognised this description of protection. When Divine anger was an eagle swooping down against God's enemies (Jer. 48: 40), people could almost feel the peck on the back of the neck, while knowing God was not a bird. Metaphors are best understood and make best sense in their original context, with nuances lost in another era. "Eagles" around a carcass in Matthew (24: 28 (KJV) are better translated vultures, known for where they hang out. When wealth takes wings and flies like an eagle to heaven (Prov. 23: 5), the imperial eagle came to mind, said to fly high enough to see into the sun.<sup>iv</sup> Metaphors can enlighten, confuse or deceive in a different context and knowledge base; and a truth for ancient people may not be truth for today, just as *our* truth is open to

future correction. In Central Bougainville, the Willy Wagtail lays its eggs in the open while Golden Plover nests are never found. According to locals, a Spirit assigned Willy Wagtail a task and she failed. The Golden Plover succeeded. Thus the Spirit told Wagtail she would always build her nest where people could steal the eggs but Plover would lay eggs where no one could find them. To this day, no one has seen a Plover nest in the Solomons. This wonderful tale was “true” for these folk, but they did not know the Golden Plover *never* nests in the Solomons but breeds in the Arctic and flies south. They created their truth from their knowledge, but lacked a vital piece of information. <sup>v</sup>

So it is with God-metaphors. Whatever we say is always limited by *our* grasp of the world, which should serve as a warning about using ancient God descriptions to make ultimate truth claims today. "The Lord is my shepherd" is a beautiful psalm of comfort and my generation is old enough to remember a shepherd walking his sheep, but what of high tech city grandchildren? Must we keep describing a shepherd to new generations in order to use it as a metaphor for God? George O'Brien says, "A God who travels only on camels may end up as a subject only for tourists, not for life's daily commuters. How is the modern commuter to engage his or her imagination with that Biblical narrative so overstocked with sheep and figs?" <sup>vi</sup> We also paint this shepherd in Church School material as a neatly groomed, gentle Caucasian man surrounded by cute lambs, not the rugged, odiferous loner fighting wild animals for economic survival; and the adjective “good”, which meant a responsible and savvy shepherd as opposed to an irresponsible one, has been reinterpreted in Christian tradition as a *moral* category -- good versus evil. We keep recreating an outdated biblical metaphor as if the *metaphor* is sacred, rather than what it portrayed.

The ancient Hebrews received strict instructions about not capturing God in any image.

Take care to watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making a God idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure – the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal ... the likeness of any winged bird ... (Deut. 4: 15 – 19)

Thus they used a host of metaphors for God, not just one - rock, fortress, mother hen, king, wind. Down the centuries, however, God *was* analysed and painted such that, by medieval times, Christians knew exactly what God was like - an bearded man in the clouds. Christianity had pinned the Mystery in its butterfly collection and peered at it with a magnifying glass, describing a male like themselves, but writ large.

As the late Marcus Borg pointed out, biblical God-metaphors fall roughly into two groups - monarchical metaphors of a ruling male - King, Father, Warrior; and formless metaphors - Wind, Breath, Spirit, Love. Yet when British hymn writer Brian Wren analysed God images used in our traditional hymns, he found 73% were variations on a *male* ruler giving commands. Of pronouns used for the Trinity, over 1400 were masculine, one neuter and none feminine, even though Spirit (*Ruach*) in Hebrew is feminine. Such selective usage makes people in pews assume these are the *major* biblical metaphors, which is not so.<sup>vii</sup> We first meet a Creating Wind sweeping the waters, Divine Breath breathed into clay, pillar of cloud fire – not a human form amongst them.

Father is used only fifteen times in the Hebrew Bible, more as head of a clan than a male parent. It is used disproportionately in John's Gospel because the author is painting a *family* metaphor to assure the community, now expelled from their synagogue, they are still God's people, children of the Father. If John's gospel had not been included in the biblical canon - and it was in doubt at times - Father may not have become the common metaphor for God and cemented in the Trinity metaphor. Interestingly, this metaphor originally described three "persona" or masks - like one actor playing three parts in a play - but it became a *biological* metaphor, courtesy of the virgin birth story which is not mentioned in Paul's writings or the earliest gospel, Mark, or the latest gospel, John. This story of a Father God producing a Son with a human woman cast God as male, further perpetuated by God's earthly representatives, all celibate men, called Papa or Pope, and his priests "fathers". You see how metaphors and reality get confused.

Similarly, King came into use as a God-metaphor when wandering Hebrews established a settled kingdom around 1000 BCE. If the King was the supreme ruler, God was the ultimate King. The New Testament metaphor, “Kingdom of God”, translated thus in the 1611 *King James Version* celebrating *King James* as head of the church and God's representative, is better translated "Empire of God", given Jesus' location under a Roman Empire. Scholars tell us this metaphor "Empire of God" deliberately contrasted Jesus' vision of a non-violent, just alternative rule with that of the violent Empire of Caesar, *also* called Son of God and Divine saviour. When Christianity became a powerful part of the Roman empire a few centuries later, it took on Greco-Roman images for God as a Divine emperor on a heavenly throne, a metaphor that is sung as reality in traditional hymns, art and theology and persist in our contemporary context. Choruses are filled with “almighty King” and “king of Kings,” when America, from where many came, fought a war to get rid of kings, and Britain and Australia have had a queen for years! And for those pretending king is not a *gendered* metaphor, try calling God a queen! The metaphor became reality - we created God in our image.

My melody sounds again - metaphors for God *matter* because they determine how we relate to God and whether we can believe in a God at all. The Bible comes from a tribal culture where God was described as a warrior leading Israelites into battle against their enemies. This divine warrior did not shrink from violence, destroying all “by the edge of the sword,” the Bible says, “men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep and donkeys” (Joshua 6: 21). Because of this metaphor, violence and slaughter in God's name has been justified down the centuries. In the Crusades, the Christian God was claimed to head the army reclaiming Jerusalem from Islam and, on the way, destroying Jewish towns as well. Once in Jerusalem, Jews and Muslims were slaughtered in a horrific mass murder, no doubt while singing the battle-stained Psalm, “God’s right hand and holy arm have gotten victory” (Ps. 98: 1).

Language of Divine militarism is still with us, often with *both* sides claiming the same warrior God of Abraham. Religion scholar Mona Siddiqui says, “We are living in a time when the power of

religious language and religious sentiment has once again been affirmed in the most alarming and dreadful of ways. Our current conflicts are political in nature but have assumed a different character as they are reflected and discussed increasingly through religious language.”<sup>viii</sup> Even though the warrior metaphor is *biblical*, to continue using it in the Twenty-first century creates and justifies a culture of violence around God in the name of protecting religious truth. It produces a people who accept violence as a necessary part of the societal norm. When some Christians dismiss this violent Hebrew God by claiming a different loving, non-violent New Testament God, I remind them that the traditional *Christian* explanation for Jesus' death is a Father God, affronted by disobedient human beings, demanding the murder of an innocent Son in a cruel, demeaning death to satisfy the Father's affront, all in the name of love.

German theologian Dorothee Soelle never lost her shame over her country generating two world wars. In the High School where she taught, few students knew their Nazi history. She introduced Holocaust studies, despite opposition from school and parents, and made students count off in threes to emphasize that every third Jew went to the gas chamber.<sup>ix</sup> What God-images were in place in Christian Germany, dominating theological scholarship at the time, to create and justify its culture of violence and anti-Semitism, lulling many Christians into complicity? Both Christians and Jews were forced to rethink their God-images after the Holocaust. Survivor Elie Wiesel wrote:

Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky ... Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul...<sup>x</sup>

We cannot treat biblical God-metaphors as sacred, simply because they are in the Bible, but must strive in our time and place to talk about God in ways that make sense. A Twenty-First Century God cannot be such that would be brought before an International Court of Justice today for annexing territory and destroying innocent women and children; or before a criminal court for the murder of a son as payback for fatherly anger. And to continue to insist or insinuate that God is male

or draw conclusions about male superiority or headship from an ancient patriarchal society denies equality and power to half the world's Christians -- women. Such descriptions must die and fresh images take their places so people do not have to leave their minds and ethics at the door.

How can we talk about God in our scientific world? What biblical metaphors are transportable and what contemporary images better mirror the Mystery? Theology, however obtuse and scholarly it seems, is simply the human attempt to speak of God and it is not done *only* by theologians. We all need to do theology to find God-images that work in our lives, the theme of my book *Testing Tradition and Liberating Theology: finding your own voice*, which encourages laity to become theologically literate and not simply borrow sound bites from others. Contemporary God-images must be both plausible in a scientific, technological world and large enough for the ever-expanding universe scientists describe. We have gone into space and are learning of parallel universes and hundreds of billions of galaxies. We are told there are more stars in our universe than grains of sand on earth. We can no longer locate God in a medieval universe of heaven above the clouds and hell under the ground, as our Church Creeds do, nor ask people to say "I believe" to their outdated cosmology. We know enough about the natural laws of the universe not to talk of God as an external supernatural Being changing these laws to send floods on some and find parking spaces for others. Our metaphors for God must make sense within scientific knowledge, not over against it or apart from it. This does not mean science can explain everything but we cannot use God-talk that contradicts what science and contemporary knowledge have adequately demonstrated.

Richard Dawkins and others think the more sweepingly ultimate and religiously downgrading their arguments are against God, the faster religion will disappear, yet this dismissal of religious enquiry is strange in an age that celebrates the relativity of all thinking and the absence of universal truths - which should keep *all* conversations open and evolving, rather than closing them down. Scientists that adhere to the rules of scientific method are the first to acknowledge they cannot prove or disprove a God-space by their methods - God is always a *faith* statement outside the

discipline of scientific investigation. But science and religion *can* talk together about the wonder and mystery of the universe, each using *their* metaphors. Biblical scholar Antony Campbell says:

Given that our world is vastly more complex than we can ever hope to imagine, is it the least bit surprising that God should escape the limits of our understanding? For centuries, theologians have called it mystery. It still is mystery but today it is just that little bit more okay for it to be mystery. After all, so much else is.<sup>xi</sup>

Contemporary science concerns itself with energy and interrelatedness within our organic universe, observing elements of unpredictability and chance. Christians can *also* talk about Something within everything constantly mending and re-creating our planet, or, alternatively, the universe as God's Body -- "God, in whom we live and move and have our being" as Paul said (Acts 17: 28) The Sikh's sacred text has similar imagery, describing God as the Ocean - "How can I, a fish in the ocean, ever perceive the limit of what you are? Wherever I look, there you are. If I leave you, I gasp and die." The Hindu *Upanishads* say "the Spirit, though one, takes new forms in all things that live".<sup>xii</sup> Sufi poet Rumi (1207-73) explained this Something, "Does dust rise up without wind? Does a ship float without a sea"?<sup>xiii</sup>

There are many attempts in contemporary theology to imagine God in forms that do not set up against science. I can't go into this in one lecture, but one example is process theology developed from Alfred North Whitehead's philosophical thought (1861-1947). Whitehead developed a way to talk about everything in the universe in the same categories, and theologians took this on board to talk about science and theology. It is too complex to even touch on details here, but enough to say that process theology describes the interdependence of plants, frogs, humans and God in relationship with each other in an interconnected universe, affecting each other and being affected. God is the urge in each emerging moment in this interconnection towards the best possible outcomes for the next moment. Our responses to this Urge in an interconnected universe affects everything and expands or limits the future for everything. Instead of traditional Greek-influenced ideas of God as

external, unchanging, transcendent, unaffected by the world and of a different substance, or the medieval Christian God organising everything in the world from outside with a manual gear-stick, Process imagery of God as Divine Persuasion in interacting world of events and also beyond what we know and understand, reminds us of the Psalmist's rhetorical question, "Where can I go from your Spirit?" and the answer "Nowhere, because God is everywhere, both here and beyond what we know". Physicist and process theologian Ian Barbour (1923-2013) said, God "is not before all creation but with all creation ... present in all events in a role different from that of natural causes. We can speak of God acting, but God always acts with and through other entities rather than by acting alone as a substitute for their actions .... While natural science sees a messy trial and error, yet fruitful world, process is God working patiently, gently and unobtrusively".<sup>xiv</sup>

God as the Urge towards novelty and transformation in the universe parallels scientific language of the universe as a living organism of interdependent actions, open to change and unpredictability. Quantum physics talks of a mysterious spontaneity and indeterminism in the universe and chaos theory demonstrates how a small, simple variation can generate a large outcome in a dynamic system, transforming an entire system. It also proposes a "self-organization" that stabilizes chaos in nature, all of which sit comfortably with Process God-imagery, albeit using different metaphors. This God, however, is not all-powerful and almighty, since our free choices in each moment *affect* God's future action, limiting Divine choices. It is persuasive power rather than almighty power, which would better answer my friend's question about her best friend's death.

In a recent interview with university lecturer and Uniting Church member Joel Corney, whose specialty is quantum physics, Corney described how both physics and faith are integral to his search for what makes humans tick. He sees science and religion as addressing different aspects of human experience and operating in different, self-limiting methods. They overlap, he says, in their ... search for beauty - for symmetry and simplicity [which] is one of the things that physicists and mathematicians talk about, and that connects with the experience of

faith. In the mess of equations, if you can see beyond the mess to the unifying simplicity, that's beauty. Looking for patterns ..is one of the links between scientists and theologians.<sup>xv</sup> Corney warned against fusing theology and science, or using God as a God of the gaps, the explanation for the still unexplained - that God just gets smaller as knowledge increases. Science and theology are *both* provisional but, if you fuse them together, the scientific theory might move on but the *theology* based on it will need to be reinvented, which does not always happen. The outdated cosmology in our Creeds, already mentioned, is a good example.

A central aspect in science is uncertainty, Corney says, and in quantum physics there is an irreducible uncertainty which is philosophically quite different to the classical notions that in principle everything could be knowable. To avoid this uncertainty, people search for a theory of everything that unites incompatible theories but, Corney says, " it is a bit like a mirage - it is currently far out of the range of what we can test experimentally so it remains in the realm of metaphysics and speculation".<sup>xvi</sup> As a scientist in a former life, I like this honest, self-limiting uncertainty of science before mystery as a model for talking about God - an openness in the face of Divine mystery, rather than clinging tightly to unchanging dogmas of certainty about God or dogmatic certainty there *is* no God - both are arrogant in our rapidly changing knowledge of our amazing and mysterious universe. I was once on a panel with astrophysicist Lawrence Krauss who often appears on Q & A. He is not a believer, but acknowledges that "while nothing in biology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, or cosmology has ever provided direct evidence of purpose in nature, science can never unambiguously prove that there is no such purpose. As Carl Sagan said in another context, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence".<sup>xvii</sup> Scientific knowledge is always testing its hypotheses for new insights. Religious thought must do the same, constantly revising its God-descriptions rather than declaring eternal truths.

Science is also asking questions about "consciousness". We are learning how amazing brain mechanics are, like trillions of sparkplugs with astonishing interconnections. How does something

*subjective* like consciousness emerge from the electro-chemical process of neurons firing? How can mechanical activity result in subjective states? <sup>xviii</sup> Some scientists wonder if consciousness is a natural biological phenomenon in itself, like photosynthesis or digestion, but how then is the chasm bridged between *that* phenomenon and neurons firing - how do they link together? Others wonder if the brain is constructing an account of what happens when an object is encountered and, by building up and holding together memories of similar instances, makes an interpretation - consciousness. Scientist Peter Russell links this discussion with God-talk. He suggests that consciousness has its own reality, something that basically exists in everything, what he calls the 'light of life' - or God. Again, he is talking in metaphors, but he thinks science and religion will eventually meet in a discussion of consciousness. <sup>xix</sup> I know nothing about neuroscience - I am just a learner offering examples of how new metaphors for God can emerge from our human and scientific knowledge today. If Jesus was alive, I wonder if theologians would describe him as one whose consciousness was supremely stimulated by what he encountered, including his experiences of God, rather than in the fourth century Greek philosophical categories as to how he could be fully divine *and* fully human. We can ponder theologically on scientific discoveries because good scientists cannot deny pondering rights outside their job description. When German neuroscientists published their *Manifesto on the Present and Future Brain Research* in 2004, they finished with a modest recognition of *their* limits:

Brain research will have to distinguish clearly between what it can say and what lies outside its sphere of competence, just as musicology .... has something to say about Bach's fugue, but can have no explanations of its unique beauty. <sup>xx</sup>

Our expanding scientific knowledge has also returned our attention to our endangered planet; and imagining God *within* the universe brings added urgency to the planet's well-being. We must show reverence for it, not raping it for personal benefit and greed. Ecological crises and climate change issues are *theological* issues, affecting both God's dwelling place and the world's

people in whom God dwells, who struggle with devastating poverty, disease, lack of education and endemic oppression caused by the actions of others. Rather than Christians fighting *against* advances in science threatening their traditional doctrines, theology becomes eco-theology. Thomas Berry said, ‘The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity and beauty is a sacred trust. The renewal of religion in the future will depend on our appreciation of the natural world as the locus for the meeting of the divine and the human. The universe itself is the primary divine revelation’.

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On a human level, Spirit or Presence in everything means *all* people, not just those with “correct” beliefs. No longer can we see others as beneath us in beliefs, race or intellect if they also contain the Divine within; and we can no longer describe God in language and metaphors drawn only from *our* religious imagination, or claim we have the only truth. Hindu Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) said, "The devotee who has seen God in one aspect only, knows [God] in that particular aspect alone".<sup>xxii</sup> If we are not interested in how others experience God, we are perpetuating our exclusivity, say nothing of limiting our possibilities for transformation. Interestingly, in describing God as Energy infilling the universe, rather than a God in the heavens unaffected by us, we are newcomers on the block. The Native American Sioux Black Elk said, “For the Great Spirit is everywhere; he hears whatever is in our minds and hearts, and it is not necessary to speak to him in a loud voice.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Shinto teaching says, “There is not a single place in all the corners of the world where God is absent.”<sup>xxiv</sup> And from the Qur’an, “Wither soever you turn, there is the presence of Allah, God. For Allah is all-pervading, all-knowing.”<sup>xxv</sup>

For centuries, Christians have been asked to believe doctrines taught to them, whether they made sense or not. As I develop in my other talk today, we have been told that doubting is the enemy of faith and something wrong with *us*. This is no longer valid in a post-modern world where "truth" is recognized as dependent on and limited by the language, knowledge and worldview in which it is created. Doubting the status quo is expected and encouraged in good educational

environments, so we cannot condemn doubt in *religious* enquiry, the theme of my book *In Defence of Doubt: an invitation to adventure*. Even in medieval times, theologian Peter Abelard said, "The first key to wisdom is assiduous and frequent questioning ... for by doubting we come to inquiry, and by inquiry we arrive at truth".<sup>xxvi</sup> This is true for God-talk for our time. Many people leave churches because of outdated language and religious concepts that no longer convey meaning for them. Theologian Keith Ward says:

Traditional images of God seem to have lost their appeal in modern American and European culture ... God has simply become boring and irrelevant. We no longer care for big men with white beards. We no longer feel the weight of tremendous guilt that drove the Pilgrim on his Progress.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Perhaps you have never considered such questions because you have lived with the traditional story of God, but unless we wish to bury our heads in the sand, we have to deal with these questions. Talking about God should start where every other thought starts - with our experience, reason and knowledge, not hiking back to a biblical, non-scientific world to fit present knowledge into that. In the end, choosing God-metaphors are faith statements and different people come up with different answers - not once-for-all answers because new information comes to hand that challenges previous ideas. Agnosticism, atheism and belief are different points on a spiral journey, with many "what-I-think-now" moments of clarity and confusion along the way. The search is ongoing, even for those who decide God is not-at-all, because even that conclusion in an evolving world is open to contradiction, just as certainty about God is open to disillusionment. Past seekers have thrown back over their shoulders hints and visions of God, dressed in metaphors from other places that need unpacking if they are to guide our contemporary path. We have to our own theology - thinking about God - for *our* time and place and we take comfort in Frederick Buechner's words:

Theology is the study of God and God's ways. For all we know, dung beetles may study humans and call it humanology. If so, we would probably be more touched and amused than irritated. One hopes that God feels likewise. <sup>xxviii</sup>

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- <sup>i</sup> Paul Knitter, *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian* (Oxford: One World, 2009), xiv
- <sup>ii</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006).
- <sup>iii</sup> Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Crow's Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2007).
- <sup>iv</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 232.
- <sup>v</sup> Don Haddon, *Birds and Bird Lore of Bougainville and the Northern Solomons* (Alderley, Qld: Dove Publications, 2004), 88, 239 – 40.
- <sup>vi</sup> George Dennis O'Brien, *God and the New Haven Railway: And Why Neither One is Doing Well* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 4.
- <sup>vii</sup> Brian Wren, *What Language Shall I Borrow? God-talk in Worship: A Male Response to Feminist Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).
- <sup>viii</sup> Mona Siddiqui, "When Reconciliation Fails: Global Politics and the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73:4 (December 2005), 1148.
- <sup>ix</sup> Dorothee Soelle, *Against the Wind: memoirs of a radical Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 24.
- <sup>x</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Bantam, 1960, 1982), 32
- <sup>xi</sup> Anthony F. Campbell, *The Whisper of Spirit: a believable God today* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 30
- <sup>xii</sup> Quoted in Juan Mascaró, trans., *The Upanishads* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1971), 64
- <sup>xiii</sup> Quoted in Robert Van de Weyer, ed., *Rumi* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), 28
- <sup>xiv</sup> Larry Witham, *The Measure of God: our century-long struggle to reconcile science and religion: the story of the Gifford Lectures* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 249
- <sup>xv</sup> Joel Corney, 'A quantum leap of faith' in *Journey*, March 2015, 10-11
- <sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid*, 10-11
- <sup>xvii</sup> Lawrence Krause, *Does the Universe have a Purpose?* [http://genesis1.asu.edu/~krauss/essay\\_Krauss.html](http://genesis1.asu.edu/~krauss/essay_Krauss.html)
- <sup>xviii</sup> Bruce A Stevens, "Death of the soul & birth of consciousness". (*Colloquium* 39:1: 2007, 90-102), 93-5
- <sup>xix</sup> Peter Russell, *From Science to God: a physicist's journey into the mystery of consciousness* (Novato, Ca: New World Library 2012)
- <sup>xx</sup> Quoted in Hans Kung, *The Beginning of all Things: science and religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 182
- <sup>xxi</sup> Thomas Berry, quoted in Ursula King, *The Search for Spirituality: our global quest for a spiritual life*, (New York: BlueBridge, 2008) 172
- <sup>xxii</sup> Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958, 1965), 86-7
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Quoted in Anand Krishna, *One Earth, One Sky, One Humankind: Celebration of unity in diversity* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2009), 13
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Omoto Kyo, Michi-no-shiori, quoted in *Ibid*, 6
- <sup>xxv</sup> Qur'an 2: 115
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Abelard, *Sic et Non* (c.1120), quoted in Frederick Denison Maurice, *Mediaeval Philosophy, or A Treatise of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* (1870), 138
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Keith Ward, *God, a Guide for the Perplexed* (London: One World Publications, 2002, 2013), 1
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking* (London: Collins, 1973), 91.