

Shuck and Jive

A Presbyterian minister blogs about spirituality, culture, religion (both organized and disorganized), life, evolution, literature, Jesus, and lightening up.

This is my personal blog. My views are my own and do not represent those of the congregation I joyfully serve. But my congregation loves me!

Friday, August 07, 2015

God?

My summer series **Bring Your Own Sermon (BYOS)** is going even better than expected! We are having a good turnout for worship and for the discussion following the service. Here are the questions I have grouped together for this week:

- *If God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and all powerful and needs nothing then why does "He" need 8+ billion of these little critters here on earth to worship "Him" to feel complete?*
- *What phraseology do you use to speak of God? How do you internalize it or find meaning in it (the phraseology)?*
- *What do you mean when you say you don't believe in God? (or a supernatural God)*

This Fall I am doing a four week class on "The Evolution of God" for our Sunday Starter Adult Class. Then on November 6-7 we are hosting our annual **Jesus Seminar on the Road** on the topic of God.

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For this Sunday I will probably start with **Daniel Dennett's theory** on how gods then God came to be. Then I will offer a quick and dirty history of **Ancient Near Eastern cosmology** and the **Ptolemaic cosmology** and how "God" fit into that.

What happens to God after Galileo put him out of a home and Darwin put him out of a job? In other words, what difference does God make or what does God really do? Those are questions many of us ask. The existence of a supernatural being who intervenes in the natural flow of life is improbable at best. This is not news. Theologians have been saying this for centuries. Most mainstream seminaries at least present this as a problem.

What do we do about that? We can call ourselves non-theists or post-theists or a-theists and declare game over, there is no reality to which theism points and thus no need for religion or Christianity. Some of us do that. Others of us say, no, there is a place for religion and Christianity even as a supernatural interventionist god is superfluous. Some redefine God as everything or everything plus extra or creativity or evolution or process or human aspirations, or you name it. Some say the term God is too confusing, let's drop

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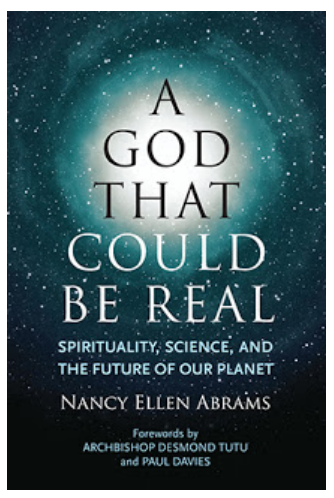


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it. I don't think there has to be a final answer at least just yet.

This brings me to my friend, [Gretta Vosper](#). She goes with the option of God as too confusing, let's drop it. I think that is a great option. Christianity needs her voice. I believe or don't believe as she does and as many do even as they may be less vociferous about it. I still play around with the symbol God as I wrote in [my post in the Friendly Atheist](#). I could change tomorrow. I really like the imaginative work that Nancy Ellen Abrams is doing with [A God That Could Be Real](#).



What I don't like and what I will resist is the attempt to silence creative voices such as Gretta's voice by inquisitions. Don't like doubts? Questions scare you? Silence the doubter and the questioner. That is bad faith.

God has always been a human construction. Is there anything real to which the symbol God points? I think that is a great question and a worthy one to ask in the context of parish ministry.

Some have asked, "Why stay in the church?" Why not become a Unitarian Universalist where apparently these questions are more welcome? I love the UUA and I think in many ways they are a model. However, I am a Presbyterian. Denominations are not fixed entities. They change. In my view, all of the Christian denominations need an upgrade.

Gretta's denomination is the [United Church of Canada](#). This is probably the most liberal denomination in North America. If that denomination can't move into the 18th century let alone the 21st then who can? In my view, Gretta is not on trial, Christianity is. Can it move ahead or is it stuck forever in a pre-modern world? The United Church of Canada and the PCUSA have great social justice commitments. That is important work. These denominations are home for many even as many have outgrown the stale theological formulations.

Christianity is never static, always evolving. Now the evolution needs to take seriously modern historical criticism of the Bible, comparative religious mythology (i.e. Jesus mythology) and the meaning of the symbol God in a modern understanding of cosmology. Gretta is saying what many have been scared to say. She needs applause and support.

Podcast Playlist!



Produced at KBOO Community Radio



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Places

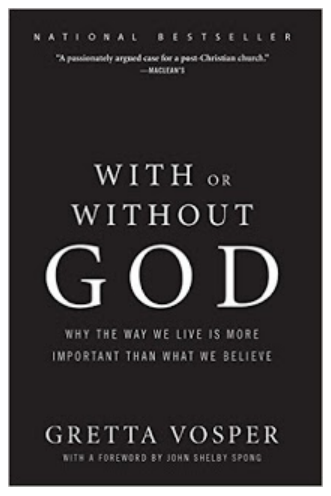
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I don't know if I will go into all of that in my sermon on Sunday, but it should be fun!

See you then!

Posted by [John Shuck](#) at 8/07/2015 03:14:00 PM



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Popular Posts

Last Post

For everything, there is a season. The season has changed for Shuck and Jive. I am ending this blog. It is funny how changes come abou...



Too Silly Not To Post

From The Onion :
WASHINGTON—A little more than a month after the first family's move to the White House, reports of strange

happenings...

What A Friend We Have In (the critical study of) Jesus

The Jesus Seminar will hold its fall meeting next week . I am bummed that I will miss it. The Jesus Seminar has moved beyond the historic...



Ash Wednesday

We are having an Ash Wednesday Service tonight. It will be a bit different than your usual Ash Wednesday Service, if you ever go to one. ...

Rahab, Leviathan & Behemoth: The Chaotic Trinity

William Blake created this enchanting piece . Yahweh with his finger holds down Behemoth and Leviathan, the forces of...



Progressive Spirit

I have been producing a weekly half-hour radio program and podcast for over four years. Nearly 190 episodes. I am now putting it in a hig...



Call Me Ishmael--A Sermon

Call Me Ishmael John Shuck
First Presbyterian Church
Elizabethton, Tennessee
November 6, 2011 Genesis 16:1-15; 17:18-26; 21:8-20; 25:12-18...



Good Without God

It looks like we are in for a bit of weather in Southtown : Tonight Snow. Snow may be heavy at times. Snow accumulation of 5 to 9 inches. L...

Conservative Christians Against the Teachings of Christ

This is just too good. Hat tip to Tennessee Guerrilla Women . Jesus is too liberal for America.



Time for a Cleansing

The election is over. Time for the "emotional bath" I have been talking about: St. Anthony , dear friend and heavenly g...

Making News

Local Minister, Radio Host Prepares to Sign Off

As Congregation Sizes Dip, Local Religious Leaders Talk Causes, Solutions (Johnson City Press, 5/17/14)

Religion For Life Strikes Chord with WETS Listeners (Kingsport Times-News)

Faith on air: Weekly radio show takes look at religion and society (Johnson City Press)

Struggle to Protect State's Mountains is a Moral Issue (Elizabethton Star)

Jesus Seminar in Elizabethton (Elizabethton Star)

Amendment A in Johnson City Press

Amendment A in Elizabethton Star

Amendment A on Front Page of Kingsport Times-News

Social Justice: Preserving Earth Just One Concern for Local Church (JC Press)

Can A Christian Embrace Evolution? (JC Press)

FPC Celebrates Evolution Sunday, (Elizabethton Star)

Beverly Shuck: Music Provides Inspiration for Worship (Elizabethton Star)

International Peacemaker to Visit Elizabethton

First Presbyterian Begins Study of Qur'an (Elizabethton Star)

First Presbyterian to Dedicate Labyrinth

Preacher, Science Writer Teach on Faith, Evolution (Jim Dahlman—Johnson City Press)

Jesus Seminar Comes to Elizabethton (Elizabethton Star)

Churches to Host Thank God for Evolution Author (Elizabethton Star)

Church to Host "Evolutionary Evangelists" (Johnson City Press)

Church to Host Jesus Seminar (Johnson City Press)

Community Remembers Knox Victims (Johnson City Press)

Dr. Robert Hamblin to Perform as Clarence Jordan (Johnson City Press)

First Presbyterian Becomes More Light (More Light Presbyterians)

Woodpeckers (Elizabethton Star)

Gay, Lesbian Group Launches Tri-Cities Chapter (Johnson City Press)

Creating a Culture of Peace (Johnson City Press)

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Michael Morgan for Our 225th (Johnson City Press)

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Old Time Religion (Johnson City Press)

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Radical Reverend (Johnson City Press)

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