

Is God Dead ?



by Erwin Braker, *Fellowshipian*

I have no idea what the German philosopher Nietzsche meant 100 years ago when he wrote "God is dead," but, for the purpose of this article, I mean the word "God" is dead. For me, God is no longer a useful word as I continue along my spiritual path. The experience of overcoming life-threatening challenges during a long active life has given me an inner knowing of who I am. At my core, I'm

Spirit: eternal, unlimited, peace, love and joy. When I do my inner work I experience miracles and feel the vital creative force that, in the past, I would have called God at work. Today, I'm looking for words other than God to explain the unexplainable.

Over millennia, the word God has become loaded with too many negative connotations left over from our earlier evolution. Images immediately arise of an external judge, or a savior with human features, both of which no longer fit for me. A *Course in Miracles (ACIM)* says, "My salvation comes from me." (W-p.I.70.7:3) Not that I do all my work alone, ACIM also reminds me "Salvation is a collaborative venture." T-4.VI.8:2 My inner voice will tell me all I need to know.

When Eckhart Tolle writes that the word God has become empty of meaning through thousands of years of misuse, I say, "Amen." A Fellowshipian friend reported to have pretty much given up on anything "spiritual" and convinced themselves "God" is a product of human evolution that came into "existence" when people got smart enough to realize they were going to die. My answer to my friend was that this may very well be.

The idea part is true for sure according to the *Course* which says: "God is an idea. Every thing is an idea." (T -15.VI.4:4; T-5.I.2:4) Ideas, like thoughts and beliefs, can change, and as they do, we need to come up with new names for our new beliefs. For example, very few of us still believe God is a long-bearded guy in the

sky. Pondering the heavy-handed male orientation the *Course* gives to naming God caused me to write the following poem.

GOD'S NAME

The course is full of He's and Her's
We find one Her and nothing more.

Who do not find one single She,
Yet We are He and He is We.

He's and She's are all called Son.
My sisters cry, "Hey, that's no fun!"

So when we told God has no name.
And only we create our pain,

I hope you will not throw a fit
If I call God my Beloved IT!

Writing this poem helped me let go of the gender issue, but using "it" didn't cut it for me either. Humankind has evolved into high enough states of consciousness that we can let go of Mother / Father God issues. We have evolved into Beings who, regardless of gender, have an inner power and guidance system which enables us to do the miraculous and experience the extraordinary. Many of us know someone who has had a Holy Instant or experienced merged consciousness. At such times oneness, peace and beauty all take on new meaning. The person having the experience is left changed forever and usually speechless.

A man I've known for most of his life recently described an experience he had last summer alone on a mountain bike in Colorado. He had just finished a three-hour bike climb using all his gears to reach the top of the trail. He took a narrow, steeper trail down. The trail was strewn with small loose rocks and embedded roots. It was very winding with a precipitous drop-off to the left and a jagged sheer rock wall to the right. Urged downward by the steep incline, he was soon going faster than he had ever gone on such a trail. Strange things started happening. He felt he was in a slow-motion movie. He could no longer see the trail and his arms seemed to be melting away. He didn't seem to be in control any more.

His first reaction was to panic, but instead he relaxed and began to laugh. He had a definite feeling that something was holding him up and guiding him. Peace and a connectedness beyond all understanding overwhelmed him. After about 10 minutes of wonderful riding,

The Mini-Abstract of A Course in Miracles, which Erwin has compiled and edited, has grown to include 80% of the wisdom of the Course using less than 1.7% of its words. Copies of this latest version are available from the FFT book store for a \$5 donation to the Land Development Fund.

things slowly returned to normal and in the afterglow he felt more exhilarated than he ever felt in his life.

My friend was reluctant to share this experience with many people, afraid they wouldn't understand. Most would think they'd just heard an account of a finely-tuned athlete getting "into the zone." He'd experienced that and knew this was more. It felt more miraculous, more like merged consciousness. When people try to write about an experience like this, they often get tangled up in our old religious vocabulary and the message, for the most part, is lost.

The *Course* wisely reminds us words are but symbols of symbols and recommends we forget the words and concentrate on the experience. Unfortunately, the *Course* goes on to bury us in so many words with hidden meanings that those of us who try too hard to analyze the *Course* let those words get in the way of having the intended experience.

If I had suggested to my biking friend that he had gotten a glimpse of the Heaven God has promised us, I would have only added confusion to what was, of itself, an event of pure clarity. Spiritual discussions would be enhanced, I believe, if we could find new words for God.

The *Course*, in its early pages, uses the two words "Divine Abstraction" which say much more to me about what the *Course* is attempting to teach me. Unfortunately, it then goes on to use the word "God," "He," and "Him" over 5,000 times in the remaining pages. It is no surprise that attempts to find a replacement for the word God often require two words. Stephen Mitchell, in his book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, points out that the Bible says God's true name is "I am." Byon Katie in *Loving What Is* says, "God, as I use that word, is just another name for 'what is'."

Even our own Matt Bliton, who in his article "What's in a Name?" challenged us all to come up with our own personal names for God, came up with a two-word name. When I spoke to our beloved retired minister Amalie on her 92nd birthday, it reminded me of three words she sometimes used for God, "Impersonal Divine Principle."

Not all efforts to rename God end up with multiple words. Eckhart Tolle, in his book *The Power of Now*, uses the single word, "Being." Early in his book, he makes the point that words are useful signposts, but our main spiritual teacher is stillness. This powerful energy field is always available to us through meditation. In simple language he explains how to "listen with your entire body," while working with the body, mind, and attention in order to "merge with this moment." As we go beyond the need for thought, he teaches, we achieve the meditative state of "no mind" or "presence" that is effortless, joyful, and natural. Through this timeless path we merge with the universal purpose, and become a divine presence. Eckhart is clearly a contemporary writer who has learned to teach spiritual practice without distracting us with our old, negative views of God.

For me, at least, it is easier to engage in spiritual thought when I'm not struggling with childhood images of some being who sits up in the sky and decides who is going to live or die; who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. My Divine Universal Power, "Dup," simply is the name I give to the capacity that we all have to demonstrate love, kindness and compassion. Dup has no voice and no hands on this earth but ours.

While my Fellowshipian friend who was turned off by spiritual stuff was recently standing shoulder to shoulder with me demonstrating for peace in front of our state capital we were both doing Dup's work. Dup has no way to demonstrate love on this earth except through us. Obviously, working with a new word can be awkward, especially such a funny one like Dup. For all of you who are comfortable with the word God and can let go of any negative thoughts it may bring up for you, bless you. For some of the rest of us, it might help us to get back on a spiritual path if we find a new symbol for what we know and feel in our hearts.

Gandhi once said, "Peace between countries must rest on the solid foundation of love between individuals." It is up to each of us to be the living manifestation of divine love. We cannot hope for peace on earth when there is still war in our hearts.

My Divine Universal Power, "Dup," simply is the name I give to the capacity that we all have to demonstrate love, kindness and compassion. Dup has no voice and no hands on this earth but ours.

Erwin Braker