

An Infinite Web by Richard Rohr

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Author and Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor has been writing about the intersection of faith and science for a long time. In this essay, written over twenty years ago, she was already exploring a new cosmology, one that honored her deep understanding of both God and the workings of the universe. She has the courage and conviction to ask hard questions and wrestle with them alongside us. Her insight into God's unifying and enlivening presence has much in common with the mystics. As Franciscan theologian Bonaventure described, God is One "whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." [1]

In Sunday school, I learned to think of God as a very old white-bearded man on a throne, who stood above creation and occasionally stirred it with a stick. When I am dreaming quantum dreams, what I see is an infinite web of relationship, flung across the vastness of space like a luminous net. It is made of energy, not thread. As I look, I can see light moving through it as a pulse moves through veins. What I see "out there" is no different from what I feel inside. There is a living hum that might be coming from my neurons but might just as well be coming from the furnace of the stars. When I look up at them there is a small commotion in my bones, as the ashes of dead stars that house my marrow rise up like metal filings toward the magnet of their living kin.

Where am I in this picture? I am all over the place. I am up there, down here, inside my skin and out. I am large compared to a virus and small compared to the sun, with a life that is permeable to them both. Am I alone? How could I ever be alone? I am part of a web that is pure relationship, with energy available to me that has been around since the universe was born.

Where is God in this picture? God is all over the place. God is up there, down here, inside my skin and out. God is the web, the energy, the space, the light—not captured in them, as if any of those concepts were more real than what unites them—but revealed in that singular, vast net of relationship that animates everything that is.

At this point in my thinking, it is not enough for me to proclaim that God is responsible for all this unity. Instead, I want to proclaim that God *is* the unity—the very energy, the

very intelligence, the very elegance and passion that make it all go. This is the God who is not somewhere but everywhere, the God who may be prayed to in all directions at once. This is also the God beyond all directions, who will still be here (wherever “here” means) when the universe either dissipates into dust or swallows itself up again.