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February 9, 2021: God and the Pandemic

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Title: God and the Pandemic

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2/9/2021--It has gone out of style to conceive of God as sending COVID-19 as a way of punishing humankind. We don't believe in that kind of God anymore--which means we don't believe in God at all. A God who could never do that no matter what is just not God. A culture that believes in only natural processes is no longer in the Biblical tradition. If we were going to think of God that way, however, what sin would the virus be punishing us for? Karl Barth used to say that God punishes simply by leaving us along to do as we will. If so, we have so degraded the natural world that the emergence of a novel virus seems a fitting natural response. But try a different idea. What if God were showing us just what virtual life is really like. In other words, we wanted to live online and now we do. It turns out that what we really need is human contact. What is the virus signals the beginning of the end of our fascination with the Internet and social media? Now that would be a creative God.