

# Grawemeyer Awards

## Scholar focusing on God's human qualities wins 2024 religion prize

By Denise Fitzpatrick

God gets angry. God gets jealous. God hates, regrets and learns.

Theologians often dismiss those depictions of God in the Bible because they seem to clash with God's image as an all-loving being, but an Episcopal priest with a different view has received the 2024 Grawemeyer Award in Religion for helping explain the paradox.

The Rev. Charles Halton, associate rector of Christ Church Cathedral in Lexington, Ky., won the prize for ideas set forth in his 2021 [book](#) "A Human-Shaped God: Theology of an Embodied God." He argues that embracing God as a deity with human qualities can bring us closer to God and inspire us to become better people.

"We are, like God, to move from a place of exclusion and anger-fueled violence to a life of inclusion, radical forgiveness and compassion," he said. "This is the path God is on. If we are not on it too, we are not imitating God."

As an example, Halton cites the Old Testament story of how God floods Earth, destroying everything except Noah's Ark. Later, God feels regret and creates a rainbow in the sky.

"Many Bible accounts are springboards for theological imagination that help us see God in constructive ways," he said. "As humans, we too lash out in anger, but we also learn to forgive."

[Halton](#) explores "an underappreciated view of God that exists in the Bible but is absent from most Eurocentric theology," said Tyler Mayfield, who directs the religion award. "His approach is original, thought-provoking and offers new opportunities for understanding the biblical God."

Halton taught Old Testament and Semitic languages at seminary and college levels for nearly a decade. He holds a doctorate from Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Bible and ancient Near East studies and is an external affiliate at the Centre for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity at St. Mary's University, Twickenham, London.

The University of Louisville and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary jointly give the religion prize.