

# Deism Today...

The Deist Alliance Quarterly Newsletter...



Volume 1, Section 1, April 1, 2006

## Weekly Chats...

Unless otherwise noted weekly chats will be held on Friday evenings at 10:00 p.m. central time. You can join in on the chat by going here...

[www.positivedeism.com/chat](http://www.positivedeism.com/chat)

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## Deism Is An Opinion...

Dictionary.com says that Theology is... "A system or school of opinions concerning God and religious questions"

My definition is "what we think about God"

I believe that any theology (including Deism) is simply an opinion. No theology has empirical proof that their theology is true (much less that it's "the ONLY true theology"), and Deism is no different. Our Deist beliefs are simply our opinion

I think that the big difference between Deism and the theologies of revealed religions is in the way that we arrive at our theological opinions. Deists don't believe in God simply because they were brought up to believe that, and refuse to question it. We don't believe in God because it says to in some 'Holy Book'. Instead, we believe in God based on our own reason, and what we ourselves infer from nature. We come to our OWN conclusions.

But I think we're fooling ourselves if we think our Deist beliefs in God are empirical FACT. They're not. They are simply opinions. The revealed religionists don't have an exclusive lock on theological truth, and neither do we.

This almost sounds like we're Agnostics doesn't it... Claiming that we don't know for sure, and neither does anyone else. Well, Deists and Agnostics are indeed close cousins. But there is a difference. Agnostics say, "We don't have proof one way or the other, so we can't know". And they stop right there. On the other hand, Deists say, "We don't have proof one way or the other, but nature speaks to us of a God". Deists are simply willing to take that one extra step toward accepting a belief in God, even though they know it can't be empirically proven.

The fact that Deists realize that they don't know for sure, is a wonderful safeguard to them against fundamentalism. I realize that there are a few "fundie" Deists out there. But nowhere near the number that are in revealed religions. Fundamentalists refuse to believe that their theological beliefs are only opinions. They believe that they have THE truth concerning God. They believe that their theological beliefs are right, and everyone else's is wrong. Fundamentalism causes people to disregard the rights of others, dream of (and work towards) a theocratic society where their religion is in charge, and (taken to the extreme) flying planes into buildings because they believe they are on a mission from God.

Thank God (if I may say that), Deists don't have this problem for the most part. And the reason we don't have this problem, is because most of us realize that our Deist beliefs are simply our opinion, and not absolute fact.

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## **Editor's Note...**

"The views expressed by the authors of the articles in this newsletter don't necessarily reflect the views of all Deists, or of the Deist Alliance"



## **Personal Announcements...**

Michael from the PD and DD forums would like to announce his new blog at...  
<http://masonheart.blogspot.com>

Stetmediq from the DD forum would like to announce that he has written a book on the subject of Deism. The name of his book is "Toward A New Religion" and it can be found at [Authorhouse.com](http://Authorhouse.com) for anyone interested...

Recently, Aaron (the editor of this Newsletter) became the official Dynamic Deism representative to The Deist Alliance. David Pyle (the previous Dynamic Deism rep) has begun attending seminary, which places a big limitation on his time. Aaron stepped up to the plate and took David's place as Dynamic Deism's representative to the Deist Alliance. The Deist Alliance is glad to have Aaron step into this role. He has shown himself to be an enthusiastic, active representative. It is a pleasure working with Aaron as we continue our work to promote Deism to the world.

~Steve Dowell  
([www.positivedeism.com](http://www.positivedeism.com))

Even though Deists acknowledge that their beliefs might be wrong. They are convinced that they are at least "Less wrong" than the revealed religionists. Theologies of revealed religions are filled with contradictions, inconsistencies & absurdities. At least Deism has fewer of those issues to deal with. If a Deist view turns out to be contradictory or inconsistent, we're far more willing to discard it and look down a different path.

For many years I've said, "How you live your life is far more important than your opinions about God". Our life is here and is real. It's in our face. We have our own actions and the actions of others to deal with. We have relationships with family and friends to cultivate.

I believe that the most important thing in life is to live our lives well. Act in a morally good fashion (according to reason, not theological rules), and to cultivate our relationships with others. Especially our families and loved ones.

Sure, go ahead and have your opinions about God. Seek for answers and search for truth. But I believe that your true energy should be focused on living and loving well, and according to reason. If we can do that, then I think God is honored...

~Steve Dowell...

## **Suggested Deist Readings...**

### **Deist Books...**

- Ethan Allen's, "Reason: The only oracle of Man".
- Thomas Paine's, "Age of Reason" (or Steve Dowell's paraphrase "Modern Age of Reason").
- Matthew Tindal's, "Christianity as old as the Creation".
- Elihu Palmer's, "Principles of Nature".
- Baruch Spinoza's (Benedictus de Spinoza), "Ethica" (Ethics) can be found on Project Gutenberg.
- Ken Wilber's, "A Theory of Everything", "Beyond Borders", and "Sex, Ecology and Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution"
- A. N. Whitehead's "Process and Reality"

### **Science...**

- Paul Davies', "The Mind of God "
- Steven W. Hawking's, "A Brief History of Time"
- Brian Greene's, "The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory"

### **Essays...**

- "The Deist Document" [www.positivedeism.com/deistdoc.html](http://www.positivedeism.com/deistdoc.html)
- "The Deist Primer" [www.moderndeism.com/html/deism\\_defined.html](http://www.moderndeism.com/html/deism_defined.html)

## *Easter from a Christian Deist's Perspective...*

Many people do not know that the "Easter" holiday is based on religious traditions that are centuries older than Christianity. As the Christian movement ventured beyond Judea and into the Gentile world, the movement encountered other religious traditions, which were assimilated by Christians and redefined in Christian terminology.

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after March 20, the nominal date of the Spring Equinox. Easter Sunday comes in March or April. The name of the holiday, "Easter," apparently comes from "Eostre" which was the name of the Great Mother Goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Eostre was a Goddess of fertility. The name of the Goddess, Eostre, comes from an ancient word "eastre" for "spring."

Spring, of course, is a time of new life. It is a time when new plants begin to grow and new leaves appear on trees. The "dead of winter" ends with the rebirth of vegetation in the cycle of life. Also, it is a time when many animals give birth to their young.

In human history, the celebration of "new life" in the Spring appeared many centuries before Christianity. The cycle of life that is so evident in the Spring has inspired human beings to have hope for life beyond death.

In trinitarian Christianity, the Easter holiday was adopted as the day to commemorate the "resurrection" of Jesus. Jesus was crucified by the Romans on Friday of Passover week in the Jewish tradition. He was laid in a rock tomb on Friday before sundown and the tomb was found to be empty on the following Sunday morning. Then Jesus, who was physically wounded but alive, met secretly with his disciples for some days before Jesus disappeared.

Jesus' disciples believed that Jesus had died and was brought back to life by God. The apostle Paul claimed that belief in Jesus' "resurrection" was one of the two requirements for obtaining salvation from sin and death. Paul wrote, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Trinitarian Christians believe that the "resurrection" of Jesus is evidence of life after death, and Easter Sunday is used to celebrate this hope. Christian Deists believe that God's power to give life is demonstrated in the fact that we have life now. Obviously, what God has already done, God can do again. As human beings have recognized for centuries before the time of Jesus, there is a cycle of life of which we are a part. Each Spring, Christian deists celebrate "new life" and the hope it brings for the future. Christians have borrowed the name "Easter" from a tradition older than Christianity but the basic meaning of the celebration is known naturally: God has the power to give life.

One Easter weekend, my wife and I decided to celebrate Easter Sunday at a beautiful State park that is known for its waterfalls and wild flowers. We took our little camper to the park and set our alarm clock for before dawn on Easter Sunday. That morning, in the darkness, we hiked to one of the waterfalls and waited for the sun to rise. On that fresh Sunday morning, as the dawn came, we could understand how human beings have always experienced reverence and awe in observing a beautiful sunrise and the majesty of new life in the flowers and trees. The experience of "Easter" that morning transcended any one religious tradition. "Easter" is a universal experience available to anyone who chooses to observe it.

~John Lindel...

### *What is the Deist Alliance?*

The Deist Alliance (DA) consists of various Deist groups who have formed a friendly alliance with each other in order to open channels of communication, share information, resources and advice, and generally work together toward a higher goal of promoting Deism to the world...

For more information about Deism or the Deist Alliance check out the following website:  
<http://deistalliance.org>

## *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Reason But Were Afraid To Ask... (At least in regards to Deism)*

Deism is defined as a faith that is based on the use of “Reason” and the observation of “Nature”. This stands in contrast to those faiths that are based on the more common use of revelation and scripture. Essentially, religious authority rests within the Deist rather than on any person, place, book and/or institution because of the utilization of reason rather than revelation. As such, reason is not just an aspect of Deism but it is the very foundation on which we base our faith. Unfortunately, reason is also an aspect of our world that is greatly misunderstood even in this day and age.

As Deists, we must understand Reason for what it truly is and how it applies not only to theology but also to our daily lives as well. Reason is defined as “*a methodology for applying intuitive and logical thought processes to develop rational inferences and arguments based on varying degrees of evidence (empirical and circumstantial).*” What should be immediately obvious is that reason is a methodology or process that we use to examine the world that we inhabit.

Reason is not a static thing but a tool that we can utilize and should utilize in all aspects of our lives. Many equate reason with only logic but this in turn pushes intuition to the side. Studies have shown that both are invaluable for our ability to understand and function in this world and reason is a process that balances such views. Reason allows for a balance between more than just logic and intuition but also between empirical knowledge and circumstantial knowledge, rationalism and romanticism, science and philosophy, nature and nurture, the conscious and the unconscious.

One way to show that reason is a process is that the use of reason is called “reasoning.” There are two types of reasoning, which are called deductive and inductive reasoning. Here are examples of each:

∞Deductive reasoning: The process of starting with a general statement and arriving at a specific conclusion. A valid example would be, “*All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal.*” \*

∞Inductive reasoning: The process of starting with a specific statement and arriving at a general conclusion. An example would be, “*All of the planets we have observed in the universe revolve around a star; therefore, to discover more planets we should begin by locating other stars.*” \*

As Deists, we utilize reason to develop our faith. It is claimed by some that reason and faith oppose each other but this is called a False Dichotomy, which is a form of logical fallacy. This shows a lack of understanding of what reason and faith are. Faith is defined as “*a belief not based on proof or empirical evidence.*” As has been shown, reason does not rest solely on empirical knowledge or proof so one can utilize reason to develop their faith (despite what others may say).

It must be understood that Deism is not any better or worse than other religions just because it bases its faith on reason. Faith is beyond proof so concepts of correct and incorrect have no relevancy here. Remember that Deists are not using reason to make a claim of proof regarding the theological. What we are doing is using a non-revelation based method to develop our beliefs in God, which is nothing new as the Greeks were doing this over two millennia ago. As Deists, we center our beliefs in reason and through this we develop a profound and unique belief in God.

~ Joe Hardwick...

*\*Special thanks to Jay Boswell of Deistnet for letting me use his excellent examples*

### *For Mom...*

God gave me a universe,  
Full of colors so true,  
I might never have seen,  
Were it not for you.

I might never have seen,  
The symmetry of a leaf,  
The majesty of a mountain,  
Were it not for your belief.

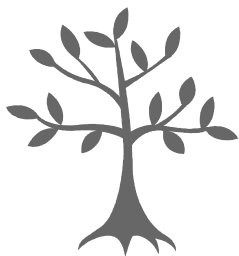
Though our paths may be different,  
Our views not the same,  
Were it not for my mom,  
There would not be beauty... in the rain.

~David Pyle (Mother's Day)...

## Deist Alliance Links and News...

### Deist Alliance Member Sites...

- **PONDER: Presence On the Net of Deists for Enlightenment and Reason...**  
Promoting Deism and Deists' Communications Worldwide  
<http://www.deistnet.com>
- **Modern Deism: Reason, Nature, Free Thought, Liberty, and Respect...**  
<http://www.moderndeism.com>
- **Deist.Info...**  
<http://www.deist.info>
- **POSITIVE DEISM: Promoting Online Deist Community and Friendship...**  
"Reason and Respect in all you think, say and do"  
<http://www.positivedeism.com>
- **Dynamic Deism: Belief in God Through Reason and Nature...**  
<http://dynamicdeism.org>



### Positive Deism News...

Positive Deism recently installed a new chat system. The old chat system we were using was functional, but we had lots of complaints that people couldn't connect to it. So far, with the new chat system, people have been able to easily connect for the chats. So if you tried to join the Friday Night chats in the past, but had problems connecting, let me invite you to try again! We look forward to seeing everyone on the Friday Night chats, where we can hang out and relax with fellow Deists. (See chat times at the top of the Newsletter)

Positive Deism produces a podcast that we call "PD Podcast". Please visit <http://sdowell.libsyn.com> to download past shows from our archive. New podcasts come out about twice a month.

~Steve Dowell (Positive Deism)...

### Dynamic Deism News...

It has been an exciting quarter at Dynamic Deism, with several additions and changes! On our website, you will notice a slightly new look, with new links to the Online Deist chat sponsored by our partner website, [www.positivedeism.com](http://www.positivedeism.com), as well as links to register for this Newsletter. We also have made some content changes, including a more streamlined front page, as well as new Bio's of DD leaders in the "About Us" section.

We have had several requests to begin presenting "DD Reverence Services" again, and another such podcast service is in development right now. It is entitled "Speaking through Thatched Cottages" and will be available online in mid-April. Thank you to all who contacted us! To listen to the reverence services that are already online, go to [dynamicdeism.org/reverenceservices.htm](http://dynamicdeism.org/reverenceservices.htm).

In our library, there are a few newly added works, as well as some classics. We are especially proud to have "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" by Theodore Parker and "The Deists Immortality" by Lysander Spooner. As always, there are other more classic works in the library, as well as new entries in the [Celestial Lands Journal](#).

I would like to thank all the long time members of the DD Fellowship and Community Forums, but especially I want to thank all the new members that have during the past quarter started so many wonderful topics. I think half my theological formation occurs in just reading what the wonderful members of DD have to say.

I also would like to congratulate and thank Aaron for his willingness to become the Dynamic Deism Representative to the Deist Alliance. He has done an outstanding job representing DD to the wider Deist community. I also want to thank the "man behind the scenes" Kiwimac, for his help in keeping our forum functioning and free of spam. Without them, I don't know if I could keep DD online.

We are looking forward to an exciting quarter for DD, with a few additions to the library on the way, as well as our "headquarters" moving from Galveston Texas, to Knoxville Tennessee, and then to a more permanent home in Chicago Illinois. So, there may be some transfer pains, but we will get through them.

We look forward to seeing you at Dynamic Deism!

~David Pyle (Administrator, Dynamic Deism)...

## Children's Moment...

### *Billy and the Secret Hat...*

I once had a friend. His name was Billy. Now Billy and I were great friends, and we played and ran, climbed trees and talked. We talked a lot... and he never lied to me.

Billy once told me a great secret. Now that I am older, and perhaps Billy is too I can share the secret. At the very least, I am probably now bigger than Billy, and so he can't beat me up if I tell.

Billy and I hadn't always been friends. In fact, I had only known him for a year. Before that, he lived with his Uncle in some weird place called Idaho. I had heard there were a lot of potatoes there.

But Billy's uncle was not a potato farmer. No, he was a Scientist. In fact, he was a really good scientist. He once gave Billy a special hat he had made, a hat that let you see into the future while you slept.

Now, I didn't believe Billy at first... Because it is just silly, isn't it? See into the future. But Billy kept talking about it, and talking about it. So finally, I asked him if he still had the hat that lets you see into the future. To my surprise, he said he did.

So, we went to his house, and up to his room. And hanging on a hook next to his bed was a hat. It was like a baseball cap, only without the bill. It was big and blue, and when Billy put it on it almost came down over his eyeballs, so he couldn't see.

Frankly, he looked really silly in it, and I told him so!

I told him I still didn't believe him, and he started telling me about all the things he had seen. About flying cars, and self-opening jars... About clothes that change color and buildings that grow taller... About schools with no books, and kitchens with no cooks... About a movie with no screen, and bedrooms that stay clean... About grass with no dirt, and about shots that don't hurt.

All of this and more Billy told me about. His eyes grew bright, and it seemed he was right.

So, a few weeks later, after he had forgotten what he told me, I went over to his house to spend the night. When we went to bed, we talked quietly until Billy went to sleep... but I stayed awake. When he started snoring, I got out of my sleeping bag and got the silly looking see the future hat and I looked at it.

It seemed like a normal looking hat, no wires, no batteries. It was made of blue cloth, and had an elastic band. And it just looked silly.

But, no one was looking... so I put it on. I couldn't see, so I laid down carefully, and soon I was asleep.

And do you know what happened? In my dreams I saw all that Billy had seen and more! I saw the future. I saw phones with no cords, and houses with no boards. I saw glass that doesn't break, and buildings on a lake! I saw cups that never spill, and an entire meal in a little pill. I saw people float through the air, just having fun without a care....

All of this I saw, and much, much more!

When I woke the next morning, I was so excited. But, so Billy wouldn't know, I took off the hat and put it back in its place.

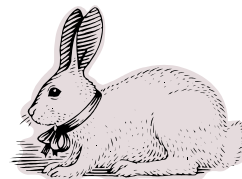
I never, never told him I had used the hat...

The next night, alone in my own bed, I got a big surprise. When I fell asleep, I dreamed again of the future, even without the hat. I saw people living underwater, and a light like the sun, only hotter! I saw kids use computers to learn, and a flame that was bright but would not burn. I saw cars that could also be boats, and shirts that could also be coats. I met a guy who could talk to his horse, and all the other animals too, of course!

All of this I saw that night, and many other nights when I went to sleep. Sometimes, I still see the future in my dreams, even though I am now big and old.

But now that I'm older, I have learned the secret. There was nothing special about that silly hat. Nothing at all, it was just a hat. But Billy's Uncle did know a secret.

The secret was that there is something special, and it was inside of me. It was inside of Billy. It is inside of you. The secret is that your mind, your imagination... can show you the future. All you have to do is dream.



~ David Pyle...

## *Deist Testimonial...*

In the age of pop culture and infomercials it seems as though nothing gets through without a testimonial. So, for those new to Deism, I thought I would relate my journey towards Deism.

I was brought up in various denominations, Lutheran, Methodist, First Christian. Personally, I liked the youth groups for the camaraderie, and the Church was an excuse to get together. I never really thought all the Bible stories were literal, but I believed the basic premise that Jesus died for our sins, and if we asked for forgiveness, it was freely given, and one day after I died, I would get to go to Heaven.

As I matured, two things about Christianity began to rub me the wrong way. One, I discovered many adults did believe the Bible stories to be literal, and two, if Christianity was correct, a whole lot of people were going to be roasted in Hell. It did not sit right with me that an "all-loving" God could be so cut and dry, especially when it seemed many people simply followed the faith of their parents. Also, along the lines of the first quandary, it seemed to run counter to many scientific truths that had obviously allowed mankind to progress in great technological leaps.

So, much of my late twenties, I was a quasi-Christian, believed in the salvation and forgiveness through Christ, while not above criticizing fundamentalists or laughing out loud at Monty Python (Holy Grail, Life of Brian)!

After I was married, my wife, who had studied Platonism, asked me a simple question, "How do you reconcile the vengeful God of the Old Testament with the Loving God of the New Testament?" Being a semi-intellectual, I did something that had not occurred to me in all my years of being a Christian, I read the Book, cover to cover, Genesis to Revelations. I came away with one, overriding thought. It was fiction... it was bad fiction. Where were all the supposed family values? I read about polygamy, genocide, incest, child sacrifice, and murder... and these were committed by the supposed "good guys"...

I thought, there must be something common to all peoples about one's spiritual nature or thoughts. My wife and I began searching. At the time, I didn't realize Platonism was a practice, not just someone who studies Plato, and my wife wasn't ready to let me in on this quite yet. She's very clever. We first came across a likely candidate in Theosophy. It was a

combination of philosophy and religion. I found it interesting, but not convincing. I then spotted Deism in the list, which led me to [www.deism.com](http://www.deism.com).

After reading the web site, I knew that that was what I always knew intrinsically, just never thought it had been developed. And, what development! The Enlightenment, the Forefathers, Reason. I quickly read Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason" and Ingersoll's "Some Mistakes of Moses". I knew the Bible was flawed, but the depth of such flaws escaped my first reading. To make a long story short, I have read much about the subject now. Some of my views may be more extreme than some, but the main thing about Deism is that you don't "join" it. You acknowledge it, and then proceed to develop your reason. It is one of the most liberating experiences, challenging long held superstitions, and relying on your own God-given reason to discern the only true miracle, the Creation itself. The great thing is that one doesn't have to disbelieve science to also acknowledge a Creator.

This is a very simple explanation. As I'm sure Rev. Peter can affirm, my thoughts and contemplations on the matter have taken me well beyond the first euphoric discovery, but it was that simple beginning that opened new vistas in how to live now, as opposed to waiting to die to go to some "mythic paradise fantasy land"...

~Travis Clementsmith...

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[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DA\\_Newsletter](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DA_Newsletter)

Or by sending an email to...  
[DA\\_Newsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:DA_Newsletter@yahoo.com)