

Deism Today...

The Deist Alliance Bimonthly Newsletter...



Volume 1, Section 3, August 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

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The Rain Storm...

Moments before the rain began; time seemed to have stopped as if the world had just come to an end. I ceased what I was doing and just listened...

Nothing...

Even the birds had stopped singing and the wind was nowhere to be found... I patiently waited for their return... And the moment seemed to last forever...

Then it came down... and all came back to normal... Birds were chirping and the leaves started swaying in the wind like saying hello to the world that is listening. Then after a few final drops of rain, the sun came out to brighten and complete the picture...

A picture of perfection...

With a sense of relief I savored the sounds and all the beauty that enveloped me with loving care being grateful for it all...



What if we all had the power to create this within ourselves, quieting our inner sounds?

To create that perfect peace for just a few moments and then return to our world grateful to the music that life brings...

~11A11...

Deist Differences...

Every religion in the history of the world has had its differences. Usually these differences are not over the core beliefs but due to minor issues. Some accept the differences and move past them but others become bitterly embroiled and forget the core beliefs that unite them. These differences have been the cause of many rifts in religion over the years. The most well known example was the reformation in Christianity that created the Protestant movement. The differences were great enough that a schism occurred and a split took place. Generally, the differences are not of major consequence but have lead to problems. One way to look at the issue is from the viewpoint of Protestant denominations.

There are many denominations that exist within the Protestant arm of the Christian faith and will serve as a good example. The most famous are the Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. There are many more than this. The issues that separate these groups are not question(s) regarding the divinity of Jesus but in how God is seen. Each denomination has the belief that Jesus is the messiah and died for humanities sins. They also believe that the bible is the “word of God” but may disagree on whether it is to be read metaphorically or literally. However, divisions occur in the areas of heaven and hell, predestination/predetermination, sin (in general), atonement, prayer and morality. Many of these differences are based on the subjective nature of God and how God can be viewed. Deism as a religious philosophy and category of belief is no different.

Deism is a religious category of belief that is best defined as a religious philosophy and methodology that asserts the existence of a God/Higher Power through the exercise of Reason, the observation of Nature (existence) and the use of personal Experience with an emphasis on individual freedom of thought rather than on a foundation of divine revelation(s) and “holy texts.” For the Deist, Reason is the primary tool in the development and maintenance in their belief in God. However, Deists accept that the nature of God is generally unknown and incomprehensible to us at this point in time and that any beliefs into this nature are purely speculative. This does not stop the Deist from speculating on the possible nature of God but the Deist will admit that their view into this nature is no more “correct” than any other view based on

Reason. This is where the differences among Deists arise.

While this difference into the nature of God causes problems in other religions, it is generally well received in Deism since it is a category of belief like Theism and Atheism. Here are a few types or religions of Deism: Monodeist, Panendeist, Process Deist, Christian Deist, Philosophical Deist, and Scientific Deist. There are more types but these tend to be the major groups or religions under the umbrella of Deism. How it is possible that these types do not break apart and start different groups all competing for the term of “real Deism.” It is because Deists are freethinkers who like to discuss differences as it causes them to think about their beliefs. Furthermore, they accept that what they are pushing is pure speculation and that each is free to speculate on their own as long as it is based on Reason.

These terms for the different types/religions of Deism are generally only used around other Deists. To illustrate, I will use myself as an example. I consider myself an Integral Panendeist while around other Deists. When around those who only know of the standard definition of Deism, I am a Modern Deist. In the company of those who know nothing of Deism, I am a Deist. I used to be a Monodeist but after an experience I had I became a Panendeist. I use and have used science as my base point for my Deism so I also consider myself a Scientific Deist. To make matters worse, I consider myself a Deistic Humanist on a day to day basis. Regardless of the types that I use or adhere to, I am a Deist based on the fact that I use reason, experience and nature to develop my belief in God.

Many Deists will move through the types because we speculate on the possible nature of God and this can change as time goes by. Some may start in one type and then become another type as our individual beliefs are matured and modified. This is because we are constantly in the process of discovery that causes Deists to learn and grow in their beliefs. As Deists, we will never agree completely on the nature of God but we will respect other viewpoints and learn from them as well. In the end Deists use Reason as the primary tool in developing our beliefs; therefore, minor differences are not a problem but become a positive attribute in the development and maturation of our beliefs.

~ Joe Hardwick...

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>



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"

Spiral dynamics is a model by Don Beck and Chris Cowan, which is based on the theory of psychology professor Clare W. Graves. It argues that human nature is not fixed: humans are able, when forced by circumstances, to adapt to their environment by constructing new, more complex, conceptual models of the world that allow them to handle the new problems. Each new model includes and extends all previous models. According to Beck and Cowan, these conceptual models are organized around so-called "vMeme": systems of core values or collective intelligences, applicable to both individuals and entire cultures. Here are the first eight "vMeme" levels...

- 1.) **Beige:** Archaic-Instinctive, survivalist /automatic/ reflexological, From 100,000 BC on...
 - "Express self to meet imperative physiological needs through instincts of *Homo sapiens*."
- 2.) **Purple:** Animistic-Tribalistic, Magical-Animistic, From 50,000 BC on...
 - "Sacrifice to the ways of the elders and customs as one subsumed in group."
- 3.) **Red:** Ego-centric-Exploitive, Power Gods/dominionist, From 7,000 BC on ...
 - "Express self (impulsively) for what self desires without guilt and to avoid shame."
- 4.) **Blue:** Absolutistic-Obedience, mythic Order, purposeful / authoritarian, From 3,000 BC on ...
 - "Sacrifice self for reward to come through obedience to rightful authority in purposeful Way."
- 5.) **Orange:** Multiplistic-Achievist, Scientific/strategic, From 1700 AD on ...
 - "Express self (calculatedly) to reach goals and objectives without rousing the ire of important others."
- 6.) **Green:** Relativistic-Personalistic — communitarian / egalitarian, From 1850 AD on ...
 - "Sacrifice self interest now in order to gain acceptance and group harmony."
- 7.) **Yellow:** Systemic-integrative, From the 1950's on ...
 - "Express self for what self desires, but to avoid harm to others and so that all life, not just own life, will benefit."
- 8.) **Turquoise:** Holistic / Integral, From the 1970's on ...
 - "A sacrifice self-interest system which is still forming"

Personal Announcements...

Stretmediq and Chattan would like to announce the formation of the "Tulsa Deist Society". They will be starting the group at "All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church" in Tulsa, Ok.

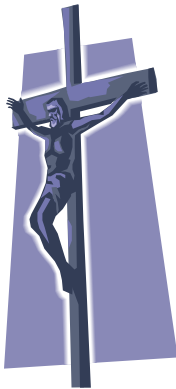
For more information, check out the new "Tulsa Deist Society" group at "yahoo groups". You don't have to live in Tulsa to join. A friend or family connection will do.

Do You Know Your Savior?

The ancient mythologies of the "pagan" religions are full of saviors- legendary figures that saved people from some evil- whether it was some force of nature, the claws of an evil beast such as a dragon, or the forces of an invading army ruled over by an evil general. How many of these Saviors can you name?

The ancient Hebrews also had their saviors. There was Noah, who saved 8 people and 2 of each un-kosher animal and 7 of each kosher animal from a devastating worldwide flood. There was Abraham, who saved his nephew Lot when Lot was caught up in the middle of a war including many Canaanite city-states. There was Moses, who saved the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. There was Joshua, Ehud, Gideon, Samson, Saul, David, Elijah, Elisha, etc.

A small number of Jews around the first century of the common era believed their executed Rabbi to be the Savior of the World. They took their faith to the Gentiles (Who ironically, showed their gratitude by purging this new Jewish faith of all Jewish traces), and the Gentiles ruled the new faith within 100 years after his death.



It is of small importance whether you believe any of these people did what they are said to have done, or whether they even existed in the real world or not. What I wish to examine is the need behind these stories. We, as humans, feel a need to be saved. The world is a terrible place, and we feel like we need the security of a Savior.

I have my own individual Savior. You also should have a Savior that is very much different than mine. Your friend should have a Savior very

much different from both of ours.

You see, my Savior is... Me!!! Your Savior should be... You!!! Your friend's Savior should be... Guess who?.. Your friend!!! Let me explain before you get ready to burn me at the stake for heresy.

We each have our own Hell. That Hell is the negative things within us that hold us back from reaching our full potential. It is our anger that we refuse to let go of. It is our fears that we needlessly hang on to. It is so many other things as well. Our Hell is a mix of these.

Only one person can save you from your hell, and that is YOU!!! Yes, you may need help. That is why our society has therapists and counselors. These people help you find all these things that you need to eliminate. You may need the guidance of the inner piece of the Divine each of us posses. But in the end, it is your decision whether to let these things go or not.

Only you can be your own Savior. We each are our own Saviors. We must only accept it, and begin the mission that the Divine has given us, to deliver ourselves from our own individual Hells. Will you accept your destiny, or will you continue to look to others to deliver you, while deep down knowing that they cannot?

~ Byron Arnold...

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>

Married To A Christian...

I wasn't a Deist who married a Christian. I was a Christian all my life up until about 6 years ago. When my wife and I got married over 25 years ago, we were both Christians. We raised all of our children as Christians. So 6 years ago, went I rejected Christianity and became a Deist, we got some new twists to our relationship that we didn't have previously.

I remember when I first announced to my wife that I was no longer a Christian. It was during an anniversary dinner that we were having out at a fancy restaurant (I know... my timing sucks.) That bit of news definitely spoiled the anniversary dinner. My wife was in tears. She was angry, frustrated, felt betrayed, confused... lots of emotion. I never wanted to hurt her in any way. I simply felt that I had to be honest about my own theological beliefs. I didn't feel that it was right for me to go on through life pretending to believe something that I no longer believed. I felt that was just too hypocritical, and I couldn't do it.

After a number of weeks, things settled down a bit, and although my wife thought I was making a huge mistake (she thought I was going to burn in hell for my decision... and I guess she still does), she sort of reconciled herself to the fact that I had made my decision, and wasn't going to turn back.

I remember those early days of being a Deist in a Christian household. As with any new "convert", I felt that I had finally found "the Truth" and felt compelled to convince my wife (and anyone else who would listen) about my spectacular new revelation. I quickly discovered that she was completely happy as a Christian, and absolutely did NOT want to hear me ridiculing or belittling her faith. It caused more than a few arguments. I realized that I had to make a decision. What was more important to me, my theological beliefs, or my relationship with my wife and family? The answer was clear. My relationship with my wife and family was FAR more important to me than my theological beliefs. Hands down... no contest.

It was at that point that I came to the conclusion that Deism shouldn't be focused on bashing Christians and Christianity. The focus of Deism should be... Deism. I feel like every person's spiritual journey is a personal matter and every person should be free to decide what makes the most sense to them, and what works for them personally. But not only that... I feel that we should fully respect other's right to hold a theological belief that is different than our own. As

long as their beliefs don't harm or violate the rights of others, then I feel they have just as much of a right to their theological beliefs as I have to mine. After all, Deists don't have any more empirical proof for their beliefs than Christians do. When you come down to it, it's faith.

This concept was a significant turning point for me. It immediately removed nearly all of the tension and conflict between my wife and I that had come as a result of my leaving Christianity. I'm now able to deflect nearly every theological conflict by saying things like, "That's your belief, and I respect your right to have that opinion". I drive my kids to church when necessary. I've given Bibles to my wife and daughter for their birthday or Mother's Day. I even go to church with my family on various special occasions. Recently, we moved to a different part of town, and I accompanied my wife to several churches for several weekends, so that she could find a new church (she felt a little uncomfortable visiting new churches by herself).

I feel that this technique sets a good example. If I show a sincere respect towards her beliefs (even though I disagree with them), then it seems like she is more willing to grant a degree of respect toward my mine. It seems to work quite well.

One thing I should mention... When my wife and I were both Christians, we had a common spirituality that we shared between us. When I rejected Christianity, we lost that particular aspect of our relationship. That's probably the most difficult thing about spouses who hold different theological beliefs. That "Spiritual Connectedness" was a very powerful bond between us, and now it's missing. We are able to get along without it, but it makes me very sad that my wife and I have lost that aspect of our relationship. It was a significant loss. And I know she feels the same. We used to read and study the Bible together. We used to pray together. We used to approach life together from the same Christian perspective. We used to be "a couple" at church, and have mutual Christian friends. All that took a hit when I rejected Christianity. Losing all that has been a tough pill to swallow. But all I can say is that by putting my love for my wife first, and showing a sincere respect towards her right to hold to her own faith, we have been able to forge ahead and maintain a strong marriage.

~ Steve Dowell...

Famous "Freethinker" Quotes...

This section will feature quotes from famous deists and other "freethinkers". In this edition we will focus on quotes from Albert Einstein...

"Before God we are all equally wise - and equally foolish."

"My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble mind."

"The important thing is not to stop questioning."

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science."

"Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."

"Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one."

"When you look at yourself from a universal standpoint, something inside always reminds or informs you that there are bigger and better things to worry about."

"Every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving."

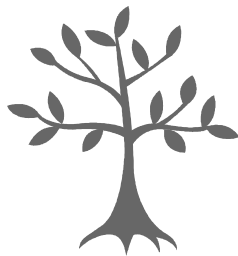
"Sometimes one pays most for the things one gets for nothing."

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

"The further the spiritual evolution of mankind advances, the more certain it seems to me that the path to genuine religiosity does not lie through the fear of life, and the fear of death, and blind faith, but through striving after rational knowledge."

"Put your hand on a hot stove for a minute, and it seems like an hour. Sit with a pretty girl for an hour, and it seems like a minute. THAT'S relativity."

"There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle."



Deist Testimonial...

Unlike many deists I did not come to Deism from Christianity. In fact, I was raised without any religious teachings at all. I only learned about religion from things I read or things I heard other people say in passing. And when I did start to learn about religion it was in the context of historical tragedies such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, or the treatment of Native Americans when the Europeans first arrived. Based on what I read I determined that religion was a great evil and that the world would be a much better place without it.

This negative attitude towards religions and religious people continued through high school. In high school, however, I began to realize that there were people I knew who were religious and also very nice people. So my attitude began to shift. I began to see how some people abused their religions for their own personal ends, while others could be inspired by their religions to do a lot of good in the world. So the focus of my discontent shifted from religion as a whole to just those who abused their religion. Still, I had not personally felt drawn to any particular religion myself, and really viewed modern religions as not much different from ancient religions, like the Greek or Norse pantheons. It was all the same to me, a lot of mythology and superstition.

At the same time, however, from the time I was very young I pondered the questions of “life, the universe, and everything.” I felt there must be something greater than us. I felt that everything in the universe must be connected. That all things come from the same ultimate source. I also felt that there must be more to our existence than just this single, short life. I didn’t know it at the time but my feelings were closely aligned with Buddhist and Taoist philosophies. I didn’t think of my feelings as religious in any way. To me, religion meant worshipping a god, and that just didn’t seem right to me.

As I got older I heard more about various religions of the world, including Eastern religions, nature religions, Native American religions, etc. I heard or read snippets of information that intrigued me, but I never attempted to share my feelings with anyone or try to find others who felt the same way. The first time I specifically studied religion (as opposed to just reading or hearing things in passing) was in college when I took a religious studies course.

It covered the major religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. It was during this class that I realized how closely my own feelings resembled the philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism.

Still, I did not go so far as to start practicing either of those religions. Instead, over the next several years I continued to explore religions and philosophies via the Internet. I wasn’t so much looking for something as I was just fascinated by the variety of human spiritual expression. I learned about many more religious traditions, including Wicca, Asatru, Pantheism, Kabbalah, Theosophy, Thelema, and many more obscure philosophies.

During this time is also when I became a Freemason. One of the things that fascinated me about Freemasonry was the potential to meet people of various religious traditions all in one place. What better way to learn about these religions than to speak with people who are actually practicing those religions? Of course, the reality is that the vast majority of Freemasons are Christian so I didn’t quite find they’re what I was looking for. There is still some diversity, of course, and that has been quite interesting and worthwhile.

And then one day I came upon Deism. The thing that struck me about Deists was how down to earth most of them were. Some Deists were aggressively anti-Christian, but for the most part they seemed to be quite open-minded. In particular I liked a little Deist Yahoo group I found called Deist_HG, which as many of you know, was the precursor to Positive Deism.

Now I feel comfortable in the online Deist community, although I haven’t really embraced the label of Deist for myself. I still feel drawn to Buddhism and now also to Ken Wilber’s Integral Model. I’ve been reading more about Buddhism and have even started to meditate. I still read about other philosophies and religions, though not quite as much as I used to.

And that’s my story... so far.

~ Michael D. Martin...