

The Modern Relevance of God

SPECIAL PODCAST SERIES

RICHARD LLOYD JONES WITH CLÁUDIA B. S. PACHECO

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To embrace sanity is to accept truth, live love, and be good.

Norberto Keppe

Thinking with Somebody Else's Head presents...
The Modern Relevance
of God Special Podcast Series

Science and Spirituality



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Humanity's Deep Need for God

Richard Lloyd Jones:

Welcome to Episode 16 of the Modern Relevance of God Podcast Series on Thinking with Somebody Else's Head. I'm Richard Lloyd Jones.

Our second to last episode in this series. We've been attempting in this series to make the scientific case for the relevance of a more theological consciousness in our everyday lives. I've been impressed with the idea Dr. Joseph Ghougassian elaborated in the preface he wrote to Keppe's, *Glorification* that if we have religions in the world, this must be because of a metaphysical dimension in us. "Worshiping is natural to the soul," he wrote, "And not something imposed by institutions." Otherwise it wouldn't have been so practiced through the millennia, long before we built churches to formalize the ceremonies. This goes deep to the nature of faith, then, and the acknowledgement that anyone acting morally or ethically is doing it out of a belief that it's important, regardless of whether the moral practitioner is a member of any congregation or not.

Jones And what is faith anyway? Fidelity to the truth, goodness, love, beauty for one thing, although our relativism muddies the waters with questions about who defines the truth and who has the final say on beauty? Keppe describes faith as the direct knowledge of the essence. And you have to have a metaphysical view of a correct and initial beautiful reality to grasp that abstraction, not an emergence from the primal mud and alterations over mutations in time. That latter won't arrive at any satisfactory conclusions for understanding the big religious questions that percolate in all of us, irrespective of dogma or belief.

Faith provides the answers that reason cannot achieve by itself. Tennyson wondered about that:

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

Now, I recognize that the "show me the money" practicalists listening might bristle at that, but I take heart that anyway, you're still listening. And that indicates another level of acceptance at work than just the grey matter between the ears. I've been there and put together this episode to try to address those tendencies of painting spirituality and religion with the same brush. Let's distinguish them in this episode, again with Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco.

Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco:

Society in the beginning was totally unified. So why separate things if everything is one? So as universal as we are, we should have a universal interdisciplinary thing because everything is in resonance. Everything affects everything. So there is nothing which does not affect another component. The universe is in vibration and all vibrations affect each other. It's a whole; it's integral. You cannot split, you cannot separate, you cannot analyze a phenomena without considering the other elements, which are in resonance with this one. Resonating with the other parts and belonging and absolutely integral. And to understand a phenomena, you have to understand everything that is around and the universal laws ...

Jones

You talked right at the beginning, and maybe we should just go to that for a minute, because that's very different from what we learn in our traditional science. In the beginning, everything was complete and beautiful, that's not what we're learning, right, in terms of we come from the mud and then we become an amoeba that joined together and becomes ...

Pacheco:

And then we become a monkey and then a human being.

Jones

Yes. So in the beginning is perfection. There was a time, and this is metaphysically completely different from our scientific view today.

Pacheco:

So all the beings in themselves are totally pure, beautiful, truthful, complete. integral. And evil or sickness is the absence or the distortion, the aggression, the destruction, of what is integral, and what is complete.

Jones

This is what we get, then, when we rejoin true theology with science. Instead of this reductionist view that we come from little particles, we have the other idea that we come from everything ...

Pacheco:

How can you analyze a human being by splitting? Like, if we don't have an interdisciplinary point of view and focus, we will never understand a human being because anything or everything is interconnected in relation to each other.

Jones

This changes everything about how we see the world, how we see ourselves.

Pacheco:

And you know, all the religions understand that. All the religions, not only Judaism, not only the Bible, but also other perspectives see the human being as a spiritual being. Not only physical, but mostly spiritual. All religions, all philosophies.

But you have to consider that something is religion and churches and institutions, while another thing is spirituality, because spirituality is something innate in humans. Every human being is spiritual, no matter where he's born. And this has already been verified by many anthropologists, psychologists, theologians, philosophers, that there is this tendency or this inner ethical aspect in human beings, which is the search for a higher purpose, the purpose of life. And that there is some higher being controlling or feeding or giving life to other creatures. They may even be sort of pantheistic in seeing a huge force in the universe and not a being, but they know, and all of us know, that we are not the creators of ourselves. And this is what is the difficult part of our situation: we are not the creators of ourselves. Here we are, we have been born someday and our grandparents and great-great-grandparents, one day they were born. And they were not born out of their own option or choice or will. So there is a higher force controlling everything. And this notion is so strong that if we deny this, we go to a mental hospital.

Jones

You're seeing this as one of the sources of mental disease.

Pacheco:

Yes, absolutely right. Dr. Keppe saw Theomania, the mania of being godlike, of being our own creation or the creator of our own life and our own truth, and being above God sometimes. You may even be a believer and a religious person and be very, very theomaniac, above anyone, above everything, above the truth and being the owner of the truth.

And arrogance is the biggest characteristic of Lucifer. He knows there is God, but he doesn't accept it. So this is arrogance. The spiritual need of humanity is present in all peoples, in all colors, all races all times. So this is beautiful because Keppe arrived to a point where religions could be unified under the same understanding of God. God is one. So God should be the One of everybody. And not split into this or that religion. And what Keppe arrived at is really a universal view of God and understanding God.

Jones

And the difference that Dr Keppe would make (and you might make!) between spirituality and religion is what? Because when we start to talk about this — science with theology — people start thinking that we're religious fanatics. And so we need to take that out of the equation now. Spirituality is not religion, but religion has spirituality in it ... How would you describe that?

Pacheco:

Yeah, spirituality is this natural tendency, and one of the strongest essential components of human beings. And religion seems to include some specific beliefs and dogmas that people follow linked to their culture, to their social, historical evolution and experience. So many people form a church and they go to that church to perform religious rituals ...

Jones

Those religious rituals,

Pacheco:

Those specific rituals that belong to an institution. So it contains much more particulars in that. So, when we speak about spirit, we understand more universal ideas and feelings. And when we talk about religion, we speak more about particulars. "At that time, in that time in history, that person, that prophet, or that person specific wrote that book," so you go for that book. So there are more particulars.

And theomania comes here to make things more difficult because then each religion says or claims, "I'm the owner of the truth. The truth is in my religion, not in your religion." So this creates enormous friction. It's even worse than fighting about politics, particulars. And theomania is very much applied to particulars because we can only fight over particulars not universals, because universals are universals.

And what you understand about universals is the same thing that I understand. For instance, peace is good, peace is necessary, peace is a good thing. And people, theomaniac people start fighting, "No! War is sometimes necessary in order to have peace. You must make war." This is all about theomania. We know that peace is necessary. Only demons and crazy people live out of the necessity of having a war and destruction and killing people and suffering. And all of this impedes the development of civilization.

Jones:

It's a wonderful antidote to the idea that war brings development, isn't it? It seems that the war mongers and perpetrators of crime amongst us are really out of reality, in the sense of reality that Dr. Pacheco was laying out in that episode. You know, I've been watching the Israeli TV series, Fauda, on Netflix recently and struck by the greeting that guerrilla warriors call out to each other upon meeting: "May peace be with you." Ironic in a series that presents the problems between Israel and Palestine as unsolvable, relentless, a cycle of violence without end. Without this uniting in the universality of spirituality and spiritual beliefs, we really are doomed to fight endlessly about the particulars. Well, we'll try to bring all this together into a new vision for spirituality in the new century in our next and last episode.

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