

Bible Special 06-08-29b

Let's resume our study now. We are looking at the broad categories of belief in terms of life stance or world view. And most of the religions of the world or the belief systems of the world can be categorized as either monotheistic, and that of course is your Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Pantheism, polytheism, which kind of depending on what sort of Buddhist and Hindu you are, those can fall under that. You know, what is your concept of nirvana? Is it joining the great divine or is it just reaching some stage of enlightenment that has nothing to do with God? It's a matter of definitions really. And then naturalism, which says we are not going to define our view of the meaning of life in terms of any sort of divine entity or entities.

We believe that the universe is a material system. It's made out of atoms and energy and you've got to figure out the meaning of life within the context of the natural order of things, the natural world. And this is eventually going to bring us to the topic that I announced for tonight, which is secular humanism, because it is the most popular of the options within the naturalism sphere.

If you're going to be a naturalist, you're probably going to be a secular humanist. Some of these definitions, it's just like I was talking about when the break began, about what's the difference in, say, monotheism and eutheism. Well, they really address two different aspects of God.

Monotheism is how many gods are there. Eutheism is what kind of a god or gods are you talking about. And so some of these definitions can overlap.

Like you can be a eutheistic monotheist or you can be a distheistic polytheist, depending on how many gods you believe in and what kind of a nature you think they have. You see what I mean? So a lot of these definitions are going to overlap or blend together or apply in more than one way or more than one kind of thing. So depending on the context, depending on the subject you're talking about, you have atheists who sort of define themselves in opposition to the traditional, common, usually Judeo-Christian.

You don't find atheists popping up in the Islamic world that much, saying, Allah, there is no Allah. I mean, if they do pop up, I don't think they stay up for very long. It amazes me that people try to say, oh, shame on you, you violent Christians.

They have to go back like six, seven, eight hundred years to try to find some way that Christians were violent. And you've got the Muslims chopping off body parts and disappearing people every day over there. But oh, they're not violent, it's just a few radicals, a few fundamentalists.

They don't call them radicals, they call them fundamentalists because that way they can apply the term fundamentalist. Well, there's a fundamentalist Muslim and there's a fundamentalist

Christian. They're both fundamentalists.

Therefore, they're both violent, hateful, spiteful, dangerous people who need to be suppressed and eliminated because they're fundamentalists. Well, it's all a matter of definitions. So in terms of God and what kind of God there is, you have atheists.

I define myself as disbelieving in the God that all you people believe in. I don't believe in him, I'm an atheist. Or I'm an agnostic.

Maybe you think there's one and this atheist guy thinks there's not. I don't know and I don't really much care. I'm agnostic.

I guess we'll all find out by and by, won't we? Then you have your anti-theists who say not only do I not believe there's a God, but I think everybody who does believe there's a God needs to be suppressed and silenced and gotten rid of because this whole idea of religion and belief in God is a cancer and a malformed idea that should have never perpetrated itself in the human race and we've got to get rid of it. You have deists and of course this goes to your Latin term for God instead of your Greek term. Your Greek term is Theos, your Latin term is Deo.

Quorum Deo, you find it in Christmas songs every once in a while. Gloria in excelsis Deo, glory to God in the highest. Well, so deism is another variation.

This cropped up in the 1600s and the 1700s in Europe and America primarily and it said, well, look at what religion is doing for us. You've got the Puritans, you've got the Anglican Church, you've got all of this religious strife and discontent. They're burning witches in Salem on religious grounds and this whole religious thing is bad.

So, we believe that there's a God, but we're going to get rid of all this creedal, religious, traditional mumbo-jumbo and we're going to figure God out only from reason. We're going to reason our way to God. We're going to deduce all about God.

We'll just look around in creation and you can see that there would be a kind of argument for this because we know that God reveals himself in creation and in his word. Well, they're kind of throwing out his word and saying, we're just going to try to figure God out from what's revealed in creation. Classical deism believes in sort of theistic evolution.

Actually, Darwin, by the way, was something of a deist, in practice at least. If you look at the tail end of his famous book, Origin of Species, Darwin basically said, well, I think there's a creator and I think he may have made the original animal or animals, like just a few, and then evolution sprung from them. So, Darwin never said there is no God and it's all the material world.

Darwin was a Christian. In fact, you know what the one university degree that Darwin had? Do you know what it was? Theology. The only academic degree Darwin had was a theology degree.

He wasn't a university-trained scientist at all. He believed in God, but of course his belief

changed and he began to think that the six days of creation and all that wasn't true. But at the end of the Origin of Species, when you read his summary and his conclusion, he says, well, I think the creator created one or a few of the animals and all these others were derived from them.

Of course, people since then have just kind of eliminated that whole thing as well. So, you have deists who think that God created the world, but he doesn't involve himself in it. He just kind of wound it up like a clock and now he's busy elsewhere.

He instituted the laws of nature. He set up the system and now it just runs kind of on its own. There is no such thing as a miracle because God isn't intervening.

He set it all up in advance and that's it. So, there's no angels. There's no walking on the water.

There's no parting of the Red Sea. There's no Walls Jericho falling down by God's active intervention. And so, this is deism.

And you'll find people who try to say that the founding fathers were all deists and this is disproved by their writings. People try to say George Washington was a deist. Just utter nonsense.

And if you do a little bit of research, you'll discover that it's hard to make a case that any of them were deists. The closest you might be able to get to that is maybe Ben Franklin. But Ben Franklin didn't write the Declaration of Independence.

He wasn't the first president of the country. In fact, he was never president of the country. So, in what sense, other than being the figure with the Continental Congress and so on, when you say founding father, he's not in the founding documents and he isn't in the founding phases of the government.

You've got Jefferson and Hamilton and Washington and these guys. And even Jefferson, with his much ballyhooed, chopped up Bible, was not a deist. So, anyway, we could talk about them at length.

But this is another way of defining oneself. Now, if someone is a deist, which one of those big worldviews do they fall into? Are they a naturalist? Are they a poly or pantheist? Or are they a monotheist? Generally, your deists are monotheists, almost exclusively. They are a variety of Christian.

Well, they may or may not be Christian, but deists believe that there is one God who is the Creator, capital C, but he's uninvolved. So, he obviously would not have a son who was sent. They don't see the moral aspect of salvation and sin, righteousness and judgment.

So, a deist, if he is a true deist, is not going to be a Christian. Well, we've already talked about the eutheists, who, in their view of God, think that he's essentially good. And then you have

your distheists, and a variety of distheists is your maltheists.

Now, you know what M-A-L means. Mal-adjusted means bad. So, sort of within distheism that says that God is a bad guy, the fact that the universe contains evil, people will blame God for this.

It's God's fault that he hasn't done something about evil. And so, he's therefore the author of evil. Because he tolerates it, he probably created it.

And if he was truly omnipotent, he wouldn't let evil happen. So, obviously, he's not as powerful as some would claim. So, if evil exists, if he is omnipotent, then he is freely chosen to allow it, and that makes him a bad God.

How could he let child abuse, starvation, tsunamis, and so on take place? So, inherent goodness is not an innate quality of God. That's what the distheists believe. Most people have to address somewhere, sometime, in their life stance, in their world view, the problem of evil.

Why do bad things happen to good people? And that's a whole issue unto itself. So, sometimes you'll run across a word, especially if you get into literature, it's called theodicy. That's T-H-E-O-D-I-C-Y.

Theodicy is that part of philosophy or religion that tries to figure out evil. Theodicy. If there is a good God, if you're a eutheist, then how do you explain evil? Well, your attempt to reconcile those, that's theodicy.

And great barges full of books have been written on this kind of thing. We're not going to try to go through the whole issue of that. I mean, we're talking about world philosophies, world religions, the history of human thought.

It's a huge subject. So, all I want to do is just introduce you to some of the categories and some of the terminology. And if you run across these in a specific context, you can research them and get more depth.

Thanks to Diana, part of our remote congregation, the Dannon Halls. We've got an update. My copy of *So What's the Difference*, which I recommended to you at the beginning of this study.

Come to find out they have actually updated it in the last 30 years. My copy was circa 1970. This one is quite a bit newer and is quite a bit thicker.

I don't think I brought my old one down. But some of these terms and some of these cults and religions are covered in greater depth in books like this. And this one is published by Regal Books.

It's by Fritz Reidenauer, who I guess is still alive and kicking some 30 years after he wrote the first one. He wrote the foreword to this one. And there's a good treatment if you want a good reference so that as you run across religions and religious terms, philosophical terms, you'll

find a lot of them in this book.

The web is another good place. Your online encyclopedias and so on. Well, so people are going to generally, the first kind of division you can make of a religion or a philosophy as well, does it believe in God or not? If it believes in God, it's either going to be monotheistic or something else.

Pantheistic, polytheistic, or whatever. Hinduism is unique in that it sort of was the original, the oldest religion to introduce the idea that man can sort of achieve his own form of godhood. And you find elements of this all trickling down and cross-pollinating with things like your Jehovah's Witnesses, like your Mormons and things like that, where you've got this idea that man can achieve some sort of godhood all by himself.

People who don't understand Christianity will go to John 1 and claim that being a son of God is somehow attaining to deity, which Christianity does not teach, never has taught. But the Gnostics teach this. And you find that there are common ideas in things like Hinduism and Eastern mysticism and the perversions and corruptions of Christianity.

So the idea that knowledge can raise you out of your earthly flesh to some great state of attainment, that's a part of Gnosticism, but that has its roots way back a thousand and more years in Hinduism. And so you'll find that when Christianity gets perverted and corrupted, you'll always find these elements from other false religions. It's a rehash.

It's a pasting on of something else. Well, we've talked about the different kinds of theisms. Atheism, pantheism, non-theism, eutheism, mal-theism, dis-theism.

There's also henotheism. H-E-N-O. Now, heno, one of the first things you learn in Greek, it's just like most foreign languages, you start with the numbers.

Well, depending on the gender in Greek, it's heis, mia, or hen. So heis, mia, hen is one of the first things you learn in Greek. That's the number one.

So you have, for example, hen soma, hen nouma. When Paul is talking about one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Depending on if the word is masculine or feminine, you'll have heis or mia.

Well, henotheism is something along the lines of monotheism, where you believe in one God. But there are differences because, for example, henotheism is also called inclusive monotheism or monarchical polytheism. All of this basically means you are devoted to one God, although you admit that there are other gods.

This is like the ancient Greeks. They say, well, I am devoted to Athena. She's my goddess and she's my one God.

I do everything to and for and on behalf of and in the sight of Athena, or Mars, or Bacchus, or any of the other. You pick one out of the pantheon. Remember pan meaning all, all of the gods

there in the pantheon.

I'll pick one and I'm going to be devoted to that. So this is henotheism. Out of the many gods, this is the one I'm going to serve.

Is that clear? The difference between monotheism and henotheism? So that's why it's called inclusive monotheism. You include and recognize that there may be other gods, but you stick to one. Well, you have another term for the non-theists.

Remember the non-theist says it's an absurd question. Don't even ask me. I don't even bother with it.

This is also called agnosticism. It's like agnostic but with an I. Agnosticism. The question of the existence of God is meaningless because you can't test it.

You can't solve it. There's no way to prove it. So ignore it.

Ignore. I'm going to ignore the whole question. This term was coined by a Jewish rabbi who founded the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

Another term for this is theological non-cognitivism. Anyway, we find the question of God's existence meaningless because it has no verifiable consequences. So it justifies non-theism on the basis of basically science.

There's no cause. There's no effect. There's no test.

It makes no difference if there is one or if there is not. You can't believe the number of terms to wade through. Logical positivism, which says the word is meaningless because it's incoherent and so on.

We also have omni-theism. What does omni mean? Omnivorous. I eat everything.

Omnipotent. Powerful in every way. Omni-theism is belief in the existence of a god or gods.

Every religion has something good in it. Many paths to God. It's okay if you're a Buddhist.

It's okay if you're a Muslim. It's okay if you're a Christian or Jew. It's all good.

Nobody's got a lock on the truth. It's all good. Omni-theism.

All of the gods are good. As long as you've got some kind of a religion thing going, you're good. Basically, the root idea here is that your intelligence has a spiritual dimension.

If you're intelligent enough to think, cogito ergo sum. You know what that is, right? Have you ever seen that? Cogito ergo sum. I think, therefore I am.

It's Latin. If you can think and are self-aware, and you're that intelligent, then you've got a

spiritual dimension. Just pursue that.

Go with that. That's good. It can be the force.

It can be the creator. It can be the great id. Gods, spirits, angels.

This is all just terminology. You're hooking into the greater something. The big awareness out there.

Who knows? Everybody's feeling the elephant. One guy's got the tail. One guy's got the leg.

One guy's got the trunk. But it's just the big elephant. That's omni-theism.

You have pan-en-theism. Pan-en-theism. Pan means all.

It's like fingernails on the chalkboard to somebody who studies languages. Because this is a mix of Greek and Latin in the same word. Pan is Greek.

Pan-en-en is a Latin prefix. And deus is Latin. So you're sticking a Greek prefix on top of two pieces of Latin to get pan-en-theism.

And this is deism. You think there's a God who's a creator who wound it up and let it go and now he's uninvolved. Plus, you believe that the universe is a part of God.

It's just like a thought of God. It's a hologram in God's mind. It's an idea.

So, in a way, it's monotheistic because you think there's just one God. But it's also pan-theistic because God is all and all is God. But the emphasis is that the universe is a part of God.

So, if you take monotheism and you shove pan-theism into it, it's pan-monotheism. It's pan-en-theism. En meaning in.

So, en-theism. He's in everything. This is a fairly recent term, by the way.

It's within the last six or seven years. Somebody coined this term. But they've got their own website, so of course they have to actually exist.

You have pan-en-theism. You've got pan-en-theism. Remember, deism is the uninvolved creator God.

You've got pan-en-theism. This is the view that God is imminent within creation. He's the animating force in it.

He's the life of it. But He's not synonymous with it. In pan-en-theism, the universe is God.

Grab your coffee cup. You've got a hold of God or a part of Him. But Christianity understands eminence and transcendence.

God can be active within the universe, and God also transcends the universe. In classic Christianity, traditional Christianity says that God is both eminent, not I-M-M-I, as though just about to happen. My death is imminent.

That's not what we're talking about. Immanent, with an A. Immanent means that you're involved within it. You're making it go.

You're a hands-on participant. Transcendent, God is not only at work in creation, but God is outside and beyond creation. That's the transcendent part.

God, in our understanding, is both eminent and transcendent. The pan-en-theists believe that God is immanent within creation. He's the animating force.

He is involved and active. But He's not summed up in the universe. He isn't the universe, and the universe is Him.

That's not what they believe. There's more to God than the material universe. Well, you have poly-deism, just like you have poly-theism.

What's the difference in deism and theism again? Deism, God was at the beginning and then disappeared. Theism, God is still around in some sense. So what's poly-deism? The universe was the collective creation of a bunch of gods, who then disappeared and went off to do something else.

So you could subsume under this the idea that we're sort of a matrix deal. The matrix is a universe in which people live that was created by some other civilization. That would basically be sort of a poly-deism.

You're all living in a universe that was created by a bunch of people who've got more power than you. So materialism, naturalism, gets rid of all of these ideas in terms of calling it God. And yet sometimes they wind up embracing the concept.

Materialists don't believe in a supreme being. They don't believe in a God, capital G. They might think that there are superior beings in terms of some advanced civilization from a galaxy far, far away. But those also would have evolved from some primordial ooze on their planet.

They're not transcendent. They are not divine. They are not supernatural.

So you can be a materialist and you can be a sort of poly-deist in the sense that you think that this creation on this planet in particular may be the detritus of some, you know, the trash dump of some civilization. They dump their garbage here and unbeknownst to them, oh look, biological life formed. There are people who actually believe that or who postulate it.

Well, this goes all the way back to 300 B.C. with Epicurus. You had the Epicureans. And they were materialists who believed that there was no such thing as gods and there shouldn't be such a thing as superstition and belief in immaterial things.

Everything is material and therefore the goal of your life ought to just be to have a good time. Pursue pleasure because it's just a natural material world. So the Epicureans eventually, of course they were opponents of other philosophies like the followers of Plato and those who tried to assign a meaning to life.

They said, no, no, there's no meaning to life. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. That's Epicureanism in a nutshell.

Well, the last one I want to talk about here is transtheism. Transtheism is kind of the opposite of pan-deism. Transtheism says that there is a deity or deities, a god or gods, that transcends the universe and yet is still involved and imminent.

So there is a god and he's beyond the universe, but he also does things in the universe. So there's a sense in which Christianity could be classified as transtheistic in the sense that we believe that God transcends. He exists outside the universe, he existed before there was a universe.

Well, why is all of this important? All of these different kinds of views of god or non-god, there is a god, there isn't a god, I care, I don't care. Why is this important? God, who does exist, who has manifest himself in creation, even the materialists, even the existentialists, even the secular humanists, even the Darwinists, and we'll talk about some of these people in detail next week, all of the people who say, well, here we are, cannot explain how we got here. Nobody has an explanation, materialist or otherwise, for the material universe and certainly not for biological life.

Science can't explain it, computers can't explain it. So, we're here and we're responsible for the decision we make about the creator god. And that decision will lead to seeking the truth.

Well, we're out of time for tonight. We'll pick up here looking at these kinds of life stance again next week. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for revealing the truth to us in our souls, in nature, in your word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of the importance of our daily decisions about you as we live our lives in anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and his judgment of our lives. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.