

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

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Separation from God is Psychotic

Richard Lloyd Jones:

Welcome to Episode 9 of the Modern Relevance of God Podcast Series here on Thinking with Somebody Else's Head. I'm Richard Lloyd Jones.

Canadian artist, Lorena McKennitt has a song on her Mask and Mirror album from the '90s called Dark Night of the Soul that stood out to me then, even before I began the deeper search for meaning that marks my life now. The lyrics are based on the St. John of the Cross poem of the same name. That poem's from the 1500s and strikes profoundly if you let it in. Heartfelt words from a seeker, looking for connection with the source of life.

In the theological canon, a dark night of the soul signifies a spiritual crisis in a journey towards union with God. In more secular language, I guess that would be the transformational journey that takes place when you're suffering.

A journey of transformation. Can't you relate to that? A conversion, even. A deep repentance for a path ill chosen. And at the end, "the sudden reception of grace," as Aquinas called it. Surely that's what slave trader John Newton must have gone through on that wild stormy night as he stood on the wind-swept deck and surprisingly found himself muttering, "May God have mercy on our souls." Apparently that caused some reflection when he retreated to his captain's chambers below. An atheist, and self-avowed scoundrel appealing to divine salvation in a time of need. And a questioning that led him to repent his misspent ways in the slave trade. eventually becoming an Anglican minister and penning the unforgettable words, "I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see." Amazing grace, indeed.

Victor Frankl talked about man's search for meaning, and he declared that this was to be found in overcoming oneself, giving oneself to a cause, or even to another to love. He speculated that being truly human meant being directed to something or someone other than ourselves. He called this "the self-transcendence of human existence" and witnessed it frequently, even in the depths of despair that was Auschwitz.

But I'm wondering now, if the transcendence we're seeking isn't something more than just moving beyond ourselves, but is in fact a search for something, not other than ourselves, but greater than ourselves. Something to believe in certainly, but also something to explain our existence and all of this magnitude we live inside. And for this, we need theology. We can't get there through apps or economics. We need that wisdom that plums the depths of human experience to find the answers to the questions, not just more questions.

The country of Portugal was established based on this dream of a new world, a Fifth Empire that would initiate a period of 1000 years of justice and peace and spirituality on Earth. “The Kingdom of God,” they called it. It’s a dream that resides like a memory inside the human breast and the desire for this signifies that we recognize the loss of it. We’ve become separated from it, and even from the consideration of it, and this has had enormous ramifications for our daily lives. The Psychotic Separation from God, in this episode with Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco.

Claudia Bernhardt Pacheco:

If we do not consider the essence of the being as a metaphysical essence, energetic metaphysical, linked to his creator, and if people don’t understand philosophically, scientifically, metaphysically, energetically, that all problems start when we cut off the link with this very source of life and beauty and truth and goodness, which some people name God. If people want to cut off from this source, all social, economic, psychological, physical, spiritual, emotional infirmities start. All problems start. And if a client when he comes to analysis does not consider, or does not accept, to go back to sanity, one must relink to God. But not religious in terms of institutional religion. If one does not want to relink to truth, to goodness and beauty, which are synonyms of God, one cannot have a reasonable balance. I see this in every client I get into my office. If the person is receptive to this concept, they really, really improve a lot in their analysis. But if they don’t, they will not be able to help themselves. And I cannot do much for this patient.

Jones:

It’s very interesting. In fact, the word religion relates to this relink, right?

Pacheco:

What is very, very important is a comment that professor Joseph Ghougassian did about this book, *Glorification*, that he made the preface. Professor Ghougassian, who was a professor of psychology, philosophy and law at San Diego university. And I have to say this book is not a religious book in terms that people understand religion, right? So this is a scientific book, a psychological book.

Jones:

Right. In Ghougassian’s foreword to Keppe’s book, Ghougassian writes, “Keppe gives a prominent place to religion in man’s life. Religion has no cultural origin. Only the manner of worshiping is cultural. Man is by his very being a religious creature. If there are various liturgical ceremonies practiced around the world, this is possible because in the first place, religion is a metaphysical dimension of human reality. And consequently, there is a primordial manner of worshiping natural to the soul. Praying, bowing and repenting are natural impulses. So Keppe writes, religion is something that is within the human being, not something social.”

Pacheco:

So you see, this is all about the essence of ourselves.

Jones:

Of course.

Pacheco:

And if we repress this, we are repressing life itself.

Jones:

We're killing ourselves.

Pacheco:

We are killing, we're destroying ourselves. So only people who've still preserved some of their essence can vibrate and resonate with this understanding of this masterpiece, which is this book, *Glorification*, of a science which encompasses spirituality, encompasses philosophy, encompasses arts, beauty, poetry. So, you see that since the modern ages, the philosophers started to discuss about the possibility of human beings getting in touch with the essence of things, with the truth of things and with our soul, with truth, with reason. So, all the philosophers started to even deny this possibility. And some of them, the existentialists, like Kierkegaard, like Schopenhauer, or like Nietzsche, like Sartre, got into a deep, deep, dark night of the soul when they started to be like, nihilists in terms of what we could touch of truth and beauty and goodness, and calm down a little bit in our anxiety, in our anguish, in our emptiness, the lack of meaning for life. So, we see the enormous amount of denial, of darkness, of anguish, in all thinkers in the modern age, especially the late 19th century and the 20th century. You see Keppe alone in this desert of thinkers and scientists and metaphysical thinkers, and you see him being alone and being still unknown by the majority. I understand that people do this because they are all inverted.

Jones:

This nihilism Claudia referred to here can be easily seen in our modern philosophy. And when she says Keppe stands alone, she's talking about this. The philosophy of liberation, which dominates the academic and seminary thinking in much of the Western world today, says liberate yourself from the chains of duty or obligation. Turn on, tune in, drop out. Come out of the closet. Be who you want to be. All siren songs to breaking step with orders and expectations. But this hasn't led to more understanding of our plight; it's led to less understanding. And all that freedom seems to be causing more angst, more depression, more dissatisfaction. What a conundrum. And people finding no solace on a path that promised fulfillment, arrive at Nietzsche's conclusion that God is dead.

Well, that brings problems of its own. As we'll explore in our next episode.

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