

Closing: Sally Hodges

In Marcus Borg's book 'The Heart of Christianity' P. 65, he says, "In the history of Christianity, there are two primary ways of thinking about the God-world relationship. I call these two concepts of God "**supernatural theism**" and **panentheism**. One of the central themes in Karen Armstrong's book, 'A History of God,' is that that these two concepts of God run side by side throughout the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Supernaturalism theism imagines God as a person-like being who lives 'way out there' and from there occasionally intervenes in this world (if you're lucky).

Panentheism on the other hand imagines God and the God/ world relationship differently. Although the word panentheism is only about 200 years old, the notion is very ancient. Rather than imagining God as a person-like being "far out there" Panentheism imagines God as the encompassing spirit in whom everything that is, is. The universe itself is in God.

Chapter 6 of our book, Future Faith, talks about the tension between **individualism and community**. The author brings up the German theologian **Bonhoeffer** who championed the life of the Christian Community, emphasizing prayer, meditation on Scriptures and identifying with the most vulnerable. His example is still a model for people who wish to live in community.

How would Bonhoeffer describe God? The **supernatural theism model** does not seem to offer much for those who live their life for others the way that Bonhoeffer did. I am guessing that Bonhoeffer's work was rooted in **Panentheism**. Bonhoeffer wrote in his *Letters From Prison* "I believe that God is not just timeless fate, but that he

waits upon and answers sincere prayer and responsible action.” When we look at North America and its culture based on the individual, one notices that for most Christian groups there is an emphasis on a personal relationship between each person and a supernatural God. This is the **Supernatural Theism** I mentioned. By contrast, Bonhoeffer’s work, creating a life for Christians in Community and helping the most vulnerable is, I think, an example of **panentheism**. He believes that God is everywhere at all times, here on earth and through the entire universe.

Let us pray.

Dear God, Thank you for this group and our hard working leaders. . Thank you for the opportunity to learn about spiritual matters and to come closer to you as we think about what the world needs. Please bless this world of yours, and help us to play a part in making things right. Please bless our families and those who are ill or in turmoil. May we be willing to give ourselves to making community at St David’s and wherever we are. Give us hope, give us courage, give us love for others and love for You. May this church survive, even if it changes a great deal. We ask for your blessing as we drive home and your blessing as we venture into the future. Thank you for being with us, always.

Amen