

Evolution of a Credo

I was raised a Presbyterian. Most of what I learned in church, Sunday school and church camp I no longer believe. Over my adult years through experience, reading, and thinking, I have crafted what I consider to be a set of religious / spiritual beliefs that are comfortable to me.

I no longer believe in the Trinity: God the Father, Jesus, the son of God, and the Holy Spirit.

To me, God is not the grandfatherly figure, dressed in white robes, sitting on some heavenly throne, to whom I was introduced as a child. The God I believe in now is immeasurable, without limits, continuing endlessly in time. He is everywhere. This God could be called Everything, Being, or Nature.

I believe that Jesus lived but he was a teacher, a teller of parables. He was a wise, good human being.

The Holy Spirit I know exists because I have felt it, but it is far beyond how the Presbyterians described it. I feel it in many ways: when I am moved emotionally by music like Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*; when dusk falls in Taos as the setting sun turns the mountains rose-colored and ethereal; when I am moved by the loving kindness of others.

I believe that the Bible is not some Holy Write. As a tome, it has evolved over centuries. It is a collection of stories and oral histories recorded. I do not believe it is the Word of God.

In religious matters, I believe in allowing every person to think as he/she likes and say what he/she thinks. Everyone is free to define God, and worship that God, in his/her own way.

I believe fervently in science as well. Science explains many phenomena, often left to various organized religions. Science helps us explain things – the creation story

comes to mind – so that we don't have to depend on some explanation mandated by organized religion.

Given these foundational beliefs, I think everything is as it must be. Belief in this God is a rational experience. I may not understand why certain things happen, but I believe there is some reason behind their happening. Believing this, I am comforted and can live in peace and harmony.

I realize that if I am able to employ the Buddhist precept of non-attachment to what I hope happens, I am happier.

I regard my life and how I live as a testament to what I believe. I believe in living fervently and experiencing deeply. Getting lots of things done each day is limited in value. It's not what and how much one does that counts. The quality and depth of experience is more important.

Each day I try to do the best I can with the challenges presented. I resolve to be aware of beauty and order, to appreciate pleasures, to love and act with gratitude and kindness. I am working on having more patience.

Charles Bukowski, in his poem "Go All the Way," says it well.

"If you're going to try, go all the way.
Otherwise, don't even start.
If you're going to try, go all the way...
There is no other feeling like that.
You will be alone with the gods,
and the nights will flame with fire.
DO IT, DO IT, DO IT. All the way.
You will ride life straight to perfect laughter.
It's the only good fight there is."

Any essay on one's religious life probably requires confronting the question of Death. In my opinion, one's attitude toward Death is about the only choice in life we really have.

As usual, Mary Oliver says it best.

“When death comes...
I want to step through
This door of curiosity, wondering:
What is it going to be like,
That cottage of darkness?
When it’s over, I want to say
That all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom,
Taking the world into my arms.
When it’s over, I don’t want
To wonder if I have made of my life
Something particular, and real.
I don’t want to find myself
Sighing or frightened,
Or full of argument.
I don’t want to end up
Simply having visited this world.”