My Beliefs and Practices

5/17/21

LIH ("Life In Harmony") contains the essence of my beliefs, values, and daily practices, as does the abridged version of LIH from the website. Here is a link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xnCKEjnIrC8vkZVoDwNazJBrDRjhQTe_/view

The only thing I might add that is not included in LIH is that I am a committed follower of Jesus. However, more often than not, I would rather not be identified as a Christian because I am not at all in agreement with most people who use that label.

I still unite with Conservative Quakers (Ohio Yearly Meeting or the Fairhope Faith and Practice more than any other). For more about Quakers, here is a link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19fZQpeGc6GYOWijdrVlWXylSZy7x3ku4/view?usp=sharing

My religious views can best be summed up as being a committed follower of Jesus who daily uses 9 words from my nine favorite things Jesus said - seek love within, possess happy fruit, and follow abundant light. In addition to these nine there are three more verses that have great meaning for me. The additional 3 words from these verses are - free peaceful rest. All 12 verses can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u0WD6bVdZE9kk7XCvGcjDp2ANMhg_Nw4/view?usp=sharing

I dwell on each of the 9 words throughout my day, often recalling the entire verse for each word. Sometimes I might query myself (a practice of Quakers) and ask - did I seek love within today?

I agree with Quakers that all people have something of God within them, the seeds for the Inner Light or Light of Christ. Each day I try to be mindful of that as I interact with others.

Love does no harm. To love others means to cause the least harm. That is the biggest criteria I use to look at both myself and others. By their fruits ye shall know them. I have

a hard time accepting someone who intentionally harms others can honestly claim to be a follower of Jesus.

I care very little about what words a person uses (ESPECIALLY politicians), preferring to let people's lives speak. What has a person done (and that includes me), rather than what have they said?

I do not subscribe to popular church practices, including preaching and spending money on elaborate buildings and material things. If asked by someone who identifies as an evangelical Christian if I am one of them, the answer would be a resounding NO.

But my spiritual heritage means a great deal to me. I feel a strong bond with those who have gone before me also choosing to be a committed follower of Jesus - Mom, Granddad, Big Granny, Mary Brooks, … I am humbled to know I am part of their group.

I do not set aside one day a week for spiritual practices or worship. Rather than one day a week, I seek daily worship. Each day I incorporate my spiritual practices into my daily routine (which is much easier to do now that I am retired). My single biggest goal for the day is to cause the least harm and to never intentionally harm another person. Throughout my day I am mindful of the beauty of all life around me. Sometimes I just sit down by the lake and think of the different plants, trees, and animals around me. At other times I find peace and harmony taking Max on a hike in the woods or going out on the lake in the kayak.

Rather than identify with a single group, I am more inclined to view myself as part of the human race and part of all living things on this planet. While labels are sometimes beneficial, more often than not, they can never accurately describe someone. If I have to select labels for myself, they can easily change from day to day. However, I am a huge fan of science and accept the labels of monist, agnostic, materialist.

When exploring religious groups and labels, I often find myself in unity with the Fairope Faith and Practice.

From Fairhope Faith and Practice (1970):
In our Society unity is essential upon the spiritual and practical nature of Christianity -- the claim of Christ to rule the whole of our life, both inward and outward, and the deep and penetrating reality of worship.

It is our conviction that if we will but put Christ's teachings into everyday practice, then and only then, can a society be built from which peace will evolve as naturally and as

surely as does war from our present social order. Let us be continually conscious of this goal and strive for the highest fulfillment of it, keeping before ourselves the vision and faith of "a new humanity which does not recognize frontiers and always stands for the all-embracing world community."

We believe the spirit of Divine Love, as seen in the life, teachings and cross of Christ, teaches us that we, too, must be peacemakers. Before we can proclaim it to the world, however, we must first have peace within ourselves. **"That of God" within us, speaking to our condition, is the true source of peace.**

All men desire peace, but do not know how to attain it. They are bewildered and frightened, and in their confusion a double standard of morality develops in which, on the one hand men are trained to kill and on the other they are taught that murder is evil. Vast sums of money are going into instruments of death instead of life, while millions of people are near starvation or suffer from preventable diseases. All this is in the name of peace, freedom and security.

Our Christian faith says that war is wrong, and that double standards are wrong. Only the love of God is strong enough to overcome fear, suspicion and hatred. Friends should be able to bring to situations of political tension a spirit of self-sacrificing love. The Spirit of Christ is not changeable and our historic testimony is as true today as it ever was. It calls for action that is peacemaking and reconciling.

The roots of war can be taken from all our lives as they were from those of Francis of Assisi and John Woolman. Day by day let us seek out and remove every seed of hatred and of greed, of resentment and grudging, in ourselves and so far as we can in the social structure about us. Christ's way of freedom replaces slavish obedience by fellowship. Instead of external compulsion, He gives an inward authority. Instead of self-seeking, we must practice self-giving; instead of domination, cooperation.

Fear and suspicion must give place to trust and the spirit of understanding. Thus shall we more and more live in true harmony with all men and our lives be filled with joy which true fellowship never fails to bring. Surely this is the way in which Christ calls us to overcome the barriers of race and class and thus make all humanity a society of friends.

The Light is in all men, and the closer they come to it, the closer they come to one another.

Daily Prayer and Review:

Into thine hand I commit my spirit: ... Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:...

Dwell on the vision planted in the brain of - unbothered, calmness, satisfied - Let life speak - trust, obey, surrender - Seek Love Within

"'That of God' within us, speaking to our condition, is the true source of peace."

"Only the love of God is strong enough to overcome fear, suspicion and hatred."

Mindfulness, breathing, condition, senses, perspective, emotions, to do list, roles, reality

Seek Love Within - Possess Happy Fruit - Follow Abundant Light.

Simple, does not need many words - it's what we do, not what we say that matters, … lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

9.23.5
It's all about Christ - the Light within - keep it simple - focus on Love and the Kingdom - stress the importance of subtraction and no creeds. Experience is the greater teacher - a shaper of beliefs - not words or doctrine.

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What inside you tells you it is wrong to steal? Listen to that "voice" without needing to label or define it. Trust it. Accept that it is greater than you. It has been around since life began. It is within all people, everywhere. Being surrendered to it brings a peace that is not available from any other source.

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From "Life In Harmony":
Sitting in nature and being silent, allows me to better hear that still small voice and gather a sense of what direction to take.

The practice of subtraction has brought balance in my life between the desire to learn and the need to be still and listen.

Reality - Reality, it is what it is. Pay attention to your rules, your activities, your habits, and your routines. Give attention to desires and things that bother you. Once you focus your attention, you can change, reduce, or eliminate what is unwanted.