

Coming of Age Faith Statements  
May 31, 2009

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Logan:

A little bear named Pooh, who is one of the world's greatest philosophical leaders, once had something very important to say to someone very important to him. And that story goes like this, "Pooh knew what he meant, but being a Bear with Very Little Brain, could not think of the words." This, in and of itself, is how I feel about my own sense of spirituality.

Even though I have been in this Coming of Age program for many months now, I do not feel that my beliefs pertaining to the spiritual world have not completely cemented themselves yet. As I look to my friends in this same program, it seems that all of them have learned something new about their own beliefs, and words cannot describe how happy I am for them, and how privileged I feel to have experienced it with them.

And while I may have not watched my own beliefs blossom into a personal philosophy, I do not feel left behind. I know now that I have blossomed in other ways. I've learned to be more accepting of other's beliefs and how to deal with those that may try to change mine. I have become wiser in some things I now know how to deal with my own fears and desires and how to help myself feel like I am a part of this world.

And on the note of spirituality, while I may have come of age, my spiritual beliefs will not come to me as easily as I had hoped. I am the kind of person to whom self discovery takes a while to ferment and it can begin to do so at the oddest times in my life.

And so, my journey to find what I truly believe still continues, and will for a long time. I hope that one day, I can come before everyone one more time and relay a message of true self discovery. But for now, that day will have to wait.

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Carrie:

The definition of faith is...well, according to dictionary.com there are 7 and I couldn't decide which to choose, they all seemed to apply. The one I chose was confidence or trust in a person or thing. There were definitions that actually applied to religion and God, but I felt that this applied more. If you think about it, if you're Christian you put your trust or faith in Jesus and God. It makes sense. I put my faith in people and a higher power. People control this world. Some people say that a higher power made them do it. In Luke 22:3-4 it says "Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus." I don't believe that the devil made him do it. People have control over their own actions, I do believe that there is a higher power, but it doesn't control you. I feel that people control the higher power. It will take on any form you desire, so if you believe it is an old man in the sky then it is, if you believe it is the wind blowing, or the majestic look of a sunset, it is. I feel it is when you look at someone and you see how much they care about you. That is the higher power, I believe that is God.

My belief on death has a connection to science and faith. Matter cannot be created or destroyed, but it can be recycled, and changed. I believe that when you die you go into reflection; you look back on your life and see what you did right and what you could have done differently. Then I believe you come back to earth as a different person, you come back as someone completely different. You don't remember your old life. You may have little flashes, but you don't fully remember it. In your new life you have the same talents you did in your previous life. If you are an artist now you will be an artist in your next life. This comforts me because I believe that my grandmother is here in this world again. I believe that I might meet her, though I won't know who she is, she is still with me in spirit and in body.

My last belief is about the beginning of the earth. I like science, and answers. That is why I like math, because there is an answer for sure. Eight times eight equals 64, there is no doubt. I like the theory of evolution, but I feel that that is too scientific. I know I said I like answers and I am contradicting myself but some things shouldn't have exact answers. Some things should be left up to speculation. I am still looking for my belief, it should have some scientific proof, but a lot of it should be my belief. I think that belief is impossible, but I will always be looking. I hope that all of you find your beliefs and you feel confident in them, because I know I do. Peace

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Soren:

I like fish; you know why I like fish? I like fish because I like people. I believe people came from fish, you know, evolution and all that. Recently I was reading an article in the National Geographic magazine about Darwin, and his collection of bugs. Darwin is cool. I believe in Darwin's theory of natural selection and that those in a species that are best adapted are the ones that survive. And that the additions of new and better characteristics being added to species, and the destruction of bad characteristics slowly leads to evolution.

Some people might call me a geek or a nerd, science and math are my favorite subjects. Point is I don't believe in something unless there's proof to prove it and facts to back it up.

Which obviously means I don't believe in any so called "God," his son Jesus, the Holy Ghost, or any other religion related to all-powerful beings. Well, I guess I can't say I don't believe in the Holy Ghost since I never really learned anything about it. A Holy Ghost sounds like a dead good guy, but I always thought that was an angel. I believe god was invented by people when they couldn't explain why things happened the way they do. So an easy way to answer all their questions was just to say there's an all-powerful being that controls everything. Well how does he/she do that you ask? He/she just does! No questions asked.

I believe that the Earth was formed by the collision of two smaller rock forms, to form one, which was pulled around the sun. Life was made by combinations of amino acids to form proteins, the building blocks of life. Those proteins also combined to make the first single-celled organism. I believe when we die, were put in a box, buried underground and left to rot. Or burned to ashes, depending upon which you prefer. Not that I really care which one happens to me. Cause I'll be dead! Point is we cease to exist. Our memories and our emotions, just gone. Like poof.

I believe what we do in this world won't affect anything. When the world is destroyed the universe won't end. Aliens (yes I believe there are aliens) will keep living; all the stars will keep burning. I believe the end of the world wont set off another Big Bang. Although I'm sure many people would like it to, but no such luck. I understand it's human nature to not only want to survive, but to succeed. I'm cool with that; I mean I want to be a billionaire. All I'm saying is that if we all died today, the sun will still rise tomorrow.

Now I know I'm looking at the very big picture. I do understand that what I do today will affect my life tomorrow. In this statement I have not looked much at the tiny picture. I also do believe in love, charity, and helping people live a better life, but when I go to bed I just can't help thinking for example: So I gave this homeless guy 5 dollars. So? He'll be dead eventually. Does whether he could eat that bagel or not before he died matter? Then I feel guilty that I could not care about someone starving or not.

I have absolutely no belief or faith in an all-powerful being or "God." Sometimes I really wished there was, but I could never comprehend how that could be possible. I believe everything happens because of cause and effect. Example: the car hit the kid because whoever sold the car didn't tell the buyer of the faulty brakes. He didn't tell the buyer of the faulty brakes because he needed the money to pay rent. He couldn't pay rent because his boss fired him. Ect. Ect. As Esqueleto in Nacho Libre once said: "I believe in science."

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Garrett:

A faith statement is like an ID card. It enables you to go places you hadn't seen yet. On my imaginary ID card, it would say that I believe that people should always treat each other with respect. It would then build off that, because I believe that that is the main principle to life. To even further elaborate, all living things should be treated with equality. Even if that living thing feels no pain, or is nearly invisible, there should be no exceptions. The First Unitarian Church and Coming of Age have shown me how other people are affected by their religion and which religions they are devoted to. I wouldn't exactly say that I am religious, but I would like to practice a religion of respect. To respect others and what religions they practice. You may call that a religion, but I know I don't call it that.

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Chris:

Some people who don't know me too well might say that I'm all about rejection; that I reject the notion of God, as well as the notion of there being no God. Those are the people who are convinced that I don't believe or trust in anything and therefore my life is somewhat empty. Not true. I'm a big fan of acceptance. I accept the UU principle of free and responsible search for truth and meaning. I accept the idea that we, as humans, can never really know truth or meaning. Quite a few people reject this idea. They trust and have certainty in things that can never be proven. The thought that they might be on to something occasionally crosses my mind. However, too often I have seen examples of faith going beyond even sanity. For instance, in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, the citizens of Salem, Massachusetts, are motivated by the accusations of teenage girls to arrest and put on trial men and women thought to be witches. In reality, the girls, who would perform theatrics and then claim they were caused by witches sending out their spirits, were simply faking to avoid punishment for dancing, which was forbidden in the Puritan society. Those few who stuck to reason and called the girls out were subsequently imprisoned and hanged. Miller's work was written and originally staged in another time of mass hysteria in America: the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s. Senator Joseph McCarthy, riding a wave of anti-Communist sentiment, began accusing influential people of socialist practices and subsequently placing some under arrest. Miller himself testified before McCarthy. It is examples like this that led me to the lifelong search for truth and meaning. This Unitarian principle is the only thing that makes sense to me.

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Emily:

When I first started CoA, I held the following three beliefs:

- Everything is black and white, there is no in-between; something is either right or wrong.
- After people die, they are dead and gone. There is no spirit that ascends and reincarnation is a dumb idea.
- There is no God or higher power.

Now I believe three different things:

- There is a gray area; not everything has to be right or wrong. It's okay to be uncertain.
- I am made up of dinosaurs.
- Love is the most powerful thing in the world.

The first belief was hard for me to accept. I have always seen things as either right or wrong, good or bad, there was no middle. But people kept on giving me those annoying, unanswerable questions, when you do not know what is the right thing to do? Like, is my cat still a good cat if he kills bunnies; or, if there is an uncontrollable population of sika who are destroying the ecosystem, is it okay to hunt them? Slowly, I began to realize that I didn't always know and that I had to accept that. I still tried to search for a definitive answer, but if I cannot find one, I know it will be okay.

The second belief is pretty cool in my opinion. So you might be asking yourself: what makes Emily think that she was a velociraptor? Well, first of all, this isn't entirely true, I'm not *just* made up of dinosaurs. Energy cannot be created or destroyed. My energy is the same energy that has always been there and always will be. So I am made up of many things. My energy will take form of many things, so, in a way, I will never be gone from the world. For this reason, I think reincarnation is much more believable. Though I don't believe that I have a soul that goes from one body to another, I do believe that I will become part of future organisms and a part of me will always be here. So just as a part of me was once a velociraptor, part of me will one day be a tree or an ant or another human.

I also believe that love is a power that is greater than humans. Humans cannot control their love. Not just romantic love, either. The love that a parent has for his or her child might actually be the most powerful kind of love there is in the world. Parents do so much for their children. They sacrifice so much just to ensure that their child is safe and healthy. When I was eight years old, I became severely depressed. I was hospitalized four different times in one year. My parents spent thousands and thousands of dollars to make me well again, but I know they did not care about the money. They would do anything to help me. After working medication was found for me, I had to relearn so much. I could no longer spell and I could not do math as well as I could before the depression. My mom and dad worked with me and I gradually began to regain the knowledge that I had lost. I obviously did recover, and am now happy and healthy and about to go into 10th grade. I never could have made it through without the love my parents provided for me. And I realize now, that is what God is: the power you cannot survive without.

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Burkely:

I have explored a lot about my faith over the last few years and I have discovered a set of beliefs and rules that I expect to govern my life for years to come. But before I get to that, let's remember that people make discoveries every day about things we cannot see or taste or touch or feel. I'd like you to imagine a time when we didn't know anything about the composition of air and the role plants played.

A test with mint sprigs and a mouse under a glass bell jar changed all of that in 1771. During an experiment in which he was testing the components of air, Joseph Priestley washed the mouse carefully. He had discovered oxygen earlier, and the mouse was still alert and alive under the jar. In these tests, he discovered that plants absorb carbon dioxide, which he called "foul air," and created oxygen, which he called "good air." This discovery formed the foundation of our current idea of the ecosystem.

Not only was Priestley considered the "father of modern chemistry," he is also credited with starting the Unitarian movement in England. Priestley was dissatisfied with conventional theological explanations. Through exploration, he developed his own religious ideas and for that, he was cast out of England by an angry mob. So, not all discoveries are rewarded immediately!

Like Joseph Priestley, I have explored my faith. Through this church's Religious Education classes, I have visited many places of worship for such faiths as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Catholicism and many more. I have explored these religions and found they share common values, like kindness, equality and justice. Having learned this, I ask myself: why do these faiths so often fight one another?

Of course, this is an open-ended question that I cannot answer. But, what I can say is that I believe that everyone—not a holy book—chooses their own higher power. I also believe that all people

should be treated with equality and justice and that a poor person is just as worthy as a rich person. In addition to my beliefs, I've developed a set of lifelong rules which are to treat everyone the same, to follow the law, and to help others in need and to be a good world citizen.