

Agnostics

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Here comes our agnostic. “Do you believe in God?” “Don’t think so; not really. But I’m not prepared to say for certain there is no God.” I can respect that. It makes sense to withhold final judgment on these things. After all, who knows? Although (you knew this was coming) what about those other things – magical, imagined creatures, mythological images, etc? Are you really prepared to say, “Well, I’m not sure. I could be wrong. There might be fire-breathing dragons.” Sigh.

I draw the line at the supernatural. I see and experience nothing that is beyond the natural world and universal nature. I understand that some claim they do, but I don’t. Thank goodness we can agree to disagree.

What I share in common with the retired pastor is this: what we call ourselves doesn’t ultimately matter all that much. We both like “freethinker” since that covers any rational person with faith or without. A freethinker is open to question, invites reason to sit firmly on the judgment seat and welcomes the gift of an active skepticism.

A freethinker has freely chosen to believe or not to believe, yet the best part is that they are free to change their minds,

to learn and discover and admit they were wrong, acknowledging they need to learn more and are forever learning more. In other words, a freethinker of any kind, always “leans” toward fresh knowledge, gutsy wisdom and fearless self-reliance.

My pastor friend and I share a former career in chaplaincy. We seem to agree that the best kind of chaplaincy is non-sectarian and non-proselytizing. A good chaplain, in our experience, is one who doesn’t see their work as a “mission field” but listens, assists when invited, present with people in crisis or critical transition times. Intense work; harder than it may sound.

Would an agnostic be a good chap-

lain? Maybe so. If it means a willingness to ask questions with people, to “seek the truth” alongside others, perhaps that’s the healthiest and most helpful thing to do.

Would it be more effective to be a “practicing agnostic” in human relationships, whether we identify as a believer, a non-believer or an “I don’t know for sure, but I’ll try to find out” kind of person?

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