

The Seven Principles as Theology: Credo vs Creed
by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, UUMUAC

Light Chalice: me

Pat Mohr: chalice lighting words

Opening Words: me

Let the words of my mouth,
and the meditations of my heart –
be acceptable in thy sight,

O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer:
and, most of all,

may they be acceptable in your sight,

O my brothers and sisters and cousins here
at the

First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia South Carolina

Series of items which I am not involved in

- a. Hymn: Rank on Rank
- b. Father's Day slide, singing Amen
- c. Candles of Concern
- d. Announcement about giving away the plate
- e. Meditation: father's day theme plus lakescape

Sermon:

Credo vs Creed: The Meaning of the Seven Principles
of Our Seven Principles by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial
Unity Action Council

Prologue

Let me begin by making clear where I stand so that we can have a productive discussions
and disagreements in our after church talk back.

Once we were known proudly as the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
(UUAC) and now we are known simply as the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). And
now I will add another reality: the UUA is now under the control of a group of Afrocentric
neo-racists called the Black Lives UU Organizing Collective, which is seeking to create the
UUABL UUOC or UUABL for short. At some point the schism between the UUAC and the
UUABL will explode into visibility over what shall be the basis of Unitarian Universalism.

The Seven Principles and their sources or the 8th Principle and its sources based on truths, fallacies, and falsehoods.

I further assert that it is time to make a stand against the mystification of the great historical and theological traditions of Unitarian Universalism, rooted in historical theism on the one hand and social humanism on the other.

I dedicate this sermon to Sister Marie Cobbs, a black woman; and Brother Evan Freund, a white man; and to my wife, Bobbi Lammers Campbell, of mixed ancestry, who believe that the Seven Principles aka the Magnificent seven constitute the ground of being of our evolutionary faith and of our Association of Congregations.

By the way I won first prize for a version of this sermon in 2011 when we were a part of the old Central Midwestern District. And there may be a poorly recorded version of this sermon on video, go to the link which might still be available from the new Mid-West Regional headquarters.

Now, we are ready.

I. Introduction

A. Here is the parable of the morning: Sometime back in June 2010, four delegates set out for the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations General Assembly meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A black man and a white man; a black woman and a white woman, driving down I-94. They discussed a variety of things, especially issues of racism, shared personal information, talked about church activities. At the Dells in Wisconsin, they stopped for a carry out lunch, mingling with a predominantly white group of folks but sprinkled with a few black folks. Then continued driving through the beautiful northern Wisconsin landscape, stopping from time to time at rest stops, then crossing the St Croix river into Minnesota, arriving safe and sound in readiness for the first night of the General Assembly. This then is the parable for this morning service.

B. The purpose of today's dramatic sermon is to argue that it is time that serious Unitarian Universalists come up with a common understanding of our faith/beliefs/--call it what you will, a Unitarian Universalist theology based on our Seven Principles and our sources, modified to include Islam explicitly.

C. My thesis is that this time of crisis, seen in the up rise of racism in old and new forms, in which we now live, makes it urgent that we began to accept our Seven Principles as presently constituted as a credo (I believe as an act of personal commitment), though not as a creed (we must believe as a dogma or else be excluded as a heretic), while using some of the incidents from my own struggles with the Afrocentric neo-racists to support this assertion.

D. Blue Print

1. What is the difference between a credo and a creed?
2. How has the evolution of our Seven Principles shaped them into the basis of a Unitarian Universalist Theology around which UU historical theists, social humanists, and spiritual- transcendentalists can unite?
3. Why are the Seven Principles the bases of a new form of Unitarian Universalism, multiracial Unitarian Universalism, especially appropriate in all white and predominantly white congregations, as we seek to win people of all colors into our ranks, especially black foix?

In the time remaining, let me see how much of this can I cover in the form of some improvisations. By the way a complete copy of my "script" will be available from www.uumuac.org eventually and I am also working on a book of my sermons.

II. Body/Development [Improvisation]

- A. What is the difference between a credo and a creed?

At the old GA's, you could see a few people wearing a tee shirt which said, "No creeds; just deeds." On the face of it, that seems a positive message to define our denomination. But on second thought, for me, as a UU Christian and as a Marxist-Leninist historical theist, mere deeds, no matter how beneficent, without some informing principle, faith, or theology /ideology, is mere pragmatism, which, without some informing flame of commitment, can easily burn itself out, especially during this particular historical period. Indeed, for whitesupremacyologists, our very good deeds of justice and struggle against injustice, of personal sacrifice and even death, are denigrated, if we are white, as a part of the spectrum of white supremacy. This awful accusation is especially disheartening when applied to our southern UU comrades who stood up against explicit bias and shonuff white supremacists in those bad old days of the Old Racism. It has been my commitment of the Seven, now strong, now wavering, as my personal credo, which has helped me to persevere under persecution carried out by my own senior ministers and their Afrocentric supporters at First U. Trials, bannings, malicious emails, one sent to UUMA members around the country. [stopped here]

Moreover, it is no accident that some many powerful words a based on the Latin word credo: credence, credible, credibility, I would argue that without a credo of some kind, our churches lack a common basis for unity and a common reference point for action, both within the church and without our walls. Credo can either be translated I believe or we believe. Thus, to accept our Seven Principles as a credo, we avoid the narrowness and exclusivity which have made creeds so detrimental to human progress. A declaration of faith unforced by external pressures is in most instances a deeper can of faith, belief, to inform our deeds with design, with purpose, with a transcendent goal which will trump this present time of moral relativism. For example, my impromptu speech at the Midwest Regional meeting. "Even though we are predominantly white, it does not mean that we cannot do right."

- B. How has the evolution of our Seven Principles shaped them into the potential basis of a Unitarian Universalist Theology?

1. All life enhancing theologies, ideologies, and creeds are reflection of their origins in the period of Neolithic communism when the principles of cooperation, participation, and community were vital for the survival and socio-economic/cultural evolution of homo sapiens.
2. The Seven Principles emerge out of living traditions we share draw from many sources which I shall now present in my own evolutionary sequence:

First, we begin with the individual us, the ego-centric as a starting point of spiritual awareness (which simply means being aware of and responding to the transcendental through our neuro-cerebral systems: Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life.

But we do not stop there: second, there has to be a social /external dimension to religious consciousness which gives direction to our egocentric natures: Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil (selfish violations of our Neolithic communal values) With justice, compassion and the transforming power of love (the sensuous bonding with one or more others within the framework of those ancient/existential values);

Next, it is from these men and women, priestesses and priests, who help develop the pantheistic mythologies which emerged during the period of Neolithic communism and which continued during the period slavetalism: Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Then we move up from mythology to theology: wisdom from the world's religions - Islam, Buddhism, Yoruba, Hinduism, Manitou -- which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life.

Then we narrow down those religions to the specific revolutionary egalitarian monotheistic world religions which emerged out of slavetalism, become more complex during the period of feudalism, and achieved their worldwide influence during the complicated period of capitalism, in its progressive and regressive forms. I am speaking of our direct ancestors: Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves; but I also add Islam whose scholars who introduced Michael Servetus to monotheism and whom John Chrysostom saw as a Christian heresy.

And finally, we add those secular philosophies which evolved out of revolutionary monotheism, in socialistic, scientific, and atheistic forms: Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.

There is another way in which these principles evolved: Overtime as we moved from being a free Christian denomination, to a free liberal Christian denomination, to a non-Christian denomination, to a final level as a spiritual pluralistic denomination, working our way through a

variety of statements of conscience and principles, we now have arrived through discussion, debate, visions, and revisions to our Seven Principles, which recently were confirmed by the Committee on Appraisal process.

3. At this crucial historical moment, we discover that we have been multiracial, multicultural, and international all this time, even though many of our churches may be temporarily of one color: Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennoble our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations and, I add, as free persons, we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual support and trust.

Thus, because of all this, our seven principles, grounded in this evolution, carry then the weight of a legitimate theology, a way to study a transcendental reality which our monotheistic ancestors called God, a theology to which I can freely assent credo, I believe, a theology manifested in the opening and closing ceremonies at this General Assembly.

C. Why are the Seven Principles the bases of a new form of Unitarian Universalism, multiracial Unitarian Universalism, especially in all white and predominantly white congregations? To answer this question, let us briefly look at how the Seven Principles are structured. They open with a form of what I mean by a credo, a voluntary commitment to believe in something greater than ourselves which becomes the basis for evaluation, both of ourselves and our society, and of action, both within and without our church, recognizing always our human imperfections: Still, we covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

These three are needed to create community and relationship. To see inherent worth and dignity, even in the most despicable of human beings, while allowing us to judge their behavior and actions, locating evil deeds not in some inherent biogenetic or neurologic flaw, but in the effects of a social order on the mental development of a person, especially in the form of ideologies. Negative ideologies create negative people; positive ideologies create positive people. Therefore, the more humane the society is, the more humane the people in it.

Indeed, it is the function of the Beloved Community, the future evolution of the Neolithic communes, to foster that inherent worth and dignity. From that awareness of inherent worth and dignity we move to structured or religious behavior with justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. This is in contrast to the injustice, inequity, and brutality which pervert human relations. It is no accident that the word iniquity/inequity, is repeated so often in the Christian Bible as summing up injustice and brutality, in a word, oppression. And the last part dealing with acceptance, minimally tolerance, maximally love, signaled by a deliberate plan to help our congregations grow spiritually through study, worship, and prayerfulness, but mostly through an intelligent acceptance shaped by a willingness to practice criticism/self-criticism if someone is behaving in unacceptable ways.

4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

These two foci on epistemology (how do we know what we know and how do we search for truth in such a way as to avoid arrogance on the one hand and ignorance on the other). Here critical thinking is crucial, not only in determining truth in this period of time in which lies and half-truths are so pronounced, but also in seeking to locate meaning, that is, the best rationale for living as Unitarian Universalists among our neighbors, fellow workers, relatives, and friends. And if this is accomplished, then we have the possibility of developing a conscience which is both egoistic and altruistic, since a conscience is an inner guide for making decisions when no one else is around to help us do so. And if one's conscience is clear (easily accessible), then the possibility of democratic process can emerge with others whose conscience is also clear and, in that way, we have a chance to make changes for growth, for example, within ourselves, in our congregations, and, as a potential, in the outer world. Majority rule would be flexible enough, in this context, to respect the inherent worth and dignity of a minority. And a minority would through a clear conscience be able to carry out the results of that rule in good faith. But we must be careful to distinguish between democratic process as a complex of participation and cooperation, and not merely just voting. A true democratic process grows out of a commitment to the larger social unit in which such a process is occurring and whether or not that larger social unit is in itself democratic.

6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are apart.

These last two take us outward to the world at large, to an internationalist vision of the Beloved Community, going beyond the present artificial boundaries of the nation state and sees a goal for this journey we are on, with all its zigs and zags: a world without war, a world in which the free development of each is dependent of the free development of all, and a world of justice, the free access of those things necessary to life, liberty, and happiness, while recognizing the uneven development which exists in the human race. When that is achieved, then we can have as a universal imperative respect for the interdependent web of all existence which, right now, we can only have as a categorical imperative. Thus, the color of the members of a church with these kinds of principles is secondary to the fact that there is a conscientious attempt to live out these principles as a credo. Indeed, such a clear declaration of belief would attract persons of color, if such resided in your area and who themselves had such a credo or who desired to learn of such a credo, would through outreach efforts be brought into our ranks.

Multiracial Unitarian Universalism is based firmly on the First, Fourth, and Seventh principles. Because it sees human beings of all colors as having inherent worth and dignity, then there is no need to separate on the basis of color. Because it sees the free and responsible search for truth and meaning as vital to discernment, multiracial unitarian universalism will reveal the utter artificiality of all forms of race theories and racism; therefore, it opposes false doctrines about the origins of race being in something called white supremacy or white privilege. Because it sees Unitarian Universalists as an interdependent whole, it does not see white brothers

and sisters as allies with a separate mission, but as comrades in a common struggle with a common mission to eliminate all forms of racism once and for all - if not in this generation, then the next. And this can be done whether a UU church is all white or all black, since these would-be temporary conditions.

II. III. Termination

A. Let me now sum up and conclude this message: I have shown the difference between having a credo and being constrained by a creed. I have also shown how the evolution of our Seven Principles from the time of Neolithic communism through the present has shaped them into the basis of a Unitarian Universalist Theology needed to be a ground of being for the upcoming struggle. And I have argued that the Seven Principles should be the bases of a new form of Unitarian Universalism, multiracial Unitarian Universalism, especially in all white and predominantly white congregations.

So, my thesis should be clear: As this time of crisis, with its up rage of racism in old and new forms, in which we now live intensify, it is urgent that we began to accept our Seven Principles as presently constituted as a credo (I believe as an act of personal commitment) as we deal with problems of growing our churches, expanding our denomination, and, most of all, having an impact on the historical times in which we live.

B. To conclude: Now do I cry credo to all this, all this I believe. What about you? What do you believe, really?

Amen

A.

Hymn

Supplemental words for Once to Every Soul and Nation

Once to Every Soul and Nation, modern version of a poem by James Lowell by Rev. Dr. Finley C. Campbell, chair/spokesperson, the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Council

Verse #1 (first verse in hymnal)

Once to every soul and nation

Comes the moment to decide

In the strife of truth with falsehood
For the good or evil side;
Then to stand with truth is noble,
When we share her wretched crust
ere that cause bring fame and profit
and tis prosperous to be just

Verse #2 (new verse)

Of one blood are we created
all the peoples of this earth
Of one family related
children of a single birth
There are lies which would divide us
there are truths to set us free
When we grasp with God's assurance
the power of equality

Verse #3 (new verse)

Truth forever on the scaffold
Wrong forever on the throne,
so it seems, throughout the ages
all the power is with wrong
Yet that scaffold shapes the future
and within the dim unknown

standeth God within the shadows

keeping watch o'er all her own.

Closing Words:

Closing words

A Litany for the Beloved Community by Otunya N'gessa

Rev. Campbell: though the road to the Beloved Community is long and the journey arduous
with peril and the dawn seems faraway;

Pat: Yet this long dark night will one day have an end.

Rev. Campbell: though we seem small, yet we aint all, for glaciers are built with snowflakes
and rain forests by leaves of grass and sunlight built with invisible photons.

Pat:: This long dark night shall one day have an end.

Rev. Campbell: It is as comrades and friends, not allies, that we shall achieve the promised
end -- the Omega Point of known human history, the Beloved Community, itself
based on multiracial unity, international solidarity, and multicultural synergy, shaped
by egalitarianism.

Together: And then and only then will this long dark night shall finally have its end, with the
coming of a new Pentecost.

Extinguish the chalice: I now extinguish the chalice but not the glow which

burns within our skins. Amen

Break before workshop

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