

"Religion is a part of me"... how to deal with that?

Post by "Pacatus" of January 12, 2022 at 4:54 PM

I grew up steeped in Christianity, and in my adult years became a liberal Anglican. I read folks like Gregory of Nyssa and Clement of Alexandria; and Protestant theologians like Paul Tillich and Jurgen Moltmann; a bit of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar in the Roman Catholic tradition; and three of the five volumes of Jaroslav Pelikan's history of church doctrine; etc., etc. I realized in the end that I was searching for some way to believe (in terms of honest assent) the core truth claims. In the end, I could not.

At the same time, I realized I was deeply steeped aesthetically: the poetry, the art (especially Greek Orthodox icons), the "bells and smells," the eucharist, the music. I tried returning to church for all of that, sans the doctrine -- but they always intruded themselves. I can't do it (even though I think that Epicurus would not object).

And most of the Christians I knew -- including priests and deacons -- were wonderful people. (But I was mostly insulated from puritanical fundamentalists.) I do not argue with them, nor disparage their beliefs. If asked, I might speak my truth "quietly and clearly" (as the Desiderata says) as best as I understand it (knowing I might often be wrong), as I strive to "go placidly amid the noise and the haste."

I still listen to Gregorian chant sometimes, and even Taize music. When they are not in English, my mind does not busy itself with translating (even if I recognize some Latin words). I can take that as a lovely form of meditation. But the nostalgia is always there. I suspect it always will be. And that's okay.