

We have to rid ourselves of all notions of God in order for God to be there. The Holy Spirit, the energy of God in us, is the true door. We know the Holy Spirit as energy and not as notions and words.

- *Thich Nhat Hahn (from One River, Many Wells)*

None of us controls God. Not even God's name. To attempt to control God by controlling a name of God is an act of idolatry, and act of freezing Divinity.

- *Matthew Fox, One River, Many Wells*

God is like a mirror. The mirror never changes, but everybody who looks at it sees something different.

- *Rabbi Harold Kushner*

How important the concept of God is, and how instead of valuing what has been given us, we with light hearts spurn it because of absurdities that have been attached to it.

- *Leo Tolstoy, Last Diaries, 1960*

Dear ones,  
Beware of the tiny gods frightened men create  
To bring an anesthetic relief  
to their sad days.

- *Hafiz, The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, the Great Sufi Master (from One River, Many Wells)*

...To call God either him or her, he or she, is in both cases to miss the wholeness of the Creator. And so we lose all sense of proportion, and try to clamp God once again within our own broken image.

- *Madeleine L'Engle, Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections*

There was something formless and perfect  
before the universe was born.

It is serene. Empty.  
Solitary. Unchanging.  
Infinite. Eternally present.  
It is the mother of the universe.  
For lack of a better name,  
I call it the Tao.

- *Tao Te Ching 25 (from One River, Many Wells)*

For God to me, it seems  
Is a verb  
Not a noun,  
Proper or improper;  
Is the articulation  
Not the art ...  
Is loving,  
Not the abstraction of love ...

Yes, God is a verb,  
The most active, connoting the vast harmonic  
Reordering of the universe  
From the unleashed chaos of energy.

- *Buckminster Fuller*

It makes no difference as to the name of the God,  
since love is the real God of all the world.

- *Apache proverb, from One Heart: Universal Wisdom from the World's Scriptures*

The difference between theism and nontheism is not whether one does or does not believe in God. It is an issue that applies to everyone, including both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Theism is a deep-seated conviction that there's some hand to hold; if we just do the right things, someone will appreciate us and take care of us. It means thinking there's always going to be a babysitter available when we need one. We all are inclined to abdicate responsibilities and delegate our authority to something outside ourselves. Nontheism is relaxing with the ambiguity and uncertainty of the present moment without reaching for anything to protect ourselves.

- *Pema Chödrön, When Things Fall Apart*

Nothing important is completely explicable.

- *Madeleine L'Engle, A Circle Of Quiet*

Some people hold that anything that is not rational is irrational and, therefore, to be rejected; but reason suggests that beyond the rational lies a transrational realm. We enter it in our dreams; we enter it in moments of worship. We enter it singing, when the tunes are good, even when the words are not. We enter it in lovemaking and in dancing and stargazing. We break through to a transrational realm, beyond knowing or naming.

By ignoring this reality in a narrow attempt to guard the portal of rationality against all intruders, we betray the canons of both reason and science...

- *F. Forrester Church, Our Chosen Faith, p. 163.*

For the things that are seen are temporal, but things that are unseen are eternal.

- *Madeleine L'Engle, A Wrinkle In Time, 186.*

This is what I believe:  
That I am I.

That my soul is a dark forest.  
That my known self will never be more than a little clearing in the forest.  
That gods, strange gods, come forth from the forest into the clearing of my known self, and then go back.  
That I must have the courage to let them come and go.  
That I will never let mankind put anything over me, but that I will try always to recognize and submit to the gods in me and the gods in other men and women.

There is my creed.

- *D.H. Lawrence*

## Natural Theology

Is there such a thing as God?  
I saw sunrise at Jackson Hole.  
I fell in love many years ago.  
I caught a tear in my father's eye.  
I watched a lily bloom.  
I saved a boy from drugs and death.  
I touched the hand of Martin Luther King, Jr.  
I feel the warmth of children.  
I laugh almost every day.  
I hold the hem of hope.  
The only God I can possibly know is the God of life—  
and life is endless.

- *David O. Rankin*

The human being's attempt to understand the Creator is never static; it is constantly in motion. If we let our concept of God become static, and we have done so over and over again throughout history, we inevitably blunder into forensic interpretation, and that does not work.

- *Madeleine L'Engle, Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections*

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight. Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are and, renewed by their grace, move boldly into the unknown.

- *Sara Moores Campbell*

If I could comprehend God completely, God wouldn't be worth bothering about. I'm finite, God is infinite; the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. But we get enough glimpses.

- *Madeleine L'Engle, Village Life Interview*

Were there no God, we would be in this glorious world with grateful hearts and no one to thank.

- *Christina Rossetti*

If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.

- *Voltaire*

There is a reality outside the world, that is to say, outside space and time, outside man's mental universe, outside any sphere whatsoever that is accessible to human faculties.

Corresponding to this reality, at the centre of the human heart, is the longing for an absolute good, a longing which is always there and is never appeased by any object in this world.

- *Simone Weil*

I could not say I believe. I know! I have had the experience of being gripped by something that is stronger than myself, something that people call God.

- *Carl Jung*

I do not believe in God, for that implies an effort of the will - I see God everywhere!

- *Jean Favre*

We have seen the highest circle of spiraling powers.  
We have named this circle God.  
We might have given it any name we wished: Abyss, Absolute Darkness, Absolute Light, Matter, Spirit, Ultimate Hope, Ultimate Despair, Silence.  
But never forget, it is we who give it a name.

- *Nikos Kazantzakis*

Is man one of God's blunders, or is God one of man's blunders?

- *Friedrich Nietzsche*

God, that dumping ground of our dreams.

- *Jean Rostand, Carnets d'un Biologiste, 1962*

The house of God is not a safe place.

- *Madeleine L'Engle, A Stone For A Pillow*

Sometimes it rains on the just. I believe that.  
Sometimes it rains on the unjust. I believe that, too.  
But I also believe that sometimes it just rains.  
Neither God or Justice or belief has anything to do with it.

- *Anonymous*

Seeing so much poverty everywhere makes me think that God is not rich. He gives the appearance of it, but I suspect some financial difficulties.

- *Victor Hugo, Les Misérables, 1862*

I don't want to start any blasphemous rumours  
But I think that God's got a sick sense of humor  
And when I die I expect to find Him laughing

- *Depeche Mode*

I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.

- *Mother Teresa*

In the long run nothing can withstand reason and experience, and the contradiction which religion offers to both is all too palpable.

- *Sigmund Freud*

God gave us an opportunity through science to understand the natural world, but there will never be a scientific proof of God's existence.

- *Francis Collins*

I was at this time living ... in a whirl of contradictions. I maintained that God did not exist. I was also very angry with God for not existing.

- *C.S. Lewis*

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things...which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all of those who adhere to them.

- *Emile Durkheim, as quoted by David Sloan Wilson in Darwin's Cathedral*

### **Out of Our Yearning**

We speak to the god, the goddess, the spirit of life, the eternal.

We speak to the mysterious thread that connects us one to the other and to the universe.

We speak to the deep wisdom at the center of our beings.

We embody the yearning of all people to touch each other more deeply, to hear each other more keenly, to see each other's joys and sorrows as our own and know that we are not alone, unless we create solitude for ourselves; and even then, community awaits us.

Out of yearning we have come to this religious community.

May we help each other proclaim the possibilities we see,

to create the community we desire, to worship what is worthy in our lives, to teach the truth as we know it, and to serve with justice in all the ways that we can,

to the end that our yearning is assuaged and our lives fulfilled in one another.

Let us go, now, into the silence of the faith that is unique to each of us, and still the same.

Let us be silent together for a moment.

[Pause.]

May peace be yours.

- *Susan Manker Seale (from For Praying Out Loud by L. Annie Foerster)*

...We believe faith should come across us like a blinding light, transforming us, subsuming us in divine rapture. We want to be like Paul on the road to Damascus, knocked to the ground by a truth we cannot deny. If our faith is not like this, we reason, it is no faith at all.

But faith is not always so dramatic. It is sometimes a quiet shaping – an edifice built, stone by stone, from the hard labors of our heart.

- *Kent Nerburn, Make Me An Instrument of Your Peace: Living in the Spirit of the Prayer of St. Francis*

Through our direct experience, we ... may discover a profound sense of wonder about the gift of life and be led to gratitude, renewal of the spirit, and openness to the forces that create and uphold life. "Belief is many things," said one of our modern leaders, A. Powell Davies, "and so is disbelief. But religion is something that happens to you when you open your mind to truth, your conscience to justice, and your heart to love." In Unitarian Universalist congregations, we do

not try to make one another fit a given pattern of experience. But we do discover together that there are religious dimensions in all our varied human experience.

For us, religious experience is direct and personal. It may be joyous – a transformative moment of awakening like being present at a child's birth. Or it may be as painful as the birth itself or as wrenching as grief. Sometimes it takes something very close to our own death, or the death of someone we love, to break through our usual defenses and remind us what a gift it is to be alive and to be able to love. Part of all authentic experience is deeply inward – beginning to trust what Channing calls "the power of God within." But often it is dependent on the agency of others whose insight, courage, and love helps us expand our idea of what human life can be.

- *John A. Buehrens, Our Chosen Faith*

Religion is so much more than just spirituality. What religion seeks to do, and what spirituality cannot accomplish alone, is to reunite our divided selves. The role of religion in our lives is to give us integrity. Integrity, which literally means the state or quality of being entire, complete and unbroken. Spirituality is the Band-Aid or cast that indicates a broken heart or fractured life. It has no healing powers of its own, and yet promotes the environment necessary for good health to return. Religion is the mending of the break or fracture itself. Religion reacts with spirituality to seal the wound and fill in the cracks. And good religion, good religion leaves no scars.

...So rather than go it alone, rather than trade in one fable for another, I prefer to call upon the bedrock of religion... I need trustworthy relationships, tenacious communities of support. This is the only way I can sustain the journey toward wholeness, toward an undivided life. The journey has its solitary passages—it sure does. But it is simply too arduous to take without the assistance of others. Because I have such a vast capacity for self-delusion, I will inevitably get lost en route without correctives from outside myself.

- *Rev. Greg Stewart, "I'm Not Religious But I Am Spiritual" sermon (September 16, 2007)*