



The Interfaith Unionsm
for Progressive Religion



Identity, Spirituality and Cosmopolitan Love (Part I)

by David E. McClean

Who are you? Not merely a Spaniard or American, not merely a Christian or Jew, not merely a Muslim or a physician. You are the being who decides what to be, what to do, where to do it and why to do it. If there is anything essential about being human, it is this capacity to be in the world in a way that trees and rocks and fish cannot. To conclude otherwise is to dishonor your Creator, which made you free.

*A Message
to Members*

vol. 1, no.6

So much wrong with the world has to do with our attachments to where we were born, our culture, or the faith in which we were raised. Now, these things are important. We are shaped by them, even when we resist or reject them, even when we leave our native soil or choose to worship nothing at all. But to be shaped by something is not the same thing as to be *determined* by it.

The ease with which so many of us permit ourselves to be determined by the conditions of our lives or the life paths we have chosen is *amazing*, and yet *understandable*.

It is amazing because our *decision* that we cannot be other than what we are flies in the face of the obvious fact that we can change at any moment we really wish to – whether that means getting on a plane and leaving our city or country or village (even if there are terrible costs), or exiting an abusive relationship, or forcing ourselves to look at “things” in a different way (even if there are terrible costs). Every day I ask myself why I am doing what I am doing, why I look at this or that the way that I do, and I make small changes, and sometimes big changes. I know that I am not a determined being, stuck in circumstance and nailed-down to past choices and ways of seeing.

It is understandable, on the other hand, because life is hard and time is precious and energies are limited. Better to believe that we “can’t” be other than we are than expend the effort to change ourselves. Change is scary. But it may be morally and spiritually required, and to not listen to the voice that bids us to change is dangerous.

Clinging to our identities can be *scary*, too. The underside of our personal conservatism is a willingness to close our minds to other people’s views, to see them as so other that we cannot befriend them, to see challenges and threats rather than opportunities for love and friendship and growth. So, who are you? A free creature of the universe, or a determined thing – a leaf in the wind caught on winds of circumstance

(May 2005 - Vol. 1, No. 6. Welcome to a very special ministry, and a very special effort to, through faith and love, help to heal the wounds and divisions in our world in concert with other like-minded people of faith. The Interfaith Union’s project is healing our divisions - divisions of nationalism, divisions of race, divisions of sex and sexual orientation, divisions of class, divisions of culture, divisions of faith, divisions between secular and sacred, divisions between market and family, divisions that chop-up our souls, cloud our eyes and bid us to live lives of inner deformity and social distance. *Note on the image: The tree is a ubiquitous image, found in many faith traditions. It suggests life, power, spiritual growth, and insight.* WWW.IUNION.ORG (a New York not-for-profit religious corporation). Copyright 2005, The Interfaith Union for Progressive Religion. All Rights Reserved.

and old choices? Or a being just on a wonderful and challenging road of self-discovery and spiritual growth?

(May 2005 - Vol. 1, No. 6. Welcome to a very special ministry, and a very special effort to, through faith and love, help to heal the wounds and divisions in our world in concert with other like-minded people of faith. The Interfaith Union's project is healing our divisions - divisions of nationalism, divisions of race, divisions of sex and sexual orientation, divisions of class, divisions of culture, divisions of faith, divisions between secular and sacred, divisions between market and family, divisions that chop-up our souls, cloud our eyes and bid us to live lives of inner deformity and social distance. *Note on the image: The tree is a ubiquitous image, found in many faith traditions. It suggests life, power, spiritual growth, and insight.* WWW.IUNION.ORG (a New York not-for-profit religious corporation). Copyright 2005, The Interfaith Union for Progressive Religion. All Rights Reserved.