

Paul, I thank you for clearly laying out your struggle with our faith community. You have set the tone and example for my "presponse" - what a word!

My story and understanding of UUism is at times different from and at times the same as yours.

First, a caveat: You confess to a relentlessly logical mind with a pathological bent for rebellion. I

have a relentlessly ADD mind replete with sidebars, often understood only by other ADD minds.

I was heartened yesterday when you confessed to be cursed with an ADD mind. I am also a pathologically counter dependent lover of community. There is oxymoron in my being.

I am a born Unitarian, raised in a Unitarian Christian church school, a happy camper believing in God. I love our history because of the story it tells. While central to my beliefs it is not central to my faith. At 17, when my mother died, I was left alone and confused in the cosmos, without a responsive God. Some idiot church school teacher had taught me that God would respond to my prayers. Today, I do not sense a personal god, yet in ministry I am surrounded by Gods and Goddesses that I must deal with daily. At 58, my faith reflects the 17's year old's struggle.

Religiously, I am a modern/postmodern mongrel. One spiritual practise is important to me. I regularly enter a thankful-prayerful-attitude first encountered while reading medieval Christian mystics. . I do not pray to anything, yet prayer gives me the blessing of place in the cosmos. I choose no further explanation. It just works for me. The humility which thankful prayer instills is a welcome antidote to an age of empty egos, consumerism, and stupid uses of power. I confess

to being responsive to my culture.

I live in a rich dialectic between the humility below thankfulness, which causes me to see myself as a tiny part of all that is, nearly meaningless, and an inner need to create meaning so that I may have an existential feeling of self bumping up against the world. In a counterintuitive way, labelling and ascribing meaning to the world has come to be rooted in the Buddhist understanding of Sunyata or emptiness. I have fashioned an understanding of my most basic religious impulses from bits and pieces of other religions. I confess to post modern influences.

This rich dialectic leaves lots of room for me to plant my feet firmly at the same time as I remain open to change. The possibility of change does not make me timid or tentative, nor does it inhibit my stubborn and tenacious support of what I see as ethical.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarians in the East fought Unitarians in the West over belief and ethics - at least that is my take. The Western "ethics people" won and since then we have behaved more like Jews than Christians. Jews argue all the time over the meaning of the scriptures. We argue all the time over everything and call it a discussion. We can not say what we believe - but neither can the Jews - but we know and so do they. And we live our lives as ritualistically as the Jews, though differently. Their rituals are bound to the stories of their history and the year. Our rituals are found in instinctual responses to oppression, manipulation, injustice, unethical behaviour, caring for our neighbours. Our responses are couched in compassion, the creation of

environments where dignity is possible, and a deep love of others. There are down sides too - we are as xenophobic as some but much less than most, we are elitist and we do not like that about ourselves, and we love our fur lined rut, but desperately want to be out of it. We are filled with paradox. We are a faith of works more than belief. I do not find, in Canada, that Unitarians shirk or lurk. Canadian Unitarians accept responsibility for their neighbourhood of the world and they take part in solving problems.

My ethics have always been rooted in what I was taught in church school about the historical Jesus. Through disciplined study, my faith in those ethics has grown deeper over the years.

You have spoken about the importance of the ethics of Jesus as they encompass compassion, neighbour love, hospitality, and community renewal, as well as the moral-justice traditions of the Hebrew community. I agree with these tap roots and add to them the sense of oppression and non-violence expressed by Gandhi and Martin Luther King. I add the rootage of Schweitzer's and the Dali Lama's sense of reverence for life. I add a deep attachment to and reverence for land, and I add the spirit community which surrounds us, as found in Native traditions. These last elements were also part of my life on the farm when I was a child. My culture shapes my faith. I do not want a faith out of place and time.

(Ah, here is a sidebar . . . .) One last note on ethics, I believe that too many Unitarians jump to the use of the words "prophetic voice" without remembering that there are really precious few

examples of the use of that voice throughout thousands of years of Old Testament history.

Today we often convey a false sense of the prophetic and in doing so we cheapen the examples of Isaiah, Amos, Micah and others. I never use a prophetic voice, but am always called toward it, and I often site the true prophets.

My training before ministry was in geology. The rational mind is important to me. As a young adult that rational mind was at war with my body and soul. Today they live together richly. I spent years in therapy and with spiritual mentors experimenting with balance, tension, and fluidity, seeking to deal with psychological barriers to a healthy relationship between the head, heart, and soul. Mostly, however, I have changed because of time alone in the high desert of the Mojave in Southern California. There I have hiked in silence, one month out of each year, for the past seven years. The model is from childhood teachings - 40 days and nights in the desert.

Institutionally, I serve a church of 550 members which is incredibly caring and passionate while deeply rooted in Canada's socialist movement. We have over eighty groups in the church. Most of the groups act as entry points for the incredible post modern melange which comes through our doors. We preach the core messages found in the ethics of Jesus without often referring to Jesus himself. The teachings are so radical that we can not measure up. Together we prefer ethics which call us to new being, ethics which we will always feel tugged by, but never fully able to measure up to. Easy ethics are no good for us.

Much of your criticism of Unitarianism rings true to me. But there is one area you ignored. It is

an important edge for me. It is found in the fact that Unitarianism is more process than shared content. That does not mean that the individual content or the community is devoid of depth or meaning. I do not believe that we have shallowed ourselves out on process so much that the foundations in reason, justice, and love have been watered down. I have let Wieman's call to process and an ever greater appreciative understand be my guide.

We are a conduit for many people seeking to find a safe religious home for themselves. Perhaps, we have been a conduit for you, and today you can feel safer and more at home in the Quaker community because your time amidst Unitarians provided untold gifts which opened you up, again, to a community with a deep and rooted central theology. If that is so, I know we have succeeded in providing a haven to a bruised traveller. We have successfully practised the fragile art of hospitality. I am happy that you have found something which challenges you and engages you. Pendle Hill is indeed a special place. I bless you and send you on your way, letting you know that you are always welcome in our home whenever you care to stop by.

I think you and I share respect for liberalism and we have differences, some named, some hinted at, others skirted. Certainly we have some different experiences of Unitarian Universalism. I thank you for your paper which has caused me to think about and give expression to parts of my own faith history as affected by modern and post modern influences.