

Feminine and Masculine Principles

Sunday, April 22, 2018

God is beyond gender, of course. Yet Genesis says that both male and female are included in “the image of God” (1:27). Throughout the Bible, both feminine and masculine images are used to illustrate the divine, although we must admit that the masculine ones dominate. [1] It is important that all people are able to recognize themselves in the picture we paint of God. When we over-emphasize masculine traits, many women, transgender, and intersex persons feel less-than, that their voices and bodies don’t matter as much as men’s, that God’s image is not in them.

As we saw last week, gender roles are fluid and somewhat arbitrary. But we can learn from the archetypal patterns called “feminine” and “masculine.” Let’s explore the unique gifts of feminine and masculine soul principles (regardless of one’s gender identification), recognizing how these characteristics are evident in the divine. I do know that I am entering a mine field here, and many do not like calling things masculine or feminine. Trust me, this is only a starting point.

In most mythologies and archetypal psychology, the feminine principle has greater interest in the inner, the soul, the formless, intuition, connection, harmony, beauty, and relationality in general; it is more identified with lunar subtlety than the over-differentiating light of the masculine sun god or the literalism and linearity of the left brain. Not all women fully identify with the feminine principle, and some men do, but these descriptors give you a sense of where I am coming from—and moving beyond, too. Many of the Prophets, the Wisdom literature, and of course Jesus himself illustrate these feminine qualities. Jesus is by no definition a classic patriarch. The Divine is often called “Sophia” or Holy Wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures; and God is variously described as a compassionate mother, a hen protecting her chicks, and even “The Breasted One” or El Shaddai (Genesis 17:1, Exodus 6:2).

The masculine principle, as I experience it and have observed it, is more interested in the outer, the mental, exterior form, idea, the movement or action of things, the naming and differentiation of things one from another; solar clarity of individual things, as it were, as opposed to the relationship of one thing to another. It prefers the ascent of mind to the descent of soul. It often moves toward “agency” and action before relationship or intimacy. Just watch little boys play, and watch how men love to fix, build, and also demolish. It is often a more “focused consciousness” than the “diffuse awareness” of the feminine principle, as Carl Jung noted. We see examples of these characteristics in Moses, the Hebrew judges, the practical, eager disciples, and in many images of God as lion and king.

The dance of gender seems to be a foundational opposition in the human mind, which is why many languages (but not English) call even inanimate objects masculine or feminine. Our deep preoccupation with gender also helps explain why dualistic gender taboos are often the very last and hardest to be resolved, even among people who consider themselves quite open-minded, educated, and progressive. Gender seems to be a very deep archetype in the psyche. As long as we read reality in a non-contemplative, dualistic way, any gender identity that doesn’t follow our binary “norm” will invariably be challenging and usually resisted. Binary divisions seem to give the psyche both simplicity and some kind of comfort.

References:

[1] See Richard Rohr and Marcus Borg, <https://cac.org/mother-god-2017-11-08/>.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi* (Franciscan Media: 2014), 120-122.

<https://cac.org/feminine-and-masculine-principles-2018-04-22/4/6/2022>

Union: The Foundation and Goal

Monday, April 23, 2018

We two being one, are it. –John Donne [1]

Even as we acknowledge the sacredness of gender and sex, we also need to realize that there’s something deeper than our gender, anatomy, or physical passion: our ontological self, who we are forever in Christ. As Paul courageously puts it, “There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Those who have already begun to experience their divine union will usually find it very easy to be compassionate toward people who are not like them because they know they share the same essential self that is “hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

For all of the beauty and power of sexuality, it is still under the rubric of the floating or passing self, rather than the Self eternally anchored in God. I believe our gender is going to pass away when we do. I think that’s what Jesus is referring to when he says, “The children of this world take wives and husbands . . . but in heaven there will be no marriage or giving in marriage” (see all of Luke 20:34-37). Our personality and physicality are gates to the temple—the place of union. We often confuse the gates of embodiment with the temple itself. In the end, there is only universal love where “God will be God in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Both sexuality and gender are mysteries much broader than genitality and intercourse. It is an inner drive toward the other and beyond the small self, which some call eros. Someone can be celibate and still experience this pull to give oneself to another. Someone can be genital and be totally self-absorbed, which is not eros at all, but “lustful.”

A good intimate relationship takes away our existential anxiety. Even without any touching, true intimacy overcomes our feeling of separateness: “I’m not attractive; I’m not believable; I’m not credible; I’m not. . . .” is our desperate and disparate state. Once someone affirms that we’re lovable, that we’re even enough for them, and once we begin to deeply trust ourselves, then we can enter the gates of the temple and discover what we also desire, which is agape, or divine love. Agape is much more inclusive and all-embracing than eros. But agape builds on eros and even deepens eros because it hugely expands our sense of “Self.” Agape love transcends and includes all other true loves.

Spirituality and sexuality are two sides of one coin. They’re both a gift. One without the other might be mistrusted. But together they give us the capacity, not just to make love to another person, but to make love to God, no matter which relationship comes first. Sexuality and spirituality emerge from the same foundation and have the same goal: universal love.

References:

[1] John Donne, "The Canonization," *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin (Modern Library: 1994), 14. Adapted from Richard Rohr, *God As Us! The Sacred Feminine and the Sacred Masculine*, discs 1-3, 5, and 6 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2011), [DVD](#), [CD](#), [MP3 download](#).

<https://cac.org/union-the-foundation-and-goal-2018-04-23/4/6/2022>

Reclaiming Women's Wisdom

Tuesday, April 24th, 2018

While there is great value in the archetypes of feminine and masculine principles—which, regardless of our gender, we might all embody—it's important to acknowledge the inequality within the church and culture at large. For example, in the United States, women make 83% of what men earn; the wage gap is even higher for women of color. [1] I can only nod in agreement with criticism of the Roman Catholic Church for its disregard of women as leaders.

Thankfully, there are many people working toward a more inclusive and just society and religion. Womanist theology is helping to restore a feminine view of God and Scripture, honoring the voices and experiences of black women. It applies Alice Walker's concept of "womanist" to theology, a field that has long been dominated by men. [2] Delores Williams writes:

What then is a womanist? Her origins are in the black folk expression "You acting womanish," meaning, according to Walker, "wanting to know more and in greater depth than is good for one—outrageous audacious, courageous and willful behavior." A womanist is also "responsible, in charge, serious." She can walk to Canada and take others with her [a reference to Harriet Tubman]. She loves, she is committed, she is a universalist. . . . Walker insists that a womanist is also "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female." [3]

Other theologians are reclaiming the importance of women in the Bible. Though the Bible was written primarily by men during patriarchal periods, there are plenty of examples of women in positions of wisdom or authority: Deborah, Esther, Ruth and Naomi, Judith, Rahab, Anna, Priscilla, the several women who accompany and support Jesus, and of course Mary, the mother of Jesus.

And then there's Mary Magdalene. My colleague, CAC core faculty member Cynthia Bourgeault, suggests that a careful study of this woman who first saw the Risen Christ can help us "cut through two millennia of doctrine and dogma to Jesus' teaching. We find here relational health, an astonishing vision of love as a transformational path, and profoundly empowering models of women and men working together in spiritual leadership roles. To reclaim Mary Magdalene is to reclaim Christianity. Without her, our understanding of what Jesus really taught is incomplete. In fact, it is significantly distorted." [4]

Tomorrow I'll share more of Cynthia's insights from this maligned and ignored woman who may have been a friend and follower closer to Jesus than his twelve male disciples.

References:

[1] Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/03/gender-pay-gap-facts/> and <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/01/racial-gender-wage-gaps-persist-in-u-s-despite-some-progress/>.

[2] For more on womanist theology, see Linda E. Thomas, "Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm," *Cross Currents* 48(4), Winter 1998/1999, 488-499, <http://www.crosscurrents.org/thomas.htm>.

[3] Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices," *Christianity and Crisis* (March 2, 1987), available at <https://www.religion-online.org/article/womanist-theology-black-womens-voices/>.

[4] Cynthia Bourgeault, *God As Us*, disc 1 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2011), [DVD](#), [CD](#), [MP3 download](#).

<https://cac.org/reclaiming-womens-wisdom-2018-04-24/4/6/2022>

Mary Magdalene

Wednesday, April 25th, 2018

*Today I'll offer a glimpse into Cynthia Bourgeault's deep study of Mary Magdalene. Cynthia draws from the unfortunately named "Gnostic" gospels of Mary, Thomas, and Philip. Even though these texts are not part of the biblical canon, I believe they offer wisdom deeper than the merely factual level. I encourage you to read Cynthia's book, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene: Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity—with an open mind and heart—to discover even more about this woman.**

I'd like to reclaim Mary Magdalene as an apostolic partner of Jesus, as one who ministered in a tradition that was not just about male/female equality. Certainly it was about that, and Jesus was way out in front of the pack; equality was the starting point for everything else. But Mary and Jesus took it a step further, including and transcending the opposites and birthing a new form of person who lived, ministered, and saw out of a new and nondual consciousness. Mary can help us recover Jesus' teaching and live in holographic unity, the kingdom of heaven here on earth.

In the simplified version of the [Christian] story . . . [these are the] tenets: Jesus came to earth to found a religion called Christianity, called his male-only disciples to be its apostles and priests, and gave them the sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. The obvious anomalies are overlooked—why Mary Magdalene, who was specifically given the first apostolic charge by Jesus himself to announce the news of his resurrection, was not included among the apostles, and why Paul, who was not at the Last Supper and never met Jesus in his earthly life, was. But such is the power of blinders.

While [Mary Magdalene] has often been sentimentalized or sexualized, there has not until recently been the slightest threat of her being divinized, and her intact humanness is her saving grace. Now that a new generation of Bible scholarship has corrected the glaring inaccuracy of her earlier portrayal as a prostitute and is steadily laying the groundwork by which she will sooner or later be able to fully reclaim her role as Jesus' spiritual partner and [wisdom] lineage bearer, what presents itself to us is an accessible and entirely believable portrait of "one who got there."

Applying the teachings that Jesus showed her, [Mary] did her inner work and emerged through the eye of the needle into singleness. If Jesus shows us what the completed human being looks like in male form, she models it for us in its female version; together they become the Christosophia, the androgynous archetype of human wholeness. And because her human heart and lover's passion are so central to this transformation, she teaches us that we need not be afraid of these things in our own spiritual

striving; the path to the fullness of being lies through human intimacy, not away from it. She binds the icon of the human heart to the angel of Holy Sophia.

References:

Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene: Discovering the Woman at the Heart of Christianity* (Shambhala: 2010), 32, 179-180; and *God As Us*, disc 2 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2011), DVD, CD, MP3 download.

<https://cac.org/mary-magdalene-2018-04-25/>
4/6/2022

Franciscan Feminism

Thursday, April 26th, 2018

While my religious order is far from perfect, I appreciate how Franciscanism has in so many subtle ways honored and embraced the feminine side of things. One scholar rightly says that St. Francis “without having a specific feminist program . . . contributed to the feminizing of Christianity.” [1] French historian André Vauchez, in his critical biography of Francis, adds that this integration of the feminine “constitutes a fundamental turning point in the history of Western spirituality.” [2] I think they are both onto something, which creates the distinctiveness and even the heart of the Franciscan path. In so many ways, we were not like the classic pattern of religious orders.

St. Clare (1194-1253) is clearly the Franciscans’ archetypal symbol of the feminine, and yet the very male St. Francis (1182-1226) almost supernaturally exemplifies it—as a man. In my view, Franciscanism integrated the feminine element into a very patriarchal and overly masculinized Roman Church, the harsh male spirituality of the desert, and an overscheduled spirituality in most monasteries.

Franciscanism integrated the feminine both on the level of imagination and in practical ways too. It created new “softer” names for roles and functions, a more familial structure than a hierarchical one. We do not make our decisions top down, but communally in chapters (as do most communities now). Francis forbade us to use any titles implying up and down, like prior, abbot, or superior.

Happy and healthy Franciscans seem to present a combination of lightness of heart and firmness of foot at the same time. By this I mean that they do not take themselves so seriously, as upward-bound men often do; they often serve with quiet conviction and personal freedom as many mature women do.

I see this synthesis of both lightness and firmness as a more “feminine” approach to spirituality, beautifully exemplified in both Clare and Francis in different ways. It is a rare combination, so much so that it might seem a kind of holy foolishness. Androgyny is invariably a threatening Third Force if we are over-identified with one side or the other.

Clare asks from the papacy that she be allowed to found her community on her privately conceived and untested ground that she calls a “privilege of poverty.” Then she waits patiently on her deathbed for the papal bull to arrive. She knows she will win, even though there was no precedent for women’s religious communities without dowries or patronage systems being able to sustain themselves.

As to Francis, he twirls around like a top at a crossroads to discern which way God wants him to go, and then sets off with utter confidence in the direction where he finally lands. Neither of these ways are classic Catholic means of discernment, decision-making, or discovering God’s will. Yet I believe the lightness of heart comes from contact with deep feminine intuition and with consciousness itself; the firmness of foot emerges when that feminine principle integrates with the mature masculine soul and moves forward with confidence into the outer world. These are just my interpretations, and you might well see it differently.

References:

[1] Jacques Dalarun, *Francis of Assisi and the Feminine* (Franciscan Institute: 2006), 127-154.
[2] André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (Yale University Press: 2012), 324-336.
Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi* (Franciscan Media: 2014), 119-120, 123-124.

<https://cac.org/franciscan-feminism-2018-04-26/>
4/6/2022

Love, Sex, and Cosmic Evolution

Friday, April 27th, 2018

Sister Ilia Delio, a Franciscan professor and theologian, has a wonderful way of making the brilliant writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin accessible. Teilhard (1881-1955) was a French philosopher, Jesuit priest, and paleontologist who brought a scientific and mystical perspective to his faith. In her book, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*, Delio writes: Sexuality presumes that we are part of a whole and have been separated from the whole. Hence our incompleteness makes us long for wholeness and union. . . .

Teilhard speaks of the “creative role of erotic attraction” not only on the level of the individual but the universe itself is erotic. [1] Passion is the true stuff of the universe; “the whole creation is groaning in the pains of new birth” (Romans 8:22). Every star, cell, flower, bird, and human person yearns for wholeness and completeness. Sex is not a mere continuation of the species; it is the energy of love by which this universe is in the process of personalization, becoming more spiritualized, energized, and conscious. . . .

Modern culture’s preoccupation with the physical body and the exploitation of the body as soulless matter reflects the deep human disconnect from self, neighbor, earth, and God. Sex has become more like a video game with the goal of winning rather than part of the deep religious core of cosmic evolution. . . .

Evolution continues through humanity only when there is consciousness of love as the integral wholeness of love that includes a healthy sexuality. Awareness of our desires and attention to our deepest longings must orient us toward a unified heart and consciousness. Love is more than a survival mechanism; it is the fire breathed into the fabric of the cosmos that enkindles life, rendering life more than biological function. Love turns passion into transformative power.

One might say that evolution depends on healthy sexuality. The love between persons creates a thread of passionate energy that winds around the embrace of persons and enters into the heart of the cosmos, contributing to the energetic movement of universal convergence. Love is what “makes the world go ‘round.’” It is

fundamental to the forward movement of evolution and cosmic personalization. It is the whole of every whole, the open, dynamic field of energy that seeks greater wholeness within every star, leaf, plant, and galaxy.

By the sheer power of its energy, love draws everything into an endless depth of greater wholeness. On the level of human consciousness, the core energy of personal/sexual love must reach out to the wider realm of humanity that includes love of neighbor, friendship, and love of the stranger. Love, sex, and cosmic evolution are intertwined in a field of integral wholeness; to deny, avoid, or negate any of them is to thwart the process of deepening life.

References:

[1] Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 1969), 77, 82.

Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (Orbis Books: 2013), 47-51.

<https://cac.org/love-sex-and-cosmic-evolution-2018-04-27/>
4/6/2022

Gender and Sexuality: Week 1 Summary

Summary: Sunday, April 15-Friday, April 20, 2018

We are clearly not very at home in our bodies, yet Jesus came to show us that we can and must trust our human, and thus body-based, experience. The material world is the privileged place for the divine encounter. (Sunday)

The word sex has a Latin root, the verb *secare* [which] means “to cut off,” “to sever,” “to amputate,” “to disconnect from the whole.” We wake up in the world and in every cell of our being we ache, consciously and unconsciously, sensing that we are incomplete. —Ronald Rolheiser (Monday)

If we don’t recognize the sacred at the deep level of gender identity and sexual desire, I don’t know if we will be able to see it anywhere else. (Tuesday)

Plato and Aristotle are primarily responsible for our binary view of gender and the idea that gender and sexuality are “biologically ingrained, and determined by God, the creator of the natural order.” (Wednesday)

[Sexual abuse] is the legacy of [sexual] repression. . . . Responsible incarnational redress will not be forthcoming till that deep psychic woundedness is acknowledged, named, and subjected to a more discerning and compassionate analysis. —Diarmuid O’Murchu (Thursday)

At its most intense and most exhilarating heights, the experience of sex combines embodied love and desire, conversation and communication, openness to the other in the intimacy of embodied selves, transcendence into fuller selves, and even encounter with God. —Margaret Farley (Friday)

Practice: Sensuality

Nature writer and conservationist Terry Tempest Williams writes evocatively of her intimacy with the Utah desert. I invite you to imagine that you are the “I” in this passage. Feel what she feels. Breathe as she breathes. Notice what sensations arise in your body. Lose track of where you end and the red rock begins.

Earth. Rock. Desert. I am walking barefoot on sandstone, flesh responding to flesh. It is hot, so hot the rock threatens to burn through the calloused soles of my feet. I must quicken my pace, paying attention to where I step.

For as far as I can see, the canyon country of southern Utah extends in all directions. No compass can orient me here, only a pledge to love and walk the terrifying distances before me. What I fear and desire most in this world is passion. I fear it because it promises to be spontaneous, out of my control, unnamed, beyond my reasonable self. I desire it because passion has color, like the landscape before me. It is not pale. It is not neutral. It reveals the backside of the heart.

I climb the slickrock on all fours, my hands and feet throbbing with the heat. It feels good to sweat, to be engaged, to inhabit my animal body. . . . Once I enter the Joint Trail . . . it is dark, cool, and narrow with sheer sandstone walls on either side of me. . . . The palms of my hands search for a pulse in the rocks. I continue walking. In some places my hips can barely fit through. I turn sideways, my chest and back in a vise of geologic time.

I stop. The silence that lives in these sacred hallways presses against me. I relax. I surrender. I close my eyes. The arousal of my breath rises in me like music, like love, as the possessive muscles between my legs tighten and release. I come to the rock in a moment of stillness, giving and receiving, where there is no partition between my body and the Earth. . . .

I touch the skin of my face. It seems so callow. Moving my fingers over the soft flesh that covers my cheekbones, I wonder what it means to be human and why, at this particular moment, rock seems more accessible and yielding than my own species. . . .

I . . . focus on breath. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. The attention of breath in love, two breaths creating a third, mingling and shaping each other like clouds, cumulus clouds over the desert. . . . My body softens as I make my wish to follow my breath. It settles on the backs of swallowtails. We are carried effortlessly through the labyrinth of these labial canyons. . . .

Inhale. Exhale. . . . I am dizzy. I am drunk with pleasure. There is no need to speak.

Listen.
Below us.
Above us.
Inside us.
Come.
This is all there is.

Reference:

Terry Tempest Williams, “Desert Quartet,” *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (Vintage Books: 2001), 195-197, 199, 210-211.

For Further Study:

Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Incarnation: The New Evolutionary Threshold* (Orbis Books: 2017)

Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* (The Crossroad Publishing Company: 2003)

Richard Rohr, *Gate of the Temple: Spirituality & Sexuality* (Center for Action and Contemplation: 1991, 2006, 2009), [CD](#), [MP3 download](#)

<https://cac.org/gender-and-sexuality-week-1-summary-2018-04-21/>
4/6/2022

Gender and Sexuality: Week 2 Summary

Saturday, April 28th, 2018

Gender seems to be a very deep archetype in the psyche. As long as we read reality in a non-contemplative, dualistic way, any gender identity that doesn't follow our binary "norm" will invariably be challenging and usually resisted. (Sunday)

Even as we acknowledge the sacredness of gender and sex, we also need to realize that there's something deeper than our gender, anatomy, or physical passion: our ontological self, who we are forever in Christ. (Monday)

Mary Magdalene can help us cut through two millennia of doctrine and dogma to Jesus' teaching. We find here relational health, an astonishing vision of love as a transformational path, and profoundly empowering models of women and men working together in spiritual leadership roles. —Cynthia Bourgeault (Tuesday)

If Jesus shows us what the completed human being looks like in male form, Mary Magdalene models it for us in its female version; together they become the Christosophia, the androgynous archetype of human wholeness. —Cynthia Bourgeault (Wednesday)

The Franciscan lightness of heart comes from contact with deep feminine intuition and with consciousness itself; the firmness of foot emerges when that feminine principle integrates with the mature masculine soul and moves forward with confidence into the outer world. (Thursday)

Love turns passion into transformative power. —Ilia Delio (Friday)

Practice: Falling into Love

Let us rejoice, beloved,
And let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty,
To the mountain and to the hill,
To where the pure water flows,
And further, deep into the thicket.
And then we will go on
To the high caverns in the rock
Which are so well concealed; . . .
There you will show me
What my soul has been seeking,
And then you will give me,
You, my life, will give me there
What you gave me on that other day.
—St. John of the Cross [1]

In his prologue to *The Spiritual Canticle*, John of the Cross (1542-1591) writes, "it would be foolishness to think that the language of love . . . can be at all explained in words of any kind." Words fail to describe human and divine intimacy, and yet all mystics, poets, and wisdom teachers use words to point to the ineffable.

To take this week's reflections on gender and sexuality further, beyond the rational level, I invite you to listen to a guided meditation with CAC core faculty member James Finley. As he explores the mystical realm of union, listen with your heart. Visualize the images. Notice what sensations arise in your body. What experiences of love from your own life come to mind? Reflect on moments of love you may have skimmed over quickly at the time. Allow this teaching to guide you deeper into the love that is

always present but sometimes unnoticed. You may want to journal about this and see what your own experience has to teach you about love.

References:

[1] John of the Cross, "Stanzas between the Soul and the Bridegroom," (36-38) in *The Spiritual Canticle*. See John of the Cross: Selected Writings, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh (Paulist Press: 1987), 226-227.

From James Finley, *Intimacy: The Divine Ambush*, disc 6 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2013), CD, MP3 download.

For Further Study:

Cynthia Bourgeault and Richard Rohr, *God As Us* (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2011), DVD, CD, MP3 download

Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (Orbis Books: 2013)

James Finley and Richard Rohr, *Intimacy: The Divine Ambush* (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2013), CD, MP3 download.

Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi* (Franciscan Media: 2014)

<https://cac.org/gender-and-sexuality-week-2-summary-2018-04-28/4/6/2022>

The Template of Reality

Sunday, April 29th, 2018

God is love. —1 John 4:8

The physical structure of the universe is love. —Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) [1]

If a loving Creator started this whole thing—the Big Bang, the evolution of diverse and beautiful life forms—then there has to be a "DNA connection," as it were, between the One who creates and what is created. The basic template of reality is Trinitarian, it's relational. God is relationship.

"Let us create in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves," the Creator says (see Genesis 1:26). The Hebrew writer used the plural pronouns for some wonderful reason.

St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) called the Trinity a "fountain fullness" of love. [2] God is unhindered dialogue, a positive and inclusive flow, an eternal waterwheel of self-emptying and out-pouring love—that knows it can completely self-empty because it will always be filled back up. This is the very definition and description of divine love; all human love merely imitates, approximates, and celebrates this same pattern.

The energy in the universe is not in the planets or in the protons or neutrons, but in the relationship between them. Not in the particles but in the space between them. Not in the cells of organisms but in the way the cells feed and give feedback to one another. Not in any precise definition of the three persons of the Trinity as much as in the relationship between the Three! This is where all the power for infinite renewal is at work:

The loving relationship between them. The infinite love flowing between them. The dance itself.

References:

[1] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, trans. J. M. Cohen, "Sketch of a Personal Universe," *Human Energy* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 1962), 72.

[2] Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, part 1, "On the Trinity of God." Adapted from Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (Whitaker House: 2016), 43, 55, 56; and Richard Rohr, *God As Us: The Sacred Feminine and the Sacred Masculine*, disc 2 (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2011), DVD, CD, MP3 download.

<https://cac.org/the-template-of-reality-2018-04-29/4/6/2022>

Love Endures

Wednesday, May 2nd, 2018

CAC core faculty member, Cynthia Bourgeault, beautifully describes growth in “conscious love” in her sermon, given at her daughter’s wedding. I hope you will find it quite profound, as I did.

It’s easy to look at marriage as the culmination of love—the end point of the journey that begins with “falling in love.” . . . [But] marriage is not the culmination of love, but only the beginning. Love remains and deepens, but its form changes. Or, more accurately, it renews itself in a different way. Less and less does it draw its waters from the old springs of romance, and you should not worry if over time these dimensions fade or are seen less frequently. More and more, love draws its replenishment from love itself: from the practice of conscious love, expressed in your mutual servanthood to one another. . . .

It will transform your lives and through its power in your own lives will reach out to touch the world. . . . But how to stay in touch with that power? At those times when stress mounts and romance seems far away, how do you practice that conscious love that will renew itself and renew your relationship? . . .

Here is the one [practice] that works for me . . . :
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:7).

“Love bears all things.” This does not mean a dreary sort of putting-up-with or victimization. There are two meanings of the word bear, and they both apply. The first means “to hold up, to sustain”—like a bearing wall, which carries the weight of the house. . . . To bear [also] means “to give birth, to be fruitful.” So love is that which in any situation is the most life-giving and fruitful.

“Love believes all things.” . . . [This] does not mean to be gullible, to refuse to face up to the truth. Rather, it means that in every possible circumstance of life, there is . . . a way of perceiving that leads to cynicism and divisiveness, a closing off of possibility; and there is a way that leads to higher faith and love, to a higher and more fruitful outcome. To “believe all things” means always to orient yourselves toward the highest possible outcome in any situation and strive for its actualization.

“Love hopes all things.” . . . In the practice of conscious love you begin to discover . . . a hope that is related not to outcome but to a wellspring . . . a source of strength that wells up from deep within you independent of all outcomes. . . . It is a hope that can never be taken away from you because it is love itself working in you, conferring the strength to stay present to that “highest possible outcome” that can be believed and aspired to.

Finally, “love endures all things.” . . . Everything that is tough and brittle shatters; everything that is cynical rots. The only way to endure is to forgive, over and over, to give back that openness and possibility for new beginning which is the very essence of love itself. And in such a way love comes full circle and can fully “sustain and make fruitful,” and the cycle begins again, at a deeper place. And conscious love deepens and becomes more and more rooted. . . .

Reference:

Cynthia Bourgeault, *Love Is Stronger than Death: The Mystical Union of Two Souls* (Monkfish Book Publishing: 2014, 2007, 1999, 1997), 171-174.

<https://cac.org/love-endures-2018-05-02/>
4/6/2022