

Is It Too Much To Ask?

by Rosefire

“He who knows his self knows his Lord (Man `arafa nafsuhu `arafa rabbuhu).”
Muhammad.¹

i.

I don't know how many times I said it. It was my one-liner introduction to the issue. "If someone had a choice, why on earth would any rational person choose to be gay?" The subtext, which I never said aloud, was, "So, if you're bisexual, then you have a choice, right? And if you have a choice, there is only one choice -- again, right?"

“Because of these and similar practical handicaps, it is a kindness to advise people whose drive could be channeled in a heterosexual direction to go in that direction if at all possible.”²

ii.

I kept coming back to the idea that if you were *really* gay, the ethical ideal was of a long term relationship. If you weren't, you got married. In either case, fidelity was part of the package. The Christian Association for Psychological Studies supported this view in their 1975 meeting. Namely, they proposed that promiscuity, fornication, and adultery should be regarded as sinful for both homosexual and heterosexual people, but that a loving, committed, permanent relationship between two persons of the same sex was in a different category, and was not condemned in Scripture.³

I also struggled with the common misconception that bisexuals are promiscuous. Obvious to myself, since I had tons of self-discipline, I couldn't be bisexual. This made the rest easy. I was either gay or straight, and given those options, well, I was straight. Sexual behavior was morally independent of sexual orientation. No problem.

In my early twenties, when I was most concerned with this issue, I was mostly celibate, with brief restrained half-terrified attempts at relationships. Overwhelming surges of lust usually inspired these, rather than a sense of intimacy or emotional connection. Having struggled with attempted celibacy and failure, I modified my goals from celibacy to chastity. With a little tweaking to come up with a version of chastity not quite so incompatible with a single lifestyle in the 70s, chastity became not rushing into things, thinking with my head. It was a sincere attempt to evaluate the psychological health and probable durability of a relationship before making any emotional commitments or getting involved sexually. The goal was still a long-term faithful relationship.

Chastity was a big word for me, even if I didn't really understand what it meant. From age 22 to 24 I was a novice in the Secular Franciscans. The heart and soul of being a Franciscan were the three vows — poverty, chastity, and obedience. I had become a Secular Franciscan because I believed equally strongly that I had a calling to a sincere spiritual vocation *and* to be a mother. If anything the second belief was the stronger. As a

¹ Source unknown.

² Scanzoni, Letha Dawson; Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?: A Positive Christian Response*. Rev. & upd. ed.. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, ©1978, 1994, p. 144. [This quote is from a comparison of approaches to homosexual morality taken by the theologians Curran, Pittenger, & McNeill.]

³ Op cit., p. 140.

rural 1960s Catholic girl, I did not know of a way to reconcile the two. A priest friend mentioned the secular orders, and there I went, off and running. A seeker, a novice.

While not grasping the meaning or significance of the three vows, what attracted me was the idea of spiritual osmosis as opposed to evangelism — to live one’s life as morally as one can; attempt to set a good example; and communicate the faith only when asked. While I didn’t remain a Franciscan, I kept in mind spiritual osmosis, and the three vows. I struggled with these, and from time to time would go back to talk with the man who had been my novice master. While we talked about issues of spirituality and sexuality, we managed to avoid bisexuality or homosexuality. Despite that, he gave me a great spiritual gift, one enabling me to live with myself until I was ready to take a closer look. His gift was a way to make compromises.

In the parochial schools I attended during grade school, the idea of sin was presented as black and white. Something was a sin or not. If it was a sin, that was it. You didn’t do it, or you promised not to do it again. The idea that some sins might be worse than others wasn’t addressed. The subtlety they missed was the distinction between venial and mortal sins. It was this my novice master clarified. Mortal sins were bad things that weren’t possible for someone whose spirit was healthy and whole. They required severe damage to the soul before you could make yourself do them, or they created severe damage to the soul. Venial sins were bad things one did that nibbled at the edges and weakened one’s overall moral strength, but didn’t cripple, didn’t break the spirit or soul.

“At its Latin root, the word religion is linked to the words ligature and ligament, words having both negative and positive connotations, offering both bondage and freedom of movement.”⁴

iii.

So how did venial sin saved my sanity? It’s been a while, so let me try to do justice to my novice master’s original. Birth control is one of the Catholic Church’s big no-no’s. He explained that using birth control is a sin. Something about a focus on lust rather than cherishing and respecting your partner, and allowing decisions of birth and death to belong to God rather than taking matters into your own hands. However, as long as it is a shared and mutual decision, the use of birth control is a venial sin. Why? Because having more children than you can care for responsibly is a mortal sin, and a selfish act.

I finally understood there is a hierarchy of sin —some sins are more harmful than others, and the main distinction is who gets hurt. Now the challenge was to apply this hierarchy in my own life. I reasoned that getting physically involved with someone because of lust (however camouflaged) would eventually hurt the other person, and likely yourself as well. Getting involved with someone who was committed was the same, only more so and hurting more people. Getting involved outside of your own committed relationship would be unfair to the other individual and your partner. Getting involved or committed quickly meant you couldn’t know the other person well enough not to be fooling yourself about whether or not it was lust.

This discussion arose in my memory a few years later as I struggled with my first deep attraction to a woman, a *married* woman. How could I reduce desire enough to avoid making an impulsive and hurtful decision? How could I *ever* make sense of my sexual choices? My solution, choosing the venial sin over the mortal, was to masturbate as I bawled my eyes out in a hot shower trying not to think of another woman’s eyes and mouth. I relied on this solution over the next dozen or so years as a last ditch act of desperation whenever I was tempted toward an uncertain and unwise course of action. Sensible sexual behavior remained a struggle for me, a struggle I was determined to win.

“Is it too much to ask, that you should be my servant “ Is. 49:6.

⁴ Norris, Kathleen. *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, ©1993, p. 133.

iv.

I believe in the sacramental nature of marriage, and I believe in marriage as a form of spiritual vocation. Maybe it is because I was raised in a fairly conventional manner, or maybe because I'm a woman, but I really do believe that an important part of marriage or any committed relationship is fidelity. I believe you can learn a lot from fidelity. As in writing a sonnet or fugue, the form forces you to discover new depths to your creative ability. Not to mention that fidelity is one of the Ten Commandments and the Ten Commandments have an awful lot of just plain horse sense.

As for my predicament with the married woman, life made it easy. Well, life made it easy to avoid the issue. We headed off to different graduate schools. After a few months of crying myself to sleep, wishing that I had kissed her just once, I intentionally stopped thinking about her. New plan — I was going to have a career, marry a career man, and have kids with the man I married. Any relationship not going that direction just wasn't going to happen. But before I put the alternatives out of my mind, I made one small promise. If I was single when I turned sixty, I was going to come out, and shack up with another little old lady. Somehow, I would hold out until sixty.

“And learn whence is sorrow and joy, and love and hate, and waking though one would not, and sleeping though one would not, and hating though one would not, and falling in love though one would not. And when you have closely examined all these things, thou wilt find Him in thyself, one and many, just as the atom, thus finding from thyself a way out of thyself.” Monoïmus.⁵

v.

Four years later, I became engaged, marrying in another two years. Before the wedding I warned my husband-to-be that fidelity was an issue for me, in both possible interpretations: that I would not tolerate infidelity from my partner, and conversely that I expected to find myself tempted. I also told him that I refuse to act on these impulses. He already knew my self-discipline. Not long after the wedding, a couple of friends met my husband. They moaned, “How could you do it? How could you marry a *man*?” By that point I had forgotten a great deal, and invested a great deal in the forgetting. I replied, “I have this little problem, ladies — I'm straight. Remember?” A comment which they wisely overlooked, and of which they have graciously neglected to remind me.

Over the years, our marriage suffered. During grim years, I clung to the memory of a particular moment after the wedding and before the reception, when, I believe, I felt the sacramental grace of the wedding take hold, the moment in which the marriage was truly sanctified. I sincerely believe no matter how ludicrous or inappropriate our marriage sometimes appears God wishes us to be a couple, and that there are lessons he intends each of us to learn through being with the other. I refuse to divorce my husband, no matter how awful things are, so long as there is still something for me to learn, and as long as the children aren't the ones being hurt.

Eventually, it became clear to us that change was necessary, and change we did. As we did, everything around us also changed. Life was good at last. We both had good jobs, a lovely home, enough food, and money for clothes and necessities. We could even justify a few small luxuries. As the pressure lifted, my husband and I found time for each other in a way that had never happened before. Sitting under the trees in our back yard holding hands, we discovered the comfort of being a partner, of having a partner, of having

⁵ Monoïmus. [The version quoted here is one I memorized as a teen. I no longer have access to the original. The citation here is for the same text in a different translation.] Hyppolitus: Refutation of All Heresies, Book VIII. From: *The Gnostic Society Library*. <http://www.gnosis.org/library/hyp_refut8.htm>

known someone through bad times and good. We discovered comfort is its own blessing. I had prayed often and prayed hard, and now my prayers were of thanksgiving.

“Our love has been anything but perfect and anything but static. ... There have been times when we have misunderstood each other, demanded too much of each other, been insensitive to the other’s needs. I do not believe there is any marriage where this does not happen. The growth of love is not a straight line, but a series of hills and valleys. I suspect that in every good marriage there are times when love seems to be over.”⁶

vi.

My new job included a comfortable level of business travel. At one of the professional meetings, I noticed a woman on one of the panels. She was tall, strong, and wore a lavender jacket, which I kept noticing during the rest of the conference. It wasn’t until the drive home I figured out I had been keeping a *very* close eye on her. I found I had a powerful attraction for the woman in the lavender jacket. What horrendous timing — just as I thought I finally had my life worked out and was looking forward to a breather. I could no longer deny that I was ... something. What is the old saying? If I say something three times, it must be true. How many times did my body and heart have to speak of same-sex attraction, before I could hear what they were telling me?

Que est ista que ascendit sicut
aurora consurgens,
pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol,
terribilis ut castrorum acies
ordinata?

Who is she that ascends like the
rising dawn,
beautiful as the moon, bright-
shining as the sun,
awesome as an army in battle array?

⁶ L’Engle, Madeleine. *Two-Part Invention: The Story of a Marriage*. NY: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux / Crosswicks, ©1988, p. 100.

Assumption antiphon "Que est ista."⁷

vii.

After years of struggling to strengthen my faith and downplay my physical side, these two aspects were about to come together, obviously and with emphasis! And would explode in a richer connection than the "chastity/celebrity" debate of my early twenties. On National Coming Out Day, twenty-five years after my first attraction to a woman, my husband and I went for a walk, our path cutting through the edges of a Pride Rally. As we passed the rally, I convinced my husband I was bisexual.

This has been traumatic for both of us. Clouds of turmoil, anger, and fear surrounded us. We were again unsure our marriage would survive. He worried about my influence on the children. I worried that if he could not find a way to accept me the children would lose either a father or mother or both. Concerned friends mentioned that some men killed their wife rather than cope with such a threat to their masculinity. I found myself watching my husband with fearful eyes, just in case. My husband remains terrified that someone will find out about me.

For the first time, I felt that God had abandoned me. Nothing made sense. Why her? Why now? Why at all? I could not find a reason for what was happening. While part of me found that life finally made sense, another part felt bitter and lost, wishing none of this had happened. I could cope with death and disaster, but this was different. I felt ashamed, that everything I had ever said or done was a lie, even if mostly to myself. I wanted the lie back. I began to believe that every problem we had ever encountered in our marriage must be traced back to my own insecurities, my own subconscious. I detested myself, and felt even more unloved and unlovable than at the worst times of our marriage. I felt ugly. I could not think of an uglier word than "bisexual."

⁷ "Que est ista." Translated by Susan Hellauer. From: Anonymous 4. *Lammass Ladymass: 13th and 14th Century English Chant and Polyphony*. Arles, France: Harmonia Mundi, ©1998.

“Theologians, philosophers, and clinicians alike have alluded to the idea that persons who are hopeless misperceive to the spiritual or transcendent. ... What is perhaps most characteristic of persons who present with feelings of hopelessness is a particular muteness, an inability to cry out to a Higher Power or to others around them.”⁸

viii.

This phase lasted three months. Only three months, but still, three months of fear, paranoia, ugliness, and loneliness. Violent mood swings and irrational urges. Drawn toward fragmentation and dissolution, attempting to show no significant change in the face I turned to the world. Lucky for me, I had a family to live for. Lucky for me, I’m not the first person to go through this, and there are writings and artwork in which others have struggled with similar issues, others who reasoned with the mind, heart and soul toward solutions enabling them to survive and love themselves. As I began to discover and explore others’ solutions, I shared bits and pieces with my husband, opening a new dialogue with my spouse.

This helped, helped a lot actually. But it wasn’t everything I needed. For one thing, most books I found were written by and for gays. I found some bisexual titles in Amazon.com, but didn’t feel brave enough to order them. The few bisexual books at the public library seemed to always be checked out, and again, I didn’t feel secure enough to place a special request and risk attracting attention to myself. So it was a start, but not quite what I hoped for. When I finally worked up enough guts to ransack the shelves at a local bookstore, what I found confused me more.

I wondered was I bisexual, or was I a lesbian. I kept digging at the idea, circling around and around, and coming back to the same place. Part of me acknowledged and embraced the beauty of lesbian life. Part of me. The attraction I felt for my husband, and for other men, was as true as what I felt for women who also attracted me. Truth: attraction was different than love. Venn diagrams. Love and attraction sometimes overlapped, but there was nothing that said they had to. Attraction was only part of what I needed to understand. I still had a lot to learn.

“Beware of prejudice; light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning. A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom. A star has the same radiance whether it shines from the East or from the West.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.⁹

ix.

Having reached an understanding of how homosexuality could be a beautiful, spiritual lifestyle, I now sought a similar understanding for bisexuality. This was more difficult. Many people I knew believed that bisexuality is a cop out. For myself, to be bisexual and maintain truth, integrity, and honor was far more difficult than to be either straight or gay. Bisexuality adds a layer of complexity not present in being either straight or homosexual. It adds an easy out, an option of being true to oneself, but not wholly; a way to conform and also hide from one’s self. Bisexuality offers the opportunity to make a choice, like the apple in the Garden of Eden, but a choice with a rotten core. To take the easy out requires that one flatten one’s interior landscape, disown whole truths, whole nations, as if they never existed. Or bisexuality offers the option to make a choice, and to keep making choices.

“My own heart let me more have pity on; let
Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
Charitable; not live this tormented mind
With this tormented mind tormenting yet.”¹⁰

⁸ Farran, Carol J.; Herth, Kaye A.; Popovich, Judith M. *Hope and Hopelessness: Critical Clinical Constructs*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, ©1995, p. 29-30.

⁹ Faizi, Gloria. *The Bahá’í Faith: An Introduction*. New Delhi, India: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, ©1971, p. 39.

x.

Once, as an undergraduate, an upper level psychology course had us take a test indicating our adherence to socially defined sex roles, the normal male role (masculinity) and the normal female role (femininity). Of the entire class, I scored higher than anyone else on both measures. Later, the teacher asked everyone who thought in words to raise their hands; then asked for everyone to raise their hands who thought in images or sensation. I was in the front row and couldn't see the rest of the class, so I was surprised to find I was the only person who raised my hand both times. At the time I saw this juxtaposition of traits in my poetry. As I compose, I feel as if I am translating, attempting to sculpt an emotional response in the reader through my words, attempting in fact to recreate the sensation of my own emotional response which led to the creation of the poem in the first place.

I wonder if this isn't the core of my sexual orientation experience. Perhaps being bisexual is being a translator or bridge between different ways of being, loving, thinking. Perhaps being bisexual is to embrace and embody as many differences as possible; to show through the example of our own difficult challenging lives ways in which everyone could embrace contradiction and still be whole healthy creative individuals. And then to communicate this experience to the whole community, by osmosis —the witness of those lives which touch our own. Perhaps it is part of my duty in this life to set the example of balance between opposites, to straddle the teeter-totter of my life and make as great a harmony as I can out of opposites. Perhaps I am bisexual to deny me easy choices and easy solutions, forcing me to closely examine each step along the way. Perhaps being bisexual is to look at the I Ching symbol and identify with the seed germ dots within each teardrop.

“The words gay and lesbian do not exist in the village, but there is the word gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are the people who live a life at the edge between two worlds — the world of the village and the world of spirit. ... The gatekeepers stand on the threshold of the gender line. They are the mediators between the two genders.”¹¹

xi.

When confronted about my religious identity, I tell people I am a Zen Catholic Pagan. Some folks have no problem with this, but they are few. To most, the phrase itself is an incongruity, as much of a contradiction as the concept of being bisexual and married. To me, this incongruity, this contradiction is a natural blend of three spirit paths, unified by an emphasis on intimate contact with Deity in all aspects of life, and through the practice of hearing the Deity's voice in still spaces. Also, these three have in common a wry understanding of spiritual benefits from incongruity itself!

I find myself very glad that I was raised as a Roman Catholic, one of the few religions with both masculine and feminine forms of Deity, in the forms of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. I am glad to have been a Franciscan and learned early on the value of osmosis in a social and ethical context, quietly living one's life as best as one is able, and letting that speak for itself.

From the earth religions more commonly known as Pagan, I cherish the personal unique and sacred identity in every natural place and thing. I relish the fact that remnants of earth religions remain a part of Roman Catholicism, both through rituals, music and the saints. I marvel at the intellectual intricacy and emotional balance of the visual and poetic symbolic languages used in both Catholicism and astrology, much of which originated with historically earlier faiths and belief systems. Marveling includes a sense of awe at the

¹⁰ Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *“God's Grandeur” and Other Poems*. NY: Dover, 1995, 48.

¹¹ Somé, Sobonfu. *The Spirit of Intimacy: Ancient Teachings in the Ways of Relationships*. NY: William Morrow & Co., ©1999, 132-133.

miracle of truth that is the macrocosm and microcosm, that dynamic and active link between the great and the small, the sense that choices we make in our lives can change the pattern of the stars and visa versa.

In astrology, an opposition is two planets that stimulate contradictory and complementary areas of the person's nature. Awareness of an opposition begins as an almost unbearable painful tension, feeling somewhat like a horse is tied to each arm, running in opposite directions. Being out of control, with wild oscillations between two extremes, is more likely if one side or the other is being denied or repressed. If the lesson represented by the opposition is learned, eventually the person learns a balance between the two contradictory areas. Instead of being pulled in two directions, one centers over the fulcrum of a teeter-totter, shifting slightly one direction or the other.

Zen and Pagan traditions offer the coalescence of a sense of duty, choice, and connection extending from one lifetime into another in the principles of karma and reincarnation. These truths help me make sense out of apparent imbalances in my life. Zen centering and stillness-that-is-not-silence fills me as it extends a vibrant awareness as far as the senses reach. I find the Zen wordplay incongruities known as koans uproariously funny. I learned that, presumably intentionally, there is a great deal of similar incongruity in Christ's teachings, especially in his parables. I love the idea from both Zen and Aikido that the best way to learn spiritual lessons is to teach them to the body, and eventually the body teaches the spirit and mind. This allows me to trust the voice of my body as it tries to tell me this particular something that I have refused, until now, to hear. My body teaches my mind that I am bisexual.

It is at the points where these spirit paths link that they become most strong, and that my sense of spirituality becomes most sure. It is the flexibility and openness of moving along those intersections that allows me to maintain a sense of being anchored even as my entire life and sense of personal identity shifts wildly. It is this, perhaps, which has been the most important lesson and gift from each of these paths — that the path changes, can contradict what seemed sure only moments before, and to understand the path completely is not a requirement for following the pattern in faith.

“God exists in the mind. In your mind. “The Kingdom of God,” wrote Luke,” exists in your mind.” Zen and Christianity, the East and the West, are like two separate highways. But sometimes I come across points of interchange, intersections, crossroads between the two. Deep ones. If you do zazen you will find the complete, the total Satori. The same Satori as Christ's. The same as Buddha's. ... The object of concentration is very important. Not the Santa Lucia — not during the sesshin. Here-and-now zazen posture. Here is the true Kingdom of God. The true Santa Lucia. You don't know the meaning of Santa Lucia?”¹²

xii.

Choosing marriage the way I did represented both a conscious commitment and an unconscious denial. While our marriage would have been difficult in any case, this certainly did not help. By denying a significant aspect of my sexual and affectionate nature, little by little I closed off more and more of any affection or sexual expression. Perhaps it shouldn't have been a surprise, but surprise me it did when, in accepting my desire for women, I rediscovered desire for my husband. For several years prior to this, my husband and I lived in grudging celibacy, each feeling rejected by the other. I value the celibate lifestyle, but do believe it should be chosen rather than imposed.

Now I face a different kind of celibacy. To remain faithful to my marriage vows requires that I not explore the physical side of my bisexuality identity. I know those who consider that idea a betrayal of the essence of

¹² Deshimaru, Taisen, Roshi. *The Voice of the Valley*, ed. by Philippe Coupey. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, ©1979, p. 177.

bisexuality. The full meaning of a vow is never clearly understood at the time the vow is taken, but rather unfolds over time through exactly this sort of testing and trial. I confess I don't know if I can manage it. I agonized over this, talked it through with friends. I have heard a number of times, "How will you ever know, unless you, well, you know." Well, trust me — I *know*. I have absolutely no doubt of being bisexual.

How do I know what's right? That's hard. We never are ourselves the ones who know what's right. Whenever I decide what's right, and set my feet stubbornly on a path, God lets me know how close I got this time. This doesn't work the same for everyone, but in my life, if I've got the wrong idea, everything gets harder, impossibly hard. I can pray as much as I want, cry as much as I want, no difference. My own solutions run me up against brick walls. It feels like my prayers aren't being answered, or the answers paint me into a corner and I don't see windows.

Over the last twenty years, I have struggled to learn to listen to God, to see his hand shaping my life. I find when I pray for the right thing, it can be downright eerie how quickly and clearly some of those prayers are answered. So far, each time I was tempted toward infidelity within my marriage, and prayed for strength, I have received help. Believe it or not, "temptation's" car has been known to break down at the darnedest times! Because that happens, and keeps happening, I believe that God wants me to continue to explore the challenge of fidelity. He doesn't seem to have any problem with setting temptation in my path, but has so far always given me a way out.

"The first step to spirituality, it seems to me, comes in contemplating the mystery, not in resolving it."¹³

xiii.

For inspiration, I look to all celibates challenged in maintaining their vows, but especially Gerard Manley Hopkins. He also encountered a trial of identity in living his priestly vow of celibacy within a mostly hidden homosexuality. Every spirit path I know takes quite seriously the issue of making a vow, recognizing there may be conflicts between a vow taken and future life paths. This doesn't invalidate the vow as a source of spiritual growth. In Zen tradition, while celibacy isn't usually asked for throughout one's entire life, there is an understanding of the value of self-discipline and denial in various forms. While I don't know of a parallel in the Pagan traditions, I have encountered a belief that betrayal of a vow and the resulting injury of another builds an obligation that crosses from one life into the next.

In developing a personal identity in faith, I learned to trust a strong internal sense that seemed to ring like a bell upon hearing a truth that spans cultural boundaries. Naturally, internal chaos deafens the spirit, more than external chaos! I find myself, even as I seek to learn more about what it means for me to be bisexual in identity, also seeking to learn more about my unique blend of faith and spiritual practice. Having neglected zazen for some years, I now hunger after it, hungering for balance and stillness. Having been timid in exploring my connection to Pagan practice, I now seek out persons with a strong Pagan faith and practice. I seek out again persons who helped me define my faith earlier in my life, and as I re-define my own personal identity, I re-negotiate my faith identity.

I continue to be hesitant about exploring this issue within the Catholic Church. I did make an attempt to bring it up to our pastor, but he reacted badly, as if it frightened him. However, even observing activities within our parish, I begin to see possible connections to my life, examples which show I may not be unwelcome when I find the courage to come out. The gay tenor who pretends to straighten his bra straps during practice, solemnly playing the organ on Sunday. The young priest preaching his own analogy for

¹³ Browning, Frank. "The Way of Some Flesh." in: *Wrestling With the Angel: Faith and Religion in the Lives of Gay Men*, ed. Brian Bouldrey. New York: Riverhead Books, ©1995, p. 102.

confronting difficulty: coming out of the closet. The married-with-children choir director who refers to God as “She.”

I find a different kind of balance in bisexuality — not so much dyadic as triadic. Hold the hand of a woman. Hold the hand of a man. Connect the two, through myself. In faith, also, seeking the deep intersections between spirit paths that seem superficially unrelated. Like loving both men and women, they are connected, in my very being. In my being, I struggle to make a single faith out of what appear to be contradictions. I attempt to live a life that while superficially a paradox, when lived deeply discovers unity.

On a path I avoided, I learn a great deal! My husband, likewise, learns. I don’t know how our relationship will develop from this point. I don’t know if we will continue to learn together, or if one or the other of us will reach a point when we say, “No more.” I do know, as part of being able to live with myself as an ethical human being, I must make a concerted and sincere attempt. I have faith that there is a way to do this; that because God made me the way I am, there is a beauty and harmony to be found, so long as I keep seeking, so long as we both keep seeking. What is it I seek? The strength, courage, and wisdom, to do these three things as wholly as possible: *Celebrate diversity. Embrace contradiction. Embody paradox.* Within love.

“Bless, O God, the thing on which mine eye doth rest,
Bless, O God, the thing to which my hope doth quest,
Bless, O God, my reason and what I desire,
Bless, thou God of life, o bless myself entire ...”¹⁴

¹⁴ “Rest Benediction.” From: McLean, G.R.D. *Praying with the Celts*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, ©1988, p. 69.