

This is a response to the Biblical Interpretation in *The Holy Estate* discussed in the public forums held in the Diocese of Ontario this spring

The intention here is not to look at the issue/question as one that is right or wrong, but one of exemplifying our place in the journey:

Question # 4 asks: When does human sexuality become symptomatic of Idolatry?

The Diocesan paper introduces the question by noting New Testament scholar Richard Hays' observation that Paul is attempting to show "self righteous judgment of homosexuality is just as sinful as homosexual behavior itself." This holding of oneself as more self righteous than others is here described as idolatrous.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary notes the four classes of fallacies referred to by Bacon (1620) as idolatrous: limitations of the human mind, prejudices of idiosyncrasy, influence of words, philosophical and logical presuppositions. Any one of these four classes could refer to the idolatrous attitude of those who hold themselves more self-righteous than others.

Human nature is in the process of becoming whole. It will be so when it matures to the fullness of the stature of Christ. In the interim each one of us is subject to a propensity of thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

The simplicity and brevity of Richard Rohr's Cosmic Egg illustrates the human dilemma that is a form of idolatry. He asks us to see how we each live out our lives within three possible stories: My Story, Our Story and The Story. The most idolatrous is living exclusively in the private identity of individualism with its exaggerated sense of self, ego and overprotected personal boundaries. "I" and its feelings and opinions are the reference point for everything. Objective truth is sacrificed on the altar of personal opinion. That opinionated self divides the world into 'me' and 'them'. Because of this dualism the small self is constantly on the defensive, fearful and insecure. In reality it has no ontological foundation, but is a figment of its own defense mechanisms.

Our story is the domain of our group, our community, our country, our church. We need this to give context to our own identity and to find our secure place in society. Without this story we create an asocial being, even a sociopath

who is incapable of bonding anywhere. This story gives one myth, cultural heroes, group symbols, flags, ethnicity and patriotism that tells one he/she is not alone, but connected to a larger story. Idolatry happens at this level when any of these contextual relationships become infallible. Religion at this level is a belonging system attuned to mutual agreement of popularized group values. This “us” verges on archetypal meaning where these groups are valued as “gods” if one does not hold them within the third and highest level of meaning.

Rohr describes the third level as that of universal meaning, patterns that are always true. This level assures and insures the other two, it holds them together in sacred meaning. “Without the Great Stories that free us from the tyranny and the idolatry of the first two stories we remain trapped in small cultural and private worlds.” [2] Biblical religion holds all three stories, the personal journey, the raw material, communal identity as a school for training and true transcendence as the integration and gathering place for all aspects together.

Reaching a consensus on the acceptance of homosexuality is such a difficult challenge for us because of the diversity of human perspective as noted in the distortion of individual and group think.

Choosing to embrace the maturation process that invites us to move beyond individual and group idolatry is to question our biases at the price of a surrender of self to our innate truth intuited in The Story. This is a willingness to participate in reconstruction. It is the renewal that is the Kingdom of God. It holds all three levels of the Cosmic Egg to exist simultaneously.

Perseverance in this self surrender is an act of faith that holds diversity in unity. It also helps us to identify how our baptism calls us out of our propensity to an idolatry of self preservation, to our identity in The Story, in the Person of Christ. [3]

[1] Hope Against Darkness Rohr, R. St. Anthony Messenger Press
Cincinnati, Ohio p. 83-92

[2] *ibid.* p. 91

[3] Book of Alternative Services. p. 158,159 – The Baptismal Covenant

The Cosmic Egg

