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## Integrated company: *Alastair McIntosh* on gender

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*‘All that we most truly  
love always was, is,  
and will always be.’*



Photo by Kyle on Unsplash

**W**hat of human sexuality? What of its spirituality? Let me come at it obliquely.

I am often asked to speak to faith groups about climate change. But I set them ill at ease when I say it's not good enough to replicate Greenpeace. Our calling is to a deeper light.

Earlier this month the pope issued *Laudate Deum*, a missive aimed at COP28. We should be asking the deeper questions, he suggested: What is the meaning of my time on earth? And what is the ultimate meaning of all my work?

The pope has had a busy month. Five conservative cardinals tried to flush him out on same-sex unions and his reply surprised many: 'We cannot be judges who only deny, reject, and exclude... When a blessing is requested' – and this, of course, applies to any one of us, gay or straight – it is 'a plea to God for help ... to live better.' That's a level of depth beyond the registry office. A 'blessing' is to be held in the community and in the greater cosmic hand.

What, then, of marriage? In approaching scripture, I seek the poetic truths. In Matthew's gospel, the teachers of the law are out to trip up Jesus. They're of a deeply patriarchal culture, where a widow's security depended on her late husband's brother. Rather like the cardinals with the pope, Jesus' adversaries toss him a trick question.

'Here's a family of seven brothers,' they say. 'A woman marries the eldest, but he dies. So she marries the next. He too dies. And the next. And the next... next... next! Then she too dies, and goes to heaven. Whose wife will she be?'

'You tricksters!' retorts Jesus: 'You don't know how God works.' Because in heaven 'we're beyond marriage.'

Where does such a story leave a bereaved spouse, perhaps yearning for reunification in the hereafter? I'd suggest, precisely there. Reunited! For as the mystics understand it, heaven *is* marriage. The communion of the saints is union in love in the divine together. To riff on George Fox: 'We marry none; it is the Lord's work.' All that we most truly love always was, is, and will always be. Moreover, as Genesis has it, we are made both male and female in the image of God. And from there to Paul on a good day: in Christ 'there is neither male or female: for you are all one.'

This transcendent androgyny lies at the heart of many mystical and shamanic paths. We miss a trick if we tie our gender only to the physical plane. Without the vision of spiritual psychology, we risk confusing categories between spiritual problems and material solutions.

Jung taught that a woman's call on the path to wholeness is to integrate her masculine side, and a man's his feminine. Might this bring deeper understanding to sexual or gender diversities? To seek blessing is to seek acceptance. In our tradition, such is not ours, but 'the Lord's work'.

Ours is to hold spaces that are 'hospitable to the soul'. Ours is to be communities of presence, gathered in the light. And, like with climate change theology, ours is not to make God too small; but rather, to pay heed to leadings that might nod to openings of the way. ●

*Alastair is from Glasgow Meeting.*