

SPIRITUALITY IN CHAOTIC TIMES

Session 3: Oneing

Thursday June 4 - @ 10:00am

ONEING: by Richard Rohr (Jan.21, 2014)

The divisions, dichotomies, and dualisms of the world can only be overcome by a *unitive consciousness* at every level: personal, relational, social, political, cultural, in interreligious dialogue, and spirituality in general. This is the unique and central job of healthy religion (*re-ligio* = to re-ligament!). A transformed person unites all within himself or herself, so they can then do the same in the outer world.

My favorite Christian mystic, Lady Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), used the Old English term “oneing” to describe what happens between God and the soul. As Julian put it, “By myself I am nothing at all, but in general, *I am in the oneing of love*. For it is in this oneing that the life of all people exists” (*Showings*, 9). She also says, “The love of God creates in us such a *oneing* that when it is truly seen, no person can separate themselves from another person” (65), and “In the sight of God all humans are oned, and one person is all people and all people are one person” (51).

This is the perennial tradition. Our job is not to discover it, but only to retrieve what has been discovered—and enjoyed—again and again, in the mystics and saints of all religions.

As Jesus put it in his great final prayer: “I pray that all may be one” (John 17:21).

Adapted from *Oneing, “The Perennial Tradition,”* Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 12, 14

Epilogue

By James Finley, PhD

A magician fans out a deck of cards face down on a table and says, "Go ahead; pick a card, any card." It does not matter which card you choose, and then bury facedown, back into the deck. The magician will, inexplicably, bring it forth from your shirt pocket or, perhaps, from behind your ear.

Now imagine you are out walking on the beach and God says, "Go ahead, pick a grain of sand, any grain." No matter what grain of sand you choose, God is present in it. Since God is not subject to division or diminishment of any kind, God is completely present in that one little grain of sand. Furthermore, since the whole universe flows from God, is sustained by God and subsists in God, you are holding in your hand a grain of sand in which you, along with the whole universe and everyone and everything in it, is wholly present.

Surprised by such an all-encompassing oneness, you begin to get a little weak in the knees. Then God moves in to finish you off by suddenly expanding this awareness of realized oneness in all directions. "Go ahead," God says, "pick a place, a situation, a circumstance in which you might find yourself." If you choose a wooded area, you see yourself in your mind's eye surrounded by trees. God is there, inviting you to reach out and pick a leaf off one of the low-hanging branches. As you do so, you realize you are holding a leaf in which the totality of reality is wholly present. If you choose your own home, God is there, inviting you to choose something, anything at all: the teakettle on the stove, or perhaps a chair in a corner of the living room. No matter what you might choose, you realize you are choosing something in which God is wholly present, loving you, and all people and all things, into being.

Then God invites you to reflect on any aspect of yourself. No matter what aspect of yourself you focus on, God is there, wholly present in each breath, each thought and feeling, each turn of your head. You realize, as you sit, that God is present as the ungraspable immediacy of your sitting. As you stand, God is there as the ungraspable immediacy of your standing. As you laugh, God is there as your laughter. As you cry, God is wholly present in each tear that falls from your

eyes.

It does not matter what little thing you might choose, within or around you. It might just be the thing that awakens you from your fitful dream of being separate from God, who is the reality of yourself and all that is real. May each of us be so fortunate as to be overtaken by God in the midst of little things. May we each be so blessed as to be finished off by God, swooping down from above or welling up from beneath, to extinguish the illusion of separateness that perpetuates our fears. May we, in having our illusory, separate self slain by God, be born into a new and true awareness of who we really are: one with God forever. May we continue on in this true awareness, seeing in each and every little thing we see, the fullness of God's presence in our lives. May we also be someone in whose presence others are better able to recognize God's presence in their lives, so that they, too, might know the freedom of the children of God.

This article is the epilogue to the manuscript of a book currently being written by James Finley, titled Little Things that Fill the Whole World: Gospel Metaphors of Spiritual Awakening.

