

## INTRODUCTION:

### Homosexuality and the Soul's Longing

“ . . . When a man comes across something that intrigues him, even though to others it may seem dull and inert, a mere stone, he should suspect that this stone contains for him a spirit. If that spirit calls to him he ought to go and rescue it from its stony prison and make for it a more worthy body, whether in his eyes it seems a precious stone or whether it is a stone of stumbling—a point at issue—which also contains a spirit that will not let him rest in peace until he has redeemed it from its despised condition.”

—Mary Esther Harding, *Psychic Energy*

Behind all forms of sexuality is the great longing to find some way to experience the unity of oneness with the Other. Ultimately that “Other” is the “Other” in us as our own soul and all that lies hidden there repressed, shunned, and ignored. In their attempts to be known, these hidden places often get projected onto others. Whatever our sexual orientation may be, at its core is a longing for our own soul and the desire to bring into existence that which lies buried there. Thus, all sexuality, including homosexuality, can be understood as one of the many ways the soul expresses itself. All attraction is a longing of the soul. To understand the hidden meaning in the attraction is to bring a level of understanding and consciousness to the experience, which shifts one from living under its spell as “fate” would have it, to living with it in a conscious relationship.

There are times when living out one's sexual desires and attractions in the outer world is too demanding, not feasible, and may not be appropriate, such as in the case of sexual compulsions. In such situations a person's libido needs to be expressed elsewhere, often internally. Carl Jung suggested that when a person turns his desire away from outer things, his libido turns inward and he reaches the place of the soul.<sup>1</sup> Turning libido inward opens a man to the possibility of discovering the spiritual meaning of his desires and finding a new life plan.<sup>2</sup>

Where does that inward journey lead? Where does it end? The answer is unknown until one day you realize you are home. Somewhere deep inside you resonate with what you have discovered, who you have become. You recognize that you have found your truth. There is no need to defend it. Other points of view do not diminish it. You can allow others their judgments without judging. You are home! You have come to understand that those desires and attractions were symbols of the soul's longing to live its un-lived life, not yet understood. That life, unconscious, dormant in your soul, becomes your life. In this I am suggesting that the life that you find was what you were longing for all along—the intent and spiritual purpose behind the sexual desires and attractions you experienced.

I was born into an evangelical minister's home. I was also born with the proclivity for same-sex attractions. I say “born” because current brain research indicates that biology plays a part in sexual attraction.<sup>3</sup> Of course, I didn't know that when I was growing up. As my life unfolded, I discovered that while I was attracted to certain women, I was also attracted to certain men. These two worlds—my same-sex attractions and my religious training that believed homosexuality was a “sin”—would eventually collide.

This collision would lead me into a deep, soul-searching journey of self-discovery and to an understanding that sexual attraction—same-sex attraction—isn't just about sex. It isn't just about erotic feelings for another man. While it is that, it is also more than that.

Freud's discovery of the unconscious changed the world forever. For the first time we came to understand that phenomena outside of conscious awareness influences our beliefs, our thoughts, our feelings, and our behaviors, and therefore how we see the world and how we perceive reality. Jung's discovery of the collective unconscious with its archetypes altered our world even further. Not only did the unconscious influence reality, it organized it according to certain universal patterns, acting like a magnet attracting various and relevant experiences that influenced us to live out their emotional and behavioral stories.

Einstein's famous discovery that  $E=MC^2$  or energy equals mass plus light squared, set in motion a series of scientific experiments that concluded, in the language of quantum physics, that at the most basic level everything is energy. Both the physical plane of matter and the more abstract plane of the mind are energy. Therefore, our thoughts, our emotions, our fantasies, and our behaviors are expressions of energy, each vibrating with information that attracts to it those experiences that match its energy.

Sexuality and spirituality can thus be understood as expressions of energy. Sexuality does not exclude spirituality, nor does spirituality exclude sexuality.<sup>4</sup> Rather, they represent two aspects of a person's total energy flow. Sexuality and spirituality are one energy. The flow in one direction is complementary to, and dependent upon, the flow from the opposite direction.<sup>5</sup> This means that the spiritual life of each person is an inner, private exploration in which each individual is trying to understand the meaning and purpose of his or her life in his or her own terms. Inevitably, as sexuality and spirituality become increasingly recognized as interdependent and complementary forces, the fulfilling of this purpose includes an exploration of one's sexual life.<sup>6</sup>

If everything is energy, and if sexuality and spirituality are two aspects of one energy flow—each complementary and dependent on the other—then homosexuality and same-sex attraction can also be understood to have a spiritual purpose. By spiritual purpose I mean the intent of homosexuality as an interplay of energy within the individual to provide a healing to the soul—a reconciliation of a split between the “outer-man” or “ego-self” and some “inner-man” or “unconscious self” that longs to live and of which a man may be completely unaware.

From an energetic point of view, same-sex attractions, fantasies, and behaviors are fundamental and meaningful patterns of energy that play at creation and development. They are archetypal in the sense that they express the call of a basic power in the depths of the soul that is essentially of a spiritual or sacred nature.<sup>7</sup> These images and sexual acts carry a certain mystery, a certain sense of awe, a certain power that grabs the soul. The experience, whether in fantasy or acted out, can be so powerful that it is capable of lifting one outside of oneself into some transcendent place.

With the explosion of gay rights, same-sex marriage, and increasing numbers of people “coming out” and proclaiming their sexual orientation, there is the potential for a split in our thinking. We are either gay or straight. If we have same-sex attractions, can we be in a traditional marriage or a heterosexual relationship without being judged as somehow going against our “true nature”? Is there a place for the homosexual or bisexual man within the context of a traditional marriage or heterosexual relationship? Could same-sex attractions be about something else altogether; some other longing of the soul that takes the form of same-sex desires, fantasies, and attractions?

I applaud the advances we are making in tearing down the prejudices against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. However, I wonder about those countless individuals who are married and have

chosen to remain married or in a heterosexual relationship or other living circumstances and struggle with being gay or bisexual, or having same-sex desires and attractions, silently suffering in the recesses of their souls. Many men are afraid to face their same-sex desires and attractions, repressing them, hiding them, living in quiet desperation, often feeling confused and at odds with themselves, wondering about the meaning of it all. Like me, they want acceptance and understanding. They want a way to live with these longings that is congruent with their soul's deepest needs and works within the context of their individual lives.

If you are a gay or bisexual man who is happy with the life you are living, you have found your path. This book may not be for you. This book is for:

- the gay, bisexual, and straight men who wrestle with same-sex desires, fantasies, and attractions, and perhaps even wrestle with the idea of having some same-sex encounters but are caught in conflicting priorities;
- the man who for one reason or another is unable to leave his circumstances—perhaps his wife and family, a partner, his religion or other values—to embrace a same-sex relationship in the outer world;
- the man who has some sense that there may be something else at the core of his same-sex attractions. (Maybe it isn't just about sex and the need for a physical man.);
- the man who is caught between the pull of two passions—two spirits—one to embrace the feminine and the other to embrace the masculine;
- the man who needs to find a way to live with his same-sex attractions that is congruent with his soul's purpose and deepest longings;
- the partners and family members who need to understand the struggle and travail of their loved ones.

The challenge is how to hold the tensions of these “conflicts of the soul,” these seemingly contradictory paths, while making sense of them. The task is to find meaning in it all so that one can live one's life with compassion and honesty, being true to the deeper nature and longing within.

In the case of same-sex attraction, this may be the call of an ancient man, a memory living in the depths of the soul of a time when the masculine was a companion of the earth, one with her, living as a spirit in nature instead of personifying a masculine image living in the heavens.

While the ideas in this book may have application to other forms of sexual attraction, this book is about male same-sex attraction as I have come to understand it in my life. I propose that there are many forms of homosexuality and the reasons for same-sex attractions are as varied as the people who experience them. Same-sex attraction has its own meaning peculiar to the individual and psycho-spiritual development depends on becoming conscious of that meaning.<sup>8</sup>

In my opinion, sexual attraction—what arouses one person and what arouses another—is a highly complicated phenomenon with multiple contributors. On one hand, sex is simply a biological drive,

a physical arousal produced through the combination of endocrine, neuronal, and molecular mechanisms that wants to fulfill itself. The object of desire may be secondary. It can be an unknown man in a men's room or public park who you do not know and whom you will never see again. It can be someone you meet online for mutual masturbation or any number of other scenarios.

At another level, sexual attraction is fueled by loving feelings, longings for a connection with the object of one's affection.

At a third level, sexual attraction can be understood as symbolic. Our fantasies, our attractions, and even our behaviors mirror parts of us, telling a story of our own individual mythology. By mythology I do not mean falsehood, but rather images as symbols that bring a level of understanding to our attractions, which cannot be known simply through the image or our own personal history

I believe that sometimes life provides a conflict of priorities that force us to discover our soul's longing and purpose. It is in the process of finding the source of these "soul conflicts" that we discover a deeper meaning—why we are here and what we are to do. As such, I believe that these "soul conflicts" have a spiritual purpose. That spiritual purpose is to lead us to that part of us that transcends ego needs, that transcends our personal history, that transcends our family and ancestral patterns, that transcends our beliefs, even what we might hold valuable. It connects us to the Divine Spark within us that longs to fulfill its destiny.

Spiritual meaning is born when sexual fantasies, attractions, and behaviors are recognized as symbols of energy patterns at work within the individual. When we recognize that images are the mediating world between the physical and the spiritual, between the mind and the body, between spirit and matter, between the inner and the outer, we discover a pathway to the individual meaning of our individual lives. The spiritual goal of the energy that expresses itself as same-sex desires, attractions, and behaviors may be understood as an innate potential that seeks correspondence in the outer world. Whether a man lives this experience out in a same-sex relationship or as an inner experience is a matter of his particular soul's destiny and personal choice.

My own personal experience and the experience of the hundreds of people I have worked with over the past twenty-nine years as a clinical social worker and psychotherapist have taught me that there are as many soul conflicts as there are individuals. But all these soul conflicts seem to have something in common. The conflict is between the life one is living and the life one longs to live. It is a split between the outer and inner lives—a split between ego and soul. For me this split, this conflict of soul priorities, manifested as a conflict between my life as a husband, father, musician, church leader, and well-respected man of my community, and my secret same-sex desires, attractions, and fantasies. This conflict ultimately resulted in cursory sexual encounters with men in men's restrooms—wherever I could find them.

Was I gay, straight, or bisexual, or none of the above? At the time I wondered, should I leave my marriage and my life as I knew it and embrace a gay lifestyle? Was that my journey? And how was I to reconcile these seemingly opposing worlds? How could I make sense of it all? How do I resolve what emerged as conflicting needs of my soul? I kept a detailed journal of my dreams, fantasies, conflicts, and inner struggles for most of my life. This book is the result of my journey back through the pages of those journals—a looking back at that life forty years later. In the rearview mirror I see more clearly how

the life vibrating in the depths of my soul was actually guiding me often through my same-sex attractions to discover and embody the “other man” living there.

If we understand that sexual desires, fantasies, and attractions may be interpreted as symbolic expressions of the soul, cries of the spirit vibrating with information that long for recognition and life, then we can consciously make constructive choices about them. For if we fall under their spell unconsciously, we are at risk of unwittingly living them out in destructive and compulsive behaviors that may wreak havoc on our lives and our families. By discovering their hidden meanings we can make decisions about how to live with them in a way that is congruent with our soul’s needs and the individual meaning of our desires and fantasies without necessarily living them out physically in sexual relationships or denying them.

I dream that

I go out to the parsonage where my pastor, an evangelical minister, used to live. I enter the back door. The house has been all remodeled. In the first room a repair man is doing some kind of work. He leaves. I walk on through the house. I notice it has been re-carpeted—everywhere except the family room, which has been tiled with a mosaic tile. I don’t think anybody is at home, so I walk on through the house. I open the door to a room. It is a bedroom. There is a boy sleeping in the bed; he is completely covered. I am surprised to find someone in the house. I didn’t think they had any young children. I leave quietly so as not to wake him and have him find me in the house. (Journal, 11-5-83)

As I meditated on this dream, I felt compelled to go back into the dream and interact with its images. I open the door to the bedroom. I go in and sit down on the bed. I pull the blanket back. I see a fair, young blond boy. He becomes a large wolf, now a large green snake. Yet still he is the boy.

Sheldon: “Who are you, little boy?”

Boy: “I am the little boy who is still hiding, covered up in the parsonage, afraid to accept his instincts, afraid to embrace life and relationship, the little boy that stays hidden and wrapped up in the rules and morals of the parsonage, in bed covered with a blanket of fear. You must take me with you. Me, with all my instincts, drives, needs. I am your younger brother, your other self, your primitive self, the part of you that desires the masculine. Please free me from the parsonage bedroom. Please remove the blanket that keeps me hidden. Please embrace me. Please love me! Please free me!” I take his hand, a combination now of the little boy, the wolf, and the big green snake, and lift him into my arms and carry him from the bedroom to the outside. As I do this, the wine-colored shag carpet becomes flames of fire and burn the house down. As the boy and I walk off down the road, I walk straight ahead, knowing that the smoke of the burned down house is billowing up into the sky.

I walk on. I sense the charred remains. Suddenly the little boy is walking by my side. How I love him. As we walk, I feel like a little child—helpless, vulnerable, and wondering, now what do I do?

Suddenly the little boy becomes white, like a spirit or ghost. He enters into me. We are now a man in a long white robe, like a wise man, a spirit being, much like the image of Christ. He is us, and yet we are still there on the road watching. He is heading south. We stand watching, holding hands. It is like we are transparent or spirits ourselves. We walk off to the right into a green field. As we walk things pass through us. The field is green and there are flowers. (Journal, 11-5-83)

Five nights later, I dream “I am told by a voice that the little boy that I freed from the former parsonage is my homosexual self and that the healing of the homosexual is in freeing him from the parsonage.” (Journal, 11-10-83)

The dream says, “The healing of the homosexual self is freeing him from the parsonage.” At first glance the word healing conjures up thoughts of “something wrong that needs to be fixed,” some “flaw” that needs to be changed or cured, a “sin” that needs to be confessed and redeemed, or some “evil” from which one needs to be set free. While the word heal can be defined in such ways, the word heal also means “to repair or reconcile,” “to heal the rift between,” “to become whole or sound,” “to mend,” “to restore.” It also literally means “to make whole.”

I discovered that freeing my homosexual self from the parsonage, from the “age of the parson” in which I was raised, was about healing. But it wasn’t about fixing something that was wrong, sick, or a “sin.” It was about restoration, reconciliation, and healing the rift between me and other parts of myself. It was a story about the soul’s longing to become whole, to embrace the pieces that had been repressed or that had not yet made it into consciousness at all. It was a story about finding the soul’s path, the individual meaning of an individual life. Ultimately it was the healing of the mind-body split in me, the split between the forbidden and the acceptable, the split between spirit and matter, between the “ego-self” and the “unconscious Other.” For me the drive behind my same-sex attraction was the longing for a man buried deep within my soul, a re-connection to an ancient memory of a man that, as previously stated, used to roam the earth, the man connected to the Divine in nature. It was a return to the Green Man, an archetypal masculine that is one with nature, a divine intelligence, a divine light, a wisdom and consciousness that exists in matter that both protects and reveals its spirit—its light—whether that matter is a stone, a tree, an animal, an organ in the body, or the earth herself. This was a story of the discovery of the spirit in the “matter” of same-sex desires, fantasies, and attractions and its path to the soul—to that spark of the divine that lives in each of us as our unique individual life. To the extent that any man is cut off from aspects of the masculine that are his to embody, this archetypal masculine will erupt from the unconscious in a multitude of ways, including same-sex fantasies and attractions.

Chapter 1, “The Call of the Masculine” tells the story of the entrance of same-sex attractions into my life and the call of the masculine as an archetypal force to be reckoned with.

Chapter 2, “The Call of the Soul” identifies the emergence of my soul’s conflicts and the soul’s response to my same-sex attractions as a call to seek “the treasure hard to find.”

Chapter 3, “The Call of the Dreams,” details my confrontation with the unconscious and the discovery that deep within us lives an unknown land. This is a land with its own laws and its own plans and purposes populated with characters playing out sometimes tempestuous relationships in the depths of our souls. These archetypal forces and images live in the very depths of us and long for recognition, for communion, for expression, and a way to get into life. They make their appearances in our dreams. By engaging them they help us find our soul’s path and to write our own destinies.

Chapter 4, “Meeting the Shadow,” tells of the return of what we have repressed and the challenge of embracing and integrating into consciousness what we have pushed away into the darkness of the unconscious in order to live the life we are living.

Chapter 5, “Honoring the Witch,” is my confrontation with the feminine in me and her perspective on my life.

In Chapter 6, “The Emerging Self,” the Divine Masculine makes his appearance as Phallos and the inner Christ. This chapter details my increasing awareness that my same-sex attractions were really about leaving my life as I knew it and embracing this “Other” in me.

Chapter 7, “The Call of the Swan Maiden,” tells of the response of the unconscious to my desire to return to a homosexual relationship and details more clearly the meaning and purpose of my homosexuality and same-sex attractions.

Chapter 8, “Manifestations of the Self in Male Same-Sex Behaviors,” suggests the symbolic and spiritual meanings in male same-sex oral sex, anal sex, and masturbation.

Chapter 9, “Looking in the Mirror,” continues to clarify that what I am seeking in my same-sex attractions, fantasies, and longings is really about what is longing to come into consciousness in me—the discovery of another man living in my soul, the shaman and the Earth Masculine. This is a consciousness that recognizes that the Divine Masculine isn’t some God living up in the heavens ruling over the earth and the feminine but a divine spirit vibrating in the very nature of the earth and matter, one with her as co-equal and co-creator.

In Chapter 10, “Same-Sex Attractions and the Interplay of the Masculine and Feminine,” I show how my same-sex attractions played out in my own inner masculine and feminine relationship. I suggest that our masculine and feminine energies play out their inner relationships in our external lives, whether they be between a man and a woman, between a man and a man, or between a woman and another woman.

Chapter 11, “Caught in an Archetypal Tale,” further clarifies the conflict that emerged between that part of me that was feeling same-sex attractions on the one hand, and the man of the church and the parsonage on the other. I then detail how I forged a path forward from there.

Chapter 12, “Same-Sex Attractions and the Hero’s Journey” is the culmination of ten years of inner work and learning to listen to the voice of this other man living in my soul. In it, I discuss my decision to leave the safety of my life as I knew it, that of a respected high school teacher, and to embrace what Joseph Campbell calls the “hero’s journey”—the journey of individuation to discover one’s individual life. This decision would come to mean more than just leaving teaching and the town where my family and I had lived for twenty-plus years. It was about leaving an ideology, leaving a belief system, leaving a particular world view and discovering the one living in my soul—the one that was more authentic and congruent with my own individual self.

Chapter 13, “Archetypal Implications in Same-Sex Dreams, Fantasies, and Behaviors” tells how this journey continued to reveal itself through my paintings. Images that appeared in these paintings became guides that introduced me to unconscious parts of myself. I came to see that behind my same-sex attractions was the expression of the Green Man, the archetypal masculine who I mentioned above. His appearance in my life became the impulse for my journey into shamanism, with its emphasis on Spirit as well as its emphasis on matter and Spirit in nature. This was my attempt to heal the mind-body split in me and to free myself from the masculine image of the evangelical parsonage.

Chapter 14, “The Music Begins,” tells of the emergence of a Divine Masculine spirit different from the one I’d been raised with. This masculine spirit was one with nature, a consort and companion of the

Earth Mother and the Goddess of ancient times, a reunion of spirit and matter. I came to look at objects, people, and even the events of my life as sacred and as having some spiritual or transcendent purpose and meaning—as music in my soul.

In Chapter 15, “Return to Eden and the Soul’s Next Manifestation,” I discuss how my dreams and my art introduced me to my soul’s next manifestation and put me more firmly on the shamanic path.

Chapter 16, “The Matter of the Heart and the Heart of Matter,” is my journey to resolve the spirit/matter, mind/body split by exploring the “imaginal sight” of the heart and its capacity to see the spirit that is vibrating in matter.

Chapter 17, “The Return of the Green Man,” tells of the emergence of the archetype of the Green Man in my art, and his meaning.

Chapter 18, “Homosexuality and the Two-Spirit Archetype,” discusses the role of the berdache, or two-spirit, in Native American and other indigenous cultures as a medicine man and shaman who serve as a “go-between,” an entity between the masculine and the feminine, between matter and spirit.

Chapter 19, “The Rest of the Story,” tells the impact of my journey on my family.

In the Appendix I describe the characteristics of my parents and how their relationship to me and to each other influenced my psychic configuration to set up another masculine image in my soul that longed for expression.

While this journey into the depths of my own soul was influenced by Jungian psychology and my own analysis with Jungian analyst, Dean Frantz, I have chosen to describe these experiences as expressions of my own soul as I experienced and interacted with them, letting them speak for themselves. However, there are times when I have found it necessary to talk about my experiences within the framework of Jung’s psychology. Anyone familiar with Jungian psychology will recognize this underlying bias by which I make sense of the soul’s longing.

Consistently, the images that surfaced in my dreams in response to my desires to act on my same-sex desires indicated, as touched on earlier, that my attractions were about something else wanting to come to life in me. In my ongoing analysis, I drew from both personal and archetypal material presented in my dreams and spontaneous images arising in meditation and art. I also drew upon the meanings that I found in coincidences, serendipitous meetings, and synchronicities, and explored my own same-sex attractions and the same-sex motifs found in mythology and in certain customs and rituals of some primitive societies. In so doing, I have been able to tell a story of the discovery of the symbolic and spiritual meaning of my own homosexuality and same-sex attractions. These interpretations can open a man to deep places in his soul—places that can assist him in finding his way when faced with conflicts on how to live with same-sex desires in a manner that is congruent with his own established priorities and the meaning of his individual life. In some ways this book is the culmination of that same-sex longing.

Irrespective of how a man chooses to live his same-sex desires and attractions, whether that be in brief sexual encounters with other men, in a loving same-sex relationship or marriage, or as an inner relationship with the masculine within, I invite you to listen to the longings of an ancient man who longs for us to live in harmony with all that is.

1 Jung, *Collected Works* 14, 443.

2 Main, *Childhood Re-imagined*, 35.

3 Psychology and science have multiple theories on the origins of or the reasons for male homosexuality. Dutch physician and neurobiologist Dick Swaab says “[c]urrent evidence indicates that sexual differentiation of the human brain occurs during fetal and neonatal development and programs our gender identity—our feeling of being male or female and our sexual orientation as hetero-, homo-, or bisexual” (*Sexual Orientation and its Basis in Brain Structure and Function*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, PNAC, vol. 105, no. 30 Dick

F. Swaab, 10273–10274). Brain research over the past decade has brought to light differences in brain responses between gay and straight men to various stimuli. Certain brain studies show evidence for structural and functional brain differences related to gender and sexual orientation, while other studies have shown that the brains of gay and straight men respond differently to human pheromones (Savic, I, H. Berglund, P. Lindström), (2005). Brain response to putative pheromones in homosexual men. (*Proc Natl Acad Sci USA*, 102:7356–7361). While these studies do not prove that our brains are hard-wired for sexual orientation, it does indicate that biology may play a part in one’s sexual proclivities. Whether our brains determine our sexual preferences and behaviors or whether our sexual behaviors change the brain’s structure and response is still undetermined. I think that sexual orientation in all its wide range of expressions is a complicated process that is a response to both nature and nurture. However, current research is providing evidence of a biological influence. I intentionally chose to use the words “born gay or at the very least bisexual” because I believe that current research suggests that we are born with the “markers” (biological and psychological) that both push us and pull us toward those experiences that will bring to birth the nature of our individual souls. Coagulated by Craig Chalquist, M.S., Ph.D., author of *Terrapsychology: Reengaging the Soul of Place* (Spring Journal Books, 2007).

4 Jung, *Collected Works* 14, 443.

5 Moore, *Sexuality and Spirituality*, 20.

6 *Ibid.*, 19.

7 Whitmont, *Return of the Goddess*, 259.

8 Hopcke, “Jung’s Attitudes toward Homosexuality,” 154–161.

9 Christensen, C. S. *Lewis on Scripture*, 76–77.