



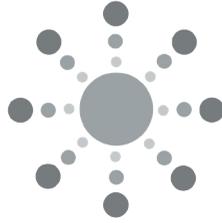
THE
RECOVERY
OF *love*

LIVING IN A
TROUBLED
WORLD

A Series of Discussion Papers by

DAVID CADMAN





PANACEA

BOOKS THAT REIMAGINE
THE WORLD

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As a sequel to *Love and the Divine Feminine*, published by Panacea Books in 2020, David Cadman is writing and sharing this series of Discussion Papers titled *The Recovery of Love: Living in a Troubled World*. The papers will be published on the Narrative of Love website (narrative-of-love.org) over the course of several months.



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Introduction to the Papers

AUGUST 2021

It was the last day of February, 2021, Winter seemed to be easing and on that day my garden was sunlit. There was only the gentlest of breezes. The snowdrops were in full bloom and the daffodils were in bud. There was even the prospect of some easing of the COVID Lock Down. I began to write these papers.



I am now old, at the end of my seventies, and last year, looking around at the growing evidence of possible catastrophe – climate breakdown, pandemics and hate-filled divisiveness – I published a book called *Love and the Divine Feminine*, in which I asked the questions: how did we get here, how did we become who we are? I suggested that we are as we are – damaged I fear – because we have lost two great qualities, Love and the Divine Feminine. I traced the ways in which, for thousands of years, ancient and long-lived cultures intertwined qualities of the feminine and the masculine, and expressed them in the form of many goddesses and their consorts, husbands, lovers and sons; and how, almost of a sudden, this was overcome and buried by the worship of warrior gods and then the One God, Yahweh, who alone was supposed to have created the world not through the belly of a woman but through the head of a man. The enormity of this has long since been forgotten.

And then I looked at our more recent history, the last two thousand years in which Jesus, or, as I like to call him, Yeshua, a man whose closest companions and disciples were both women and men, brought us teachings of Love; and I looked at how this community was all but dismissed by what became the Great Church, dominated by men, the teachings of Love set aside in favour of a doctrine of sin and redemption, founded on crucifixion, resurrection and teachings of original sin, a sin attributed to Eve and thence to all women, not least Mary Magdalene, the companion of Yeshua who fled from Palestine when Yeshua was gone. Out of fear, her role as disciple and teacher was denied by the Great Church, who portrayed her as a repentant prostitute.

And so, at the end of *Love and the Divine Feminine*, I suggested

a number of Questions to which, if we would rediscover Love, we should try and find answers. Three of these are the foundation for this collection of papers:

1. Can we more explicitly describe principles of Love and if so how would these be applied to the problems that face us today?
2. If there is something that we describe as ‘feminine’, something that was once regarded as the Divine Feminine, what is it, and what can we say about it? How might this now help us?
3. Is it useful to work with notions of ‘the feminine’ and ‘the masculine’ or do these notions create harmful divisions and cloud our understanding? And what would we be able to say about a discourse that was un-gendered, but which spoke of qualities to be found in all of us?

Reflecting on these questions, I realise that whatever I might say about them will be limited by who I am and where I am. I can only respond as an elderly Quaker man living in Suffolk beside the river and the sea. Many of you will have a different insight, and undoubtedly much greater expertise than I have. I can only share my thoughts with you in the hope that they might help, but not replace, your own reflections.

First, in order to say anything at all, I need to say something about the matter of Language, something that has concerned me for many years, and which I have written about again quite recently,¹ for whenever we begin a discourse, begin a conversation or share our writing, we soon discover that language is at one and the same time powerful and fickle. What we try to share is always shaped by a language that precedes us, a language that we have come to speak, but which we have not created for ourselves. It is always a language that has been shaped by others. As the inspirational philosopher, Walter Mignolo, puts it,² our language has long since been colonised, and with such effect that many of us are quite unaware that this is so.

But we have to use words as best we can, and I need to write this and challenge what we have all been told. For it seems to me that we are presently bound by a language, and by systems and practices, that are no longer suited to the circumstances in which we find ourselves; no longer suited to a world in which we face climate breakdown and resource depletion, no longer suited to a world in which we suffer damaging hostility, prejudice and division. We live in troubled times, and we cannot find our way because we don't know what to say or, perhaps, how to say what we want to say. Endemic to this condition is an underlying violence towards each other and the Earth that we barely understand – there is a damaging greed and selfishness in us that we have come to take for granted. I want to explore a new and more appropriate language, and a way of being that will enable us to live and flourish in present and likely future times. For until we can imagine another way of being, we will remain stranded and mute, unable to comprehend our condition and envision our future.

In this, a single principle shapes my work, that Love is of the Essence.



The first paper speaks of 'language', the ways in which we are captured by words, and it will be followed by an exploration of the meaning of Love and of Silence. Following on from *Love and the Divine Feminine*, the next three papers will explore the voices of women, speaking of the divine feminine, of patriarchy, and of feminism, and of the need to find new ways of expressing what we presently call the feminine and the masculine – and of the difficulties of doing this. Although I seek an ungendered discourse, one in which what we sometimes think of as feminine and masculine qualities are shared irrespective of gender, I believe we have first to restore a proper balance between the masculine and the feminine. And because we have been dominated by men, we must begin by listening to what women have to say.

Other papers will follow, each one exploring the possibility of a new language that can move us away from where we are towards a future which challenges the presently dominant themes of patriarchy: separation, conflict, greed and selfishness. I shall start by sharing my readings of other people's work, of principles of Harmony, and of the ancient Chinese traditions of the I Ching and the Tao. I hope to be able to share examples of love and harmony at work, and at the end in some months time, I will try and draw all of this together by reflecting on what has been said and looking at the questions this raises.



In all of this, I shall follow a winding path, drawing together in what I can only hope is a way that you can follow, many thoughts and reflections. My style has always been, and is here, somewhat personal. That seems to be the only way I can write, setting words down on the page for you and whoever else may come to read them, as a possible answer to the questions set out above. I hope that you will find some of this at least to be of interest and even, perhaps, a help in your own adventures. I have no doctrine or teaching, only glimpses and intimations garnered whilst walking through the reedbeds and along the footpath that follows the bank of river. I hope you will share your thoughts with me by writing to me at david@davidcadman.com.

Endnotes

1. David Cadman, A Reflection on Words, Silence and Love, temenosacademy.org, February 2021.
2. Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Colonization and the Discontinuity of the Classical Tradition*, *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 45, No. 4 (Winter, 1992).