



THE
RECOVERY
OF *love*

PART ONE: TO BEGIN

PAPER TWO

Love's Meaning

A Series of Discussion Papers by

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So much has been written and said about Love, that whatever I have to say will be the tiniest crumb upon the table. However, this is a matter to which I have turned many times, and I have a proposition: that Love matters. As I said in the Introduction to *Love and the Divine Feminine*:

There is a Presence, a form of Being which is beyond our understanding. It is Good and it is Loving. When we surrender to it, we are loved by it and we are drawn to love it. Given the limitations of our knowing, we begin to endow this Presence with personality, for that is what we find in ourselves. And then, for comfort, we call it God. But the moment we do so, the moment we seek to name it, we begin to limit it, to make it less than it is. And then we limit it again and call it Father, excluding half of our nature, and if we are not careful, we place Him far away, in the sky above us and wonder how we shall ever reach Him.

Love is not man or woman. Love is Divine Presence, and this Presence is the energetic force that shapes all relationships when they are most natural and at their best. Love is the primal impulse, and it is no *thing*, but rather a *movement* from and towards. We have to *be* in Love. This is the truth that lies behind the Christian commandment to ‘love God’ and to ‘love one another’, and to keep this commandment we have to *be in Love*.

Just suppose that we are being called to a new Gospel of Love in which there is a marriage between the Divine Feminine and the Divine Masculine, an integration, a new consciousness. I think that this is possible, and that it is required.¹



Looking back, I see that there have been two vital influences that have shaped my life and brought me to this place. The first is a birthright of Quakerism with its parables and the words of the man I like to call Yeshua. The second, and later, is the teaching of

the Buddha. I understand those who say that you must choose a path and stick to it, but in my case these two paths have become intertwined like a honeysuckle and a rose. The rose is my birthright and was in place before the teachings of the Buddha grew upon it. Now their fragrance has become one. For they share, as it were, a common root, a root that is grounded in teachings of love and compassion.

Because a sense of the sacred has been so much removed from our lives, from our language, the very word ‘Love’ has been diminished; has, perhaps, come to mean little more than personal desire, affection, even sentimentality, or worse still a narrow virtue. None of these will do. Love is something much more profound than this. It is *of the nature of true being*. It is elemental. It is that which is captured in the Arabic word *Mahabbah*, which means Love as the underlying principle of the universe;² it is that which the late Sir John Templeton referred to as “Ultimate Reality”;³ it is the very “breath of the Divinity”⁴ and, as such, it is the ground of kindness, reciprocity and relatingness. It is that which the Orthodox Philip Sherrard called the “irreducible touchstone” of life, an “ontological tenderness:”

Only in and through love is the innermost reality of things disclosed and fulfilled. Such love is not a divine quality, still less is it a personal attribute, something merely human and emotional. Apart from love there is no reason for the existence of the world – ‘God so loved the world’ – and apart from love the world has no purpose in existing, all other purposes being either auxiliary or merely false and superfluous. It is the irreducible touchstone; it is the seal and the consummation of the sacred.⁵

This Love lies at the very heart of Buddhism where it is expressed in the teaching of the unity of wisdom and compassion. Indeed, in one of the earliest texts⁶ it is said that it is only by dwelling in the realm of the four divine abodes⁷ of loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy⁸ and equanimity that enlightenment is to be found. And at the heart of my Quaker childhood, with its emphasis upon silent contemplation, non-violence and tolerance,

there was a teaching that stressed the strength and gentleness of Yeshua as the good shepherd – his compassion for the suffering of others, and his assurance that those who would find the kingdom of heaven would not be the rich and the powerful but the meek, the merciful, and the pure in heart. I was brought up to believe in turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Yeshua was a man who taught kindness and selflessness for everyone, and who encapsulated the core of his teaching in the following words:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.⁹

Now, many years later, it seems to me, that this teaching is even more profound than I had supposed. Not only are we being taught that we should love one another as a matter of virtue, we are, I believe, being taught that love, or rather Love, is *of the essence*. For it is also said:

We are of God... for love is of God... God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him... because as he is, so are we in this world.¹⁰

And if all that is comes from this ‘God’, then God is in all that is. And if God is Love, then, surely, what we are being told is that all that is is Love – all of us, all of life, the rose and the honeysuckle, the coming and going of the seasons, the wind, the sun and the rain, the in-breath and the out-breath.

As the American scholar Whitall N. Perry puts it in his *Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*:

Love is the energizing elixir of the universe, the cause and effect of all harmonies, light’s brilliance and the heat in wine and fire, it is the aroma of perfumes and the breath of the Divinity: it is the Life in all being... It is all that the texts have to say, and the more that remains unspoken.¹¹

It is that which the Christian mystic Julian of Norwich refers to as “our Lord’s meaning.”

From time to time these things were first revealed. I had often wanted to know what was our Lord's meaning. It was more than fifteen years after that I was answered in my spirit's understanding. 'You would know our Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand love more and more. But you will not know or learn anything else – ever!' So it was that I learned that love was our Lord's meaning.¹²

In all of this, then, is there not a suggestion that the natural state of the world, its essence, is the very manifestation of Love; that love is in all or is expressed in all; that the fragrance of both the Great Reality, and reality of our everyday lives, is divine order and harmony? Surely, this must be the 'divine Reality' of the perennial philosophy. And if this is so, then it must shape all that we do.



In an age that so often favours the head against the heart, it is worth noting that in both the Christian and the Buddhist traditions the Way of Love, the way of compassion, is not described by reference to some complex theoretical proposition. Indeed, in Buddhism, the story of the poisoned arrow,¹³ quite specifically advises against such speculation. Rather, in both traditions, Love is taught by reference to everyday practise. Again and again in the teachings and parables of Yeshua we are presented with practical acts of selflessness and gentleness that reveal a common ground of love and compassion – the Good Samaritan, the forgiveness of the prodigal son, the anointing of the feet of Yeshua by Mary Magdalene, "that ye love one another."

And in Paul the Apostle's First Letter to the Corinthians¹⁴ we are given the very characteristics of what it is to be loving. The text is so especially beautiful that I cannot resist quoting it:

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth...

In an essay entitled ‘The Greatest Thing in the World’,¹⁵ the Scottish evangelist, Henry Drummond, analysed these characteristics to provide A Spectrum of Love, which had nine ingredients. They are:

Patience	“Love suffereth long.”
Kindness	“And is kind.”
Generosity	“Love envieth not.”
Humility	“Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.”
Courtesy	“Does not behave itself unseemly.”
Unselfishness	“Seeketh not her own.”
Good Temper	“Is not easily provoked.”
Guilelessness	“Thinketh no evil.”
Sincerity	“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

“You will observe,” he said, that all of these characteristics are “in relation to life, in relation to the known to-day and the near to-morrow, and not to the unknown eternity.”¹⁶

Interestingly but not, of course, surprisingly, the four divine abodes of Buddhism¹⁷ are also said to lead to a set of ‘perfections’ that bear a strong similarity to Paul’s characteristics of Love. The Ten Perfections, or *paramitas*, are:¹⁸

Generosity, Morality, Renunciation, Wisdom, Energy, Patience, Truthfulness, Resolution, Loving-kindness and Equanimity.

And, indeed, it is these qualities that are expressed in the Buddha's teaching on loving-kindness, the *Metta Sutta*, where, for example we are urged to be straightforward and gentle in speech, be at ease and frugal in our ways, not to be angry or harm one another, cherishing all living beings and radiating kindness, free of hatred, pure hearted and with clarity of vision.¹⁹

Then, quite recently, I received from my friend, Bob Boisture, who is the CEO of the Fetzer Institute in America, and not much younger than me, the following statement of his Ten Affirmations of the Meaning of Love:

- Love is the most powerful and sublime force in the cosmos.
- Love is the source, the purpose, and the consummation of all that exists.
- Love is at the heart of the sacred mystery that we call Spirit.
- Love is the lover's whole-hearted desire for communion with, and the flourishing of, the beloved.
- Love must guide both our public and our private lives; nothing less can ensure the survival and flourishing of the human family and the natural world.
- Love compels a fierce commitment to justice; it stands with all who are oppressed, all who suffer, and the suffering earth.
- Love embraces all; no one should be outside the circle of our love.
- Love calls forth and strengthens our commitment to truth.
- Love is the highest expression of freedom.
- Love is a choice; as affirmed by all our spiritual traditions, and increasingly by science, we can and must open to and increase our capacity for love.

It is encouraging that an organisation such as the Fetzer Institute is speaking out on these matters, insisting on Love against all the obstacles, and despite those who doubt Love's meaning. And for Fetzer, this over-riding aim is expressed as building a spiritual foundation for a loving world.²⁰

Thus, it would seem that in both Christianity and Buddhism, this Love, this root cause, this organising principle, this essence, is to be discovered not in elaborate theory but in the everyday, and

in the practise of small things: harmlessness, patience, generosity, kindness, humility. It is in places such as this that we find the entangled fragrance of the honeysuckle and the rose.



But if these two traditions, Quaker and Buddhist, have been the ground of my being, or rather, Being, there are other teachings that whilst less familiar to me seem to have much that is common, eternal and universal.

For example, another expression of Love as being of the essence, of being the organising principle of the world, is provided in the Orthodox teaching of the Trinity. In his book *The Orthodox Way*,²¹ published in 1998, Bishop Kallistos Ware, as he then was, described the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son as a relationship of mutual love – the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father:

To speak in this way of God as Son and Father is at once to imply a movement of mutual love...It is to imply that from all eternity God himself, as Son, in filial obedience and love renders back to God the Father the being which the Father by paternal self-giving eternally generates in him.²²

I do not speak of God as a Father with a Son, but I accept that what Bishop Kallistos Ware was saying is in accordance with a tradition in whose presence I have felt that which is Holy. Standing in the church of the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, caught within the liturgical chanting of the monks, the light of the candles of the corona and the circling smoke of the incense, that Other, for which there really is no name, is so intense as to be almost tangible.

And then, of course, in the Sufi tradition of Islam, we find a quite extraordinary and ecstatic expression of Love. Indeed, we might say that there is no tradition in which Love is more intensively expressed. We find, for example, the poet Rumi drenched in love for the beloved:

A lifetime without Love is of no account
Love is the Water of Life
Drink it down with heart and soul.²³

And Love like a great force is everywhere:

Love makes the sea boil like a cauldron,
Love reduces the mountains to sand.
Love cracks hundreds of fissures into the heavens
unconsciously,
Love makes the earth tremble.
...(God said): "If it wasn't by pure love, how could I have
brought the heavens into existence?
I have elevated the sublime celestial sphere so that you could
understand the sublimity of Love."²⁴

The more that I have explored this remarkable expression of Love, the more humble I have felt, and the less I have felt I should say. This is the fragrance of the most delightful and entrancing of blossoms, an exotic perfume, something quite beyond my experience of the honeysuckle and the rose. With my Quaker childhood and its teaching of reserve and moderation, such ecstasy probably lies beyond me. I fear that I shall never quite be able to find in myself that quality of abandonment that it requires, never, perhaps, be able to find these Gardens of Paradise. This is my loss.

By contrast, a more calming fragrance, and one in which I have found great comfort, is offered by the devout expressions of Love of the Brahma Kumaris.²⁵ The Brahma Kumaris teach a form of Raja Yoga, a meditation practice that presents the true self as soul, an eternal being at peace and full of Love. The divine, they say, can be experienced as an ocean of Love that brings tranquillity and understanding, a deep sense of peace and wellbeing that enables us to see the world more clearly, and engage with it more effectively. A central part of this teaching is that both the soul and the divine are to be experienced as a point of light – infinite and eternal. In meditation the body and its senses are seen as being no more than a garment worn by the eternal soul, a tool with which the soul can

engage with the mundane world.

The inspiration of the Brahma Kumaris is *The Bhagavad Gita*, a text of such wisdom and beauty that one stands before it in awe and astonishment. It is redolent with the immanence of the divine and the fragrance of Love:

I am the taste of living waters [says Krishna] and the light of the sun and the moon. I am OM, the sacred word of the Vedas, sound in silence, heroism in men.

I am the pure fragrance that comes from the earth and the brightness of fire. I am the life of all living beings, and the austere life of those who train their souls.²⁶

He who in this oneness of love, loves me in whatever he sees, wherever this man may live, in truth this man lives in me.²⁷

Only by love can men see me, and know me, and come unto me.²⁸

At one point in the *Gita*, Arjuna asks the Lord Krishna to tell him “who are the best Yogis?” Krishna replies with a great list of qualities that are dear to him, but in the end he says:

...even dearer to me are those who have faith and love...²⁹

The delight of the teaching of the Brahma Kumaris is that they open the gateway to the Garden of the Soul, a place of such peace and tranquillity that all else is as nothing. This is the place of unconditional love, quite literally Being *in* Love. And to find it, they say, you simply have to be who you truly are. It is always there whether you find your way to it or not. It is there as you breath in and as you breathe out. It never fails since it always is. Like the incense of the church in Vatopedi, it is a ‘fragrance’ that cannot be captured in words but only in experience, and it is not about knowing but about being. The question, then, would seem to be not ‘What shall we do?’ but ‘How shall we be?’, that is, ‘How shall we Be with the divine?’³⁰



In all that I have described so far in this series of papers, with all its apparent diversity of expression, it is clear that there are perhaps two particular ways of speaking of Love. The first can be termed as *elemental* – that Love is the Ultimate Reality or that it is a great force that Rumi says makes “the earth tremble” or makes “the sea boil like a cauldron.” The second is that it is *personal and social*, that it is expressed in our relationships with one another and with all that is – it is patient, peaceful, kind and compassionate, it is wise and truthful. So much is known of this, and so much has already been set down in texts or in images that if we fail to practise it, it cannot be for the lack of telling, but only because we choose to disregard it. We have known that it is true for a very long time, but now the difference is that, above all else, we must attend to it with urgency.

In the Preface to *Love and the Divine Feminine*, Love speaks and says:

“I am the messenger of stars, and of river, wind and earth. Hear me. Invite me in, and for a while suppose what I say is true.”³¹

What might happen if we were to suppose that what Love says is true?



I come to an end of this paper, with this quotation from one of the earliest Quakers, William Penn, who, speaking in 1693, but with words that are as relevant today as they were then, said this:

A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it ... We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet

we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what love will do: for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but love gains: and he forgives first, when is the laurel.³²

Perhaps then, in seeking a new pathway, in trying to discover a new language, we might “try what love will do”.

Endnotes

1. David Cadman, *Love and the Divine Feminine*, Panacea Books, 2020, 12.
2. I am most grateful to my dear friend, the late Professor Suheil Bushrui, for pointing this out to me. The word is part of the teaching of the Bahá'ís
3. Stephen G. Post, *Is Ultimate Reality Unlimited Love?*, Templeton Press, 2014.
4. See below, Whitall N. Perry.
5. *Temenos*, Volume 9, 1998, p.234.
6. Op cit, MN Sutta 52, the *Atthakanāgara Sutta*.
7. In Pali, the four divine abodes are the brahma –*vihāra*, which are *mettā* (loving kindness), *karunā*, (compassion), *muditā* (appreciative joy) and *upekkhā* (equanimity).
8. This is sometimes termed 'joy in and for others'.
9. Gospel of St. John, Chapter 13, v. 34.
10. I John, 4, v.v. 6-17.
11. Whitall N. Perry, *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, Fons Vitae, 2000, p.612.
12. Quoted in Dorothea Siegmund-Schultze, 'Some Aspects of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*,' p.p. 199-210.

13. The Cula-Malunkya Sutta: The Shorter Instructions to Malunkya” (MN 63), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight, 14 June 2010“
14. I Corinthians, Chapter 13.
15. Henry Drummond, ‘The Greatest Thing in the World,’ *The Compact Treasury of Inspiration*, Edited by Kenneth S Giniger, Festival Books Ser., Nashville, TN, USA: Abingdon Press, 1977, p.242 *et seq.*
16. Ibid.
17. MN Sutta 52, the *Atthakanāgara Sutta*, described above.
18. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, 1997, p.p.147-8. The Pali equivalent words are: *dāna-pārami*, *silā-pārami*, *nekkhamma-p*, *paññā-p*, *virīya-p*, *khanti-p*, *sacca-p*, *adhiṭṭhāna-p*, *mettā-p* and *upekkhā-p*.
19. This comes from a translation of the *Metta Sutta*, itself a part of the *Sutta Nipāta*, is from Sharon Salzberg, *Loving Kindness*, Shambhala, Boston & London, 1995.
20. fetzer.org
21. Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998.
22. Ibid, p.32.
23. Divan-i-Shams, 11909
24. *Mathnawi*, v. 2375.
25. The Brahma Kumaris were founded in what is now Pakistan in 1936 by a remarkable man, Brahma Baba, who dedicated the rest of his long life to bringing into

reality a vision of people of all cultural, economic and religious backgrounds coming together to rediscover and develop the spiritual dimension of their lives. In 1951, he founded a university on Mount Abu in Rajasthan; today that university has grown, and his movement has extended worldwide with around 3,500 branches in 70 countries. Their teaching is a form of Raja Yoga.

26. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Penguin Classics, 1962, p. 36. 7.8 and 7.9
27. Ibid, p.34. 6.31
28. Ibid, p.58. 11.54
29. Ibid, p.61.
30. This teaching was given to me by the late Dadi Janki, then co-leader of the Brahma Kumaris.
31. Op cit, David Cadman, 6.
32. William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude*, 1693 maxims 537, 543-546 quoted in *Quaker Faith and Practice* 24.03.