

July 28, 2003—Subject: Love

**DEAR FRIENDS:** Mary Baker Eddy gave her students 26 subjects for weekly Bible Lessons, to be covered twice yearly. Flowing through the year in her order of the subjects, we hereby present fresh views of each one by outstanding Christian Scientists. In this way, we hope to partake with you of new unfoldments of her infinite revelation.

Our first selection this week is from Miscellaneous Writings by Mary Baker Eddy. Our second selection is from — GOD'S NATURE AS LOVE — No. 1 of a Series on the Sevenfold Nature of God— by Peggy M. Brook.

## LOVE

What a word! I am in awe before it. Over what worlds on worlds it hath range and is sovereign! the underived, the incomparable, the infinite All of good, the *alone* God, is Love.

By what strange perversity is the best become the most abused, - either as a quality or as an entity? Mortals misrepresent and miscall affection; they make it what it is not, and doubt what it is. The so-called affection pursuing its victim is a butcher fattening the lamb to slay it. What the lower propensities express, should be repressed by the sentiments. No word is more misconstrued; no sentiment less understood. The divine significance of Love is distorted into human qualities, which in their human abandon become jealousy and hate.

Love is not something put upon a shelf, to be taken down on rare occasions with sugar-tongs and laid on a rose-leaf. I make strong demands on love, call for active witnesses to prove it, and noble sacrifices and grand achievements as its results. Unless these appear, I cast aside the word as a sham and counterfeit, having no ring of the true metal. Love cannot be a mere abstraction, or goodness without activity and power. As a human quality, the glorious significance of affection is more than words: it is the tender, unselfish deed done in secret; the silent, ceaseless prayer; the self-forgetful heart that overflows; the veiled form stealing on an errand of mercy, out of a side door; the little feet tripping along the sidewalk; the gentle hand opening the door that turns toward want and woe, sickness and sorrow, and thus lighting the dark places of earth.

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## God's Nature as Love

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, declared in his Epistle, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Surely to know and feel what love really is is one of the deepest desires of the human heart. Love has been called "the greatest thing in the world." St. John also wrote that "perfect love casteth out fear." What is that perfect love? Does not every one of us long to know such a love,—a love that has the power to cast out fear?

Let us therefore turn our thoughts towards the contemplation of God as Love and listen together for Love's revelation of its own nature. Of course, no one can give a full picture of divine Love. It is such a vast conception and yet so detailed. Moreover, the actuality of divine Love is something one must be spiritually convinced of and deeply feel in one's own consciousness. It is also a power and a presence that lives more nearly to us through our very living of it.

Let us realize, though, that as here and now, wherever we are, we open our thought to the nature of God as Love, every one of us will experience a new and living consciousness of Love. And the essence of that consciousness has nothing to do with words. I may be speaking words to you, but at the same time you are entertaining spiritual ideas in your individual way, just as I am. So as we, with spiritual sense, open our thought to God's nature as Love, we shall all be listening in our own unique way to what Love is revealing to us of its very being.

In contemplating Love, many statements of Mrs. Eddy's have poured into thought, -such statements as "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Mis. ii: 3). Does not that mean that in working from Love we can have no sense of restriction or negative thinking-of "Thou shalt not," which is the standpoint of the law-but instead we work and think from the standpoint of everything being fulfilled here and now? We work out from God, from the perfection of God's universe, instead of straining to get there. Elsewhere Mrs. Eddy asks, "How shall we reach our true selves?" And her answer is, "Through Love" (Mis. 104: 23-24). Just that simple statement. What does it imply? Surely that divine Love impels us to find ourselves in the image of Love. And in finding this we learn to love ourselves aright-not our personal material selfhood with all its mortal mistakes, but our true self; what we really are as God's image and likeness. Then we begin to love and appreciate our neighbour also. Loving our true selves is indissolubly linked with loving our neighbour; because we are expressions of one undivided consciousness.

Here is another interesting point in Mrs. Eddy's references to Love. Although she speaks of Life and Truth as "the way," she very often associates Love with "the way" as well. Sometimes when one cannot see the next step to take or the way one should go, it is helpful to turn to these passages that refer to "the way." In doing so, one is surprised to see how much Love enters into them. We read, for instance, "Love is the way always" (Mess '01, 35:10); "Universal Love is the divine way in Christian Science" (S&H 266:18-19); also, "love inspires, illumines, designates, and leads the way" (S&H 454:18-19). And so at these times one should ask oneself: Am I conscious of Love? What is Love? Am I expressing the love of Love in my life? To feel deeply and to express the Love that is God invariably "inspires, illumines, designates, and leads the way" for us.

In a slightly different vein we also read, "The way to extract error from mortal mind is to pour in truth through flood-tides of Love" (S. & H. 201: 17-18). It is useless to pour in truth in a hard way, forcefully, with little sense of love. Truth must always be poured in "through flood-tides of Love." As we recognize that Love has fulfilled everything, our declarations of truth, when faced with some error, will have no element of condemnation; nor shall we ever believe that we are pouring truth into a spiritual vacuum. From the standpoint of Love's completeness truth will overflow and find ready acceptance in the heart of man as native and natural to him. It is interesting that this reference continues, "Christian perfection is won on no other basis."

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And so we have come right through to the home of Love where we have always been and always will be. Mrs. Eddy writes of the seventh day of Love, "The depth, breadth, height, might, majesty, and glory of infinite Love fill all space. That is enough!" (S. & H. 520: 3-5). And it is.

### A Summary

Let us now take these tones through briefly and see how logically they follow one another. Love as Mind is the Motherhood that is wise; it gives us the ideas we need in every situation, at every point on our journey.

Love as Spirit says, "And the conception of every idea is pure. These ideas that come to you are pure ideas and give you a pure conception of your fellow man." Then Love as Soul says, "And that is constant, because Love is Soul, and its constancy demands translation of the human." Love as Principle then says, "This unchanging conception is impersonal. It is based on Love as Principle, and because it is based on that, it operates with power." Then Love as Life says, "But it grants to every idea true individuality. It isn't so impersonal that it is just coldly systematic. It is Love as Life, warm and individual. Every idea has a place in the one undivided plan." Love as Truth then says, "And that plan is one. All these individualities make up one manifestation. They constitute one man." And finally they are all found in the home of Love, in the design of Love. Let us sum up how we have taken these tones and then let us continue to think about them, so that we begin, to have a full sense of Love and how the twenty-third Psalm gives a rich and rounded conception of Love.

I think that this whole Psalm, and the way we have been considering Love, is mainly from the standpoint of Christianity. There are hosts of things one could say about Love, but we have been taking a Christianity aspect, a sense of true relationship.

Love as Mind is the Motherhood that is wise. "

[DIVINE LOVE] is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Love as Spirit is the conception that is pure. "

[LOVE] maketh me to lie down in green pastures: [LOVE] leadeth me beside the still waters."

Love as Soul is the constancy that translates. "

[LOVE] restoreth my soul [spiritual sense] :"

Love as Principle is the impersonal wholeness that is power. "

[LOVE] leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Love as Life is the unity that is indivisible, individual.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for [LOVE] is with me; [LOVE'S] rod and [LOVE'S] staff they comfort me."

Love as Truth is the universality that recognizes only one man. "

[LOVE] prepareth a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: [LOVE] anointeth my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

Love as Love is complete oneness.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house [the consciousness] of [Love] for ever."

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