

Impossible Loves: Spiritual Intelligence

Romans

8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Luke 1,38

'Here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.'

Mark xv, 34

And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Matthew vi,6

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Mark i, 35

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Matthew xiv, 23

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Galatians ii, 20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

Psalms 46, 10

Be still, and know that I am God.

Philippians 2, 5-8

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

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1 Thesalonians 5, 16 – 19

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

St Therese of Liseaux

“To be little also means not to ascribe to oneself the virtues one practices, not to think oneself competent, but to recognise that God places this treasure in the hand of His little child for it to use when it has need. Finally, it means not to lose courage on account of one's faults, for children often fall, but they are too small to hurt themselves seriously.” Gorres, *The Hidden Face* 333

“And suppose God wishes to have you as feeble as powerless as a child? Do you think that would be less worthy in His eyes? Consent to stumble, or even to fall, at every step, to bear your cross feebly; love your weakness. Your soul will draw more profit from that than if, sustained by grace, you vigorously performed heroic deeds which would fill your soul with self-satisfaction and pride.” 330

Pierre Lacout *God is Silence*

The beginner needs an object. Before contemplating he must meditate.

Silence is an active waiting animated by faith and love.

Each of us should make a personal anthology of those writings which the touch of the Spirit has sanctified.

If we wish to make progress in the way of Silence we must be convinced that the will cannot of itself impose calm and serenity.

But let it persevere; one day it will find itself, without knowing how, in a wide space within, free and bathed in light.

In the desire to escape from all distraction there lurks a dangerous pride: the dream that one can, like some celestial being, be above the common condition.

It could be said that the external actions of Jesus are completely enfolded in his inward silence.

Words must be purified in a redemptive silence if they are to bear the message of peace.

Paul Celan

Now I am a person who likes simple words. It is true, I had realised long before this journey that there was much evil and injustice in the world I had now left, but I had believed I could shake the foundations if I called things by their proper names. I knew such an enterprise meant returning to absolute naivete. This naivete I considered as a primal vision purified of the slag of centuries of hoary lies about the world.

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Only one thing remained reachable, close and secure amid all losses: language. Yes, language. In spite of everything, it remained secure against loss. But it had to go through its own lack of answers, through terrifying silence, through the thousand darknesses of murderous speech. It went through. It gave me no words for what was happening, but went through it. Went through and could resurface, 'enriched by it all'.

In this language I tried, during those years and the years after, to write poems: in order to speak, to orient myself, to find out, where I was, where I was going, to chart my reality.

Only truthful hands write true poems. I cannot see any basic difference between a handshake and a poem.

Poetry is perhaps this: an Atemwende, a turning of our breath. Who knows, perhaps poetry goes its way – the way of art – for the sake of just such a turn? And since the strange, the abyss *and* Medusa's head, the abyss *and* the automaton, all seem to lie in the same direction – it is perhaps this turn, this Atemwende, which can sort out the strange from the strange. Is it perhaps here, in this one brief moment, that the Medusa's head shrivels and the automatons run down? Perhaps, along with the I, estranged and freed *here, in this manner*, some other thing is also set free?

Affirmations

You are a powerful, loving and creative being.

The more you have, the more you have to give.

The light within me is creating miracles in my life here and now.

I am now attuned to my higher purpose in life.

I now feel deep inner peace and serenity.

You are a lovable and loving person.

This is an abundant universe and there is plenty for all of us.

You deserve the very best in life.

What you set your heart upon, that you become.

I am an open channel of creative energy.

Simone Weil.

The essential contradiction in human life is that man, with a straining after the good constituting his whole being, is at the same time subject in his entire being, both in mind and in flesh to a blind force, to a necessity completely indifferent to the good.

What thing in the world is most opposed to purity? The pursuit of intensity.

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Joy is nothing other than the feeling of reality.

Don't try to make oneself understood ... What's the use? To understand: that's better.

Genesis separates creation and original sin because of the necessities inherent in an account composed in human language. But by being created the creature preferred itself to God. Otherwise, would there have been a creation? God created because he was good, but the creature let itself be created because it was evil. It redeems itself by persuading God, by the power of prayer, to destroy it.

God is only the good. That is why he is waiting there in silence. Anyone who comes forward and speaks is using a little force. The good which is nothing but good can only stand waiting.

The secret of salvation is so simple that it escapes the intelligence by its simplicity. It is like a play on words.

We love the two things which it is impossible to love: that which does not exist and that which is not loveable.

We are obliged to imitate the act of creation, and there are two possible imitations - the one real and the other apparent - preserving and destroying. There is no trace of I in the act of preserving. There is in that of destroying. The I leaves its mark on the world as it destroys.

Nothing which exists is absolutely worthy of love.

We must therefore love that which does not exist.

The situation of all of us is comparable to that of Socrates when he was awaiting death in his prison and began to learn to play the lyre ... At any rate we shall have lived ...

Nothing in the world can prevent us from thinking clearly.

The man whose soul remains oriented towards God while a nail is driven through it finds himself nailed to the very centre of the universe; the true centre, which is not the middle, which is not in space and time, which is God. In a dimension which is not spatial and which is not time, a totally other dimension, the nail has pierced through the whole of creation, through the dense screen which separates the soul from God.

To contemplate what cannot be contemplated (the affliction of another), without running away, and to contemplate the desirable without approaching – That is what is beautiful.

What we are talking to you about is the very thing you are longing for with your whole soul, at this moment, in your present state. But you give it a false name. Don't give it

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the name we suggest. Simply stop giving it any name at all. Persevere in this interior silence. And one day you will hear a voice that will tell you the true name.

If I grow thin from labour in the fields, my flesh really becomes wheat. If that wheat is used for the host it becomes Christ's flesh. Anyone who labours with this intention should become a saint.

In a sense the creature is more powerful than God. It can hate God and God cannot hate it in return. This impotence makes him an impersonal Person. He loves, not as I love, but as an emerald is green. He is "I love." And I too, if I were in a state of perfection, would love as an emerald is green. I would be an impersonal person.

One of the most exquisite pleasures of human love – to serve the loved one without his knowing it – is only possible as regards the love of God, though atheism.

God is attention without distraction.

Love is a divine thing. If it enters a human heart it breaks it. The human heart was created to be broken in this way. It is the saddest waste if it is broken by anything rather than by the divine love. Because the divine love breaks only those hearts which consent to be broken and this consent is difficult to give.

For the privilege of finding myself before I die in a state perfectly similar to Christ's when he said, on the Cross: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" – for that privilege I would willingly renounce everything that is called Paradise. Because all his desire was entirely directed towards God, and therefore he perfectly possessed God. He was enduring almost infernal suffering, but what does that detail matter? It is in respect of false goods that desire and possession are different things; for the true good, there is no difference. Therefore, God exists because I desire Him; that is as certain as my existence.

Once the record-breaking ambition has been abolished, then one may adopt some daily practice in a steady way, or one may say "I will do such or such a thing so many times" and stick to it, and one can be sure that the animals in the soul will be irritated and will cry and howl and will realise their impotence to make themselves heard. For the body will not hear them if one's resolve comes from the centre of the soul.

Whatever has not been available at all times and in all places to whoever desires the truth is itself something other than truth.

A method of purification: to pray to God, not only in secret as far as men are concerned, but with the thought that God does not exist.

If I knew how to withdraw from my own soul it would be enough to enable this table in front of me to have the incomparable good fortune of being seen by God.

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God asked us 'do you want to be created?' and we answered yes. He still asks us at every moment, and at every moment we answer yes. Except for a few whose soul is split in two; while nearly their whole soul answers yes, there is one point in it which wears itself out in beseeching: no, no, no! This point grows larger as it cries, and becomes a patch which eventually spreads throughout the soul.

The good seems to us as a nothingness, since there is no *thing* that is good. But this nothingness is not unreal. Compared to it, everything in existence is unreal.

If we love God while thinking that he does not exist, he will manifest his existence.

God can love in us only this consent to withdraw in order to make way for him, just as he himself, our creator, withdrew in order that we might come into being.

If only I knew how to disappear there would be a perfect union of love between God and the earth I tread, the sea I hear ...

Adam and Eve sought for divinity in vital energy – a tree, fruit. But it is prepared for us on dead wood, geometrically squared, where a corpse is hanging.

We are what is furthest from God, situated at the extreme limit from which it is not absolutely impossible to come back to him. In our being, God is torn. We are the crucifixion of God.

Redemptive suffering is that which strips suffering naked and bring it in its purity right into existence. That saves existence.

'Give me a point of leverage and I will lift up the world.' This point of leverage is the cross. There can be no other. It has to be at the intersection of the world and that which is not the world. The cross is this intersection.

Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love.

Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.

If we turn our mind towards the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself.

We can only know one thing about God – that he is what we are not. Our wretchedness alone is an image of this. The more we contemplate this, the more we contemplate him.

The sea is not less beautiful in our eyes because we know that sometimes ships are wrecked. On the contrary this adds to its beauty. If it altered the movement of its waves to spare a boat, it would be a creature gifted with discernment and choice and not this fluid, perfectly obedient to every external pressure. It is this perfect obedience which constitutes the sea's beauty.

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All the horrors which come about in this world are like the folds imposed upon the waves by gravity. This is why they contain an element of beauty.

Love sees what is invisible.

Let us love the country of here below. It is real; it offers resistance to love. It is this country which God has given us to love. He has willed that it should be difficult yet possible to love.

G. Thibon

I had the impression of being in the presence of an absolutely transparent soul which was ready to be reabsorbed into original light. I can still hear Simone Weil's voice in the deserted streets of Marseilles as she took me back to my hotel in the early hours of the morning; she was speaking of the Gospel; her mouth uttered thoughts as a tree gives its fruit, her words did not express reality, they poured it into me in its naked totality; I felt myself to be transported beyond space and time and literally fed with light.

Dharma

To remain in the prison of samsara myself is unbearable, yet all other living beings are in the same situation. Moreover, when I suffer only one person suffers, whereas when others suffer countless living beings suffer. How can I bear the thought of countless living beings experiencing suffering without end? I must liberate them all from suffering. To free all living beings from suffering I must become a Buddha, and to become a Buddha I must realise ultimate truth, emptiness. (Gyatso)

Inhale: black smoke, which dissolves into our heart and completely destroys our self-cherishing.

Exhale: in the aspect of wisdom light, its nature pure uncontaminated happiness, pervades the entire universe. (Gyatso)

“Wear the cloak of the Dakini's deep breath” (Milarepa)

“It is said that patience in the best means of attaining Bodhi. My aunt is the support of my meditation. It is thanks to my uncle and my aunt that I have entered the path of liberation.” (Milarepa)

“Having meditated on love and compassion, I forgot the difference between myself and others.” (Milarepa)

“Rather than moulding figurines, meditate four times a day. [...] Raise the banner of meditation!” (Milarepa)

“Abandon everything you call Dharma practice but which actually is directed toward glorifying the worldly life.” (Milarepa)

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I don't need to read books; everything that appears to my mind is a Dharma book. All things confirm the truth of Buddha's teachings and increase my spiritual experience.
(Milarepa)

Since death alone is certain and the time of death uncertain, what should I do?
Understand Anguish. Let go of its origin. Realize its cessation. Cultivate the Path.

I am medicine for the sick. May I be both the doctor and their nurse, until the sickness does not recur.

Through my merit, may all those in any of the directions suffering distress in body or mind find oceans of happiness and delight.

All things are the primal void,
Which is not born or destroyed;
Nor is it stained or pure,
Nor does it wax or wane. (The Heart Sutra)

Looking deeper, I see the interconnectedness of all things.

We venerate the Three Jewels
And are thankful for this meal
The work of many people
And the sharing of other forms of life.

Don't let unwholesome thoughts arise.
Don't let them continue.
Make wholesome thoughts arise.
Make wholesome thoughts continue.

Hurtful and untrue - don't say it.
Hurtful and true - don't say it.
Helpful and untrue - don't say it.
Helpful and true - find the right time.

What you put out into the universe will be reflected back to you.

Did I love well?

Stop the war.

When sitting: "this too, this too".

Take the one seat. (Commit to a practice).

May all beings be happy, may all beings be well.

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No-one is saved until we are all saved.

Wear the hint of a smile (kind of NLP thing, like the hand position). Also focus attention on the left hand (to engage the right brain).

Only to the extent that a person exposes himself over and over again to annihilation, can that which is indestructible be found within them. In this daring lies dignity and the spirit of true awakening. (Zen teacher)

In spiritual practice there are only two things: you sit and you sweep the garden. And it doesn't matter how big the garden is. (Zen tradition)

Deep Ecology – the real work

Simple in means, rich in ends.

Down with the Empire! Up with the Spring!

Hastening the downfall, hearkening the dawn!

Think like a mountain.

The other is no other than myself.

William Law

There is no wrath that stands between God and us, but what is awakened in the dark fire of our own fallen nature; and to quench this wrath, and not His own, God gave his only begotten son to be made man.

Talking With Angels

Every true act springs from love.

Welcome suffering as a messenger from heaven, but let it depart when it is ready to leave.

Be pagan in every way, for that is the root of all things. You should blossom, but this is not possible without roots.

If you have faith, you can walk not only on water, but also on nothing, on the black void.

Your goal is to attain to the level where anyone who looks at you ... awakens.

If you rejoice ten times, there are nine gaps between the ten joys.

Nervousness is life without a task.

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The sphere is the image of giving without judgement.

Each organ of your body is an image of a universal force – it receives its strength from this force. Your heartbeat is identical with the heartbeat of the universe.

William Blake

“I know of no other Christianity, and of no other Gospel, than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the divine arts of imagination: imagination, the real and eternal world of which this vegetable universe is but a faint shadow, in which we shall live in our eternal or imaginative bodies when these vegetable Mortal bodies are no more.”

“I question not my corporeal or vegetable eye any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it and not with it.”

“A spirit and a vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing; they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all.”

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.

The cut worm forgives the plough.

He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.

Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.

The most sublime act is to set another before you.

If the fool would persist in its folly he would become wise.

The cistern contains: the fountain overflows.

One thought fills immensity.

Everything possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.

To create a little flower is the labour of ages.

Damn braces. Bless relaxes.

Exuberance is Beauty.

Péguy

Joan: Then the disciples, all leaving him, fled ... I believe ... I believe ... I believe that if I had been there, I should not have left him.

Pat Barker

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“Cut a chrysalis open, and you will find a rotting caterpillar. What you will never find is that mythical creature, half caterpillar, half butterfly, a fit emblem of the human soul, for those whose cast of mind leads them to seek such emblems. No, the process of transformation consists almost entirely of decay.”

Kierkegaard

What pleases him even more than the praise of angels is a human being who in the last lap of this life, when God seemingly changes into sheer cruelty and with the most cruelly devised cruelty does something to deprive him of all zest for life, nevertheless contrives to believe that God is love, that God does it out of love. Such a person becomes an angel.

I cannot make the movement of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd; it is for me an impossibility, but I do not praise myself for that. I am convinced that God is love; for me this thought has a primal lyrical validity. When it is present to me, I am unspeakably happy; when it is absent, I long for it more vehemently than the lover for the object of his love. But I do not have faith; this courage I lack.

Bonhoeffer

God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without Him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15.34). The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us.

Matt. 8.17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering.

To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after.

It must be a passion without honour. Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Jesus.

It [enduring the cross] is not suffering *per se* but suffering-and-rejection, and not rejection for any cause or conviction of our own, but rejection for the sake of Christ.

If we want to know our own goodness or love, it has already ceased to be love. We must be unaware even of our love for our enemies. After all when we love them they are no longer our enemies.

In the passion Jesus is a rejected Messiah.

It is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself.

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ACIM

Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists.

Miracles enable you to heal the sick and raise the dead because you made sickness and death yourself, and can therefore abolish both. *You* are a miracle, capable of creating in the likeness of your Creator. Everything else is your own nightmare, and does not exist. Only the creations of light are real.

The mind that serves spirit *is* invulnerable.

Truth is always abundant.

Only your mind can produce fear ... you must somehow have chosen not to love.

Nothing and everything cannot coexist. To believe in one is to deny the other. Fear is really nothing and love everything.

God is in everything I see.

I could see peace instead of this.

God is the light in which I see.

God goes with me wherever I go.

Love created me like Itself.

Love holds no grievances.

Mother Teresa

In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.

St. Francois de Sales

Bring yourself back to the point quite gently. And even if you do nothing during the whole of your hour but bring your heart back a thousand times, though it went away every time you brought it back, your hour would be very well employed.

Thomas Merton

The one thing necessary is not that which is left when everything is crossed off, but it is perhaps that which includes and embraces everything else, that which is arrived at when you've added up everything and gone far beyond.

The one who has attained final integration is no longer limited by the culture in which he has grown up. "He has embraced **all of life**." He passes beyond all these limiting forms, while retaining all that is best and most universal in them, finally giving birth to a fully comprehensive self. He accepts not only his own community, his own society,

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his own friends, his own culture, but all humanity. He does not remain bound to one limited set of values in such a way that he opposes them aggressively or defensively to others. He is fully “Catholic” in the best sense of the word. He has a unified vision and experience of the one truth shining out in all its various manifestations, some clearer than others, some more definite and more certain than others. He does not set these partial views up in opposition to each other, but unifies them in a dialectic or an insight of complementarity. With this view of life he is able to bring perspective, liberty and spontaneity into the lives of others. The finally integrated person is a peacemaker, and that is why there is such a desperate need for our leaders to become such persons of insight.

John Fowles (in *The Aristos*)

“God’ is not; but its not-being is universally present, and universally affects. It cannot exist in any sense meaningful to material organisms; but that does not mean that this situation is meaningless to such organisms. If, for instance, you see two men fighting, but do not intervene (although you could have intervened), then in fact you intervene by not intervening; and it is so with ‘God’.” (p. 23)

The ubiquitous absence of ‘God’ in ordinary life is this sense of non-existing, of mystery, of incalculable potentiality; this eternal doubt that hovers between the thing itself and our perception of it; this dimension in and by which all other dimensions exist. The white paper that contains a drawing; the space that contains a building; the silence that contains a sonata; the passage of time that prevents a sensation or object continuing for ever; all these are ‘God’. (27)

Just as the atom is made of positive and negative particles, so each thing is made of its own existence and non-existence. Thus is ‘God’ present by being absent in every thing and every moment. It is the dark core, the mystery, the being-not-being of even the simplest objects. (27)

The counterpole of all that is existent and known or knowable, that is ‘God’, must be infinite mystery, since only so can a tension remain to keep mankind from collapsing into total knowledge, or a ‘perfect’ world that would be a perfect hell. From this knowledge-mystery tension there is no transposing; and it is the source of human being.”

Not doing good when you usefully could is not immoral; it is going about with excrement on the hands.

Non-performance [of bodily functions] means illness or death, just as the non-performance of good actions finally means the death of society. Charity, kindness to others, actions against injustice and inequality should be *acts of hygiene, not of pleasure*.

Quaker Advices and Queries

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Receive the vocal ministry of others in a tender and creative spirit. Reach for the meaning deep within it, recognising that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others.

When others mourn, let your love embrace them.

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.

Are you open to the healing power of God's love? Cherish that of God within you, so that this love may grow in you and guide you.

All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our experience of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength.

Hold yourself and others in the Light, knowing that all are cherished by God.

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern?

Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.

Live adventurously.

Let your life speak.

Try to live simply.

Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one. (George Fox, 1656).

Alan Keightley Wittgenstein, *Grammar and God*

If only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unutterable will be – unutterably – *contained* in what has been uttered!

We *feel* the need for compensation even though this may never come. By contrast, the believer views *everything* as a gift. He has died to the longing for compensation. He has died, in fact, to the self.

Parker J. Palmer

Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline.

Krishnamurti

A man who wants peace and who wants to create a new world, a happy world, surely cannot isolate himself through any form of belief.

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This, after all, is the truth: to have the capacity of meeting everything anew, from moment to moment, without the conditioning reaction of the past, so that there is not the cumulative effect which acts as a barrier between oneself and that which **is**.

When do you create? Surely when there is no effort, when you are completely open, when on all levels you are in complete communication, completely integrated. Then there is joy and you begin to sing or write a poem or paint or fashion something. The moment of creation is not born of struggle.

To love is not to ask anything in return, not even to feel that you are giving something – and it is only such love that can know freedom.

Jung

One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.

Quakers

2.18 Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blusterings and storms. That is it which moulds up into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God, with his power.
George Fox, 1658

“As iron sharpeneth iron, the seeing of the faces one of another when both are inwardly gathered into the life, giveth occasion for the life secretly to rise and pass from vessel to vessel. And as many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together in the same life, there more of the glory of God and his powers appears, to the refreshment of each individual.” (Barclay)

2.24 Consider now the prayer-life of Jesus. It comes out most clearly in the record of St Luke, who leaves us with the impression that prayer was the most vital element in our Lord's life. He rises a great while before day that he may have some hours alone with His Father. He continues all night in prayer to God. Incident after incident is introduced by the statement that Jesus was praying. Are we so much nearer God that we can afford to dispense with that which to Him was of such vital moment? But apart from this, it seems to me that this prayer-habit of Jesus throws light upon the purpose of prayer. I think of those long hours alone with God. Quite obviously petition can have had a very small place in our Lord's thoughts. We cannot suppose that He whose chief desire was that God's will should be done in all things could have been incessantly asking, asking. There must have been a sacred interchange far deeper than this. Especially are we sure that He was not praying for material blessings to be enjoyed by Himself alone. On the only occasion recorded in which He asked (in perfect submission)

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something for Himself, at Gethsemane, His request was not granted. My own belief is that outward circumstances are not often (I will not say never) directly altered as a result of prayer. That is to say, God is not always interfering with the working of the natural order. But indirectly by the working of mind upon mind great changes may be wrought. We live and move and have our being in God; we are bound up in the bundle of life in Him, and it is reasonable to believe that prayer may often find its answer, even in outward things, by the reaction of mind upon mind. Prayer is not given us to make life easy for us, or to coddle us, but to make us strong ... to make us masters of circumstance and not its slaves. We pray, not to change God's will, but to bring our wills into correspondence with His. William Littleboy, 1937

19.08 The Lord of Heaven and earth we found to be near at hand, and, as we waited upon him in pure silence, our minds out of all things, his heavenly presence appeared in our assemblies, when there was no language, tongue nor speech from any creature. The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net, and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; [...] We met together in the unity of the Spirit, and of the bond of peace, treading down under our feet all reasoning about religion.

19. 20 Edward Burrough (1632 or 1633-1663) wrote:

While waiting upon the Lord in silence, as often we did for many hours together, with our minds and hearts toward him, being stayed in the light of Christ within us from all thoughts, fleshly motions and desires, we received often the pouring down of the spirit upon us, and our hearts were made glad and our tongues loosened, and our mouths opened, and we spake with new tongues, as the Lord gave us utterance, and his spirit led us, which was poured upon sons and daughters.

19.21

For, when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; (Barclay)

26.12 So one approaches, by efforts which call for the deepest resources of one's being, to the condition of true silence; not just of sitting still, not just of not speaking, but of a wide awake, fully aware non- thinking. It is in this condition, found and held for a brief instant only, that I have experienced the existence of something other than 'myself'. The thinking me has vanished, and with it vanishes the sense of separation, of unique identity. One is not left naked and defenceless, as one is, for example, by the operations of the mind in self-analysis. One becomes instead aware, one is conscious of being a participant in the whole of existence, not limited to the body or the moment... It is in this condition that one understands the nature of the divine power, its essential identity with love, in the widest sense of that much misused word. Geoffrey Hubbard, 1974

26.35 All my life I've heard, 'God is love', without understanding what was meant. Recently I've come to feel that in a very real way G-d/ess is the love that flows in and between and among us. The ebb and flow of my commitment to love, to peace, to

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harmony makes G-d/ess stronger or weaker in my heart. Sometimes the web feels like G-d/ess' body, her vast cosmos, of which we are an inextricable part. The web is also the love that flows through creation, from G-d/ess, from us, from everywhere. The web is an affirmation and comfort, support and clear-naming. The web is harmony, proving to me by its fleeting, fragile appearances that peace can happen. Most of all, for me, the web is friendship. That the web exists is my faith. Spinning at it, dancing along it and calling others into it are my ministry. Ripping it or withdrawing into isolation and despair are my sins. Articulating my faith is hard enough; living it is often beyond me. But we are all connected. Strength seeps in from everywhere and amazing things happen. The sense of participation and communion sweeps over me like ocean waves.

Rose Ketterer, 1987

26.56 The resurrection, however literally or otherwise we interpret it, demonstrates the power of God, to bring life out of brokenness; not just to take the hurt out of brokenness but to add something to the world. It helps us to sense the usefulness, the possible meaning in our suffering, and to turn it into a gift. The resurrection affirms me with my pain and my anger at what has happened. It does not take away my pain; it still hurts. But I sense that I am being transfigured; I am being enabled to begin again to love confidently and to remake the spirit of my world.

S Jocelyn Burnell, 1989

26.58 For two thousand years there has been emphasis on the Yang aspects of Christ, that is, on the amazing teacher, healer and master of all spiritual power, he who rebuked the winds and the waves and told his disciples they had only to believe and mountains could be uprooted and set down in the seas. This over-emphasis upon the power aspect of the spirit has resulted ... in domination of the planet. But because intuitive reverence has been missing we have unwittingly set about destroying the living and healing processes which actually hold the world together. The Yin or feminine aspect of the Christ now awaits our discovery. This is the Christ in the second period of the Gospel story. He who, echoing his mother's receptivity to the divine, in the garden of Gethsemane prayed, 'Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.' Just here in the rending of the material, which the cross betokens, a new invasion of spirit into matter occurs. This is the Christ, agonisingly separated from spirit, who by his receptivity makes possible a fresh The Light that shines for all flow of impregnation from the divine, right down into the depths of nature and into humanity.

Damaris Parker-Rhodes, 1985

Quakers

"[...] become more transparent to the Light."
(Waiting and Resting in the True Silence, 12)