

L – Love within Limits

Dear: Let me remind you about where this trail is leading – besides up the hill, to get a view of the mountains! With this and the previous chapter, I'm trying to show you some "moral codes" that can be (and have been) adopted, as well as a little of their history and some of their inherent and recommended limitations. For example in the previous chapter, after showing you different "formulations" of "the kindness principle", I recommended that you "apply kindness with keenness" and tried to show you that "sometimes it's kindest to be cruel". In this chapter, I want to comment on some recommended limits for love.

The concept that "sometimes it's kindest to be cruel" has recently been called "tough love". To remind you of what I wrote in an earlier chapter, let me put it this way: if ever you have children, Dear, don't be so cruel as to rob them of their problems. It's a difficult "balancing act", but "loving parents" must continuously seek a "happy mean" between helping their children solve their problems and yet helping them to gain strength by solving their own problems (from solving their homework problems to solving interpersonal relations, and from paying for their college expenses to buying their own homes). On the other hand, if you ever have grandchildren, then...!

In addition, Dear, you should apply "tough love" also to others, including brothers and sisters. For example, today (when I wrote this, when you were seven), I watched you be kind to your brother when he hadn't earned your kindness; I saw you show love to another, when the other wasn't loveable. Dear, you must be less generous with your love and more judgmental, for by helping, you can hurt. That is, Dear, if your brother behaves as a brat (as he was behaving) and yet you show him kindness, then you're teaching him that even if he's a brat, somebody will still love him. But that won't happen later in his life, Dear, or even now, outside his home. He (and anyone) must learn that, to have others show him kindness, then he must show kindness to them; he must learn that if he behaves as a brat, then people will not like him; he must learn the meaning of "reciprocity". It's an extremely important lesson for him to learn, Dear, and yet, with your nonjudgmental "kindness", you were impeding his learning it; thereby, you're increasing the pain he will feel outside his home; thereby, by trying to be kind, you were being unkind.

And I know that your parents (and leaders in your church) have told you to be kind to others regardless of their behavior (even “love your enemies”!), but such instruction is not only superficial it can be at the limit of stupidity; instead, Dear, always use your brain as best you can. You help others more (that is, in the long run, you will be kinder to them) by teaching them that you will be nice to them only if they earn your kindness. You will be kinder to them by being more judgmental. You will be kinder to them if you put yourself first. Others must learn that your love is not free – that they must earn your love. It’s an extremely important lesson for everyone to learn; it’s the essence of interpersonal justice: you get out of a relationship pretty much what you put into it. In contrast, by being nonjudgmental, you practice and promote interpersonal injustice.

Further, the applications of “sometimes it’s kindest to be cruel” range far beyond your own family, e.g., from refusing to give anything to physically healthy beggars when jobs are available, to working for the goal of not providing Russia with any more foreign aid. As a more poignant example for me, Dear, many people would think it’s horribly cruel for a grandfather to try to “shake” his grandchildren’s “faith” in “the Lord Jesus Christ”, whereas I know of at least one old grandfather who thinks that it’s far kinder to exercise this “cruelty” if, as a result, his grandchildren will increase their capabilities to use their brains as best they can.

Now, Dear, you might have noticed how, in the above, I began by addressing the concept of ‘kindness’, and somehow I “drifted off” to the concept of ‘love’. But I trust that the change caused you little difficulty, because I trust that you consider a principle such as “love one another” to be essentially the same as “be kind to one another”. I similarly expect that you would have no trouble understanding the following description of “tough love”, which was written by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (pronounced “Neecha”) more than 100 years ago: “This is the hardest of all: to close the open hand out of love, and keep modest as a giver.” But although that’s “true enough”, I would now ask you to bear with me while I address the concept of ‘love’ – for I’d like to show you, first, that probably never in the history of any language has a word been so overused, misused, and therefore abused as ‘love’!

To begin, let me ask you to consider a question. If you “love” strawberry milkshakes, sunsets, friendly puppies, forests, the pounding surf, and the

way a certain person talks, then what do you mean by ‘love’? And if your left-brain is now churning away to find the answer to that question, I hope you’ll temporarily stop, because the verb ‘love’ (and similarly, its opposite, ‘hate’) is a right-brain synthesis – an emotion – that doesn’t need left-brain analyses to “explain” it.

Of course, whether or not the word ‘love’ needs analysis is rather irrelevant – because you know you’re going to try to understand it! And to try to help you understand ‘love’, Dear, I’d have you first consider if you are thinking about a noun or a verb. In that regard, I wonder if it’s only in the English language in which one can get away with something so potentially confusing as “I love love”. Or how about the disenchanted lover who says “I hate love”? Or the lunatic who says “I love hate”? And after you distinguish the verb ‘love’ from the noun ‘love’, then please see that the verb ‘love’ needs an object (“I love strawberry milkshakes”!), and that the noun ‘love’ (as with the noun ‘freedom’) needs an adjective or a modifying phrase: “love of life”, “romantic love”, and so on.

Further, Dear, notice that when the noun ‘love’ is modified by various adjectives, then many different “things” are being identified with the clumsy word ‘love’: love of life, of yourself, of family, friends, “that special person”, humanity, strawberries, Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, the soft noses of horses, . . . where, in such a listing, I trust you’ll excuse me for mentioning a few of my own favorites! Let me put it this way: if someone says that they love you, it may mean that they have a very limited vocabulary; in contrast, if other people neglect to say that they love you (when you are fairly certain that they do admire your ability to write stories, enjoy your company, think that you’re intelligent, etc.), it may reveal less about their emotions than their reluctance to use such a clumsy, ill-defined word as ‘love’!

It might be thought better to avoid the word ‘love’ and use appropriate synonyms. In a way, that was the method used in the language in which the New Testament was written (i.e., Greek). As described by Graham Lawrence in his on-line book *The Fallible Gospels*,¹ readers should be careful to determine the meaning in English of text that was translated from Greek:

¹ Available at <http://freespace.virgin.net/graham.lawrence/gospelintro.htm>.

In English we can say “I love toast”, “I love my husband”, “I love my daughter”, or “I love ski-ing”. We know what we mean from the context, although we keep using the same verb. In Greek, the passionate or sexual ‘love’ of *eros* can be distinguished from the warm affection of the ‘love’ translated as *philia*, and also from *agape*... Jesus was not telling his followers to feel about strangers in the same way as they felt about friends or relatives. *Agape* [pronounced “ah-gah-pay”] is an active and genuine interest in the welfare of others.

But (and admitting bias), I think that the method used in English is better. Thus, in Greek three different types of love are identified (*eros*, *philia*, and *agape*), but in English, through the use of different objects of the verb ‘love’ and different adjectives for the noun ‘love’, we can identify innumerable types of love! Let me comment on the meanings of a few of these different types of love.

- Surely the most fundamental and common love is *love of living*, because most people who don’t want to survive, didn’t! Thus, saying that you love life is just another way of saying that a prime goal of life is to continue. An alternative expression describing such “love of living” is “to be happy”!
- Similarly, although no doubt each of us can identify aspects of ourselves that we’d like to improve, yet in general, most of us (i.e., those of us who don’t plan on committing suicide) have concluded that, on balance, we *love ourselves*. And by the way, Dear, such “love of oneself” isn’t necessarily the same as “being egotistical” (i.e., “selfish, self-absorbed, and self-centered”). A similar conclusion was obviously reached by whoever wrote the statement in the Old Testament’s *Leviticus* “you shall love your neighbor as a man like yourself” (as I’ll show you later, there are many indications that the writer wasn’t Moses) and by whoever is being depicted in the New Testament by having the cleric’s Jesus say “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” That is, such “commandments” obviously contain the premiss that we love ourselves: if you hate yourself, then are you to “hate thy neighbor as thyself”?!
- A type of love that you may now be experiencing, Dear, is *romantic love*, which is what the Greeks described as *eros* (the basis for the word *erotic*). Assuming that “popular culture” adequately portrays reality (a dubious assumption!), then apparently young women, especially, “long for romance” – longing to have “someone to love”, longing to hear someone say “I love you.” If this “romantic love” were analyzed, surely

a major component is our powerful instinct to produce offspring, an instinct dictated by our DNA molecules and a powerful instinct in all animals (apparently especially powerful in most male animals) – at least in those animals that have managed to continue for these past billion-or-so years!

- Associated with romantic love is *parental love*, which no doubt is also “dictated” by our DNA molecules, in turn “learned” via natural selection (i.e., animals that didn’t learn parental love – including “tough love” – soon disappeared). And I would like to add that my experiences (both as a child and a parent) suggest to me that a mother’s love is more generous than a father’s love: I’ve gained the impression that, at its core, a father’s love seems to be derived more from self love (even egotism) and thereby is less generous than a mother’s love.
- In the case of *love of others*, probably the most powerful and common example is that derived from (or developed with, or dependent upon) shared goals, e.g., a part of the love between husband and wife, the love between comrades in arms (sharing the goals of winning the battles, winning the war, or just staying alive), and even the love between co-workers, sharing the goals of some enterprise – including “enterprises” from propagating some religion to robbing a bank – which, come to think of it, are quite similar! This love of others associated with working together to achieve common goals may be another form of “self love”, for in this case, helping others is a way of helping oneself.

And of course I could continue this type of “explanation” (e.g., with ‘love’ of family, of friends, of *some* neighbors, of freedom, of the greatness of humanity, and of many other things, from strawberry milkshakes to the softness of horses’ noses), but instead, let me try to summarize.

Dear, as far as I have been able to discern, ‘love’ is another set of “pleasure signals”, telling us that we are satisfying our trio of survival goals (survival of ourselves, our extended families, and our values). That is, if I list all my types of “loves”, I find that the list indicates: that I’m surviving (including “pleasure signals” picked up by my senses, e.g., from strawberry milkshakes), that there are no threats to my survival (including “pleasure signals” from, e.g., sunsets), and that there’s hope for the survival of my genetic code (e.g., my love for my daughter) and of productive humans (e.g., my love of understanding and of freedom). That is, ‘love’ seems to be an

“alive and well” sign (!), as from a sunset, a friendly puppy, the pounding surf, and maybe from the sound of a particular person’s voice. In particular, this male’s analysis of what apparently is more a female feeling of “romantic love” seems to be the good feelings associated with another human – hopeful signs of future well being (safety, security, etc.) for you and (as appropriate) for your future children (i.e., for your genetic code). Of course, because you’re a different person, your analysis may lead you to different interpretations of your emotions, but I trust that at least you agree that ‘love’ is a right-brain synthesis (as is ‘hate’).

Normally associated with a feeling of love are a host of desires and actions, many of which can be traced to infancy and even to animal behavior: if you love your puppy, you want to pet him; if you love strawberry milkshakes, you would like to have one; if you love a person, you want to be with that person and help him or her. Unfortunately, many people subvert love by substituting just words in place of these desires and actions.

In that regard (and again assuming “popular culture” adequately portrays reality), it seems rather strange to me that so many women seem especially receptive to “words of love”. Such words are quite abstract. For example, women seem to be more “romantic” than men, longing to hear someone say “I love you”. Yet, maybe this receptiveness is consistent with my observation that, in general, women seem more competent with words than are men. In contrast, men would much prefer to hear less abstract but equivalent statements, such as: “I share your goals; I want to help you survive; I want to join with you to help our shared genetic code continue; I share your values and want to work with you to promote them.” But I should add that, in the end, all humans want more than just words: they want to see action consistent with such promising words. For example, Dear, shall I say that I love you – or instead, how about if I sit down for ten thousand-or-so hours of thinking and typing to show you?

Alternatively, Dear, how about considering a scientific description of love? The following is a good illustration, available from a tremendous web site entitled “Pathways to Philosophy” at <http://how.to/philosophise>, in particular from <http://www.pathways.plus.com/questions/answers10.html> and written by Glyn Hughes in answer to a web surfer’s question:

Love is an obsessive-compulsive affection state characterized by euphoria brought about by the release in the brain of dopamine and a chemical called phenyl-

ethylamine. These most likely affect the reward pathways leading from the limbic system at the base of the brain, where desires are generated, and the cerebral cortex, where they are registered into consciousness. The close-bonding association (both between lovers and between parent and child) is probably associated with the hormone oxytocin, which is manufactured in the hypothalamus and is released in response to stimulation of the genitals. This stimulation need not be physical, but can be initiated in lovers by the chemical signalers called pheromones being exchanged between the two. Oxytocin produces the well-known warm, other-worldly feeling, and, being chemically similar to vasopressin, a chemical known to have the ability to enhance the forging of new memories, it may be the case that the mental impression of the person who initiates oxytocin release may be especially strong and lasting. Oxytocin is also similar to the opium-like endorphins and, like them, is capable of causing an addictive response, so that the lover may feel distressed when separated from the object of their affection and its associated ‘fix’ of oxytocin.

The reason you are unaware of this chemical cacophony is twofold. Firstly, it is all initiated in the lower, unconscious, part of the brain. Secondly, it is a chemical effect, not an electrical one, and as such floods virtually all of the brain, ‘clouding out’ other thoughts and leaving the unfortunate sufferer famously unable to concentrate, and equally famously unable to make any reasoned assessment of the suitability of the loved one. To use the old analogy, “when your heart’s on fire, smoke gets in your eyes” – and also into your amygdala, cerebral cortex and prefrontal lobes.

Anyway, Dear, in contrast to the above (which I hope you’ll conclude is a reasonable start toward understanding what is meant by ‘love’), let me try to show you some of the stupid ideas about ‘love’ that are at the core of “the Abrahamic religions” (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Mormonism,...), i.e., those religions that can be traced to the stories about Abraham, as given in the Old Testament – although, as I’ll sketch in the “excursion” **Yx**, it probably would be more accurate to describe them all as “Zoroastrian religions”). After my attempt to show you some of these general ideas, I’ll turn specifically to some of the stupid statements about ‘love’ that are at core of Christianity (and therefore, Mormonism), as given in the New Testament.

At the core of all the Abrahamic or Zoroastrian religions is self-love gone berserk.² And if (as I expect) you don’t know what I mean by “self-love gone berserk”, then let me put the idea in the form of a question for all “believers”: How could you possibly be so conceited as to think that you’re

² Actually, Dear, if you took the “excursion” **Ix** (dealing with “The Origins of the God Idea”), then maybe you can see that all religions ever concocted “massage the ego” of the individual, not only putting him or her in contact with the gods but even showing the individual how to influence the gods! In the “excursion” **Yx**, dealing with “Your Indoctrination in the Mountainous God Lie”, I’ll show you more.

so important that the creator of the universe (the omniscient, omnipotent, omni-whatever-else) gives a damn about your miserable little carcass?

As an example of what I mean, consider again the circumstances when most “believers” are driven most to prayer. It’s in times of trouble. As I asked you to consider in an earlier chapter, look at the essence of such “prayers of petition”. In essence, they amount to: “Hey, God, what the hell is going on down here? I’m important! And right now, I need some help – so get your ass down here, NOW!” Talk about delusions of grandeur! In contrast to our society’s almost constant encouragement to pray, in a sane society, anyone’s claim that the creator of the universe is “personally” concerned about your well being would be grounds to certify that you’re insane.

But before providing additional illustrations of what I mean by saying that at the core of all such religions is “self-love gone berserk”, let me comment a little on the “clinically-cleaner term” used by psychologists and psychiatrists, namely, “narcissism” [pronounced “nahr-se-sizm”] – which contains the idea “self love gone berserk”, but actually, it’s more general. According to my dictionary, the common meaning of ‘narcissism’ is “self love; excessive interest in one’s own appearance, comfort, importance, abilities, etc.” In psychoanalysis, narcissism is “arrest at or regression to the first stage of libidinal development...” Certainly everyone should love themselves, but narcissist take self love to an extreme; that is, the usual meaning is that ‘narcissism’ is excessive love of one’s self.

Actually, though, the original meaning of ‘narcissism’, as conceived by the Ancient Greeks, was rather different from the meaning now commonly used by psychologists. To see the original meaning – and for your enjoyment! – you should read any of many versions of the Greek myth about the beautiful boy Narcissus (pronounced “nahr-sis-us”), after whom is named the narcissus species of flowers, such as the daffodil (whose botanical name is *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*). You can find many version of the Narcissus myth on the internet; the following [to which I’ve added a few notes in square brackets] is a good example.³

The river god Cephissus long had his eyes on the lovely nymph Leiriope. [A ‘nymph’ was (is?!)] “a mythological spirit of nature imagined as a beautiful maiden

³ Copied from www.androphile.org/preview/Library/Mythology/Greek/Narcissus/narcissus.htm, which in turn references Robert Graves’s *Greek Mythology* and Donald Richardson’s, *Great Zeus and All His Children, Greek Mythology for Adults*, Greyden Press.

inhabiting rivers, woods, or other locations”.] And, being a god, he got his wish and Leiriope in time grew heavy with child. On the fated day, a boy was born to her, and being curious about what the future held in store for him, she went to ask the blind seer Teiresias about his fate. “He will live a long life,” said the wise man “but beware that he not set eyes upon his own reflection, for it will be his doom.” His mother made sure that all the mirrors were safely put away, and he grew healthy and strong, and more beautiful than any other boy in the land. So often did people tell him how handsome he was that he began to think he must be someone really special [i.e., Dear, an egotist.]

Many were those who fell in love with the beautiful lad. Even when he was a baby his nurses swooned over him, and by his sixteenth birthday, every man and woman in town pined for him. [In Ancient Greece, Dear, homosexuality was common (even customary), not “an abomination before the Lord”.] None of them however were good enough for him, he felt. One day his neighbor, Ameinias, could stand it no longer, and told Narcissus how much he longed for him, and asked him to be his lover. Narcissus said nothing, but merely sent a servant to deliver a dagger in response. Ameinias understood the meaning of the ‘gift’, and with that dagger, took his own life, calling down the wrath of the gods upon Narcissus and cursing him to ever meet in love the same disdain that he had for others.

Echo was a mountain nymph who had once served Zeus [aka the Roman god Jove] by distracting [his wife] Hera [literally “lady”, aka the Roman goddess Juno] with meaningless chatter whenever she came close to where the Thunderer was compromising his marriage vows [i.e., whenever Zeus was engaging in adultery]. Echo’s prattle gave Zeus’s guests sufficient time to make their exits. When Hera discovered the wily goddess’s ruse, she flew into a rage: “Henceforth that evil tongue will silent be! Except when spoken to, you shall not speak at all and then but brief noises.” [And thus, Dear, the Ancient Greek “explanation” of what an echo was!]

And so, when Echo came upon Narcissus one morning, as the youth was struggling with a deer he had just netted, she could only gaze and not speak. And gaze is what she did. Even among the deathless gods she had never seen his like. Hot desire coursed through her veins. How she longed to seduce the handsome youth with honeyed words, but she moved her lips in vain.

Narcissus sensed her eyes upon him. “Who’s there?” he called out. “...there,” answered Echo, who could only repeat what was spoken to her. “Let me see you,” said the boy. “...see you,” answered Echo. Momentarily intrigued, Narcissus then shouted, “What are you called?” “...you called,” the nymph replied. Then, unable to contain her ardor, she burst from her cover and threw herself, hot and panting, upon the beautiful youth. [In Ancient Greece, Dear, women’s sexual desires were not considered “impure”; that hideousness came centuries later, courtesy Christianity and Islam.] Not unused to such behavior, Narcissus quickly freed himself from her embrace and fled posthaste deeper into the forest, leaving his nets behind.

Echo followed after, trying to call out to calm his fears, disarm him, but no sounds came. The youth soon disappeared from her sight. For weeks the nymph wandered the forest in search of her beloved, sleeping little, eating nothing. She became so thin that before long there was nothing left of her at all that an eye could discern. To this day she wanders mountains the world over, still looking for Narcissus. The rocky canyons and deep valleys are her home. One can call out to her, and if she is home, she will answer but only with the words first spoken to her. By decree of Hera she can do no other.

One afternoon, within a month of his escape from Echo, in a secluded woods higher up Mount Helicon, Narcissus fell to his knees, exhausted from hunting and being hunted. In front of him was a deep, clear pool, the glassy surface of which so caught the light through the trees overhead as to become a perfect mirror.

Narcissus had seen his shadow many times but never his reflection. Thus, when he leaned forward on his hands and knees and peered into the pool, he was startled by the image of unsurpassed beauty peering back at him. No face he had ever seen was like the one he now studied. For the first time in his life he fell in love. [Thus, Dear, the “online” *Encyclopedia Britannica* states: “Narcissus was a beautiful youth who refused the love of a nymph named Echo. In punishment the goddess Aphrodite condemned him to fall in love with his own image.”]

He brought his face down closer to kiss the youth and reached into the pool to embrace him. His lips and arms found only water. Although he quickly withdrew, the reflection was for a moment broken by ripples in the water. Thinking his beloved had fled from him, as he himself was wont to do, Narcissus began to weep. Presently, though, the ripples died down, and the beautiful face again appeared. “Do not leave me, oh handsome friend,” he pled. “Stay, my love.”

Again Narcissus reached down to touch the form in the water; again the image blurred when his hand broke the surface. Certain now his true love was forever lost to him, he tore at his hair and drew his nails slowly down across his throat. When he relented and the waters again cleared, the dear face reappeared, now battered and disheveled. The sight pained him, and he wept.

Helios’s chariot finished its trek across the sky [i.e., the Sun went down!], gray night stole over the forest, but Narcissus did not stir. Nothing mattered to him save the elusive youth in the pool. Dawn’s first light found him gazing intently into the water’s clear depths. The face that slowly appeared was haggard and distraught. He reached his hand into the water to caress that cheek now most dear, and his frustrations of the day before were renewed.

“I love you! I love you!” he shouted a thousand times into the pool. The face, like Echo’s, moved its mouth but made no sound. Unwilling, unable to leave the pool’s edge, Narcissus at length died there, his once beautiful countenance now twisted and grotesque. Mountain nymphs found him and would have buried him; but as they

were preparing for the funeral, his body vanished, and where it lay a flower bloomed with golden petals tinged with white.

And so, Dear, maybe you see why I said that the original meaning of ‘narcissism’ was different (from its current and rather common usage), because Narcissus actually fell in love, not with himself, but with the image of himself. Therefore, maybe it would be useful to summarize as follows.

Self-love is common, and in moderation, is generally good – it helps one’s survival! Conceit and egotism are self-love taken too far. “Self-love gone berserk” is what psychologists call narcissism – but if psychologists would stop being so “politically correct” (or stop being so “sensitive” to their patients’ feelings), then they would more accurately use the common term “egomania” to describe cases of “self-love gone berserk”. Meanwhile, to be consistent with the original meaning, psychologists could reserve the term ‘narcissism’ to describe what happened to Narcissus: he fell in love not with himself but with an image of himself. You can see such narcissism in many “movie stars” (and actually, also in many political leaders and most religious leaders): as with Narcissus, they fall in love not necessarily “just” with themselves, but with the image of themselves that they see in their “adoring public”.

And maybe it would be useful if I added some comments about terms related to Narcissus such as ‘narcosis’, ‘narcotics’, and even ‘neurosis’. According to my dictionary, *neurosis* is “any of various psychic, or mental, functional disorders characterized by one of several of the following reactions: anxiety, compulsions and obsessions, phobias, depression, dissociations, and conversion”; thus, Narcissus was neurotic, obsessed with his own image. *Narcosis* is “a condition of deep stupor which passes into unconsciousness and paralysis...”; thus, Narcissus fell into a narcosis, pining over his image. And a *narcotic* is “**1.** a drug, as opium or any of its derivatives (morphine, heroin, codeine, etc.), used to relieve pain and induce sleep; narcotics are often addictive and in excessive doses can cause stupor, coma, or death **2.** anything that has a soothing, lulling or dulling effect”; thus, Narcissus’ own image was a narcotic for him, causing his narcosis, a form of neurosis.

“And how,” asked a certain grandchild, “does any of this have anything to do with me? Is a certain grandfather suggesting that I’m a neurotic narcissist; an egotist gone berserk, an egomaniac?!” No, Dear – in fact, sometimes I worry that you have insufficient self esteem; sometimes I worry

that you don't seem to appreciate how brilliant and beautiful you are. Yet, simultaneously I worry that you've "bought into" the clerics' con game, a game in which they sell the addictive narcotic of narcissism, charging 10% of their marks' income to tell them how important they are – even to the creator of the universe! As Marx said, "religion is opium [a narcotic] for the masses", and as Freud said, religion is "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity." That is, Dear, and as I tried to sketch in earlier chapters, at the core of all Abrahamic religions (and in fact, at the core of essentially all religions) is the idea that "the true believer" is so important that he or she has a direct, one-on-one relationship with no less than the creator and maintainer of the entire universe.

Although you may be tempted to "reject such ideas outright", Dear, I hope you'd dig deeper to try to understand and evaluate them. For example, I hope you'll dig to try to understand the Christian (and Mormon) concept of "love", which many consider to be the key to Christianity (and therefore Mormonism). Thus, consider the proud proclamation (e.g., on car bumpers) that "Jesus loves me" or "I {heart} Jesus" or similar. Behind these familiar bumper stickers are a huge number of references to love in the Bible. When I used the search engine at <http://bible.gospelcom.net>, it spit out 560 biblical references to "love"! But most of these seem to be references to the commandment to love God. In fact, I was rather surprised to find that in the core of the New Testament (the reported testaments of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) there are relatively few suggestions that Jesus (or God) loves the believer. Yet, from *John 14*, 21, there is the following "direct" quote from the clerics' Jesus:

The man who has received my commands and obeys them – he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love him and disclose myself to him.

This appears to be the principal "authority" upon which Christians (and Mormons) base their "belief" that God loves them (provided that they obey the commandments).

As a start toward evaluating this "love" offered by Jesus, please look at this quotation again. Let me add some notes [in square brackets such as these] directly within a re-quote:

The man [and, it now would be "politically correct" to add "and the woman"] who has received my commands [it's a pity that anyone proposing to lead or to promote

* Go to other chapters *via*

love proposes to do so by commanding rather than convincing others] and obeys them [i.e., “obeys my commands”—whereas it’s better, by far, to obey (or, better, follow) the results of rational analyses and nature’s laws than a leader’s “commands”, e.g., a leader such as Hitler or Stalin] – he it is who loves me [normally, one obeys commands not out of love but out of fear – and fear is normally associated not with love but with hate!]; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love him and disclose myself to him.

The main point I would have you notice, Dear, is that this love certainly is “conditional”. It might even be at the limiting extreme of conditional love: God and his purported son will love only those who love them and obey their commands, whereas I doubt that even few humans would be so callous as to love even their animals only if they obeyed and loved them!

Be that as it may be, Dear, if you’re “hooked” on your religion and if the source of such addiction is love (your love of God or of his purported son, or of their assumed love for you), what I hope you’ll do, Dear, is ask some questions about this “love”, such as: What’s the essence of this “love”? “Love” for what purpose? What’s the objective? What’s the goal?

In general, Dear, when you love a person, process, or thing, don’t you want to be with “it”, to get more of “it”, to help “it”, to promote “it”, and so on? And in contrast, when you hate a person, process, or thing, don’t you want the opposites? Further, don’t you consider the object of your love to be “the good” and want more of it, and in contrast, don’t you consider the object of your hate to be what you consider bad, and you want to avoid it, hinder it, damage it, etc.? Assuming that you agree, then the only (rather trivial) point I hope you see is that a common feature of both your love and your hate is your engagement / interaction / involvement with “it” (whether you love “it” or hate “it”); in contrast, and in contrast to both love and hate, is disinterest. That is, if you love (or hate) something, you are involved with it; in contrast, the opposite to both love and hate is if you ignore it.

Thus, Dear, do you see that the key feature of all that you love (and hate) is you? When you love (or hate) any person, process, or thing, you interact with it. In contrast to both love and hate are disinterest and/or disengagement, i.e., the difference is how you interact with it (by not interacting with it at all). Therefore, if you feel that the essence of Christianity and Mormonism is love, then you are stating that their essence is you! And similarly for all “true followers” of the Abrahamic religions: all who feel that the essence of these religions is love have “concluded” that

their religion's essence is for them to feel engaged with the creator of the universe, with universal struggles of good and evil, with love of mankind, etc. Thus, Dear, if you are engulfed in (addicted to?) "Christian love", please realize that, by absolute necessity, the essence of this love is not Jesus or God or your fellow humans or "love" itself or... (and similarly, the essence of "religious hate" is not Satan, or nonbelievers, or fornicators, or homosexuals, or other races, or...); the essence of this narcotic that the clerical con artists are selling is you (your involvement, your "connectedness", your importance, your...)!

If you are a true "believer" in Christianity and/or Mormonism, Dear (and only you know if you are), then I expect that your mind rebels at what you have just read. Certainly that's understandable. But, Dear, maybe it would help if you imagine the first time "an innocent" heard a clerical con artist pitch his line: "Have I got a deal for you. For only 10% of your salary, I'll give you life after death (or in the case of some Jewish sects, "success of the Jewish people") – and, what's more, I'll tell you that you're important." Hearing this the first time, a sane human might not be able to contain his laughter at such a ridiculous sales pitch!

But suppose that (as is the case) your parents had been telling you similar stuff since even before you understood what the words meant; suppose that your parents had involved you in this charade at least twice a day, by saying "grace" at dinner and requiring you to say your prayers every night; suppose that every Sunday you went to a church where every member of a large group of people demonstrated their fidelity to these ideas; and suppose that essentially our entire society participated in this same nonsense, in everything from the daily pledge at school containing "one nation under God", to the message on our currency "In God We Trust", to the arsine statements by political leaders such as (during my lifetime) every President's damnable "God bless America". Do you see, Dear, why people succumb? Do you then see why people don't burst into laughter but say: "Okay; here's 5% of my salary for eternal life, and 5% if you'll tell me I'm important."

And actually, Dear, on a different level, the appeal of the clerics' con game (viz., "Yes, you are important") is quite understandable and, in fact, has very deep roots. Thus, the DNA molecule has programmed all its hosts to consider themselves important enough to struggle for survival. Individuals without such conviction were tested by evolution and found to be inadequate. If you don't know, instinctively, that you're worthy of living,

you won't. Yet, all evidence available (including the billions of other people!) suggests that you really aren't very important! When you look at the huge number of other people (an observation that already suggests that you aren't very important), you see what appears to be random elimination of individuals (and this randomness, itself, suggests that a specific individual isn't very important): by disease, natural and other disasters, and various other acts (accidents, murders, wars...). All of which suggests an apparent contradiction: you feel, instinctively, that you (the individual) are important, but evidence suggests otherwise.

The apparent contradiction can be eliminated in at least two ways. On the one hand, the contradiction is eliminated if you understand the cause of your feeling of uniqueness and importance: it's the DNA molecule's method to promote its survival. It "inculcated" this "feeling" of importance (even in all animals and plants!) by evolution: those plants that didn't seek to survive, didn't; those animals that didn't want to live, didn't; those humans who didn't think they were important, weren't. And note that, thereby, it required no "thought" by the DNA molecule to program its carriers to "think" that they were important: evolution does this, just by a process of elimination. And another way to eliminate this contradiction, between the "feeling" that you're important and the evidence that you're not, is to buy into the clerics' con game!

But actually, I don't want to dismiss this aspect of the clerics' con game so lightly. Thus, before Darwin explained evolution, the quandary / the dilemma faced by humans must have seemed enormous. (And so, too, for those who still don't understand natural selection.) The process of natural selection resulted in humans "knowing" that they're important; and yet, as I've already said, a huge amount of evidence (whenever death is seen) suggests otherwise. Before Darwin explained evolution (less than 200 years ago), this "dilemma" of knowing that you're important, but seeing that you're not, must have caused enormous emotional problems. And to have a socially approved scam that resolved this dilemma was no doubt viewed by people as a "god sent". The well-known "resolution" (or scam, depending on viewpoint): "Yes; you are important; you have a unique and everlasting soul; yes there is death, but your spirit goes on; you are even so important that within you, no less than the cosmic forces of good and evil wage war. And there will be a day of judgment when no less than the Lord and Creator of the universe will judge you! So pray to him at least daily; speak to no less

than the Lord God, creator of the universe, who sees all, knows all, and is waiting to hear from YOU!”

That is, Dear, the “love” that such religions sell (for 10% of your income), such love as that proudly proclaimed on the bumper stickers as “Jesus loves me”, “I {heart} Jesus”, and so on, is solely for the benefit of the owner of the bumper! In its mildest form, it’s egotism; but in its common form, it’s “egotism gone berserk”. For 5% of his or her salary, the egotist gets eternal life (because he or she is so important) and for the other 5%, he or she gets to be involved (through “love”) with no less than the creator of the universe! Who would say she isn’t important when the creator of the universe loves her so much that he put that sign on her bumper!

But quite commonly it can be even worse. At best, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, etc. are for egotists; at worst, they’re for egomaniacs and narcissists. And maybe even a narcissist’s most fanciful dream couldn’t match the behavior of many “true believers”: “I’m sorry, but I can’t be bothered with real life problems right now: you take out the garbage, you change the baby’s diapers, you cut the lawn, and you..., but I’ve gotta go. God’s waiting for me on the other line.” That is, the salve of religious “salvation” is self! And of course that’s why it sells so well: it’s an ego booster; it proclaims: you ARE important. Never mind the mess you’re in, whether it’s your fault or not. YOU are still important. YOU possess an immortal soul... The Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon,... are absurd con games designed as “soul food” for narcissists and egomaniacs.

For many of us, Dear, it takes a lifetime to unlearn the lesson that the DNA molecules programmed into each of us and that our parents, grandparents, and others re-enforced, i.e., that each of us is important. Religions such as Christianity (and Mormonism) and Islam are particularly adamant in teaching their followers that they are so important that they’ll go on to “bigger and better things” even after they’re dead! As someone else said, such religions represent egotism gone berserk. In contrast to what such religions preach, what’s needed is to learn some humility. And, Dear, if you think that I’ve missed the point, if you maintain that the essence of such religions is not self love but love of others (“love thy neighbor as thy self”, “love thy enemy”, and so on), then my response, Dear, is not that I’ve missed that point, I was saving it: when I include that point, my criticism of these “revealed religions” is much more severe.

* Go to other chapters *via*

Thus, Dear, self-love is desirable (though these religions carry it to ridiculous extremes), but this other love that the clerical con artists sell is immoral. Now, it'll take me a while to show you why what I mean by saying that this other message that the con artists are selling is immoral (see the **M**-chapters), but let me mention the essence of this immorality right here, so that, even if you can't follow my argument, now (because of its brevity), maybe you'll at least get a hint that this isn't a trivial point.

For example, Dear, if you'll examine both the direct commandment from Christ to "love thy neighbor as thyself" and also the context of his presentation of this commandment, you'll find that the essence is: "don't judge others, love them". Sweetheart, please, PLEASE, never, NEVER, do that! Especially for girls unable to defend themselves physically against the immoral people of this world, never abandon your judgment, never abandon reason, never "love thy neighbor as thyself"; judge who is worthy of your love and who deserves your hate, and then act accordingly, i.e., as your reason dictates. As for "love thy enemy", Dear, please never do that either. As someone else said, to love one's enemies is to hate one's friends. But there is also this: loving the enemy in almost any country is called treason, which is punishable by death. Thus, the other "love" that the Christian and Mormon con artists are selling (as a part of your payment of 10% of your income) is to abandon reason and to practice treason. And thus the point that I'll now start trying to justify is that, although the ridiculous extreme of self-love promoted by Christian and Mormon con artists is stupid, the type of love of others that these con artists promote – to love without judgment – is immoral.

To try to show you what I mean, let me now turn to statements about 'love' that are at the core of Christianity (and therefore, at the core of Mormonism). Some of these statements are from "Saint" Paul, who is the person primarily responsible for the existence of the Christianity and Mormonism (both of which, therefore, should more accurately be called "Paulism", as I'll try to show you in later chapters). That is, as I'll try to show you later, Paul transferred a few statements that might have been made by a wandering "preacher" (the "historical Jesus", possibly Jesus ben Pandera) into a "movement" and then into an "organization", eventually leading to various huge "bureaucracies", now called churches.

But in spite of my desire to show you some of the ideas proposed by "Saint" Paul, I should admit that I've had great difficulty overcoming associated

* Go to other chapters *via*

problems. The source of my problems is this: much of what is generally accepted to be “human progress” can be attributed to our abilities to communicate – among the living, from the dead (through their writings and sayings), and we hope, with those yet to be born (through our own sayings and writings). And my problem with Paul arises from my anger at anyone who refuses to conform to some of the most rudimentary principles of communication.

Let me show you an example. As given in the New English Bible at *I Corinthians 12*, Paul states to a group of Christians that he was organizing (at Corinth):

About gifts of the spirit, there are some things of which I do not wish you to remain ignorant... [Hello? Why only “some things”? Does he want the people to remain ignorant of other “gifts of the spirit”?] There are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit... The higher gifts are those you should aim at... And now I will show you the best of all... In a word, there are three things that last forever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love.

My complaint (even, my anger) at such writings can be summarized this way: his words seem to say something, but don't! His words have a mesmerizing, even hypnotic quality, but instead of penetrating into clarity, cause a fog of confusion.

Let me show you a partial analysis of the above quotation to suggest some of the problems I have with Paul's failed attempt to communicate – or maybe they're successful attempts to confuse or obfuscate. In the above, he begins by writing about “gifts” and in particular “gifts of the spirit” – which surely everyone stumbles on. But then, most readers (at least, most readers not familiar with Paul's notorious obfuscations) probably give him the benefit of the doubt and are willing to assume he means that, with some “spirit” of “something”, there are associated a number of gifts, i.e., nouns or “things” (like flowers, baseball gloves, and cars) that most people understand. But then he writes: “In a word [and yet, he plans to use more than “a word”], there are three things [three of these “gifts”] that last forever: faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of them all is love.”

“And what's wrong with that?” asks a certain grandchild. Dear:

1. As used here, these “gifts” of “faith, hope, and love” are used as nouns – but without any adjectives.

2. But without adjectives, the nouns, alone, don't convey complete thoughts. What does he mean? Faith that the sun will rise tomorrow? Hope that the sky won't fall? Love of sunsets or strawberry milkshakes or of clear thinking?
3. And if your response is "everyone knows he means faith in God, hope for eternal life, and love of one's neighbors", then first he's being stupid, for he supplies no evidence to support his claim that such "things" last "forever", and
4. He's being asinine, because "faith, hope, and love" are trite compared with our ability to think! Dear, the greatest ability of humans – in Paul's words, our greatest "gift" or the greatness of the human "spirit" – is our ability to think, which is exactly what this idiot Paul's writings seem to seek to destroy.

But be that as it is (!), let me finally get to Paul's asinine description of "love" (*1 Corinthians 13, 4-7*):

Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.

What jabberwocky! What "love" does he mean? Apparently not love of strawberry milkshakes, because it ain't patient! Apparently not love of sunrises, because it has nothing to do with kindness. Apparently not love of skiing, because those who love skiing, but aren't, envy those who are! Apparently not love of one's daughter, because I'm always boasting about mine. Apparently not love of one's self, because no doubt he would say that such would be conceited and selfish. Apparently not love of law and order, because that could be interpreted as rude or keeping score of wrongs. Apparently not love of God, because that delights in hiding the truth!

And if the response is that "it's obvious that Paul means love of fellow humans, including romantic love", then I cough at Paul's: "there is nothing that [this] love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance." As a single devastating example, Dear, please consider some more advice from your old grandfather. After you "fall in love" and marry "the one of your dreams", if you find that it's a nightmare, then use your

brain as best you can: first, analyze the data (define what you are prepared to “face”, define your “limits”, realistically assess your “hopes”, judge what you are prepared to “endure”), then evaluate your thoughts against the available data, and then take action consistent with your judgment, e.g., divorce the SOB. And while your throwing out the trash, throw Paul’s stupid junk out too!

But enough of that, rather-trivial stupidity. It’s rather trivial in the sense that it’s just an illustration of problems caused by people who use words so loosely. In contrast, let me now turn to some really rather serious stupidities – serious in the sense that these stupidities have trapped a huge number of people in “double binds” (i.e., “damned if you do and damned if you don’t”). These are the double binds (or “Catch-22’s”) that Christian and earlier mystics created – and that the clerics of such religions still perpetuate.

First, let me turn to the “love” promoted in the dominant (and dominating!) religions of our society, starting with #1 of the top “Ten Commandments”, allegedly cooked up by Moses: “You shall love the Lord your God”. In total, as I’ll show you in later chapters, there aren’t just ten commandments in the Old Testament, but literally hundreds of them.⁴ As I showed you before, buried among these hundreds of commandments, at *Leviticus 19*, 18, is another commandment that a new breed of clerics (the Christians) decided should be #2 in priority among the commandments. (I wonder if Moses and his god would agree!). Thus, not to be outdone in stupidity by Moses, the #1 and #2 commandments allegedly advocated by the clerics’ Jesus are:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Given your experiences, Dear, I suspect that you wonder: what’s wrong with that?

Dear, what’s wrong with these commandments is, first, that they’re commandments: commandments to love! Please, Dear, never try to command an emotion – either in yourself or in anybody else. If you try to force yourself to “feel” a certain way, you’ll be just wasting your time (and a lot of energy) trying to force an emotion! Worse: if you try to force

⁴ Dear: I’ve seen it written (but never bothered to verify it) that, in total, the Old Testament contains not 10 but 613 “commandments”! Whatever!

someone else to “feel” a certain way (e.g., with a commandment) almost certainly the dominant feeling aroused will be resentment – for your not having the decency to permit people to possess even their emotions!

Let me give you an example. Dear: if anyone ever “commands” you (or, better, tries to cajole you) even with something as simple as: “Ah come on, cheer up; life’s not all that bad!” you may want to try this. First stare at that person in disbelief: he or she wants you to abandon your right-brain synthesis of your predicament by stimulating you to adopt a contrary emotion, without giving you the slightest respect for your ability to synthesize your experiences, without offering you any sympathy, without offering you any help (e.g., to analyze your predicament or to help you solve your problems), and so on.

If you’re so inclined, maybe you’d like to determine if you can trigger an emotion in such a person, with a question such as: “Why don’t you feel guilty about your unkind remark?” Actually, that may cheer you up a little – if the other person then realizes that he or she was trying to force an emotion on you with “Cheer up”, if with that realization you then triggered a guilt emotion in the other person, and if you then pick up a survival signal telling you that you still have some control over your life!

As another possibility, depending on circumstance, the emotion aroused may be one of amusement. Let me try to illustrate. Dear: remember that kid who was absolutely horrible to you? I command that you love him. Why the snicker? But okay, let me try another. Remember the “ickiest” food that you were ever expected to eat, the junk that made green eggs (and ham) seem delicious, the stuff that caused you to throw up? Well, I command that, from now on, you’re to really love that food. Hey, no laughing! Okay, then, think of...

Anyway, Dear, please don’t be so silly (or so inconsiderate – or so stupid!) as to command anyone to love anything: if this emotion doesn’t flow naturally (as is the case, for most people, when they see beautiful sunsets, and as is the case, for more “advanced people”, when they taste strawberry milkshakes – how your grandmother can maintain that she prefers vanilla or even chocolate milkshakes, I’ll never understand...), then at least supply reasons, e.g., we are to love one another (or be kind to one another), e.g., because “what goes around comes around”.

Further, Dear, if our more natural reaction is to hate a specific thing or concept (e.g., a God who approves of slavery, who promotes treating women as if they were cattle, and a thousand other horrible examples that I'll show you in later chapters), then whoever is trying to get us to love such a thing or concept better "back pedal" as hard as they bloody well can, trying to eliminate our resulting hate.

Now, Dear, with the above, I'm not suggesting that analyses (and words) can't influence emotions (and in some cases even generate emotions). For example, with left-brain analysis, probably obviously I can "work myself" into quite an emotional state about all religions, hating them for how their stupidities have harmed so many humans. Also, sometimes I can temper my emotions with analysis. For example, sometimes I can even temper my hate for all religions, when I think that most religious people probably mean well, probably became involved in religions by erroneously transferring their necessary trust in their parents to their parent's religion, and probably stay involved with the hope that religions will promote kindness and peace. Thus, sometimes I can "analyze" myself out of hateful feelings. (For some strange reason, I've never tried to analyze myself out of love!) But even recognizing that left-brain analyses can influence right-brain emotions, probably obviously, I still respond emotionally to such ignorance or stupidity as that from the clerics' Moses, Jesus, and the rest of them, commanding people to love.

A classic example of such stupidity is some famous stuff from "Saint John the Devine". Some of it's so "famous" that recently it has become a bumper sticker: "God is love". This appears in *1 John 4*, but before I get to it, let me comment on some of his surrounding statements (as given in *The New English Bible*) starting with *1 John 2, 15*:

Do not set your hearts on the godless world or anything in it. Anyone who loves the world is a stranger to the Father's love. Everything the world affords, all that panders to the appetites or entices the eyes, all the glamour of its life, springs not from the Father but from the godless world. And that world is passing away with all its allurements, but he who does *God's will* stands for evermore.

For those who are silly enough to "believe" all the junk in the Bible, this statement by John surely must be confusing. He says that "everything the world affords, all that panders to the appetites [such as strawberry milkshakes?] or entices the eyes [such as sunsets and flowers?], all the glamour of its life [such as the "mysterious allure" felt for a certain someone

– or even the allure felt when making a scientific discovery?] springs not from the Father but from the godless world.” Really? How is that conclusion consistent with the idea that their God made the world? Does this mean that their God didn’t make strawberries and sunsets? Does it mean that people should avoid the allure of “a certain someone” or even the allure of making a scientific breakthrough?

And why? Well, according to John [who, in his craziness, thought the world was about to end – as reportedly did the clerics’ Jesus – and (as I’ll be showing you in later chapters) was clearly claimed by the insane “Saint” Paul – all of which possibly came from the crazy character Zoroaster]: “That world is passing away with all its allurements, but he who does *God’s will* stands for evermore.” That is, we’re “not to set [our] hearts on the godless world or anything in it” so that, then, we can “[stand] for evermore”, i.e., gain eternal life. That is, don’t love what you have; love what you don’t have. Don’t appreciate what you have now; instead, dream (and drool over) what the clerics promise for the future. Don’t love the present; love what’s promised. Could anything be more stupid?!

And the answer to the last question is “yes”, because as I’ll show you now, John outdid himself even in the above stupidity. In *1 John 4, 7*, he writes:

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves [other people] is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God. For God is love; and his love was disclosed to us in this, that he sent his only Son into the world to bring us life. The love I speak of is not our love for God, but the love he showed to us in sending his Son as the remedy for the defilement of our sins...

What amazes me most about this famous passage is that it has been around for almost 2,000 years and so few people seem to have said: “Hey, wait a minute, this fellow John has some loose screws!”

As evidence for some loose screws, there is the business (almost certainly concocted by the insane “Saint” Paul) about God arranging for his “only begotten son” to die on the cross to relieve the rest of us of our “original sin” (i.e., that Adam and Eve ate fruit from the tree of knowledge). I’ll (repeatedly!) go into this crazy idea in later chapters, but let me give you a quick summary, here.

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First, what “sin”? I ain’t guilty; I have an “iron-clad” alibi: I wasn’t there! Second, even in the fictitious story Adam didn’t do anything wrong: God purposefully and explicitly prevented Adam and Eve from knowing the difference between right and wrong; so, they couldn’t have done anything “wrong”! Third, nothing could be more horrible than this proposed remedy for their “sin”: punish the innocent (the clerics’ Jesus) for the crimes of the guilty! Could anything be a worse travesty of justice? Fourth, what’s the big deal of a “begotten son”: why would someone derived from God having sex with a woman be more “cherished” than a “son”, such as Adam, who was reportedly made out of clay (in fact, if one thinks about it for a minute, making a person out of clay is rather more impressive than the alternative). Finally, what’s the big deal about the death of the clerics’ Jesus – when within a few days (at least according to the myth) he was whisked away to the never-never land of eternal life? In summary, he didn’t die, there was nothing special about his birth, punishing him would have been a travesty of justice, Adam and Eve didn’t sin, and neither did the rest of us!

In the above, I said that only “few people” have commented on such nonsensical ideas of “love”, but if you’ll search, Dear, you’ll find that there have been quite a few. One of the best is the following from the ex-preacher Dan Barker, in his book *Losing Faith in Faith*:

I do understand what love is, and that is one of the reasons I can never again be a Christian. Love is not self denial. Love is not blood and suffering. Love is not murdering your son to appease your own vanity. Love is not hatred or wrath, consigning billions of people to eternal torture because they have offended your ego or disobeyed your rules. Love is not obedience, conformity, or submission. It is a counterfeit love that is contingent upon authority, punishment, or reward. True love is respect and admiration, compassion and kindness, freely given by a healthy, unafraid human being.

But the above evidence for John’s loose screws is minor compared to the mind-twisting junk in the rest of what he wrote. First, John warns us not to love strawberry milkshakes, for “anyone who loves the world is a stranger to the Father’s love.” Okay, I’ll try to suppress my emotion; I’ll tell myself over and over again that I hate strawberry milkshakes – maybe that’ll work – but I doubt it! Now what am I to do? Oh, there it is: I’m to do “God’s will”. What’s that? Oh, now I see: according to both the Old and New Testament, the number one rule is to love God, but John added “the love I speak of is not our love for God”; so “God’s will” must be what the Christian clerics listed as the number two commandment: love one another.

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Okay, John, I've got you on that one. And the only other piece is: "God is love". Okay, gimme a minute while I put the pieces together: 1) Don't love what you really love, 2) and it's not "love God", which – with "God is love" – would yield "Love love", but 3) "love [verb] one another", so that with 4) "God is love" [noun], therefore 5) "God [noun or verb?] one another". Hello? Let me try it again. The clerics claim that Jesus said "Love thy enemy." John tells us "God is love." So putting the two together we get "God thy enemy". Hmm... maybe some punctuation is missing. Ahh... there it is! It should be written: "God: thy enemy"!

Dear, maybe you see some of the reason why I remind myself when I'm walking: *love is an overused word*. As a noun, as a minimum, 'love' needs an adjective; as a verb, as a minimum, 'love' needs a object; as John uses the word 'love', it's meaningless: somehow or other, we're not to love one another, we're to God one another! It reminds me of the song, from a few years back, entitled "What's love got to do with it?" I can't help feeling that a better song could be derived from the title: "What's God got to do with it?"!

But if all of the above seems to be too general and too "esoteric" for you, Dear, let me give you an example, from closer to home, that may better convey what I'm trying to say. The example that I'm thinking about is the worst next-door neighbor that I ever had. He was a cleric of I-don't-know-what religion (maybe he was a Baptist or an Episcopalian). But I do know that he was an inconsiderate, incompetent, fool! Every month or so, he would have about 30 "church leaders" over to his house, totally destroying the peace and quiet of the neighborhood: with 20-or-so cars parked on the streets, blocking people's driveways; with the noise and the crowd in his backyard, destroying the serenity in our backyard; and with the noise at around midnight (when the "parishioners" left) awakening the other neighbors, who had to get up to go to work at 5 in the morning. And no doubt every Sunday he preached: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

I remember one night that I awoke (at about 1 AM) to enormous banging, realized what it was, and telephoned his house:

"Is that banging coming from your house?"

"Yes", his wife answered, "The Reverend is finishing one of the rooms downstairs."

“At one o’clock in the morning! You’ve got to be kidding” is all I said – and then hung up.

And there were a huge number of other examples that support my judgment that he was the worst neighbor I ever had, from the way he permitted his house and yard to deteriorate (I guess doing manual labor was below his priestly status) – thereby deteriorating the value of the neighborhood – to the noise he made (playing “hymns” on his portable “boom box”) and permitted his son to make, practicing the drums! My summary statement: if this Christian priest practiced “love thy neighbor as thyself”, then he must have hated himself – but more likely, he was just plain stupid.

But, Dear, the above stupidity (including commanding people to love) is trivial compared with the stupidity of another statement that at least two of the writers of the New Testament (with the names of “Matthew” and “Luke”, although it’s unknown who they were) allege that their Jesus made. At *Matthew* 5, 43, such stupidity appears as:

You have learned [Jesus reportedly said] that they were told, “Love your neighbor, hate your enemy.” But what I tell you is this: Love your enemies...

And I consider this commandment to “love your enemies” stupid not because it’s another commandment to feel an emotion, not because it’s a commandment to feel opposite from your likely emotion of hatred toward an enemy, but because without amplification of its meaning and examination of its limits, it’s a commandment that’s meaningless – which is a statement that I acknowledge also requires amplification.

Toward this “amplification”, Dear, let me first point out that the idea of loving one’s enemy (where ‘enemy’ normally means “someone who hates another and wishes or tries to injure him”) predates Christianity by at least 2,000 years. Further, earlier statements of this idea are much more meaningful. Let me give you some examples:⁵

From the Akkadian Councils of Wisdom, the ancient Babylonian civilization that existed ~2,000 BCE:

⁵ These quotations are from the web pages at <http://www.unification.net/ws/theme144.htm> and at <http://www.skeptical-christian.net/articles/love-your-enemy.html>, the latter compiled by Edward T. Babinski.

Do not return evil to your adversary. Requite with kindness the one who does evil to you. Maintain justice for your enemy. Be friendly to your enemy.

And from three religions/philosophies whose founders lived ~500 years before Jesus:

Taoism: “Return love for hatred.”

Zoroastrian: “Lord God, may I strive to make him who is our enemy, a friend; to make him who is wicked, righteous; to make him who is ignorant, learned.”

Buddhism: “Let us live happily, not hating those who hate us. Let us therefore overcome anger by kindness, evil by good, falsehood by truth... In this world, hate never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate. This is the law, ancient and inexhaustible.”

Maybe you agree, Dear, that those statements make sense. In essence they say: try to help those who are trying to hurt you, try to get them to correct their errors, try to educate them – for your own benefit!

But the idiot who wrote “Love your enemies” (the cleric “Matthew”, almost certainly a Jew who probably lived in Alexandria and had available to him the “wisdom literature” of all societies in the astounding library at Alexandria) obviously totally misread the message: instead of appreciating the idea that there is benefit to you if you can get your enemy to “smarten up”, instead of seeing that the ancient idea was to try to help your enemy, so he would eventually help you, the clown Matthew apparently thought that the idea was to help your enemy to hurt you!!

You can see Matthew’s misunderstanding (of the ancient principle of trying to correct your enemy’s errors) by the other stuff he concocted about how to help your enemy to hurt you. This idiocy is from the stupid “Sermon on the Mount” (which as I’ll show you in **Qx** almost certainly was never delivered by Jesus). Matthew’s concoction of this “Sermon” was then apparently copied by Luke; it’s nowhere else in the New Testament or in the Gnostic literature. Let me quote some of it (starting at *Matthew 5, 39*).

Do not set yourself against the man who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him your left. If a man wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well... There must be no limit to your goodness...

Balderdash! Jabberwocky! What there seems to be “no limit to” is the clerics’ lunacy! This isn’t what “the ancients” meant by loving those who hate you. They didn’t say “help your enemies to hurt you”! They meant “help your enemies, so they won’t hurt you”!

As I’ve urged you before, Dear, please “Look at the limits”. That is, in any argument, look at limiting cases; see if something makes sense “in the limit”. For this idiotic stuff from Matthew, the limit reveals lunacy: if someone sues you for your property, give it to him; if someone rapes your wife, offer him your daughter; if someone wants to kill you, offer him a knife and your bare throat; if someone wants ‘whatever’, then ‘whatever’. It’s totally crazy!

But, opine some (e.g., the pacifists), eventually your enemy will see the error in his ways. Really? Offer Hitler Czechoslovakia and we’ll have “peace in our time”? Offer a rapist your daughter and he won’t rape your granddaughter? It’s wrong, Dear, don’t buy it. The “commandment” to “love your enemies” is so blatantly idiotic that it astounds me that it wasn’t corrected, thousands of years ago, as a typo! The poet (and philosopher) William Blake (1757-1827) said it well: “He who loves his enemies betrays his friends.”

I agree with Blake. To see why, Dear, think of the enemies that those of my generation fought – and were wounded and killed, trying to protect us (especially from the Nazis and the Communists). The Nazis’ stupidity was to proclaim (and then put into practice) the principle (which is the same principle that was promoted by the Hebrews, as described in the Old Testament) that they belonged to a “superior race”. The Nazis used this principle to “justify” slaughtering Jews. The Communists’ stupidity (similar to stupidity that I’ll later show you is promoted in the New Testament and in the Book of Mormon) was contained in Marx’s asinine principle “from each according to his abilities; to each according to his need”; applying this principle, the Communists brought their society’s development to a halt, not seeing that people in such a society would have no incentive to produce, that there is no objective standard to measure “need”, and that the result would be (and was) an enormous, inefficient, and dictatorial bureaucracy that busied itself in distributing fewer and fewer goods to the “needy” – and of course the bureaucrats concluded that their own needs were substantial (for automobiles, summer homes, and all the best consumer goods).

These “enemies”, the Nazis and the Communists, were especially our enemies because both groups planned to force their stupid ideologies on everyone. And the Christian and Mormon clerics’ have their Jesus advocate that we are to love such enemies?! No, Dear, please don’t: maybe that’s done in the clerics’ dream world, but in the real world, it’s called treason! In our society, “loving your enemies” is punishable by death! As Blake said, if you love your enemies, you betray your friends – and in the cases described, you would desecrate the graves of those who died trying to help you. Instead of following the stupid advice to love your enemies, Dear, I would urge you to evaluate what the stupid cleric Matthew obviously misread from at least 2,000 years earlier: don’t help your enemies hurt you, help them to smarten up, so they’ll stop hurting you – even, if necessary, as a last resort, “smarten them up” by defeating their armies!

And as if the double bind promoted by the clerics’ Jesus of loving one’s enemy weren’t enough, the clerics’ Jesus then put his followers in a triple bind! As maybe I mentioned before, the clerics rarely have their Jesus make direct statements, apparently preferring to confuse his followers with parables. But even his most simple-minded followers (such as Paul and John and Matthew) must have been horribly confused when allegedly he told his followers about the parable of a king (interpreted to be Christ or God) who had returned from a long journey. The punch line of this parable was not “love thy enemy” but (according to *Luke 19, 27*):

But as for those enemies of mine who did not want me [Jesus or God] for their king, bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.

Yes, sir: if this is how to “love one’s enemies”, we’re talkin’, here, about real “tough love”. But it’s even tougher on the simple minded Christians and Mormons who are trying to follow this leader: first he commands them to have an emotion (to love), then he commands them to love their enemies (an emotion contrary to their feelings), and then he shows them how to love their enemies: slaughter them!

And if you think that I’ve misinterpreted this parable, Dear, then please think more generally about what the clerics have their Jesus teach. They write that he taught “love thy enemies”. He then identifies (or, better, the clerics identify) his “enemies”: those who don’t believe that he’s the son of god (i.e., those who refuse to pay the clerics for running their con game). So, what’s proposed for these “enemies”? Are they shown “love”? Are they

told that, even though people such as your grandmother and I are their “enemies”, we’ll get all “the goodies”, like everlasting life in heaven, just as do all his friends? No! We’re the enemies. We’re to be sent to hell, and we’ll have our toenails torn off (or whatever) for eternity. This is showing “love” for one’s enemies? What it really shows is a religion that’s totally bananas!

Again, Dear, please consider the stupidity of this stuff. First is the stupidity of trying to force an emotion with a “commandment” (i.e., to use left-brain authoritarianism, replete with left-brain words, to force a right-brain synthesis or feeling, which seems to be most responsive to pictures). Next is the stupidity of commanding people to love their enemies. And then, illustrating how to show love to your enemies: slaughter them; torture them for eternity in hell!

Dear, it’s total stupidity – and it hasn’t a hope in hell of working. For example, a Christian or a Mormon may be commanded by the religion’s entire authoritarian hierarchy to “love thy neighbor”, and his or her left brain may understand perfectly the words “love thy enemy”, but if in his right brain he sees the picture of when his neighbor raped his wife (or if in her right brain she sees the picture of her neighbor seducing her husband), then I guarantee that underneath any Christian or Mormon veneer of “love” is pure, unadulterated hate – and no amount of commanding will alter this emotion. Thus, such a Christian or Mormon will be stuck in a double bind, one source of which is the stupidity to try to “command” a person’s feelings.

Further, Dear, it’s not the clerics’ commandments, but the person’s feelings that are right. In later chapters, I’ll show you more of the stupidities in Christian (and Mormon) teachings, but here let me focus on just one of their teachings, to show you what I mean that “the feelings are right”. Think again of the guy who hates his neighbor because his neighbor raped his wife – yet the clerics’ Jesus tells him to love his neighbor. The clerics’ Jesus further admonishes: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” What stupidity!

Dear, without judgments, without thoughts, humans degenerate to the basest animals, for which the only remaining principles are “might makes right” and “eat or be eaten”. Even dolphins apparently “judge” that there’s value in being kind to one another; even monkeys recognize the value in ostracizing those who aren’t kind to one another. Dear, if one of my neighbor rapes my grandchild, I trust that you will support my judgment that

* Go to other chapters *via*

such a neighbor is wrong, my emotion to hate such a neighbor, and my plan to do what I can (within the law) to punish such a neighbor – if for no other reason than to be kind to other humans (for example, another neighbor’s child, who may have been the rapist’s next victim).

But that’s enough (too much?) for now. To “turn these two chapters off”, let me show you what I actually review for “K” and “L” when I’m walking:

***K:** Be kind, if you can, but be careful: apply kindness with keenness – sometimes it’s kindest to be cruel.*

***L:** Love: an overused word. Look at what you mean: “Love everything” means “be aware”! “Love God” with “God is Love” means “Love love”! “Love your enemies” means “Love what you hate” – it’s treason – and laughable – were it not for the double binds that such ludicrousness has led to.*

In this, by “love everything”, I’m reminding myself of the “poem” that I wrote a half a century ago (and showed you in the Preface) and that contains (or should have contained!):

You’re born and you die,
So if you can, try
To love everything...

That is, I now see that what I must have meant by “love everything” was “be aware.”

When I’m walking, I also remind myself in “L” with ideas that I’ve already demonstrated to you:

“Look at the limits – and the outliers.”

For example, I showed you how I used “look at the limits” in the “limit arguments” of **J**, and way back in **B**, I tried to show you the value of looking at “outlying” data points (in particular, the heroism displayed by so many people). In this chapter, too, I looked at some limits, e.g., be aware that even love should have limits and realize that, in the limit, religious “love” is the love of egomaniacs and narcissists. Similarly, Dear, reading, too, should be limited: get some exercise!

* Go to other chapters via