



SERVANT-LEADERSHIP, REGENERATIVE LOVE, AND FORGIVENESS

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SERVANT-LEADERSHIP — “NONE DARE CALL IT RELIGIOUS?”

Christine Wicker, a senior religion reporter for *The Dallas Morning News*, captures an intriguing aspect of the spirit of Robert Greenleaf and the servant-leadership movement he created in her essay, *Seeking the Soul of Business*. Wicker observes that “None dare call it religious! But a management philosophy catching on at companies across America sounds so much like religion that adherents are sometimes at pains to make the difference clear. This is spirituality. Ethics. Values. Common sense. And market imperative, they say” (Spears, 1988, p. 246). But not necessarily the domain of religion.

The prologue to Wicker’s essay states that Wicker is writing a book on “individualistic spirituality, a trend that University of Chicago church historian, Martin Marty calls one of the three greatest changes happening in American religion today” (Spears, 1988, p. 247).

It is important to note that there is indeed an elementary rebirth of the power and practicality of love as incorporated, for instance, in Greenleaf’s servant-leadership writings as well as other writings in a variety of fields perhaps best described as a rise of consciousness or “individual spirituality.” But it is important to note that this rebirth of the power of love is not led by any specific religious organizations. In fact, the reference to religion is placed in the context of honoring both the individual person’s identity and the collective’s choice to pursue wholeness within the context of relig-



ion, or outside that context. For instance, though the image of Christ washing the feet of his disciples was a central image to Greenleaf regarding the power, beauty, and love evoked by servant-leadership, Greenleaf did not impose his own personal beliefs on others, and in fact encouraged a graceful, open sense of mutuality for humanity as a whole, regardless of religious tradition. In later life Greenleaf often lived in community as a Quaker, and was blessed with an iconoclastic, often countercultural persona. He appeared to foresee and thus discard the heavy baggage religious, gnostic, atheistic, or even irreligious biases and ideological colorations often introduce, and he forwarded a kind of elegant and disciplined view of the regenerative powers of love for all people.

Thus, servant-leadership appears to fit comfortably in the description of individual spirituality or “individualistic spirituality,” to borrow Martin Marty’s words, as a part of a growing worldwide consciousness of the practical power of love and forgiveness both within the context of religion and outside religious contexts.

Ervin Laszlo, the founder and president of the Club of Budapest and author of the books *The Choice* and *Macroshift*, writes in the magazine *IONS Noetic Sciences Review*, March-May, 2002, No. 59, p. 9, that “Behind the global cacophony of terrorism, war, social, economic, and ecological upheaval, something else is happening. A quiet but significant groundswell of consciousness is arising perhaps just in time to save us a sustainable niche on this still-beautiful planet.”

Laszlo adds:

Perhaps the most promising aspect of the people involved in this groundswell of consciousness is their spirituality. This need not mean adherence to a formal religion or organized church. It can be an inner-directed attitude, a search for personal identity and meaning in life. Spirituality unlike religion is a private matter, penetrating the relationship between the individual and the cosmos. Unlike religion, it does not require a particular place for its exercise, nor does it require a priesthood. Its temple is the mind of the individual, and its altar is the state of consciousness that comes about through deep meditation and prayer, art and literature in



their many forms and the remarkable fact that science is evolving in a holistic way of thinking about the world. (IONS, March-May, 2002, pp. 10, 14-15)

Laszlo also reports that “addressing a joint session of Congress in Washington in February of 1991, Czech writer-president Vaclav Havel said,

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better. . . . and the catastrophe towards which this world is headed—the ecological, social, demographic, or general breakdown of civilization—will be unavoidable. (IONS, March-May, 2002, p. 15)

Laszlo, however, while admitting that “Havel’s view is well taken,” writes,

but it is not a ground for pessimism. The breakdown of civilization is not unavoidable: Our consciousness can be evolved. In a significant number of people it is evolving already. If each of us would evolve his or her consciousness, today’s stream of what I call “Holos-consciousness” would swell into a mighty tide that could change the world. (IONS, March-May, 2002, p. 15)

Robert Owens Scott, editor of the magazine *Spirituality & Health*, which deals with the soul-body connection, expressed similar sentiments in the magazine’s Spring 2001 edition about a cultural revolution he too sees taking place:

Two years ago, we founded this magazine on a simple premise. Namely, that all of us are living in an era of such profound and hopeful change that it is not an exaggeration to call it a renaissance. The word, of course, means “rebirth.” What’s being reborn is our sense of ourselves as spiritual beings, deeply connected and open to one another and to something greater than ourselves. These are exciting times, and whether that’s a blessing or a curse is up to us. The first step in realizing our potential may lie in recognizing what’s going on around us. (p. 1)



UNLEASHING THE AMAZING POWERS OF LOVE

Peter Block, a supporter of servant-leadership and a well-known business consultant and author, is quoted by Wicker about the religious aspects of servant-leadership and Robert Greenleaf's philosophy. Wicker tells the story about Block, a Jew, who was once complimented after a speech dealing with servant-leadership and told he sounded like a good Christian. His reply was, "I'm just trying to figure life out." And then he added the telling words so many people feel about servant-leadership: "It's pure pragmatism for me" (Spears, 1988, p. 247).

Individual spirituality and servant-leadership are founded upon a very simple, yet profound basis—to wit: the expansion of the power of our love and the respect it builds in our relationships with others. It assumes that we are here in this time and space experience to love and serve and that the only thing that really matters is that we love each other.

Unfortunately, the expansion of our love is conditioned by differences of religion, nationality, race, tribe, gender, cultures, skin color, social class, money, ego, politics, *ad infinitum*. Depak Chopra writes that only when one "drops the terrific burdens and encumbrances of defensiveness, resentment and hurtfulness, can we become lighthearted, carefree, joyous and free" (1994, p. 61). That is not an intricate concept. Love is very learner-friendly.

The notion of deep learning presents itself: learning that only love and forgiveness have any chance of ridding our human ego of its many judgments, criticisms and hatreds that divide humanity.

Dr. Gerald G. Jampolsky writes:

If we love, we tend to forgive, and forgiveness is the vehicle for changing our perceptions and letting go of our fears, condemning judgments and grievances. We need to remind ourselves constantly that love is the only reality there is. Anything we perceive that does not mirror love is a misperception. Forgiveness, then, becomes the means of correcting our misperceptions; it allows us to see only the love in others and ourselves and nothing else. (1979, p. 65)



The more we expand love and forgiveness, the more we realize their practical power.

When I was in my first year of college many years ago, student attendance was required at weekly chapel services. At that time I had never been a member of any church. I found, however, that I enjoyed these services. At one of these chapel events an elderly preacher rose to speak. After surveying the student body, he opened his sermon by quietly saying, “Never criticize.” He paused, took his time to again view his audience, and quietly repeated his admonition: “Never criticize.” He then suddenly pounded the podium with a very loud thud of the flat of his hand (awakening many students in the process) and thundered the words, “No, never!” Most of us were very startled.

His message was elementary: “The power of love in your life is what you are. So don’t compromise it by negative judgments, resentments and criticisms.”

Although those thoughts didn’t sink in right away, the seeds were planted.

I have come to believe, after 14 years in our nation’s government, that eventually we all must learn that we need an ability, indeed, perhaps better referred to as a response-ability, to drop our negative judgments, defensiveness, resentments, hatreds and criticisms that serve only to short-circuit our natural gifts of love. We do, indeed, need to remind ourselves constantly that love is the only reality there is and that we are all here to love and serve. Conscious thinking often sees only distorted visions. Love is ever true. The author Joel Goldsmith writes, “We are admonished to withhold all judgments because if we judge by appearances the world is filled with skies that sit on mountains and car tracks that come together” (Goldsmith, 1961, p. 63). Most people wouldn’t go so far as Goldsmith, nor would they agree with Shakespeare’s Hamlet that “nothing is good nor bad but thinking makes it so.” But we all know in our better moments that much of what we see is illusions of our mind and that there is so much bad in the best of us and so much good in the worst of us it hardly behooves any of us to busily



judge and criticize each other, lest we become and be known, over time, as all judgment but not much of love.

Each time we catch ourselves criticizing and hating, our better selves remind us that someone so taught us as a child and that only the miracles of love and forgiveness can undo it.

That seems to me to be what Robert Greenleaf was also writing about when he urged employers to abandon command and control leadership for a servant-leadership that validates the worth and dignity of employees with a love that was free of criticisms, commands, and judgments. Greenleaf writes:

Love is an indefinable term and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. But it begins, I believe, with one absolute condition: unlimited liability. As soon as one's liability for another is qualified to any degree, love is diminished by that much. (1977, p. 38)

Unlimited liability to love, of course, is unconditional love.

This kind of love is usually held up for ridicule in the "real world." Good for poets and philosophers, dreamers, perhaps, but not practical. But this is beginning to change.

In Larry Spears' interview of Margaret Wheatley he mentioned that in her book *Leadership and the New Science* she wrote, "Love in organizations is the most potent source of power we have available." Spears then asked her, "What do you think that servant-leaders inside our many organizations can do to unleash love in the workplace?"

Wheatley replied:

It's simple: just be loving. Why has expressing love become such a problem when it is a fundamental human characteristic? This is where I think we have overanalyzed and overcomplexified something that is known to everyone alive. Babies know how to unleash love. (Spears & Noble, 2005, p. 62)

We should all pause to let Wheatley's words sink in. Wheatley is not a



philosopher. She is a business consultant of renown. She gives practical, common-sense advice to business people who seek her help and advice. Well, there it is. In practical, common-sense English. There's nothing mysterious about love. It is simple. It is practical. It is a "fundamental human characteristic." Yet it is too often imprisoned deep within us.

Robert Browning wrote:

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise from outward things. There is an inmost center in us all where truth abides in fullness—and to know rather consists in finding a way whence the imprisoned splendor from within may escape, than in effecting entry of a light supposed to be without. (1948, p. 431)

Yet we all seem to "seek without" for the great truths, for our light. But, alas, our light is never without. It is the imprisoned splendor of love and compassion always within and always ready for its miraculous use. It binds us together with all mankind, always reminding us that wholeness is indeed our natural state.

Albert Einstein, perhaps the greatest scientist of the 20th century, put it this way:

A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature. ([http://en.wikiquote.org/Albert Einstein](http://en.wikiquote.org/Albert_Einstein))

We all have to free ourselves from the prison of our illusions and the insecurities of our freedom by simply being still and quiet and widening our circle of compassion and love so that at least as we enter old age—and hopefully before—we can free that imprisoned splendor of love within us.

We all know better than we do. If we knew "back then" what we know



now, our circles of compassion would be wider. Yet, life is nothing if not a learning process. There is an old German saying that “we get too soon old and too late smart.” But one never gets too old to continue learning. The opportunity to love and serve is always there.

Lama Surya Das, one of the foremost teachers of Buddhism in the West, quotes Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in *Insecurity of Freedom*, as follows:

One ought to enter old age the way one enters the senior year at a university. The years of old age may enable us to attain the high values we failed to sense, the insights we have missed, the wisdom we ignored. They are indeed formative years, rich in possibilities to unlearn the follies of a lifetime, to see through inbred self deceptions, to deepen understanding and compassion, to widen the horizon of honesty, to redefine the sense of fairness. Pablo Casals at the age of 93 was practicing the cello five or six hours a day. Someone asked him, “Pablo, why are you still practicing the cello?” Casals answered: “Because I think I’m making progress.” (Lama Surya Das, “Ripening Over Time: The Art of Becoming a Wise Elder,” *Spirituality & Health*, February 2006, p. 85)

THE WONDERFUL GIFTS OF RELIGION?

The wonderful gift of religion is the message that we are spiritual in nature. A major drawback, however, to religion is expressed in the magazine *Spirituality & Health* by Elizabeth Lesser, co-founder of the Omega Institute, the nation’s largest holistic education and retreat center. Lesser writes:

We’ve had thousands of years of rule-based theologies that demand love and proscribe hatred, envy and inhumanity. (2001, Spring, p. 37)

In response to that accusation her close friend Huston Smith, author of *The World’s Religions*, asked,

How much of the damage you are thinking of was due to Christianity and



how much to the fact that the people who perpetrated it happened coincidentally to be Christian and behaved in the way greedy and power hungry people tend always and everywhere to behave? (p. 38)

To which Ms. Lesser replied:

But I don't think it is enough to say that the shadow side of a religion is activated coincidentally; that the greedy and power hungry people within a certain religion would be greedy and power-hungry regardless of religious affiliation. I think that religions have to take more responsibility than that.

Elizabeth Lesser and Huston Smith are great friends and have a strong mutual respect for each other's views. And so, religions can be good or bad and at times ridiculous and so can people pursuing spirituality independent of religion. Obviously, good teachers like Elizabeth Lesser and Huston Smith abound within or without formal religion—teachers who strive even to free their students of the teacher's own philosophical preferences. Condemnation of a given religion is like condemnation of the self: it is worthy, if received well and authentically acted upon. Let's take, for example, two of the major religions of the ancient and contemporary world, and one ideology. In the name of both Islam and Christianity, and what many call "the new religion," an ideology called Science, dastardly deeds have been perpetrated throughout history. Now let's extend this thought. Both within and outside the context of Islam, Christianity, and Science, whole cultures have perpetrated massacres, mass bloodshed, genocide, and human atrocities of every form. Even so, there is a sense of illumination that accompanies all great spiritual traditions, as well as all great cultural traditions, and yes, all great ideas, which we might also call great dreams. And within such traditions, ideas, and dreams, a transcendent understanding tends to rise from the ashes of our human frailties and failures.



UNCONDITIONAL LOVE THRIVES WITHOUT ORGANIZATION, RULES OR REGULATIONS

Many religions, however, still have significant problems in conditioning love on the basis of religious affiliation. Neither can many religions affirm other religions as authentic ways of salvation or liberation on their own terms. History is replete with thousands of years of religious discrimination between and within religions as well as against those who profess no religious faith. Even in this twenty-first century there remains a great deal of misunderstanding, hatred, vengeance and the conditioning of love by those who lead or profess to represent world religious faiths. In addition, there is little effort among the world's religious leaders to address what Elizabeth Lesser refers to as that "shadow side" of religion. Why haven't religious leaders sought an international body of religions that would at least affirm the free flow of love and the sanctity of human life as everyone's right—especially the world's war-ridden children's? Who is at fault for this elementary neglect?

A friend of mine recently was part of a group that traveled to Israel and to the West Bank of Palestine to view the walls the Israelis have built to shut out the Palestinians. The group heard from Dr. Jad Isaq, a Palestinian who heads the Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem; he talked about the pain of being a Palestinian whose land has been stolen. Here is what my friend reported that Dr. Isaq said to this group of Christians:

Dr. Isaq said he had no use for religion. He said he sees three kinds of religious people: Christians—like George Bush who woke up one morning and said he dreamed that God told him to invade Iraq. So he did. And next week he might say God told him to invade Iran. Jewish—like Ariel Sharon who said this is the land God gave him, so it's all right for him to take it from the Palestinians. Muslims—like the suicide bomber who does not like what is going on so he kills himself and others with him. Between these three crazies, I cannot live. If these are the three religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, then to hell with religion.



I do not validate Dr. Isaq's conclusions as to who are the "crazies" in the Middle East. There are enough of them to share the blame. But I do agree with Rabbi Michael Lerner "that we cannot continue using violence against violence as a way to end violence" (*Tikkun*, March/April 2006, p. 11).

HONORING THE HISTORY OF THE GREAT SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

I also believe that Robert Greenleaf, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, Bishop Tutu and many new leaders of the 20th Century have honored the history of the world's great spiritual traditions by demonstrating that the regenerative power of love can nullify vengeance and terrorism. There is an old saying that "he who uses vengeance must remember to dig two graves: one for his enemy and one for himself."

That, I believe, is the strong and unified message capable of being delivered by all of our great religions to the "crazies" of this beleaguered world who espouse terrorism in all of its sophisticated and not so sophisticated forms and guises. If political and religious leaders fail to speak out about the regenerative power of love as a natural antidote to vengeance, then others who are individually spiritual must do so. Love, in the final analysis, is simply treating people with respect, that is, validating their worth and dignity. The roots of violence are always found in disrespect and despair.

In an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* on February 23, 2006 entitled "Roots of Violence Found in Disrespect," staff writer Jane Lampman writes:

Respect is one of the most widely shared yearnings among human beings, and it touches the emotional core of people in profound ways. Respect given can be powerful and transformative. The results of respect withheld can be painful or even explosive. At a time when civility seems to be diminishing, some see the power of mutual respect as a way to break through cultural stereotypes and religious prejudices.



Lampman also quotes Akbar Ahmed, professor of Islamic studies at American University in Washington, who points out:

Cultures are rubbing against each other more than ever before in history. We need to be sensitive to. . . respect, honor, dignity, and how they are viewed in different societies.

Obviously, the simple power of love can demonstrate respect for a person who may be viewed as an enemy. Lampman quotes Rabbi Marc Gopin, director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, as stating that when such a demonstration of the power of love occurs “it’s a shock” and “respect can have remarkable effects.”

It’s not as though the world has not recently experienced national leaders who have embraced and successfully used the practical power of love in meeting hatred, vengeance and terrorism. Examples abound in leaders such as Gandhi of India who championed love, non-violence, forgiveness and peaceful civil disobedience as a response to unjust laws in successfully leading India to a largely bloodless revolution against England.

And a youthful-hearted though physically aged Nelson Mandela, the liberator of South Africa from brutal terrorism and apartheid, followed Gandhi’s advice and used the power of love and nonviolence to convince President F. W. de Klerk of South Africa to announce to a startled world that the best interests of the white community of South Africa would be served by negotiating themselves out of the exclusive control of political power. Martin Luther King also replicated Gandhi’s reliance on the power of love and forgiveness in his successful civil rights revolution in America in the 1960s. And there were many more world leaders in that brutal and bloody 20th Century who recognized the practical powers of love and that using violence against violence is no way to end violence.

We live in a fast-shrinking world of time and space. And, as Vaclav Havel expressed it, time may be running out unless there is “a global revolution in human consciousness” (*IONS*, March-May 2002, p. 15).



And today there is growing evidence of such a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness. After all, the human spirit is freer today than ever and the potential of the evolving human spirit—that imprisoned splendor within us all—is boundless. Under these circumstances, movements such as servant-leadership and individual spirituality encourage us to lead by emphasizing the amazing regenerative powers of love in all our lives.

And why not? After all, the idea is hard to escape, that we are all here to love and serve. For some, that's what life is all about. For many, the beauty of love is what makes life worth living. Everyone knows its touch, some more than others. Some in a highly conditioned form. But we all know it exists. No one has to take it on faith. It is the universal, golden rule of life that is increasingly being verified by high-quality science. No one, religious or not, can copyright love, for love crosses all the many boundaries, prejudices, religions, politics, tribes and cultures with ease.

Love sells only itself and is easily felt and identified. No broker is necessary. It validates the interconnectedness of us all.

In a real sense, no political or theological walls can be erected that fence out love. Charles Schultz, a practicing Christian and the creator of "Peanuts" and Charlie Brown, reportedly said after having taught Methodist Sunday School for ten years, "The best theology is probably no theology: Just love one another."

The story told of the well-known teaching of Hillel, the celebrated first-century rabbi for whom Jewish campus organizations today are named, illustrates this simple point. A man approached Hillel and said, "If you can teach me the whole truth of the Torah while I stand on one foot, you can make me a Jew." Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary" (Kimball, 2002, p. 131). That is simply a good description of unconditional love and it is at the center of all of our great religions and thoughts, yet is often buried in the commentaries, regulations, dogmas and cultures of organized religions or in the disorganized methodologies of thought found both within and



outside religion. Fortunately, as was previously expressed by Wheatley, it is also “a fundamental human characteristic—babies know how to unleash love” (Spears & Noble, 2005, p. 62). Is it any wonder that Hillel’s fame with young people has lasted over the centuries?

A GENTLE CHIDING OF RELIGION

It is interesting to note that even the Dalai Lama has gently chided organized religions. In a review of two of the Dalai Lama’s best-selling books, *Ethics for a New Millennium* and *The Art of Happiness* in the New York Times on October 27, 1999, Richard Bernstein quotes the Dalai Lama as stating: “I sometimes say that religion is something we can perhaps do without.” Bernstein comments: “One wonders if that is not part of his appeal, a call for a ‘spiritual revolution’ that does not depend on the idea of a supreme being. It appears the perfect way to satisfy the spiritual hunger of people living in a scientific and secular age.”

Bernstein further comments: “The Dalai Lama, refreshingly, claims no unusual spiritual powers. He identifies himself as an ordinary man, prone to the same troubles as the rest of us, but one who has learned something about conquering the impulses that make us unhappy.”

In the same article, Bernstein quotes the Dalai Lama as stating, “Generally speaking, one begins by identifying those factors which lead to happiness and those factors which lead to suffering. Having done this, one then sets about gradually eliminating those factors which lead to suffering and cultivating those that lead to happiness. That is the way. . . . Happiness comes from cultivating the traits of selflessness, generosity and compassion for others,” which gently relieves one of the burdens of judgments, criticisms, and defensiveness, hence breeding happiness.

I see these words of the Dalai Lama as part of a not-so-quiet cultural and spiritual revolution of the practical powers of love—perhaps, part of the reinvention of spirituality that also includes what Greenleaf was referring to in his views of servant-leadership that aim to simply validate the worth and dignity of people. How refreshing.



A story told by Huston Smith in *Spirituality & Health* (Spring 2001, p. 38) is revealing about the Dalai Lama's refusal to judge others. Mr. Smith writes that a Hindu swami tried several times to get the Dalai Lama to say that Buddhism was a more peaceful religion than Christianity. When the Dalai Lama dodged the questions and it was put to him a third time, the Dalai Lama said, "If I say anything against someone else's religion, the Buddha would scold me"—with a twinkle in his eye, no doubt.

This simple message that our judgments (such as the one proposed to the Dalai Lama) often get in the way of, and dilute, our love is a big part of the driving force of the individual spirituality renaissance which Greenleaf, Block, Wheatley, Laszlo, Scott and so many others appear to be articulating. We all may have separate views of life, but that doesn't mean that judgments and criticisms have to get in the way of our extending love and kindness beyond our normal limits.

The noted American poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox is quoted by Carol Zaleski in *The Christian Century* magazine (March 21, 2006, p. 35) as expressing these sentiments:

*Don't look for the flaws
As you go through life
And even though you find them
Be wise and kind, and somewhat blind,
And look for the virtues behind them.*

There is an old saying that if one has a choice of being right or kind, one should always opt to be kind. Few of us can follow that admonition. But there is wisdom in it.

In fact, one of the most self-serving things one can do for mind and body is to love others "no matter what," that is, by dismissing our judgments and criticisms that only serve to drag us down and dilute our energies.

If that sounds difficult to do, it's because as simple and as beautiful as unconditional love is, it involves changing our customary frames of refer-



ence. This is not easy. Consider Harry Emerson Fosdick's words said of Henry Ward Beecher: "No one ever felt the full force of his kindness until he did Beecher an injury" (Fosdick, 1958, p. 29). With Beecher, unkindness was met not with judgments, unkindness or vengeance, but with more love, no matter what! Obviously, Beecher had a different frame of reference than most. And it included the immense power of loving unconditionally.

Fosdick also wrote, "We can never forgive as much as we have been forgiven" (quoted in Perry, 2002, p. 27) and quoted Booker Washington as saying, "I will not let any man reduce my soul to the level of hatred" (Perry, 2002, p. 31).

Fosdick also quoted Abraham Lincoln as stating:

No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare the time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper, and the loss of self control. You have more of that feeling of personal resentment than I have. Perhaps I have too little of it; but I never thought it paid. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing. (quoted in Perry, 2002, pp. 31-32)

Lincoln obviously knew that ill judgments, criticisms and loss of one's temper serve only to dilute the power of one's love, or as the Dalai Lama might express it, serve only to produce impulses that make us unhappy.

THE BEAUTY AND SIMPLICITY OF LOVE

The beauty of love is that it is not a matter of intellect. It only has to be released. Lama Surya Das seems aware of this when he writes, "Wisdom tells me I am nothing; love tells me everything" (*Spirituality & Health*, February 2006, p. 85).

Nor is the power of love as impractical as it may seem when one realizes that quantum physics is now verifying that the physical appearances reported by our limited human receptors can be highly illusory. Indeed, subatomic particles, of which we are all constructed, act and react in accor-



dance with the attitude and feelings of the scientific observer. We are finally beginning to be aware that most people tend to be as good or as bad as we choose to see them as being.

We have begun to understand a Henry Ward Beecher, a Booker Washington, a Gandhi, a Mother Teresa, a Martin Luther King, a Will Rogers, an Albert Schweitzer, a Nelson Mandela, a Bishop Tutu, a Vaclav Havel, a Corazon “Cory” Aquino, and countless others who have discerned the elementary power of love and forgiveness when it is not conditioned by the heavy baggage of endless judgments and criticisms. Were these people saints? By no means! But they are people who have evolved in consciousness enough to realize how painful it is to their souls to let their love be conditioned by the acts or words of others.

Steven Covey, in his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, also affirms that the simple, universal principles of unconditional love

are not esoteric, mysterious or “religious” ideas. There is not one principle taught in this book that is unique to any specific faith or religion, including my own. These principles are a part of most every major enduring religion, as well as enduring social philosophies and ethical systems. They are self-evident and can easily be validated by any individual. It’s almost as if these principles or natural laws are part of the human condition, part of the consciousness, part of the human conscience. They seem to exist in all human beings, regardless of social conditioning and loyalty to them, even though they might be submerged or numbered by such conditions or disloyalty. (1989, p. 34)

Using today’s high-tech verbiage, one could say that we are all “hard-wired” for love. I am convinced that this is what fires the engines of our world’s greatest leaders. It is part of an evolution of consciousness, a transformational bridge to authenticity and service without purely personal agendas. And that’s why so many people are interested in it. In its essence, love makes complex things simple.

Dr. Dean Ornish, a cardiologist, author of the book *Love and Survival*,



is one of the many writers speaking about the practical power of love from a viewpoint of the complexities of medicine and new science. He writes:

This book is based upon a simple but powerful idea: Our survival depends upon the healing power of love, intimacy and relationships. Physically. Emotionally. Spiritually. As individuals. As communities. As a country. As a culture. Perhaps even as a species. . . Love and intimacy are at a root of what makes us sick and what makes us well, what causes sadness and what brings happiness, what makes us suffer and what leads to healing. If a new drug had the same impact [as love and intimacy], virtually every doctor in the country would be recommending it for their patients. It would be malpractice not to prescribe it, yet, with a few exceptions, we doctors do not learn much about the healing power of love, intimacy and transformation in our medical training. Rather, the ideas are often ignored or even denigrated. (1998, pp. 1, 3) .

Dr. Ornish further writes,

I am not aware of any other factor in medicine that has a greater impact on our survival than the healing power of love and intimacy. Not diet, not smoking, not exercise, not stress, not genetics, not drugs, not surgery—that has a greater impact on our quality of life, incidence of illness, and premature death from all causes. (pp. 3-4)

He continues,

Put in another way, anything that promotes feelings of love and intimacy is healing; anything that promotes isolation, separation, loneliness, loss, hostility, anger, cynicism, depression, alienation and related feelings often leads to suffering, disease, and premature death from all causes. While the evidence on the relationship of psycho-social factors to illness is controversial, most scientific studies have demonstrated the extraordinarily powerful role of love and relationships in determining health and illness. (p. 29)

Ornish adds,



I am learning that the key to our survival is love. When we love someone and feel loved by them, somehow along the way our suffering subsides, our deepest wounds begin healing, our hearts start to feel safe enough to be vulnerable and to open a little wider. We begin experiencing our own emotions and the feeling of those around us. (p. 96)

LOVE AND THE POINTING FINGER OF “TOUCHY-FEELEY”

Of course, despite the growing support of the power of unconditional love, community, relationships, bonding and connectedness, there will always be doubters of the power of love as a natural cosmic law.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D., Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine and author of the book *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, addresses such doubters from the viewpoint of medicine and science. Dr. Remen cautions,

Anything that is not intellectual is seen as a weakness in this culture—the intuition, the spirit, the soul, the heart. Up until very recently, people devalued these things. It still opens one up to the pointing finger of touchy-feely. (Quoted in Ornish, 1998, p. 206)

Dr. Remen, however, adds,

But I don’t care about the pointing finger anymore. Often, people who point that finger have no idea what human strength looks like. These things that are seen as so soft are far more powerful, when the chips are down, than the ideas and the intellect, all these things we respect so much. They are what enable us to meet the events of our lives and not be trampled by them. Ideas are not as powerful as the heart and the soul. Love is more powerful than ideas. (Quoted in Ornish, 1998, p. 206)

Immediately upon the tragic occurrences of September 11, 2001, when our nation’s feelings were suddenly and catastrophically “down,” the soft values of love, community, relationships, connectedness, all immediately surfaced across America to unite and strengthen our nation. It is, indeed,



these softer values which enable us in troubled times to experience what human strength is and how important our relationships and connectedness with each other are.

It appears at times that those involved in the delivery of health care often go to great lengths in order not to talk about love and affection in healing. Somehow, the words love and intimacy are hard to say, for fear, I suppose, of that pointing finger.

Dr. Deepak Chopra, in his book *Unconditional Life*, tells the story of a hospital's treatment of premature babies. One group of babies was given normal treatment in the hospital's intensive care unit for neonates. The other was scheduled for fifteen minutes of special attention, in which someone reached in through the portholes of their sealed cribs to stroke them and gently wiggle their arms and legs. Dr. Chopra reported that

the result of such a simple addition to the usual hospital formula was striking. The stroked babies gained 47 percent more weight per day than the control group; they were more alert and started to act like normally delivered babies sooner. Finally, they left the hospital a week ahead of schedule, allowing the authors of the study to note a savings of \$3,000 per infant. . . . Here, the contrast between life and antilife seems almost too obvious to point out. Scientific medicine has reached the stage where it is not respectable to call stroking by its right name—much less love and affection. Stroking has to go by the Orwellian “tactile/kinesthetic stimulation.” (Chopra, 1992, pp. 14-15)

Dr. Chopra also told in his book *Quantum Healing* the interesting story of an Ohio University study of heart disease in the 1970s that was conducted by feeding quite toxic, high-cholesterol diets to rabbits in order to block their arteries, duplicating the effect that the diet has on humans. Dr. Chopra reported:

Consistent results began to appear in all the rabbit groups, except for one which strangely displayed 60 percent fewer symptoms. Nothing in the rabbits' physiology could account for their high tolerance to the diet, until it was discovered by accident that the student who was in charge of



feeding these particular rabbits liked to fondle and pet them. . . . This alone seemed to enable the animals to overcome the toxic diet. (Chopra, 1992, pp. 30-31)

Dr. Chopra added that repeat experiments, in which one group of rabbits was treated neutrally while the others were loved, came up with similar results.

LOVE: THE ONE CREATIVE FORCE

Eric Butterworth tells the story of a distinguished professor of sociology who conducted a study to determine the effects on children living in an environment that was ravaged by war-like conditions and economic uncertainty. He gathered 200 young boys from the most impoverished and violent areas of Baltimore and sent a group of eager graduate students to interview them. Sadly, but not surprisingly, his researchers' evaluation of each boy's future was, "He hasn't got a chance" for success. They could see only despair ahead of them.

Twenty-five years later, another professor, intrigued by the study, conducted follow-up research to see exactly what had happened to those 200 boys. Had their lives turned out as dismally as they had feared? Surprisingly, they had not. Of the 200 original research subjects, 180 were located, and of these 180 nearly all of them had grown up to be successful, healthy, happy adults who were contributing positively to their communities.

What had happened between the time of the original research study and adulthood? The follow-up research could find only one common factor that linked all of these people together. All of them reported that they had been profoundly impacted by the same teacher. When this teacher was located, now much older, and asked to tell what remarkable things she had done to change the course of these children's lives, her eyes sparkled and her lips broke into a gentle smile. "It's really very simple," she said. "I loved those boys" (Canfield & Hansen, 1993, p. 2).

She just loved them! That was the very practical and in-common treat-



ment that teacher gave to her students that brought unanticipated success to their lives!

Some would say that to extend love unconditionally to others is weakness, a retreat from the realities of life. But it is the weak who retreat from the deep realities. Love and gentleness can only be expected from the strong. Truly successful people are aware that their primary responsibility in life is to love and serve others.

Evolving humanity is beginning to realize that anything that gets in the way of loving and serving—be it political, social, religious, tribal, racial, whatever—is a misuse of our consciousness, and, indeed, consciousness is what we are.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN

In our children's formal education, we stress all kinds of achievements to be attained, in terms of grades, athletic prowess, academic laurels, attending the finest schools, and so forth, with the implication that ultimately these effects of the world will bring important jobs, material comforts, increased social advantages, and meaning and purpose to life.

But as alluring as these achievements are, in the final analysis, they are of secondary importance for our children in terms of their experience, from mature, transparent, authentic adults, as we are here in this fragile time and space experience to love and serve humanity. The world's most revered leaders have always been servant-leaders, from Gandhi and Mother Teresa, to Robert Greenleaf and many more. This kind of a focus in life always produces people on the front lines of serving humanity!

We all might consider anew how children would react during their formative years if they were advised that their basic purpose in life, their road to true greatness, is simply to love and to forgive (themselves and others) and to serve humanity.

Perhaps children would be impressed by the very practical statement of a highly regarded and successful American football coach, Vince Lom-



bardi. Robson M. Marinho quotes Lombardi as saying, “I don’t necessarily have to like my players and partners. But, as a leader I must love them. Love is loyalty, love is teamwork, love respects dignity and individuality. This is the strength of any organization” (Marinho, 2006, p. 261).

Recognizing how powerful love is, of course, is very challenging for most of us, but giving love and forgiveness in our daily lives is not complex. It is a universal power bestowed at birth, and it is a practical necessity of life. It can be dispersed liberally or grossly limited by our own conditions or racial, religious, cultural, tribal, social, economic and many more man-made restrictions.

Consider how Martin Luther King felt about the power and accessibility of love. King wrote about greatness and simply related it to love:

Everybody can be great. . . because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love. (Quoted in Canfield & Hansen, 1993, p. 34)

Dr. George Wald, a Harvard biologist who won the Nobel Prize, writes: “What one really needs is not Nobel laureates, but love. The Nobel laureate is a consolation prize. What matters is love” (1998, p. 96).

And consider too what Martin Luther King said about terrorism, certainly the antithesis of love and service, on the night before he was assassinated:

The choice is no longer violence or nonviolence. That’s not what we’re talking about. It’s nonviolence or non-existence. Unless we all become nonviolent we are doomed. (*Tikkun*, January/February 2006, p. 46)

One only has to look at terrorism and the growing hate and vengeance that is popularized by world political leaders, our entertainment industries, news media and extremist religions, amoral philosophies and overly-reductionistic scientist-atheists to see how important King’s message of love, nonviolence and forgiveness is.



If challenged by parents and educators, children could be led to focus on how they can best use their unique talents of love and forgiveness to serve people and a frightened world. And why not? Love is natural to children, especially to very young children. A one-year-old baby will immediately give back smile for smile and love for love because that is his nature. While all children, considering conditions at birth and their early environment, may not continue to respond with love, most of them have that potential which could be brought out by parents and teachers who are not afraid to talk openly about those words *love* and *forgiveness*. Who knows how many Gandhis, Lincolns, Martin Luther Kings, Corretta Kings, Corazon Aquinos, Albert Schweitzers, Henry Ward Beechers, Desmond Tutus, Nelson Mandelas, Mother Teresas, and Robert Greenleafs are potentially within our children just waiting to be drawn forth?

THE TURNING OF VIOLENCE AND HATE INTO TOLERANCE, LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

In January of 2006, Michelle Bachelet was elected as the first woman president of Chile. She was also the first woman to rise to political prominence on her own merits rather than on the political power of her husband. Bachelet also bears her own scars from the dark years of massive human rights abuses during Pinochet's coup in 1973. Her father, an Air Force general who opposed Pinochet, died after being tortured in one of Pinochet's prisons. Bachelet and her mother were also arrested by the Pinochet government, tortured, and forced into exile. The *Chicago Tribune* reported on January 17, 2006 that at her inauguration as President of Chile,

The 54 year old pediatrician spoke on Sunday of life and healing, not death and revenge. "Violence entered my life, destroying what I loved. Because I was a victim of hate, I have dedicated my life to turn that hate into understanding, into tolerance and, why not say it, into love."

The power of love was waiting within her to be tapped. How encouraging and unique it is to hear a prominent politician, a victim of hate, dedicate her



life to “turning hate into understanding and tolerance and, why not say it, into love.”

Yes, why not say it? Again, as Margaret Wheatley asks, “Why has expressing love become such a problem when it is a fundamental human characteristic?” (Spears & Noble, 2005, p. 62). Is it not a powerful human instinct in all of us? Shouldn’t it be more popularly expressed when it is such a deep human instinct?

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

Michelle Bachelete is not your ordinary political leader. Her insights reflect a growing awareness of world leaders that forgiveness allows, indeed, encourages leaders to, using her words, turn “hate into understanding, into tolerance and, why not say it, into love.” She understands that in failing to forgive by cherishing our grievances we only dilute our most valuable resource, our power of love.

Gerald G. Jampolsky, M.D., advances the same insight in his definition of the power of forgiveness:

Forgiveness then becomes a process of letting go and overlooking whatever we thought other people may have done to us, or whatever we may think we have done to them. When we cherish grievances we allow our mind to be fed by fear and we become imprisoned by these distortions. When we see our only function as forgiveness, and are willing to practice it consistently by directing our minds to be forgiving, we will find ourselves released and set free. Forgiveness corrects the misperception that we are separate from each other, and allows us to experience a sense of unity and at-one-ment with each other. (1979, pp. 65-66)

In other words, forgiveness frees up our dormant love.

Mrs. Bachelete has found her real self, her purpose of life, and that’s good news for the people of Chile.

Desmond Tutu, the South African Anglican Bishop who helped lead opposition to apartheid and decades of black and white terrorism in South



Africa, also spoke eloquently and bravely about the power of forgiveness. After the creation of democracy in South Africa, Bishop Tutu chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was designed to grant forgiveness and amnesty for all acts of terrorism, for blacks and whites who admitted their guilt for actions committed during the South African apartheid nightmare and sought forgiveness. In Tutu's book, aptly entitled *No Future Without Forgiveness*, he writes:

Thus, to forgive is indeed the best form of self interest since anger, resentment, and revenge are corrosive of the *summum bonum*, the greatest good, communal harmony that enhances the humanity and personhood of all in the community. (1977, p. 35)

Tutu further writes:

Forgiveness is not being sentimental. The study of forgiveness has become a growth industry. Whereas previously it was something often dismissed pejoratively as spiritual and religious, now because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa it is gaining attention as an academic discipline studied by psychologists, philosophers, physicians and theologians. In the United States there is an international Forgiveness Institute attached to the University of Wisconsin, and the John Templeton Foundation, with others, has started a multimillion-dollar Campaign for Forgiveness research.

In an article entitled "A Drive to Help Others Forgive," Jane Lampman, in the January 25, 2007 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*, tells the story about the immense power of forgiveness that reshaped the life of investment banker Azim Kharmissa, whose only son, Tariq, a student at San Diego State University, was shot and killed by a 14-year old gang member as he was delivering pizzas for a part-time job. Kharmissa recounted that when he learned of his son's death, it "felt like a nuclear bomb detonated inside of me." He reported that he was filled with extreme grief for a long time but "eventually experienced a very profound vision that there were victims at both ends of the gun."



That led him to make a crucial choice of forgiveness of the life of the murderer and his family. It also led him to create an antiviolence program that measurably altered attitudes among youths in San Diego and other cities. After his son's death, Khamisa created the Tariq Khamisa Foundation to develop and hold antiviolence forums in elementary and middle schools throughout San Diego. Seeking to inspire youths to choose nonviolent alternatives for solving their differences, he invited the father of his son's killer to join him in this work. The father accepted and Khamisa asked this utterly striking question:

Would he have become my friend if I'd wanted revenge? Revenge is never the right response. Conflict will never go away, but from conflict, brotherhood and unity are possible.

How many of us would have asked such a question? It is difficult for most of us to realize how necessary it is to practice love and forgiveness in our lives. Yet we really have no choice. Sooner or later the necessity is like a clarion call: we are here to love and serve. It's really just that simple if humanity is to save itself a place on this still-beautiful planet.

The world badly needs people like Bishop Tutu, Mrs. Bachelete and Azim Kharmissa who are not afraid to speak out about the practical power of forgiveness. They are just three of those not so rare new leaders of our age who have learned not to let other people's wrath and vengeance control their actions or dilute their love or cause them to follow the road to still more vengeance.

CONCLUSION

There is an emerging global awareness in human consciousness today sparked by prophetic new and exciting voices.

These voices are grounded on a growing belief in one's individual spirituality, the wholeness of our natural state and, as Robert Greenleaf expressed it, in the simple and regenerative forces of love and forgiveness.



Common folk lived over the centuries with a simple and often hidden faith in the power of love and forgiveness, and we are all the better for their unrecorded lives that were challenged by so many counterproductive cultures, clans, dogmas and beliefs.

George Eliot seems to recognize this in the novel *Middlemarch*.

For the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

(2003, p. 838)

Growing numbers of people, worldwide, now live, however, not in faithfully hidden lives but in open and global revolutions of profound changes that challenge our clashing cultures and disparate religious and nonreligious beliefs. Increasingly, the common and caring folk see themselves, as Robert Owens expressed it, “as spiritual beings deeply connected and open to one another and to something greater than ourselves” (*Spirituality & Health*, Spring 2001, p.1).

That something “greater than ourselves” requires the granting of universal human rights for all of the people on our good earth regardless of gender, race, religion or nationality. This may be a struggle for some of our political and religious leaders, but these are values sorely needed by much of humanity. Fortunately, they are easily available to anyone through giving love and forgiveness, because these are our most fundamental human characteristics, and they are inexhaustible and easily shared. They simply require, in the words of Robert Greenleaf, that we validate the worth and dignity of the people with whom we interrelate. And remember we are here to love and serve. And love alone makes life sweet.

And the crucible of life is love. No more. No less.

Teilhard de Chardin agreed:

The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that



day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire. (quoted in Canfield and Hansen, 1993, p. 1)

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