The Salvation of Love
And
Love as Salvation

“Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”

Poems in Response to
Søren Kierkegaard's
Works of Love.
By Laurence Robert Cohen
Dedication to Silvia
The Subject of My Works of Love

For all this whole long process
Silvia was always there
As these poems I readdress
I can see her everywhere
As muse and inspiration
Motivating as first reader
I could then fulfill my intentions
Because her love has made them clear

Kierkegaard wrote in some abstraction
Yet his Works of Love contain reality
With Silvia such love's a personification
Which made true my poetic totality
She and I make this love quite tangible
The middle term gives us God's blessing
Manifest in the sensual and the spiritual
Through our love all of life reassessing

Through all this year or more
There she has always been
As the Works of Love we explored
Each poem is our love's hymn
To Silvia each poem came
Between each line a presence
Here I now pronounce her name
She is part of all in essence

We can take this as my dedication
To the miracle she brings to living
Written in my most profound affection
And in gratitude for all her giving
Acknowledgments

The page numbers in parenthesis refer to

WORKS OF LOVE SOME CHRISTIAN REELECTIONS IN THE FORM OF DISCOURSES
translation by Howard and Edna Hong, Harper and Row, New York, 1964

Richard Stivers was instrumental in the creation of this book. He suggested I read Works of Love as part of larger discussion about the salvational qualities of love in our technological milieu. I thank him for his work generally and for his discussion with me.

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Laurence Robert Cohen
Works of Love

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Eternal Debt of Love--Works of Love
Kierkegaardian Inspiration and Action
Love as Advantage or Sacrifice--Works of Love
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The Middle Term Mathematic
The Middle Term, Illumination, and Loneliness
The Mind and Body Connection and Love
Technological Purpose and the Middle Term
Who Abandons Whom?
You Shall Love
Kierkegaard’s Works of Love—Forward

“These are reflections of the works of love... That which in its vast abundance is essentially inexhaustible is also essentially indescribable in its smallest act, simply because essentially it is everywhere wholly present and essentially cannot be described”

Profound insights come from Kierkegaard
We would be wise to listen
Thoughts that take us far and wide
Where he offers us his wisdom
He says we need a leap of faith
To escape our mortal prison
It’s where we’ll find a state of grace
For our existential transition

We can transcend our conformity
In divine love and its acts
Such love comes in its enormity
And transforms existential facts
These are the facts we have not questioned
In all our life before
Yet they put us into a painful tension
Our love can calm restore

Restoration by friend Kierkegaard
Comes simple and complex
We want to choose to read each word
To see what he says next
With openness and acceptance
Such reflections don't come with ease
Still it's worth all of our persistence
With our new vision, we will feel pleased

Works of Love he named his book
The result of his Christian reflection
Where we can do more than just look
We will find love's validation
“O spirit of love, you who take nothing for your own but remind us of that sacrifice of love, remind the believer to love as he is loved, and his neighbor as himself.”

The acts of love claim no compensation
He says in his opening prayer
Love's granted by God's dispensation
It's a gift we need receive with care
Love is not a negotiation
There is no buy and sell
It asks for sincere self-renunciation
That comes from love itself

Love is narrowed by our human language
But love is in all true actions
Without that love, we can do great damage
Or make love a mere distraction
Love of neighbor is all inclusive
There are no exceptions
It is not a thought that is selective
Such love makes clear direction

When I say I love you, what do I mean?
Do I speak solely of your body?
Can I love more than you seem?
Or are my feelings shoddy?
Can our love rise and suggest
Something that is far more bold?
Return to love's quality that we oft repress
Then I love you as a soul

When we accept true love, it's God we essential seek
No matter if done passively
Through our love, the divine will speak
And will do so very actively
"For each tree is known by its fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush." Luke 6:44

Technology and science
Are both great temptations
So we fall into compliance
And are trapped in self-deception
They take our senses as totality
The material our sole condition
When our love is the true reality
By the most divine admission

When technology is all definitive
We surrender all our trust
To what is proven evidentive
Where kinesthesi a must
But love is not so tangible
So it ceases to exist
Thus life becomes quite terrible
And our false beliefs persist

It is far better to believe in love
And be badly disappointed
Then to fall to a victim of
A belief that is so disjointed
The loss of love is irredeemable
Love is one with the eternal
To surrender that's unthinkable
And really quite infernal

Love's life may be hidden
But its fruits we recognize
When the best of life is given
Then love is not disguised
Of love, we cannot find its source
   It is hidden in its depths
But that's no cause to feel remorse
   No need for deep regrets
There is alone one way to truth
   Where love can be uncovered
We know of love by its fruit
   From the works that love's discovered

The source of life and source of mind
   Are both truly hidden
But when we look, we will find
   The place where we are hidden
Where we can perceive but not possess
   The wonder of love's works
It is in the way it is manifest
   Which heals and does not hurt

If we know love’s tree by its fruits
   Is it in our word and speech?
It’s in our actions without dispute
   Does that make love too hard to reach?
These loving deeds are open-hearted
   They seek no compensation
It must be love that is imparted
   From a heart that’s pure intention

This source of love may be truly hidden
   Deep in the heart of eternity
With acts of love full freely given
   Its fruit is there in plenty
(34) Works of Love
Part II A
You Shall Love

You shall love thy neighbor as thyself sounds a pretty thing
But upon that thought we find a catch
Here’s the trepidation that phrase brings
This commandment and self-love simply do not match
To love ourselves as we love another
We simply can’t feel superior
But must feel equal to be that sort of lover
No one can be inferior

This commandment is awe inspiring
Because it’s so far reaching
So much here that is transpiring
Subtle and divine in teaching
It can transform all our perceptions
About who are our neighbors
It’s all living beings without exceptions
Although it’s humans we may favor

It will open up our hearts and minds
To other’s ways of seeing
The world is richer we will find
Than we have long been dreaming
To love our neighbor comes as adventure
Into other lands unknown
It can end all kinds of censure
Through the bonds we will have grown

This can be quite liberating
As daunting as it may feel
There is little more exhilarating
To escape what self-love seals
(40) *Works of Love*

Your *Shall Love*
The Royal Law

The *Works of Love* is a special place
   One that is self-corrective
We cannot show a false-made face
   Love makes us introspective
We learn how we can love ourselves
   And not as a narcissist
It is by loving someone else
   So in that way we’re blessed

If we love our theology
   More than we love the divine
It becomes our love’s idolatry
   Not by this is love defined
If we in romance love another
   More than we love as commanded
Love loses its divine encounter
   And in self-love we are remanded

Love so enganged can become a prison
   Entrapping our sacred existence
This royal law pardons such decisions
   With its simple, strong insistence
It frees us from our past perceptions
   Which our thoughts of love distorted
Made us believe in great deceptions
   So all acts of love were thwarted

The best of law will liberate
   When divinely framed
No need to perseverate
   Our true sense of love remains
(41) Works of Love

Your Shall Love
The Royal Law

“All things are made new”

In love, we know, all things are made new
  For all the powers of life spontaneous
Through it we’ll find what is the truth
  All else thus seems extraneous
From out of our emotional turmoil
  Love arose as something pure
It brought us balance if not control
  Of this we can be sure

Out of all our feelings, both confused and chaotic
  Can arise our love in purity
At times both intimate and cosmic
  We can love in universal unity
From our self-renunciation
  The best of self will stay
In a divine sort of delineation
  We can reach the highest in this way

“Worldly goods are inconsequential”
  These temptations are external
What’s within us is so essential
  That in faith we are original
This faith comes in its simplicity
  And not because we’re shrewd
Still we can use our ingenuity
  To protect us from what’s crude

When we feel by love possessed
  It’s an act of deepest faith
Love’s a duty by which we’re blessed
  And it offers an endless strength
(70) *Works of Love*

II B

“To love one’s neighbor is therefore eternal equality in loving”

Why do some who have religion
Feel they are superior?
You’d think that it would be forbidden
So in reverse make them inferior
When we acknowledge “love thy neighbor”
Such falsity must simply cease
In that we change behavior
And in ourselves find peace

The concept of the highest
Is steeped in our bombasity
This is often an educated bias
Devoid of our true veracity
Does learning teach to love the other?
Or just beloved pomposity
To yourself become your lover
In a well-tuned sophistry

Awash in our self-admiration
By dint of our degrees
But they give no preparation
For love’s doctrine to make free
The true state of our humanity
Is in our equality divine
We can’t see that in our urbanity
Without the love that constant shines

In the height of our intelligence
We reach the depth of our stupidity
Deny ourselves God’s presence
In our educated rigidity
You Shall Love Your Neighbor

In friendship and our love erotic
   We still need to love our neighbor
That does not make our love quixotic
   But makes such love the stronger
It's not the songs of romantic poets
   Whose love sounds narcissistic
Still we love our beloved and we show it
   To love our neighbor is not simplistic

Love returns us to our kinship
   With the essence of the divine
In that love is a form of worship
   Which we can follow all the time
Our friends and our beloved
   Can help us to this task
To love our neighbor help's recommended
   For that help we need to ask

Even if we suffer separation
   That old theme of poetic dirges
Love is still our consolation
   An answer to eternal urges
For the quality that outlasts time
   Love can grow in its perfection
When it’s the love that is sublime
   And not dependent on affection

Love they say is blind
   In such blindness we can see all
We can choose to love everyone in kind
   Into divine love we do not fall
You Shall Love Your Neighbor—Distinctions

Great distinctions can possess us
  Alone in love are we truly free
Our true selves we learn to trust
  And not to distinction's identity
Our vision opens us to all and thus
  We can glory in our equality
Love removes us from the superfluous
  Brings our sacred equanimity

With love we rise above distinctions
  Freed from the chains of hierarchy
Where in love we can seek the extinction
  Of our despair and our inner anarchy
For distinctions trap us in the circle
  Of those in our same level
However grand, our distinctions cripple
  And our soul bedevils

We are distinct in our own being
  Our positions are impermanent
Love can take us near God's seeing
  Thus our souls form our own firmament
Each of us is a vast complexity
  An eternal beauty immaterial
All formed from God's intensity
  And bound for the eternal

Our distinctions are a shibboleth
  They cannot make our true connection
It's love that leads us to express
  And enact the divine intention
When we seek power and position
To reach for a kind of celebrity
We create a heavy imposition
On loving our neighbor as reality
This is a kind of inhumanity
That we subtlety perpetrate
Our soul gets lost within our vanity
From that choice let us hesitate

When we cease to love our neighbor
Our neighbor will cease to exist
Yet our love presents no favor
It's self-condemnation will persist
We've become corrupted
When we wrap ourselves in prominence
And others may be thus obstructed
By the presence of such dominance

Distinguished corruption is an enormity
In which Kierkegaard says we're trapped
Distinguished corruption demands conformity
Where you're a traitor when you love enact
We would be scorned and buffeted
If we aspired to love our neighbor
The corrupt would say, "Your corrupted"
A point they'd be glad to belabor

When we walk with our neighbor
It's with God we also stride
True life will regain its savor
To its fulfillment we will strive
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