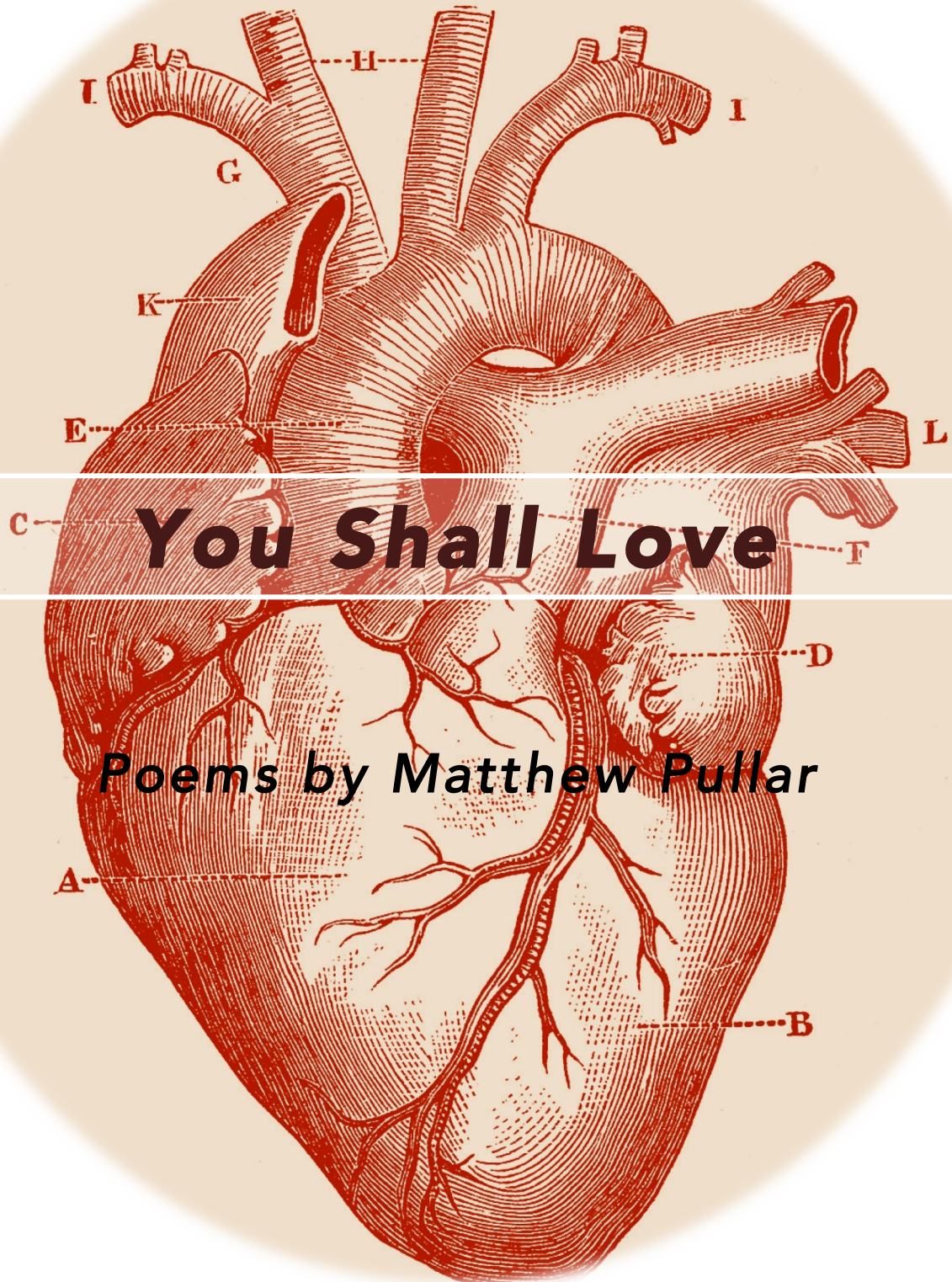


*Fig. 37.*



**You Shall Love**

**Poems by Matthew Pullar**

# ***You Shall Love***

Poems after Søren Kierkegaard's  
**Works of Love**

**Matthew Pullar**

*...love to one's neighbour is not to be sung about – it is to be  
fulfilled in reality.*

(Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*)

*You shall love your crooked neighbour*

*With all of your crooked heart.*

(W.H. Auden, "As I Walked Out One Evening")

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## Nature Boy

They say he wandered very far  
And left his home behind;  
They say he gave up kings for fools  
And land for seas and tides.

They say he wandered 'til he found  
A tree to make his throne  
And searched for friends who would betray  
And lost ones who would run.

They say he gave up all he had –  
The heavens and the earth –  
To take his place, gasping for air  
And thirsty to the bone.

They say that as he breathed his last  
He looked on what he'd made  
And, seeing how his love dispersed,  
Asked nothing in return.

And when one day – one magic day –  
He passed my way, we spoke  
Of all that he had learnt and known  
And all that I must know.

He showed me scars within his palms  
And as we spoke he wept.  
*The greatest thing you'll ever learn*  
*Is just to love, he said.*

## **What It Is**

is a giving, a direction,

a relation to God,

a movement within the eternal.

At His core is what we fail  
to be, to do, to know.

And so

we love to show

what we are not

and what He is:

relationship, community,  
righteous love, perfected from  
the start,

ever true, what light years, aeons

can't produce

within our hearts

of their accord:

love in the making, in creation,

lived and breathed

in us.

## **Fulfillment**

He remembered us in our low estate  
*His love endures forever.*

(Psalm 136:23)

The esteem of love which esteems greatly,  
sacrifices all for the receipt of nothing,  
and gives self when Self is not  
found within oneself;

the worth of love which bestows worth,  
values highly what is lowly valued,  
remembers what is passing, faint  
and lost in low estate:

sing, celebrate, imitate this love,  
which loves where love is not,  
which lifts what sinks in swamp and mire;  
and loves what it transforms.

Yet love which loves with double-tongue  
and loves that it may be esteemed,  
esteeming only when it's loved  
and gives to be returned,

which values what gives value back  
remembers only what clings to the mind,  
which sinks unless by others raised,  
and affirms the fishing soul:

*love is not love which alters when  
it alteration finds, nor is*

it love when with a hidden hand  
it clutches and gives up.

Indebted to eternity, already aeons lost in space,  
beholden to a love too vast  
for any mind or hand to grasp,  
love as you have been loved.

The law fulfilled, the highest good  
held out to you upon a tree,  
seek first the kingdom and receive  
a love which gives as love.



## **You shall love**

not to win the dash and charm the crowd  
    nor gain a victor's kiss,  
not that you may save yourself  
    from lonely night on lonely night:  
    not for all of this.

Nor that passers-by may give you love  
    or those for whom you've pined,  
not that you may earn a wreath  
    and win praises far and wide  
    for your sacrifice.

Nor in finding love shall you ask *why*  
    or put it to the test  
as though you could not give your love  
    without the promise of return;  
    no, love without this.

"More loving than beloved", you shall  
    love with all eternity's great breadth  
and breath. Love by Love suspired,  
    give love without the thought of love  
    and let Love sustain.

"Only when love is a duty, then  
    is love secure"; *then*  
is love an act of freedom, un-  
    shackled from our expectations,  
    doubts and fears. So love:

and in loving, learn the depth, the height –

see scars that were His crown;  
love given without fear of love  
or thought of throne, such love  
lives eternally.

## Reciprocity

Three times He asks: *Do you love me?*

as though –

blasphemy to think this? –

the Son of God needed

*Yes*

as the answer,

as though

the act

of coming down

to this mortal level,

this place of dependency and

loss, were

more than a giving but

a receiving too,

as though,

complete in Himself, He chose

all the same

to make Himself

the needy one.

O God,

may we

who give only as is

given to us, who look

with suspect eyes

towards each prize

of love,

may we

with palms scarred  
learn to stand  
upon the beach and ask  
like You  
with love emblazoned  
in our eyes:  
*Do you love me?*  
and to bear  
the cost there as we wait.

## Samaritans and Pharisees

Choosing a lover, finding a friend, yes, that is a long, hard job, but one's neighbour is easy to recognise, easy to find – if one himself will only recognise his duty.

(Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*)

### *I. The Question*

*Who is my neighbour?* he asks, the question  
a cleverly devised and disguised trap, and yet  
the Rabbi's too wise for the ruse.

*Who is my neighbour?* A question pregnant  
with legal categories, excuses  
why to love only this one and not that,

speaking out of the deep-hidden heart  
which renders *corban* what it craves  
and shields its own greed within Law.

The question justifies, theorises, scoffs:

*Who is my neighbour?* the mouth asks, and yet  
the neighbour stays seen and unloved.

### *II. The Response*

We love in rations, restrictions and fees,  
and choose who to love while our neighbour  
rots in the gutter, as Levites and thieves  
put flesh-needs before him  
and leave.

We love in safety, selecting our loves,  
defining our neighbours to suit us.  
We love with interest accruing and needs  
disguising themselves  
as love gifts.

The question still hangs: Who is my neighbour?  
The answer surprises the asker.  
The question is changed: not *who* now but *how*;  
the spotlight on us as  
the neighbour:

the neighbour while walking the Jericho Road  
or eating the fruit of home's safety;  
the neighbour of enemies, neighbour of friends,  
in marriage-beds and  
in the courtroom.

No longer abstract, in ledgers or books,  
no pious devotion to concept.  
No poetry, only Samaritan love,  
the duty to go and do  
likewise.

## **Theology (After John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme")**

### *I. Acknowledgement*

First of all, acknowledge Him;  
know that all good comes from Him.  
The sun, the moon are His lamp-shades,  
the sea His pool, the skies His chair.  
Health and growth and happiness:  
these are from Him; He made them.  
Relationships, prosperity:  
all good comes from Him.  
Rain to make the soil soft,  
sunlight so that plants may grow,  
air so we and they may breath:  
    turn to Him with thanks.

And then, submit: know He is God  
and you are not; the difference there  
is pivotal, though you forget  
its truth from time to time.  
He is not man that we may twist  
His arm in our direction; nor  
is He a tyrant that He does  
not hear our cries for help.  
Age to age unchanging, yet  
relationship within His core:  
acknowledge Him, give thanks and bow;  
    know that He is God.

And love: love Him, for He is good.  
In loving Him, we learn to love,

for love's made perfect when it's turned  
to its most worthy object and  
not towards ourselves.  
And then, turn out to love like Him;  
love and see you cannot love  
without His love within Your core.  
Only when we know the gulf  
of Being between us and Him  
can we marvel that we're His  
and learn to love aright.

## *II. Resolution*

Faith is no good if,  
seeing yourself  
in a morning mirror,  
you walk into the day  
and forget your own face.

Love is no good if,  
taking, not giving,  
you can say to your father  
whose all is your own,  
"Give me now what is mine."

And poetry is no good  
if you can walk to Jericho  
and leave the stranger  
lying, bleeding  
beside the bleeding road.



### *III. Pursuance*

Go and do likewise;  
what you have seen,  
now do, and do with joy,  
    and what  
you have heard once  
    whispered  
    in your ear,  
proclaim it from the rooftops;  
                    now shout

the truth that rings  
in your ears; proclaim  
in word and deed and  
    in the beat  
of your changed, now  
    pounding  
    heart, stone  
replaced with flesh and life  
                    instead

of death. What deeds  
consumed your life  
in days before: now toss them  
    into  
the winds of yesterday;  
    follow  
    the man  
from Galilee whose steps now lead  
                    towards

love's Cross. Watch king

throw off His crown, and take  
thorns upon His brow;  
now see  
all vast eternity's wisdom  
contained  
in Him;  
see His scars and learn; now go and do  
likewise.

#### *IV. Psalm*

God, my love is vapour,  
my heart's dust.  
I pass and fade like dew,  
like day;  
I tremble like the dawn.

God, my all is empty,  
I have no  
grace to give my neighbour or  
give You.  
So be my everything –

be constant when I fade,  
constant in  
my nothingness, my sapping  
strength, my  
faithless, lovelessness.

## **Pure Heart, Free Heart, Bound Heart**

Birds: do you understand?

The wind is your ladder, the trees your net;  
surely indignant, you must look at all our vague wanderings,  
bound by gravity, bound to soil,  
lords of the earth and yet failing to fly  
while the canopy takes you to freedom?

Trees: you, like us, are bound,  
yet you wonder, no doubt, how it is that we move  
and yet stick within that movement,  
grinding ourselves into ground  
as though our legs were not means to move,  
but upright fetters to bind.

Heart: do you also not comprehend  
what it is to have all and yet throw it out  
to the cold unfeeling wind,  
to rule everything yet surrender?  
Heart, do you not know, do you still need to learn,  
that freedom is found in love's binding?

## Descend

...to descend from heaven means limitlessly to love the person you see just as you see him.

(Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*)

To love  
when the heart races,  
when the eye beholds the  
sweetness  
of beauty,  
when all is well and all's  
abloom,  
to love then is  
a joy, a dance.

To give  
of self when self is met  
with equal giving, then  
the gift  
is no pain  
and bears no cost, only music,  
only  
sun and spring and  
blossoming.

To see  
into beloved eyes when love  
needs most to be returned –  
when love  
is craved like  
water, like air – to see not love

but spite,  
abandonment,  
silence – then

when Love  
looks beloved straight in the eyes  
and sees that human love has died  
and yet  
still gives, still loves,  
still bears the curse – then love  
is made eternal –  
then love is purified.

**Teach me to love the way that You love me:**

seeing all, knowing all, pure, but still  
rejoicing in small victories, ever in hope,  
taking the brokenness, weakness with strength.  
Teach me to hold the way that You hold me,  
to find in much giving the fullest of fill,  
to trust without limit, accept without scope,  
to walk without any thought of the length.

If love were to measure always the expense  
and tallied each day the gain and the cost,  
love would be poorer than life's meanest hate.  
So teach me to love, not with border or fence,  
log-book reminders of what has been lost;  
teach me to open love's welcoming gate.

## **The Giving**

It's strange, this giving that we do –  
of one self to another self,  
of two separate selves now combined –

strange that way we both lose  
and gain self in the giving,  
both defying and fulfilling self in the act.

And there it is: the moment of giving,  
no knowledge of what  
on the other side shall be –

a thrill at once and a chasm  
between our safety and that new world  
which opens only when we give

when we let our clutching selves open  
and dare that which risks most, gives most,  
tells most as we give.

**Sometimes a dance –**

moving back and forth, correcting,  
taking steps, retracing  
where our feet once faltered.

Sometimes a leap –

risking all and throwing wildly  
self, security,  
all we hold too dearly.

Sometimes a death –

all power that we hold as selves  
surrendered, and the flesh  
supplanted by the Spirit.

Always a gift –

this chance to take the cross and live  
enacted parables  
making love complete.



**So love:**

love beloved, love God,  
love neighbour as yourself,

and give  
the self that holds  
back of itself, and love

not through  
demanding eyes, seeking  
perfection, but through eyes

of Love  
which see both neighbour  
and beloved in the

same gaze.  
Love which sees the ideal  
does not love. And so love

to love,  
the neighbour that you see  
and love eternally.

## **For You**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

(2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Hands held,  
still and open – a dove  
gathered in the cup of two palms –

we look, within and out to see  
who walks  
across the road and by these homes,

these daily moments laced with grace,  
these chances now to serve, to die –  
to live –

not so  
we grasp, or hold too tight  
to things which smell of earth

and all our striving dreams, nor so  
the joy  
is ours alone, but instead to pray

that freedom may bow in sacrifice, and duty  
may blossom free with joy in all our works  
of love.