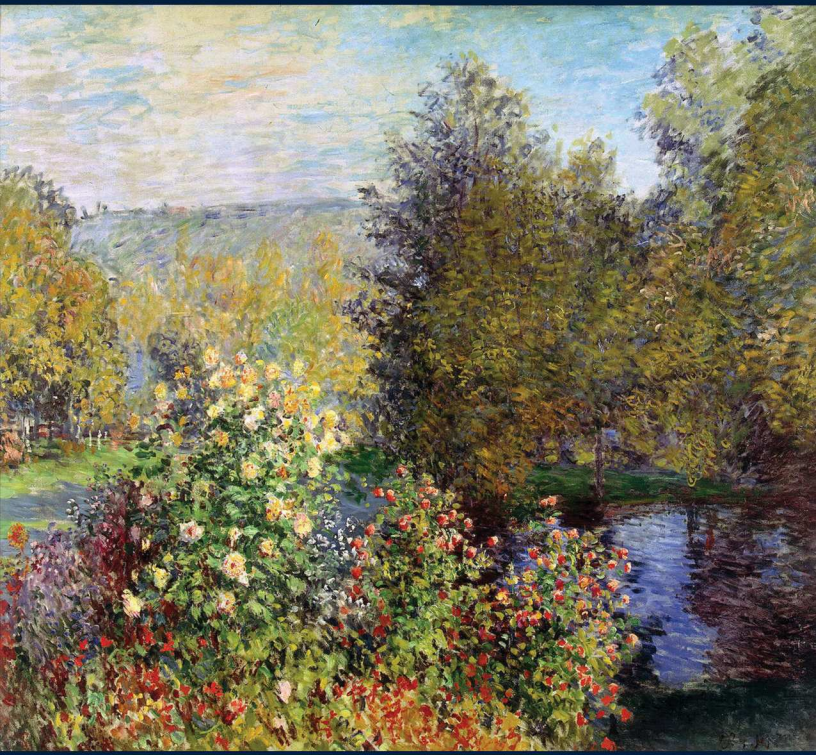
Songs of Eden

The Depths of Love in Poetry, Paintings, and Prose



edited by **John** *and* **Alexandra Balouziyeh**

Songs of Eden

To: _____

From: _____

Songs of Eden

The Depths of Love in Poetry, Paintings and Prose

2010

edited by John *and* Alexandra Balouziyeh

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Let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God ... God is love.

The First Epistle of John, 4:7-8

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Foreword

This book is a celebration. It celebrates the power and creativity of love. We are God's work of art, brought into existence not from His need, but the overflow of His "gift-love." When we truly love, we wish to give, too. For our earthly beloved, it is our joy to give whatever we have: The world, the stars, would not be too much, if it were in our gift. Even more elementally—and in this we are very like our Creator—when we love, we want to give ourselves. When we freely give to God and to each other, the bond is deeper than the chemistry that holds our bodies together and lasts far longer.

This book is also a thing of beauty. From the very first glance, it celebrates the creativity of love. Just as God in his love made a universe of beautiful things, human love, after his image, creates beauty in life and art. Where beauty is, there God is reflected; His fingerprints are all over the universe, and all over us. We know our Maker loves verbal

and visual art: "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver," says the inspired author (Proverbs 25:11). And consider the beauty God ordained for His tabernacle, filled with art crafted from cedar, linen, gold by artists "filled with the spirit of God" (Exodus 31:3).

This book is a draught from a very deep well—spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally: love enlivens these all and flows between them. Drink deeply from this well, because it is fed by the streams of living water. From it, your soul will be refreshed, your mind enlivened, and your imagination "baptized." Thank you, John and Alexandra for this celebration of love.

Wayne Martindale
Professor of English
Wheaton College

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we give our thanks to the Lord for His mighty provision: "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad" (Psalm 126:3).

We would like to express our gratitude to the many friends who helped make this book possible by assisting during all phases of its production, from suggesting titles for inclusion to commenting on the final manuscript: Lauren Bobbit, James Eli Adams, David Parker, George Stade, Helen Ogiozee, and Christine Balonze. We would especially like to express our gratitude to Wayne Martindale: Wayne, you are a treasure, and all of us—students, colleagues, and friends—will always be grateful to you and love you for who you are: a light, a gift, a joy, a mentor and teacher by example, and a model of selfless humility that always puts others first.

We would also like to thank our families and especially our parents for their unconditional love, sacrifice, and support, and for offering us models of

committed, faithful marriages.

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- Thomas Nelson, Inc., for permission to use the New King James Version translation of Proverbs 5:18-19 and 31:10-29; Song of Songs 2:10-14, 6, and 7:10-13; and 1 John 4:7-8 (copyright © 1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved).

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Preface

This book brings together the voices of some of the greatest poets who have ever written on love. In describing the virtue, nobility, and beauty of their loved ones, they express a love that knows no limits, a love that, in the words of Dante, "moves the sun and the other stars."[1] It is a love that is faithful, selfless, and true.

In this volume, we hope to share the words of a diverse group poets and other writers that have inspired and deeply moved us. These writings come from widely varying sources and span a period of several thousand years, beginning with the Hebrew Scriptures and continuing through to the modern day.

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[1] Philip Henry Wicksteed, Herman Oelsner (eds.), *The Paradiso of Dante Alighieri* (London: J. M. Dent & Co.: 1908), Canto XXXIII, pp. 409.

We selected the poems that have most brilliantly expressed love as the universal longing of the human soul, as the bond between God and man, between man and woman, and between friends who share the joys and the sorrows of one another as though they were each one's own. It is a love based on trust, truth, and fidelity, one that bonds together the fundamental building block of any community—the family, which is founded on the love between a man and a woman.

The Apostle John's *First Epistle* states in chapter 5, "Let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God ... God is love" (4:7-8). These verses explain in so few words the very substance of God's nature: love. It is only through love that we truly reflect God's image in ourselves. It is for this reason that He commands us to love one another and teaches us that on love "hang all the Law and Prophets" (Matthew 22:39). In his *First Epistle*, the Apostle chooses a very appropriate metaphor in describing God and His love: to love is to be "born of God." Birth is a great and awesome miracle that represents new life and new beginnings. To be "born of God" is to be

remade into God's substance and to acquire His image anew; it is to become purified, reshaped, and transported to new grounds with new thoughts and new vision; it is to see like God and to love like God loves: unconditionally, and with all of his being.

This is the love that these poems and songs praise. It is not a passing emotion or uncontrollable passion. It is not love frustrated or love unfulfilled. It is love radiant, love divine. It is an enduring love that transforms each person in a relationship, infusing him or her with new life, and, while drawing each one closer together, draws both closer to God. It is love as God intended it to be.

We have entitled this book *Songs of Eden*. It strives to take the reader from our fallen world of broken love to the perfect harmony of prelapsarian Eden, to a garden whose airs are filled with the joy, fulfillment and bliss of man and woman in love, a place where love is pristine and man and woman delight in each other's innocence. These are songs of eternal spring days, of airs filled with the singing of songbirds and the perfumes of lilacs and garden roses.

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honor love and to root it in that ancient institution that has been at the heart of civilization from time immemorial: the institution of man and woman in a committed, faithful, and lifelong relationship that reflects the love, selflessness, and character of God.

We hope these texts will serve as a source of inspiration that will guide your heart and mind upwards towards the eternal things of life: hope, faith, truth, and sacrifice, all rooted in the most eternal gift of all: love given and love received.

John and Alexandra
San Francisco, 2010

Scriptures

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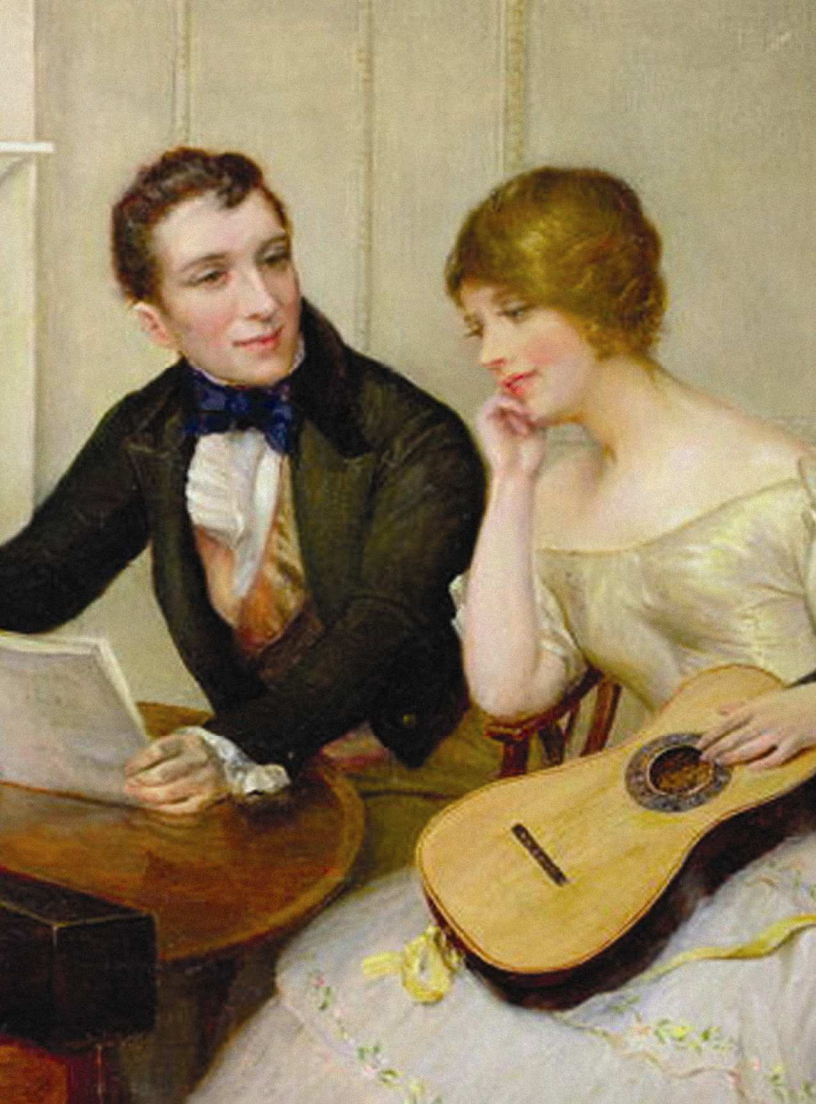

The Time of Singing Has Come

King Solomon

(c. 1011 - c. 932 BC)

MY BELOVED spoke, and said to me:
"Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away.
For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of singing has come,
And the voice of the turtledove
Is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth her green figs,
And the vines with the tender grapes
Give a good smell.

Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away!

"O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret places of the cliff,
Let me see your face,
Let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet,
And your face is lovely."

Where has your beloved gone,
O fairest among women?
Where has your beloved turned aside,
That we may seek him with you?

My beloved has gone to his garden,
To the beds of spices,
To feed his flock in the gardens,
And to gather lilies.
I am my beloved's,
And my beloved is mine.
He feeds his flock among the lilies.

O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah,
Lovely as Jerusalem,
Awesome as an army with banners!
Turn your eyes away from me,
For they have overcome me.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
Going down from Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of sheep
Which have come up from the washing;
Every one bears twins,
And none is barren among them.
Like a piece of pomegranate
Are your temples behind your veil.
There are sixty queens
And eighty concubines,
And virgins without number.
My dove, my perfect one,
Is the only one,
The only one of her mother,
The favorite of the one who bore her.
The daughters saw her

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Church Fathers

The Praise of Love

Clement of Rome

(fl. 96)

WHO can describe the blessed bond of the love of God?

What man is able to tell the excellence of its beauty, as it ought to be told?

The height to which love exalts is unspeakable.

Love unites us to God.

Love covers a multitude of sins.

Love beareth all things, is long-suffering in all things.

There is nothing base, nothing arrogant in love.

Love admits of no schisms: love gives rise to no seditions: love does all things in harmony.

Driven to Love

John Chrysostom

(347-407)

NEVER call your wife simply by her name, but with terms of endearment, with honor, with much love. Honor her, and she will not need honor from others; she will not want the glory that comes from others, if she enjoys that which comes from thee. Prefer her before all, on every account, both for her beauty and her discernment, and praise her. Thou will thus persuade her to give heed to none that are without, but to scorn all the world except thyself. Teach her the fear of God, and all good things will flow from this as from a fountain, and the house will be full of ten thousand blessings. If we seek the blessings that are incorruptible, these corruptible things will follow. "For," saith He, "seek first His kingdom, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. 33.) What sort of persons, think you,

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Heaven and Earth Cannot Contain Thee

Augustine of Hippo

(354-430)

WHAT art Thou then, my God? Most highest, most good, most potent, most omnipotent; most merciful yet most just; most hidden yet most present; most beautiful yet most strong; stable, yet incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet all-changing; never new, never old; all renewing, and bringing age upon the proud, and they know it not; ever working, ever at rest; still gathering, yet nothing lacking; supporting, filling, and overspreading; creating, nourishing, and maturing; seeking, yet having all things. Thou lovest, without passion; art jealous, without anxiety; repentest, yet grievest not; art angry, yet serene; changest Thy works, Thy purpose unchanged; receivest again what Thou findest, yet

didst never lose.

Oh! that I might repose on Thee! Oh! that Thou wouldst enter into my heart, and inebriate it, that I may forget my ills, and embrace Thee, my soul good!

Narrow is the mansion of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter it.

Let my soul praise Thee, that it may love Thee; and let it confess thine own mercies to Thee, that it may praise Thee.

He that knows the Truth knows the Light; and he that knows It, knows eternity. Love knoweth it. O Truth Who art eternity! and Love Who art Truth! and Eternity Who art Love! That art my God, to Thee do I sigh night and day.

O Love, Who ever burnest and never consumeth! O Charity, my God! kindle me.

Ancient and Medieval Poetry

Love Conquers All

Virgil

(70-19 BC)

LOVE alters not for us
His hard decrees,
Not though beneath
The Thracian clime we freeze
Or Italy's indulgent heaven forego
And in mid-winter tread
Sithonian snow
Or when the bark of elms
Are scorch'd, we keep
On Meroë's burning plains
The Libyan sheep,
In hell, and earth, and seas,

And heavens above,
Love conquers all,
And we must yield to Love.

Love that Moves the Stars

Dante Alighieri

(c. 1265-1321)

O LIGHT eternal who only in thyself abidest,
only thyself dost understand,
and to thyself, self-understood, self-understanding,
turnest love and smiling!

That circling which appeared in thee
to be conceived as a reflected light,
by mine eyes scanned some little,

In itself, of its own colour,
seemed to be painted with our effigy,
and thereat my sight was all committed to it.

As the geometer who all sets himself

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Love, the Greater Law

Geoffrey Chaucer

(1340-1400)

KNOW you not well the ancient clerk's saw
Of "Who shall give a lover any law?"
Love is a greater law, by my pan,
Than may be given to any earthy man.
And therefore positive law and such decree
Is broken all day for love, in each degree.

The Renaissance

Love's League

Edmund Spenser

(1552-99)

THE doubt which ye misdeem, fair love, is vain
That fondly fear to loose your liberty,
When loosing one, two liberties ye gain,
And make him bond that bondage erst did fly.

Sweet be the bands, which true love doth tie,
Without constraint or dread of any ill:
The gentle bird feels no captivity
Within her cage, but sings and feeds her fill.

There Pride dare not approach, nor Discord spill
The league 'twixt them, that loyal Love hath bound:
But simple truth and mutual Good will,
Seeks with sweet Peace to salute each others wound.

There Faith doth fearless dwell in brazen tower,
And spotless Pleasure builds her sacred bower.

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The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Christopher Marlowe

(1564-93)

COME live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,

A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

The Eighteenth Sonnet

William Shakespeare

(c. 1564-1616)

SHALL I compare thee to a Summer's day?
Thou are more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:

But thy eternal Summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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Air and Angels

John Donne

(1572–1631)

TWICE or thrice had I lov'd thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame,
Angels affect us oft, and worshipp'd be:
Still when, to where thou wert, I came,
Some lovely glorious nothing I did see:
But since my soul, whose child love is,
Takes limbs of flesh, and else could nothing do,
More subtle than the parent is
Love must not be, but take a body too;
And therefore what thou wert, and who,
I bid Love ask, and now

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Romanticism

Never-Ending Happiness

William Wilberforce

(1759-1833)

CAN a more pleasing image be presented to a considerate mind, than that of a couple, happy in each other and in the pledges of their mutual love, uniting in an act of grateful adoration to the Author of all their mercies: recommending each other, and the objects of their common care, to the Divine protection; and repressing the solicitude of conjugal and parental tenderness by a confiding hope, that through all the changes of this uncertain life, the Disposer of all things will assuredly cause all to work together for the good of them that love and put their trust in him; and that after this uncertain state shall have passed away, they shall be admitted to a joint participation of never-ending happiness.

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Victorian Era

How Do I Love Thee?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(1806-61)

HOW do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!--and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

A Love Letter

Charles Dickens

(1812-70)

HE WAITED anxiously for the letter. It came the next day, and it ran thus:

"My dear, kind, good Friend,—I scarcely know what to say to you now that I have sat down to write the letter which I promised. I feel, keenly and deeply, how unworthy I am, how ungrateful I must have appeared to you; but I fear I shall not have words to tell you what my heart reveals to me, now that I have awakened from that delusive dream.

"What I wish to say is, that I have never ceased to love you from that day which I so well remember. Yes, it was *you* I loved. I know it now; but how—how can I tell you? I carried your image away with me. I carried away with me not only a vision of your face, but the sound of your kind voice, the pressure of your gentle hand upon my

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A Birthday

Christina Rossetti

(1830-94)

MY HEART is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;

My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a daïs of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,

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Contemporary Voices

Love

Roy Croft

(published in 1979)

I LOVE you,
Not only for what you are
But for what I am
When I am with you.

I love you,
Not only for what
You have made of yourself
But for what
You are making of me.

I love you,
For the part of me

That you bring out;

I love you,
For putting your hand
Into my heaped-up heart
And passing over
All the foolish, weak things
That you can't help
Dimly seeing there,
And for drawing out
Into the light
All the beautiful belongings
That no one else has looked
Quite far enough to find.

I love you because you
Are helping me to make
Of the lumber of my life
Not a tavern

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I Sought for Love

Unknown Author

I SOUGHT for love
But love ran away from me.
I sought my soul
But my soul I couldn't see.
Then I sought You,
And I found all three.

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