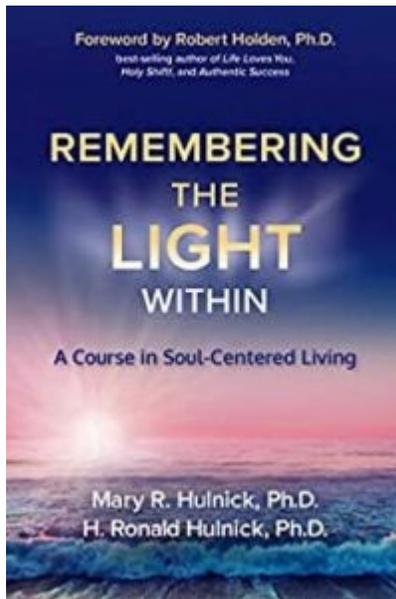


Not Your Father's God by Anna Zimmerman April 19th, 2020



At a recent Enneagram class as the group studied a diagram and discussed the various personality characteristics when we came to the quality of “love” there was some disturbance, dissension. It even led to conversation about the G-word through the idea of “God is love.” The word actually seems to make some people... shudder.

I sort of chuckled to myself, or maybe out loud even, since no one was paying attention to me at that moment. I may even have said something under my breath like that God really is love. Because that’s what I have come to know for myself. But I remember very well when I was of the other mind.

I grew up in a hell and brimstone community. My dad was even a Southern Baptist minister, making me a PK, preacher’s kid. Even though my dad was a very gentle, loving soul who did not spend lots of time telling people they were sinners going to hell, that was all around us. Dancing=hell etc. It’s taken me a lifetime to recover from what was damaging for me, though I do see that it was and is valuable, sacred (s-word) for some.

Somehow I was able to say yes to the Master’s Program in Spiritual Psychology at the University of Santa Monica when my dear friend recommended it, dialed the phone to the admissions office and put it in my hand, and I remember during the first few classes and books resisting the words and phrases that were packed with what I remember experiencing as such vitriolic judgment. Ironic that I had some of my own such judgment in reverse.

It was in the second year of the program a student, an earnest young women, stood up in front of the class of about 200 and shared some similar experiences. I remember one of the beloved and brilliant professors Dr. Mary Hulnick asking her when she would be ready to let go of the God of her father and find what there is for her? A whole conversation between teacher and student ensued with my pen flying over my notebook page trying to get down every word as I also opened my heart and mind to the learning coming right at me.

It still took more time, maybe the first year of an experimental follow up doctoral program, or maybe it was during my time as a classroom assistant that a first year student, an engaging Black man who was also grappling with a Christian background, joyfully shared, again to the full class, that his previous learning combined with what was being offered there was enhancing his previous ministerial leanings and confirming that God, in fact, is love.

When I heard it that time, and it's rumbling and resonating joyfully and powerfully inside me right now as I write this, that that was the moment the hole closed up the rest of the way for me and I got that too.

I still find a sort of quantum physics approach more harmonic for me. I see God as the energy that is Life, all of life. As I've heard our dear Enneagram teacher Martina say, Life Force. To me It's Breath, without It we're not alive. It's the spark of awareness, what breathes us.

And from that moment on what I've put together is that Love is that energy, or that energy is Love.

I used to think it was sappy too. Maybe I mostly ever thought of love in romantic terms. Now I click on that red Facebook heart with wild abandon, I sign even email with it, and I mean it. My life is love. Or I seek to make that the case. I am radiating love. Through meditation with loving kindness for myself and others—all others, no exceptions. Aren't we blessed (b-word) to have a community meditation class lead by the wonderful Ron de Jong that is starting it's 6th year of meeting every Monday to support that kind of practice? As well as Nadine de Jong's book study group, also beginning its 5th year in La Mision, and the weekly north Rosarito meditation/book study group. And through devoted (d-word) participation in both Not Churches (La Mision and Norte), and being grateful to be surrounded by people who are in these uplifting conversations, at Breakfast Club at Dymitri's La Fonda after Monday Meditation and in the various community outreaches.

So grateful to live in a community with so many people who are committed to exploration and expansion of their inner lives however that is for us. In church or Not Church or any or no way at all, whatever words are used. 