Insights on love

These notes are direct quotes or paraphrases of the ideas contained in the following books which I found interesting. Sources are indicated at each bullet point:

 CL = Brady, B. V., Christian Love: How Christians through the ages have understood love, (Washington: Georgetown University Press)

• Love is the drive towards unity of the separated [LPJ, p.25]
• The Bible knows that libido (desire) belongs to mans created goodness and that it is distorted and ambiguous in mans state of estrangement [LPJ, p.117]
• Philia love establishes preferential love. Some are preferred, the majority are excluded. Agape doesn’t deny preferential love but elevates it. The preferences of friendship are not negated but they do not exclude all others. Not everyone is a friend but everyone is affirmed. Agape loves what it has to reject in terms of philia. [LPJ, p.118-119]
• We do not choose to fall in love BUT consent to. We fall in love because we want to NOT against our inclination. Love is not forced upon us against our inclination, our attention towards another is given voluntarily. There is a difference between consent (acting freely in the sense of doing something willingly ie. gladly doing something that is unavoidable) and choice (acting freely in the sense of having the ability to act in alternative ways). [MOL, p.44-45]
• Love includes sexuality but cannot be equated with sexuality. [MOL, p.50]
• Love can be expressed in many ways appropriate to the various objects which it is directed eg. in marriage an appropriate way of expressing love may be with sexuality but outside marriage this would be an inappropriate way of expressing love. [MOL, p.51]
• Love can be based on desire (Plato) – the desire for something we don’t have OR if I have it a desire not to lose it. [MOL, p.110]
• Augustine – Loving God doesn’t preclude loving your neighbour or loving your self. We have proper love for self if we aim diligently to attain the chief good which is knowing God. Love of man to man is a sure step towards the love of God. Bring your neighbour to the same chief good you desire for yourself. Not loving neighbour better than yourself, but as yourself. [MOL, p.118-119]
• We should consider other people as gifts to us and we should always love the giver more than the gift. [MOL, p.122]
• Nygren – The different ‘dimensions of love’: God’s love for us; Our love for God; Our love for neighbours; our love for self. [MOL, p125-126 & p.131ff]
• There is a difference between the love we receive from God and the love we show towards others. We do not give out exactly what we have received (otherwise we become passive channels of God’s love). We allow
what we have received to overflow from our own reservoir of the love God has given us. It is in this way that we love with the love of God. We love actively (ie. choice) rather than passively (ie. simply being channels).

[MOL, p. 136 & p.139 also cf. p.145]

- Agape becomes corrupt when it arises out of self-hatred or resentment (contempt for self). One cannot love without turning away from oneself BUT the crucial question is whether this movement is prompted by the desire to turn towards a positive value OR whether the intention is a radical escape from oneself. Love of the second variety is inspired by self-hatred. Agape can spring from inner strength, inner security and vitality ie. sacrificial love does not necessarily have to be based on a hatred of self [MOL, p.141-143]

- The lover will feel an intimate concern about the continuance of the good properties of the beloved and the diminishing of the bad ones. [MOL, p.152]

- Love is not merely a feeling / emotion but also a purposive commitment to adopt a complex pattern of actions and attitudes in relation to the beloved. [MOL, p. 153]

- Our feelings can strongly motivate us to make the relevant love commitments BUT they do not cause these commitments in a way which makes the unavoidable. We consent to make loving commitments based on our feelings. The sincerity of the commitments (and of expressions of the feelings which give rise to them) are therefore tested by the faithfulness of the lover. If he fails to keep his commitments we say that his love is not true. [MOL, p.154]

- A loving relationship is possible without sex. Sexual activity is possible without a loving relationship. Sexual desire can be the motive for entering a love relationship BUT sexual emotions are passing and loving relationship involved loving commitments. Love tends to grow with time, sexual desire withers. Sexuality moves from being motivation of love to expression of love. [MOL, p.173-175]

- My penitence is a necessary condition for your forgiveness, it is not a sufficient condition. My penitence can neither cause or earn your forgiveness. Whether you are to identify with me again depends on your freely doing so. It takes two to repair a personal fellowship just as it takes to establish it in the first place. [MOL, p.186]

- You can forgive my injuring your good, but not the fact that in so I outrage goodness as such. Only God can forgive sins and we need forgiveness from both God and others. [MOL, p.200]

- Loving self, God and neighbours does not mean that we have to love them all in the same way. We need to order our loves rightly. [MOL, p.207]

- Loving others as we should love God leads to idolatry. [MOL, p.211]

- Learning to order our loves means learning to differentiate between them qualitatively and not learning to grade them hierarchically. We should not love people alike because they are not all alike. We love people in their uniqueness. We need to differentiate our loves in an appropriate way. We are not required to bestow identical quantities of identical love on all person but we are required to love indiscriminately, but such love will vary from object to object. [MOL, p.213-214]
• Love unites us with the beloved. We treat their interests as my own (love neighbour as self). This means we work for their good NOT your every wish is my command! My attitude to your wishes will be evaluation / appraisal AND bestowal. I feel concern about the continuance of your good characteristics and the diminishing of your bad ones. (This requires objective appraisal – both of your wishes and mine as I might not always be working for your good). Our love doesn’t make us blind to other people’s faults. [MOL, p.215-217]

• Our human finitude sets limits to the intensity and range with which we can identify with others. Real relationships take time and energy which we have limited amounts of. [MOL, p.217]

• Loving a stranger does not mean treating him as a member of our family. We need to differentiate loves. [MOL, p.219]

• We desire another’s love but restrain this longing when it tries to control their love and prevents them from bestowing it on us freely. We wait without trying to earn it or extort it. We are willing to bear being let down rather than to pervert fellowship / love within the other. Although love does not desire affliction, it is always willing to permit the possibility of affliction. [MOL, p.225]

• Devotion to your good is unconditional in the sense that I do not serve your interests on the condition that you serve mine in return. Love is not self-regarding but other regarding. [MOL, p.239]

• If we reject the concept of need-love this would mean rejecting God’s gift love. [MOL, p.240]

• Love is a motion / movement of the soul towards something. [CL, p.84]

• What if we see a person’s bad qualities before the good and this leads us to move away? We should endure a person’s ills and don’t make rash judgements. We do not love for the sake of the persons good qualities but we realise that the person we love is someone for whom Christ died. [CL, p.98-99]

• We are to love our neighbour by seeking his good in terms of body and soul: caring for their physical needs and drawing them towards God. [CL, p.104]

• Christ loved people not for what they are but in order that they may become. God is the end and beginning of all true neighbour love. We don’t love our neighbour because he has the capacity for God, but in order that God may be in him. [CL, p.104-105]

• Augustine identifies the three parts of love: The lover, the beloved and the love between them. [CL, p.105]

• Our choices can create the conditions for love to flourish OR can poison love. [CL, p.108]

• We are to love all men equally but we can only truly assist those bound in to us by place, time or opportunity. [CL, p.111]

• Our love for our enemies grows out of sorrow for how far away they are from God. [CL, p.111]

• Love is the movement of an internal aspect of a person toward a particular object. [CL, p.165]

• In some loves benevolence is reciprocal / mutual in some it is not. [CL, p.166]
In true friendship we love the other person, not because of pleasure / their usefulness BUT because of shared values / common ground. [CL, p.166]

Love unites. True friendship is union – it pushes one out of oneself, without negating one’s true self. [CL, p.167]

Love perfects and betters. Unsuitable ‘love’ wounds and worsens. We are perfected and bettered by the love of God, wounded and worsened by sin. [CL, p.168]

All friendship is love, but not all love is friendship! [CL, p.169]

Love for God directs all others loves. Through loving God one necessarily loves others. [CL, p.171]

We love those close to us (eg. family members etc.) more than those who are not close to us. [CL, p.172]

Love is never limited in terms of object ie. it is shown to friends, sinners, enemies etc. [CL, p.173]

One loves the self before the other. One cannot harm one’s essential self for the other. One cannot sin for the good of another. [CL, p.173]

We love some more than others. It is unreasonable to think we are to love all people equally. Love can be unequal in the sense of the good we wish our friend but there is a generic good that we wish all people. Love can be unequal in the sense of its action being more intense ie. we have greater action / passion towards some people compared with others. We cannot do good to all but our desire for the good of the other out not be unequal. [CL, p.176]

The intensity of the love depends on the loves and the form of the love depends on the beloved eg. is it a love for enemies, friends etc. [CL, p.177]

Love has confidence in men; therefore it is often deceived. The confidence that love has is so necessary for this present life that without it life on earth could not go on. If one man did not believe and trust another what would life on earth be? cf. 1 Cor. 13 where Paul says that love always takes the risk of trusting. Love does trust but when deceived other aspects of love come into play eg. patience, forgiveness etc. [CL, p.183]

If God can bestow all good on Judas or Ciaphas, should not we do the same? Yes he may be our enemy and do nothing but evil to me, but he is also God’s enemy too and he does far more evil to God than he can do to me or you. My love should not grow dim or cease because he is evil and unworthy of it. His wickedness must not overcome me. If through love I can rebuke and admonish him or pray for him, that he may amend his ways and escape punishment this I should do and do gladly. But to want to become his enemy and do evil to him will not make me any better and it will only make him worse. [CL, p.185]

The good man is likeable and we shy away from the rough / evil naturally BUT this is flesh and blood not true Christian love. A Christian must not derive his love from the person (ie. the good we see in them) as this can fade. Our love is derived from Jesus Christ. [CL, p.186]

Love is not just wishing someone well (internal) but needs to be acted upon / incarnated through doing well / service. [CL, p.186]

We are to love without exception, neither in favouritism nor aversion. [CL, p.196]
• When you open the door which you shut in order to pray to God, the first person you meet as you go out is your neighbour whom you shall love. [CL, p.197]
• Mutual love can only be initiated by sacrificial love. True love may elicit but can never require a reciprocal response. [CL, p.201]
• We love, forgive etc. not because it achieves something but because God does. [CL, p.202]
• Confrontation of evil by the power of love. It is better to be a recipient of violence than an inflictor of it. The latter only multiplies the existence of violence. The former may shame and bring about transformation. Confrontation of evil by love demands not only the oppressor is change but that the oppressed are changed as well. [CL, p.211]
• No matter how tragic the experiences, we will not let anyone drag us so low as to hate them. [CL, p.211]
• Along the way of life someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil. The greatest way is through love. [CL, p.212]
• The evil deed of the enemy never quite expresses all that he is – elements of goodness may be found in our worst enemy. [CL, p.214-215]
• If we respond to hate with hate, we do nothing but intensify the separation that already exists in broken community. [CL, p.217]
• We shall match you capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. Do to us as you will and we shall continue to love you. [CL, p.217]
• Intention alone is not indicative of true love. Love must conform to the moral order (ie. we love in the right ways appropriate to the relationships). [CL, p.236]
• The lover must put their neighbours basic well being on the same level as their basic well being. [CL, p.246]
• The value of self-sacrifice is instrumental, it is not necessarily good in itself. Self-sacrifice must always be purposive in promoting the welfare of others and never simply expressive of something resident in the agent. [CL, p.248]
• Not all self-sacrifice is love. We have a moral obligation not to relate to another in a way which is truly destructive of us as persons ie. we won’t sacrifice communion with God etc. [CL, p.257]
• Sacrificial love cannot be eliminated from the Christian understanding of love (eg. the cross). Self-sacrifice is an element of love but not the end of love. [CL, p.263]
• NOTE: There are those who imply love as only meeting another’s need. However what if the other person is not in need, are we not to love them? Does this not imply that love will not be needed from an Eschatological perspective? Perhaps it is better to recognise blessing another with kindness, generosity etc. are also acts of love. This means that love is not solely based on a lack in the other person, but is also based on a giving / moving towards the other person which includes the possibility that they have no lack.
• [on the moral example model of atonement] What is there in the cross which reveals love? True love is purposive in its self-giving; it does not
make random or reckless gestures. If you were to jump off the end of a pier and drown, or dash into a burning building and be burnt to death, and if your self-sacrifice had no saving purpose, you convince me of your folly, not your love. But if I were myself drowning in the sea, or trapped in the burning building, and it was in attempting to rescue me that you lost your life, then I would indeed see love not folly in your action. Just so the death of Jesus on the cross cannot be seen as a demonstration of love in itself, but only if he gave his life in order to rescue ours. His death must be seen to have an object, before it can have an appeal. [COC, p.220] Dying on a cross is not an act of love in itself, it only becomes a manifestation of love when it is directed towards another and is purposive in building the other up / doing good to another. Random acts that we do are not loving necessarily loving in themselves, to be loving acts must but must be directed towards another and must have a purpose of goodness.