

RATIONALISM, MEANING, & LOVE: SHERLOCK'S ETHOS AS A KEY TO UNLOCK ALL MYSTERIES

Jasmin Biggs on the Pursuit of Truth

The 2010 television show *Sherlock*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson, adapts the original 1892 book series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle to modern-day secular London. Mysteries are solved with state-of-the-art technology rather than old-style maps and magnifying glasses. Aside from such notable stylistic differences, *Sherlock* follows in the footsteps of Doyle in presenting us with a Sherlock Holmes who, on the surface, encapsulates the reductive modernist viewpoints of philosophical rationalism, empiricism, and scientific materialism. Sherlock believes that truth is known solely by logic, reason, and evidence, while sources such as emotion, tradition, or divine revelation are deceptive and illusory. He privileges reason and evidence as the sole sources of truth. Sherlock Holmes, therefore, might be considered an archetype or paragon of the project of Enlightenment modernism.

But the fascinating fact is that the entire story arc of *Sherlock*, Season 3, contradicts Sherlock's own philosophy. In this season, we watch Sherlock discover

both the limits of rationalism and his need for meaning and love. By love, I am referring not to love as *eros*, or romantic love, but what C.S. Lewis calls *charity*, which we often call *agape* love. It “is wholly disinterested and desires what is simply best for the beloved.”¹ It is the selfless self-giving that seeks another’s good, rather than one’s own. Throughout this season, the intriguing possibility unfolds that Sherlock may be wrong about his own rationalistic philosophy and that the key to the meaning of life is deeper than he realizes. In this essay, I will argue that the story of *Sherlock*, Season 3, points ultimately not to rationalism, but to love, as the key that unlocks every mystery.

Note Well: the remainder of the essay will be rich with spoilers!

Rationalism and Meaning

Let us look at a brief overview of the key moments in the plot of Season 3. Season 2 ends with Sherlock apparently killed by his sworn enemy, Moriarty. Episode 1 of Season 3 is set two years later, when we learn that Sherlock faked his own death. However, Sherlock had intentionally allowed Watson to believe that he was dead for the duration of those two years. Moriarty had told Sherlock that the three people he loved the most in the world, presumably including Watson, would be killed if Sherlock did not kill himself. So, he faked his own death and disappeared into Eastern Europe to track down and destroy Moriarty’s criminal network. Sherlock fears that if Watson knew he was actually alive, Watson would

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, in *The C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017), 828.

accidentally let it slip, in which case word would reach Moriarty's criminal network, and Watson's safety would be compromised. Hence, it is imperative for Watson to believe Sherlock was dead. Of course, once Sherlock returned, he faced Watson's anger for failing to inform him of the ruse.

In this episode, Sherlock also grapples with a fresh mystery. Watson is violently kidnapped and placed inside a large Halloween bonfire. Sherlock and Watson's fiancée, Mary, frantically follow the clues texted to them from the mysterious perpetrator, only to drag Watson out of the gasoline-doused, flaming rubble in the nick of time. Why the perpetrator would target Watson to get at Sherlock, Sherlock cannot fathom. The mystery will not be solved until Episode 3.

His love for Watson, admittedly immature, is also why Sherlock struggles with Watson's marriage in Episode 2. He fears that Watson will be so deeply lost in marriage that it will end their friendship bond. Even so, he is blown away when he discovers how deeply Watson cares for him. When Watson asks Sherlock to be his best man, he is utterly shocked. He asks, "So I'm your... best... friend?" Watson responds, "Yeah, of course you are. 'Course you're my best friend."²

Further along in Episode 2, we encounter Sherlock Holmes's secular creed eloquently and succinctly stated in his best man's speech at Watson's wedding. He proclaims,

"I'm afraid, John, that I cannot congratulate you. All emotions, and in particular love,

² *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 2, "The Sign of Three." Jeremy Lovering, et al., Directors., 2014. Timestamp 23:05.

stand opposed to the pure cold reason I hold above all things. A wedding is, in my considered opinion, nothing short of all that is false and specious and irrational and sentimental in this ailing and morally compromised world. Today we honor the deathwatch beetle that is the doom of our society and in time, one feels certain, our entire species.”³

In other words, Sherlock reduces love down to an emotion and immediately dismisses it as an enemy of the “pure cold reason” that he believes is ultimate truth. Furthermore, he believes that all emotions are “false, specious, irrational, and sentimental.” Like a repulsive beetle, they will ultimately doom us. The cold world of Enlightenment modernism leaves no rational room for such irrational things as love, values, or emotions.

Sherlock seems to think of himself as a logic calculator, with nothing more fundamental than reason. Thus, he is baffled when faced by his own need for love and meaning. Mary Watson, John’s wife, points this out to him, thereby triggering his breakthrough to solve a crime. At the pinnacle of Episode 2, a man’s life is on the line, but Sherlock cannot solve the mystery.

Mary tells Sherlock, “Solve it. Solve it, and he’ll open the door, like he said.”

Sherlock: [angrily] “I couldn’t solve it before; how can I solve it now?”

Mary: “Because it matters now!”

³ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 2, Timestamp 23:57.

Sherlock: "What are you talking about? [To John] What is she talking about? Get your wife under control!"

John: "She's right."

Sherlock: "Oh, you've changed!"

John: "No, she is. Shut up. You are not a puzzle solver; you never have been. You're a drama queen. [A wave of offense passes over Sherlock's face] Now, there is a man in there about to die, [mockingly] 'the game is on', SOLVE it!"⁴

Suddenly, everything comes into focus. The data points crystallize. Sherlock had believed that knowledge is the key to all mysteries, so when his knowledge calculator reaches a dead end, he believes there is nothing more to be done. But Mary gestures towards a key idea with far more explanatory power: the existential need for drama, for story, for meaning. She points out that narrative and meaning are central to Sherlock's motivational calculus. Upon this revelation, Sherlock puts the pieces together and saves a man's life. Sherlock's own creed, so eloquently proclaimed only minutes before, is shown to be inadequate and insufficient. It lacks the explanatory power to explain life in its totality.

The universe is not some mere puzzle to be cracked, decoded, and tidied away. Without meaning, there is nothing to live *for*. There is no *reason* to solve the puzzle without love. What we love motivates every word we speak, every choice we make, every action we pursue. We

⁴ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 2, Timestamp 1:14:00.

do not just crave truth. We also crave meaning. We want purpose. We long for existential significance to be imbued into the stories of our lives.

Rationalism and Love

These threads fully materialize into a tapestry in Episode 3, when Sherlock slowly comes to recognize that the primary motivation for his actions is *agape* love for Watson. Sherlock is on a mission to destroy his enemy, a master blackmailer, named Charles Augustus Magnussen, who has significant dirt on Mary Watson, John's wife. But when he breaks into Magnussen's office, Sherlock is shot by an assassin's bullet: the assassin is Mary herself.

As doctors work to save him, we are put inside Sherlock's head, where he stumbles down a long winding staircase to a sort of dungeon. There, he flatlines, laying on the concrete floor of the dungeon, lifeless. In the dungeon is an old foe, Moriarty. While on the exterior, the doctors work to restart his heart, Moriarty tells him, "You're going to love being dead, Sherlock. No one ever bothers you."⁵ The easy thing would be to stay dead. Except, Moriarty continues, "Mrs. Hudson will cry. And Mummy and Daddy will cry. And the women will cry . . ."⁶ No response from Sherlock, who lays as still as a stone as the flatline tone continues in the background. ". . . And John will cry buckets and buckets. It's him I worry about

⁵ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 3, "His Last Vow." Jeremy Lovering, et al., Directors., 2014. Timestamp 39:55.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the most . . . You're letting him down, Sherlock. John Watson is definitely in danger."⁷

Sherlock's eyes fly open, panic-stricken. He groans. He forces himself to a standing position, yelling from the pain. Then leaving the dungeon, he hauls himself up each step of the staircase, grasping the handrail desperately, while his body shakes in agony. In the background on the monitor, the first heartbeats beep. When he realizes that Watson still needs him, Sherlock regains the desire to live. This desire drags him out of the grave.

One could say he behaves irrationally. He's not doing what "makes sense." If Sherlock's greatest love or desire is his own comfort and convenience, it would be more rational to stay dead, where, as Moriarty points out, he will no longer be bothered. But Sherlock's greatest love is not self. For the love of Watson, he is willing -- no, compelled -- to pull himself out of the dungeon, up the staircase, back to life, no matter the personal cost.

Here, we receive another clue that rationality is a dependent reality, rather than an independent one. What is rational depends on something other than itself: what we love. In other words, what we love determines what makes sense. Rationality is dependent on love.

Crucially, love does not triumph *over* rationality. Rather, love *undergirds* rationality. We critique not rationality, but *rationalism* that makes the claim that there is nothing higher nor greater than itself. We propose not fideism nor fundamentalism, a blind faith that guts reason of any role in our lives. It is a false dichotomy to claim that we must choose between

⁷ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 3.

rationality and love. Instead of opponents, love and rationality are hierarchical.

Rationality is the house we build, while love is the foundation upon which the house is built. If we selfishly love power, we build a house like Magnussen's. If we love and worship ourselves and our own bitter vendettas, we may build a house that looks like Moriarty's. But if we selflessly love other people, even imperfectly, we will build a house that looks a bit more like Sherlock's. Love, not rationality, is the foundation for all our choices. The question is, what do we love most of all, and how does that shape the house we build?

Put differently, our loves are the fountainhead from which the waters of reasoning flow. We cannot escape the role love plays in our rational calculus. For instance, suppose we love and desire money above all else. That love or motivation will define the compass that shapes every path we choose, every argument we listen to, and every step we take. Jesus uses the metaphor of a master: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."⁸ Again, Proverbs 4:23 warns us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Our rational thoughts and subsequent choices flow downstream from what we love.

If love is indeed the foundation of all things, one of the necessary implications of this truth is that it abolishes the fact-value split that characterizes modern life. The secular creed tells us that science and technology are in the realm of facts, while values are solely the realm

⁸ Matthew 6:24, English Standard Version.

of private opinion. But if what we love undergirds our rationality and the conclusions we draw, this idea can be incredibly destructive. If no higher authority in heaven or on earth may tell me what I may love, what foundation I may choose, or what master I may serve, then who is to say I may not choose as my master the love of nation, or the love of racial superiority, or the love of sexual conquest? Hence rises the fascist, the racist, and the rapist.

Public rationality relies on private loves for its defense. The secular creed indeed seeks to defend the worth of persons and prevent oppression, but it does so by elevating personal choice as the arbiter of morality. The only requirement for choosing your values is to be true to yourself. Yet this creed devours itself. What we choose to privately love and value leads to spectacularly good -- or evil -- public consequences. The relegation of all morals to the private sphere spells disaster for a society that wishes to defend the vulnerable. For example, the choice to love one's ethnicity above all else leads to the horrors of ethnic cleansing. This is why we can never divorce public facts from private loves, desires, and values: what we love, desire, and value determines what we believe makes sense. Such private values direct our rational intellect — and, ultimately, how we vote. Therefore, we cannot privilege personal choice as the ultimate arbiter of morality without destroying that which we seek to defend.

In the midst of his recovery, Sherlock goes with Watson to confront Magnussen. As owner of a vast media empire called CAM Global, Magnussen could easily destroy Mary Watson and her husband by publishing the facts of her criminal past. Magnussen explains his

elaborate system of what he calls “pressure points”, which he uses to control the powerful. Showing them video footage of Sherlock and Mary frantically dragging John from the bonfire of Episode 1, Magnussen muses,

“Very hard to find a pressure point on you, Mr. Holmes. The drugs thing I never believed for a moment. And anyway, you wouldn’t care if it was exposed, would you? But look how you care about John Watson. Your damsel in distress.”

Watson: “You put me in a fire... for leverage?”

Magnussen: “Oh, I’d never let you burn, Dr. Watson. I had people standing by. I am not a murderer. Unlike your wife . . . Let me explain how leverage works, Dr. Watson. For those who understand these things, Mycroft Holmes is the most powerful man in the country. Well, apart from me. Mycroft’s pressure point is his junkie detective brother Sherlock. Sherlock’s pressure point is his best friend, John Watson. John Watson’s pressure point is his wife. I own John Watson’s wife -- I own Mycroft.”⁹

Magnussen blackmails people by discovering whom they love most. Then he controls them by threatening the ones they love. Since Mary has committed unspeakable crimes, Magnussen can, by threatening her, exert control upon the highest echelons of government. He kidnaps Watson and places him, gagged, inside a bonfire to verify

⁹ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 3, “His Last Vow.” Jeremy Lovering, et al., Directors., 2014. Timestamp 1:11:45.

Sherlock's most poignant pressure point — that is, to answer the question: Whom does Sherlock love? For whom will Sherlock give up all in order to save? Love, not logic, is Sherlock's most fundamental motivation. Despite his best efforts, Sherlock cannot adhere to his own philosophy.

Sherlock then kills Magnussen to defend John and Mary — even though Mary caused him so much physical pain. After he does so, Sherlock is pictured as a little boy with tears running down his cheeks, police lasers fixed to his forehead. He commits crimes against the state to defend those he loves. It is another surprisingly irrational choice, if we judge by the logic of self-preservation and the logic of revenge. But by the logic of love, his choice makes perfect sense.

At the heart of his human nature, Sherlock is not some impersonal brain, a computer that crunches logical enigmas into tidy solutions. Rather, passionate love is the essence of Sherlock's humanity. Brett McCracken writes, "Humans aren't emotionless automatons sealed off from the world. We're porous, deeply relational beings. We're not just data-crunching machines. We are lovers, worshipers, magnetically drawn to the lover of our souls. God made us this way."¹⁰ Sherlock chooses to sacrifice his reputation, his freedom, and potentially his life to defend the Watsons. As punishment, he is sentenced to an espionage assignment in Eastern Europe that is almost certainly a death sentence. The essence of what it means

¹⁰ Brett McCracken, "Surprised by Oxford' Film Adaptation Is a Pleasant Surprise", *The Gospel Coalition*, Published Oct 15, 2022, accessed Oct 22, 2022 at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/surprised-by-oxford-film/>.

to be human is to love -- to lay down one's life for one's friend.

Sherlock himself glorifies the certainty of deductive rationalism. He thinks of himself as a brain in a tower, or "mind palace." He denigrates love as the height of irrationality, the "deathwatch beetle" that will doom society. Yet Sherlock's "weakness", his weak link, is his love for Watson. It is the key that allows Sherlock's enemy Magnussen to control him. Love for Watson is why he goes to the grave and returns, only to lay down his life once more. Yet such selfless love, which spends its own strength in defense of those who are weaker, cannot be adequately explained by a Darwinistic set of presuppositions. The meaningless will to power can assign no moral value to survival. Sherlock contradicts his own rationalistic philosophy, which labels love as the ultimate weakness.

Fundamentally, Sherlock lays down his life for his friends. Thus, he indicates that he values love, meaning, and purpose, not merely the cracking of puzzles. From the perspective of self-preservation, Sherlock's love is quite literally a fatal flaw, for it leads him to suffer a great deal of pain, anguish, and even death. But without love, what is he? He would be, in fact, a self-described "high-functioning sociopath" -- *without* a reason to choose the good.¹¹ Without love, he would have no compelling reason to use his powers for good, rather than evil. We can contemplate little more terrifying than a brilliant mastermind unmoored from any moral code. In fact, such a description fits many of Sherlock's nemeses, such

¹¹ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 3, "His Last Vow." Jeremy Lovering, et al., Directors., 2014. Timestamp 1:21:40.

as Moriarty or Magnussen. Magnussen himself showcases what it means to idolize knowledge without love; he sums up his own philosophy as follows: “It’s all about knowledge. Everything is. Knowing is owning.”¹² Love is the indispensable difference between Sherlock and his enemy.

So is love a weakness? A flaw in the rational structure of the universe? Or is love the ultimate meaning of all things? Jesus of Nazareth sheds light on these questions. His love for his Beloved, his people, led him straight to the cross. Without that love, he would not have permitted his enemies to torture and murder him. So was Jesus’s love his weakness, or the key to his strength? It appears that the power to love, even in the face of death, is not a weakness. Rather, it is the greatest superpower that can be conceived. Thus, Christ presents us with the paradox that flouts every human sensibility. The power of Christ is *through* weakness, not through strength; through defeat, not victory; through love, not self-preservation.

What, or should we say *whom*, is the pressure point of Jesus of Nazareth? For whom will he sacrifice his life and his reputation? For whom will he gladly embrace agony and claw his way out of the very grave? Satan, like Magnussen, threatens the bride of Christ. Satan, like Magnussen, holds Mary Watson’s crimes over her head. He rightly points out that she deserves damnation. What does Jesus do? He is a lover. Heaven and earth cannot stop his passionate love for his bride. So he storms the very gates of hell to save her.

We are all Mary Watson: wretched, undeserving, aching for happiness when all that awaits us is judgment

¹² *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 3 Timestamp 1:17:37.

and doom. Yet every one of us is God's pressure point. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."¹³ He loves us with such a desperate love that even though our condemnation is well deserved, he will do whatever it takes to save us from the accuser of our souls.

At the end of the episode, John Watson takes the hard drive with all of Mary's sins and casts it into the fireplace, where all is erased. He chooses not to view the contents of that hard drive, but rather tells her, "The problems of your past are your business. The problems of your future are my privilege. That's all I have to say, and that's all I need to know."¹⁴ Jesus goes a step further: he has viewed, in full, the content of all our hard drives. He fully knows our sins, our weaknesses, our hatreds, our lusts, our idolatries. And yet he also casts them away, telling us in Hebrews 8:12 and many other passages of Scripture that for those of us who choose to know and love him, he will remember our sins no more.

Implications for the Mystery of Faith

Since we often view ourselves as brains in vats, we may also fall into the further error of thinking that God is also primarily a brain in a vat, rather than primarily a lover. If this were true, then the Christian life is principally about knowing the right things, checking the right theological boxes, and clinging to certainty at all costs. Personally, there was a time in the not so distant

¹³ John 3:16

¹⁴ *Sherlock*, Season 3, Episode 3, "His Last Vow." Jeremy Lovering, et al., Directors., 2014. Timestamp 1:03:34.

past when I believed that God's love for me depended on my possessing perfectly correct theology. One could say that I believed knowledge to be the key to all mysteries, including the mystery of my own existential wretchedness. If I just knew enough and checked all the right theological boxes, God would accept me.

But when did perfect knowledge become a condition upon which his love is contingent? He says that *whoever* believes in him will not perish. He forgave and welcomed the thief on the cross, who undoubtedly held all kinds of confused beliefs about God, theology, and the nature of the cosmos. "God shows his love for us in that while we were *still* sinners, Christ died for us."¹⁵ God prefers a dynamic relationship with us, for us to love him and pursue him, than for us to check every theoretical doctrinal box with cold hearts. "And if I . . . understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing."¹⁶ As Christians, we are not called to merely parrot correct answers and deduce the answers to mysteries.

If knowledge were the key to all mysteries, we might rightly ask why God leaves parts of Scripture difficult, mysterious, and paradoxical. Not all of us can be Sherlock. In fact, very few of us, if any, can answer every theological question perfectly, even for those of us privileged enough to possess extensive training, academic resources, and mental acuity. So if our primary mandate is knowledge, why would God make knowledge and certainty so difficult? But if our primary mandate is love, then allowing mystery in Scripture not only makes

¹⁵ Romans 5:8

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:2

sense: it is necessary. Perhaps God leaves parts of Scripture difficult, mysterious, and paradoxical to remind us that our ultimate need is not for certainty, but for love. It would make sense that he allows parts of Scripture to remain paradoxical and leave some questions unanswered, that we might be spurred on to pursuing relationship with the lover of our souls rather than being tempted to ignore him out of a misguided rational certainty about him. We need experiential, not just theoretical, knowledge. Mere answers would leave us impoverished. We need the foundation of love before the house of knowledge can be built.

Bluntly, if we could deduce all there was to know about God, we could close the books and place them back on the shelves. God would be like a solved mathematical problem. Having mastered the puzzle named “God”, we could move on without the compunction to pursue a relationship with him. We would mistakenly think we knew all we needed to know. Knowledge without love is like the Library of Alexandria: it is dead data. It is the face of Magnussen, with his dead, reptilian eyes. Such a God would be a dead God, not a living, breathing Other.

In fact, it is impossible for a God that we could fully understand to be truly God. He would be less than God, for we would have full knowledge and mastery over him. A god that our finite minds could fully understand would necessarily be a finite god, subject to mastery by our finite minds. Such are the idols of gold or clay, or money, sex, career, and power: fully comprehensible to our little minds, which we may pick up or set aside as whim dictates. There is no relational obligation to such a god. But Yahweh is infinite. As a person, he is an Other, and we have real relational obligations to him. As C.S. Lewis

writes of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Yahweh is not a tame lion.¹⁷ He is not some toy, a pretend stuffed lion that we may play with or set aside without consequence. Rather, he is fully alive: wild, fierce, and present in the very place where we are currently reading this sentence. And yet, in spite of our inability to fully control or understand him, he is infinitely good.

This infinite God knows that we need him, and we need him relationally. He knows this because he himself is the one who crafted our hearts. We long for love that will last, love that is not dependent on our performance, love that is, in fact, unconditional. We were made for relationship with the Creator and lover our souls. God knows we need that love. So, God tests us by withholding knowledge. He withholds certainty by design. He knows that our deepest need is not knowledge, but love; not for answers, but for meaning; not for a valid syllogism, but a victorious story.

Our response to disagreement in our relationships reveals whether we more highly prioritize knowledge or love. People bring different experiences to God's word, leading them to embrace various positions on many questions, including such difficult topics as predestination, gender roles, the age of the earth, and political issues. God wants to see if we will erase and cancel all those who disagree with us, or if we will choose the way of love. If the latter, then we humbly recognize our own fallibility and finitude. In light of our imperfect knowledge, we will seek to learn from one another. We will view our differences as an arena for enrichment

¹⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1956; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 194.

rather than impoverishment. Even when arguing vigorously for our own understanding of things, we will remember that the pursuit of knowledge must take place in the context of love for God and neighbor.

Conclusion

One of the greatest paradoxes we face is the problem of evil. How could a good God allow such tremendous suffering in our world – and in our own lives? Often this question is imbued with the scream of existential pain; it is often no merely rational inquiry. To test our theory that meaning and love are more fundamental to our questions than knowledge, let us turn to the story of a young singer by the stage name of Nightbirde, who dazzled the world in 2021 when she performed her song “It’s Okay” on *American Idol*. At the time, she was also fighting her third round of cancer, with only a two percent chance of survival. In a blog post titled “God is on the Bathroom Floor”, she wrote about the experience of wrestling with God, begging for mercy and comfort.¹⁸ Ultimately, she came to the following realization: “If an explanation would help, He would write me one — I know it. But maybe an explanation would only start an argument between us — and I don’t want to argue with God. I want to lay in a hammock with him and trace the veins in his arms.”¹⁹ Though she has since passed on to glory, she helps us appreciate the glory of friendship with God. In the dark night of the soul, we long not merely for

¹⁸ Nightbirde, “God Is on the Bathroom Floor”, March 9, 2021. Accessed October 23, 2022. <https://www.nightbirde.co/blog/2021/9/27/god-is-on-the-bathroom-floor>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

a syllogism to prove that our pain has warrant; rather, we long to be loved and treasured, and for our pain to be imbued with meaning and purpose. Nightbirde again writes,

“Call me bitter if you want to — that’s fair. Count me among the angry, the cynical, the offended, the hardened. But count me also among the friends of God. For I have seen him in rare form. I have felt his exhale, laid in his shadow, squinted to read the message He wrote for me in the grout: ‘I’m sad too.’ . . . Call me cursed, call me lost, call me scorned. But that’s not all. Call me chosen, blessed, sought-after. Call me the one who God whispers his secrets to. I am the one whose belly is filled with loaves of mercy that were hidden for me.”²⁰

Here is one who traversed one of the darkest valleys a human can face, and yet finds that the love of God sustains her with meaning and significance.

Sherlock, the paragon of cold rationalism, cannot live up to his own creed. In spite of himself, he debunks his own worldview with the powerful image of his own life, death, and resurrection. Love motivates the solving of crimes and the sacrificing of a life, bringing with it the greatest of joy.

Thus, love is not weakness, irrationality, falsehood, and doom, as Sherlock claims he believes. Rather, it is the greatest strength, the foundation for rationality, the key to truth and the path to joy. It seems that love is the foundation of the universe and the key that solves all

²⁰ Nightbirde, “God Is on the Bathroom Floor.”

mysteries, even the most painful mysteries of faith. The Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and therefore a recipient and key witness of that divine love, tells us that “God is love.”²¹ Since God is, himself, love, then God is, himself, the foundation for all things. Our deepest need is not for encyclopedic knowledge, but for love -- for God. We ache for the one for whom we were made.

And yet, in Jesus Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”²² We need not choose between rationality and meaning, between knowledge and love. In Christ, we have both. He is the key to all mysteries. Ultimately, the new heavens and new earth will consist of God showing us ever greater depths of knowledge, in the context of warm and secure relationship where every existential ache for love and meaning is eternally satisfied.

²¹ 1 John 4:8

²² Colossians 2:3

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