

CHAPTER SIX: LOVE: THE DIVINE FULLNESS WHICH FULFILLS

A. Introductory remarks

5 In chapter four, I considered the ultimate completion of all things in Christ--the fulfillment toward which God is creating and redeeming everything. Within ultimate completion the central reality is the fellowship of divine and created persons, the latter richly fulfilled, and all sharing a common life. In chapter five I considered the goods which fulfill human persons according to our own nature. These goods are open and unfolding in such a way that human nature does not prevent human persons from sharing in divinity.

10 In the present chapter I consider the divine fullness, the love which God is. Because of His love and by means of it, God communicates His love to created persons and in this way makes them share personally and intimately in His own life. This sharing will be perfected in heaven, but it begins even now in those who believe in the Lord Jesus and cling to Him, who live in Him and follow His way. Thus the present chapter is concerned with the divine component of ultimate completion.

15 The love of God is the principle of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus, which will be considered in part three; it is the principle of the Church and her Gospel, which will be considered in part four; it is the principle of all the virtues and precepts of the way of Christ, which will be considered in part five; it is the principle which heals sin and all its consequences, which will be considered in part six; and it is the principle which is nourished in us into eternal life by prayer and the sacraments, which will be considered in part seven. The love of God which begins in the present life remains forever (cf. 1 Cor 13.13). More than anything else, this love unites Christian life in this world with heavenly life. This unity will be the main subject of chapter seven. Thus the present chapter is a key one.

20 Because I am concerned here with love insofar as it is in so many ways a principle of the principles of Christian morality, I shall not consider at once some obvious and most important questions. How are the requirements of this love specified--for example, how can one tell whether or not killing the innocent is incompatible with love of God? How are the various human and Christian virtues related to the love of God? These and related questions belong to part five. Yet at a general level, I shall indicate here the relationship between love of God and the keeping of His word, especially His commandment of brotherly love.

25 Every Christian doctrine has a normative aspect. God's revelation demands a response from us, and everything God reveals should help to shape our response. In many cases, the practical significance of the most basic truths of faith has not been made clear by reflection; although it has been communicated more effectively to unreflective understanding, especially by the words and deeds of the liturgy. In the present chapter, one of the important things I try to do is to make clearer to reflective understanding the practical significance of one of the most central doctrines of Christian faith, namely, the teaching on the Holy Trinity.

30 The share which God offers created persons in His own life is an utterly free gift on His part. One is a human person by natural generation; one is a child of God by divine regeneration. The former is natural; the latter supernatural, although not contrary to human nature. This gift of God can be looked at from two points of view. From one point of view, it is a gift which brings us to rebirth and enables us to do our part; this gift is called "actual grace." From another point of view, the gift is the very divine life in which we are invited to share. This divine life is given in a manner which inwardly transforms those who are reborn; they possess a new life which is their own life (cf. Gal 2.19-20; Rom 6.4; Jn 1.13); they are new creatures (cf. 2 Cor 5.17) or new men and women who have been recreated in justice, holiness, and truth (cf. Eph 4.24). This new life which is one's own is called "sanctifying grace."

35 As I shall explain in this chapter, the love of God by which Christians love Him also must be understood as a disposition which is their own and which transforms them inwardly. The Church has not taught and theologians do not agree whether this love and sanctifying grace are in the Christian one and the same reality or two distinct but closely related realities. [1] It seems to me that for the purposes of moral theology the distinction is unnecessary; to the extent that the gift of divine life is a principle in the Christian distinct from the uncreated gift of the Spirit it can be identified with the love of God which "has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5.5). (I shall explain below why "love of God" in this text should be taken to mean a gift distinct from the Spirit Himself, a principle within Christians which disposes them to live as children of God.) Thus, although I will not often use the expression "sanctifying grace" in this chapter, what is said here about love will include a treatment of this grace. Actual grace will be treated in chapter seven.

40 Throughout this chapter, unless the context indicates otherwise, I am concerned with those who have received new life in Christ and who have not killed themselves and wounded Him by mortal sin. Thus when I say "we," I assume hopefully that we live now in Christ and will live forever in Him. This qualification will not be restated over and over but must be remembered throughout.

45 Throughout this work, readers must expect a consideration of divine realities and truths of faith only insofar as these are relevant as principles of Christian living. They must look to contemplative systematic theology for a richer reflection upon these subjects considered in themselves. This limitation is especially to be borne in mind in the present chapter. Moreover, in writing this chapter I am more than usually conscious of the risks of going beyond the faith we have received to seek theological understanding. However, our heavenly Father wishes His children to think of Him, His Son, and Their Spirit, and to converse about Them. If we do so lovingly, He will not mind the childishness of what we say.

B. What human love is

Although "love" said of God cannot have precisely the same meaning it has when applied to human love, God has chosen to use the language of love in revealing Himself to us, and we know the meaning of this language primarily from experience of human love. Therefore, some analysis of human love is necessary as a basis for considering the love which God is and in which He calls us to share.[2]

As I explained in chapter five, section D, the good of each thing is that which fulfills its possibilities in such a way that it becomes more and more what it can be. Everything requires in itself some principle by which it is disposed toward its good. In creatures which lack cognition, such as plants, this requirement is met by blind tendencies which automatically have their effect under suitable conditions. Creatures which have cognition can to some extent anticipate what will be fulfilling, and so they can act on this anticipation to bring about their own good.

Corresponding to cognition, there must be a disposition which is based upon cognition and which underlies the tendency both to appropriate action and to rest when the action has realized the good to which it is directed. The capacity to have such dispositions is the ability to love, for such a disposition is most basically what love is. In animals which have only sentient cognition, the ability to love is a basic aspect of emotional make-up, which in scholastic philosophy is called "sense appetite" or "the passions of the soul." Human persons also have an emotional make-up corresponding to sentient cognition; in addition, we have an ability to love corresponding to intellectual knowledge of good. This ability is the basic power of will, which in scholastic philosophy sometimes is called "rational appetite."

Thus love is a basic disposition which adapts one to a known good. There are two fundamentally different modes of love in human persons: emotions in respect to sensible goods and caring about intelligible goods, such as the various forms of basic human goodness discussed in chapter five. Other emotions and volitions are based upon love or closely related to it, since the whole function of these dispositions is to enable creatures with cognition to fulfill themselves by actions.

Two other dispositions most closely related to love are desire and satisfaction. Often "love" and "desire" are used interchangeably, but there is a difference. Love of an anticipated good which is not yet realized arouses desire and leads to action; if the loved good is achieved by the action, desire fades and is replaced by satisfaction--an emotion of pleasure at the sentient level or the joy of accomplishment at the intellectual level. Thus love is the constant, underlying disposition toward fulfillment whether anticipated or achieved.

Emotions often are thought of as sentiments or feelings which are consciously experienced. Emotions often do give rise to sensations of which one is aware; this is especially so if the emotion is unusual or particularly strong. Moreover, it is not implausible to think of desire and satisfaction as more or less directly experienced. However, what is essential to emotions is not that one has a feeling, but that one is disposed to behave in certain ways. Hence, it makes perfectly good sense to talk about subconscious and unconscious love, hatred, anger, and so forth, as Freud and many other psychologists have done. Since love is in play only when it arouses desire or issues in satisfaction, the emotion of love is not a feeling one can isolate in experience. One knows what an animal loves by what it pursues and rests in; similarly, one knows the emotional love of oneself and of other persons by observing what arouses an urge and gives pleasure.

Just as emotional love is not primarily a conscious state, so volitional love is not primarily an experience. Neither is it a kind of knowledge or--in any ordinary sense of the English word--an action. Volitional love begins as a caring about or a basic interest in understandable human goods of all the basic forms: This caring or basic interest presupposes some understanding of these goods as goods--that is, as modes of human fulfillment. This love makes appealing various possible ways of intelligently acting to realize these goods. As I shall explain in part three, sometimes one acts intelligently yet spontaneously, without deliberation, to realize a good understood and cared about volitionally. In other cases, different possibilities come to mind and one must choose which course of action to take, which possible good to try to realize. In any case, volitional love is not one's action--not something one does--but one's disposition of caring about understood goods. This is the disposition which both makes appealing possible ways of acting intelligently and makes satisfying actions which go well.

Thus far I have been talking about love as a disposition toward a fulfilling good. We do use the word this way--for example, people love steak and they love truth. Even more often, we talk about loving people--oneself and others. One both loves something and loves somebody. The two are not separate; they are different aspects of the same thing. For one cannot love a good without its being someone's fulfillment. Thus to be disposed to what fulfills is to be disposed to the person fulfilled by that. St. Thomas distinguishes between these two aspects of love, calling the disposition to that which is good "love of concupiscence" and the disposition to the person "love of friendship." This terminology misleads if it is mistaken to mean two different kinds of love--for example, selfish love and love which is altruistic.[3]

C. Selfish and unselfish love

Of itself, neither emotional nor volitional love is either selfish or altruistic. If love were of itself discriminated in respect to persons, then the different attitudes involved in selfish and unselfish love would be impossible. Of itself love must be open to both since both in fact are real possibilities. Some take the position that since love is a disposition to what fulfills, and since the disposition always is someone's disposition, love always must be a disposition to that person's own fulfillment. The distinction between selfish and unselfish love cannot be understood unless one understands in what sense this position is true and in what sense it is false.

It is true that love disposes one to fulfillment through action, and any action is

a fulfillment of the one acting. Persons are fulfilled by living their lives, and every love disposes the one who loves to this self-fulfillment. A good person who lives in a very unselfish way fulfills himself or herself as a person. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus promises the richest personal fulfillment for those who accept and follow Him; one example is the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5.3-12). The Church condemns the position that one should love God with no hope of reward and no fear of punishment (cf. DS 2351-2357/1327-1333). Thus in one sense it is true that love is a disposition to the loving person's fulfillment, and the best love is a disposition to one's perfect fulfillment.

But neither emotional nor volitional love is limited of itself to care about the good precisely insofar as it is one's own. Individuals are not made for fulfillment in isolation; they are made for some form of common life and fulfillment in it.

That this is true at the emotional level is obvious by the disposition which leads animals to propagate and care for their young. Among all human individuals, natural sympathy shapes many spontaneous acts directed toward the protection and satisfaction of others; this fact tends to be ignored because it is so obvious, and because one begins to notice emotions when conflicts arise.

The same thing is true at the volitional level. Understandable goods do not have anyone's proper name attached to them. For example, one can notice and be interested in the possibility of rectifying injustice or protecting life whether or not the injustice is against oneself or the life threatened is one's own. The work of those who try to protect the unborn makes this clear. Very often, someone who finds great fulfillment in a certain good is especially anxious to share it with others. For example, those who live joyfully in Christ are most eager to make Him known to others.

In all these cases, what one does is fulfilling to the one who does it. But in none of these cases need this fact be the reason for acting. Animals care for their young without self-consciousness; they simply cannot be selfish in their motives. A pedestrian who spontaneously reaches out to stop another from stepping off a curb into the path of an oncoming car is acting in an equally unselfconscious way. Those who by generous commitment dedicate themselves to work--often very difficult and thankless work--for human life or the spreading of the Gospel no doubt realize that their own goodness and holiness are realized in their lives, and they hope for ultimate fulfillment in heaven.

Yet one need not make one's commitments precisely for the sake of one's own fulfillment; one sometimes makes choices out of sheer fascination with a possible good, and only subsequently realizes how acting for and sharing in the good is fulfilling. An example is a child's interest in a field of study, in a hobby, or in collecting funds for a charitable cause, such as helping children in some far-away country. Even when one does make commitments with one's own fulfillment in view, this purpose need not render one's commitment to another's good ungenerous or selfish. The real question is how one's most fundamental commitments relate to and establish order among one's own interests and the interests of others.

How does one love another? Emotional love of another is a compound of various degrees of sympathetic or natural love of the other's own good and care about the other insofar as the other is identified with oneself. All of these affections are mingled and brought to a focus upon the other. What is involved can be exemplified not only in emotional love of another person but also in attachment to a pet animal. Volitional love of another person is a willing of that person's good, which can occur in various ways. One example of volitional love is the commitment which a married couple freely make to one another; by this commitment, undertakings are given to cooperate together for mutual fulfillment in a common life and work. Neither emotional nor volitional love of another person, as described, is either selfish or unselfish.

Emotionally, love is selfish when the feelings of the other are disregarded and one's own allowed to dominate, when sympathy and natural affection are submerged under concern about the other insofar as the other is identified with the self. For example, a person who regards others--other people or even pets--as mere objects which satisfy his or her own needs, rather than as fellow sufferers and fellow enjoyers, is emotionally selfish.

Volitionally, the love of another person is selfish when one is unfair. The Golden Rule, "Treat others the way you would have them treat you" (Mt 7.12), is a succinct formulation of the requirement of fairness. What this amounts to is that in making choices a person ought not to act for any reason which he or she would not be willing to have others accept as their reason for acting, when the persons acting and those affected might be changed around in such a way that oneself or someone to whom one is deeply attached would be affected as one now is choosing to affect another. On this basis, one who gets married is selfish if he or she is less willing to give than anxious to receive, less ready to love faithfully than concerned to be loved faithfully.

Unselfish love between or among persons is marked by a focus of affection on one another with sympathy and fairness. Both selfish and unselfish love bond persons together or unite them, but in different ways. Selfish love is based upon nonacceptance of the real mutuality of the relationship. One who loves selfishly would reduce the other to a possession, to a mere function of one's own fulfillment--a kind of appendage of oneself. One who loves unselfishly accepts mutuality. The unity established is not by absorption but by a communality of interests and fulfillments. The closer the unity between those loving unselfishly becomes, the more their own identities and fulfillments are realized and appreciated.[4]

D. The problem of the one and the many

There is a tendency to think of unity and multiplicity as if they were contraries, like black and white. If this thought were correct, unity and multiplicity could not stand together or could coexist only by mingling and compromise, as black and white coexist in various shades of grey. But this thought about unity and multiplicity is false. "One" and "many" have many meanings. "One" sometimes signifies a numerical unity, and "many" a numerical plurality such as two or one hundred. "One" also can signify a

whole, and "many" the parts of the whole. And there are other ways of using these expressions. The important point to notice is that in any case, what is called "one" and what are called "many" are relative opposites, like right and left. It is possible to imagine a world in which everything was white and nothing black, but it is impossible to imagine a world in which everything was right and nothing left. Relative opposites require each other to be what they are--that is, to be what they are in the respect in which they are relative opposites.

Thus the unity of a whole is unthinkable unless there were many parts to make it up, and the many parts could not be a many unless they were parts of one whole. Similarly, numerical unity is unthinkable unless there were two or more items to be counted--the lone item would simply be what it was, not one--and vice versa. And the same thing holds for other cases of one and many, as Plato clearly shows in his dialogue, Parmenides.

What does this bit of metaphysics have to do with love? Just this, that selfish love thrives on anxieties based upon the absurd thought that there has to be a choice between one and many, while unselfish love proves the inseparability of one and many.

In societies, individualism and collectivism are two opposed destructive movements. Individualism would destroy society by eliminating its unity, by breaking its members up into a collection of selfish individuals all trying to reduce one another to functions of themselves. Collectivism would destroy society by eliminating its members in an attempt to overcome selfishness by eliminating selves. Very often people suppose that the only solution is a compromise between individualism and collectivism: libertarian anarchy up to a point and selves become slaves beyond that point.

The explanation of unselfish love shows that such a compromise is not a real solution at all, and that the only sensible option is to embrace both the one and the many: a fellowship of persons whose distinct personalities will be fulfilled by their common life. The bond of such a society is its common love, its common disposition to cooperation for goods which fulfill all, and are personally sought by each for others with unselfish love.

What I have just described is an ideal human community. Human persons who would fulfill this ideal must look to its model: the Holy Trinity.

E. The Holy Trinity: mystery of love

The mystery of the Trinity is one of the mysterious mysteries, a revealed truth which perplexes us and is beyond our understanding. If one omits part of the doctrine, one eliminates the perplexity but also misses the revealed reality; if one holds all of the doctrine but mistakenly thinks one understands it, one turns the perplexity into absurdity and also misses the only clue we have to the revealed reality. Thus it is important both to keep the doctrine intact and to realize the limits of one's understanding of it.[5]

The Church teaches that there is one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one in being, but three in Persons. The Father is not begotten; the Son is begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. None of the Persons is identical with either of the others. The three Persons are one God, not three gods; for they are one divine reality, a single entity not three entities. Only in what is distinguished by the opposition of personal relationships--for example, of Father and Son to one another--is there multiplicity. Because of Their unity, each of the Persons is wholly in each of the others. The Father and the Son and the Spirit are not three principles of creatures, but one principle (cf. DS 1330/703).

One might omit part of the doctrine by supposing that the Father really is the one God, and that the Son and the Spirit are divine beings of a lower type. Or one might hold the divine equality of all three Persons, but suppose each to be a particular something, just as three human individuals are equal as human persons, but each is a distinct particular. The former mistake would eliminate the threeness of Persons; the latter would eliminate the unity in being, and substitute three "gods" for the one only God.

The propositions which the Church articulates in her teaching are closely based upon, although they develop, propositions expressed in sacred Scripture. If one assumes that the expressions in these statements mean precisely what they would mean outside the context of revelation, then the mystery is reduced to absurdity: How can three distinct entities be identical with something one? This reduction to absurdity is avoided if one bears in mind that what is said of God always is said relationally, as I explained in chapter one, sections C-E. We do not know what God is in Himself, but we do know that He presents Himself to us in revelation as the one only God, the God of Abraham and our God, and also as the incarnate Son who relates personally with His heavenly Father, with whom He sends a Holy Spirit who remains always God with us (cf. Jn 14.16; 16.7).

"Person" said of Father, Son, and Spirit certainly does not mean what "person" said of human individuals means. This situation is not new; it did not arise because of modern developments in the understanding of human persons; it has been true since the doctrine first was articulated and will be so always. Yet as long as we call parents and children "persons," we can hardly avoid saying that the one God revealing Himself as Father and Son is one God in distinct "Persons". Since They must be called "Persons," Their Spirit also must be, lest His divinity be denied.[6]

Since we must understand God as a unity of three distinct Persons, we can think of Him as familial, as "Father" and "Son" demand. As familial, the divine Persons are most perfectly united and most perfectly distinct. The ideal of love, in which unity and multiplicity are both at their ultimate, is realized best here--or, better, our ideal of love comes from this divine exemplar, proceeding from "the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name" (Eph 3.14-15).

St. John, inculcating brotherly love, makes the point: "The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love" (1 Jn 4.8). While the context indicates that John is thinking of God's love manifested in the Incarnation and redemption of the Son, the verse nevertheless seems to me also an expression of the reality of the Holy Trinity which is truly revealed in Christ.

Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., in summarizing his very careful analysis of many texts of John, particularly those bearing upon the love of Father and Son, says:

5 There is so complete an identity between Christ's love and the Father's love that we can conclude from one to the other. It is more than a matter of manifestations and marks of love, as if God and Jesus were acting with one and the same heart. The relationship between the Father and his only Son springs from a reciprocal, permanent, and eternal charity (Jn 17.23-24). Everything that Christ has revealed about the intimate life of God is summarized in its being an exchange made within the mutual relationship of knowledge and love between God and his Son. The union of the two persons seems to be accomplished in agape [note: Jn 17.22-23, 26]. Thus one arrives at conceiving of a substantial charity which is God (1 Jn 4.10). Love is of the same nature as God. [7]

10 What is said here of the Father and the Son surely must be extrapolated to include the Holy Spirit. The inner reality of the Holy Trinity, it seems clear, is a communion which is infinite love.

15 Someone might object that the very unity in distinction of the Trinity ought not to be considered divine love, because love is a disposition toward an appropriate fulfillment. Hence one might talk of God's love toward Himself (and toward creation insofar as He is creator) but--so the objection concludes--one should not think of love as God's very constitution.

20 However, in a certain way the Church's articulated doctrine concerning the Trinity permits us to think of the divine Persons, by analogy, as one another's fulfillment, and suggests that Their very distinguishing relations are dispositions of the nature of love. For the divine Persons are Persons only in being interpersonally related with one another, and none of Them is God except in being the Person He is. Therefore, without one another, the divine Persons could not be God--They simply cannot be without one another. Thus for each, His very distinguishing relationship to each of the others is a disposition to His own full-being. Such a disposition is love. But since this disposition always is to what always is actual, this love is a principle of rest in common joy, not a principle of tending toward fulfillment.

30 In this argument, I suggest that the very distinguishing relations of the Persons are dispositions which are love. Someone might object that to say this is to say that in God there is not one love, but as many loves as relations. My reply is that the conclusion does not follow, because even if the distinguishing relations are dispositions which are love, still the Persons are not other in this love, but are one in it. Hence, love is a common principle by which the divine Persons in Their very distinction are one.

35 Someone might suggest further that personal love must be thought of not as a disposition toward fulfillment but as the mutual act of the Persons vis-a-vis one another. For the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, and so on (cf. Jn 14.31; 40 17.24). Because of Their mutual love, the Persons are in familial unity, but we should think of the divine love as distinguished into paternal love, filial love, and so forth. Therefore, we ought not--so the objection concludes--think of love as God's very constitution.

45 It seems to me that the premisses of this argument are true, but the conclusion does not follow. As I explained above in section B, love is not properly an action. In us, love is a disposition to act toward a good. To love someone is not an action by one person upon another as, say, to hit someone is. To love someone is to be disposed to act in a way which realizes a good which fulfills the one loved. Divine love within the Trinity clearly cannot be considered a disposition to act in any sense which would suggest unfulfilled possibilities. But if we are to talk about love in God at all, it seems to me we ought to think of it as the common disposition of the divine Persons toward one another precisely insofar as each is His own divinity by relation to the others--each, as it were, being fulfilled by the others.

55 F. Practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity

The preceding considerations are very speculative, both in the sense that they press theological reflection far and in the sense that they are proposed tentatively. But they are not without implications, some of which will appear later in this chapter and in chapter seven. The implications arise from this: If God's very constitution is love, then sharing in His personal love is sharing intimately in His life.

60 In any case, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity has practical implications. Non-Christians who think of God as absolutely and noncommunally one tend to suppose that human relationship with God must be either of two kinds. Either human persons always must remain extrinsic to God or they will be absorbed into Him. Aristotle's thought illustrates the first possibility; some Eastern thought illustrates the second. In the Old Testament, while a lively relationship was established by God with His people, it lacked the intimacy of Christian communion with God in the Lord Jesus. The sacramental communion of the Old Covenant was a meal which God deigned to permit in His sight (cf. Ex 24.11); the communion of the New Covenant is a meal in which God not only takes part, but gives Himself (cf. Jn 6.53-58; Mt 26.26-29).

70 According to Christian faith, there is only one God, and He is the creator of all else. But He is not a solitary being, nor is He an impersonal ocean of divinity. The Trinity, the one only God, is a communion of Persons eternally one in love. In the awareness of this mystery, even by the indirect light of faith, we realize that divine life is not in principle incommunicable and is not communicable only at the price of the dissolution of selfhood. A divine Father who has a natural Son is a God who can extend His family by adoption.

80 Furthermore, the divine exemplar of love is a model for our brotherly and sisterly love. Teaching the importance of love of neighbor, Vatican II explains:

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, "that all may be one . . . as we are one" (Jn 17.21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason. For he implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the union of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only

creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself (GS 24).

The divine Family of the Holy Trinity is the model for the human family called to become the extended family of God.

5 Love always means communication, always involves a gift, and always depends upon initiative. Someone must make the first move. Who does so often is dictated by who can do so--for example, parents must love their children into being.

Analogously, in the life of God, the Father has the initiative in begetting the Son, and the Father and Son have the initiative in breathing forth the Spirit. By free
10 choice, God has the initiative in creating the world. The Incarnate Word has the initiative in redeeming the fallen world.

Initiative establishes priority--of course, one must realize that initiative and priority are diverse within God from His initiative and priority toward creatures. But if one bears in mind the analogous sense of the statement, one can say that love always
15 establishes order, and the order once established is never lost. The basic priority is built into the interpersonal relationship; to deny it or to try to reverse it is to negate what the relationship really is.

Among the Persons of the Trinity, the priority apparently holds in the salvific and sanctifying missions of the Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus says: "The words I speak
20 are not spoken of myself; it is the Father who lives in me accomplishing His works" (Jn 14.10). He also says that the Holy Spirit ". . . will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on His own, but will speak only what he hears" (Jn 16.13).

Such priority clearly does not mean that the Father is superior and the Son inferior; the Holy Spirit is not deprived of freedom in teaching because He does not speak on
25 His own. Something similar is manifested in Jesus' washing of His disciples' feet (cf. Jn 13.12-16) and His subsequent remarks about their status as friends rather than slaves (cf. Jn 15.14-15). Of course, love does not eliminate real differences. But neither does the order love necessarily implies entail that the one who has initiative is in a higher caste than the one who first receives.

One concrete example illustrates the tremendous significance of this point. St. Paul teaches that "wives should be submissive to their husbands" (Eph 5.22). This teaching
30 does not consign Christian wives to an inferior position. In the marital relationship, the husband has priority in giving, based upon the actual dynamics of the psychology of sex. In another relationship, as Paul remarks elsewhere, women have priority
35 to men (1 Cor 11.12). The consequence of the priority of the husband in giving to his wife is that he must sacrifice himself for her: promote her security and fulfillment, not his own comfort, success, and pleasure (cf. Eph 5.25). For her part, a wife cannot proceed autonomously, as though she did not need her husband. The abuse of the male
40 role is to dominate and exploit, to use one's wife for one's own ends. The abuse with which wives respond to this exploitation is refusal to submit: an irresponsible declaration of liberty.

G. God's creative and redemptive action as a work of love

45 As I explained in chapter four, section G, God, perfect in Himself, creates all things not to acquire anything for Himself, but solely to express His goodness. God creates everything by a completely free decision, cares for and blesses everything He makes, preserves all things in being, and orders all things with gentleness (cf. DS 3001-3003/1782-1784). The wonder of creation--the coming forth of things from God by His
50 simple word--leads us to marvel at the power of God: We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. But the total gratuity of the creative act, God's utter freedom in choosing to create, His generosity in blessing His creatures, His constant care for all things--all of these make clear that creation is the work and expression of God's love.

55 Reflecting upon God's power, the book of Wisdom finds in it the ground of His mercy and willingness to forgive. God's mercy is absolutely universal:

For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made:
for what you hated you would not have fashioned.

60 And how could a thing remain unless you willed it;
or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? (Wis 11.24-25).

The love of God for creation suggests that from the start His relationship to what He makes is and is meant to be a personal one. Vatican II teaches that God's love in creating implies a call for human response:

65 An outstanding cause of human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin, man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved in it. And he cannot live according to the truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to his Creator (GS 19).

70 Even by the natural light of reason, human persons can know themselves to be creatures of God's love (cf. DS 3004/1785), and they should admit this truth and live in light of it.

The creative work of God can be seen as love in the following way. God expresses His goodness in creating. As a real expression, creation must be wholly distinct from the creator, established in its own being, set apart from the creator. What truly is
75 made must truly be other than its maker. But also as a real expression of its creator, creation is as it were a mirror reflecting His goodness, with human persons the very image of God within this mirror. What truly is made must truly be one with its maker. Nor can this bond of unity be dissolved, since nothing can remain unless God wills it; the image of God in creation would not exist were it not constantly preserved in God's
80 love. Thus the relationship of creator and creature is a unity in multiplicity, a reflection of the love which God in Himself is.

The Old Testament is a progressive revelation of God's love and an ever-growing communication of it. Abraham is called to be God's friend (cf. Is 41.8; Gn 18.17). The Jews are chosen not because of their greatness, but because "the Lord loved you and

because of his fidelity to the oath he had sworn to your fathers" (Dt 7.8). Therefore, Israel is called to love "God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Dt 6.5). Only God's personal circumcision of the hearts of His people makes it possible for them to fulfill this vocation (cf. Dt 30.16). God's love and kindness is so great that it endures forever (cf. Ps 118.1-4, 28-29).

God loves His people like a faithful husband who continues to love his unfaithful wife (cf. Hos 3.1). In response He wishes only faithfulness, with love and mercy toward others (cf. Hos 4.1; 6.6). The ideal of love between God and his people is that of faithful, even passionate human sexual intimacy (cf. Sg 7.11-13), God promises to repair infidelity by His own action, overcoming sin by a gift of His spirit (cf. Ez 36.25-28). The Messiah who is to come will be anointed with this spirit (cf. Is 61.1), and it will be poured out upon the people like refreshing water, healing everything (cf. Is 32.15-20; 44.3). The effect of the gift of God's spirit is that His people will have new hearts, capable of loving Him faithfully (cf. Ez 36.26-27; Jer 31.33-34).

The wisdom of God has been with Him from the beginning of creation; she plays on the surface of the earth where she finds "delight in the sons of men" (Prv 8.31). This wisdom is or includes God's spirit (cf. Wis 1.4-7; 7.7; 7.22; 9.17). The spirit, the creative power of God which renews the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104.30), makes divine wisdom able to penetrate and pervade all things, to transform them gently and inwardly. Wisdom "renews everything while herself perduring; and passing into holy souls from age to age, she produces friends of God and prophets" (Wis 7.27). The love of God becomes His gift of His own wisdom and spirit, which establish communion between God and His people.

This communion becomes manifest in Jesus. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (Jn 3.16). Not because human hearts were ready: "It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5.8). "God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: he sent his only Son to the world that we might have life through him" (1 Jn 4.9).

Jesus is not only a work of God's love, an expression communicated out of love. The very love of God "comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom 8.39). The Word of God, his eternal Wisdom in person, comes "filled with enduring love" (Jn 1.16). Jesus and His Father are one (cf. Jn 10.30). With His Father's love, "Jesus loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (Jn 13.2).

The Father's love of the Son is total: "The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him" (Jn 3.35). The love of Jesus for His followers is the same: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (Jn 15.9). Jesus wishes His love to be communicated perfectly: "Live on in my love" (Jn 15.9). About to die, Jesus prays to the Father and expresses the meaning of what He is doing for those who will believe in Him: "To them I have revealed your name, and I will continue to reveal it so that your love for me may live in them, and I may live in them" (Jn 17.26).

The revelation of God's love is a total personal communication. Jesus gives nothing other; He gives Himself "filled with grace and truth" (Jn 1.14) so that of His fullness we may all receive (cf. Jn 1.16). Coming down from heaven, filled with divine life, Jesus gives Himself as living bread, gives His flesh as food to be eaten, and thus communicates the Father's life, which also is His own life, to all who partake of Him (cf. Jn 6.33, 48-58).

The Incarnation of the Word is attributed to the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1.35; Mt 1.18). Jesus is endowed with the Spirit and has power to baptize with the Spirit (cf. Jn 1.32-33; Mk 1.8-10; Lk 3.22). Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, announces the fulfillment of all the prophetic hopes (cf. Lk 4.1, 18-21). Jesus, "the One whom God has sent speaks the words of God; He does not ration His gift of the Spirit" (Jn 3.34). He announces that the Father gives the Spirit freely, for the asking: "If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children good things, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him" (Lk 11.13).

From within Jesus flows the Spirit, as living water (cf. Jn 3.4; 4.10; 7.37-39). The Spirit is the Spirit of truth, of divine faithfulness; He will come to stay (cf. Jn 14.17). Jesus and the Father send the Spirit (cf. Jn 15.26). By His power, sins are forgiven (cf. Jn 20.22-23). When Jesus has been glorified, the promised Spirit comes and the new family of God is formed (cf. Acts 2.4, 17, 33). The love of God is sealed by His personal gift of Himself, for the Spirit fills Christians and dwells in them permanently as in His own home (cf. Rom 8.9; 1 Cor 3.16; 6.19; 2 Tm 1.14).

H. God's love divinizes created persons

How intimate a communion does God establish with us? "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are" (1 Jn 3.1). God's love makes us His children. As His children, we are called to share intimately and fully in His own life: "Dearly beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall later be has not yet come to light. We know that when it comes to light we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3.2). These points already have been considered in chapter four, sections I and J. What I wish to do here is to develop them more deeply by considering this intimate relationship in the light of the discussion in the present chapter.

The gift of the Spirit is the principle of our adoption as children of God. To be reborn as a child of God is to be "begotten of the Spirit" (Jn 3.8). The Spirit is the principle of adoption by which we call out to God: "Abba!" (cf. Rom 8.15). "The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8.16). God lovingly chooses those whom the Spirit will adopt in order "that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers" (Rom 8.29).

This way of speaking suggests a parity between the eternal Son and the adoptive children of God. How seriously are we to take this suggestion? Certainly not in any way which would eliminate the distinction between the natural Sonship of our Lord, who is a divine Person, and the adoptive sonship or daughtership of Christians, who remain human persons. But the personal communion in which Jesus wishes His disciples to remain

is based upon a strict analogy with His Father's love for Him: "'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Live on in my love'" (Jn 15.9).

Jesus wishes it known that the Father loves His followers as the Father loves Jesus Himself (cf. Jn 17.23). It is the Father's very love for Jesus which, together
5 with Christ Himself, is to live in Christians (cf. Jn 17.26).

On John 15.9, Spicq comments:

The great revelation of this verse is that the charity of the Father, the Son, and the disciples is on one and the same level and flows from one to the other without any interruption. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. You, yourselves, remain in agape. The verse implies that charity is a bond; charity creates the union between those who love one another. It tells us that "to be in Christ" (v. 2) means to be in his love. Above all, it presents the relationship of the Father to the Son as the type and source of Christ's relationship to his own disciples. There is so great a disproportion between the Son and the disciples that the statement is truly stupefying, but it is no arbitrary parallel or comparison. It is precisely the love most proper to God which reaches men through the intervention of Christ. God loves men in Christ, and they participate in his love and live from it in the most real sense.[8]

Now, I argued in section E that God's most proper love is His very constitution as one
20 only God in three divine Persons. If it is correct that the love which is most proper to God is extended to us in Christ, then it follows that in Christ--through having been reborn by the Spirit--the very constitution of God includes us.

Divine love transforms created persons into partners in communion who are related to the divine Persons very much as the divine Persons are related to one another. This
25 transformation is not imposed upon anyone who is unwilling. That divine life which is the eternal Word is revealed to humankind as a light to be accepted in faith; if it is accepted, human persons are reborn as children of God who share in the faithful love of God which is fully present in the Word incarnate (cf. Jn 1.4-16). St. John thus can say that if we are faithful:

30 God dwells in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

The way we know we remain in him and he in us is that he has given us of his spirit.

We have seen for ourselves, and can testify,
that the Father has sent the Son as savior of the world.

35 When anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God,
God dwells in him and he in God.

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.

God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God in him (1 Jn 4.12-16).

A mutual abiding-in, the unity of love, is established by God with His adopted children.

As I have explained in sections B and E, love is not an action. It is a disposition to that which fulfills. To abide in the love of God is to be drawn within the
40 unity of God Himself. This unity is so perfect that although the divine Persons are utterly distinct, they also are wholly in one another. The Father and Son are expressly said in Scripture to be in one another (cf. Jn 10.38; 14.11) and the Church teaches that the same is mutually true of all three Persons (cf. DS 1331/704). In some way, God
45 brings Christians into this divine unity. Jesus prays for all who will believe in Him:

that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you;

I pray that they may be [one] in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one--

I living in them, you living in me--that their unity may be complete.

50 So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me
(Jn 17.20-23).

Not only our Lord Jesus, but the Father and the Spirit as well, dwell in Christians (cf. Jn 14.17, 23).

Pope Pius XII warns us not to suppose that this intimate unity means that the
55 Christian ceases to be a creature; divine attributes cannot be predicated univocally of created persons (cf. DS 3814/2290). My thesis is that these restrictions are sound, but also that communion by love in God's life is a mystery which cannot any more be reduced to any other way of speaking than to that which is excluded by Pope Pius. In other words, what is revealed about the sharing of Christians in the unity of God is an irreducible
60 truth. One ought not to try to explain it in other categories.[9]

Meister Eckhart, an unorthodox mystic of the later middle ages, held that the Christian is substantially changed into God, that the make-up of the Christian is exactly that of Christ, that the Christian is so united with the divine nature that he or she shares in its immanent processions and in its creative action, and many other absurd
65 theses, including some which approve lax morals. Eckhart's thinking is condemned by Pope John XXII (cf. DS 950-980/501-529).[10] Now, clearly, Christians remain and will remain human persons and of human nature; therefore, their make-up cannot be exactly that of Christ who assumes His created humanity within His divine Personality; nor can there be any question of sharing in the divine processions or in the divine work of
70 creating. Human persons sharing in divinity can no more create than the divine Word sharing in humanity can sin. Without us, He can do everything: He creates. Without Him, we can do nothing: we sin. And sin, precisely insofar as it is evil, is privation, is nonbeing.

Commenting on 1 John 4.17, where it is asserted that Christians are in this world
75 as Christ is, Spicq says:

The clause is not about qualities and virtues or even about states and modes of being in heaven and on earth, but simply about being. The burden of the comparison rests on the verb "to be." Just as he is, so we are. Who is he? He is the

80 object of the disciples' faith, Christ himself, precisely the incarnate Son of God. Jesus is God and man. Similarly, in this world, Christians are both men and gods.[11]

Human persons (who always remain of human nature and always remain creatures and not the creator) by a free self-giving of the divine Persons (which self-giving always presupposes Their own relationships and in no way constitutes them) also in some real way

share--and "share" in an irreducible sense--in divinity.

To speak of the divinization of human persons might seem extreme. But the Fathers of the Church do speak in this way. Athanasius says of the Word: "He became man so that we might be made God" (FEF 752). St. Basil the Great describes the effect of the

5 gift of the Spirit:

Shining upon those who are cleansed of every blemish, He renders them spiritual in a communion with Himself. Just as a sunbeam, falling on light and transparent bodies, makes them exceedingly bright and causes them to pour forth a brilliance from themselves, so too souls which bear the Spirit and which are illuminated by

10 the Spirit become spiritual themselves and send forth grace to others. Hence comes to us foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, discernment of what is hidden, sharing of good gifts, heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of angels, joy without cease, abiding in God, likeness to God, and that which is best of all, being made God (FEF 944).

15 Saint Augustine also says that Christians are deified by grace (cf. FEF 1468). According to Augustine, Christians are distinguished from Christ precisely by this: Christians are sons of God by adoption, having first been human persons, and then becoming what they were not, while Christ "when He was Son of God, came that He might become the son of man" (FEF 1433).

20 From what precedes it seems to follow that in some true sense one can say of created persons who enjoy the grace of adoption that they are God. Thus, we can say: "Mary is God, and Joseph is God, and Peter is God. . . ." Of course, in saying this, one is not using the word "God" in precisely the same sense in which one uses it in saying that the Holy Trinity is God.

25 It also seems to me to follow that in some true sense one can say of certain created persons--those in whom Christ lives and who live in Him--that they not only exercise human capacities in an appropriate and fulfilling way, but somehow also act in union with Christ according to the divine nature in which they share. I suggested this in chapter four, section J, at the end. Why I did so ought now to be somewhat clearer.

30 I think that this conclusion also is supported by a remarkable passage in St. John of the Cross:

Having been made one with God, the soul is somehow God through participation. Although it is not God as perfectly as it will be in the next life, it is like the shadow of God. Being the shadow of God through this substantial transformation,

35 it performs in this measure in God and through God what He through Himself does in it. For the will of the two is one will, and thus God's operation and the soul's is one. Since God gives Himself with a free and gracious will, so too the soul (possessing a will the more generous and free the more it is united with God) gives to God, God Himself in God, and this is a true and complete gift of the soul

40 to God. It is conscious that God is indeed its own and that it possesses Him by inheritance, with the right of ownership, as His adopted son, through the grace of His gift of Himself. Having Him for its own, it can give Him and communicate Him to whomever it wishes. Thus it gives Him to its Beloved, who is the very God who

45 gave Himself to it. By this donation it repays God for all it owes Him, since it willingly gives as much as it receives from him.[12]

The exchange of love, initiated by God in creating humankind, comes to its fulfillment in such unity.

50 Eckhart did not err by claiming too much for the divinization of human persons; rather, he claimed far too little. For with his pantheism, Eckhart thought of divinization as if it removed human nature and personality, and replaced it with the proper Personality of the divine Persons. Eckhart did not see that the Spirit who is the gift of divine love perfects, not destroys, the unique reality of those whom He divinizes.

55 I. The love of God poured forth in our hearts

God's love has not been given to an upright humankind. Rather, from the beginning all men and women were enmeshed in a web of sin, which alienated humankind from God (cf. Rom 3.9-11; 5.12-19). God's love is shown all the more splendidly because He sent His

60 only Son to die for us godless ones (cf. Rom 5.6-8). And so love comes not only as a deifying principle, but first of all as a healing principle. It straightens out what is crooked. It justifies--that is, puts right. God's love is a gift of justification.

Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 3.1-9, 26). One's human life becomes "a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2.20). In Christ one "is a new creation" (2 Cor 5.17). One's life must be that of the

65 "new man created in God's image" (Eph 4.24). The intrinsic principle by which anything is such as it is, is called a "formal cause." Thus roundness is the formal cause of the shape of a ball; whiteness is the formal cause of the color of snow. What is the formal cause of the justification of the

70 Christian? According to the Council of Trent, it is the "'justice of God, not that by which He is just, but that by which He makes us just'" (DS 1529/799). Sinners are justified by a rightness which is not merely attributed to them, but which they receive within themselves as their own, in a measure determined by the will of the Holy Spirit and their disposition and cooperation (cf. DS 1529/799). The love of God is poured forth

75 into hearts by the Holy Spirit and remains in them (cf. DS 1530/800). Christians would not be justified without this inherent love and grace given by the Spirit (cf. DS 1561/821).

The love of God from this point of view is a principle by which the sinner is made right, the Christian is a child of God. This love is not identical with the uprightness

80 of God; it is not identical with the Holy Spirit. The love of God is the Christian's own love, received as a gift, but remaining as a transforming, inherent principle. A Christian's living is straightened out and conformed to Christ by this principle as a ball is shaped by its own roundness.

As I said at the end of the previous section, God's love perfects, not destroys,

the unique reality of those whom He divinizes. God wishes us to share His life, but to be ourselves in sharing it. His love is fatherly, not voracious. His respect for us necessarily follows: He proposes intimacy; He does not execute rape. As St. Irenaeus says: "Not merely in works, but even in faith man's freedom of choice under his own control is preserved by the Lord" (FEF 245). Hence, for anyone who is capable of free choice, there is the possibility of refusing to accept God's love. Aroused and helped by God, one must cooperate by accepting God's proposal (cf. DS 1525/797; 1554/814).

Moreover, continued cooperation is required. The Christian ought to keep God's commandments and do good works; Christians can do as they ought because those who are justified love Christ, and those who love Him keep His word (cf. Jn 14.23; DS 1536/804).

One is justified by faith in Christ in the following sense: Faith is the beginning of one's salvation (cf. DS 1532/801). The sinner must turn to Christ and hear Him; without this he or she cannot become a Christian, and so cannot become a child of God in Christ. Yet after one is justified, the grace of Christ can be lost by mortal sin without the loss of faith; such faith--which is called "dead faith" because it is loveless--is not saving faith (cf. DS 1544/808). The faith which saves is that which one seeks and receives in baptism; it is infused along with hope and charity at the same time sins are remitted (cf. DS 1531/800). This is the faith which works through love (cf. Gal 5.6; 6.15) and keeps the commandments faithfully (cf. DS 1531/800).

God's proposal of intimate communion comes to us in our Lord Jesus; this proposal is the Gospel of Christ. The first work of living faith is the justifying acceptance of this proposal; this act of living faith is the human person's own human act of entering into the kingdom announced by the Gospel. This human act is done by one's own free choice. Now, just as one must have love to have living faith, one must have living faith, which involves a free choice, to have love: "When anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him and he in God" (1 Jn 4.15). This acknowledgement certainly is not an act of dead faith. Thus, living faith presupposes love, and love presupposes living faith. How can this be?

As I shall explain more fully in part four, one hears the Gospel and is prepared to accept it because it is credible. One sees that one ought to believe it and chooses to do so. But before one receives God's love this choice must be made for the sake of a human good--for example, the human good of avoiding God's punishment and enjoying His favor. Having accepted God's proposal, one thereupon receives from Him the gift of love which He offered. Disposed by this gift of love toward the divine goodness which God is and which He shares with His children, one has a new reason for choosing to listen to God and to adhere to Him faithfully, namely, His own goodness. One's choice is thus transformed, not by being a choice to assent to a different Gospel, but by being a differently motivated choice to assent to the Gospel. Out of love of God, not merely out of love of a human good, one chooses to adhere to God revealing Himself in Christ and to be faithful to God by living according to the Gospel.

This explanation clarifies how God's love gently invites, always respects, and finally divinizes human persons. The person enters freely, by his or her own human choice, into the intimate communion. And since one remains a distinct person, this free commitment remains one's own act. Still, so long as one's faith remains living faith, this act really is proportionate to and responsive to God's love. One is not accepting communion on unequal terms. The good shared by God and the soul is common to both, as St. John of the Cross explains in the passage already quoted. Moreover, one who adheres to God with living faith is not seeking eternal life with God for the sake of something other and less than God--a merely human good--but for the sake of the very divine goodness by which one is fulfilled with God.

It will help further to clarify what has just been stated if one considers the question: What does St. Paul mean when he speaks of the love of God which "has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5.5)? Many interpreters take "love of God" to mean God's love for us rather than our love for God. However, St. Thomas takes "love of God" here to refer to our love. The Council of Trent refers to this passage in Paul when it teaches about the charity which is infused by God into our hearts and inheres in them (cf. DS 1530/800). St. John speaks of love in a somewhat similar passage, in which it is clear that the love in question is our love:

Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God;
Everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God.

The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love (1 Jn 4.7-8).

Making reference to Romans 5.5, Spicq comments on the passage just quoted, saying that Paul's meaning is somewhat unclear, but in John's epistle it is clear "that the Christian himself is the lover, for he has become capable of loving divinely." Spicq also says that since the phrases "he who has been begotten by God" and "he who loves" are equivalent, "it is clear that the child of God has received a faculty or power of loving which is inherent in the divine nature he has come to share." [13] In Spicq's view, no sharp distinction should be made between "love of God" meaning God's love and the same phrase meaning our love. Rather, the phrase

. . . represents a genitive of quality, "the love that is truly divine," already mentioned in 1 Jn 3.17. Before being subjective or objective [that is, meaning God's love or ours], love exists in itself as a distinct entity. It is possessed or shared by various persons and consequently has various manifestations, although it always keeps its own nature and essential laws. Perfect, authentic, full agape is described in 1 Jn 4.10. God possesses it supereminently and essentially (v. 8). He communicates it to his children, whom it enables to love their brothers and to love him. Love creates the stable union among all those who share the same divine nature. [14]

Spicq surely does not literally mean that love is a distinct entity prior to God in which He shares. God is His own love. But otherwise this passage seems to me admirably clear. The love of God which is poured forth in our hearts is a disposition to the divine goodness which God is, the goodness which God communicates first in creating, and ultimately in divinizing created persons. By this disposition created persons receive

their own inherent capacity to act according to the divine nature in which they share by God's grace.

As I explained in section B of the present chapter, love is primarily a disposition. It is not an action, but a ground of acting. Human persons naturally and spontaneously love each of the basic human goods described in chapter five, sections G and H. Thus one loves life, truth, one's own self-integration, friendship with other persons, and so on. People even naturally and spontaneously love peace with God, and on this basis people of every human culture do religious acts to try to avoid God's wrath and to win His favor.

By the love of God poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who is given us, we are disposed to love super-naturally and spontaneously the one super-human good, namely, divine goodness. We are disposed supernaturally, because we share by adoption in the divine nature; we share by the Spirit's gift in the love of God, which is the power to act according to the divine nature.

By this power we freely choose out of love of God, not merely out of love of a human good, to accept God's proposal of intimate communion. The first act we do by the love of God poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit is our act of living faith, an act freely accepting this gift and our own participation in divinity.

Were it the case that God at once made His goodness totally evident to us, we not only would love Him spontaneously, but also would have no choice about loving Him. The blessed in heaven cannot sin, cannot fail to love God, because their hearts are so totally enamored with Him that they cannot let Him go. A husband and a wife who do not love one another truly can have sexual intercourse at times with one another, and at other times be unfaithful. However, if a husband and his wife were united permanently in intercourse, enjoying continuously its most intense pleasure, they could never be unfaithful, could never get a divorce. But even in such a situation, people would have a choice about getting married. So we have a choice about entering into communion with God.

A wife who freely married and then entered into lasting intercourse with her husband would not be a victim of rape merely because she would no longer have a choice to leave him. Her love of her husband would be her own, for she would have accepted permanent union by her own choice. One's choices constitute oneself; as I shall explain in part three, choices endure. They are not passing occurrences but makings of oneself to be the person one existentially is. Thus her love always would remain hers, her husband's love his. The very free choices by which they entered communion also would maintain their permanent personal distinction.

Similarly, God's gift of himself to us is an utterly gratuitous gift. We become His children only by His grace, by His utterly free election. At the same time, since we accept God in faith we are His children by our own free choice. This free choice of ours (if we faithfully persevere in love until death) will remain for all eternity. God's love for us is always His, our love for Him will always be ours. The very freedoms by which uncreated Persons and created persons enter into communion maintain and always will maintain their mutual distinction. Thus the love which is the Holy Spirit and the love of God inhering in us are a communing in divinity by persons whose distinctness from each other remains absolute.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is a mystery of love, the wonderful reality of the communicability of divinity. That there are three divine Persons in the one only God shows that divinity is not a monad. A monad is a self-enclosed absolute one, which never could be many without exploding into an infinity of particles and never could gather the many to itself without absorbing them into indistinguishable unity. God is not so. He is One in Three, Three in One. He is love, the perfect exemplar of love, the absolute reconciliation of the one and the many. This reconciliation is what philosophy always seeks and never finds; it is what sinful created persons always long for and never enjoy.

Never, that is, unless these sinful persons are human persons, to whom God's love comes in human flesh to reconcile the unfaithful spouse to her eternally loving Husband. To those who believe in Him, He gives the power to become children of God. This power is God's love poured forth in our hearts by the gift of the Spirit. The uncreated Spirit, the gift of love who recreates us as new men and women in Christ, remains perfectly distinct from the love which inheres in us created persons. Yet by this inherent love we share in divine life. The love God is embraces us, and we really and truly share in this love.

Is this sharing in the love which God is--this sharing which inheres in us as our own love of God--itself something created or is it the very Creator Himself? My answer is: Neither.

It is not the very Creator Himself, for only the Trinity creates. Everything other than the Trinity proceeds from the Father, Son, and Spirit together by Their free choice (cf. DS 1330-1331/703-704). The love of God which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit does not proceed from Him as the Son proceeds from the Father or as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son: that is by an eternal procession without which God cannot exist. The love of God poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him--His having been sent by the Father and the Son--through a sovereign act of the Personal freedom of the Trinity. In this respect, our share in divine love is like a creature, for it wholly depends upon the generous grace of the Holy Trinity.

Yet I do not see how this love can be a mere creature. How can it be something created? Surely, nothing created can be the very love which God is. If the Christian does not share in this very love, in what sense is a Christian really an adopted child of God? Every creature participates in divinity, since every creature is some manifestation of God's goodness and love. But not every creature participates in the very divine nature; not every creature is an adopted member of the eternal Father's family. How could any created gift bring about this unique transformation in created persons? For we remain created persons. In this respect, adopted children of God are altogether other than the divine Persons, who are identical with Their very divinity. We are not

and never can be personally identical with the divine nature. We are children of God by adoption, by participation in His love.

Therefore, I think that the love of God poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit neither is something created nor is the very Creator Himself. Like things
5 created in being the Trinity's free gift, like the divine Persons in being uncreated, this love of God which inheres in us also is diverse from both. It is unique, in a category all by itself, for this love makes created persons sharers in divine life. As I have explained, the opposing relationship between the Trinity's freedom in bestowing
10 Their love on us and our freedom in consenting to share in it--let it be done to me according to Your word--guarantees that there can be no confusion between the divine Persons and us created persons, and also that there can be no absorption of our created personhood into the love which makes us adopted children of God.

What I have just said is a position which, so far as I know, never has been asserted before. For this reason, students should consider this position with great caution.
15 They ought not to propose it to anyone as if it represented the Church's teaching. But I believe it articulates an understanding of the relevant truths of faith, consistent with the Church's teaching, which might one day be accepted as a legitimate development of this teaching. [15]

Of course, the position I propose also sounds self-contradictory. But I am confident that it is not. However, if it is correct, then it expresses an utterly mysterious
20 mystery. The doctrine of our adoption as children of God, as I understand it, is very like the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. In all three cases, unity and multiplicity, which seem absurdly opposed, are perfectly reconciled. Is Jesus God or not? If He is God, must He not be the Father; if He is not the Father, must He not be
25 other than God? In the sense in which this question first arose--in the minds of the Jews who listened to our Lord--Jesus neither is God (the Father) nor not-God (a created person). Is Jesus a man or not? If He is a man, must He not be a human person; if He is not a human person, must He not be God in merely human form? In the sense in which
30 this question first arose--in the minds of many early Christians--Jesus is neither a man (a human person) nor not a man (God veiled in flesh not His own). Similarly, is the love of God in us by which we are His adopted children something uncreated or something created? I am maintaining that it is neither in the sense in which the question has
35 been asked since St. Thomas. It is neither the Creator (the Trinity) nor a mere creature (something other than divine life); it is uncreated (a true sharing in divine life) and yet inherent in us by the free choice of the Trinity (and so a sharing by the grace of adoption, not by nature).

If this explanation of God's love and our sharing in it is correct, then the warning of Pope Pius XII, which I referred to in section H, is really an essential word of
40 truth. The intimate unity which Christians enjoy with God by the love of God given by the Spirit does not make created persons cease to be created persons. Nothing which is said of the Holy Trinity can be said in exactly the same sense of created persons. Communion with God is no pantheistic merging into Him. Eckhart was totally mistaken.

God loves us by an act of His sovereign freedom. We enter into communion with Him freely. Giving and receiving forever unite and forever distinguish. We are God's
45 adopted children. And not only are we not His natural children, as our Lord Jesus is, but we were hateful children of sinful Adam. "See the love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are" (1 Jn 3.1). Like yet unlike our Lord Jesus, who a divine Person is man, we human persons are God.

50 J. A comparison with other views of charity

Without articulating and criticizing in detail other accounts of Christian love, I wish very briefly to point out how different what has been said in this chapter is from
55 some other views.

Some think that love of God is simply a desire to get to heaven. Such a desire follows from love of God, to be sure, but love of God is much more, for it is a sharing
in divine life.

Some think that love of God is simply friendship with Him. True, the concept of friendship has application here. But to reduce love of God to friendship is to miss
60 this love's supernatural meaning. Such a reduction is like thinking of marriage as an economic partnership. Marriage normally is this, but so much more.

Some think that love of God just is love of neighbor, and that to love one's neighbor just is to satisfy his or her human needs. This view underlies the idea that
65 one who loves God will be prepared to do anything necessary in a given situation to satisfy a neighbor's needs--for example, will commit adultery to save a life, will lie to avoid hurt feelings, and so forth. This theory will be discussed at length in due course. Here it suffices to notice that love of God cannot be reduced to love of neighbor, although, as I shall explain in chapter seven, supernatural love of God entails
love of neighbor.

Some think that love is a particular act rather than a disposition to action. This view makes one think of God's love for us as His act and our love for Him as our
70 act, and our loves for our neighbors and ourselves as so many more other acts. This view is based upon a misunderstanding of what love is. This mistaken view is nourished by individualism--the way of thinking which simply does not grasp that persons are made
75 for community. The model of the Trinity should help us to understand how wrong individualism is. Love is not primarily an act directed at a person as shooting is an act directed at a target. It is a disposition toward fulfillment. Such a disposition can be shared by many persons. The argument about selfish and unselfish love can be dissolved if this point is understood.

Some think that "love" means exactly the same thing when it is said of love of God and love of the basic human goods. This view misses the wonder and mysteriousness of
80 the revelation of divine love and God's invitation to sinful creatures to share in it. Moreover, this view inevitably leads to unsolvable conflicts between love of God and love of basic human goods. The false, forced option between secularist humanism and

fideistic supernaturalism, described in chapter three, section D, in no small measure depends upon the logical working out of the implications of this view.

Moreover, because natural human love always requires some fulfilling good other than the love itself, one who thinks of heaven as the consummation of divine love and who does not sufficiently distinguish between natural and supernatural love either will think of heaven as empty or will posit some particular form of human fulfillment to make heavenly happiness humanly interesting. The former approach, a vacuous heaven, makes all talk of love of God pointless. The latter approach, a heaven described in terms of some specific human fulfillment, introduces a division between that human good and all others. This division will make love of God seem a humanly limiting thing. Every description of heaven which more or less approximates the platonic idea of the soul gazing at beauty itself has this sad effect.

Some think that love of God is experienced closeness to God. If one does not have the sentiment, one thinks one does not love God. The fact is that love of God makes possible experiences of communing joyfully with Him, but these are particular acts without which it is possible to love God. Emotionally, one can feel angry at God and alienated from Him yet still love Him; the evidence will be that one is prepared to accept and to do His will despite one's feelings. This situation is not ideal, by any means, but one who is faithful in it rejoices in misery.

Some think that love of God is exclusively His love--His eternally free, totally gratuitous, saving love of sinful humankind. Except for its exclusivity, this view is basically correct, and those who have developed it have unfolded most beautifully a fundamental and always essential part of Christian teaching about God's love. He has the initiative; He is the great lover, not we. But this view, which so perfectly protects those who hold it--mainly Protestants--from all false mysticism and pantheism, is dreadfully incomplete. God loves sinful humankind like a faithful husband who loves his unfaithful wife back to loving him faithfully. Both the fidelity and its fruitfulness in recreating a shattered marriage are unimaginable, but they are real. Thus God's love which is poured forth in our hearts by the gift of the Spirit also inheres in us, as the Council of Trent teaches.

We believe that love of God is something greater than desire for heaven, friendship with God, benevolence toward one's neighbor, actions God and we do, a disposition of one's heart to rest in God rather than in created goods, experienced intimacy with God, and God's loving-kindness toward sinful humankind. The love of God makes us desire heaven, makes us friends of God, makes us do good to our neighbor, makes us interact with God, disposes our hearts to rest in God, allows us to taste His sweetness, and gratuitously redeems us. It does more. It makes us children of God, adopted children who freely assent to be members of the divine family, and who therefore enjoy the glorious liberty to be fully ourselves, to be full human persons.

The account of the love of God articulated in the present chapter has many practical implications. Some of these will emerge in chapter seven, others throughout the remainder of this work. But two important points can be indicated briefly at once.

First, the love of God is a tremendous, incredible, precious gift. For it we can only thank God enough by loving Him perfectly in return, by giving Him back the Spirit, as John of the Cross says. Nevertheless, in this life we still can separate ourselves from the love of God. Nothing can separate us from it (cf. Rom 8.35-39); we can separate ourselves from it by the evil, the privation, the nothing of sin. To sin mortally is to do oneself the greatest possible harm.

Second, the love of God is the model and the energizing principle of human community. I pointed this out in section F, where I proceeded directly from the doctrine of the Trinity to some of its practical implications. Although we truly are children of God, we must continue to live the lives of human persons, enjoying human community.

How are we to do this? How are we to live our human lives--which must be lived here and now in this world--out of the love of God and in the hope of ultimate completion in Christ, when this completion will not be achieved until He comes again? The answer to this question will be sketched out in chapter seven and unfolded in the remainder of this work.

Notes to chapter six

1. See S. González, S.J., *De gratia*, in *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, ed. 4, vol. 3 (Matriti: B.A.C., 1961), p. 603 (tr. III, art. 196).
2. Students who are unfamiliar with the Thomistic analysis of knowledge and appetite might find it helpful to consult one of the standard, textbook treatments. I suggest James E. Royce, S.J., *Man and His Nature: A Philosophical Psychology* (New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961). This work is adequate, no more complicated than necessary, and has the virtue of relating scholastic philosophy of the human person to modern psychology. Royce's references and bibliographies also are helpful.
3. See St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, qu. 26, art. 4.
4. Much of the work of Gabriel Marcel clarifies the basic realities of interpersonal existence. Unfortunately, his writing is diffuse, and one does not find brief treatments of the various aspects of this domain. However, a student would do well to begin with *Home Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1951), especially pp. 13-28.
5. Pending closer examination of the central mysteries of faith in contemplative systematic theology, students ought to familiarize themselves with a sound catechetical presentation of the Church's teaching on matters such as the Trinity. I recommend two catechisms, written for the serious, adult reader: John A. Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism: A Contemporary Catechism of the Teachings of the Catholic Church* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1975); and Ronald Lawler, O.F.M.Cap., Donald W. Wuerl, and Thomas Comerford Lawler, eds., *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1976). The latter work has a good, brief chapter on the Trinity, pp. 174-185, and a good, brief bibliography for this chapter, p. 598.

6. Karl Rahner, S.J., The Trinity, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 103-120, questions the suitability of the concept of "person" in the doctrine of the Trinity. For this purpose, he stresses the otherness of God, but he seems to me to fail sufficiently to bear this otherness in mind when he
- 5 treats the unity of God. Rahner claims that the concept of person is not used in the New Testament and the early Fathers; I consider this claim patently false, since the lack of mention of the word "person" is not lack of use of the concept. The concept is used in all New Testament talk about Father and Son. Despite the insights in Rahner's treatise, I think it ought to be regarded very diffidently, for its unbalanced stress
- 10 seems to me a leaning toward modalism (Sabellianism).
7. Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., Agape in the New Testament, vol. 3, Agape in the Gospels, Epistles and Apocalypse of St. John, trans. Sr. Marie Aquinas McNamara, O.P., and St. Mary Honoria Richter, O.P. (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1966), p. 166.
8. Ibid., p. 35.
- 15 9. Just as various attempts to explain the Incarnation in other categories fail, so do attempts to explain the sharing of God's adopted children in His own life. In both cases, the revealed fact is a contingent one about God; the predication is relational (as all contingent predication about God is), and it tells us not what God is in Himself, but rather that whatever His always-mysterious reality is, God is what He must
- 20 be to bring about realities related to Him as are His Incarnate Son (our Lord Jesus) and His adopted children (Christians). See Bernard Longergan, S.J., De Verbo Incarnato (thesis altera ad decimam), ed. 3 (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1964), pp. 252-255.
10. On Eckhart, see Etienne Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 438-442; bibliography, pp. 755-756; the positions condemned, p. 757.
11. Spicq, op. cit., p. 143.
12. St. John of the Cross, The Living Flame of Love, Stanza 3, 78, in The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio
- 30 Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964), p. 641.
13. Spicq, op. cit., p. 124.
14. Ibid., p. 137.
15. Prior to the time of St. Thomas, it had been suggested that the grace by which a Christian shares in divine life is the Holy Spirit Himself. St. Thomas (with
- 35 others around the same time and since) insists that there must be something inherent in the Christian, assumes that everything other than the Trinity is some created entity, and concludes that grace is a created quality inherent in the soul (cf. In II Sent., d. 26, qu. 1, art. 1; De ver., qu. 27, art. 1; Summa theologiae, 1-2, qu. 110, art. 1 and 2). From the supposition that sanctifying grace is a created entity together with
- 40 the principle that everything created as such relates to God as to a unitary principle, it follows that the Christian life of which grace is the principle involves a relationship to God, not relationships to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, Scripture, the Fathers, and the Liturgy do seem to indicate that Christians relate to the distinct divine Persons. All this had to be written off to appropriation--that is, to a
- 45 manner of talking as if there were distinct relationships when there really are not. To many theologians, the Council of Trent seemed to have adopted the teaching of St. Thomas on grace; Trent certainly makes clear that grace and/or charity inheres in the Christian. But Trent does not say that this principle of divine life in the Christian is caused or created; Trent says it is infused (cf. DS 1529-1531/799-800; 1561/821). And
- 50 it must be noticed that Trent's main concern is to exclude an account of justification which would allow for no real transformation of the justified person--a position the opposite of that which I am taking. More a danger for me is that of false mysticism or of pantheism, against which the condemnation of Eckhart and the warning of Pius XII, cited in the text, speak. But I think I am making adequate distinctions to obviate this danger.
- 55 In recent years, many faithful Catholic theologians have tried to articulate some theory by which the Christian really can be related to the divine Persons indwelling in distinct ways which theologians after Trent, drawing out implications of the Thomistic theory, had to write off to appropriation. It seems to me clear that by denying conclusions logically consequent upon the theory of created grace, these recent theologians
- 60 all implicitly deny the theory, but fail to face this implication of their position. It seems to me that if sanctifying grace/charity is neither the Holy Spirit nor a created quality in the soul, then it must be the adopted child of God's own share in the uncreated divine nature. It should be noted that while I am saying the constitution of the Christian is very like that of Christ, I am not asserting that the Christian is hypostatically
- 65 united with the divine nature. I am saying that the human person who is adopted is united dynamically--in the power to act, not in the person--with the divine nature, which is communicated freely by the Trinity. For essential background and a presentation of the Catholic teaching on grace, along with indications of the problems I am trying to solve, I recommend two works: Henri Rondet, S.J., The Grace of Christ: A Brief History of the
- 70 Theology of Grace, trans. Tad W. Guzie, S.J. (Westminster, Md.; Glenrock, N.J.: Newman Press, 1967), especially pp. 209-248 and 365-377; Robert W. Gleason, S.J., Grace (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962), especially pp. 101-171 and 223-240. A rounded, systematic, clear, and sound treatise on grace, without the same indications of history and problematic, is Michael Schmaus, Dogma, vol. 6, Justification and the Last Things (Kansas City
- 75 and London: Sheed and Ward, 1977), pp. 3-81.

Questions for study and review will be found on p. 6-15.

Questions for study and review

1. Explain the fundamental principle by which the natural and supernatural must be distinguished in Christian life.
- 5 2. Summarize the account of human love provided here.
3. How are selfish and unselfish love distinguished from each other?
4. Summarize the Church's teaching concerning the Holy Trinity. Summarize what I add by way of theological interpretation.
- 10 5. Apply the Trinitarian model of interpersonal relationships to the question of authority and obedience--for example, to the obedience of a priest toward his bishop.
6. Summarize the various moments of God's creative and redemptive activity considered as a work of love. Review chapter one, section F, on revelation as total personal communication, in the light of the present chapter's treatment of God's activity toward us.
- 15 7. What is said in Scripture, in the Fathers, and in other witnesses of faith concerning the status of Christians as adopted children of God?
8. What errors must be avoided in dealing with this question?
9. Summarize the theological speculation proposed here concerning the status of the Christian. State any arguments you can find or think of against this speculation.
- 20