2012

The Concept of Divine Love in the Context of the God-World Relationship

John C. Peckham
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ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOD-WORLD RELATIONSHIP

by

John C. Peckham

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Title: THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOD-WORLD RELATIONSHIP

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Name and degree of faculty adviser: Fernando Canale, Ph.D.

Date completed: July 2012

The love of God is central to God’s relationship to the world. This dissertation addresses the conflict of interpretation between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models regarding divine love in the context of the God-world relationship by applying a canonical methodology. Chapter 1 introduces the background, purpose, problem, scope, and plan of study as well as the final-form canonical theological method employed in the investigation. Chapter 2 briefly surveys the historical theology of love, tracing the central conceptions of divine love and the God-world relationship by selected, highly influential thinkers. Chapter 3 presents and analyzes the irreconcilable interpretations of divine love in relation to the world, and the ontologies that ground them, in the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models. In the former model, divine love is a unilaterial, unmotivated, willed benevolence, while in the latter model divine love is essentially relational, emotional, and primarily passive. Subsequently, a sample of recent reactions to both models demonstrates the current dissatisfaction regarding the
conflict of interpretations, indicating the potential for paradigm change in the theological model of interpreting God's love to the world.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 shift to the investigation of a canonical and systematic model which addresses the issues raised by the conflict of interpretations through the identification and explanation of five primary aspects of God’s love in relation to the world derived from inductive examination of the canon: the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational aspects. Chapters 4 and 5 present the data from a canonical investigation of the data regarding divine love in the OT and NT respectively. The material from the biblical investigation of divine love is utilized to construct a model of divine love that addresses the conflict of interpretations seen in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 summarizes and explains the broad outline of a canonical and systematic model of divine love in relation to the world, with implications for divine ontology and the nature of God’s relationship to the world. The dissertation concludes by summarizing the findings and conclusions of the study and making some recommendations for further study.
THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE GOD-WORLD RELATIONSHIP

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

John C. Peckham
July 2012
Volume 1
THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE CONTEXT
OF THE GOD-WORLD RELATIONSHIP

A dissertation
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John C. Peckham

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB       Anchor Bible
ABD      Anchor Bible Dictionary
AnBib    Analecta biblica
ANE      Ancient Near East
ANET     Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament
ANF      Anti-Nicene Fathers
ANTC     Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BA       Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR    Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BECNT    Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL     Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
Bib      Biblica
BNTC     Baker’s New Testament Commentaries
BSac     Bibliotheca sacra
CBQ      Catholic Biblical Quarterly
ChrCent  Christian Century
CNT      Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
CSR      Christian Scholar’s Review
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<td><em>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EKKNT</td>
<td>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>ExpTim</td>
<td><em>Expository Times</em></td>
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<td>GBWW</td>
<td>Great Books of the Western World</td>
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<td>GNB</td>
<td>Good News Bible</td>
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<td>HALOT</td>
<td><em>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</em></td>
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<td>HBT</td>
<td><em>Horizons in Biblical Theology</em></td>
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<td>HCSB</td>
<td>Holman Christian Standard Bible</td>
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<td>HNCTC</td>
<td>Harper’s New Testament Commentaries</td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td><em>Interpreter’s Bible</em></td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>IDB</td>
<td><em>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>IKZ</td>
<td>Internationale katholische Zeitschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td><em>Journal of the American Oriental Society</em></td>
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<td>JBL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Biblical Literature</em></td>
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<td><em>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</em></td>
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<td>JNES</td>
<td><em>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</em></td>
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<td>JNSL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</em></td>
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<td>JPS</td>
<td>Jewish Publication Society</td>
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<td>JRE</td>
<td>Journal of Religious Ethics</td>
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<td>JSNTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series</td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
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<td>MT</td>
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<td>NAB</td>
<td>New American Bible</td>
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<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>NIDNTT</td>
<td><em>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</em></td>
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<td>NIDOTTE</td>
<td><em>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</em></td>
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<td>NIGTC</td>
<td>New International Greek Testament Commentary</td>
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<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<td>NKJV</td>
<td>New King James Version</td>
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<td>NovT</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum</em></td>
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<td>NP NF</td>
<td><em>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</em></td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>New Testament</td>
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<td>Overtures to Biblical Theology</td>
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<td>OT</td>
<td>Old Testament</td>
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<td><strong>RTR</strong></td>
<td>Reformed Theological Review</td>
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<td><strong>SBLDS</strong></td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
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<td><strong>SJT</strong></td>
<td>Scottish Journal of Theology</td>
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<td><strong>SNTA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SNTSMS</strong></td>
<td>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</td>
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<td><strong>ST</strong></td>
<td>Studia theologica</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TDNT</strong></td>
<td>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</td>
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Profound thanks to Dr. Fernando Canale, the chair of my dissertation committee, who inspired me to the task of investigating and articulating a biblical system of theology which subjects presuppositions to correction by the inner logic of Scripture. I will remain indebted to him for his profound teaching and excellent guidance throughout my graduate education. I am also extremely grateful to Dr. Miroslav Kis and Dr. Roy Gane, who have provided their time and considerable expertise as part of my dissertation committee and have both had a significant impact on my theological growth through their teaching and counsel. Dr. Nicholas Miller was helpful as the internal examiner of this defense, for which I am thankful. A special thanks to Dr. Jerry Walls, Professor of Philosophy, Houston Baptist University, who graciously served as the External Examiner and provided excellent feedback.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

What is the nature of divine love? The importance of this question is apparent by way of the prominence of the concept of divine love in diverse paradigms, worldviews, and theological systems. Many theologians consider divine love to be a central component of God’s nature/character, if not the very essence of God itself. Accordingly, the conflict of interpretations regarding the nature of divine love has large repercussions in the wider doctrine of God and systematic theology. However, there are significant conflicts in contemporary theology with regard to the nature of divine love, the very definition of which is prone to considerable semantic and conceptual ambiguity. While conceptions of divine love vary widely across a vast spectrum, the primary features of the debate over divine love may be illuminated by examination of the differences between two prominent and recent models of divine love in contemporary theology, which I have called the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models.


2 The transcendent-voluntarist model depicts a form of classic theism and the immanent-experientialist model represents a form of panentheism. Since neither classic theism nor panentheism is a monolithic category (that is, there are other conceptions that fit within classic theism and panentheism), I have identified these models more narrowly. Of course, there are also numerous other models that would not fit within either of these models nor under classic theism or panentheism. However, the issues raised by these two models are issues that must be addressed in any model of divine love that pays attention to the
The transcendent-voluntarist model is, in many ways, an offspring of the classical doctrine of God, which described God as utterly transcendent and incapable of pathos. This model of divine love emphasizes the distinction between God and the world, specifically, sovereignty and transcendence. The contemporary proponents of this model reject emotionless impassibility, yet find difficulty in reconciling God’s love with the sovereignty and immutability of God’s will. For this model, love originates in the sovereign will of God. God’s love is not merited or elicited by humans, but is totally gratuitous, nearly identical with grace. Accordingly, God’s love is unmotivated by external factors, and human love toward God does not bring him value. The immanent-experientialist model, on the other hand, stresses that divine love is relational, emotional, and supremely affected. This model of divine love emphasizes the immanent and essential relationship of God with the world. Proponents of this model claim that the problem with the classical view of divine love is a metaphysic which fails to allow for dynamic, relational, and reciprocal love. In contrast, this model posits a loving relationship of contemporary debate.

3 Donald A. Carson frames the issue well when he asks, “What does such love look like in a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign, and transcendent (i.e., above space and time)?” The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 45.

4 “God’s agape is comprehended in voluntary relationships that stem from his creative and compassionate personality. As represented in the Bible God’s love presupposes the exclusive voluntary initiative of the sovereign divine being whom no external power can manipulate.” Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority (6 vols.; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1976), 6:349. This love is inherently rational and primarily volitional.

5 “Here the Lover does not seek to satisfy some personal lack or to remedy an inner need, for God has none, but bestows a benefit on the one he gratuitously loves.” Ibid., 343. The love of God is the motivation of His redemptive work, but it is a purely internal motivation. “We do not bring anything valuable to God—in fact, we acquire value only because we are the recipients of his love.” Leon Morris, Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 142.

6 The mutuality of such love is stressed as Charles Hartshorne states, “To love is to rejoice with the joys and sorrow with the sorrow of others. Thus it is to be influenced by those who are loved.” A Natural Theology for Our Time (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1967), 75.

7 “Using the word ‘love’, they emptied it of its most essential kernel, the element of sympathy, of the feeling of others’ feelings. It became mere beneficence, totally unmoved (to use their own word) by the sufferings or joys of the creatures. . . . A heartless benefit machine is less than a friend.” Charles Hartshorne, Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes (Albany: State University of New York, 1984),
“communion in freedom” which changes the participants. Therefore, God’s love is in the shared experience of suffering (pathos) with the world. Not only is God free but the world is free: “there is an aspect of real chance in what happens” since freedom is seen as the only context for authentic love.

These models depict mutually exclusive conceptions of love as well as mutually exclusive ontologies of God. Moreover, as shall be examined below, the concept of divine love of both models is a logical outgrowth of their respective, competing, divine ontologies. This amounts to an impasse at the level of fundamental theology. In what way, then, could such an impasse be addressed in a productive manner, not only with regard to these models but with regard to the wider issue of divine love? On what basis should theologians decide whether God should be conceived as the Sovereign Will, as the self-surpassing surpasser of all, or as something in between? Many models of love tend to move from divine ontology to particular divine characteristics, the latter being constrained and shaped by the former. However, what if a canonical methodology was applied that afforded epistemological primacy to Scripture, sought the particular characteristics of God therein and, only then, asked: What is God like? This dissertation will do just that by taking the central issue of the nature of divine love and seeking a canonical model which then might shed light on the wider doctrine of God.


9 Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 18. “The traditional assertion that the will of God is the ultimate cause of every event cannot be preserved without qualification, because a will which allows no effective power to any other cannot be a loving will.” D. D. Williams, Spirit, 128. Moreover, “predestination, in the sense of determination by something less than personal will, would destroy the meaning of love.” Ibid., 116.
Problem Statement

The concept of the love of God occupies an important place within the doctrine of God, with abundant implications regarding theology proper and, consequently, wider systematic theology. The specific problem to be addressed in this dissertation is the significant contemporary theological conflict regarding the precise nature of divine love. The transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models assert irreconcilable interpretations of divine love in the context of the God-world relationship. In the former model, divine love is a unilateral, unmotivated, willed benevolence, while in the latter model divine love is essentially relational, emotional, and primarily passive. The nature of the conflict between these two models highlights the primary issues regarding the nature of love throughout contemporary theology.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this dissertation is to address the conflict of interpretation between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models regarding the conception of divine love within the context of the God-world relationship. Specifically, this research seeks to analyze the nature of the conflict of interpretations between the two representative models, investigates the source and causes of that conflict, and applies a canonical method as a means to address the conflict of interpretations and better understand the broader issue of divine love.

Scope and Delimitations

A comprehensive investigation of the historical theology of divine love is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Accordingly, after a brief survey of the historical theology of love by way of a few major exemplars, the issues will be addressed within models which themselves will be approached through highly regarded representatives of the respective positions, along with selected input from other proponents.\textsuperscript{10} Carl F. H. Henry will represent the transcendent-

\textsuperscript{10} The use of models as an aid to grasping and dealing with major streams of thought is well
voluntarist model due to the immense influence and wide impact of his theology.\(^{11}\) Charles Hartshorne will represent the immanent-experientialist model, since his highly influential view of process ontology is laid out extensively in direct opposition to classical ontology.\(^{12}\) Exemplars of other, nuanced positions will also be engaged. An exhaustive analysis of these theologians will not be attempted. Rather, the focus of the analysis will be on their expressed concept of divine love with emphasis on the God-world relationship.

Rather than approaching the entire conception of love, or even that of divine love, this dissertation is interested specifically in the love of God in the context of the God-world relationship. Metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological issues will be addressed only as they relate to the conception of divine love. Moreover, the large and growing field of trinitarian theology is not the focus of this study. Intra-trinitarian theology is addressed to the extent that it sheds light on the nature of God’s love in relationship to the world. Although the reality of intra-trinitarian divine love entails vital information, the nature and operation of this love is secondary, in this research, to the love between God and other than God. Moreover, the loving actions of attested. For instance, David Tracy comments that the use of models becomes imperative due to the complex situation of theology and thus “a widely accepted dictum in contemporary theology is the need to develop certain basic models or types for understanding the specific task of the contemporary theologian.” David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 22. D. D. Williams employs a similar methodology, with regard to historical analysis, to this topic of divine love which he calls a “typological method” as “an instrument of analysis . . . to sharpen and organize significant aspects of the data.” *Spirit*, 52. Excellent examples of a similar use of models or types include Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love: A Study in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992); Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 1999); and H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951). For a further discussion of the use of models, see Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962); Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic and God* (New York: Harper, 1961); and Ian T. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

\(^{11}\) In his six-volume work *God, Revelation, and Authority*, C. F. H. Henry explicitly lays out both his ontology and his conception of divine love thus providing excellent material to explore the interrelationship of ontological suppositions and the meaning and nature of divine love. The contours of his thought on these issues are representative of the scholars in the transcedent-voluntarist model.

\(^{12}\) Moreover, Hartshorne adopts love as the central category of being and explicitly identifies this with the nature of God in numerous discussions. His thought forms much of the foundation that other scholars of the immanent-experientialist model build on.
God are not focused upon due to the lack of an objective way to delimit which actions would receive treatment. Indeed, one could make the case that all God’s actions are loving. That is, God’s actions are always good and appropriate to the state of affairs in accordance with his love. It should be noted here, then, that God’s love is consistently manifested in action throughout the canon, though such actions are not identical with love itself. In this work, actions appear as they relate to the specific questions of this dissertation.

The investigation of canonical data will be limited to information that relates to the conception of divine love in relationship to the world. Accordingly, the texts to be examined will be selected in relationship to questions that directly bear on integral aspects of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models. Furthermore, a full exegesis of each text will not be attempted, nor will this dissertation attempt to produce an exhaustive conception of divine love. Rather, this study is limited to the articulation of the outline of a biblical model that may serve as a blueprint of divine love in the God-world relationship.

Plan of Study

Methodological Steps

The first methodological goal will be an analytical description of each model’s view of divine love in order to clearly identify the conflict of interpretation. The second methodological goal will seek to uncover the causes that are explicitly or implicitly involved in the construction of these two conceptions of divine love in the context of the God-world relationship. Closely related to the main conflict of these models are the issues of divine ontology. The nature of God and God’s relationship to the world has come under increasing debate in scholarship, which has

13 These questions are extracted from the conflict of interpretations investigated in chapter 3. See the brief discussion of these questions below in this chapter.

14 Such a model will outline the contours of divine love in a systematic manner and will serve as a heuristic tool, with the recognition that it will not be exhaustive and includes the potential for distortion. In this way, the model itself is open to and encourages revision based on the implications of continued biblical research by myself and others.
pointed out the vital importance of underlying ontological suppositions. Furthermore, it is increasingly recognized that by nature, conceptions of divine love are directly related to these ontological suppositions. This suggests the possibility that conceptions of divine love may be by-products of the underlying epistemology and ontology, which themselves are often derived from presupposed philosophical systems. Both the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-
experientialist models repeatedly employ ontological language in their descriptions of divine love. In this way, both appeal to ontological suppositions, whether explicitly or implicitly, to support and express their respective conceptions of divine love.\(^{18}\) Therefore, the conflict of interpretation regarding the conception of divine love seems to spring from a deeper, underlying conflict of ontological interpretations about the being of God and God’s relation to the being of the world.

The present conversation about divine love is by no means limited to these two models (as shall be seen in chapter 3) and a survey of this issue suggests significant dissatisfaction with the status quo. The growing interest and research regarding ontological suppositions in theology, coupled with the contemporary conflicts regarding divine love specifically, signifies the emergent potential for a paradigm change as it relates to this issue.

As a third methodological goal, this dissertation proposes to seek a way out of the conflict of interpretations on divine love by analyzing the biblical data regarding divine love. This will consist of a fresh study of the biblical text regarding divine love, which does not assume either ontology of models in question, but rather, intentionally brackets out (epoché) extra-biblical ontological presuppositions relating to divine love.\(^{19}\) This should expose a model of divine love, situated within an ontology that is implied in the Bible, which may help overcome concept of divine love and preclude another. Accordingly, certain aspects of divine love may call for a revision of ontological suppositions. In the unraveling of these issues, methodology plays a prime role.

\(^{18}\) In the immanent-experientialist model such language is explicitly and intentionally used to critique the classical ontology. The transcendent-voluntarist model may not explicitly identify the underlying assumptions of God’s timelessness and perfection with ontology. Nevertheless, whether used implicitly or explicitly, underlying conceptions regarding God’s nature are, by definition, ontological.

\(^{19}\) Epoché refers to suspension of judgment and is used philosophically to describe the intent to describe phenomena apart from presuppositions. Farber states on such a method “phenomenological reduction makes possible the final elucidation of all elements of knowledge and experience by enabling us to get back and to the bottom of all presuppositions” which “makes possible a truly descriptive philosophy.” Marvin Farber, “The Ideal of a Presuppositionless Philosophy,” in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl* (ed. Marvin Farber; New York: Greenwood, 1968), 62. For a further discussion of epoché see Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965).
the theological conflict. This inverts the prevalent order by investigating the nature of divine love prior to the supposition of a pre-existing and developed ontology. In the interpretation and analysis of the biblical data, a final-form canonical approach will be utilized, which will employ *tota scriptura* on the concept of divine love. In this way, the canon as a whole will provide the content for a model of divine love which sheds light on an implicit biblical ontology and provides implications for the God-world relationship.

**Annotated Outline**

After this chapter, the study continues in chapter 2 with a brief historical survey of divine love which traces the central conceptions of divine love and the God-world relationship by a few selected, highly influential, thinkers. Next, in chapter 3, the exemplars of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models will be engaged to analyze their views on divine love in relation to the world as well as the ontologies that ground their conceptions. Subsequently, a sample of recent reactions to both models will demonstrate the current dissatisfaction regarding the conflict of interpretations, indicating the potential for paradigm change in the theological model of interpreting God’s love to the world. In chapters 4, 5, and 6 the study will shift to the investigation of a canonical and systematic model that addresses the issues raised by the conflict of interpretations. Chapters 4 and 5 present the data from an extensive canonical investigation of the data regarding divine love in the OT and NT respectively. The material from the biblical investigation of divine love is then utilized in the construction of a model of divine love that

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20 As Vanhoozer notes, “There has been a tendency in Western theology to discuss the divine attributes—the properties or qualities that make God God—in abstraction from the biblical stories about God’s speaking and acting in the history of Israel and Jesus Christ.” *Remythologizing*, 70. In his project to remythologize theology Vanhoozer asks: “What must God be like in order to do what the Bible depicts him as doing with words: creating, commanding, promising, consoling?” Ibid., 3. This work asks a similar question with regard to the nature of divine love.

21 This approach looks for a unified worldview (specifically on divine love) that may be discovered in the biblical data, due to a belief in the inherent unity of Scripture, due to its divine revelation and inspiration. This methodology will be discussed in more detail below.
addresses the conflict of interpretations seen in chapter 3. Chapter 6 will then reveal the broad outline of a canonical and systematic model of divine love in relation to the world, with implications for divine ontology and God’s relationship to the world. Finally, the dissertation will conclude with the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

**Theological Method: A Final-Form Canonical Approach**

In order to seek a systematic model of divine love that might address the issues raised by the conflict of interpretations this study utilizes a final-form canonical approach to systematic theology. This approach accepts the biblical canon as the basis of Christian doctrine and thus reserves epistemological primacy for the canon as divine self-revelation.

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22. A final-form approach means that the canonical text is approached in the extant form(s) available due to the lack of access to a complete, original, final form. As such, attention is directed to the received corpus of canonical texts and not to non-manuscript-based reconstructions of the text(s). At the same time, the best findings of textual criticism in recovering the original text should not be excluded.

23. Here, the “canon” refers to the 66 OT and NT books that are recognized most widely throughout Christianity. While some may wish to include other books or traditions, the authority of the 66 books finds wide agreement since the 39 OT books are accepted as canonical throughout Judaism and Christianity and the 27 NT books are accepted across Christian denominations. I believe the 66 book canon has been correctly recognized (intrinsic canon) but not determined by the community (community canon) as I have described elsewhere. See John C. Peckham, “The Canon and Biblical Authority: A Critical Comparison of Two Models of Canonicity,” *TJ* 28, no. 2 (2007): 229–49, and “Intrinsic Canonicity and the Inadequacy of the Community Approach to Canon Determination,” *Them* 36 (2011): 203–15. Nevertheless, one need not subscribe to this view of the scope of the canon in order to implement the approach suggested here.


25. Although it is beyond the scope of this work to justify the authority of Scripture in systematic theology, there are plausible reasons for such a selection, not least of which is the conviction of the vast majority of Christians who attribute some degree of authority to Scripture. Moreover, calls for further collaboration of biblical theology in systematics have been growing. Here the selection of Scripture is admittedly a presupposition, the validity of which is open to question; nevertheless it seems at least as valid as any other starting point. In this regard, it is worth noting that postmodern epistemology has overcome the strictures of logical positivism, thus opening an alternative to evidentialism, that of faith. As Vanhoozer puts it: “Instead of making robust claims to absolute knowledge, even natural scientists now view their theories as interpretations.” Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 19. Cf. Fernando Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2001), 9. As such, all epistemology requires the selection of a starting point. This is not to say that all choices are equally adequate or valuable but, rather, that it is not necessary (and perhaps not possible) to provide a defense of one’s epistemological starting point *a priori*. Therefore, as Canale states, “If the
Canonical Correspondence and Coherence

Two criteria of adequacy pertain to this canonical approach: correspondence to the canon and internal coherence. Canonical coherence seeks a system that is internally consistent and lucid. Such an approach entails a sympathetic reading of the canon where the congruity of meaning of the ultimate framework for intelligibility rests on human choice, why not choose divine revelation as available in Scripture? Ibid., 10. Further, the objection that theism should not be selected as a starting point also founders in light of postmodern epistemology since, as Anthony C. Thiselton points out, “non-theism or positivism is no more value-free than theism.” “Canon, Community, and Theological Construction,” in Canon and Biblical Interpretation (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006), 4. This is not necessarily the same as epistemological presuppositionalism, a perspective that nevertheless is of interest and could be compatible with this approach. See Cornelius Van Til, A Christian Theory of Knowledge (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), and Gordon Haddon Clark, Religion, Reason, and Revelation (2d ed.; Jefferson, Md.: Trinity Foundation, 1986). C. F. H. Henry, the exemplar of the transcendent-voluntarist model, explicitly adopts Scripture as the ground of theology saying: “The legitimacy of what we may say about God’s being, essence, nature, substance, attributes, or whatever else, stems solely from the living God who makes himself known and from the divinely inspired Scriptures.” God, Revelation, 5:49. On the other hand, Hartshorne (the exemplar of the immanent-experientialist model) does not himself recognize the normativity of the canonical text but does recognize its potential (but not a priori validity) for theological reflection: “A theology which in principle accepts revelation as affording knowledge to those able to assimilate it may have light to throw upon truths otherwise likely or perhaps certain to be missed or seen less clearly.” Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1964), 67. For him, however, nature “is the real ‘word of God’ concerning the general structure of the cosmos.” Omnipotence, 73.


Compare Grant R. Osborne’s criteria of validity according to his critical realism, including the “criteria of coherence, comprehensiveness, adequacy, and consistency” and, he adds, durability. The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (2d ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006), 398.

Coherence is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for adequacy since, short of exhaustive knowledge, more than one system can at least appear to be internally coherent.

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diverse texts is sought without injury to the meaning of individual texts and pericopes. As a starting point, then, this approach subscribes to the canon’s own claims to internal coherence and thus looks for internal consistency “while conscientiously dealing with areas of perceived or apparent tension.”

The historical rationale for approaching the canonical text, written by numerous different authors in different times and places, as mutually consistent and complementary stems from the view that canonical texts were written from within the stream of canon that preceded them such that their successive human authors were overtly influenced, having their preunderstanding shaped by existing canon and consciously intended faithfulness to preceding canonical writings. The theological rationale for such an approach affirms the

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28 Peckham, “Analogy,” 49. On the other hand, some have suggested that, for the sake of legitimate, critical study, any presupposition of the truthfulness of the text should be set aside. See John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2007). However, why not first look for the coherence and consistency in the text, not assuming it uncritically, but looking for it rigorously? It seems that a decision to approach the text in this manner is no less arbitrary than the decision to expect incongruence in the text. Where apparent problems arise they should be duly noted and not glossed over but oftentimes even these, in light of further examination, do not rule out overall consistency (not simplistic identicality). In this way, the diversity and polyphony of the text does not necessarily equate with a cacophony of voices. Daniel J. Treier, “Scripture, Unity of,” *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 733. On the other hand, James Sanders contends, “Consistency is a mark of small minds.” *Canon*, 46. However, the rush to judgment of naiveté or simplicity against those who look for unity and coherence in the canon might be premature and at times may even rely upon a hyper positivistic and simplistic reading—a kind of reverse proof-texting intended to prove disunity, which is no more helpful than the out-of-context proof text in favor of consistency that ignores the textually conveyed and controlled intentions of the canon. Indeed: “Critical scholarship in this sense is often more ‘literalistic’ than are conservative scholars in that it often assumes that any so-called contradiction or difference between biblical writers removes the basis for a deeper theological unity between them.” Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 350. On the contrary, where tensions arise there might be an “underlying unity,” despite a “different level of perception.” I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 30. So Osborne, *Hermeneutical*, 357. As such, the canon may be approached as a unified composition while recognizing the diversity stemming from human authorship and various historical contexts. On the other hand, one who does not subscribe to the divine revelation and/or inspiration of the canon may still follow such an approach by (temporarily) suspending judgment about the congruity of the canon.

29 This does not necessarily mean that congruity exists (though I believe it does), nor does it exclude diversity and multivalency, but nevertheless points to the legitimacy of looking for coherence in the canon since earlier parts of the canon provided the context and contributed to the shaping of later parts of the canon. For example, when Isaiah writes and calls for correspondence to the “law and to the prophets” he is appealing to the in-process “canon” as the context of proper prophetic speech (Isa 8:20). This is not necessarily the case for all authors, but for those who do subscribe to the divine revelation and/or inspiration of the canon, the earlier parts of the canon may still form the context and contribute to the shaping of later parts of the canon. For example, when Isaiah writes and calls for correspondence to the “law and to the prophets” he is appealing to the in-process “canon” as the context of proper prophetic speech (Isa 8:20).
canonical claim that Scripture is divinely revealed and inspired and is, as such, a unified (though not monolithic) document; not merely the words of humans but the word of God (cf. 2 Tim 3:16; 1 Thess 2:13).¹³⁰ The canon itself contains numerous examples that provide the basis of something like a canonical approach.¹³¹

message” such that the “the whole work, almost exactly half of the Hebrew Bible, was the end product of [a] single mind or compiler (or a very small committee, like the one that produced the famous King James Version of the Bible),” David Noel Freedman, Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, and Michael M. Homan, The Nine Commandments: Uncovering a Hidden Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1, 164. Contra Sanders who dismisses any “discreet genius” redactor or master weaver hypothesis. Canon, 29-30. Consider also Hans W. Frei’s proposal of the unity of narrative, which gathers Scripture as part of an overarching story, a realistic narrative in contrast to referential reading, in The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974).


¹³¹ The canonical writings themselves contain the notion of canon in the limited sense of “rule” or “standard.” The intention recognized in the Bible to be read as canon does not itself prove its canonicity but does provide the necessary condition for such a canonical approach. Many instances of the OT demonstrate the intention for the writings to have a continuing, authoritative function like unto a rule or standard. Perhaps the capstone statement comes from Isa 8:16, 20, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples” (Here and elsewhere, unless otherwise noted all biblical quotations are from the NASB). Verse 20 adds, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” Moses, per divine instruction (Exod 17:14), wrote the law and gave it to the priests (Deut 31:9) who were to assemble the people to encourage them “to be careful to observe all the words of this law” (Deut 31:12). Cf. Josh 1:8; 23:6; 1 Kgs 2:3; Neh 8:8–18; 9:3. Throughout the OT, the prophets continually called the people to “hear the word of the Lord” (Amos 3:1; Jer 2:4; Ezek 6:3; Hos 4:1). Furthermore, over and over NT writers appeal to OT writings as authoritative (Rom 4:3), including Jesus himself (Luke 10:26). In the NT, 2 Tim 1:13 exhorts to “retain the standards of sound words which you have heard from me” (Cf. 2 Thess 2:15; 3:14; Titus 1:9; 2 John 9–10; Jude 3). Jesus counseled to hear his words and do them, likening those who do to one who builds on the rock and one who does not to one who builds his house on the sand (Matt 7:24, 26). Moreover, Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, utilizes Moses and all the prophets to explain “the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27, 44; cf. Matt
Beyond coherence, this approach seeks discernible correspondence to the canonical data.\textsuperscript{32} That is, this canonical and systematic approach seeks the maximum achievable correspondence to the intention \textit{in} the text that is discernible, demonstrable, and defensible.\textsuperscript{33} As such, theological construction must not be isolated from exegetical considerations but based upon them while at the same time taking care to avoid extra-canonical presuppositions that might unduly affect interpretation.\textsuperscript{34} The intention \textit{in} the text is the effect of authorial (divine and human) intent in writing that text but not identical to authorial intent. While the text inscripturates, to some degree, authorial intention, one has only the effect of that intention (the text) as object of investigation.\textsuperscript{35} It is thus the job of the interpreter to find the intent that is

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5:17–18). Elsewhere Jesus teaches that the Scriptures testify of him and that one who believes Moses should believe him; conversely if one does not believe Moses it is clear why one does not believe him (John 5:39, 46–47). Paul contends that he believes “everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14; cf. 2 Cor 4:2). Moreover, belief is to be in accordance with the gospel preached by the apostles, which is not their own message but itself received from the Lord (Gal 1:8–12). In this way, the early Christians were “continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42; cf. Titus 3:8). In 1 Thess 2:13 it states, “we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted \textit{it} not as the word of men, but \textit{for} what it really is, the word of God.” In Acts 17:11 the Bereans are commended for their commitment to the Scriptures, “for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily \textit{to see} whether these things were so.” The importance of Scripture, its inspiration and essential function, is also unequivocally stated in 2 Tim 3:16 (cf. 2 Pet 1:19).

\textsuperscript{32} The importance of correspondence to Scripture is widely recognized. For example, Wayne A. Grudem states, “Theology should be explicitly based on the claims of Scripture.” \textit{Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 15. Cf. Scalise, \textit{Scripture}, 17.

\textsuperscript{33} There is no method that will mechanically distinguish adequate interpretations from inadequate ones. Thus, it is acknowledged that subjectivity as to what is adequate will remain, but the interpreter attempts to provide interpretation that might be discernible by, and demonstrable to, others. Such interpretations should continually be subjected back to the text in a hermeneutical spiral.

\textsuperscript{34} In this regard, see the discussion of hermeneutical and phenomenological exegesis below.

\textsuperscript{35} However, the text itself is not identical to the complexity, comprehensiveness, and exhaustiveness of the author’s intention including the author’s consciousness at the time of writing. Since the author’s consciousness at the time of writing is not an available object of examination (indeed it is lost even to the human author in subsequent moments), appeal to intent that is beyond or behind the text (that is, not textually discernible) is speculative. So Jean Grondin, \textit{Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics} (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), 73. This approach thus rejects the unfortunate dichotomy between what the text \textit{meant} and what the text \textit{means}. The former is unrecoverable in its entirety but is the cause of the text, itself the grounding of the latter. As such, the legitimate contemporary meaning in the text cannot be separated from the original meaning \textit{in} the text insofar as that can be discovered. Consider the debate between Krister Stendahl and Avery Dulles on this issue, especially the
preserved and discernible in the text and thereby interpret the meaning in the text, insofar as possible.36 Accordingly, this approach adopts a hermeneutical (critical) realist perspective37 “while recognizing that the interpreter brings his/her own horizon to the text such that explicating


Therein Vanhoozer points out that pebbles formed by waves into words would not be considered text by anyone. Rather, text requires an ordering agent, the author. Thus, for him, “‘the sense of the text’ is logically inseparable from ‘the intention of the author.’” Meaning, 109.

37 “The ‘hermeneutic realist’ holds that there is something prior to interpretation, something ‘there’ in the text, which can be known and to which the interpreter is accountable. By contrast, the hermeneutic nonrealist (e.g., Derrida, Fish) denies that meaning precedes interpretative activity; the truth of an interpretation depends on the response of the reader.” Vanhoozer, Meaning, 26. In other words, hermeneutical realism believes that there is meaning in the text that exists objectively (independent of the interpreter). Cf. Stephen Mailloux, “Rhetorical Hermeneutics,” Critical Inquiry 11 (1985): 620-641, and E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967). Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer’s seminal view that meaning is not located merely in authorial intent but in a “fusion” of the textual and interpreter’s horizons such that the reader cannot fully recover the meaning of the text objectively since the interpreter’s horizon always contributes to the interpretation due one’s historically effected consciousness (wirkungs geschichtliches Bewusstsein), in Truth and Method (trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall; New York: Continuum, 2004). For a variation of the issue of the horizon or intention of the text see Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 30. While this canonical approach recognizes that one’s interpretation is always more than the objective meaning of the text due to the horizon of the interpreter, it insists that the interpreter’s horizon is not a valid contributor to meaning but should continually be subjected to the text. Here, the search is for the meaning in the text, which is an important nuance beyond the approach that seeks the determinate meaning of authorial intention itself. See C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:403, and Walter C. Kaiser, Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 32. Their view is largely in keeping with the view of Hirsch in Validity. Such attempts to reach the author’s intent have been roundly criticized; consider the seminal article by William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” in The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 3–18. For an excellent discussion of the various issues involved with regard to intention and the location of meaning see Vanhoozer, Meaning.
the meaning in the text is an imperfect, complex, and continual process, which the interpreter must recognize and apply in an ongoing hermeneutical spiral.”  

In this approach the text as canon is always the source that the interpreter seeks to understand rather than replace as well as the objective control to which interpretation seeks to conform. Accordingly, in the absence of either internal coherence or canonical correspondence, the interpreter should return to the canonical data to identify and correct any discrepancy.

Since this approach focuses on textual and intertextual interpretation of the canon as a unified, literary document in accordance with the analogy of Scripture (analogia Scripturae) less consideration is given to questions of introduction (isagogics) and more consideration to the theological interpretation of Scripture.  

Accordingly, the canonical approach includes exegesis as a crucial starting point for the gleaning of biblical data but transcends its limitations, especially in looking “beyond (without overlooking) the limits of individual texts and pericopes, toward the entire canon.”  

It further transcends biblical theology insofar as that discipline refers to the compilation and summary of an exegesis of particular books or themes. It includes such exegesis and compilation of biblical data but utilizes that data in the quest for the “patterns and inner logic of the texts in relation to the whole canonical text” without dismissing the complexity of the

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38 Peckham, “Analogy,” 51. Here and elsewhere, I use the term “spiral” in Osborne’s sense to refer to the process of going back and forth between various components (i.e., text and context, interpreter’s horizon and the text’s horizon), which mutually correct one another, avoiding vicious circle and thereby moving closer and closer to the intended meaning in the text. In this way, “continuous interaction between text and system forms a spiral upward to theological truth.” Osborne, Hermeneutical, 392. That the text is distinguished from its author and from its interpreter(s) should not lead to separation or autonomy, but differentiation; what we have is the text, nothing more, nothing less. Thus the text is to be interpreted without naïvely believing one’s interpretation always gets past one’s own limited horizon while nevertheless seeking the horizon (the thought world) of the text, not to get behind the text but to make sense of it. “The goal of understanding better, conceived in terms of an unreachable telos and the impossibility of complete understanding, bears witness to the fact that the endeavor to interpret more deeply is always worthwhile.” Grondin, Introduction, 71.

39 This in no way excludes the importance of isagogics and other, related disciplines but simply limits (at least at first) the focus of the canonical investigation to the text itself. See Meir Weiss, The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984).

texts. As such, the product of such a canonical approach is not merely an outline of biblical data. Rather, the systematician asks theological questions of the canon and seeks text-based and text-controlled answers from the canonical data itself rather than from extra-biblical sources or presuppositions.

Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Exegesis

This process is further clarified by Fernando Canale’s distinction between hermeneutical and phenomenological exegesis. Hermeneutical exegesis refers to the philological and historical dimensions of the exegetical method, whereas phenomenological exegesis refers to interpretation that goes beyond a particular pericope in seeking the canonical horizon that impacts the meaning of the text(s). As such, phenomenological exegesis utilizes exegetically derived canonical data in order to uncover the first principles of reality that are implicit in the canon and, in so doing, addresses the conflict between the interpreter’s presupposed (whether conscious or unconscious) metaphysical framework and that which is constitutive of the internal logic of the canon by

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41 Ibid. Canonical primacy here includes high regard for the canonical details, which means that one should not flatten the meaning of individual texts in order to fit them within a broader system. Rather, both limited texts and pericopes and broad, overarching readings are utilized to inform one another. All the while, this approach recognizes that a method of analogy “can lead to an overemphasis on the unity of biblical texts,” resulting in “artificial conformity” that ignores the diversity of expression and emphasis between divergent statements in the Bible.” Donald A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, Scripture and Truth (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1983), 361. Cf. James Barr, The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996); and Walter Brueggemann, Old Testament Theology: An Introduction (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2008).

42 That is, the answers to theological questions must be demonstrably derived from the canonical data. On the importance of questions to meaning see Gadamer’s contention regarding the dialectic of question and answer that makes up the “hermeneutic urphenomenon”: “no assertion is possible that cannot be understood as an answer to a question, and assertions can only be understood in this way.” Gadamer, Truth, 11.

43 See Canale, Revelation-Inspiration, 149.

44 See ibid., 148. It is essential to note that this phenomenological method differs from the ontological suppositions of Husserl, particularly his premise that reality is grounded in human perception. Here phenomenological methodology responds to the need to continually criticize and re-form (and in this way suspend) one’s preunderstanding on the basis of the engagement of the phenomena of the canonical text.
continually subjecting the interpreter’s horizon to the canonical horizon. Accordingly, this approach “brackets out [epoché], as much as possible, the interpreter’s preunderstanding in favor of the preunderstanding required by the text in its pericope as well as the text as canon, thus allowing the canon to provide its own metaphysical framework.” In this way, phenomenological

45 As such, the first principles of theology are not presupposed or derived from existing philosophical systems. Fernando Canale has correctly criticized the apparent priority given to philosophical systems “as the main provider of the ‘system’ or intellectual framework for the development of Protestant theology.” Revelation-Inspiration, 53. Similarly, Brevard S. Childs adds, “For systematic theologians the overarching categories are frequently philosophical. The same is often the case for biblical scholars even when cloaked under the guise of a theory of history.” Biblical, 158. Osborne similarly recognizes that “all decisions are filtered through a network of tradition and preunderstanding, which itself exerts tremendous influence on our interpretations and choices. To this extent, each decision we make is provisional, and we must establish a continual dialogue between tradition and biblical text in the spiral upward to truth.” Osborne, Hermeneutical, 396. Canale thus contends: “Inner coherence should drive Christian theology to conceive and formulate its presuppositional structure employing a biblical rather than philosophical or scientific interpretation.” Revelation-Inspiration, 149. Here, while the tools of philosophy, especially with regard to questions and analysis, may be utilized, the “data” and “answers” of philosophical systems are not afforded epistemological weight but always subjected to the canon. Compare Jay Wesley Richards’s contention that the Christian doctrine of God must be derived “not simply from general metaphysical intuitions . . . but from unique, contingent things that God has done in history and, in particular, in Jesus Christ.” The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Immutability, and Simplicity (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 30. He adds that such a concept of God must be biblically normative and affirm the principle of perfection and the sovereignty-aseity of God. Ibid., 32–33. However, what if the “Principle of Perfection” and/or the “Sovereignty-Aseity Conviction” conflicts with a canonical ontology of God? On this, see the brief discussion of the way of eminence later in this chapter. As Maier puts it: “Every hermeneutic will be grounded in certain metaphysical convictions. . . . The question is ‘which presuppositions are justified?’ The question is ‘which assumptions are legitimate?’” Biblical, 46.

46 Again, epoché refers to suspension of judgment and is used philosophically to describe the intent to describe phenomena without presuppositions (see the brief discussion above). As Canale states, “In this phase of data interpretation, exeges and theologians cancel out all previously inherited theories that could prove to be hindrances to the understanding of Scripture.” Revelation-Inspiration, 149. Osborne adds, “The key is to ‘bracket’ out our own beliefs and to allow the other side to challenge our preferred positions. This will drive us to examine the biblical data anew and to allow all passages on the topic to have equal weight.” Hermeneutical, 373. In this vein, Vanzhoozer speaks of the interpreter “indwelling” the text, which means that “interpreters pour themselves out, at least temporarily, for the sake of understanding the other.” Meaning, 349. To be sure, despite the intent to overcome them, preunderstandings remain and that is why the hermeneutical spiral is ongoing and never complete, ever moving toward a more canonical metaphysical framework in place of the interpreter’s horizon. Thus, while looking at the text hermeneutically to ascertain the textual intent (both divine and human) it also looks at the ontological suppositions that provide the framework (environment) for the text’s communication. The understanding of this implicit worldview will only add to, not reduce, the hermeneutical content. As such, this approach contrasts with Sachkritik or content criticism, which makes the interpreter supplement the meaning of the author. Here, the interpreter merely seeks the answers to metaphysical questions that the text requires, which of course is a complex task considering there may be multiple metaphysical options that could fit a text, which again magnifies the usefulness of the canonical context as a whole. For an Evangelical criticism of Sachkritik see I. Howard Marshall, “An Evangelical Approach to ‘Theological Criticism,’” Them 13 (1988): 79–85. Likewise, this approach takes care to avoid the imposition of a “canon within the canon” in favor of tota scriptura, cognizant of the criticism that all theological communities supposedly make use of
exegesis complements, rather than excludes, hermeneutical exegesis by way of reciprocal interdependence since the former keeps the canonical horizon in view while the latter’s focus on individual verses and pericopes “contributes to and corrects the wider metaphysical framework” of the interpreter in an ongoing spiral that does not subvert the multivalency of the text(s). Therefore, these complementary categories of exegesis address the two hermeneutical circles (that of the text and the interpreter as well as the canonical parts and whole) from the standpoint of the epistemological primacy of the final-form canon for systematic theology.

Overall, this final-form canonical approach uses the canon as the theological source from which answers are derived to theological questions toward the articulation of a coherent system that corresponds to the text as nearly as achievable while continually subjecting the interpreter’s horizon to that of the canon in a hermeneutical spiral. The extracted canonical and systematic model is by no means the final word but remains secondary to the canonical text, which further corrects the system by way of ongoing canonical investigation. “Hence, the system will never exhaust the canonical text but endeavors to persistently move toward thorough correspondence and rigorous inner coherence.” Therefore, the model of divine love, sought in this study by way of canonical investigation, intentionally moves away from presupposing an ontology grounded in a canon within the canon. See Eugene Ulrich, “The Notion and Definition of “Canon,” in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 29; James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1990), and “Has the Canon a Continuing Function?” in *Canon Debate* (ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002); and Barr, *Concept*. Here, whatever community constructs that may function as a canon within a canon should be continually corrected according to the canonical text itself.

47 Peckham, “Analogy,” 53. In other words, “while looking at the text hermeneutically to ascertain the textual intent” this canonical approach “also looks for the biblical ontological suppositions that provide the framework for the text’s communication” such that “phenomenological exegesis and hermeneutical exegesis function concurrently in an ongoing, reciprocally correcting manner.” Ibid., 52. Thus, while “phenomenological answers are logically prior to hermeneutical ones, they are actually recognized from within the ongoing, reciprocal, correcting task of interpretation.” Ibid., 52–53. Such a derived framework is always open to, and should be continually subjected to, further analysis on the basis of canonical investigation.

48 Ibid., 53.
tradition(s) in search of rigorous correspondence to the text as canon. This is accomplished by first ascertaining the canonical description of divine love and thereafter asking what must God be like in order to cohere with the canonical description. Thus, the prevalent order of presupposing ontology then reasoning to divine characteristics is inverted by investigating the nature of divine love prior to the supposition of a pre-existing and developed ontology.

**Method of Investigation and Presentation of the Canonical Data**

The canonical approach described above is implemented specifically with regard to the scope and delimitations of this dissertation by first conducting an inductive reading of the entire canon and grouping the data under the canonical rubrics of OT and NT. This reading analyzed any texts and/or passages that might contribute to potential answers to the systematic questions

49 Of course, this approach does not rule out from the outset the possibility that the canonical data could affirm an existing traditional viewpoint but merely does not assume the veracity of any particular existing viewpoint. Further, this approach contrasts with the contention of Thomas Jay Oord that “the Bible does not provide an internally consistent witness to love’s meaning. Biblical writers talk about love in different ways and give it differing meanings. If love is to play the leading role in biblically oriented Christian theology, an adequate theology of love must admit this diversity.” *The Nature of Love: A Theology* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice, 2010), 12. To be sure, there is a great diversity regarding the meaning and usage of love within the canon. However, I do not believe it is true that the canon is internally inconsistent in this regard. Rather, as I hope to demonstrate, there is a consistent (though not monolithic or simple) canonical view of divine love. In a canonical approach one is not at liberty to select one aspect of love and declare it the “the meaning of love dominant in the biblical witness.” Ibid., 13.

50 Compare Vanhoozer’s question, which he phrases in numerous ways throughout his project, “What must God be like if he is actually the speaking and acting agent depicted in the Bible?” *Remythologizing*, 23. Elsewhere, “What must God be in order truthfully to be represented as repenting, grieving, compassionate?” Ibid., 50. Cf. ibid., 3, 13. He attempts to avoid ontotheology in favor of theo-ontology, that is, to avoid “‘bad’ metaphysics” which impose “a system of categories on God without attending to God’s own self-communication.” Ibid., 8. Cf. ibid., 36, 175. In his view, “the character, and fate, of theism depends on how one relates biblical representations (the dramatic mythos) to metaphysical conceptualizations (logos). Metaphysics plays a magisterial role (i.e., system-building) in ontotheology (i.e., perfect being analysis). By contrast, a theo-ontology that hearkens first of all to God’s self-naming in the biblical record (i.e., mythos) accords metaphysics the more modest, ministerial vole of conceptual elaboration.” Ibid., 104. In this way, Vanhoozer has made a call to “reform metaphysics along biblical lines,” which does not follow “the five speculative ‘ways’ of Aquinas . . . but the biblical account of the ‘ways’ of God.” Ibid., 9, 23.

51 By inverting the method in this way I propose that the particulars in the economy of God’s revelation logically have epistemological priority. In other words, if we operate with a view of divine revelation then it follows that we come to know about God by what he reveals, and he reveals himself in particulars. Any ontology must take into account these particular revelations, rather than assuming a broad ontology that necessitates strained interpretations of the particular revelation.
raised by the conflict of interpretations in chapters 2 and 3, which revolve around the question of whether divine love is unilateral or whether God and humans may share a reciprocal (though unequal) relationship of love.\textsuperscript{52} The data extracted from this reading were then analyzed and grouped in an ongoing spiral, which included both narrowing and expansion of the data when themes became more or less significant than originally thought.

Within this process, a number of prominent terms that hold significant implications for potential answers to the systematic questions became apparent.\textsuperscript{53} These were investigated from the standpoint of a synchronic-canonical approach. Here the inherent limitations of semantic studies with regard to systematic investigation are recognized, especially the fact that meanings of words vary depending upon their context and usage. Accordingly, it is not the intention of these semantic surveys to reduce the terms to simple definitions, nor to assume that a nuance of meaning in one location can be extrapolated to all other occurrences of a given term (illegitimate totality transfer). Rather, such surveys seek to identify and summarize the basic meaning denoted by word groups as well as the polysemy and the multivalency of their semantic range and usage within the canon in order to provide the crucial background for engaging the wider canonical themes regarding divine love.

While the OT and NT data were investigated inductively, chapters 4 and 5 present the OT and NT data deductively by grouping the pertinent content under five rubrics that respond to the

\textsuperscript{52} Relative to this broad issue, five questions are identified in chapter 3 as standing at the center of the conflict of interpretations. First, is God the sole giver but never the receiver? In other words, is divine love only arbitrarily willed, pure beneficence (thematic \textit{agape}), or may it include desire or enjoyment (thematic \textit{eros})? Second, does God only bestow and/or create value or might he also appraise, appreciate, and receive value? Third, does God’s love include affection and/or emotionality such that God is concerned for the world, sympathetically or otherwise? Fourth, does God choose to fully love only some, or does he choose to love all, or is he essentially related to all such that he necessarily loves all? Fifth, bound up with this is the question of whether divine love is unconditional or conditional, ungrounded or grounded, and so on. While these questions relate to the theological conflict of interpretations presented (especially in chapter 3) the questions themselves were also shaped and altered by the canonical investigation itself.

\textsuperscript{53} The terms included in this study have not been selected arbitrarily but in conjunction with the inductive reading of the canon and the subsequent shaping of the canonical analysis. Further, as will be seen in chapters 4 and 5, many such terms interrelate quite closely both semantically and thematically.
systematic questions derived from the conflict of interpretations. As such, the order of presentation differs from the order of investigation and it must be understood that such rubrics are themselves derived from the canonical data and not presupposed. Under each of the five categories the data are further organized according to the various sections of the OT and NT canon. Such diacanonical presentation respects the canonical groupings of the text without entering into the speculative field regarding the authorship and dating of specific passages and texts. Of course, the large amount of data precludes an exhaustive presentation of its analysis. As such, the thematic presentation in chapters 4 and 5 consists of but a survey of the research conducted.

The data that make up chapters 4 and 5 are used to address the systematic questions regarding the conflict of interpretations regarding the nature of divine love toward a canonical and systematic model of divine love. This model is outlined and briefly explained in chapter 6 along with some implications for a wider ontology of God. In all, this dissertation does not attempt to produce an exhaustive conception of divine love. Rather, this study is limited to the articulation of the outline of a canonical and systematic model that may serve as a blueprint of divine love in the God-world relationship. At the same time, the model itself is open to and encourages revision based on the implications of continued canonical investigation.

**Methodological Issues of the Canonical Investigation**

With the broad framework of this canonical approach in mind it is necessary to address some methodological issues that pertain to the canonical investigation of a systematic model of divine love in particular: (1) accommodative language and figurative expressions, (2) the

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54 In each canonical section themes recur and serve the purpose of presenting aspects of divine love from within their own canonical context, but also demonstrating, in retrospect, a striking continuity throughout the canon with regard to the concept of divine love.
treatment of data derived from the revelation of Christ incarnate, and (3) the agency of love and ambiguous genitive constructions in the NT.

Accommodative Language and Figurative Expressions

All canonical language about God is necessarily accommodative language since all such language corresponds to human language. What, then, is to be done with regard to the applicability of canonical language to the nature of God as he actually is? Three approaches are generally recognized. One might treat such language as if it applies to God univocally, analogically, or equivocally. Since all available language is subject to the limitations and imperfections of human beings, it does not seem that such language could apply strictly univocally to God. On the other hand, if one receives the canon as divine self-revelation (as in this approach) such language cannot be equivocal but must apply to God in some manner. In this way, it is recognized from the outset that canonical language, as human (but not merely human) language, is partially univocal and, in this way, analogical. Importantly, the precision of

55 As such, the supposition of the utter ineffability of God and the consequent apophatic theology is rejected in favor of cataphatic, or positive, theology based on divine self-revelation, not least of which is that manifest in the incarnate Christ. See Insole’s warning that apophatic theology also easily falls prey to anthropomorphic projection. Christopher J. Insole, “Anthropomorphism and the Apophatic God,” Modern Theology 17 (2001): 475–83. At the same time, humility about one’s understanding of God is nevertheless maintained such that one recognizes the imperfection of one’s picture of God. C. F. H. Henry affirms the “incomprehensibility” of God but not “God’s unknowability,” meaning that we have incomplete knowledge of God. God, Revelation, 5:375. Nevertheless, it may be misleading (even if unintentionally so) to speak of God as “wholly other.” The ontological and qualitative distinction between God as Creator and creatures is to be maintained along with the recognition that humans were created in the image of God (imago dei) in accordance with the canonical data on both points. Thus, Michael Scott Horton comments: “God is therefore neither ‘wholly other’ nor ‘wholly identical’ to human experience.” Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 8. Murray A. Rae likewise cautions: “The reality of God’s personal presence with humanity must not be sacrificed to a form of deference for the infinity and transcendence of God that would preclude us from speaking of God at all.” “Anthropomorphism,” Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 49.

56 By speaking of such language as both partially univocal and analogical it is recognized that the language does not correspond perfectly to God (since the language is itself imperfect) but may correspond to God to the extent that human language is capable in light of a common reality created by God and experienced by creatures. That is, the canonical language used of God is analogical but, on the basis of the canonical assertions themselves, much closer to being univocal than to being equivocal. Compare William Alston’s argument for “partial univocity” of “divine and human action” by which he means there is “a
the correspondence between divine self-revelation in human language and God as he actually is cannot be determined prior to the eschaton due to the epistemic distance (but not detachment) between God and humans as well as human limitations and imperfections. In light of this, the canon, as divine self-revelation in human (but not merely human) language, is the prime available source of theology in the absence of direct divine self-revelation and, though it includes analogical language, is nevertheless the trustworthy source and guide of theology (cf. 2 Tim 3:16).57 “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully” (1 Cor 13:12).

In light of the fact that all available language is human, and thus accommodative, it must be recognized that not all canonical language is intended literally, though one should take care to not dismiss or “demythologize” language that is intended literally, especially by way of extra-canonical presuppositions or pressures.58 On the contrary, some language is figurative whether by

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57 It is folly, therefore, to try to go behind the canonical data by way of other sources or human reasoning since all such sources and reasoning are subject to the same limitations while also not the products of divine inspiration. “All the language we use of God will be inadequate . . . yet the treasure is entrusted—by God himself—to earthen vessels.” Rae, “Anthropomorphism,” 49.

58 By literal I mean that “words are used literally when they are meant to be understood in their primary, matter-of-fact sense” in contrast to figuratively or metaphorically. See G. B. Caird, The Language
way of metaphor, idiom, hyperbole, and the like.\textsuperscript{59} It is not always easy to identify such language but, to the extent that it can be identified, the interpreter should treat such language according to the intention in the text with attention to the genre, context, and other textual and contextual clues to its intended correspondence to its referent(s).

Within this context, one of the most pressing problems pursuant to a canonical and systematic model of divine love is the issue of the interpretation of figurative expressions relative to God’s nature and/or actions. In particular, the interpretation of so-called anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms is of crucial importance to a canonical approach to theology proper. An anthropomorphism (\textit{anthropos} + \textit{morphos}) is the attribution of human form (or behavior) to a non-human entity.\textsuperscript{60} Anthropopathisms (\textit{anthropos} + \textit{pathos}) more specifically ascribe human pathos, emotions, to non-human entities when they do not possess such traits. In the realm of theology, such monikers are often applied to particular canonical language in order to convey the notion that such phraseology should not be taken to accurately depict God, that is, that such language ascribes human characteristics to God that do not actually correspond to him.\textsuperscript{61}


\textsuperscript{59} This is not a judgment against the truth value of the language but a recognition of the intention in the text, which is often figurative rather than literal. This is sometimes spoken of as interpreting the text not by way of naïve literalism but literarily, that is, with a view toward the maximum achievable correspondence to text. See Osborne, \textit{Hermeneutical}.

\textsuperscript{60} A broader definition is sometimes used that sees an anthropomorphism as “any attribution of human characteristics to that which is not human.” Caird, \textit{Language}, 172.

Any dismissal of canonical language as anthropomorphic/pathic poses great difficulty for a coherent theological method and is mutually exclusive to the final-form canonical approach posited above. Specifically, to dismiss the value of figurative language in illuminating the nature of God a priori, because it is “human” language, runs into a number of problems. First, it appears to overlook the fact that all language to which the interpreter is privy is human language. Indeed, as explained above, all divine self-revelation is accommodative. The fact of

“From man’s limited, earthly, finite perspective it only appears that God’s purposes have changed.” Marvin R. Wilson, “removeAttrs,” Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (ed. R. Laird Harris; Chicago: Moody, 1999), 570–1. Cf. William A. Dyrness, Themes in Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1979), 57, and Nathan M. Sarna, Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation (The JPS Torah Commentary 1; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 47. Luther took a similar position with regard to divine grief in Gen 6:7 stating: “Such an emotion is attributed to God, not as though He were thus moved, but the holy prophets, Moses, and Noah conceived of Him in this way.” Martin Luther, Luther’s Works (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 17:358. Further he states, “One should not imagine that God has a heart or that He can grieve. But when the spirit of Noah, of Lamech, and of Methuselah is grieved, God Himself is said to be grieved. Thus we should understand this grief to refer to its effect, not to the divine essence.” Ibid., 2:47. See also Calvin’s view of this with regard to Hos 11 below. Recently, Phillip R. Johnson contended that though anthropopathisms “mean something we were meant to understand . . . we must also confess that there is something they do not mean. They do not mean that God is literally subject to mood swings or melancholy, spasms of passion or temper tantrums” for “absolute immutability is one of God’s transcendent characteristics.” “God without Mood Swings,” in Bound Only Once: The Failure of Open Rheism (ed. Douglas Wilson; Moscow, Idaho: Canon, 2001), 116.

62 To a large extent, the dismissal of so-called anthropomorphisms/pathisms is due to the desire to avoid criticisms of God being anthropomorphized, that is, theology as merely the projection of humanity. This issue of humans crafting God in their own image is not merely responsive to Feuerbachian criticisms of projection but has been an issue from early on in Christian history. Thus, Vanhoozer states, “Cultured Greeks like Plato and Aristotle had an aversion to anthropomorphism when myths attributed to gods things that were immoral and shameful, such as theft or adultery,” Remythologizing, 60. Cf. Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Perennial, 2001), 344–45, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Anthropomorphism in Hellenism and in Judaism,” BSac 127 (1970): 212–22, and “Anthropomorphism in Ancient Religions,” BSac 125 (1968): 29–44. In this regard, Hartshorne believes: “A well-meaning attempt to purify theology anthropomorphisms purified it of any genuine, consistent meaning at all.” Omnipotence, 29. See also, in this regard, Edmond La Beaume Cherbonnier, “The Logic of Biblical “Anthropomorphism,” HTR 55, no. 3 (1962): 187–206. However, the solution to the tendency toward human projection in theology is not to try to remove “human” language but to purposefully do theology in a way that rigorously corresponds to the canon. Thus, “if we are not to fall into the arms of Feuerbach at the very first step . . . we must think of God as the subject.” Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 21. Further, “unless we accord priority to God’s own self-presentation in theodramatic activity, Christian theology is but smoke and mirrors—a human projection of religious affections and special effects.” Ibid., 23.

63 For example, “the classic understanding is that God speaks about himself anthropomorphically or analogically all the way through Scripture—not just in a few places. In every noun, verb, and adjective God has used to present Himself, certain notions of limitation and moral inadequacy apply to the human world that must be deleted when we apply it to God.” “God vs. God: Two Competing Theologies Vie for the Future of Evangelicalism,” Christianity Today 44, no. 2 (2000): 35. The problem is not with the
accommodative language cannot then be used (in and of itself) to distinguish between canonical (or any other) language that corresponds to God and that which does not. In other words, it is inappropriate to sideline particular canonical language about God based on the premise that it corresponds imperfectly to God as accommodative language since this is true of all available language.  

Second, such dismissal of canonical language as inappropriate to God appears to assume that the interpreter already knows what God is like and can thus differentiate between language that actually corresponds to God’s being and/or actions and that which does not. This runs the risk of presupposing a doctrine of God rather than investigating it from the canonical data.

64 Indeed, Caird states, “We have no other language besides metaphor with which to speak about God.” Language, 174. So John C. L. Gibson, Language and Imagery in the Old Testament (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), 26. “The only choice open to us, therefore, is whether we derive our metaphors from the human realm or from the non-human, and it is important to note that the biblical writers use both kinds.” Caird, Language, 174. In this vein, Terence E. Fretheim comments: “Metaphors do reveal an essential continuity with the reality which is God; they do in fact contain information about God. At the same time, they disclose that which is discontinuous with the divine reality”; the danger is “either interpreting metaphors literally in every respect or (more commonly today) denying any essential relationship between the metaphor and God.” “The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk,” HBT 10, no. 1 (1988): 51.

65 Thus, Vanhoozer states, “One common Jewish and early Christian strategy for dealing with anthropomorphic language was to distinguish God as depicted in the Bible from God as he actually is. The procedure assumes, of course, that one already knows what God is like (e.g., the most perfect being).” Remythologizing, 60. “The church fathers had their own special device—the axiom of divine immutability—for deciding when to take anthropomorphisms literally and when to spiritualize them.” Ibid. Hartshorne criticizes that those who dismissed such language must have “thought they knew better than the naïve writers of scripture what concepts do and what do not literally apply to deity.” Omnipotence, 76.

66 Consider, for example, the tension evident in Cooper’s contentions that “biblical assertions of God’s reactions are anthropopathic” while, on the other hand, recognizing that “Scripture presents God as acting and responding in ways that are analogous to humans.” Panentheism, 322–23. This tension is addressed by so-called modified classical theists (such as William Lane Craig and Nicholas Wolterstorff) by asserting that God is temporally everlasting. In this way, Cooper states, “by allowing that God is, to some extent, in time, the modified version can read Scripture’s narrative of God’s mighty acts in history more straightforwardly and less anthropomorphically than the traditional version requires.” Ibid., 343. On the other hand, Cooper comments: “Admittedly, it is more complicated for traditional classical theism to
For instance, the assertion that particular canonical language is anthropomorphic/pathic may be asserted on the basis of the presupposition of impassibility. Insofar as one claims to appeal to biblical data for one’s doctrine of God, such an interpretive procedure falls prey to circular reasoning if the biblical data for divine passibility are excluded on the basis of the premise that God is impassible. Absent a compelling canonical argument which asserts that emotive language should not actually apply to God as he truly is, one who subscribes to a final-form canonical approach is not at liberty to dismiss the language of divine emotions (among other language of God), however unsettling it may be for the proponent of traditional divine ontology.67 With this in mind, two broad principles might be posited that address these problems from a canonical approach. First, since all language available to the interpreter is human language, the dismissal of figurative language for this reason is self-defeating.68 Second, it is inappropriate to assume that the interpreter knows what God is like prior to and/or independent of the canonical data itself and use such assumptions to qualify and/or dismiss canonical language regarding God.

Thus, from a canonical approach, the burden of proof is on those who rule out so-called anthropomorphisms/pathisms as descriptions of what God is like.69 In my view, such a maneuver treat this presentation as completely anthropomorphic and explain how a wholly eternal, immutable God acts sequentially in history and interacts with creatures.” Ibid., 323. See also Canale’s contention for divine (analogue) temporarily in Criticism.

67 Here is not the place to discuss whether a compelling canonical argument for divine impassibility exists. The issue will be taken up below. Absent particular canonical data one might posit that a divine ontology needs only internal coherence. However, the approach of a coherence theory of truth is insufficient since there are many apparently internally coherent pictures and even if one thought they had arrived at the singular coherent picture of God, the reality of human imperfections and limitations of reasoning should give one reason for pause.

68 Further, according to a canonical approach, the favoring of abstract language over figurative language as it relates to one’s description of God should be demonstrated in accordance with the canonical data itself or discarded.

69 With regard to canonical language of divine emotion: “The weight of traditional theological wisdom is on the side of the nay-sayers: nothing that happens in the world, say classical theists like Aquinas, can affect God’s emotional life, much, less his knowledge and will.” Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 77. On the other hand, many recent theologians argue that divine passibility, including relationality, is necessary to love such that God is the “deeply moved ‘first mover.’” Barry L. Callen, Discerning the Divine: God in Christian Theology (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 23.
lacks a consistent and compelling rationale for determining which canonical data accurately depict God’s nature and which canonical data are to be dismissed as merely accommodative language. In sum, unless there are some canonical data to the contrary, the literary thrust of canonical revelation should not be cast aside as merely human accommodation.

This brings us to a third issue, which is only indirectly addressed by the two broad principles explained above, that is, the supposed rationale for the dismissal of anthropomorphisms and/or anthropopathisms based on the argument that such figurative language utilizes the language.

See also Richard Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” in The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God (ed. Clark H. Pinnock et al.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994). With regard to the former position, whence is the criterion that provides the rationale for “non-literal interpretations of biblical passages about God changing and suffering?” Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 84. Wolterstorff helpfully states that “an implication of accepting Scripture as canonical is that one affirm, as literally true, Scripture’s representation of God unless, on some point, one has good reason not to do so. Put it like this: the burden of proof, for those who accept Scripture as canonical, is on those who hold that Scripture’s representation of God is not literally true at some point.” Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Could Not God Sorrow If We Do?” in The Papers of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology (ed. Christopher I. Wilkins; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars, 2002), 140. As Vanhoozer states, “There is more than a superficial resemblance between the urge to do away with anthropomorphism and the urge to demythologize.” Remythologizing, 60.

In all this, one must have a mechanism grounded in more than the reader’s response (subjectivity) if one is to attempt to approach the meaning “in” the text. Does the text contain the intention that God has no emotions? How could that be derived from the text itself (immediate or wider canonical context)? How does the reader know, from the canon, that the language is anthropopathic?

In this canonical approach, divine characteristics cannot be asserted on the basis of some conception of God a priori but must be derived from, and able to be demonstrated on the basis of, the canonical data. Further, the ways of natural theology do not suffice since all of them circumvent the criterion of correspondence to the canon (see the explanation of this criterion above). Moreover, the way of analogy is imprecise and prone to error, especially human projection (whether of human qualities or supposedly pious abstractions) as well as an endless conflict of theological interpretations. Likewise, the way of negation (via negativa) assumes that one possesses at least some correct knowledge of God already in order to identify what God is not like and founders for lack of objective data or criteria for appeal when various individuals wish to negate different characteristics of God. Similarly, the way of eminence, favored in analytic philosophy, can be applied with various resultant conceptions of God since “intuitions about perfection differ, a fact that is arguably the Achilles heel of perfect being theology.” Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 96. As an example, see the discussion of Hartshorne’s utilization of the way of eminence, with conclusions that depart widely from those of others who argue from the infinity or perfection of God’s being such as the denial of God’s immutability and omnipotence, in chapter 3. Vanhoozer contends that “early modern philosophical theism projects human conceptions of perfection onto God as ‘highest being’ and makes the fatal Feuerbachian slip, thus amounting to nothing more than conceptual idolatry, a chasing after wind.” Ibid., 105.
of anatomy that is not proper to God as incorporeal.\textsuperscript{72} There are many significant figurative expressions used of God that are often classified as anthropomorphic and/or anthropopathic, only a few of which will be examined here toward a working approach to such figurative language. One of the most striking images of divine emotion appears in Hos 11:8-9 when God states, “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? . . . My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled. I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.”\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} The question of the incorporeality of God in itself is beyond the scope of this dissertation. One might question whether the canonical data are not interpreted to say more than they do in this regard. That “God is Spirit” need not mean that God is excluded from taking form, human or otherwise. That God can and does take form is implied in the scriptural data in many instances, not least of which is the incarnation. If one means by the incorporeality of God that God is not essentially physical or material, by which one means that God is not bound to any particular, material form, such a supposition would seem to accord with scriptural data. However, this is not the same as saying God cannot take form.

\textsuperscript{73} Compare the contrast between Calvin and Finney in the interpretation of this passage. Calvin dismisses the language of emotion stating: “God, we know, is subject to no passions, and we know that no change takes place in him. What then do these expressions mean, by which he appears to be changeable? Doubtless he accommodates himself to our ignorances whenever he puts on a character foreign to himself.” First, he rejects the implication that humans have free will. Rather, “we know that what he [God] will do is certain, and that his decree depends not on the free-will of men. . . . God then does not deliberate as to himself, but with reference to men.” Further, “when he says that his heart was changed, and that his repentings were brought back again, the same mode of speaking after the manner of men is adopted; for we know that these feelings belong not to God; he cannot be touched with repentance, and his heart cannot undergo changes.” John Calvin, \textit{Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950), 400–401. Finney, on the contrary, contends that “God really exercises all the affections ascribed to him in the Bible.” Particularly pertinent to this dissertation he asks: “When [God] professes to love his creatures, are we to understand that he does not really love them, but that he merely acts as we do when we love?” Indeed: “If this language does not mean what it says, what does it mean?” Further, “If God be not what the Bible represents him to be, then what is he, and who knows him? If these are not his real feelings then we are infinitely mistaken about his character. . . . If these are not the feelings of God, then we have no true revelation of God.” Charles Grandeson Finney, “Lecture XVIII: Affections and Emotions of God,” \textit{The Oberlin Evangelist} 1, no. 22 (October 9, 1839): 170. Although Vanhoozer comes to a different conclusion, this is akin to his striking question and the method adopted in this dissertation: “What must God be in order truthfully to be represented as repenting, grieving, compassionate?” \textit{Remythologizing}, 50. Vanhoozer himself refers to “the pained voice of God as he appears to wrestle with himself.” Ibid., 49. Wilhelm Vischer points out: “If one finds it unsuitable that God should’ speak as he does in these verses “the same goes for all declarations of his mercy, his grace, and his love” such as Exod 34:6; Jer 31:20 and others. “Words and the Word: The Anthropomorphisms of the Biblical Revelation,” \textit{Int} 3, no. 1 (1949): 3. See the discussion of this verse in chapter 4.
Here, notice the anatomical language of “heart” (לב) and “nose” (ףף) used in reference to compassion and anger. Both anatomical idioms are also used of human agency with the clear intent of conveying intense emotions. Further, it is obvious that the idiom does not refer to the physical turning (the literal meaning of הובד) of one’s heart, whether in reference to God or humans, but is an idiomatic description of profound emotion. Similarly, in Jer 31:20 God declares: “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him.”

Here, notice the anatomical language of “heart,” which in the Hebrew literally refers to intestines, bowels, a common idiom of the seat of emotions in the ANE, as well as the term for “mercy” (רחם), which derives from the root that literally refers to one’s “womb” or “belly” and thus refers idiomatically to a profoundly compassionate love. Here again, the idiom does not refer to one’s bowels literally murmuring or growling (the literal meaning of חמש) but idiomatically refers to the emotional intensity of divine compassion.

Elsewhere, God is repeatedly depicted by anatomical language including (among others) that of ears, eyes, nose, mouth, face, hands, arms and heart by way of idiomatic

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74 See the list below. The intensity of the emotionality conveyed here is evident by comparison to the similar imagery of human agents in Gen 43:30 and 1 Kgs 3:6, the only two other instances where the term כנון relates to emotions; only in one other instance does it appear at all, of skin becoming hot in the sun (Lam 5:10). Cf. Mike Butterworth, “רחם,” NIDOTTE 3:1093, and H. J. Stoebe, “רחם,” TLOT 3:1226.

75 With human agency see Gen 43:30. See further the discussion of the כנון word group in chapter 4. For an extra-canonical example of language of internal organs as the seat of emotions and/or dispositions, consider the Anuak use of “liver.” See Eugene A. Nida, Exploring Semantic Structures (Internationale Bibliothek für allgemeine Linguistik Bd. 11; Munich: Fink, 1975), 127. Compare also this idiomatic syntagm of “murmuring innards” in Isa 63:15. The word here translated “heart” (לב) literally refers to internal organs, inward parts, bowels, belly and is often used in the sense of womb and stomach. It is used in instances of intense physiological pain (Job 30:27; Ps 22:15) but more frequently to denote intense human emotions (Isa 16:11; Jer 4:19; Lam 1:20; 2:11). Stoebe thus correctly sees this as “expanded parallelism” which “approximate[s] rahamim.” “רחם,” 1226. The collocation of כנון and כנון or כנון כנון murmurs, roar, sometimes meaning arouse appears five times (Isa 16:11; 63:15; Jer 4:19; 31:20; Cant 5:4) of strong emotions.

76 For example, consider the idiom of inclining one’s ear [paragus + הף] that refers to attentively
phraseology that is not only used of God but humans as well. In all of these examples it is readily apparent that the intended meaning of the idiomatic expressions is independent of the literal anatomical references, both with regard to human and divine agency. Thus, when listening, which is used with both divine (2 Kgs 19:16) and human agency (Prov 5:1).

Consider the frequent idiom of finding favor (אִירָע + בַּי + תָּו) in one’s sight used of both divine and human agency (Gen 6:8; 32:5). The term תָּו literally refers to one’s eyes but here neither refers to one’s eyes nor necessarily to literal sight but to favorable appraisal and/or the bestowal of grace. See the further discussion of this idiom in chapter 4. Consider also the idiom that is often rendered by the English idiom “apple” of the “eye,” which in Hebrew literally means “little man [תַּוּ] of the eye [תָּו]” and appears with both divine and human agency (Deut 32:10; Zech 2:8; Prov 7:2). For many other idioms by language of the eyes and other anatomical idioms in the OT see Jeffery D. Griffin, “An Investigation of Idiomatic Expressions in the Hebrew Bible with a Case Study of Anatomical Idioms” (Ph.D. diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 111; cf. Caird, Language, 175.

For example, God is said to be literally “long of nose” (חאֵט + כַּל + אִירָע) which is translated “slow to anger” (Exod 34:6) and may be used of human agency (Prov 14:29). The idiom comes from seeing the nose as the locus of anger (think red). A “long nose” thus signifies one who would take longer to become angry. See Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in Genesis to Leviticus (vol. 1 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1994), 946. Consider also the description of divine anger as the “heat of my nostrils” in Exod 32:10, 12. Here and elsewhere the term יַב, literally “nose,” idiomatically refers to anger by metonymy as it does also with human agency (Gen 30:2; Exod 32:10). On the other hand a human may be “quick-tempered,” that is “short of nose” (Prov 14:17).

Frequently the “mouth” (יָד) of someone idiomatically refers to their speech in the sense of command and/or proclamation, both of God and humans (Gen 45:21; Deut 8:3; 2 Sam 14:19).

The term that literally refers to one’s face (יַד) may be used idiomatically of one’s presence (Exod 33:14), both divine and human (Exod 10:11). Consider also the concept of “hiding” one’s “face,” which is a sign of displeasure, with used with divine (Deut 31:17-18) and human agency (Isa 53:3). See Mayer I. Gruber, “The Many Faces of Hebrew nāšā’ pānîm ‘Lift Up the Face,’” ZAW 95, no. 2 (1983): 252–60.

Reference to one’s “hand” (יָד) may be used idiomatically in various ways, including action, receiving or giving, etc. It is also used idiomatically of both God and humans. See Gen 14:20; 49:24.

Language of “arm” (מר) may refer to one’s strength or power, also of both God and humans (Exod 6:6; 15:16; Job 35:9; 40:9). See the frequent language of God’s “outstretched arm” with reference to his mighty acts of deliverance (Exod 6:6), often along with reference to his “mighty hand” (Deut 4:34).

In Hebrew the word that literally refers to one’s “heart” [ץ] is a rich term of the totality of human disposition. It may idiomatically describe many different mental aspects including one’s thoughts, will, and/or emotions and is used of both divine and human agency (Gen 6:5-6). See also Griffin, “Investigation,” 90.


That is, the non-literal nature of the language does not relate to the question of
someone finds favor in the eyes of someone else, the idiom corresponds to favor in one’s estimation. The anatomical referent is beside the point for both humans and God. The idiom is not dependent upon the physiological phenomena that might undergird the original metaphor. It is thus fallacious to dismiss the intended reference of such language due to anatomical language. It will not do to merely assert God has no body parts, therefore the language is non-literal, and therefore it does not correspond to God. The language is idiomatic of both divine and human subjects and is, as such, non-literal, but is nevertheless intended to convey true content about its referent(s).

As such, one should not assume that since God has no “innards” therefore the idiomatic language that uses the literal terminology of “innards” does not convey any truth value that corresponds to God as he actually is. If one were inclined to dismiss the intended reference of such idiomatic language because of the use of anatomical language, consistency would require that the identical idioms with reference to human agency also be interpreted either as literal references to anatomy or as expressions that do not actually correspond to the human agents. Obviously, neither of these options would be applied by competent interpreters when such idioms are used of human agency. Therefore, why should references to divine agency be divested of the intended meaning of well-understood idiomatic phraseology? In other words, that such language is idiomatic does not mean that it does not correspond to God any more than emotions applied to corporeality/incorporeality since the idiom itself is not with reference to the literal anatomical parts therein.

86 Thus, with regard to action Vanhoozer recognizes: “While it is a contingent fact about human beings that we can only act or bring about changes in the world through some bodily movement, the latter is not a necessary part of the meaning of the concept.” Remythologizing, 58. Should not the same principle be applied to emotionality?

87 In other words, if language referring to God is to be dismissed as non-revelatory or severely flawed communication and thus dismissed, one should also logically dismiss such language with reference to humans.

88 Although Caird is not referring to the point made here, his observation fits this issue well: “Only captious pedantry or childish humour will find it necessary to remark that the eye of a needle cannot see or a tongue of land speak.” Language, 173. Similarly, the use of idiomatic language of anatomy to describe
humans by idioms do not refer to human emotions. The question of whether God has emotions cannot then be answered a priori but must be engaged a posteriori to the canonical text. Absent a compelling, canonical rationale, such interpretive maneuvers appear to stem not from textual or canonical, but dogmatic and presuppositional, rationales.

With such examples in mind, we may identify two further principles that address this proposed rationale for the dismissal of anatomical expressions relative to God. First, it is worth noting that according to the canon, humans were created in the image of God (imago dei). Thus, it may be more accurate to say that humans are theomorphic and, perhaps, theopathic, than to say that language of God that is also used of humans is anthropomorphic/pathic. Second, as clearly evidenced by the examples above, the fact that figurative anatomical expressions of emotion(s), for instance, are non-literal does not mean that they do not convey direct truth content about their divine feelings does not pertain to the issue of divine corporeality vs. incorporeality.

89 Thus Graham Cole contends that “an anthropopathism such as God’s grief is to be given its face value. God does not merely seem to have grief in Genesis 6:6; He is grieved, contra Calvin. In other words, there is some counterpart to our emotional life in God. To argue otherwise is to beg the question of why we should not dismiss references to the divine love and compassion also as mere anthropopathisms.” Graham A. Cole, “The Living God: Anthropomorphic or Anthropopathic?” RTR 59, no. 1 (2000): 23. See also Robert B. Chisholm’s argument that while so-called anthropomorphic language is metaphorical, it conveys the reality that God enters into real relationship with his creatures. “Anatomy of an Anthropomorphism: Does God Discover Facts?,” BSac 164 (2007): 3-20. Cf. Terence E. Fretheim, The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective (Overtures to Biblical Theology 14; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 99.

90 While the precise nature of the correspondence between God and human nature posited by the imago Dei is widely disputed and not particularly clear by way of the canonical data, the recognition of this point should be a control and caution against the suggestion that humans are totally unlike God.

91 So Vanhoozer who adds that the “human capacities to know, will, and love are themselves theomorphic.” Remythologizing, 64. Thus, he asks, “who is in the image or morphe of whom?” Ibid. Likewise, he adds, “In light of the doctrine of the imago Dei, then, perhaps the Bible’s depiction of divine suffering is less a matter of anthropopathic projection than it is a case of human suffering being theopathic (God-like).” Ibid., 77-78. Indeed, Silva adds, “our human qualities are themselves but a reflection of God’s person and attributes.” Moisés Silva, God, Language, and Scripture: Reading the Bible in the Light of General Linguistics (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 4; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990), 22. Caneday cautions, however: “The fallacy is to forget that we are analogues of God and to regard ourselves as the fundamental reference point for ascriptions concerning God.” “Veiled Glory? God’s Self-Revelation in Human Likeness—A Biblical Theology of God’s Anthropomorphic Self-Disclosure,” in Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity (ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2003), 153. Cf. Heschel, Prophets, 349.
referent(s). On the contrary, such figurative language is idiomatic and is used, as such, of both God and humans. As such, it is evident that the anatomical language is not intended to refer to literal anatomy but to dispositions and/or actions with either divine or human agency. Hence, one should not dismiss the well-known meaning of the idiom as it applies to God without compelling canonical data. Indeed, if one insists on dismissing such language as anthropomorphic and/or anthropopathic, consistency would also require that one rule out divine speech, which is also often conveyed by anatomical idiom.

At what point would one draw the line with regard to which language actually applies to God and is useful in the construction of theology proper and which is not? Does such figurative language, then, truly apply to God and to what extent? The

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93 Here and elsewhere I used the term “idiomatic” to refer simply to a common use of a phrase (or term in Hebrew) that has figurative meaning divergent from the literal meaning of its component term(s). In English, idioms consist of more than one word but in Hebrew a single term may be idiomatic. See Griffin, “Investigation,” 22.

94 According to Vanhoozer, “There is a true but only partial, appropriate but only approximate correspondence between divine and human speaking.” Remythologizing, 58. The question is, how does one know what part is part of the partial correspondence?

95 Vanhoozer states, “Feuerbach got it partly right. Human beings are in the image of God and so, in one sense, all language about God may be seen to be anthropomorphic. Yet one can also appeal to the imago Dei in the opposite direction to argue not that we are projecting our image upon God but that God is projecting his image onto us. Relationality would be in this case not a human projection onto God but a theomorphic projection onto humanity. The difficulty, of course, is in the details: how do we know which forms (morphe) of human life image God and which do not?” Ibid., 161. He further states elsewhere: “Those who equate anthropomorphism with the system of Feuerbachian projection overlook the extent to which the former is a legitimate cognitive instrument. Cf. ibid., 61. D. M. Beegle adds, “It is precisely in the area of the personal that theism, as expressed in Christianity, must ever think in anthropomorphic terms. To regard God solely as Absolute Being of the Great Unknown is to refer to him or it, but to think of God as literally personal, one with whom we can fellowship, is to say Thou.” “Anthropomorphism,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1984), 54. Gibson adds that the “issue in biblical anthropomorphisms is understanding them, not approving or disapproving them.” Language, 26. Cf. Garrett Green, Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 206.
canonical approach maintains that, as divine self-revelation, such language conveys meaningful and accurate (albeit analogical) data about God as he is in himself.  

The meaning of such figurative language with respect to God need not be interpreted arbitrarily. Rather, the wider canonical information provides insight that assists in the interpretation of such imagery within the context of the wider, canonical horizon of divine ontology. To take one example, God’s jealousy is commonly dismissed as anthropopathic in some theological circles. However, in light of the principles above, a canonical approach must take the language of divine jealousy/passion seriously. In light of the overall evidence of the canon, it is evident that divine jealousy differs from human jealousy not in the sense that it is “wholly other” but in the sense that divine jealousy portrays none of the negative characteristics manifest in human jealousy.  

While human jealousy includes envy, divine jealousy never does. God’s jealousy is always appropriate and in reference to his passion for that which rightfully belongs to him.  

Likewise, divine hatred and wrath is never petty or arbitrary but always appropriate to the passions of God.  

96 K. A. Matthews correctly points out in this regard: “When we consider the metaphor of God as a feeling person who loves, is angry, and grieves, the aim of the figure is to point to a mitigated correspondence between human experience and God. This does not say that the emotions of humans and God are equivalent in their entirety either in intensity or in quality, for God does not grieve in the same way as men and women. Nor is he angry in the same fashion as sinful mortals, but to conclude that such language reveals nothing of God’s essential personhood makes all such language pointless. For what purpose is there in describing God in any terms understandable to us other than to reveal something of God’s mysterious nature?” Genesis 1–11:26 (NAC 1A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 344. Hamilton adds, “It is easy, of course, to dismiss such allusions as anthropopathisms, and to feel that they can tell us nothing about the essential nature of God. But verses like this remind us that the God of the OT is not beyond the capability of feeling pain, chagrin, remorse.” Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17 (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 274.  

97 While one might extrapolate the apparently theologically sound principle that used of God such things only apply in their positive aspects, such a principle is incapable of objective usefulness since different interpreters will find different characteristics “good.” See the discussion of the way of eminence above and Hartshorne’s departure from traditional views of God on the basis of his arguments for that which is maximally good discussed in chapter 3. Thus, even if one adopts the truism that only good characteristics apply to God, it would be of no use in determining many of the thornier issues with regard to the correspondence of canonical language to God since some characteristics are thought to be good and appropriate by some and deficient and inappropriate by others.  

98 See the word studies of the language of jealousy in the OT and NT in chapters 4 and 5 respectively. E. Reuter rightly points out the dismissal of divine jealousy as a so-called anthropopathism “only serves the Stoic notion of divine impassibility, which is inconsistent with the biblical understanding

99 On this, see chapters 4 and 5. Likewise, divine repentance differs from human repentance since “God is never said to have committed any sin of which God needs to repent.” Fretheim, “Repentance,” 50. See the discussion of divine repentance in chapter 4.

100 Interestingly, C. F. H. Henry states, “Scripture itself authorizes and requires a distinction between what we may say literally or figuratively about God.” *God, Revelation,* 5:197. Caird adds that “the biblical writers at least were alert to the possible abuses of such [figurative] language and at pains to guard against them.” *Language,* 175. He points to the passages that guard against univocal attribution by reminding that God is not human (1 Sam 15:29; Isa 55:8; Hos 11:9; Mal 3:6). Likewise, human judges may be corrupted (1 Sam 8:3) but God always judges righteously (Gen 18:25), human love may fail but God’s exceeds all expectations (Isa 49:15), Israel’s lovingkindness is transient (Hos 6:4) but God’s is everlasting (Ps 100:5). In this vein, Vanhoozer adds, “If anthropomorphism highlights God’s likeness to human beings, the doctrine of creation acts as an important counterbalance, safeguarding God’s transcendence.” *Remythologizing,* 65. Consider Yamauchi’s compelling argument that “upon closer inspection . . . in spite of the apparent similarity in expression to pagan religions the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament reveal all the more remarkably a sharply contrasting concept of deity.” Yamauchi, “Ancient Religions,” 29. See also the discussion of the canonical approach and the analogy of Scripture above.

101 There is here a “dynamic tension between ‘is’ and ‘is not’” which requires careful consideration since “even those who appreciate the cognitive value of biblical metaphors . . . differ over the criteria for discerning what truly, though partially, describes God’s reality (‘is’) and what belongs to the merely figurative dross (‘is not’).” Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing,* 61. Further; “Anthropomorphic language confronts theologians with the task of distinguishing the ‘is’ from the ‘is not.’ For example, those who wish to consider descriptions of God’s bodily parts as mere projection—and hence as ripe fodder for demythologization—must explain why they are unwilling to apply the same approach to passages concerning God’s love and mercy. Conversely, those who insist on taking God’s relenting or responding at face value must also deal with images that emphasize God’s authority and control or that describe an act of divine violence that injures, kills, or otherwise ‘violates the personhood’ of another.” Ibid., 62. He thus
In all this, ascribing emotions to God (as the canon does) need not entail that God experiences emotions that are univocal to human emotions. Rather, absent canonical evidence that suggests otherwise, such language is here treated as analogical (i.e., partially univocal). That is, God reveals himself throughout the canon as having emotions that are analogical to human emotions (or vice versa) but his are wholly good, appropriate, and without fault. Thus, it is recognized that God cannot be fully comprehended by the finite, human mind and, therefore, God reveals himself in a way that accommodates the human level of understanding. At the same time, the limitations of human cognition and language continue to plague the contemporary interpreter and, therefore, it is not prudent to try to “get behind” this accommodative language. In other words, the canonical approach takes the position that God depicts himself as accurately as possible in human language via the divine self-revelation inscripturated in the canon. The universal accommodative nature of Scripture, therefore, should not be used to dismiss the direct asks: “What exactly are these anthropomorphic metaphors saying if they are not to be taken literally? It is helpful to keep in mind that metaphors assert both ‘is’ and ‘is not,’ and thus may be indicative not of sheer contradiction . . . but partial description.” Ibid. While I agree with Vanhoozer’s contention here that such language is both like and not-like God, it is not the job of the human interpreter (since it is beyond one’s abilities) to specify what the not-like consists of apart from canonical information and absent direct divine self-revelation that reveals that which is like and not-like.

102 As mentioned above, since the level of correspondence between such analogical language and God as he is is beyond investigation absent direct divine self-revelation, such analogical data derived from God’s canonical self-revelation amount to the most accurate picture of God available to humans. Thus, it is practically spoken of as corresponding quite accurately to God with the recognition that in the eschaton we will see God as he truly is and surely find our view of God, at best, imprecise and incomplete and likely filled with errors. However, such appropriate humility with regard to theology should not deter one from the quest for rigorous correspondence to God’s canonical self-revelation, despite the recognition that our conceptions will still fall far short of perfect correspondence to God. Beyond this one cannot go within the framework of a canonical approach. To those who wish to speculate beyond Scripture such a canonical approach encourages the submission (and continuing re-submission) of all analytical and philosophical theology to the claims of the canon as a whole. If it does not fit, however beautiful the analysis appears, it should not be dogmatically accepted. It may be a model of how it “could” function but not how it “does” function (principle of humility).

103 This is not an extra-canonical presupposition but is derived from the frequent, canon-wide data that describe God as always, and in all things, good (omnibenevolent). Again, one cannot objectively use the concept of divine “perfection” to impose extra-biblical notions of perfection or infinite being since such criteria leave wide room for interpretation. See the brief discussion of the way of eminence above and in chapter 3.
statements of God about himself, but such statements must continually be understood in the light of the canon as a whole within the ongoing spiral of interpretation.  

*Communicatio Idiomatum?*

In dealing with the NT data regarding divine love, especially that which pertains to the question of the emotionality of divine love, a decision had to be made with regard to the data relative to the agency of Christ as incarnate. For instance, should the feelings and emotions that Christ experiences as incarnate be utilized as evidence with regard to the nature of divine love?

Some might be predisposed to dismiss many of Christ’s experiences as merely human and not divine, much in the same way that many figurative expressions of divine passibility are dismissed as anthropomorphic/anthropopathic. However, questions and problems similar to those raised with regard to that interpretive maneuver pertain here. Specifically, what method or rationale would be employed in order to differentiate that which pertains to Christ’s divine and human natures, respectively, or both? It seems to me that a consistent and compelling method for such distinctions is not found within the canon and, as argued above, a canonical approach does not afford theological weight to extra-canonical suppositions beyond the level of commentary that

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104 This issue is of great importance to the theological conception of divine love due to the common presupposition that divine love is not emotive, evaluative, or motivated but a purposive, willed, indifferent love totally distinct from any need or desire. Biblical expressions of divine emotion “are on this view merely crude anthropomorphisms.” Badcock, “Concept,” 40.

105 This inclination has deep roots in Christian tradition in opposition to the claims such as those made by Celsus, a 2nd-century critic of Christianity, that Jesus’ lamentation and prayer in Gethsemane proved that he was not truly divine. Origen, *The Trinity* 4.2.23–26 (ANF 4:441–43). Notably, this is akin to the impetus for the dismissal of so-called anthropomorphisms/pathisms. C. F. H. Henry, on the basis of his view of divine immutability, rejects the idea of God suffering based on what he considers “its express incompatibility with Scripture.” *God*, 6:290. Cf. ibid., 5:292. In short, he contends: “The premise that Christ who suffered is true God and true man does not require the conclusion that God suffers.” Ibid., 6:291. Other contemporary interpreters maintain that the emotions displayed by Jesus are purely human emotions (so, for example, James A. Brooks, *Mark* [NAC 23; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001], 55) while others believe that Christ’s emotions (at least some of them) express divine emotions. See, for example, with regard to Christ’s anger, William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 123. With regard to Christ’s compassion as divine compassion, see Peter Thomas O’Brien, *Colossians-Philemon* (WBC 44; Dallas: Word, 2002), 199.
is to be subjected back to canonical claims. Thus, it seems to be imprudent and ungrounded to assert a dichotomy between the human and divine natures of Christ such that one may distinguish which dispositions and/or actions correspond to his divine and/or human natures.

Indeed, according to the canonical data, Christ is himself the ultimate revelation of God. Indeed, Christ came to reveal God and proclaimed in no uncertain terms: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9; cf. 1:14; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 2:9; Heb 1:3). With this in view, a canonical approach is obliged to take seriously the manifestation of divinity set forth in the person of Christ. But how can this be done without collapsing the divine nature into the merely human? In a tentative attempt to address this issue, without delving into the myriad of interpretive

Moreover, it is questionable how much assistance extra-canonical suppositions would provide considering that the issue of the relationship of the divine and human natures of Christ have been the subject of enormous (both in quantity and intensity) debates throughout the history of Christian theology, not least of which the Christological controversies.

One should not confuse them in such a way that tends toward the obliteration of one or the other but one must also not separate them such that Christ’s statement in John 14:9 becomes obsolete.

For Vanhoozer “the history of anthropomorphism takes a dramatic new turn in the New Testament with the apostolic claim that Jesus is ‘the exact representation of God’s being’ (Heb. 1:3), a claim that echoes Jesus’ own” in John 14:9. Remythologizing, 64. He further states, “The Son’s humanity is the ultimate form of God’s self-presentation, Jesus is God’s definitive word and in his person and history corresponds to what it is that makes God God. The Son is not only spoken by God but speaks as God: he is the Word made flesh, upholding creation with his own word.” Ibid., 51. Thomas R. Schreiner adds, “To separate the Father from the Son in the act of self-giving would grossly distort the NT.” Romans (BECNT 6; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 260. For Leon Morris, “Christ’s action is God’s action. Christ’s love is God’s love” (Nygren).” The Epistle to the Romans (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 224. In all this, “if our language about God is to be anything more than anthropological projection, then it must be christomorphic. To speak well of God one must draw not from the repertoire of our best human experiences, but from the recital of the economy of salvation.” Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 162. However, he qualifies: “What remains to be thought, however, is how, and to what the extent, the suffering of Jesus, including his emotional life is equally an event in the life of God.” Ibid., 78.

As Alan J. Torrance puts it, “there can be no dichotomy between the divine and human agape in Christ.” “Is Love the Essence of God?” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 135. Oord adds, “We can safely assume that Jesus’ sorrow and joy testify to a God who feels the feelings of others and cares about them.” Nature, 118. Likewise, Newlands contends: “God’s feeling for us is understood through God’s involvement in death through the death and resurrection of Jesus.” Theology, 101. Gerald L. Borchert also puts it well in stating: “The actions of Jesus, therefore, were the actions of the Father because in Jesus the Father was in fact acting. One of the great heresies among Christians is to split Jesus from God in such a way that somehow God does not participate in the work (and death) of Jesus. However one interprets the great mystery of the incarnate work of Jesus, it must never be separated from the fact that Jesus was the agent of God.” John 1-11 (NAC 25A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 238.
problems and disagreements regarding the application of the communication of properties
\((\text{communicatio idiomatum})\) between Christ’s divine and human natures, the canonical
investigation of this dissertation operates on the basis of the working hypothesis that the divine
nature of Christ is capable of experiencing that which the incarnate Christ experienced. In other
words, while the experiences of the incarnate Christ are certainly not “normal” to divinity, God is
not incapable of such experiences.

Significantly, it need not be assumed that the experiences of the incarnate Christ are
univocal to those of regular humans. To ascribe all the experiences of Jesus univocally to God
would require the conclusion that God becomes hungry, thirsty, tired, etc. But this is not
necessary to the working approach proposed here. It is only necessary, in this working approach,
to posit that divinity is capable of feeling hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc. Here, the predication of
the experiences of Christ to a doctrine of God should be interpreted in light of the wider canonical

\[\text{\textsuperscript{110}}\] Consider, for instance, Luther’s view of the \textit{communicatio idiomatum} in the discussion of his
view of divine love in chapter 2. My use of the phrase \textit{communicatio idiomatum}, however, departs in
significant ways from Luther’s, especially when it comes to divine passibility. In my view, the canonical
text points toward the divine nature’s capacity to experience all that the human nature experiences, as I will
briefly explain further below.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{111}}\] That is, while the divine nature does not normally become “tired” in accordance with divine
omnipotence, God might lower himself to a state in which fatigue can be felt. In one sense, God is said to
be wearied (ταρασσόμενος) by the sins of his people (Isa 43:24; Mal 2:17). On the other hand, normally, the
“everlasting God . . . does not become weary [σιγά] or tired [ταρασσόμενος]” (Isa 40:28). The former appears to refer to
God’s emotional response to the continual rebellion of his creatures while the latter is in the context of
divine power as the one who has no equal. In this way, the wider canonical data allow for some sense of
divine “weariness” but disqualifies another sense from God as he is in himself. In this way, it is clear
canonical that the analogue attributed to God is not univocal. That is, God’s “weariness” in Jeremiah is
not like human weariness, but what it does consist of, who can tell? However, Isa 40:28 does not require
that God is incapable of assuming a form in which he can feel fatigue (at least analogically), as Jesus did,
but appears to mean that God as he is in himself does not become fatigued. Far from depreciating God’s
omnipotence this view actually radically affirms it since, here, God is not rendered incapable of feeling
things such as fatigue but possesses the power to assume a form (voluntary and temporary self-limitation)
in which such things, normally alien to God, may be experienced. That such self-limitation does not
necessarily amount to divesting of divine power is apparent in the devil’s temptations of Christ to turn
stones into bread, etc. Thus, such condescension is not the removal of power by self-limitation but the
willful control of one’s own power and impulses. Accordingly, Anthony C. Thiselton comments: “If the
sovereign, transcendent God freely chooses or decrees to allow himself to suffer, this is an enhancement,
not a diminution, of his sovereign freedom to choose how he will act.” \textit{The Hermeneutics of Doctrine}
(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 478.
data, though a significant degree of mystery will nevertheless remain. Here, again, it should be remembered that the precision of the correspondence between the understanding of such revelation and God as he actually is cannot be determined prior to the eschaton due to the epistemic distance between God and humans and other human limitations (cf. 1 Cor 13:12).

The provisional nature of this approach must be emphasized. Indeed, to deal with this issue sufficiently would require its own dissertation (indeed, probably many dissertations). Nevertheless, the canonical rationale for taking the tentative approach that the divine nature of Christ is capable of experiencing that which the incarnate Christ experienced is twofold. First, it will prevent canonical data regarding the incarnate Christ from being dismissed from one’s conception of what God is like, in accordance with the claims of Christ that he reveals the Father (cf. John 14:9). Second, this approach is strongly supported by the wider canonical data, especially in relation to the data pertinent to the canonical and systematic model of divine love.

The most powerful evidence is the correspondence between the characteristics of divine love of Jesus and that exhibited by YHWH in the OT, especially the display of emotions with regard to both (see chapters 4 and 5). For example, the divine compassion in the OT is strikingly similar to that manifested by Christ in the Gospels. Similarly, the NT also suggests considerable overlap in this regard. In some cases the same “compassion” is predicated simultaneously of the Father and the Son (cf. Luke 1:58). Likewise, in numerous NT instances the love of Jesus is presented as being of an identical quality and nature as that of the Father (cf. Rom 8:35, 39), complementing the overlap between the descriptions of such love in the OT and NT.


Moreover, many of the passages that speak of Christ’s love and compassion for humans not only correspond to the OT depictions of YHWH and the wider NT data, but the thrust of such passages would also seem to be impoverished if they are taken to apply only to the human nature. For example, Christ laments over his people: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matt 23:37; cf. Luke 13:34; 19:41). What is this display intended to communicate if not the passionate love of God for his people? If it is taken merely as an outburst of Christ’s humanity it would not correspond to God’s concern for his people and may even suggest that Jesus was more compassionate than God by suggesting that the human nature of Jesus was compassionate but not his divine nature. On the contrary, merely human compassion does not seem to do justice to the canonical intent of a verse such as this. Indeed, notice the striking continuity between the display of God’s profound and compassionate love with those in Hos 11:8-9 and Jer 31:20. Considering that Jesus is himself the


Matthews comments in this regard: “In Christ we see God so moved by grief and love that he chooses to take upon himself the very suffering of our sins. Do we not appeal to the incarnational role of Christ as our vision of the nature of his Father (cf. Matt 23:37 par.)? God is not a dispassionate accountant overseeing the books of human endeavor.” Genesis 1–11:26, 344. In this verse the question of the correspondence of Christ’s will to God’s will is also raised. Here and elsewhere the will (at least the ideal will, see chapter 6) of Christ is clearly unfulfilled (cf. Mark 7:24). Some attribute this merely to Christ’s human will but not his “omnipotent will.” Gottlob Schrenk, “θελω, θελαμα, θελησις,” TDNT 3:48. However, without delving into this extremely thorny issue of the nature and correspondence of the divine and human natures at it relates to will, this is problematic with regard to Christology and hermeneutics since there seems to be no objective, text-based, interpretive mechanism to determine what corresponds to divinity and what corresponds to humanity (as is the case with regard to other aspects above). Therefore, no artificial separation between the two is imposed on the data in chapter 5. See also the discussion of the nature of divine will (especially in chapters 4 and 5), which supports a significant level of correspondence between the divine will in the OT and elsewhere in the NT with Christ’s will on earth, even when unfulfilled.

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ultimate revelation of God and that he manifests the same or similar emotions of love that are elicited of YHWH in the OT in similar circumstances, does it not stand to reason that such love corresponds not merely to Christ’s human nature but to his divine nature?

In all this, the canonical data strongly suggest correspondence between the nature of divine love (especially with regard to the emotionality thereof) exhibited by Christ in the Gospels and those that pertain to the divine nature according to the wider canonical data. For these reasons, the manifestation of data with regard to divine love in the incarnation of Christ has not been separated from the other manifestations of divine love in the canon. Rather, they are here taken to accurately represent divine love. However, it should be recognized that the findings of this dissertation do not hinge on this point since, with regard to the emotionality of divine love, there is enough evidence of the emotionality of God’s love even without including the emotions manifested by Jesus as incarnate. That is, with regard to this and the other aspects of divine love, the canonical and systematic model of divine love posited by the non-incarnational data coheres with that depicted in the incarnation but is not wholly dependent upon it. The NT data of Christ’s incarnation and the wider canonical data of divine love are mutually supportive.

I am under no illusion that this issue is dealt with comprehensively or settled by this brief excursus. Hopefully, however, this brief treatment of my working approach provides an understandable rationale (if not agreeable to all) for why I have treated the passages pertaining to Christ’s incarnation in the way that I have in chapters 5 and 6. Overall, it should be remembered that Christ is the true anthropomorph, not in the sense that he is attributed with characteristics that he did not possess but in the sense that he was truly God who became truly human without divesting himself of divinity.\(^{115}\) The data from the incarnation thus demand attention with regard to the wider doctrine of God and his love.

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The Agency of Love and Ambiguous Genitives

Finally, a brief word should be said about the issue of the ambiguity of the agency of love in some instances. This generally occurs in two ways. First, related to the previous discussion of the communicatio idiomatum, it is not always clear whether the Father or Son is the intended agent of love, especially when the term “Lord” is used (cf. 1 Tim 1:12-14). Scholars generally agree that in most cases the term “Lord” in the NT refers to Christ, though it is not clear that this is always the case. As seen above, however, the canon strongly suggests that the love of the Father and Christ is identical. Therefore, I am not aware of any significant import with regard to such instances of ambiguous agency. Secondly, the NT contains a plethora of ambiguous genitives (genitives that might be subjective or objective), leaving the agency of love uncertain in some statements which may be significant for divine love. The intended agency in some of these instances can be decided with reasonable certainty, and these have been briefly treated in footnotes throughout the NT chapter (chapter 5). However, others present significant uncertainty and disagreement among scholars. Therefore, I thought it best to not depend upon one interpretation or the other with regard to these ambiguities. Further, I am not aware of any significant issues with regard to the canonical and systematic model of divine love derived from the canonical data (see chapter 6) that would hinge upon one or the other interpretation of these genitives. While such texts are by no means insignificant, the information that they would convey as subjective or objective genitives is already apparent in other, clearer passages. With this background, we now turn to a survey of the theological conceptions of divine love in the next two chapters before turning to the canonical data to address the conflict of interpretations.

“The question, then, is who is in the image or morphe of whom?” Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 64. Eberhard Jüngel adds, “If ‘dogmatic’ anthropomorphism speaks of God like a man, the no less fatal ‘symbolic’ anthropomorphism forbids speaking of God as a man. Thus it contradicts what the Christian faith asserts to be true: that God was among men as the man Jesus.” This “excludes in its uniqueness one speaking of God arbitrarily like a man, but also opposes the prohibition of speaking of God as this particular man.” God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 297.
CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF SURVEY OF DIVINE LOVE IN HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

Plato’s Conception of Love

The purpose of this survey is to introduce the main themes and issues regarding divine love and provide a glimpse of the long history that will offer context for this study. To serve this purpose, major figures have been selected that demonstrate the nature of the issues involved.\(^1\) The issue of divine love in systematic theology has a long history, including a discernible connection to Greek philosophy. Therefore, the roots of the discussion of divine love generally begin with Plato.\(^2\) At least three main points of Plato’s doctrine are essential to this study: (1) his ontology of the two worlds, the supersensible and sensible, especially the veneration of timelessness, simplicity, immutability, self-sufficiency, and perfection; (2) the notion of the highest love as rational desire for the Good, the proton philon; and (3) the prominence of insufficiency and need

\(^1\) Given the nature of this study, the historical survey is limited to a few thinkers who exemplify the major issues and have had a large impact on the historical theology of divine love. An exhaustive historical analysis of the issue of divine love would require a dissertation unto itself and is beyond the scope of this work. The major figures have been chosen for their prominence and influence regarding divine love down through the ages of Western thought. While others could have been included, these figures provide an introduction that suitably frames the issues of primary interest to this dissertation, an introduction that would not be significantly improved by an analysis of other historical figures. For more on the historical theology of love see Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974); Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (trans. P. S. Watson; London: S.P.C.K., 1953); Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love* (vol. 1 of *The Nature of Love*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); John M. Rist, *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus, and Origen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964); John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*. The Hulsean Lectures for 1938 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960); Martin Cyril D’Arcy, *The Mind and Heart of Love* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954); Liz Carmichael, *Friendship: Interpreting Christian Love* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004); Brümmer, *Model*.

\(^2\) “In the philosophy of love . . . I am convinced that every discussion must start with Plato.” Singer, *Nature*, 47.
as conditions of desirous love, which is limited to human love in contrast to divine love. Among other things, for Plato, *eros* is of a rational, purposive character and emotion is downplayed.³

“The Platonic lover rises above . . . leaving emotionality behind: his love is not an attempt to express or purify sensuous feelings but rather to supplant them by sheer rationality.”⁴ This fits with Plato’s idealization of reason and the reflective life of the philosopher.⁵ Perhaps Plato’s most discussed contribution, however, is the apparent emphasis on desirous love.⁶ This conception of love is discussed both in the *Symposium* and the *Lysis*. At the outset it is important to mention that it is difficult to extract Plato’s own view from his writings with any certainty. Especially as it regards the *Symposium* and the *Lysis*, numerous ambiguities arise.⁷ For instance, the Lysis ends by stating that no definition of friendship has been ascertained; the positions set forth before are flawed somehow. But, it is not altogether clear what elements of Socrates’ conception remain and what elements have been dismissed. In both the *Symposium* and the *Lysis*, Socrates is the primary spokesperson, as is common in Platonic dialogues. However, at times the view of Socrates himself is difficult to discern and beyond that, whether Socrates represents the viewpoint of Plato.⁸

³ For instance the ideal is “Socrates [who] is emotionally cool, unimpassioned, involved in the life about him but also at a distance from it.” Ibid., 49. Accordingly, “Plato’s highest love is predominantly intellectual,” Ibid., 73.

⁴ Ibid. Thus, “wherever possible, Plato avoids the language of feeling.” Ibid.

⁵ The true philosopher contemplates the world of unchanging forms. See Plato, *Resp.*

⁶ This does not mean, however, that the motif originated with Plato. See, for instance, Nygren, *Agape*, 162.

⁷ The Symposium is a dialogue regarding love set at the house of Agathon (one of the characters) and thus presents a diversity of opinions. Many interpret Diotima’s perspective to be the position of Plato because Socrates does not overtly object to it and thus appears to accept it.

The Symposium and Lysis

In the *Symposium*, love (*eros*) is presented as desire for the “everlasting possession of the good.” This notion will be re-visited below since this, coupled with the above ontology, functions as the lynchpin of Platonic influence on the conception of divine love in Christian theology.

Before this conception of love is unpacked, two important points must be kept in mind. First, in Plato’s two-worlds ontology the world of the forms (*eidon*) is the world of reality. The sensible, material world is merely a shadow of the real world of the forms, which is a realm of timelessness and immutability.\(^9\) Change is evidence of imperfection since anything that changes must change either for the better or for the worse, meaning it was either already less than perfect or would become so in changing.\(^10\) The Good is the ultimate, and as such the Good is perfect, self-sufficient, immutable, timeless, etc.\(^11\) Secondly, if love includes desire, whatever else love means for Plato (and regardless of whether *eros* is selfish), then love signifies a lack (of some kind) in the subject of that love. Thus, desirous love is itself an evidence of imperfection and change.

At this point, the conception of love (*eros*) as desire warrants examination.\(^12\) A fundamental feature of *eros* (in Diotima’s view related in the *Symposium*) is that it is directed

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9 See, for instance, Plato’s allegory of the cave in *Resp.* 2.7.514–520a. See also the analogy of the divided line. Ibid., 6.509d–513e.


11 Thus Singer states that the “Good is not like any other object. It is the principle of value and would retain its form whether or not anyone desired it.” *Nature*, 86.

12 However, it must be remembered that Plato is clear that not all things that are called love are equivalent, or love in the same sense. Plato’s Socrates states, “We have singled out a certain form of love, and applying thereto the name of the whole, we call it love; and there are other names that we commonly abuse.” Plato, *Symp.* 205b (Lamb, LCL). For instance, “those who resort to him in various other ways—in money-making, an inclination to sports, or philosophy—are not described either as loving or as lovers, all those who pursue him seriously in one of his several forms obtain, as loving and as lovers, the name of the whole.” Ibid. 205c–d. Plato also relates the view of Pausanius that love “is not one . . . it would be more
toward that which is good; it is desire for the good and, ultimately, for happiness (eudaimonia).\textsuperscript{13}

Accordingly, Diotima can assert that love (\textit{eros}) is desire for the “everlasting possession of the good.”\textsuperscript{14} Here, love is always directed toward something good or desirable, and as such, it entails that the lover lacks (deficiency) that which she desires.\textsuperscript{15} Hence, Diotima describes \textit{Eros} not as a god, but as a \textit{daimon} whose mother is Poverty (\textit{Penia}), and whose father is Resource or Plenty (\textit{Poros}).\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Eros} does not possess beauty or goodness,\textsuperscript{17} but rather desires the beautiful and good,
and all desire presumes a deficiency, lack, or need in the desirous lover. Since Eros desires good, he must not be absolutely self-sufficient; he has need, like his mother, Poverty. Since love includes desire, and desire entails a lack of the thing desired, love according to Plato is always poor but never wholly resourceless. In this description, then, both need (or poverty) and desire are fundamental to eros love. Although, this presents no difficulty for human love, it presents a seemingly insoluble difficulty for divine love, as shall be seen.

Beyond this, the Symposium also presents a distinction between two kinds of desirous love, or two Aphrodites. Pausanius, another speaker at the gathering, presents an elder Aphrodite, the daughter of heaven, whom he calls Heavenly; and a younger daughter of Zeus and Dione, whom he calls Popular. The latter is the lesser love, a lover of the body rather than the soul, a crude kind of love. The former is the superior; it loves “what abides in the body” and “compels lover and beloved alike to feel a zealous concern for their own virtue.”

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18 Though one cannot desire what he possesses, he may desire that he possess his possessions eternally. If one says he desires things he already possesses he is “merely saying—I wish these things now present to be present also in the future.” Ibid., 200d.

19 “Now, as the son of Resource and Poverty, Love is in a peculiar case. First, he is ever poor, and far from tender or beautiful as most suppose him: rather is he hard and parched, shoeless and homeless . . . he ever dwells with want.” Ibid., 203c–d. Moreover, “the resources that he gets will ever be ebbing away; so that Love is at no time either resourceless or wealthy, and furthermore he stands midway betwixt wisdom and ignorance.” Ibid., 203e.

20 Once again, it is not clear to what extent (if at all) Plato subscribes to such a view. It is placed in the mouth of Pausanius rather than Socrates. Nevertheless, the conception is both influential and controversial and must be introduced. Nygren traces the view of higher and lower loves as the heavenly ladder (see discussion further below) down through the ages. He is highly critical of any such ascending love and his analysis often appears biased thereby; but there seems to be little doubt that ideas similar to the one related by Pausanius influenced some Christian thinkers. Nygren, Agape, 170.

21 This “is the love that we see in the meaner sort of men; who, in the first place, love women as well as boys; secondly, where they love, they are set on the body more than the soul.” Plato, Symp. 181b (Lamb, LCL). This love is shallow and fleeting, it “flutters off” as soon as the “loved begins to fade.” Ibid., 183e.

22 Ibid., 185b–c. Not only Pausanius holds this but also Eryximachus who speaks regarding this better, heavenly love saying, “This is the sort we should preserve; this is the noble, the Heavenly Love, sprung from the Heavenly Muse. But the Popular Love comes from the Queen of Various Song; in applying him we must proceed with all caution, that no debauchery be implanted with the reaping of his pleasure.” Ibid., 187d–e.
altogether clear that Plato shares the view of Pausanius, the distinction between a heavenly love and a lower, earthy love fits Plato’s two-worlds ontology, as well as the conception of eros related by Socrates in the Symposium. For instance, Socrates speaks of ascending a ladder of loves, a metaphor that depends upon the notion of higher and lower loves. He does not position these loves in absolute dichotomy but as stepping stones to the higher, truer love. Thus, the ladder is an upward path to the supersensible world of forms, in contrast to a downward path toward materiality. This is directed toward an ultimate object of love (proton philon), which is self-sufficient. Furthermore, it calls to mind the notion of the idealization of reason and rational love. The soul that is led by reason will love the proton philon whereas those held captive by appetite or spirit will desire lesser objects.

Some have harshly criticized Plato’s view, holding that eros love is a wholly, self-centered, self-gratifying desire that seeks to pull itself upwards. However, others have contended that Plato’s view of love should not be reduced to selfishness or even desirous love. One

23 The ascension is set forth thus. The true lover must first “make himself a lover of all beautiful bodies. . . . But his next advance will be to set a higher value on the beauty of souls than on that of the body.” Ibid., 210b. Eventually he is to “estimate the body’s beauty as a slight affair.” Ibid., 210c. Therefore, “beginning from obvious beauties he must for the sake of that highest beauty be ever climbing aloft, as on the rungs of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; from personal beauty he proceeds to beautiful observances, from observance to beautiful learning, and from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know the very essence of beauty.” Ibid., 211c–d.

24 This is Nygren’s major criticism of what he will call the eros motif. For him, “Eros is man’s conversion from the sensible to the super-sensible; it is the upward tendency of the human soul; it is a real force, which drives the soul in the direction of the Ideal world.” Agape, 170. Nygren’s very influential conception of agape and eros will be discussed further below.

25 “In Plato’s view, there are therefore two kinds of love: eros for the proton philon which is to be desired for its own sake since only the possession of the proton philon constitutes eternal happiness; and eros for everything else (including other people).” Brümmer, Model, 113. See more on this, related to divine love, below.

26 Consider Plato’s analogy of the chariot where the charioteer represents the rational, guiding part of the soul, a white horse represents the rational part of the passionate nature, and a black horse represents the irrational passions of the soul. The charioteer attempts to direct upwards toward the heavenly from which the pre-existent soul had once fallen. Plato, Phaedr. 246a–254e (Fowler, LCL).

27 See the discussion further below.
primary basis for this latter assertion is the contents of the Lysis, to which we now turn. In this
dialogue, Socrates discusses the issue of friendship love (philia) with two boys, Lysis and
Menexenus.\(^{28}\) He mentions the fact that Lysis believes with certainty that his parents love (philei)
him.\(^{29}\) However, he turns this conclusion on its head by arguing that no one loves someone who is
useless, but loves one who may address a need with skill, thus Lysis’s parents do not actually
love him.\(^{30}\) To be loved, he counsels, Lysis should become wise, otherwise no one will love
him.\(^{31}\) Here friendship love is clearly predicated upon utility on the part of the loved and need or
lack, which provides the context for usefulness, on the part of the lover.\(^{32}\) Socrates also raises the
question of the mutuality of love. He seems to contend that friendship love need not be mutual
but can be unrequited, even to the extent of the loved one hating the lover.\(^{33}\) But, then, who (if
anyone) is the friend (philos) in friendship?\(^{34}\) Socrates appears to find logical difficulties with all

\(^{28}\) Unless otherwise noted, it should be assumed that the word “love” as quoted or discussed
regarding the Lysis is from the philia root.

\(^{29}\) “I suppose, Lysis, your father and mother are exceedingly fond [\(\phi\lambda\ell\epsilon\)] of you? Yes, to be sure,
he replied. Then if your father and mother are fond [\(\phi\lambda\ell\epsilon\)] of you, and desire to see you happy, it is
perfectly plain that they are anxious to secure your happiness.” Plato, Lysis 207d–e (Lamb, LCL).

\(^{30}\) “Then will anyone count us his friends [\(\phi\lambda\ell\omega\)] or have any affection [\(\phi\ell\eta\rho\epsilon\)] for us in those
matters for which we are useless? Surely not, he said. So now, you see, your father does not love [\(\phi\lambda\ell\epsilon\)]
you, nor does anyone love anyone else, so far as one is useless. Apparently not, he said.” Ibid., 210c.

\(^{31}\) “Then if you can become wise, my boy, everybody will be your friend [\(\phi\ell\omega\)] or everyone will be
intimate with you, since you will be useful and good; otherwise, no one at all, not your father, nor your
mother, nor your intimate connexions, will be your friends.” Ibid., 210c–d.

\(^{32}\) This fits well with Plato’s view of the ideal society in the Republic where people love (philia)
the city as their own family. Here each one “must contribute to the well-being of the city and in this way
love the city and are loved for their contribution.” Brümmer, Model, 114.

\(^{33}\) He states, “When one person loves another, which of the two becomes friend of the other—the
loving of the loved, or the loved of the loving? Or is there no difference? There is none, he replied, in my
opinion. How is that? I said; do you mean that both become friends mutually, when there is only one loving
the other? Yes, I think so, he replied. But I ask you, is it not possible for one loving not to be loved in
return by him whom he loves? It is. But again, may he not be even hated while loving?” Plato, Lysis 212a–
b (Lamb, LCL).

\(^{34}\) “Now in such a case, I went on, the one loves and the other is loved? Yes. Which of the two,
then, is a friend of the other? . . . Or again, is neither of them in such a case friend of the other, if both do
not love mutually?” Ibid., 212c–d.
combinations, whether the friend be the lover, the loved, or both.\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps, then, there is something wrong with the question.\textsuperscript{36} He thus turns to the issue of the subject and object of love as either alike or different.\textsuperscript{37} Yet, once again, Socrates finds difficulties with the available positions, arriving at yet another apparent impasse. For instance, those alike, insofar as they are alike, have no need or lack (and thus no desire) for the qualities of the other.\textsuperscript{38} Once again, it is emphasized that “if a man has no need of anything he will not cherish [\(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\phi\eta\)] anything. . . . And that which does not cherish [\(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\phi\eta\)] will not love.”\textsuperscript{39}

On the other hand, if the like loves that which is opposite, one must say that the lover must love the hater, being its opposite.\textsuperscript{40} But the bad cannot love; thus suppose that a third

\textsuperscript{35} He maintains that if friendship requires mutuality, then the lover cannot be friend of a loved one who does not return that love. Moreover, the loved object can also not be a friend to the lover. But it seems that love does not always require mutuality. This ends in confusion. “What then are we to make of it, I asked, if neither the loving are to be friends, nor the loved, nor both the loving and loved together? For apart from these, are there any others left for us to cite as becoming friends to one another?” Ibid., 213c.

\textsuperscript{36} “Can it be, Menexenus, I asked, that all through there has been something wrong with our inquiry?” Ibid., 213c–d.

\textsuperscript{37} He quotes Homer, “Yea, ever like and like together God doth draw.” Ibid., 214a.

\textsuperscript{38} “Is like friend to like in so far as he is like, and is such an one useful to his fellow?” Ibid., 214d. He goes, “when anything whatever is like anything else, what benefit can it offer, or what harm can it do, to its like, which it could not offer or do to itself? Or what could be done to it that could not be done to it by itself? How can such things be cherished [\(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\phi\eta\)] by each other, when they can bring no mutual succour? Is it at all possible? No. And how can that be a friend, which is not cherished [\(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\phi\eta\)]? By no means.” Ibid., 214d–215a. Moreover, “but, granting that like is not friend to like, the good may still be friend to the good in so far as he is good, not as he is like? Perhaps. But again, will not the good, in so far as he is good, be in that measure sufficient to himself? Yes. And the sufficient has no need of anything, by virtue of his sufficiency. Of course.” Ibid., 215a–b.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 215b. Notice the use of the \textit{agapao} word group, as in the footnote above. In parallel fashion, one who has no use cannot be valued either. “So how can we say that the good will be friends to the good at all, when neither in absence do they long for one another? How can it be contrived that such persons shall value each other highly? By no means, he said. And if they do not set a high value on each other, they cannot be friends. True.” Ibid., 215a–c.

\textsuperscript{40} Socrates states the possibility, “for it was between things most opposed that friendship was chiefly to be found, since everything desired [\(\epsilon\pi\theta\mu\varepsilon\iota\nu\)] its opposite, not its like.” Ibid., 215d–e. Thus, “the unlikest things [must be filled] with friendship: since the poor man must needs be friendly to the rich, and the weak to the strong, for the sake of their assistance, and also the sick man to the doctor; and every ignorant person had to cherish [\(\alpha\phi\eta\mu\mu\alpha\nu\)] the well-informed, and love [\(\phi\lambda\lambda\iota\nu\)] him.” Ibid., 215d. Yet, this leads to absurdity, Socrates says, because “at once these well-accomplished logic-choppers will delightedly pounce on us and ask whether hatred is not the most opposite thing to friendship.” Ibid., 216a.
category, that which is neither good nor bad loves the good.  

He utilizes the analogy of a body that is neither good nor bad, which loves medicine. But, he adds, it seems that the body loves the medicine because of the presence of evil, for if there were no evil, the body would have no need of medicine and, hence, would not love it.  

Socrates remains unsatisfied and raises the question of motivations. To avoid an infinite regression of causes of love, he proposes the proton philon such that “the truly dear or ultimate principle of friendship (proton philon) is not for the sake of any other or further dear. . . . The truly dear is that in which all these so-called friendships terminate.”  

Thus, evil is not the cause of love, but the “desires which are neither good nor bad will exist even when the bad things are abolished.”  

Thus, rather than evil, he suggests that desire itself is the cause of friendship love.  

Notably, the notion of desirous love is well represented in the Lysis, here and elsewhere. Moreover, desire as the possible cause of love, as in the Symposium, requires deficiency and lack, specifically lack of that which is natural or congenial to

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41 Thus he states, “One view then remains: if anything is friendly to anything, that which is neither good nor bad is friendly to either the good or what is of the same quality as itself. For I presume nothing could be found friendly to the bad. True.” Ibid., 216e. Earlier he had clarified, “the bad never enters into true friendship with either good or bad.” Ibid., 214d.  

42 Ibid., 217a–218b. For example, “those who are already wise no longer love wisdom, whether they be gods or men; nor again can those be lovers of wisdom who are in such ignorance as to be bad: for we know that a bad and stupid man is no lover of wisdom.” Ibid., 218a.  

43 Plato, Lysis 220a–b (Jowett, Works, 75). He suggests that perhaps there is one thing that is the true friend and other things are loved for the sake of that friend. An “original friend, for whose sake all the other things can be said to be friends?” Lysis 219c–d (Lamb, LCL). The other things “which we cited as friends for the sake of that one thing, may be deceiving us like so many phantoms of it, while that original thing may be the veritable friend.” Ibid., 219d.  

44 Ibid., 221b.  

45 “Can it really be then, as we were saying just now, that desire [ἐπιθυμία] is the cause of friendship [φιλίας], and the desiring thing is a friend to that which it desires, and is so at any time of desiring; while our earlier statement about friends was all mere drivel, like a poem strung out for more length?” Ibid., 221c–d. He states, “Is it possible for a man, when he desires [ἐπιθυμούντα] and loves [ἐρώντα], to have no friendly feeling [φιλεῖν] towards that which he desires and loves? I think not.” Ibid., 221b.  

46 Socrates states, “There is a certain possession I have desired [εἰπὸμαι] from my childhood . . . for the possession of friends I have quite a passionate longing [ἐρωτικῶς], and would rather obtain a good friend than the best quail or cock in the world.” Ibid., 211d–e.
the lover. Here again, Socrates purports to find an insoluble difficulty and thus ends his ruminations on friendship explicitly acknowledging that “what a ‘friend’ is, we have not yet succeeded in discovering.”

Despite the plethora of logical cul-de-sacs throughout the *Lysis*, a number of points are important to understanding the issues that relate to divine love. For instance, it is significant that Plato utilizes the *eros, philia*, and even *agapao* word group in his discussions, and in a way that shows close relationships between them. For instance, need is the prerequisite for desire (*ἐπιθυμία*), and without need one will not cherish (*ἀγάπη*), and the one who does not cherish (*ἀγάπη*) will not love (*φιλία*), and the one who is not cherished (*ἀγάπη*) cannot be a friend (*φίλος*). Accordingly, desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) seems to be the requisite of friendship love (*φιλία*); it is not possible for a man who “desires (*ἐπιθυμεῖν*) and loves (*ζητεῖν*) to have no friendly feeling (*φιλέειν*) towards that which he desires and loves.” Nevertheless, there is reason for caution regarding the precise identification of Plato’s own view of these loves. For instance, Socrates is explicitly unable to arrive at a settled position in the *Lysis*. On the contrary, he presents and refutes many possible positions. Nevertheless, despite the lack of a clearly defined definition in

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47 He suggests, “the desiring thing desires that in which it is deficient, does it not? Yes. And the deficient is a friend to that in which it is deficient? I suppose so. And it becomes deficient in that of which it suffers a deprivation. To be sure. So it is one’s own belongings [things that are proper or congenial to one], it seems, that are the objects of love and friendship and desire; so it appears, Menexenus and Lysis.” Ibid., 221e.

48 Ibid., 223b. The nature of the difficulty here relates to the distinction, or lack thereof, between the congenial and the like. Having ruled out that the like loves the like, there must be a distinction between the congenial and the like to avoid equivocation here. Yet, Socrates supposes that the good is congenial to the good, the bad to the bad, and that which is neither good nor bad to that which is neither good nor bad and thus the reasoning appears to arrive at an impasse. Ibid. He thus states, “If neither the loved nor the loving, nor the like nor the unlike, nor the good nor the belonging, nor all the rest that we have tried in turn . . . if none of these is a friend, I am at a loss for anything further to say.” Ibid., 222e.

49 The precise nature of the interrelationship of the linguistics is beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to note, however, that although the words are used distinctively, they are not set in opposition.

50 Ibid., 214d–215b.

51 Ibid., 221b.
the *Lysis*, some facets of Platonic logic are clearly represented and remain influential, in consideration of their continued prevalence in later discussions of these issues.\(^{52}\) For instance, in the *Lysis*, as in the *Symposium*, the issue of deficiency and lack as a prerequisite for desirous love rises to the fore.\(^{53}\) Plato also presents the question regarding mutuality, or the lack thereof, in friendship love.

It is possible, though it seems to me unlikely, that Plato intends to present the recurrent issues related to desirous love in order to question the centrality of that presumed conception(s).\(^{54}\) Conversely, he could be endorsing the position or calling into question other facets of that or any number of conventional conceptions of love that were prevalent in his day. For instance, it is not clear if Plato wishes to show that the popular conventions (such as the initially assumed parental love for Lysis) regarding love are false, or that the view of love as desire is simplistic, or something else entirely. Or does Plato wish to state that friendship is, in fact, inexplicable? There appears to be no way to determine Plato’s own intent with certainty. Nevertheless, one can

\(^{52}\) See the remainder of this chapter and the next.

\(^{53}\) This issue is clearly seen regarding the love of Lysis’s parents for him, where utility is raised, presuming deficiency. Price agrees that these emphases remain, saying, “For all its ostensible failures, the *Lysis* ends its investigation of the grounds of desire . . . with two suggestions that Plato was not later to take back: the object of desire is that which one lacks, and that which one lacks is that which one is deprived of.” *Love*, 12. What remains unresolved, says Price, is how mutual friendship can exist, and how the notions of likeness and goodness relate. Ibid. Incidentally, Price believes that Plato’s own view is represented in these dialogues of Socrates.

\(^{54}\) For instance, C. Osborne believes that the *Lysis* rules out *eros* as acquisitive love. To support her view, she contends that the *Lysis* includes “three examples of love [that] are shown to be impossible on the assumption that love is something self-seeking that expects to gain something of benefit to the lover.” *Eros*, 58. Those three are Hippothales as unrequited lover of Lysis, Lysis and Menexenus as “like” friends, and the love of Lysis’s parents for him. These three kinds of love are dismissed by Socrates, but she suggests that this shows not that these kinds of love are false, but rather that the notions about love have gone terribly wrong. She states, “Because we perceive that these are the most classic examples of love, and that if they are inexplicable something has gone seriously wrong with the analysis of love.” Ibid., 59. Thus “Plato could convincingly represent the common assumptions of Athenians about love as being incompatible with an acquisitive analysis of love.” Ibid., 60. However, it is equally possible that Plato did not view these types of love as true or adequate but was intending to criticize the Athenian notions. Although he never does reconcile his own view here it does seem to assume many facets of desirous love predicated on need and deficiency and this fits with Plato’s overall ontology. However, one cannot be sure of either interpretation.
recognize here the issues that are repeatedly raised in the discussions of love after Plato, including the issues of perfection and self-sufficiency as opposed to desirous love that presumes insufficiency, the priority of rational love for the heavenly over against vulgar love of the earthy, and the parties and relationship (mutuality and reciprocity) of true friendship.

The Question of Egocentric Love in Plato

The ongoing debate regarding the Platonic conception of love must be further addressed. As has been briefly mentioned, some interpret Plato’s conception of eros love to be acquisitive love as represented by Diotima’s account in the Symposium. For some, this conception becomes synonymous with thematic eros, a self-centered acquisitive love. Some contend that elements in this account present a thoroughgoing egocentrism where a lover only loves for some expected benefit that will address deficiency. 55 This kind of love is motivated purely by self-interest in accordance with eudaimonistic ethics. 56 This stands opposed to the notion of love as beneficence. 57 On the other hand, it is sometimes argued that Platonic eros does not amount to selfishness per se, but rather that loving others is inseparably connected to one’s own benefit based on the interdependent nature of the world. 58 Some, however, present Plato’s view as a

55 For instance, the body loves medicine so that it can be improved. Plato, Lysis 215d. Even parental love of children is chalked up to the desire for immortality in the Symposium, as is the willingness for self-sacrifice of Alcestis and Achilles in mythology. Plato, Symp. 208c–d.

56 Nygren criticizes, “The very fact that Eros is acquisitive love is sufficient to show its egocentric character; for all desire, or appetite, and longing is more or less egocentric. But the clearest proof of the egocentric nature of Eros is its intimate connection with eudaemonia.” Agape, 180. “Of such a love it could scarcely be said that it ‘seeketh not its own.’” Ibid., 181.

57 “An Eros that was rich, and had everything it wanted, would be a contradiction in terms; and the same is true, fundamentally, of any thought of Eros as freely giving anything away.” Ibid., 176.

58 For Brümmer, Platonic “eros is love for the ideal humanity which all men share.” Model, 124. As such, it is not selfish, even though it is self-love such that “I do not love you for yourself alone, but only in order to achieve ultimate happiness for myself. In this sense all love is self-love.” Ibid., 115. Thus, while it is true that “Platonic love was in the final analysis an eudaemonistic effort toward achieving for yourself arete or that self-perfection which is identical with ultimate happiness.” Ibid. Nevertheless, “this does not mean that love is selfish. It does not seek personal advantage at the expense of other people. On the contrary, seeking my own good involves seeking the good of society as a whole and even of the universe as a whole, since all these goods are intimately connected.” Ibid.
deficient love for universals rather than persons, while others see it as love for the potential (rather than actual) goodness of persons (self and others). Still others question whether Plato’s view must be interpreted as acquisitive at all. Might Platonic love, and thus eros, rather be inexplicable, as is perhaps implied by the inconclusive conclusion of the Lysis? For instance, in the Lysis and even in the Symposium there are brief implications of other-centered love. Perhaps love is multifaceted such that an attempted reduction of it to one or two elements results in absurdity.

Whatever the case may be, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to enter into the further intricacies of interpreting Plato’s own view. Nevertheless, the briefly examined

59 Vlastos, in “Individual,” supposes Platonic love to be directed toward the eternal forms or ideas and only secondarily for individuals, and then only as an instance, or exemplification, of the eternal forms or ideas. This he finds to be the “cardinal flaw” in Plato’s theory, lack of true personal love but rather limited to “love in persons . . . the ‘image’ of the Idea in them.” Vlastos, “Individual,” 31. Norton and Kille, on the other hand, see Platonic love not as egocentric, which is directed toward love of the actual self (actuality), but as a love directed toward the “indwelling ideal” (potentiality) and its growth. Philosophies, 82. Because all of humanity is connected, this same love can also be directed toward the “ideal possibility within the beloved which it is his or her destiny to fulfill.” Ibid., 81. It is not concerned with the present imperfect condition but looks toward the perfect potentiality.

60 C. Osborne contends that eros is not acquisitive love or love motivated by desire or self-interest but is inexplicable according to the pattern of the Cupid mythology of arrows. For her, “the inexplicability of loving someone is central to the traditional notion of eros.” Eros, 72. She does concede that, “if the speech of Socrates in the Symposium is taken as an exposition of Platonic doctrine, it is easy to assume that Plato’s principle analysis of love is akin to what Nygren identified as Eros, a selfish desire to possess an inanimate good.” Ibid., 54. However, she does not take the Symposium to be a vehicle of Plato’s own view. Rather, she contends that “Plato himself suggests the reasons why it [the Symposium] should not be taken as suggesting that love is motivated by self-interest, or explained by appeal to the desirable nature of the object of acquisitive love.” Ibid., 56. She believes the Lysis “effectively undermines the notion of love that Nygren and many others have found in Diotima’s speech.” Ibid., 57. For her, it “make the uncritical, acquisitive, reading of the Symposium impossible.” Ibid., 58. Rist, on the other hand, does see Diotima’s account as including an acquisitive love that Plato would affirm, yet he also allows for some instances of non-egoistic love in Plato’s writings, noting that Plato was not consistent in his system and allowed for multiple positions that cannot be made into “a totally harmonious position.” Eros, 54. See further, ibid., 26, 33–37, 55.

61 Though it is not from the mouth of Socrates, Phaedrus states, “Only such as are in love will consent to die for others.” Plato, Symp. 179b (Lamb, LCL). He contends that the lover avoids the shameful in order to be viewed more favorably by his beloved, thus making for a better citizen, and a better society. Thus, even here there is some emphasis on utility. Moreover, in the Lysis, love from parent to child is briefly mentioned as love that desires happiness for the beloved, though this parental love is itself questioned. Plato, Lysis 207d. In another instance, according to Diotima, the beautiful may be partaken of by lesser things, which does not detract from the self-sufficiency of the Beautiful. Plato, Symp. 211b.
conflicting interpretations do shed light on what became major questions in the historical theology of love. For example, should love in its highest and purest sense be limited to altruism and beneficence or is there room for at least some degree of egocentrism? In other words, must love empty itself of valuation and desire nothing for itself? These questions become very prominent, and it does not seem necessary to pinpoint Plato’s own view to appreciate his influence in highlighting these issues. Although Plato speaks primarily of human love, and that is the locus of these questions for him, Christian theology will wrestle with these definitions as it relates to divine love. Presently, we turn to the Platonic framework, which suggests the impossibility of divine love.

Divine Love

The words of Socrates related by Plato in both the Symposium and the Lysis imply that there is only one true object of love, the Good, the proton philon.\textsuperscript{62} For instance, Plato writes, “What men love is simply and solely the good.”\textsuperscript{63} The proton philon, the supreme object of love, is the ultimate Good.\textsuperscript{64} This relates to the aforementioned analogy of progress toward higher and better forms of love as “rungs on a ladder” toward the ultimate, singular, object of love.\textsuperscript{65} In this way, everything that is loved is loved for the good that it participates in or imitates, until we reach the proton philon, that “for whose sake all the other things” are loved.\textsuperscript{66} In this ascent toward higher love, the ultimate object of love is “the final object of all those previous toils . . . existing ever in singularity of form independent by itself, while all the multitude of beautiful things

\textsuperscript{62} Plato, Lysis 219c. For Plato “all lovers are really in love with the absolute.” Singer, Nature, 21.

\textsuperscript{63} Plato, Symp. 206a (Lamb, LCL).

\textsuperscript{64} Singer, Nature, 54.

\textsuperscript{65} Plato, Symp. 210b–c (Lamb, LCL).

\textsuperscript{66} Plato, Lysis 219c (Lamb, LCL). This translation reads, “for whose sake all other things can be said to be friends.” however, it can also be translated for whose sake all other things are loved (φιλα είναι).
partake of it in such wise that, though all of them are coming to be and perishing, it grows neither
greater nor less, and is affected \(\pi\alpha\sigma\chi\varepsilon\iota\nu\nu\) by nothing.”67 This “hierarchy of loves culminat[es] in
the proton philon which is the only object to be loved for its own sake,” the eternal ultimate
form.68 The God of Christianity would later be associated with this proton philon, the impassible
one who desires nothing but is the true desire of all.

The Platonic ontology makes it clear that love as desire or utility is not appropriate to
divinity.69 As we have seen, love as desire suggests a lack or need in the lover that may be
satisfied by an object of love such that the lover is “ever poor” and in need.70 However, the Good
is the ultimate, and thus perfect, self-sufficient, immutable, timeless, etc.71 Thus, divinity as
perfect must be completely self-sufficient and, consequently, “a god cannot love, since the gods
lack nothing.”72 Moreover, there could be no relational or friendship love between God and man

67 Plato, Symp. 211a–b (Lamb, LCL). It is “ever-existent and neither comes to be nor perishes,
neither waxes nor wanes; next, it is not beautiful in part and in part ugly, nor is it such at such a time and
other at another, nor in one respect beautiful and in another ugly, nor so affected by positions as to seem
beautiful to some and ugly to others.” It is not in any instance, description, or location “but existing ever in
singularity of form independent by itself, while all the multitude of beautiful things partake of it in such a
wise that, although all of them are coming to be and perishing, it grows neither greater nor less, and is
affected by nothing.” Ibid.

68 Brümmer, Model, 112.

69 At least in the sense of the absolute Good, the proton philon who is self-sufficient and “affected
by nothing.” Plato, Symp. 211b (Lamb, LCL). Rist draws attention to a number of possible instances of
outward-focused benevolence; Plato speaks of gods such as Zeus caring (in the sense of providing) for all
(Phaedr. 246e), an age past of divine or semi-divine philanthropy (Leg. 713d) and a fatherly description of
the Demiurge (Tim. 28c, 37c). He suggests that “Plato has not worked out his thought into a fully coherent
system, but left some striking contradictions.” Rist, Eros, 33. Even if inconsistent with other elements of
Platonic ontology, such infrequent instances still cannot remove Plato’s overwhelming emphasis on the
timelessness, self-sufficiency, and impassibility that is central to the proton philon.

70 Plato, Symp. 203c–d (Lamb, LCL).

71 “But again, will not the good, in so far as he is good, be in that measure sufficient to himself?
Yes. And the sufficient has no need of anything, by virtue of his sufficiency. Of course.” Plato, Lysis 215a–
b (Lamb, LCL). Thus Singer states that the “Good is not like any other object. It is the principle of value
and would retain its form whether or not anyone desired it.” Nature, 86.

72 Brümmer, Model, 111. Thus, Diotima states, “No gods ensue wisdom or desire to be made wise:
such they are already; nor does anyone else that is wise ensue it.” Plato, Symp. 204a (Lamb, LCL).
Moreover, she dialogues with Plato, “‘Tell me, do you not say that all gods are happy and beautiful? Or
for “God with man does not mingle.” 73 Thus divinity is never the active agent of love (lover) but may only be the object of love (loved). 74

As shall be seen, the concept of *eros* as desire or as love for the useful becomes significant in Christian theology. Thus, when Christians adapted Plato’s theory of the Good or the *proton philon* to correspond to the Christian God, the issue of divine love became problematic. For instance, the Good is absolutely simple, timeless, self-sufficient, immutable, and altogether perfect. This means, of course, that the Good is in need of nothing, indeed incapable of need. The *proton philon* is the object of all love but cannot be subject; since it already possesses the object of all desire, it makes no sense to consider it a subject of desire; it lacks nothing. If God is conceived in these terms, it follows that God cannot have any desire, and thus cannot exhibit the kind of love that Plato described; if there is divine love it cannot have any semblance of the supposedly Platonic *eros* love of desire; it must be something altogether different. This created a great difficulty to Christianity, which must hold divine love of some sort to make any sense of the gospel. One major attempt to overcome this difficulty will be seen in Augustine’s theory of divine love. But first, the view of Aristotle must be considered.

**Aristotle’s Conception of Love**

The influence of Plato on Aristotle’s conception of love is vast, yet Aristotle broke from his teacher in significant ways including the fact that he further emphasized rational love and

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73 Rather, the *daimons* are “the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep.” Ibid., 203a. Thus C. Osborne states, “It seems that Diotima’s universe would be in danger of falling into two parts if intermediates were denied, due to a kind of dualism that treats what are properly contraries as if they were contradictories.” *Eros*, 110.

74 “The relation between the two worlds is entirely one-sided; the movement is all in one direction, from below upwards.” Nygren, *Agape*, 170.
added nuance to Plato’s distinctions. Essential to understanding Aristotle’s conception of love is the ontology that underlies all of his thought. Aristotle’s ontology is one of substance. Substance is a composite of form and matter (*hylomorphe*). In opposition to Plato’s two-world ontology, universals inhere in substances and do not exist independently. The form is the essence (what it is made into) and the matter is what the substance is made of. There are essential qualities without which something would not be what it is and also accidental qualities that are not necessary to that particular thing. Aristotle further develops his ontology regarding the question of change by employing the categories of actuality (*energeia*) and potentiality (*dunamis*), the former being what something is and the latter being what something could become.

Despite Aristotle’s break from Plato’s two-world ontology and his development of the ontology of substance and change, the veneration of timelessness, simplicity, immutability, self-sufficiency, and perfection remain constant in the foundation of Aristotle’s ontology. Specifically, they are essential to the unmoved mover who is wholly impassible and immutable, immovable and unalterable, pure act with no potentiality and wholly immaterial, without parts.

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77 Actuality has priority over potentiality as its ground such that “the actually existence is generated from the potentially existent by something which is actually existence” but there is no infinite regress for “there is always a prime mover; and that which initiates motion exists already in actuality.” Aristotle, *Metaph.* 9.8.5 (Tredennick, LCL). Nygren comments, “The whole process of nature is seen by Aristotle as a movement, a successive ascent from matter to Form, from imperfection to perfection of being, from potentiality to actuality.” *Agape*, 184.

78 The “prime mover, which is immovable, is one both in formula and number.” Aristotle, *Metaph.* 7.8.18 (Tredennick, LCL). “The first principle and primary reality is immovable, both essentially and accidentally, but it excites the primary form of motion, which is one and eternal.” Ibid., 7.8.3. See also ibid., 7.9.2.

79 For the logic regarding the notion of the prime mover see ibid., 7.8.3–4. The ultimate reality, the unmoved mover, is Mind (*nous*) and the mind is wholly unaffected and undetermined by external reality. Ibid., 7.9.1–2. It does not change, for the change would be for the worse, and anything of this kind would immediately imply some sort of motion.” Ibid., 7.9.3. The unmoved, or prime mover, is the ultimate
Once again, such a conception of the ultimate being greatly impacts the conception of divine love, and in Aristotle’s case, the lack thereof. First, however, his conception of love must be briefly examined.

Friendship Love

When discussing love, Aristotle prefers the term *philia*, which connotes a “rationalistic friendship love” whereas the word *eros* he uses to connote sexual love. Friendship love is rational as opposed to the fleeting love of emotion or “excess of feeling.” However, despite the difference in the nuance of preferred wording, a great deal of Plato’s conception of love towards a worthy object remains. For instance, Aristotle contends that the object of love must be useful, beautiful (or pleasant), and/or good. In this way he posits three kinds of friendship love (*philia*).

Friendship love based on utility is concerned with an expected benefit to the lover. Love of the substance, separate from potentiality and materiality. Aristotle describes it thus: “There is some substance which is eternal and immovable and separate from sensible things; and it has been shown that this substance can have no magnitude, but is impartible and indivisible (for it causes motion for infinite time, and nothing finite has infinite potentiality . . .); and moreover that it is impassive and unalterable; for all the other kinds of motion are posterior to spatial motion.” This mind is entirely self-sufficient and thinks only itself: “Therefore Mind thinks itself, if it is that which is best; and its thinking is a thinking of thinking.”

80 Singer, *Nature*, 92. Aristotle “restricts the meaning of Plato’s word *eros*, using it only for the lesser relationship of sexual love. For what he really wishes to recommend, friendship, he adopts the term *philia*.”

81 Aristotle, *Metaph. 8.6* (David Ross, *Metaphysics* [Oxford World’s Classics; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], 201). Again, for Aristotle the best love (friendship love or *philia*) is rational and purposive as opposed to the fleeting love (*philesis*) of emotion. In fact, Rackham translates it as: “Liking [*φιλήσις*] seems to be an emotion [πάθος], friendship [*φιλία*] a fixed disposition, for liking can be felt even for inanimate things, but reciprocal liking involves deliberate choice, and this springs from a fixed disposition.”

82 In fact, the majority of the difference in semantics relates to Aristotle’s usage of the category of *eros*. As has been seen, *philia* and its word group was used by Plato to discuss friendship in similar fashion to Aristotle.

83 “It seems that not everything is loved [*φιλείσθαι*], but only what is lovable [*φιλητόν*], and that this is either what is good, or pleasant, or useful.”

84 “Thus friends whose affection is based on utility do not love each other in themselves, but in so far as some benefit accrues to them from each other. And similarly with those whose friendship is based on
beautiful (pleasant) is likewise concerned with personal advantage. The first two kinds of friendship love are thus closely connected as imperfect and inferior kinds of friendship. In discussing these types of friendships, Aristotle conveys his distaste for friendship based on emotion, temporary pleasure, or profit. Notably, he ties the friendship (philia) based on emotion with eros love. Likewise, he ties friendship of utility not to mutual love but mutual profit. He thus somewhat reticently applies the term friendship (philia) to these first two types, finally acknowledging that they are only friendships in an “analogue sense.”

In contrast to these first two types is the love of the good and virtuous, not merely for the sake of utility but for those who are morally virtuous. This third kind of love amounts to perfect friendship (philia), the highest kind of love. Whereas the first two kinds are fleeting, the rare, perfect friendship remains constant since it is based on the stability of virtue. Moreover, perfect friendship.

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85 Such friendships are imperfect not only because they are based on temporary advantage (use of pleasure) but because such attachments are “accidental” and thus fleeting. Ibid., 8.3.2–3. These friendships are easily broken off: “if no longer pleasant or useful to each other, they cease to love each other.” Ibid., 8.3.4.

86 The young, he says, tend to form friendships of pleasure based on “emotion” (πάθος). “Hence they both form friendships and drop them quickly, since their affections alter with what gives them pleasure, and the tastes of youth change quickly. Also the youth are prone to fall in love [ἐρωτοκοι], as love [ἔρως] is chiefly guided by emotion [πάθος], and grounded on pleasure [ἡδονή]. . . . Hence they form attachments quickly and give them up quickly, often changing before the day is out.” Ibid. 8.2.5.

87 “A friendship based on utility dissolves as soon as its profit ceases; for the friends did not love [φιλοι] each other, but what they got out of each other.” Ibid., 8.4.2.

88 People use the word friendship for the lesser kinds thus “we must say that there are several sorts of friendship, that between good men, as good, being friendship in the primary and proper meaning of the term, while the other kinds are friendships in an analogue sense.” Ibid., 8.4.4.

89 “The perfect [τελεία] form of friendship [φιλία] is that between the good, and those who resemble each other in virtue [ἀρετῆς ὁμοίωμα].” Ibid., 8.3.6. Thus, “perfect, complete friendship (teleia philia) is contingent on virtue in both partners.” Carmichael, Friendship, 17. Singer questions this as a basis of love, however, noting: “Reason may force us to recognize the virtuous character of a good man; but nothing can force us to love him.” Nature, 96.

90 “Hence the friendship of these lasts as long as they continue to be good; and virtue is a permanent quality.” Aristotle, Metaph. 8.3.6 (Tredennick, LCL). “Because virtue is a stable state, friendship based on it will have the perfection of permanence.” Carmichael, Friendship, 17. Singer comments, “Perfect friendship is a state of justice because it enables good men to take cognizance of each
friendship is not based merely on relative goods (that which is good in the view of the lover) but absolute goods (that which is good regardless of perspective), and the virtuous lover recognizes the absolute good.\textsuperscript{91} This type of friendship affords both utility and pleasure, though these benefits are not its grounds, since the good man derives both benefits from the good that he loves.\textsuperscript{92} However, this friendship remains explicitly grounded on the worth of the object; its superiority to the other two is based on loving what is higher, the worthy virtue, rather than the baser, temporary attributes.\textsuperscript{93} Accordingly, despite perfect friendship being superior to imperfect friendships, it is not thereby purely altruistic, as shall be seen below. All three types of love are directed toward something lovable or worthy of love (useful, beautiful, or good) and thus valuable to the lover.\textsuperscript{94}

Accordingly, the question is raised, is perfect friendship altruistic and other-centered? Notably, Aristotle seems to explicitly appeal to other-regarding love. Specifically, he mentions friendship love as “wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being inclined, so far as you can, to bring these things about.”\textsuperscript{95} In another place he...

\textsuperscript{91} “All affection [\lambdas] is based on good or on pleasure, either absolute or relative to the person who feels it, and is prompted by similarity of some sort; but this friendship possesses all these attributes in the friends themselves, they are alike, et cetera, in that way.” Aristotle, \textit{Metaph.} 8.3.7 (Tredennick, LCL). “Also, when men wish the good of those they love for their own sakes, their goodwill does not depend on emotion but on a fixed disposition.” Ibid., 8.5.5.

\textsuperscript{92} Thus, “it is between good men that affection [\lambdas] and friendship [\lambdas] exist in their fullest and best form.” Ibid., 8.3.7.

\textsuperscript{93} Aristotle explicitly frames this friendship on worthiness stating, “You cannot admit him to friendship or really be friends, before each has shown the other that he is worthy of friendship and has won his confidence.” Ibid., 8.3.8.

\textsuperscript{94} Singer contends that for Aristotle love “is always a response to external merit.” \textit{Nature}, 97. Thus Singer believes that for Aristotle as for Plato “love remains the search for an objective goodness in the object.” Ibid. For this reason he believes that, “for all his originality, Aristotle still belongs to what is often called (using Plato’s terminology) the eros tradition.” Ibid., 106.

\textsuperscript{95} Aristotle, \textit{Rhet.} 1380b-1381a (W. Rhys Roberts, \textit{Rhetoric} [2 vols.; GBWW; Chicago, Encyclopaedia Brittanica, 1990], 2:626). Moreover, Aristotle does recognize that the benefactor in a relationship loves more deeply than the one benefitted, like an artist loves his work more than it could love...
states that love involves "goodwill and wishing well to each other." Thus, Aristotle clearly includes well-wishing and acting for the other’s good as a part of friendship, yet the question remains, is regard for others the motivation of friendship love? This issue is further illuminated by Aristotle’s brief discussion of self-sacrifice, stating, the good man “will if necessary lay down his life in the behalf of friends and country.” However, for Aristotle, such self-sacrifice is rooted in the self-interest of gaining nobility thereby. Elsewhere, Aristotle makes it explicitly clear that in friendship each “loves his own good and also makes an equivalent return by wishing the other’s good.”

Nevertheless, despite the appearance of benevolence (well-wishing), some have criticized Aristotle’s conception, saying that loving others is not really for the sake of those others but ultimately originated out of self-interest. Accordingly, Aristotle has been criticized for the

him if it were alive. Aristotle, *Metaph. 9.7.3–4.*


98 He states, “For he will surrender wealth and power and all the goods that men struggled to win, if he can secure nobility for himself. . . . And this is doubtless the case with those who give their lives for others; thus they choose great nobility for themselves.” Ibid.

99 Ibid., 8.5.5. Aristotle does state, “For these friends wish each alike the other’s good in respect of their goodness, and they are good in themselves; but it is those who wish the good of their friends for their friends’ sake who are friends in the fullest sense, since they love each other for themselves and not accidentally.” Ibid., 8.3.6. However, this does not seem to refer to altruism but rather to love based on recognition of virtue in the other. Thus, rather than being based on the accidents of utility or pleasure, this kind of love is based on the person himself, specifically his virtue. It does not seem to mean that the good man loves the other good man in order to benefit the other good man, although such benefit does mutually accrue, but rather because it is the rational and virtuous course to love the good and virtuous. This is readily apparent when Aristotle comments, “And in loving [φιλοδοξείς] their friend [φιλον] they love their own good, for the good man in becoming dear to another becomes that other’s good. Each party therefore both loves his own good and also makes an equivalent return by wishing the other’s good, and by affording him pleasure; for there is a saying, ‘Amity [φιλόστηκ] is equality [ισότηκ],’ and this is most fully realized in the friendships of the good.” Ibid., 8.5.5.

100 For instance, “the criticism is not,” comments Richard Norman, “that Plato and Aristotle exclude altruism. It is that, because they justify it by reference to the agent’s own happiness, they reduce it to a kind of enlightened self-interest, and so deprive it of its moral value.” The Moral Philosophers: An Introduction to Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 57. For instance, consider H. A. Prichard’s seminal criticism of self-interest, *Moral Obligation and Duty and Interest: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). However, Norman contends that perhaps Aristotle presents
semblance of overarching self-interest. Others, however, contend that Aristotle’s love is not selfish but, simply, consistently directs itself towards that which is worthy of love, that is, the good in the self or in others. Aristotle does explicitly emphasize the priority of self-love, saying that every man “is his own best friend and ought to love himself best.” For Aristotle, even parental love is an example of self-love; parents love children as offspring of their own self. However, the right kind of self-love is rational and directed toward virtue for the self. This is in accord with the Eudaimonistic ethics of Aristotle that one is best served by being good and virtuous. Aristotle frames all action directed at happiness as the ultimate end, and happiness is acting in accordance with reason, which itself is virtuous. In this limited way, love for concern for others as “constitutive of one’s own happiness” which for him would make their account “no more suspect than the altruism of one who simply enjoys helping others.” Nonetheless, Norman remains unsatisfied and detects a form of egoism here. Cf. C. Osborne, Eros, 144.

For instance, C. Osborne critiques: Aristotle’s “persistent preoccupation with what you get out of a relationship, and whether you or the other person are getting as much as you give, seems to fit ill with our notion of how friends regard each other.” Eros, 144. Nygren comments that even “the nobler form of love, is built in the last resort, according to Aristotle, on self-love.” Agape, 186.

“In perfect friendship the apparent object of love is the goodness which the excellent person instantiates.” Carmichael, Friendship, 22.

Aristotle, Metaph. 9.8 (Ross, Metaphysics, 235).


Ibid., 9.8.4–6. In fact, Aristotle contends that the wrong kind of self-love, specifically that which tries to assign “the larger share of money, honours, or bodily pleasures,” has given it a bad name. Ibid., 9.8.4. Carmichael believes that “capacity for friendship depends on right self-love, which is free of selfishness in that the good I will for myself is the good of virtue, and the virtuous person is free of self-seeking passion, and acts according to intelligent reason (nous).” Friendship, 22.

“By suggesting that self-interest is best served by ministering to the higher elements of the self, and that this is done by doing good, which itself benefits others as well as the self, he can argue that serving others not only follows from looking after number one but also contributes to that task.” C. Osborne, Eros, 151. C. Osborne contends that “Aristotle’s analysis of philia is not concerned with loving others” but “co-operating with, or befriending, others in such a way as to operate in society as if their goals were your own goals, or as if the pair of you, or group of you, had joint goals.” Ibid.

“Now happiness above all else appears to be absolutely final in this sense, since we always choose it for its own sake and never as a means to something else.” Aristotle, Metaph. 1.7.5 (Tredennick, LCL). “Happiness, therefore, being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the End at which all actions aim.” Ibid., 1.7.8. For Aristotle, “Happiness consists in acting in accordance with reason.” Norman, Moral, 39. In fact, the ultimate human function is to act rationally. This is the highest good toward
others is like love for one’s self. Thus, for Aristotle, self-love presents no problem since it is both rational and virtuous to direct love toward that which is good, thus the “good man ought to be a lover of himself” since love is directed toward a worthy object and the good man is worthy of self-love.

Mutuality and Community

For Aristotle, mutuality is an essential feature of all three types of friendship. This mutuality includes equality whether it be exchange of equal pleasure, utility, or goodness. Because friendship is a relationship of mutuality, it also requires likeness as well as nearness.


108 For Aristotle, “the extreme of friendship is likened to one’s love for oneself.” Aristotle, *Metaph. 9.4* (Ross, *Metaphysics, 228*). Carmichael comments that there seem two possibilities: “self-love is the exemplar for all other loves, or that all love is fundamentally self-love. The exemplary meaning is foremost when he says that very strong friendship ‘is likened to’ one’s friendship for one’s self.” *Friendship,* 21.

109 Aristotle, *Metaph. 9.8.7* (Tredennick, LCL). Moreover, as good “he will then both benefit himself by acting nobly and aid his fellows.” Ibid. Thus, here again, the action is for nobility and a by-product is the benefit of others.

110 Thus “the term Friendship [φίλω] is not applied to love [φιλήσει] for inanimate objects, since here there is no return of affection [ἀντιφίλησις], and also no wish for the good of the object—for instance, it would be ridiculous to wish to a bottle of wine. . . . Whereas we are told that we ought to wish our friend well for his own sake. But persons who wish another good for his own sake, if the feeling is not reciprocated, are merely said to feel goodwill [εὐρετέα] for him: only when mutual is such goodwill termed friendship.” Ibid., 8.2.3. Moreover, the goodwill must be known, for mutual goodwill unknown cannot be called friendship. Ibid., 8.2.4. Therefore he can state the three requisites of friendship, that “men must (1) feel goodwill for each other, that is, wish each other’s good, and (2) be aware of each other’s goodwill, and (3) the cause of their goodwill must be one of the lovable qualities mentioned above.” Ibid.

111 Thus, “the forms of friendship of which we have spoken are friendships of equality, for both parties render the same benefit and wish the same good to each other, or else exchange two different benefits, for instance pleasure and profit.” Ibid., 8.6.7. Aristotle does recognize that there are unequal friendships and includes among them that of father-son, husband-wife, ruler-ruled. Ibid., 8.7.1. However, he proposes that such should be balanced out by the ‘lesser’ bestowing more affection on the more deserving party. “The affection rendered in these various unequal friendships should also be proportionate: the better of the two parties, for instance, or the more useful or otherwise superior as the case may be, should receive more affection than he bestows; since when affection rendered is proportionate to desert, this produces equality in a sense between the parties, and equality is felt to be an essential element of friendship.” Ibid., 8.7.2.

112 Ibid., 8.5.5. Singer thus criticizes that Aristotle neglects “the joy or loving those who are not like ourselves, persons who are not extensions of our own personality, but are really different, separate, autonomous.” *Nature,* 102.
In this way, reciprocal friendship love is predicated upon the parties of the relationship being part of the community.\textsuperscript{113} Thus, Aristotle states, “community is the essence of friendship.”\textsuperscript{114} In fact, friendship love is what holds the community together. Moreover, the proper functioning community is one of justice, and each actual society will “involve friendship just in so far as it involves justice.”\textsuperscript{115} Justice includes love directly proportioned to merit, which “is what Aristotelian justice demands, and friendship cannot be authentic if it goes against justice.”\textsuperscript{116} In this way, it seems that the notion of unmerited love (bestowal) is foreign to Aristotle.\textsuperscript{117}

**Purposive Love**

Another important characteristic of Aristotle’s conception is volition. For Aristotle, higher love is not a passionate impulse or merely affection, but rather a deliberate choice. *Philia* love is not directed by feelings of *pathos*; rather, Aristotle writes, “Mutual love involves choice and choice springs from a state; and men wish well to those whom they love, for their sake, not as a result of passion, but as a result of state.”\textsuperscript{118} Here again we see the importance of *philia* as a rational, willed love.\textsuperscript{119} The rational man chooses to love objects that are worthy of love, and the

\textsuperscript{113} This is “an ontological precondition or ground for friendship, the sharing in some kind of ‘communion’ (*koinonia*), which of itself engenders friendship between its participants.” Carmichael, *Friendship*, 17. Therefore “when persons approve of each other without seeking such other’s society, this seems to be goodwill rather than friendship. Nothing is more characteristic of friends than that they seek each other’s society.” Aristotle, *Metaph. 8.4.3* (Tredennick, LCL).

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 8.9.1. Alternately translated, “friendship depends on community.” The Greek reads ἐν κοινωνίᾳ γὰρ ἡ φιλία.


\textsuperscript{116} Singer, *Nature*, 95.

\textsuperscript{117} This does not rule out benevolence as part of the love relationship, but love still must be grounded upon some worth in the object (usefulness, pleasantness, or goodness) and cannot thus be wholly unmerited.


\textsuperscript{119} He states, “A man of defective self-restraint acts from desire but not from choice; and on the contrary a self-restrained man acts from choice and not from desire.” Aristotle, *Metaph.* 3.2.4 (Tredennick, LCL). “Still less is choice the same as passion. Acts done from passion seem very far from being done of
most rational man loves the highest good. Yet questions are also raised as to the apparent lack of emotion in Aristotle’s conception of higher love. Aristotle makes a distinction between the higher form of friendship love (philia) which is rational and purposive and the fleeting love (philesis) of emotion. Catherine Osborne contends that this friendship love is thus really a pragmatic relationship of mutual benefit in society, less love than partnership or alliance. Why does Aristotle not give more prominence to feeling love (philesis)? Osborne comments, “The occasions on which Aristotle actually discusses whether the parties are fond of each other (stergousi) are not many, though he occasionally takes it for granted that they would be, particularly in relationships due to pleasure such as love affairs.” Nevertheless, it has already been seen that affection is a byproduct of perfect friendship, but likewise Aristotle is clear that the best kind of love (philia) is predicated not on affection but on choice. The rational and purposive nature of friendship love (philia) is again evidenced in Aristotle’s reservation of this kind of love to human beings. Philesis (or other “phil” words) may be used to refer to affection or fondness for lesser beings, and even inanimate things, but philia is reserved for reciprocal relationships between rational beings that are capable of assessing and valuing the worthy object deliberately.

120 The best one lives “by principle” based on reason rather than “by passion.” Aristotle, Metaph. 9.8.6 (Tredennick, LCL).

121 This distinction in the semantics is clearly apparent, “Liking [φίλης] seems to be an emotion [πάθεια], friendship [φιλία] a fixed disposition, for liking can be felt even for inanimate things, but reciprocal liking involves deliberate choice, and this springs from a fixed disposition.” Ibid., 8.5.5.

122 She proposes that philia is “co-operation” which is different from love (philesis). C. Osborne, Eros, 148. Here “the emphasis is not on feelings but on practical behaviour and choices.” Ibid., 149. Osborne comments, “How the parties feel about each other is not directly relevant to the practical and social implications of such partnerships.” Ibid., 151. Thus she believes perfect friendship is better not because it is more virtuous but because of pragmatic cooperation.

123 Ibid., 148.

124 C. Osborne contends that “love is relevant, then, but it is not the proper explanation of the co-operative behavior of the partners in the resulting alliance.” Ibid., 149.
of love. Therefore, the good man loves the virtuous rationally and purposely, not based on fleeting emotions, pleasures, or profit, for such feelings change, but based on the purposive state of appreciation for virtue for virtue’s sake.

Divine Love

For Aristotle, no less than Plato, the notion of divine love is impossible; such would imply a lack of perfection, a need in the divine, which is impossible for the unmoved mover. As has been seen, the absolute Mind is wholly self-sufficient and could attain no benefit (utility, pleasure, or goodness) from any object of love. Moreover, God is altogether removed from the creaturely realm, taking no action ad extra. Thus, there can thus be no friendship (philia) between humans and God and certainly no mutual relations or fellowship. Aristotle states this clearly saying, “When one party is removed to a great distance, as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases.” Thus God is an object of love but cannot be the subject of love. Aristotle’s God does

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125 “Philein and other phil-words may be used to indicate a ‘love’ or liking (philesis), even for inanimate things such as wine; but love for inanimate things is not called ‘philia’, for two distinct reasons: there is no return of love and no wishing well to the object for its own sake. We do not wish good to a friend ‘for his sake’ . . . and this is only possible with a human being.” Carmichael, Friendship, 15–16. Carmichael believes that “clearly underlying it is the intuition that only a human being can be loved ‘for their own sake’ because only a human person can be, not only the object of love but also a subject in their own right; but neither Aristotle nor any other ancient writer made this intuition explicit.” Ibid., 16.

126 Rather, God always enjoys his own happiness. “God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is.” Aristotle, Metaph. 12.7.8 (Tredennick, LCL).

127 For both “Plato and Aristotle . . . the idea of mutual love between man and God would have been blasphemous.” Singer, Nature, 107. Aristotle “rejects the very idea that God can love the world. God is perfect and self-sufficient being and contains in himself all that he needs. For God to love anything outside himself could only reflect some inner defect or deficiency.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:343. In one place, Aristotle does give a hint of divine love, but this is qualified by the hypothetical assertion regarding the deities of man’s conception. He writes, “It seems likely that the man who pursues intellectual activity . . . is also the man most beloved of the gods. For if, as is generally believed, the gods exercise some superintendence over human affairs, then it will be reasonable to suppose that they take pleasure in that part of man which is best and most akin to themselves.” Aristotle, Metaph. 10.8.13 (Tredennick, LCL). However, it seems that this statement is not intended to say anything about the actual ultimate divine being but about the value of rationality.

128 Aristotle, Eth. nic. 8.7.4–5 (Barnes, 1831). Thus there is no mutual love between God and man. Nygren notes that there can be no friendship with God for that “presupposes an equality between Divine and human love which does not exist.” Agape, 92.
not enter into relationship because this would mean that the divine is dependent on other than 
God in some manner. But there can be no relationship between God (as so conceived) and man. 
God is eternally a se, never interacting with others, entirely timeless, immutable, and 
impassible.\textsuperscript{129}

God is the unmoved mover, but he does not create motion by moving, but by being the 
object of love. Thus, the final cause “causes motion as being an object of love [\(\epsilon p\omicron\omicron\delta\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\acute{o}\nu\)], 
whereas all other things cause motion because they themselves are in motion.”\textsuperscript{130} Notice, the love 
that humans have for God is also not friendship love, for that requires mutuality, including 
likeness, nearness, and equality, but God is absolutely superior and remote, and thus there can be 
no such thing between God and man.\textsuperscript{131} Not only is mutual love ruled out, there can be no love 
from God towards humans, for God thinks only of himself in absolute self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{132}

Just as Plato (through neo-Platonism) provides the philosophical groundwork for 
Augustine, Aristotle has a thoroughgoing impact on the intricate systematic theology of Thomas 
Aquinas, who masterfully incorporates Aristotle’s conception of the divine and of love into the 
Christian tradition. In both cases, modifications are required, however, to allow for divine love in 
contrast to both Plato and Aristotle. Other elements of Aristotle’s conception shed light on issues 
that will recur regarding divine love. For instance, his emphasis on rational, purposive love is

\textsuperscript{129} Aristotle, \textit{Metaph.} 12.9.1–3 (Tredennick, LCL). See the discussion above.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 12.7.4. The most moved mover “causes movement in virtue of being an object of desire” 
C. Osborne, \textit{Eros}, 132. He goes on to explain, “Since there is something which moves while itself 
unmoved, existing actually, this can in no way be otherwise than it is.” Aristotle, \textit{Metaph.} 12.7.7–8 
(Barnes, 1694).

\textsuperscript{131} Nygren comments, “We thus find in Aristotle the Eros of Plato raised to the level of a cosmic 
force.” \textit{Agape}, 184. Further, although he is different from Plato otherwise, “with regard to the idea of Eros 
he is Plato’s faithful disciple.” Ibid., 185.

\textsuperscript{132} Once again, God is entirely self-sufficient and thinks only of himself: “Therefore Mind thinks 
itself, if it is that which is best; and its thinking is a thinking of thinking.” Aristotle, \textit{Metaph.} 12.9.4 
(Tredennick, LCL). This is because “the final good must be a thing sufficient in itself. . . . We take a self-
sufficient thing to mean a thing which merely standing by itself alone renders life desirable and lacking in 
nothing, and such a thing we deem happiness to be.” Ibid., 1.7.6–7.
continued by some theologians (see below) as the ideal, even for divinity. While Aristotle’s God does not love, later Christian theologians would propose that he does, but as wholly rational. For instance, is self-love inappropriate or even wicked? If it is, can God love himself or, in Christian theology, the trinitarian persons? Moreover, if somehow the absolute separation between God and humanity would be overcome, would God’s love be based on the worthiness of humans? Is love for God from humans necessarily based on worth? Moreover, if God and man could enter into a loving friendship, what degree of mutuality would such a relationship entail, if any? These and other questions repeatedly rise to the fore, as shall be seen.

**Augustine’s Conception of Love**

The importance of Augustine’s contribution to Christian theology can hardly be overstated. One of his many lasting contributions was in the area of Christian love. However, Augustine did not approach the issue of love in a vacuum. The similarity of his ontology to Platonic thought patterns (through neoplatonism) has been widely recognized.

133 “It is no exaggeration to say that the essential philosophical framework of Western Christianity for at least the next thousand years is owed to him.” Carmichael, *Friendship*, 56.

134 Oord states, “For Augustine, love is the center of Christianity, and it is primarily due to him that both Catholic and Evangelical Christianity take it as axiomatic that Christianity is a religion of love.” “Matching Theology and Piety: An Evangelical Process Theology of Love” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1999), 120.

135 For instance, Plotinus continued the emphasis on the impassibility of the One from which the many emanate downwards toward the earthly but desire to return upwards toward the heavenly. See Plotinus, *Enn.* (trans. Stephen McKenna; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 191–201. Specifically, “In Plotinus’ theology no god could suffer, nor love.” C. Osborne, *Eros*, 115. Despite emanation downward the Divine Being is utterly self-sufficient and impassible and does not descend downward. See Plotinus, *Enn.*, 361–62. God is Eros but as the ultimate object of desire, never himself desiring, thus the Divine Being is *erasmon*, the only one worthy of love. Cf. Nygren, *Agape*, 198–99; Singer, *Nature*, 117; J. C. M. van Winden, “What Is Love? Eros and Agape in Early Christian Thought,” in *Arché: A Collection of Patristic Studies* (ed. J. D. Boeft and D. T. Runia; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1997). This amounts to a sharp dualism between God and matter, sometimes referred to as the Alexandrian world-scheme and the divide is bridged by a plethora of intermediary beings (*daimones*). For an overview of neoplatonic conceptions of divine love from the perspective of Plotinus, see Rist, *Eros*. Nygren states, “When the Eros motif found its way into Christianity it was not exclusively, nor even primarily, in the form given to it by Plato; it was primarily in the form, on the one hand, of Mystery-piety (as can be seen above all in Gnosticism), and, on the other hand, of Aristotelian and Neo-platonic Eros-theory.” *Agape*, 183.
God is absolutely timeless, self-sufficient, perfect, immutable, and simple.\textsuperscript{136} As such, nothing can act upon God, for God is utterly impassible.\textsuperscript{137} Furthermore, God is himself the absolute good, having no need and no desire.\textsuperscript{138} Moreover, for Augustine, love is an ontological category, the essence of God, thus “love is God.”\textsuperscript{139} Augustine describes love as the bond of the Trinity (specifically the Holy Spirit).\textsuperscript{140} By extension, love is the grounding of all created beings.\textsuperscript{141} However, beyond love as the ground of being itself, Augustine deals carefully with the love of persons: love proper and improper, given and received.

\textsuperscript{136} For instance, Augustine speaks of God “whose being is perfect: it discerns also that the perfection of His being is consummate because He is immutable, and therefore neither gains nor loses.” Augustine, \textit{Letters of St. Augustin} 118.3.15 (\textit{NPNF} 1:877). Moreover, God has an “ineffably simple nature.” \textit{Trin.} 15.19.37 (\textit{NPNF} 3:424). He is the “unchangeably eternal” one. \textit{Conf.} 11.31.41 (\textit{NPNF} 1:319). Further, he is the “eternal, spiritual, and unchangeable good.” \textit{Civ.} 15.22 (\textit{NPNF} 2:648).

\textsuperscript{137} Singer attributes this at least partially to the need to avoid an anthropomorphic conception of God. Singer, \textit{Nature}, 168. In fact, nothing at all happens that is not determined by the eternal divine will. This is explicit when Augustine speaks of the divine “will of His which is eternal as His foreknowledge, certainly He has already done all things in heaven and on earth that He has willed, — not only past and present things, but even things still future.” \textit{Civ.} 22.2 (\textit{NPNF} 2:1013). He states elsewhere that, “nothing, therefore, happens but by the will of the Omnipotent, He either permitting it to be done, or Himself doing it.” \textit{Enchir.} 95 (\textit{NPNF} 3:523). Moreover, he states, “But however strong may be the purposes either of angels or of men, whether of good or bad, whether these purposes fall in with the will of God or run counter to it, the will of the Omnipotent is never defeated.” Ibid., 102 (\textit{NPNF} 3:529). Augustine did, however, attempt to maintain some semblance of free will alongside predestination. See \textit{Civ.} 5.9 (\textit{NPNF} 2:207–11).

\textsuperscript{138} For Augustine, all good is predicated on the “unchangeable good” and any good which changes is not good in itself. \textit{Civ.} 8.3.5 (\textit{NPNF} 3:218–19). He cannot increase in goodness in any way.


\textsuperscript{140} It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deal with Augustine’s trinitarian ontology. However it is interesting to note that Augustine frames the Trinity according to God as lover, beloved, and love itself. \textit{Civ.} 9.2.2 (\textit{NPNF} 3:235). Thus intra-trinitarian love is described as love between the Father and the Son (both functioning as lover and beloved), with the Holy Spirit as the bond of love. In this way eternal divine love is self-love, with no need or desire for any love outside of the perfectly self-sufficient Trinity. See ibid., 15.19.37 (\textit{NPNF} 3:423–24).

\textsuperscript{141} Augustine’s view “proclaimed that man’s creation, in fact the creation of everything, originates from an infinite source of love; and it offered the commandment to return love for love as the single but thoroughly sufficient means of attaining salvation.” Singer, \textit{Nature}, 164.
Human Love

Only God is self-sufficient and thus has no desires, yet all others have desire, and such desire is neither good nor bad in itself. The quality of love is determined according to the object of desire. In this way, love may be positive or negative depending upon its intended object. Caritas is love for an appropriate object whereas cupiditas is love for an inappropriate object. In every case, God is the sole appropriate object of love (caritas) because he is the only one having goodness in himself and the sole creator of all value. Anything else, as an object of

142 For Augustine, human “love is a kind of desire.” Moreover, “that which is loved necessarily affects with itself that which loves, it follows that what is eternal, loved in this way, affects the soul with eternity.” Augustine, Div. quaest. 83.35.2 (David L. Mosher, Eighty-three Different Questions [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982], 67). “Like Plato, Augustine approached the concept of love from an eudaemonistic point of view: love is essentially the desire for ultimate happiness.” Brümmer, Model, 118. “The key difference between them, from which all other differences follow, was in their view on what constitutes eternal happiness. For Plato ultimate happiness consists in knowing the Good; for Augustine it consists in enjoying God.” Ibid.

143 “The right will is, therefore, well-directed love [amor], and the wrong will is ill-directed love [amor]. Love [amor], then, yearning to have what is loved, is desire [cupiditas]; and having and enjoying [fruī] it, is joy; fleeing what is opposed to it, it is fear; and feeling what is opposed to it, when it has befallen it, it is sadness. Now these motions are evil if the love [amor] is evil; good if the love [amor] is good.” Augustine, Civ. 14.7 (NPNF 2:574). Interestingly, he specifically defines that “charity [caritas] denotes that whereby one loves those things whose worth, in comparison to the lover itself, must not be thought to be of lesser value.” Augustine, Div. quaest. 83.36.1 (Mosher, Questions, 67).

144 Augustine is often noted for his so-called caritas synthesis. However, it should be noted that he also uses amor and dilectio interchangeably with caritas. He states, “Some are of opinion that charity [caritas] or regard [dilectio] is one thing, love [amor] another. They say that dilectio is used of a good affection, amor of an evil love. But it is very certain that even secular literature knows no such distinction.” Civ. 14.7 (NPNF 2:573–74). Just previous to this Augustine shows the interchangeable use of the terms in a Latin translation of John 21:15–17 in an attempt to prove that Scripture also makes no distinction between these terms. Nygren took this view as a caritas synthesis of agape and eros. Carmichael points out, “In Latin translations of the Bible, agape had been rendered by two broadly interchangeable words, caritas and dilectio, the latter being a post-classical coinage from the verb diligere, ‘to love’ with overtones of choosing or regarding the beloved above others. Caritas, dilectio, and amor would all be used by theologians down the centuries as close or exact synonyms, with caritas alone gaining the honour of use in an exclusively ‘good’ sense and becoming the primary term for Christian love.” Friendship, 45.

145 Augustine defines caritas thusly, “I mean by charity that affection [motum] of the mind which aims at the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one’s self and one’s neighbor in subordination to God; by lust [cupiditas] I mean that affection [motum] of the mind which aims at enjoying one’s self and one’s neighbor, and other corporeal things, without reference to God.” Doctr. chr. 3.10.16 (NPNF 2:1173). He states, “Love, but see to it what you love. Love to God and love to neighbor is called Caritas; love to the world and love of temporal things is called Cupiditas.” Augustine, Enarrat. Ps. 31.2.5, quoted in Nygren, Agape. 495.

146 Notice the similarity to Plato’s conception of the proton philon. “For He is the fountain of our
love (*cupiditas*) in itself, is inappropriate. Thus Augustine states, “God then alone is to be loved; and all this world, that is, all sensible things, are to be despised,—while, however, they are to be used as this life requires.” Thus, similar to Plato, proper human love (*caritas*) is directed upwards whereas improper love (*cupiditas*) is directed downwards.

Nevertheless, though God is the only proper object of love in himself, this does not exclude a proper kind of love for self and for neighbor. The key is that proper love’s ultimate object is God, and all other lesser objects of love are loved for God’s sake, according to the order of love (*ordo amoris*). Thus, one who truly loves God loves self and neighbor, but always with happiness. He the end of all our desires. Being attached to Him, or rather let me say, reattached,—for we had detached ourselves and lost hold of Him,—being, I say, re-attached to Him, we tend towards Him by love, that we may rest in Him. . . . For our good . . . is nothing else than to be united to God.”

Augustine states, “Therefore let each one question himself as to what he loveth: and he shall find of which he is a citizen: and if he shall have found himself to be a citizen of Babylon, let him root out cupidity, implant charity: but if he shall have found himself a citizen of Jerusalem, let him endure captivity, hope for liberty.”

Augustine states, “No sinner is to be loved [dilectio] as a sinner; and every man is to be loved [dilectio] as a man for God’s sake; but God is to be loved [dilectio] for His own sake. And if God is to be loved [dilectio] more than any man, each man ought to love [dilectio] God more than himself. Likewise we ought to love [dilectio] another man better than our own body, because all things are to be loved [dilectio] in reference to God, and another man can have fellowship with us in the enjoyment [frui] of God, whereas our body cannot; for the body only lives through the soul, and it is by the soul that we enjoy [frui] God.”

The importance of love as enjoyment (frui) will be discussed further below.
God as the proper and ultimate object of love. God is the only object of love as enjoyment (frui). Others should only be the objects of love as use (uti). Therefore, proper human love of God is enjoyment (frui) but God is not to be loved as use (uti). Proper human love of humans is use (uti) but never enjoyment (frui). Love outside of these boundaries (misdirected love) is the cause of all disorder in the world.

Divine Love

Divine love, however, is quite different from human love. God is the only appropriate object of love because he is the Good, absolutely unchanging and fixed. In classical ontology, as has been seen, such a being would be incapable of love (eros or philia) towards the world.

150 “For it is impossible for one who loves [dilectio] God not to love [dilectio] himself. For he alone has a proper love [dilectio] for himself who aims diligently at the attainment of the chief and true good; and if this is nothing else but God.” Augustine, Mor. eccl. 26.48 (NPNF 4:92). In this way “you love [dilectio] yourself suitably when you love [dilectio] God better than yourself.” Ibid., 26.49 (NPNF 4:92). On love of neighbors he adds, “Yea, verily; so that we can think of no surer step towards the love [amor] of God than the love [caritas] of man to man.” Ibid., 26.48 (NPNF 4:92). Further, “What, then, you aim at in yourself you must aim at in your neighbor, namely, that he may love [dilectio] God with a perfect affection [amor]. For you do not love [dilectio] him as yourself, unless you try to draw him to that good which you are yourself pursuing.” Ibid., 26.49 (NPNF 4:92).

151 Humans are not to be loved for their own sakes, for if one is loved “for his own sake, we enjoy him; if it is for the sake of something else, we use him.” Augustine, Doctr. chr. 1.22.20 (NPNF 2:1100). Moreover, “no one ought to love even himself for his own sake, but for the sake of Him who is the true object of enjoyment.” Ibid., 1.22.21 (NPNF 2:1100). Rather, God is the sole object of enjoyment because “those only are the true objects of enjoyment which we have spoken of as eternal and unchangeable. The rest are for use, that we may be able to arrive at the full enjoyment of the former.” Ibid., 1.22.20 (NPNF 2:1100). Thus, the “true objects of enjoyment, then, are the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are at the same time the Trinity, one Being, supreme above all, and common to all who enjoy Him.” Ibid., 1.5.5 (NPNF 2:1090).

152 Carmichael notes “Augustine soon ceased employing the language of ‘use’ and ‘enjoyment’, but the popularity of De doctrina christiana [On Christian Doctrine] ensured its persistence within the philosophical deposit he bequeathed to the Middle Ages.” Friendship, 65.

153 See Augustine, Civ. 12.8 (NPNF 2:498–99). On the other hand virtue is “the order of love.” Ibid., 15.22 (NPNF 2:649). For Augustine disorder stems from misdirected love regarding the creature’s love for other than God. See ibid., 12.8 (NPNF 2:498–99). Moreover, “two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.” Ibid., 14.28 (NPNF 2:608).

154 For Augustine God alone is to be enjoyed, for Augustine states, “Among all these things, then, those only are the true objects of enjoyment which we have spoken of as eternal and unchangeable.” Ibid., 1.22.20 (NPNF 2:1100). Thus, all proper human love is ultimately love for God.
However, for Augustine God does love human beings and this is an indispensable tenet of Christianity. Moreover, God even makes humans into friends. However, due to his adoption of the classical ontology (immutability, timelessness, and self-sufficiency), divine love must be defined (re-defined) accordingly. Specifically, divine love cannot be acquisitive or evaluative, for God can neither acquire anything nor increase in value. He has no need nor desire, being entirely impassible and self-sufficient in perfection. In what way, then, does God love the world?

Augustine’s ontology thus prohibits a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between God and creature. This again utilizes the distinction between love as enjoyment (frui) and love as use (uti).

Augustine writes,

In what way then does He [God] love us? As objects of use or as objects of enjoyment? If He enjoys us, He must be in need of good from us, and no sane man will say that; for all the good we enjoy is either Himself, or what comes from Himself. And no one can be ignorant or in doubt as to the fact that the light stands in no need of the glitter of the things it has itself lit up. . . . He does not enjoy us then, but makes use of us. For if He neither enjoys nor uses us, I am at a loss to discover in what way He can love us.

Even in use love, God does not love any external goodness, but his own goodness. In this way, divine love is totally indifferent to its object; even use love is not at all advantageous to God.

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155 “For had not God loved sinners, He would not have come down from heaven to earth.” Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 94.5 (NPNF 7:542).

156 See ibid., 85 (NPNF 7:704–5).

157 Divine love cannot be evaluative because God already possesses all value and there is no value that was not created by God himself. “It is entirely through God’s will that value comes into being, he says, yet by his very nature God is necessarily good.” Singer, *Nature,* 168. Augustine states, “God has no need, not only of cattle, or any other earthly and material thing, but even of man’s righteousness, and that whatever right worship is paid to God profits not Him, but man. For no man would say he did a benefit to a fountain by drinking, or to the light by seeing.” *Civ.* 10.5 (NPNF 2:399).

158 Augustine, *Doctr. chr.* 1.31.34 (NPNF 2:1109). For Augustine, “to enjoy a thing is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to employ whatever means are at one’s disposal to obtain what one desires.” Ibid., 1.4.4 (NPNF 2:1090). Moreover, even God’s use of humans God “has reference to His own goodness. . . . God is said to make of us has no reference to His own advantage, but to ours only; and, so far as He is concerned, has reference only to His goodness.” Ibid., 1.32 (NPNF 2:1109–10).

159 “But neither does He use after our fashion of using. For when we use objects, we do so with a view to the full enjoyment of the goodness of God. God, however, in His use of us, has reference to His own goodness.” Ibid., 1.32.35 (NPNF 2:1109).
Thus God cannot receive any enjoyment or value from human beings or the world.\textsuperscript{161} God loves the world only in the sense of use, with reference to his own goodness.

Divine love beyond the trinitarian relationship is simply the unilateral beneficence from God to humans, exclusive of reciprocal or mutual love.\textsuperscript{162} God bestows gracious love downward, and humans love (desire) God as the good, the ultimate end of all desires. Not only does God receive no benefit from human love, human love is itself the product of divine action, a divine gift. God not only implanted the desire but himself determines who will love him.\textsuperscript{163} God is thus the only proper subject and object of love since only he is worthy of love and all love flows from him.\textsuperscript{164} Augustine’s view would function as the dominant view of Christian love down through the ages.

\textsuperscript{160} Rather, “that use, then, which God is said to make of us has no reference to His own advantage, but to ours only; and, so far as He is concerned, has reference only to His goodness.” Ibid., 1.32.35 (\textit{NPNF} 2:1110). “In other words, because of God’s self-sufficient perfection, his love for us can in no way be a form of need-love. It is purely gift-love, or \textit{agape}.” Brümmer, \textit{Model}, 125.

\textsuperscript{161} “Finally, it is not to God’s advantage (or disadvantage) that we love our neighbour and bring him to love God. Like Plato, Augustine held that, since divine perfection entails that God is self-sufficient and lacks nothing, he can in no way be in need of my love or that of my neighbour.” Ibid., 124.

\textsuperscript{162} Burnaby considers this restriction of God’s love to a “one-way” relationship, one of giving without any receiving, is “strangely inadequate.” \textit{Amor}, 307.

\textsuperscript{163} “When God gives Himself to us in Christ, He gives us at once the object we are to love and the caritas with which to love it. The object we are to love is Himself, but Caritas is also Himself, who by the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in our hearts. Even the fact that we love God is itself entirely a gift of God.” Augustine, quoted in D’Arcy, \textit{Mind}, 77. Cf. Augustine, \textit{Tract. Ev. Jo.} 17.6 (\textit{NPNF} 7:223). For Augustine “no one has a desire for God—not a scintilla of it—who has not been predestined by God to have it.” James Wetzel, “Predestination, Pelagianism, and Foreknowledge,” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Augustine} (ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 53. Specifically, “The Grace of God makes a willing man out of an unwilling one.” Augustine, \textit{C. Jul. op. imp} 3.122 quoted in Nygren, \textit{Agape and Eros}, 528 (Nygren’s translation).

\textsuperscript{164} Oord comments, “The relation between love of God, self-love, and love for neighbor is complicated in Augustine’s thought. Sometimes he speaks of self-love as the root of sin; this is \textit{cupiditas}. Sometimes he speaks of self-love as a natural condition whereby one \textit{uti} loves oneself. The most authentic love of self, however, is \textit{caritas} whereby one seeks one’s own good in seeking God.” “Matching,” 174. Accordingly, some scholars have asked, on this basis, whether all love is self-seeking love for Augustine. This is the famous criticism of Nygren who decried the inclusion of desire (aimed at ascending toward God) in Christian love, calling it the \textit{caritas} synthesis of the motifs of \textit{agape} and \textit{eros}. See Nygren, \textit{Agape}, 449–558. Singer interprets Augustine to mean that “all love, even the love of God, is self-love inasmuch as the lover seeks his own good.” Singer, \textit{Nature}, 85. Thus Singer also contends that Augustine “perceived it with the eyes and ears of the eros tradition that his father represented. Platonic love was thus converted to
Thomas Aquinas’s Conception of Love

In the middle ages, Aquinas continues the basic Augustinian premise regarding divine love and the God-world relationship while adapting Aristotelian metaphysics and ethics to medieval Christianity. In keeping with classical divine ontology, God is self-sufficient and utterly immutable. He is the first, unmoved, mover. God’s existence is utterly necessary, and he is the same as his essence of nature, purely act with no potentiality. Moreover, God’s essence is his existence. The divine essence and existence are identical, corresponding to potentiality and actuality, respectively. Since God has no potentiality and is pure actuality there is nothing to differentiate his essence from his existence, his essence being fully actualized. As such, God is absolutely simple, having no parts or composite nature. It follows that God is thus absolutely perfect, he is the absolutely simple, fully actualized, lacking nothing, the infinite one.

Aquinas adopts Aristotle’s metaphysics as well as the definition of love in his ethics and utilizes them to present a conception of friendship, human and divine, presented below. Cf. Aquinas, Summa 2.2.23.5 (Ages 3:264–65). “The theology of St. Thomas is the Platonist theology of Augustine, shaped into a closer philosophical consistency by the use of two or three fundamental principles derived from Aristotle, and resting ultimately upon the Hebrew-Christian doctrine of creation, accepted and thought through with a more radical completeness than ever before.” Burnaby, Amor, 264. Burnaby notes further, “St Thomas did not abandon the Platonism of Augustine, but he replaced Augustine’s degrees of existence; the varying participations in true being, by the _analogia entis_, in which man’s being is neither part nor equivalent of God’s, but a created likeness of it.” Ibid., 40–41.

In this way, he is pure form, but not matter at all since matter is potentiality and there is no potentiality in God. Aquinas, Summa 1.1.3.1–2 (Ages 1:33–35). Aquinas methodically adopts and frames Aristotle’s ontological conceptions. “The most important of these assumptions are the metaphysical theory of matter and form, potency and act, and the ethical theory that all love is based upon self-love, ‘that a friend is another self.’” Burnaby, Amor, 265.

Brümmer, on the other hand, sees Augustine’s view not as a self-motivated love. He states, “It is important to note that for Augustine our own advantage is not the purpose but ‘a sort of natural consequence’ of loving our neighbour.” Model, 124. He goes on, “If the _Summum Bonum_ is by its very nature the _bonum commune_, a good which can be possessed only by being shared, then the desire and pursuit of it can never be the desire and pursuit of a _bonum privatum._” Ibid. See the discussion of Nygren below.

Aquinas adopts Aristotle’s metaphysics as well as the definition of love in his ethics and utilizes them to present a conception of friendship, human and divine, presented below. Cf. Aquinas, Summa 1.1.3.4 (Ages 1:38–39).

Ibid., 1.1.3.7 (Ages 1:43–44).

Ibid., 1.1.4.1 (Ages 1:48).
possesses all perfections of being, and for Aquinas, “Goodness and being are really the same,” thus God is himself the ultimate goodness. Furthermore, goodness is “what all desire” and thus God is the ultimate desirable one, the true object of all desire. As the ultimate perfect one, God is altogether immutable. He cannot change or be affected since he is pure act with no potentiality. Moreover, he is eternal, for the divine being “bereft of movement . . . there is no before or after” and the immutable one has no beginning nor end and no succession of time. God thus has no need of anything, possessing absolute goodness, and accordingly, desires nothing for himself. As first mover and ultimate cause, God’s will is sovereign and undefeated. As with Augustine, this divine ontology rules out a mutually impactful relationship between God and the world. However, it does not preclude Aquinas from positing a friendship love (amicitia) between God and humans, as shall be seen. First, we turn to the nature of human loves.

The Nature of Human Loves
Aquinas inherited many different words that relate to different aspects of love. He specifically mentions four primary ones (amor, dilectio, caritas, and amicitia) and differentiates them accordingly. For Aquinas, amicitia (friendship) is a habit, whereas amor and dilectio are

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170 Ibid., 1.1.5.1 (Ages 1:55). All other beings which are good insofar as they have being, are “good by way of participation.” Ibid., 1.1.6.4 (Ages 1:71).

171 Ibid., 1.1.5.1 (Ages 1:55). “All things, by desiring their own perfection, desire God Himself, inasmuch as the perfections of all things are so many similitudes of the divine being.” Ibid., 1.1.6.1.2 (Ages 1:67).

172 Ibid., 1.1.9.1 (Ages 1:92–94). According to classical ontology any change would be from perfection to imperfection, and is thus wholly inappropriate to divinity.


174 “God, who is the Prime Agent of all things, does not act as acquiring anything by His action, but as by His action bestowing something (aliquid largiens).” Burnaby, Amor, 263–64.

175 “The scholastic formulation aimed at excluding anthropomorphic conceptions of Deity. We are not to think of God as of a person with a certain character, a subject of whom universal attributes are predicable.” Ibid., 40.

176 It is notable that he does not mention concupiscence here. As shall be seen below, Aquinas
act or passion. Finally, *caritas* may express all of the above.\(^{177}\) For him, *amor* is the broadest category; *dilectio* and *caritas* are always *amor* but not vice versa; *dilectio* implies a love of rational, purposive choice and is thus not of passion but of will.\(^{178}\) *Caritas* is a “certain perfection of love, insofar as that which is loved is held to be of great price, as the word [*carus*, meaning dear] itself implies.”\(^ {179}\)

For Aquinas, in human relationships love (*amor*) always has two aspects, the good which is the immediate object of desire and the person for whom the good is willed.\(^ {180}\) In other words love is always directed towards some good (*amor concupiscentiae*), which is willed toward someone (*amor amicitiae*), whether oneself or another.\(^ {181}\) The former, desirous love (*amor concupiscentiae*), “is something pertaining to the appetite [desire]; since good is the object of both” love and appetite.\(^ {182}\) The latter, love of persons (*amor amicitiae*), is the love for the person speaks of love of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*) which makes desire an aspect of love, but does not define love as desire in itself.


\(^{178}\) Aquinas writes that *dilectio* “implies, in addition to love, a choice [*electionem*] made beforehand as the very word denotes: and therefore dilection is not in the concupiscible power, but only in the will, and only in the rational nature.” Ibid., 2.1.26.3 (Ages 2:308). This emphasizes the preceding choice.

\(^{179}\) Ibid. This, of course, means the object of *caritas* is of great value. Carmichael comments, “Aquinas’s view arose within the context of Latin that had developed distinctions between the words for love such that *amor* is a sensitive love of the passions, a lower love; *dilectio* is a higher, intellectual, willed love; and *amicitia* is the mutual society of lover and beloved, who act from deliberate choice.” *Friendship*, 106.

\(^{180}\) Thus, he quotes Aristotle, “to love is to wish good to someone.” Aquinas, *Summa* 2.1.26.4 (Ages 2:309).

\(^{181}\) “Hence the movement of love has a twofold tendency: towards the good which a man wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and towards that to which he wishes some good. Accordingly, man has love of concupiscence towards the good that he wishes to another, and love of friendship towards him to whom he wishes good.” Ibid. Burnaby comments, “Benevolence, wishing someone well, has a double object—the good which is willed, and the person, whether self or another, for whom it is willed; and Thomas distinguishes these two directions of benevolence by the not very happy pair of terms which he had inherited from his predecessors: *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae*.” *Amor*, 266–67.

\(^{182}\) Aquinas, *Summa*. 2.1.26.1 (Ages 2:304). For Aquinas something is loved if the lover’s desire regards it as good and “since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one’s will be satisfied.
that the good is willed toward. Thus, in this context, desirous love (amor concupiscentiae) and friendship love (amor amicitiae) are integrally connected and complementary. One who is loved in the sense of amor amicitiae is loved in himself as an end, whereas the object of amor concupiscentiae is loved for something else, as a means. Nevertheless, he cautions:

Love [amor] is not divided into friendship [amicitia] and Concupiscence [concupiscentia], but into love of friendship [amor amicitiae], and love of concupiscence [amor concupiscentiae]. For a friend is, properly speaking, one to whom we wish good: while we are said to desire, what we wish for ourselves.

In this way, Aquinas can elsewhere contrast perfect friendship love with desirous love for self-interest, which he calls concupiscence. A perfect, complete friendship (amicitia) is actually identical to caritas love. In this context he speaks of perfect and imperfect love saying:

And this everyone desires.” Ibid., 2.1.5.8 (Ages 2:84–85). Cf. ibid., 2.2.23.4 (Ages 3:263). Nygren criticizes Aquinas, believing that “for Thomas, as for Augustine, all love is fundamentally acquisitive love; love corresponds to the acquisitive will, and this latter to the natural quest for happiness.” Agape, 642. Burnaby adds, “But the complacency in which my love consists is satisfaction in an object as my own good. The good which all things seeks is their own perfection.” Amor, 266.

Aquinas states, “To love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing.” Summa 1.1.20.2 (Ages 1:282).

“Friendship comprehends both friendship-love directed to the person as an end in themselves, and desiring-love directed to the good things we wish for them as the means for their fulfillment.” Carmichael, Friendship, 116. Thus, for Aquinas “friendship-love (amor amicitiae) and desiring-love (amor concupiscentiae) rightly directed, are complementary and integral to one another. . . . Love for the person is friendship-love, while the love that seeks to acquire goods for them is desiring-love.” Ibid., 115.

Aquinas, Summa 2.1.26.4 (Ages 2:309–10). Thus Burnaby comments, “Since the good desired is desired for the sake of the recipient, amor concupiscentiae must be regarded as secondary to amor amicitiae. It is the latter only which is love simpliciter, in which the object is loved ‘for itself’ and not ‘for the sake of anything else.’” Amor, 267.

Aquinas, Summa 2.1.26.4.2 (Ages 2:310).

He writes, still in Aristotelian categories, “When friendship is based on usefulness or pleasure, a man does indeed wish his friend some good: and in this respect the character of friendship is preserved. But since he refers this good further to his own pleasure or use, the result is that friendship of the useful or pleasant, in so far as it is connected with love of concupiscence, loses the character to true friendship.” Ibid., 2.1.26.4.3 (Ages 2:310).

Aquinas states, “Caritas signifies not only the love of God, but also a certain friendship with Him.” Ibid., 2.1.65.5 (Ages 2:697). Cf. Aquinas 2.2.23.1 (Ages 3:256–58). Thus, “caritas is the same as amicitia.” Quoted in Carmichael, Friendship, 105. Moreover, friendship (amicitia) “embraces all definitions of love and manifests every possible aspect of it” and caritas is part of this perfect class. Quoted in ibid., 107. For Aquinas caritas and amicitia “must be identical because they show love at its greatest.” Ibid., 106. Moreover, “Thomas was the only scholastic to define Christian love, caritas, fully and in every
Love is twofold: one kind is perfect; the other kind is imperfect. Love of something is imperfect when someone loves a thing not that he might wish the good in itself to the ‘thing,’ but in order that he might wish its good to himself. This is called by some ‘concupiscence,’ as when we love wine, wishing to enjoy its sweetness, or when we love some person for our own purposes or pleasure. The other kind of love is perfect; in this the good of anything is loved in itself, as when loving someone, I wish that he himself have the good, even if out of that fact nothing falls to me. This is said to be the love of friendship, whereby anyone is loved for himself (secundum seipsum). This is perfect friendship.\(^{189}\)

Love that is directed toward a good as a means to one’s own enjoyment, including when a friend is loved ultimately for one’s own gratification, is imperfect love, in the literal sense of being incomplete. It is not that love directed toward oneself is evil in itself, as if love for others is the only virtuous love. Rather, love that loves things and persons as means to one’s own good and not as ends in themselves falls short of perfect love, it is incomplete.\(^{190}\) For Aquinas, the lover is always motivated by self-love, to some extent. In fact, aside from God who is to be the ultimate object of love, Aquinas contends that humans ought to love themselves more than others, and of course has been harshly criticized for this view.\(^{191}\) However, self-love is prior to love for others not due to selfishness but because all other-love is patterned after self-love. Specifically, love for others arises out of love for self.\(^{192}\) Nevertheless, in the process of loving, a person may come to respect as friendship, amicitia.” Ibid., 105.


\(^{190}\) Aquinas writes, “Now there is a perfect, and an imperfect love. Perfect love is that whereby a man is loved in himself, as when someone wishes a person some good for his own sake; thus a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that whereby a man love something, not for its own sake, but that he may obtain that good for himself; thus a man loves what he desires. The first love of God pertains to charity, which adheres to God for His own sake; while hope pertains to the second love, since he that hopes, intends to obtain possession of something for himself.” Summa 2.2.17.8 (Ages 3:201).

\(^{191}\) He states, “It is written, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Whence it seems to follow that man’s love for himself is the model of his love for another. But the model exceeds the copy. Therefore, out of charity, a man ought to love himself more than his neighbor.” Ibid., 2.2.26.4 (Ages 3:326). Nygren comments, “His basic idea can be summarised in two sentences: (i) everything in Christianity can be traced back to love, and (2) everything in love, can be traced back to self-love.” Agape, 643.

\(^{192}\) “The love that a man has for others arises in man from the love that he has for himself, for a man stands in relation to a friend as he does to himself. But a person loves himself inasmuch as he wishes the good for himself, just as he loves another person by wishing him good. So, by the fact that one is interested in his own good he is led to develop an interest in another person’s good.” S. Pope, Ethics, 238.
desire, motivated by self-interest, to be a person who can will good to others for their own sake. In this way, the person who desires good from an object comes to love that object who provides the good, and is led to love them for their own self. In this relationship of perfect friendship, benefits are derived from the friendship but those derivative benefits are not themselves the motivation for the friendship.

Divine-Human Friendship

As mentioned previously, Aquinas posits a friendship between God and humans, which for obvious reasons, is drastically different from friendship between humans. The very possibility for such a friendship between God and humans is predicated on his analogy of being (analogia entis). This allows Aquinas to move beyond Aristotle’s view that the distance from

Carmichael comments, “Through delight, the lover stands in relation to the beloved object as though it were herself or part of herself.” Friendship, 114. Thus Aquinas goes on, “Now fellowship is a reason for love according to a certain union in relation to God. Wherefore just as unity surpasses union, the fact that man himself has a share of the Divine good, is a more potent reason for loving than that another should be a partner with him in that share. Therefore man, out of charity, ought to love himself more than his neighbor.” Summa 2.2.26.4.2 (Ages 3:327). Burnaby, however, is very critical of this approach. Amor, 269.

Thus, Aquinas states, “A man ought to bear bodily injury for his friend’s sake, and precisely in so doing he loves himself more as regards his spiritual mind, because it pertains to the perfection of virtue, which is a good of the mind. In spiritual matters, however, man ought not to suffer injury by sinning, in order to free his neighbor from sin, as stated above.” Summa 2.2.26.4.2 (Ages 3:327).

“Hence, because a person hopes for good from some other person, a way develops for him to love that other person in himself, from whom he hopes to attain the good. Indeed, a person is loved in himself when the lover wishes the good for him, even if the lover may receive nothing from him. Now, since by sanctifying grace there is produced in us an act of loving God for Himself, the result was that we obtained hope from God by means of grace.” Aquinas, quoted in S. Pope, Ethics, 238.

“However, though it is not for one’s own benefit, friendship, whereby one loves another for himself, has of course many resulting benefits, in the sense that one friend helps another as he helps himself. Hence, when one person loves another, and knows that he is loved by that other, he must get hope from him.” Aquinas, quoted in ibid.

However, as shall be seen, any suggestion of the mutuality of amicitia in the God-world relationship is qualified by the divine ontology.

“Here, then, we encounter just that feature in the Aristotelian account of Philia which seems most incompatible with the character of Agape in the Christian sense—the love which is so little dependent upon likeness as to show its nature most fully in forgiveness.” Burnaby, Amor, 267.
God to man is too great to allow for friendship. However, it must be understood that friendship love is not symmetrical but, rather, divine and human love are drastically different. Caritas (with a human subject) refers to the “movement of the soul towards the enjoyment of God for His own sake.” Moreover, in divine-human “friendship,” God is the initiator, befriending humans first as their benefactor, whereas humans love God as the ultimate object of goodness. Although humans love God, even their love is derivative from divine love. However, Aquinas employs a compatibilistic approach that attributes all reality to the necessity of the divine will yet differentiates between absolute necessity and a “conditional necessity which does not do away with the liberty of choice.” This allows Aquinas to preserve the power of humans to act in love,

198 Although Aquinas adopts much of Aristotle’s ontology, he does not agree that God is too far removed for friendship but rather allows for friendship from God to man as willed beneficence, as shall be seen below. Thus, “God is not so far removed from creatures as to render friendship impossible. Rather, he is intimately present to and in all things, loving all creatures in that he wills their own natural good to them.” Carmichael, *Friendship*, 107. In this way there is what Aquinas calls “the certain mutual return of love, together with a mutual communion,” but as shall be seen this is not a symmetrical love but includes different kinds of love attributed to both sides. *Summa* 2.1.65.5 (Ages 2:697). Moreover, “our obedience is ‘not the cause of divine friendship, but the sign’ which demonstrates that God loves us and we him.” Carmichael, *Friendship*, 109.

199 Aquinas, *Summa* 2.2.23.2 (Ages 3:258–59).

200 “We were not . . . friends in the active sense (amantes) but . . . friends in the passive sense of those whom he loved (amanti).” Aquinas, quoted in Carmichael, *Friendship*, 109.

201 See Aquinas, *Summa* 2.2.27.8 (Ages 3:358–59).

202 Love is given only by the Holy Spirit. “Therefore charity can be in us neither naturally, nor through acquisition by the natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of Whom in us is created charity.” Ibid., 2.2.23.2 (Ages 3:275). Thus, love “is primarily affirmed of God and only secondarily and in a derivative sense of the creature.” Alan J. Torrance, “Is Love the Essence of God?” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God* (ed. K. J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 120. Moreover, “that very celestial love by which we love each other is not only from God, but also is God.” Singer, *Nature*, 321. Accordingly, Aquinas comments further, “Moreover it is for this that the gift of charity is bestowed by God on each one, namely, that he may first of all direct his mind to God, and this pertains to a man’s love for himself, and that, in the second place, he may wish other things to be directed to God, and even work for that end according to his capacity.” Aquinas, *Summa* 2.2.26.13 (Ages 3:343–44).

203 Ibid., 1.1.23.3.3 (Ages 1:313). Aquinas interprets reality in compatibilistic terms in an attempt to preserve both guilt worthy of condemnation in the reprobate as well as merit in the saved. Thus he is adamant that “reprobation . . . is not the cause of . . . sin; but it is the cause of abandonment by God. . . . Guilt proceeds from the free-will of the person who is reprobated and deserted by grace.” Ibid., 1.1.23.3.2 (Ages 1:313). Nevertheless, “predestination is not anything in the predestined; but only in the person who
and thus gain merit, in accordance with his sacramental soteriology. Not only is all love ultimately from God, God is also the ultimate object of love, and all others are loved “for God’s sake.” It is God’s worth as the supreme goodness that makes him the object of all love, since all desire goodness toward their own perfection and happiness.

In Aquinas’s system, divine love is quite different from human love, in accordance with classical divine ontology. In this system, God cannot desire anything for his own benefit. He lacks nothing. Moreover, God is utterly impassible; “in God there are no passions,” and thus divine love cannot be sensitive. God loves, but his is a passionless love; it is an “act of the will” predestines. . . . Whence it is clear that predestination is a kind of type of the ordering of some persons towards eternal salvation, existing in the divine mind. The execution, however, of this order is in a passive way in the predestined, but actively in God.”

Ibid., 1.1.23.2 (Ages 1:310–11).

“Likewise, neither can it be said that the Holy Ghost moves the will in such a way to the act of loving, as though the will were an instrument, for an instrument, though it be a principle of action, nevertheless has not the power to act or not to act, for then again the act would cease to be voluntary and meritorious, whereas . . . the love of charity is the root of merit: and, given that the will is moved by the Holy Ghost to the act of love, it is necessary that the will also should be the efficient cause of that act.” Ibid. Cf. ibid., 2.2.27 (Ages 3:356–58). Singer comments, “It is the notion of human merit that determines the Thomistic argument.” Nature, 322. For Aquinas “an acceptable analysis of caritas must not challenge its ability to provide merit for the loving individual.” Ibid., 321. “Infused sanctifying grace lifts us towards God, the theological virtues transfigure our powers, caritas as transforming virtue becomes a habit of our will, and this sharing of divine life makes it possible to experience caritas as friendship with God.” Carmichael, Friendship, 111.

Ibid., 2.2.23.2 (Ages 3:259). “Likewise, neither can it be said that the Holy Ghost moves the will in such a way to the act of loving, as though the will were an instrument, for an instrument, though it be a principle of action, nevertheless has not the power to act or not to act, for then again the act would cease to be voluntary and meritorious, whereas . . . the love of charity is the root of merit: and, given that the will is moved by the Holy Ghost to the act of love, it is necessary that the will also should be the efficient cause of that act.” Ibid. Cf. ibid., 2.2.27 (Ages 3:356–58). Singer comments, “It is the notion of human merit that determines the Thomistic argument.” Nature, 322. For Aquinas “an acceptable analysis of caritas must not challenge its ability to provide merit for the loving individual.” Ibid., 321. “Infused sanctifying grace lifts us towards God, the theological virtues transfigure our powers, caritas as transforming virtue becomes a habit of our will, and this sharing of divine life makes it possible to experience caritas as friendship with God.” Carmichael, Friendship, 111.

Ibid., 2.2.23.2 (Ages 3:259). “Likewise, neither can it be said that the Holy Ghost moves the will in such a way to the act of loving, as though the will were an instrument, for an instrument, though it be a principle of action, nevertheless has not the power to act or not to act, for then again the act would cease to be voluntary and meritorious, whereas . . . the love of charity is the root of merit: and, given that the will is moved by the Holy Ghost to the act of love, it is necessary that the will also should be the efficient cause of that act.” Ibid. Cf. ibid., 2.2.27 (Ages 3:356–58). Singer comments, “It is the notion of human merit that determines the Thomistic argument.” Nature, 322. For Aquinas “an acceptable analysis of caritas must not challenge its ability to provide merit for the loving individual.” Ibid., 321. “Infused sanctifying grace lifts us towards God, the theological virtues transfigure our powers, caritas as transforming virtue becomes a habit of our will, and this sharing of divine life makes it possible to experience caritas as friendship with God.” Carmichael, Friendship, 111.

In fact, divine love is so different that it is questionable whether Aquinas’s assertion of divine-human friendship is not equivocal. Nygren comments, “It cannot be denied that the unity of Thomas’s doctrine of love suffered from this addition” of friendship. Ibid., 644. For a sympathetic treatment of Aquinas’s conception of divine love and immutability, see Michael J. Dodds, The Unchanging God of Love: A Study of the Teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on Divine Immutability in View of Certain Contemporary Criticism of This Doctrine (Fribourg, Switzerland: Éditions universitaires, 1986).

The first objection he addresses is related to the apparent discrepancy of divine love, if love is considered to be a passion. “It seems that love does not exist in God. For in God there are no passions. Now love is a passion. Therefore love is not in God.” Aquinas, Summa 1.1.20.1.1 ( Ages 1:278). Aquinas explains that God has virtues that are concerned with passion but only metaphorically, whereas properly his
not an act of the “sensitive appetite.” 209 As opposed to passion, which operates in human love, divine love is the procession of the will of God. 210 Accordingly, “the love of God for Aquinas is God’s willing the good. God is benevolent (bene volere = ‘good willing’).” 211 Such love is not caused by its object but by God alone. For Aquinas, love, or caritas, is a purposive, rational act of the will. 212 Nevertheless, Aquinas continues, at least partially, love includes desire for some good. 213 Even for God, love is directed toward a good object. But this is because every existent, insofar as it exists, is good, although it is good only because God bestowed goodness. 214 Thus Aquinas can state that divine love includes desire of a very qualified type: desire for the good of virtues are those that are concerned with “giving and expending; such as justice, liberality, magnificence” and these “reside not in the sensitive faculty, but in the will.” Ibid., 1.1.21.1 (Ages 1:289). God does not experience sorrow, according to Aquinas, rather “sorrow . . . over the misery of others belongs not to God.” Ibid., 1.1.21.3 (Ages 1:292).

209 “Therefore acts of the sensitive appetite, inasmuch as they have annexed to them some bodily change, are called passions; whereas acts of the will are not so called. Love, therefore, and joy and delight are passions; in so far as they denote acts of the intellective appetite, they are not passions. It is in this latter sense that they are in God. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii): ‘God rejoices by an operation that is one and simple,’ and for the same reason He loves without passion.” Ibid., 1.1.20.1.1 (Ages 1:280). Further Thomas speaks of the material and formal elements of the passions of sensitive appetite. But the material element is not proper to God in any way and the formal element only in “passions” which “imply no imperfection” (such as joy and love) and “without attributing passion to Him.” Ibid., 1.1.20.1.2 (Ages 1:280).

210 “There are two processions in God, one by way of the intellect, which is the procession of the Word, and another by way of the will, which is the procession of Love.” Ibid., 1.1.37.1 (Ages 1:460).


212 For Aquinas, “the will also should be the efficient cause of that act” of love. Summa 2.2.23.2 (Ages 3:259).

213 “For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved: nor is anything an object of hate except as opposed to the object of love.” Ibid., 1.1.20.1 (Ages 1:279).

214 “I answer that. God loves all existing things. For all existing things, in so far as they exist, are good, since the existence of a thing is itself a good; and likewise, whatever perfection it possesses.” Ibid., 1.1.20.2 (Ages 1:281). C. Osborne is quite critical of Aquinas saying, “In the area of mutuality, equal social status, co-operation, equal benefits accruing to both parties. This is the area in which Aquinas has to do most violence to both sides, minimizing the demand for mutual benefit in Aristotle, and maximizing the requirement of virtue in the beloved object in the caritas-tradition. In the tradition that Aquinas inherits caritas is clearly not a co-operative virtue, but one that is directed towards another object, whereas philia implies give and take, a relationship between two not towards another.” Eros, 157.
others. However, as seen above, this is by no means a passion; God is not affected in any way, it is purely willed good and only passion metaphorically. Since God has no lack or need of anything, he does not actually gain satisfaction or value, he is beneficent by nature. Accordingly, Aquinas continues the emphasis on caritas as both the divine essence and that which proceeds from God.

Although Aquinas had equated caritas with amicitia, he clarifies that God does not actually love with friendship love (amor amicitiae) but with a desire (amor concupiscentiae) for the good of others, a kind of benevolence. This fits with his further specification of love: “to love a person is to wish that person good.” This desire is strictly for their good; God gains nothing by loving humans and willing their good. However, whereas human friendships are relational, God has no actual relations with humankind. Moreover, because God’s will is undefeated, divine love is not merely benevolence but also a universal beneficence for every

215 “Strictly speaking, therefore, God does not love irrational creatures with the love of friendship; but as it were with the love of desire, in so far as He orders them to rational creatures, and even to Himself. Yet this is not because He stands in need of them; but only on account of His goodness, and of the services they render to us. For we can desire a thing for others as well as for ourselves.” Aquinas, Summa 1.1.20.2.3 (Ages 1:282).

216 See footnotes 208 and 209 above.

217 “He can understand God’s own love in no other way: if God loves His creatures, He wills their good for their sake, although, unlike our human love which is effect not cause of the goodness in its object, the divine love is creative—infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus.” Burnaby, Amor, 266.

218 “The Divine Essence Itself is charity” and further “the charity whereby formally we love our neighbor is a participation of Divine charity.” Aquinas, Summa 2.2.23.2 (Ages 3:260). Moreover, God’s love is eternal; all objects of divine love have been “in Him from eternity.” Aquinas states, “Although creatures have not existed from eternity, except in God, yet because they have been in Him from eternity, God has known them eternally in their proper natures; and for that reason has loved them, even as we, by the images of things within us, know things existing in themselves.” Ibid., 1.1.20.2.2 (Ages 1:282).

219 “Strictly speaking, therefore, God does not love irrational creatures with the love of friendship; but as it were with the love of desire.” Ibid., 1.1.20.2.3 (Ages 1:282).

220 “An act of love always tends towards two things; to the good that one wills, and to the person for whom one wills it: since to love a person is to wish that person good.” Ibid., 1.1.20.1.3 (Ages 1:280).

221 Thus Aquinas comments, “Now a relation of God to creatures, is not a reality in God, but in the creature; for it is in God in our idea only.” Ibid., 1.1.6.2 (Ages 1:68).
Whereas human love is moved or affected by its object, divine love itself “infuses and creates goodness.” Divine love, then, is not dependent upon its object but actually creates the goodness of its object. God loves universally, but this does not mean that God loves all equally. In fact, though God loves all in some way, he does not love all in willing their eternal life. Some are predestined to salvation and others are reprobate. Thus divine love is not evaluative, or affected, but a purely creative, willed love that results in beneficence.

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222 He states, “God’s will is the cause of all things. It must needs be, therefore, that a thing has existence, or any kind of good, only inasmuch as it is willed by God. To every existing thing, then, God wills some good. Hence, since to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing, it is manifest that God loves everything that exists.” Ibid., 1.1.20.2 (Ages 1:281–82).

223 God loves all, “yet not as we love. Because since our will is not the cause of the goodness of things, but is moved by it as by its object, our love, whereby we will good to anything, is not the cause of its goodness; but conversely its goodness, whether real or imaginary, calls forth our love, by which we will that it should preserve the good it has, and receive besides the good it has not, and to this end we direct our actions: whereas the love of God infuses and creates goodness.” Ibid.

224 “Further, God also loves himself and in this way moves himself. Therefore because God understands and loves Himself, in that respect they said that God moves Himself, not, however, as movement and change belong to a thing existing in potentiality, as we now speak of change and movement.” Ibid., 1.1.9.1.1 (Ages 1:93).

225 Rather “we must needs say that God loves some things more than others. For since God’s love is the cause of goodness in things, as has been said, no one thing would be better than another, if God did not will greater good for one than for another.” Ibid., 1.1.20.3 (Ages 1:283–84). “I answer that, It must needs be, according to what has been said before, that God loves more the better things. For it has been shown, that God’s loving one thing more than another is nothing else than His willing for that thing a greater good: because God’s will is the cause of goodness in things; and the reason why some things are better than others, is that God wills for them a greater good. Hence it follows that He loves more the better things.” Ibid., 1.1.20.4 (Ages 1:285).

226 “God loves all men and all creatures, inasmuch as He wishes them all some good; but He does not wish every good to them all. So far, therefore, as He does not wish this particular good—namely, eternal life—He is said to hate or reprobated them.” Ibid., 1.1.23.3.1 (Ages 1:313). Moreover, God “extends friendship . . . to all ‘antecedently (antecedente)’ but ‘finally (consequente)’ only to the elect, willing for them the same good that he himself enjoys, ‘the vision of himself, and the fruition with which he is blessed.’” Aquinas, quoted in Carmichael, Friendship, 107.

227 See the discussion of compatibilism above.

228 A. J. Torrance comments, “In radical contradistinction to the thrust of idealism, it [God’s love] is a love that creates value by giving value to what it loves. It does not desire to receive, or to fulfill itself; it simply gives—and its human object may be worthless and degraded.” “Is Love the Essence,” 130.
Martin Luther’s Conception of Love

Martin Luther breaks with the traditional doctrine of love primarily as it regards human love. However, there is a great deal of complementarity between Luther’s view of divine love and the classical theologians before him.\textsuperscript{229} At the same time, Luther pushes the conception of divine love further toward altruism while relegating all human-originated loves to egocentrism.\textsuperscript{230}

Although Luther never seems to have fully or systematically worked out a divine ontology, perhaps due to his belief in divine incomprehensibility,\textsuperscript{231} he seems to adopt central tenets of Augustine and other theologians and from the primacy of the divine will all else flows, thus amounting to a monistic determinism.\textsuperscript{232} Luther’s break from traditional theology was therefore only partial. He maintained the axiom of God’s aseity and utter freedom, locating God’s independence in the divine will. Thus, Luther’s view is voluntaristic. Everything is dependent upon God’s eternal will, even the divine nature itself.\textsuperscript{233} God is accordingly absolutely self-

\textsuperscript{229} It is important to note that the magisterial reformers did not break significantly with the classical doctrine of God as it relates to aseity and impassibility. For instance, John Calvin took it for granted: “God certainly has no blood, suffers not, cannot be touched with hands.” \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion} 2.14.2 (Henry Beveridge, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion} [Books for the Ages; Albany, Oreg.: Ages Software, 1997], 506).

\textsuperscript{230} Peter Abelard was likely the first to suggest that only altruistic love suffices; he pointed out that “if man loved God on the basis of self-love, then he did not love God properly.” Quoted in Singer, \textit{Nature}, 338. However, Luther breaks considerably, reserving altruistic love for divine love alone.

\textsuperscript{231} Luther contends, “If we knew his ways, he who is marvelous would not be incomprehensible.” Luther, \textit{Works}, 38:22. This is in accordance with his method of avoiding speculation regarding the divine majesty, “I follow this general rule: to avoid as much as possible any questions that carry us to the throne of the Supreme Majesty. It is better and safer to stay at the manger of Christ the Man. For there is very great danger in involving oneself in the mazes of the Divine Being.” Ibid., 2:45. Thus Luther avoided construction of a divine ontology.

\textsuperscript{232} Dennis Ngien argues that “the denial of divine passibility occurred because of the influence of Greek metaphysics upon the church’s reading of Scripture, and that the platonic principle of divine apathy, in particular, held in its grip what many of the fathers believed may or may not be said of God.” Ngien, \textit{The Suffering of God according to Martin Luther's Theologia crucis} (vol. 181 of American University Studies: Series 7: Theology and Religion; New York: Lang, 1995), 3.

\textsuperscript{233} God wills his own nature. “God Himself determines Himself to be divinely loving and good, says Luther, and is not determined in any way by the attitude or condition of those upon whom goodness and kindness are divinely bestowed.” Ibid., 110.
sufficient, depending upon nothing outside of himself, but purely moved by his own will.\footnote{234}{God alone has free will and relies upon no other. Luther states, “It follows now that free choice is plainly a divine term, and can be properly applied to none but the Divine Majesty alone; for he alone can do and does (as the psalmist says [Ps. 115:3]) whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth.” Luther, \textit{Works}, 33:68. Again, “free choice is a divine term and signifies a divine power.” Ibid., 33:107. Ngien comments, “God’s ‘aseity’ consists in the fact that God is \textit{totally} independent of others, and correspondingly absolutely free.” \textit{Suffering}, 27.} It follows that God is immutable and impassible according to his “immutable, eternal, and infallible will.”\footnote{235}{“God foreknows nothing contingently, but that he foresees and purposes and does all things by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will. Here is a thunderbolt by which free choice is completely prostrated and shattered, so that those who want free choice asserted must either deny or explain away this thunderbolt, or get rid of it by some other means.” Luther, \textit{Works}, 33:37. “Nothing can change, and resist God’s will. God cannot be affected or changed by anything that the creatures do, otherwise God would not be God.” \textit{Suffering}, 27.} God is infinite and eternal, and the divine will is never defeated since God’s power is inexhaustible and irresistible.\footnote{236}{Cf. Luther, \textit{Works}, 17:29. “The omnipotence of God makes it impossible for the godly to evade the motion and action of God, for he is necessarily subject to it and obeys it.” Ibid., 33:176. Moreover, “Since, then, God moves and actuates all in all, he necessarily moves and acts also in Satan and ungodly man. But he acts in them as they are and as he finds them; that is to say, since they are averse and evil, and caught up in the movement of this divine omnipotence, they do nothing but averse and evil things.” Ibid. Luther explains, “God is immutable and unchanging in His counsel from eternity. He sees and knows all things; but He does not reveal them to the godly except at His own fixed time.” Ibid., 2:45. Luther qualifies necessity as “necessity of immutability,” which retains the important fact that God acts freely. Ibid., 33:64.}

This attribute of impassibility plays a central role in defining divine love, negating affected passion, as shall be seen. For this reason it is beneficial to carefully define Luther’s view of impassibility. For Luther, as the tradition before him, God cannot be affected from without. However, it has been proposed that Luther did, in fact, allow for some divine passibility. This is suggested in light of Luther’s theology of the cross, which focuses on the suffering savior Jesus, who is himself God.\footnote{237}{For instance, Ngien theorizes that Luther’s theology actually requires divine passibility, in \textit{Suffering}. For another study of Luther’s theology of the cross see Alister E. McGrath, \textit{Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough} (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).} First, Luther clearly presents divine impassibility stating, “God is not capable of suffering.”\footnote{238}{Luther, \textit{Works}, 38:254. He also acknowledges that, “the Deity surely cannot suffer and die.” Ibid., 37:210. Elsewhere, Luther explicitly states that “from eternity he has not suffered; but when he was}
“ascribe[s] to the divinity, because of this personal union, all that happens to humanity, and vice versa” (communicatio idiomatum).239 In this way, it can be said that God suffers, not in Godself, but in Christ.240 Nevertheless, Luther opposes patripassianism. The Father does not suffer in himself.241

Thus, Luther may allow for a qualified divine passibility, only as it relates to the cross.242

Whether Luther’s theology of the cross is compatible with his simultaneous view of divine

made man, he was passible” and goes on to refer to Christ as the “impassible Son of God.” Luther, quoted in Ngien, Suffering, 82.


240 Thus Luther states, Christ “is truly God, and therefore it is correct to say: the Son of God suffers. Although, so to speak, the one part (namely, the divinity) does not suffer, nevertheless the person, who is God, suffers in the other part (namely, in the humanity). And in reality it is so.” Ibid. Cf. ibid., 24:106. Paradoxically, Luther just before had seemed to suggest that the divine nature truly suffered saying, “For if I believe that only the human nature suffered for me, then Christ would be a poor Savior for me, in fact, he himself would need a Savior.” Ibid., 37:209. However, this assumes the communicatio idiomatum, specifically that “we should ascribe to the whole person whatever pertains to one part of the person, because both parts constitute one person.” Ibid., 37:210. Thus God suffered in Christ. Luther extends this further saying, “The two natures, the human and the divine, are inseparable. They are so united in one Person that the properties of the one nature are also attributed to the other. For instance, mortality is peculiar to human nature; now that the human nature is united in one Person with the divine, death, exclusively the attribute of the human nature, is also ascribed to the divine.” Ibid., 22:492. He goes on, “Since God and man are one Person, the properties characteristic of humanity alone are attributed to the deity; for the properties of the two natures are also united. . . . Yet these two natures are so united that there is only one God and Lord, that Mary suckles God with her breasts, bathes God, rocks Him, and carries Him; furthermore, that Pilate and Herod crucified and killed God. The two natures are so joined that the true deity and humanity are one. . . . The deity and the humanity joined not only their natures but also their properties, except for sin.” Ibid., 22:492–93. Notably, Luther himself elsewhere cautions that the divine and human natures are not to be confused but presented in such “a way as to identify and recognize each nature properly.” Ibid., 24:105–6.

241 Ngien comments, “The Father does not ‘suffer’, only the Son does. But of course the Son, too, is God. That is how Luther affirms Theopaschitism but repudiates Patripassianism as the early Church does.” Suffering, 1. Ngien asserts that because the suffering of Christ was eternally in the heart of God, it reaches the Trinity. Thus he states, “If God is in Christ then whatever God the Son suffers becomes the suffering of God by the union of the persons of the Trinity. . . . In this manner the Father, though He does not suffer dying as the Son does on the cross, suffers through divine unity with the Son.” Ibid., 27 This is an interesting interpretation of Luther. However, it appears that Ngien extrapolates Luther’s position beyond what is made explicit by Luther himself. He himself admits that Luther “did not develop a theology of relationships in which the suffering and dying person of the Son affect God the Father and God the Spirit in the inner divine life,” presumably because “Luther sees no need to dwell on the ad intra life of God.” Ibid.

impassibility is an open question. This apparent tension may be overcome if God’s “passion” or “suffering” is understood not to result from any external cause but from the divine will resulting in self-willed suffering. Thus divine impassibility for Luther need not mean that God has no passions, but that divine passions are purely willed by himself; he has no externally caused passions but he may will his own passion or suffering. Thus Christ can suffer as God but even this suffering is not a suffering inflicted against God’s will or by free agents outside of God. In all this, Luther does not waver from his position that God cannot be changed or affected by anything outside of himself. God in Christ chooses to suffer and this is in keeping with Luther’s radical voluntarism, which evidences the influence of nominalism, along with his utter determinism, which hearken to Augustinian predestination.

Luther is heavily influenced by the nominalism of William of Ockham, transmitted to Luther by Gabriel Biel. Primarily of interest to this study, Luther adopted the premise that

(Original text continues)

243 “God’s passion is divine action, for He wills to bring upon Himself the deepest humiliation in the Son and enacts His will: The suffering that God undergoes in Christ’s passion is a divine act, not out of a deficiency of God’s being but out of God’s ‘boundless love.’” Ngien, Suffering, 27 Compare the view of Richard E. Creel that God cannot be “causally influenced” by any other. Creel, Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology (Cambridge, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 11. As Ngien puts it, “It is God’s glory to give, to act, and to love freely. The immutability of God’s freedom must be affirmed alongside of the passibility of God’s love in order to avoid attributing to God creaturely passion.” Suffering, 27.

244 Suggestions to the contrary in biblical languages are merely due to the language of accommodation. Therefore, regarding the grief of the Spirit in Gen 6:7, Luther comments, “Such an emotion is attributed to God, not as though He were thus moved, but the holy prophets, Moses, and Noah conceived of Him in this way.” Luther, Works, 17:358. Further he states, “One should not imagine that God has a heart or that He can grieve. But when the spirit of Noah, of Lamech, and of Methuselah is grieved, God Himself is said to be grieved. Thus we should understand this grief to refer to its effect, not to the divine essence.” Ibid., 2:47.

245 “For the counsel of God is not changed by either the merits or demerits of anyone. For He does not repent of the gifts and calling which He has promised, because the Jews are now unworthy of them and you are worthy. He is not changed just because you are changed, and therefore they shall turn back and be led again to the truth of the faith.” Ibid., 25:432.

246 Luther acknowledged the influence of Biel upon him. However, it should be noted that Luther breaks from Biel’s view of merit where congruent merit can be earned. “I know what Gabriel Biel says, and it is all very good, except when he deals with grace, love, hope, faith, and virtue. To what an extent he there
essence is known in act, in other words, something is what it does. Moreover, God’s power is such that it is beyond any restriction; God does whatever he pleases and all, even the definition of goodness and evil itself, is subject to the divine will. This voluntaristic worldview is apparent throughout Luther’s system, perhaps most clearly in Luther’s predestinarian view of the bondage of the will. God alone is free. All others are determined by the eternal, sovereign, omnipotent will of God. Here Luther adamantly supports Augustine’s view of predestination and election, locating all reality as determined solely by the divine will. Luther differentiated between the God hidden (deus absconditus) and the God revealed (deus revelatus) such that the mystery of the divine will regarding evil and the election of some but not others to eternal life is relegated to the hidden God. Nevertheless, Luther himself struggles to understand how God can unilaterally Pelagianizes together with his Scotus.” Martin Luther, Lectures on Romans (trans. W. Pauck; vol. 15 of The Library of Christian Classics; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), liii.

247 God is what God does such that “whoever understands His works correctly cannot fail to know His nature and will, His heart and mind.” Luther, Works, 21:331. Cf. William Ockham, Summa logicae (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1957).

248 “For Ockham, God and the good are not to be trapped in universals, if the good is whatever God ordains. God has absolute power (potentia Dei absolute), according to which God is free to change the good.” Ngien, Suffering, 21.

249 Luther states that since God “leads us to act by his infallible and immutable counsel and power . . . there is no such thing as free choice.” Works, 33:191. Further, by God’s omnipotence “I do not mean the potentiality by which he could do many things which he does not, but the active power by which he potently works all in all [cf. 1 Cor 12:6], which is the sense in which Scripture calls him omnipotent. This omnipotence and the foreknowledge of God, I say, completely abolish the dogma of free choice.” Ibid., 33:189.

250 Thus Luther comments, “In relation to God, or in matters pertaining to salvation or damnation, a man has no free choice.” Ibid., 33:70. Further, God “moves and works of necessity even in Satan and the ungodly. But He works according to what they are, and what He finds them to be: which means, since they are evil and perverted themselves, that when they are impelled to action by this movement of Divine omnipotence they do only that which is perverted and evil.” Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will (trans. O. R. Johnston; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2003), 204. For a discussion of Luther’s view of the bondage of the will see Peckham, “Canon.”

251 Ronald Goetz comments: “Luther, who in his theology of the cross affirmed the suffering of God even unto death, seemed to take back much of what he said in his equally foundational doctrines of predestination and the Deus Absconditus” thus portraying “the purposes of the hidden God” as “inscrutably impassible, divine sovereignty.” “The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy,” ChrCent 103 (1986): 385. Ngien adds, “Goetz is right to identify the deus absconditus as ‘an inscrutable impassible, divine sovereignty’ who devours sinners without regret. . . . But he fails to grasp Luther’s emphasis which sets the
damn some eternally and save others and yet be a God of love, but he proclaims it nevertheless.\textsuperscript{252} The extent of divine voluntarism drastically affects the conception of divine love, as shall be seen further below.

**Human Love**

Luther is primarily interested in two aspects of love, love from humans to God and love from God to humans. It is in the first category that he makes a definitive break from his background as an Augustinian monk. Specifically, Luther reacted strongly to the traditional concept of caritas love. This reaction was motivated primarily by Luther’s strong soteriology of sola gratia. Luther thought it impossible for humans to love God.\textsuperscript{253} Because of intrinsic sinfulfulness, humans are ontologically incapable of love.\textsuperscript{254} The separation between a sinless God and sinful human underscores the immense divine-human otherness, a difference so vast that there can be no true friendship between God and humans.\textsuperscript{255} Accordingly, Luther sees “the very idea that man can love God a dangerous snare of the devil.”\textsuperscript{256} As has been seen, Luther utterly preached/revealed God against the not preached/hidden God.” *Suffering*, 27.

\textsuperscript{252} “Doubtless it gives the greatest possible offence to common sense or natural reason, that God, who is proclaimed as being full of mercy and goodness, and so on, should of His own mere will abandon, harden and damn men, as though He delighted in the sins and great eternal torments of such poor wretches. . . . And who would not stumble at it? I have stumbled at it myself more than once, down to the deepest pit of despair, so that I wished I had never been a man. . . . This is why so much toil and trouble has been devoted to clearing the goodness of God, throwing the blame on man’s will.” Luther, *Bondage*, 217.

\textsuperscript{253} “The next phrases, however—‘with the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole might’—are difficult. No saint could fulfill them if God did not forgive. Yes, who is there who does not fail in both respects: in having as well as in loving one God?” Luther, *Works*, 9:68. Thus humans may only “love God by admitting your utter and total inability to love God.” Singer, *Nature*, 327.

\textsuperscript{254} Thus Singer comments, “Between God and man, however, there could be no significant equality.” Ibid., 202.

\textsuperscript{255} “Without equality there could be no friendship; and sinner that he was, man could never hope to equal the divine. But if friendship was impossible, how else could man raise himself into the love of God? To which Luther replies: he cannot.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid., 325. He states, “No one is able to love God from his whole heart, etc., and his neighbor as himself.” Luther, *Works*, 34:309. There is a love from humans to God which itself is the gift of God. “No one can love Him unless He makes Himself known to him in the most lovable and intimate fashion. . . . But where there is this experience, namely, that He is a God who looks into the depths and helps only the poor,
denies free will. Hence, he vehemently rejects Aquinas’s conception of love, which allows for merit.\textsuperscript{257} Merit is excluded both soteriologically (\textit{sola gratia}) and metaphysically (determinism) and thus love cannot be an action of any subject other than God himself.\textsuperscript{258}

When humans do exhibit love, it is God who loves through the human.\textsuperscript{259} As water that passes through a tube, so the human may be a passive conduit of divine love.\textsuperscript{260} Thus, "man himself cannot love, but he can receive love and pass it on to his neighbor."\textsuperscript{261} Nygren contends that such neighbor (human to human) love is greater than the Augustinian neighbor love, which is actually directed at God as the ultimate good. "Thus, unlike Augustine’s \textit{caritas}, which can only use the neighbor to get to God, Luther’s \textit{agape} love addresses the neighbor as neighbor. In fact, Luther claims that love for God is none other than love for neighbor."\textsuperscript{262} Yet, here the love is truly directed towards others but it does not originate with humans but with God. God is the

\textsuperscript{257} "You see that nothing is held out to human trust in any work but the undeserved love of God, by which He is moved to approach us with His Word and promise even before we are born. It is out of the question that He should requite anything after we are born or begin to serve Him. . . . We should deem ourselves to be nothing as regards our merit, but to have, receive, and find power to do everything only by His mercy and love, to His glory—mercy which He first promises by His Word and then also confirms afterward by a work which He does through us." Ibid., 9:85.

\textsuperscript{258} “But for Luther it is not man, even perfected man, who really acts: it is God.” Singer, \textit{Nature}, 340.

\textsuperscript{259} Luther states, “But this concupiscence is always in us, and therefore the love of God is never in us, unless it is begun by grace, and until the concupiscence which still remains and which keeps us from ‘loving God with all our heart’ (Luke 10:27) is healed and by mercy not imputed to us as sin, and until it is completely removed and the perfect love for God is given to the believers and those who persistently agitate for it to the end.” \textit{Works}, 25:262.

\textsuperscript{260} Thus, “faith and love, by which man is placed between God and his neighbour as a medium which receives from above and gives out again below, and is like a vessel or tube through which the stream of divine blessings must flow without intermission to other people.” Luther, quoted in Nygren, \textit{Agape}, 735. The tube/Christian makes no contribution to the character or shape of this love.

\textsuperscript{261} Singer, \textit{Nature}, 329. For Nygren, “the Christian is not an independent center of power alongside God.” \textit{Agape}, 734.

\textsuperscript{262} Nygren, \textit{Agape}, 736.
universal subject of this love as opposed to Augustine’s universal object. This still falls short of a human other-love; it merely makes God the subject of all love rather than its sole object. All true love flows from God downwards not from human upwards. Luther thus categorically rejects the conception of adequate love from humans to God and accordingly rejects any synthesis of *eros* and *agape*.

### Divine Love

Divine love, however, remains quite in accord with the tradition of Augustine and others. For Luther, love is the essence of God, and this love is outflowing beneficence manifested in the cross of Christ. Divine wrath is overcome by God’s “omnipotent love” through Christ’s atonement. This love has no regard for its own good or for the worth of its objects but manifests itself in pure bestowal. Accordingly, divine love does not enjoy good but confers good. Even if human nature was capable of loving God, he would remain unaffected by such

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263 However, one may rightly question whether this is a fair understanding of Augustine, for whom love originates with God’s efficacious will. See, for instance, Augustine, *Spir. et litt.* (*NPNF* 5:108).


265 God in Christ “conquered hell through his omnipotent love.” Luther, *Works*, 42:107. Wrath is an essential element of love; therefore Luther himself speaks of God’s love as “wrathful love” (*Zornige Liebe*). Ngien, *Suffering*, 27. “The work of God’s love works in a twofold way in relation to God’s wrath: (1) In relation to us, the work of God’s love itself works wrath (God’s alien work) in order to move us to dependence upon God’s love (God’s proper work). (2) In relation to God, God’s love moves God to come to us, thus abolishing His distance from us, which would mean wrath for us. Two contraries are resolved: (1) God’s blessing and curse in His dealings with us; and (2) God’s blessing in coming to us as opposed to the curse of His remaining at a *distance* from us.” Ibid.

266 “God does not love because of our works; He loves because of His love.” Luther, *Works*, 30:300. For Luther, it is “God’s nature to give, to bestow, to sacrifice himself and to have mercy.” Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 191. God’s loving descent is “a true ‘bestowal of being,’ a *sharing* of the nature of the divine with the creature.” Singer, *Nature*, 339. God “gladly waste[s] . . . kindness on the ungrateful.” Luther, *Works*, 14:106. This divine love is “ineffable” and is given “to the wayward multitude, which has not merited this but, on the contrary, should reasonably expect to be doomed and damned.” Ibid., 22:373.

267 Thus, for Luther, “in relationship to men, God’s creative activity is pure giving and helping. . . . He is goodness and love, constantly engaged in giving.” Althaus, *Theology*, 115. However, it is not only
love according to his self-sufficiency and impassibility.\textsuperscript{268} The gratuitous love of God (characterized thematically as \textit{agape}) is to be differentiated from all human types of love.\textsuperscript{269} As Luther puts it: “Rather than seeking its own good, God’s love flows forth and bestows good.\textsuperscript{270} Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive.”\textsuperscript{271} God receives nothing from humans but gives out of his extravagant goodness.\textsuperscript{272}

good that divine love confers but also chastening. “For God leads down to hell and brings back (cf. 1 Sam 2:6). Now you see His back parts, and God seems to be shunning you, but sometime later you will see His front parts and His face. This is what it means for Him to love those whom He chastises. This love must be learned from experience, nor should chastisement be avoided and shunned.” Luther, \textit{Works}, 6:151.

\textsuperscript{268} It should be noted that Luther at times speaks of divine love by employing passionate language. For instance, he speaks of God’s love as the “blood of love.” Luther, \textit{Works}, 30:300–301. He also speaks of the zeal of the Lord against the enemies of God’s people. Ibid., 16:102. Forcefully he even comments, “If I were to paint a picture of God I would so draw him that there would be nothing else in the depth of his divine nature than that of fire and passion which is called love for people. Correspondingly love is such a thing that it is neither human nor angelic but rather divine, yes, even God himself.” Luther, quoted in Althaus, \textit{Theology}, 115–16. In these cases, nevertheless, divine love is a willed love that remains unaffected by external influence. Yet he can even state poetically that “the cross was the altar on which He, consumed by the fire of the boundless love which burned in His heart, presented the living and holy sacrifice of His body and blood to the Father with fervent intercession, loud cries, and hot, anxious tears.” Luther, \textit{Works}, 13:319. Here again, the cross is the locus of divine passion, but passion in Christ, a willed beneficence.

\textsuperscript{269} D. D. Williams, \textit{Spirit}, 78.

\textsuperscript{270} The thought that God bestows love on the unworthy was comforting to Luther considering his own struggle regarding personal salvation and acceptance with God. This view of love allowed him to have peace saying, “If God loved me so that He gave His only Son for my salvation, why should I fear His anger?” Luther, \textit{Works}, 22:365.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 31:57. “I love thee, not because thou art good or bad, for I draw my love not from thy goodness as from an alien spring, but from mine own well-spring.” Singer, \textit{Nature}, 328. For Luther, divine love is an overflowing spring. See Luther, quoted in Nygren, \textit{Agape}, 730. Luther writes, “God’s love (amor Dei) does not find, but creates, its lovable object; man’s love is caused by its lovable object. . . . Sinners are lovely because they are loved: they are not loved because they are lovely. That is why human love shuns sinners and evil men. As Christ said, ‘I came not to call the righteous but sinners’ (Matt 9:13). And that is what love of the cross means. It is a love born of the cross, which betakes itself not to where it can find something good to enjoy, but where it may confer good to the wicked and the needy.” Luther, quoted in Nygren, \textit{Agape}, 725–26.

\textsuperscript{272} Luther compares this to a furnace saying, “If anyone would paint and aptly portray God, then he must draw a picture of pure love, as if the Divine nature were nothing but a furnace and fire of such love, which fills heaven and earth.” Quoted in Nygren, \textit{Agape}, 724. In fact, God hates some who think they are loved. Luther states, ‘Those other counterfeit saints, who are beyond reproach in their zeal for the Law, who hope to be loved, who are ready to die for their righteousness, and who suppose that with their strivings they are a delight to God—these are the ones whom Thou dost hate with a divine and insuperable hatred. Thou loveth only truth in secret. Thou dost not love those hypocrites and proud saints who go about in fictitious religion.’ . . . Hence we cannot assume so glibly that we are loved by God, as can those who
Thus, divine love is indifferent to its object, bestowing goodness on whatever objects God wills to love. \(^{273}\) In this way, divine love is a voluntaristic, willed love. The ultimate act of divine love was itself willed by God from all eternity. \(^{274}\) In this way, love is a one-way relationship from God to humans. Daniel D. Williams states, “The Protestant Reformation understands the love of God as grace, as forgiveness given to man, rather than as a spirit which can be directly and immediately realized in man.” \(^{275}\) Thus, the idea that love includes desire, or \(\text{eros}\), is fundamentally opposed to the idea of love as grace (divine bestowal). Simply put, “Divine nature is nothing else but pure beneficence.” \(^{276}\) Luther thus vehemently rejected the \(\text{caritas}\) of Augustine, finding no place for human love toward God (\(\text{eros}\)), but only divine love (\(\text{agape}\)), which is, effectively, grace. Despite this reaction to the definition of love (specifically as it relates to human nature), Luther’s view of God remains dependent upon the classical axioms of aseity and impassibility (among others) interpreted in accordance with divine voluntarism. The sovereign power and will of God is central to Luther’s view so much so that “pure love . . . must defer to coercive power.” \(^{277}\)

live in lies and brag with a loud voice that they are loved. . . . The counterfeit saints claim God’s love though they are under hate.” _Works_, 12:355.

\(^{273}\) God “loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good.” Ibid., 31:57. Thus God “is good by nature, and that His goodness does not stand or fall by the vice or virtue of another, as human goodness may stand on the virtue of one and fall by the vice of another, and even become worse than he is.” Ibid., 14:106. Divine love is “free and overflowing bestowal. Indifferent to the worthlessness of its object, it lavishly makes all things good.” Singer, _Nature_, 328.

\(^{274}\) “God’s self-sacrifice in His Son unveils His atoning will to reconcile humanity unto Himself. For Luther, God’s atoning will in Christ has already existed in the heart of God in eternity before the historical work of redemption on the cross. Already there is a cross in God in eternity before the wood is seen on Calvary (Rev 13:8).” Ngien, _Suffering_, 27. “Christ would not have shown this love for you if God in his eternal love had not wanted this, for Christ’s love for you is due to his obedience to God.” Luther, _Works_, 42:13.

\(^{275}\) D. D. Williams, _Spirit_, 76.

\(^{276}\) Luther, quoted in Nygren, _Agape_, 720.

\(^{277}\) Henry, _God, Revelation_, 352.
Anders Nygren’s Conception of Love

No survey of divine love would be sufficient without considering the influence and impact of Anders Nygren who wrote the classic work on the distinction of *agape* and *eros*. In conjunction with consideration of Nygren’s view, it will also be beneficial to consider the reaction to his landmark framing of the issues. Consideration of this reaction will shed further light on the time-tested and long-lasting issues that revolve around divine love and provide further context for the contemporary conflict. Through Nygren’s work the categories of *agape* and *eros* in thinking about divine love have become incredibly influential such that nearly every serious work on the topic of love deals with these categories, and with Nygren’s study. He uses what he calls motif analysis, avoiding the semantic argument regarding *agape* and *eros* and focusing on a thematic dichotomy. For Nygren, *eros* and *agape* are opposites that represent egocentrism and theocentrism, respectively. He chastises the early church for what he considers to be a devastating synthesis between *eros* and *agape* by accepting the *eros* worldview and attempting to integrate it with Christianity. He hypothesizes that the *eros* motif stems from Orphism and thus consists of a desire toward ascending and *agape* to be the love of

278 Nygren, *Agape*.


280 He contends that *eros* and *agape* “represent two streams that run through the whole history of religion, alternately clashing against one another and mingling with one another. They stand for what may be described as the egocentric and the theocentric attitude in religion.” Nygren, *Agape*, 205. “There seems in fact to be no possibility of discovering any idea common to them both which might serve as the starting-point for the comparison; for at every point the opposition between them makes itself felt.” Ibid., 209.

281 Further, “he identifies it both with the inclination toward the sensual that is expressed in mystery-piety and with the drive to transcend the sensual that is expressed, in its highest form, in Plato.” Oord, “Matching,” 117.
Christianity. Nygren identifies a higher and lower *eros*, which he traces throughout the history of the motif, a vulgar *eros* that is love for this world and heavenly *eros* that strives for the higher world of forms. In both cases, he identifies the central element of longing and desire for that which one does not possess and the self-interest to which such a conception of *eros* love is disposed. However, vulgar *eros* has been identified as inferior long since (see Plato); for Nygren it is heavenly *eros* that presents the rival motif to Christian *agape*.

Nygren writes from a Lutheran perspective and fleshes out Luther’s concept of gratuitous love as specifically opposed to *eros*. He positions Luther as the bulwark defender of the true Christian conception of love as beneficence, which Nygren considers under the *agape* motif. For Nygren, the only true Christian love is *agape*, which he describes as (1) Spontaneous and unmotivated; (2) Indifferent to value; (3) Creative; and (4) Initiator of fellowship with God. His perspective is further laid out in a series of antitheses. He contends that “Eros is acquisitive desire and longing” while “agape is sacrificial giving.” “eros is an upward movement, man’s way to God” while “agape is sacrificial giving” which “comes down . . . God’s way to man.” “Eros is man’s effort” while “agape is God’s grace.” “Eros is determined by the quality, the beauty and worth, of its object, it is not spontaneous but ‘evoked’, ‘motivated,’” while “agape is sovereign in relation to its object, and is directed to both ‘the evil and the good’; it is spontaneous.

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282 “*Agape* is the center of Christianity, the Christian fundamental motif *par excellence.*” Nygren, *Agape*, 48. Moreover, for him, “nothing but that which bears the impress of *agape* has the right to be called Christian love.” Ibid., 92.

283 This distinction is clear in the writings of Plato, see above.

284 He contends that Christianity’s translation into Platonic terms transformed *agape* toward *eros*, leading toward the famous (or infamous, depending on one’s view) *caritas* synthesis. Nygren, *Agape*, 54. It is quite interesting, however, that Nygren sees Platonic influence as distorting *agape* when it appears that a Platonic or neo-Platonic presuppositional doctrine of God underpins the requirement of love to be purely self-sufficient and disinterested.


‘overflowing’, ‘unmotivated’.” As such, any integration or conflation of **eros** and **agape** is utterly rejected by Nygren. For this reason he vehemently criticizes the so-called **caritas** synthesis of Augustine because, he believes, it includes the fundamental **eros** motif of ascent to God. For Nygren, such ascent upward toward God is in stark contrast to the view of Luther that humans are incapable of ascent and that God descends to man, not vice versa.

Since God, in Nygren’s view and in keeping with Luther, lacks nothing and thus desires nothing (perfection and self-sufficiency), the **eros** motif is inappropriate to any conception of divine love. Accordingly, divine love in Christianity (**agape**) is not emotive, evaluative, or motivated but a purposive, willed, indifferent love totally distinct from any need or desire. Biblical expressions of divine emotion “are on this view merely crude anthropomorphisms.”

All other types of love, **eros**, **philia**, etc., are not Christian love. Rather, friendship love is inappropriate due to the vast inequality between God and humans. He claims that **agape** was a theme specifically chosen by the NT writers to convey this **sola gratia** type of love that is “indifferent to human merit” and to exclude all other concepts of love. Thus, he believes that

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287 Ibid., 210. For Nygren, “Eros is need-love which is motivated by the desire for what it lacks. Agape is gift-love which flows spontaneously from its own abundance. Thus God’s love for us is not eros but pure agape.” Brümmer, Model, 128. Moreover, eros is self-love and agape is divine love toward others.

288 See Nygren, Agape, 449–558. Moreover, Christian love (**agape**) is opposed to **nomos** and thus a denial of the Jewish scale of values. Ibid., 210. As such, agape excludes justice. Ibid., 88.

289 “There is thus no way for man to come to God, but only a way for God to come to man: the way of divine forgiveness, divine love. Agape is God’s way to man.” Ibid., 80–81. Nygren’s analysis seems motivated by a polemic against Catholicism; he writes, “The deepest difference between Catholicism and Luther can be expressed by the following formula; in Catholicism: fellowship with God is on God’s own level, on the basis of holiness; in Luther fellowship with God is on our level, on the basis of sin. In Catholicism, it is a question of a fellowship with God motivated by some worth—produced, it is true, by the infusion of caritas—to be found in man; in Luther, fellowship with God rests exclusively on God’s unmotivated love, justification is the justification of the sinner, the Christian is ‘simul iustus et peccator.’” Nygren, Agape, 690.

290 Badcock, “Concept,” 40.

291 Nygren, Agape, 92.

292 Ibid., 57. In fact, he goes so far as to consider it a “new creation of Christianity.” Ibid., 48. Notably, Nygren dislikes the Johannine conception of love in preference for a Pauline conception. See
the NT conception of love is different from the meaning of love in the OT. Here the only true agent of love is God; humans in themselves are incapable of agape love.

Thus, a human loves God only “because God’s unmotivated love has overwhelmed him and taken control of him, so that he cannot do other than love God. Therein lies the profound significance of the idea of predestination: man has not selected God, but God has elected man.”

As for Luther, human to human agape love is likewise not originated by humans but divine love that flows through humans. “What we have here is a purely theocentric love, in which all choice on man’s part is excluded.” Agape love is thus unconditional love predicated only on the divine will which itself is in accordance with the superabundance of the divine nature of agape; divine love thus could never be earned or merited. Moreover, Nygren states that agape “excludes completely the principle of justice from the religious relationship.”

ibid., 127, 151–59. Thus, Nygren “claims that St. Paul rarely speaks of man loving God because God’s love was the only kind he recognized.” Singer, Nature, 296. However, Carmichael points out, “More objective scholarship suggests that the appearance of agape is to be attributed, not to theological motivation but to the natural evolution of the Greek language.” Friendship, 36.

293 Nygren, Agape, 62. This is in keeping with his view of discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity.


295 Thus, “to the extent that man participates in the divine, and only to that extent, is it right for me to love him.” Nygren, Agape, 215. Nygren thus takes up Luther’s tube analogy. Ibid., 215. See above. Thus, “strictly speaking, agape cannot be the love of one human being for another. It can only apply to the love of God for human beings whereby he uses one human being as an instrument through which he funnels his agape to another.” Brümmer, Model, 136. “It is therefore not we but God who does all the loving.” Ibid.

296 Nygren, Agape, 213.

297 “God’s love is ‘groundless’ though not, of course, in the sense that there is no ground for it at all, or that it is arbitrary or fortuitous. On the contrary, it is just to bring out the element of necessity in it that we describe it as ‘groundless’ our purpose is to emphasise that there are no extrinsic grounds for it. The only ground for it is to be found in God himself. God’s love is altogether spontaneous.” Ibid., 73. “God does not love that which is already itself worthy of love, but on the contrary, that which in itself has no worth acquires worth just by becoming the object of God’s love.” Ibid., 78.

298 Ibid., 88. In contrast to nomos in Judaism.
Nygren further states that “God does not love that which is already in its own self worthy of love, but on the contrary, that which in itself has no worth acquires worth just by becoming the object of God’s love. . . . The man who is loved by God has no value in himself; what gives him value is precisely the fact that God loves him. Agape is a value-creating principle.”

The God-world relationship of love is a one-way relationship wholly predicated on the sovereign will of God. God gains no value from this relationships; divine love is utterly gratuitous. Nygren’s view has come under a great deal of criticism, but it still remains a very influential study, and many of his conclusions remain prominent in biblical and systematic theology. However, before considering criticisms of Nygren’s view, it is important to recognize that Nygren explicitly states that he is not conducting a linguistic analysis or making a linguistic argument but rather a

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299 Ibid., 78.

300 “The fact that God loves the world derives solely from God himself, who is in himself unchanging, so that the love of God for the world is a function of the unchanging being and life of God.” Badcock, “Concept,” 40.

301 “God does not love in order to obtain any advantage thereby, but quite simply because it is his nature to love with a love that seeks, not to get, but to give.” Nygren, Agape, 201. Thus, “God’s love for us has its origin in God himself, i.e. in the abundance of his own agape, and not in us, i.e. in some advantage which he desires to receive from us. But did not Plato argue in a similar way about the Good? It too was self-sufficiently perfect and could have no need-love; but it too could have gift-love which imparts of its own abundance ‘to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things.’ And this form of divine agape became even more explicit in neo-Platonism since, according to Plotinus, God (‘the One’) created the world out of the superabundance of his own nature, by a process of overflow or emanation. From this it follows that the sole reason for God’s creativity and love is his own nature, which spontaneously overflows itself without suffering the least depletion.” Brümmer, Model, 129.

302 Nygren’s theology of divine love is criticized by D. D. Williams who sees it as inconsistent. Spirit, 38. “Niebuhr explicitly criticizes Nygren for making the distinction between agape and human love too sharp.” Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation (2 vols.; New York: Scribner, 1964), 2:84. Many others have pointed out that the distinction between agape and other words for love, specifically the philia family, is not supported by the linguistics. Badcock states, “The Bible itself does not actually make the rigid distinction that Nygren presupposes between Christian love, agape, and other forms of human love.” “Concept,” 37. Cf. Stephen G. Post, A Theory of Agape: On the Meaning of Christian Love (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 88–89. John A. T. Robinson harshly criticized Nygren and finds “something of unfulfilled desire in agape.” He states, “It is, indeed, utterly true that Agape does not require for its stimulation appreciation of, or desire for, a beauty or goodness external to itself. . . . But this is no way excludes the truth that Agape desires response, and desires it passionately. . . . Love yearns for a loving response. In this sense there is a need in the very heart of God, a divine discontent which must ever burn until it be satisfied.” “Agape and Eros,” Theology 48 (1945): 99. Many others have criticized Nygren’s conception; others will appear later in this work.
motif analysis. However, this leaves Nygren a great deal of room to apply definitions to thematic agape, which seem to stem from Luther’s definition more than the Bible and contrast that with the tradition that Luther explicitly condemned. In this way, the study seems to presuppose the conflict from a Lutheran perspective. The question is whether either of the motifs of eros or agape was ever widely seen in such stark terms prior to Luther.

Nygren’s basic premise regarding the categories of need love (corresponding to eros) and gift love (corresponding to agape) continues to be influential in some circles. At the same time, Nygren’s study has come under considerable criticism. For instance, Nygren’s interpretations of historical theology have been questioned regarding certain figures, such as Augustine. Many theologians question the adequacy of a conception of divine love that rules out a meaningful mutual relationship between God and humans. As might be expected, this criticism of Nygren extends to his deterministic metaphysics. Another issue is the sharp dichotomy between eros and agape. While Nygren considers them to be opposing motifs, others see eros and agape as complementary. Moreover, the contention that the agape motif is the only true Christian

303 Nygren, Agape, 33. However, he does note the lack of the word eros in the NT. It is admitted, on the other hand, that the Bible uses philia words for love positively. Ibid., 153–55.

304 For instance, these categories were adopted and popularized by C. S. Lewis in The Four Loves (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988). “The Need-loves, so far as I have been able to see, have no resemblance to the Love which God is.” Ibid., 127. There can be no need loves in God, only gift love, charity. Even Pope Benedict XVI has weighed in, dealing with these categories at length in his first encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, in which he claims that “eros and agape—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized.” Benedict XVI, Deus caritas est, encyclical letter on Christian love, Vatican website, December 25, 2005, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html.

305 Burnaby, in Amor, critiqued Nygren’s view in a classic study on Augustine’s theology of love, specifically taking issue with Nygren’s interpretation of Augustine and the so-called “caritas synthesis.”

306 Burnaby, in Amor, sees the supposition of a unilateral love relationship from God to humanity as wholly insufficient. See chapter 3 below.

307 Oord is harshly critical of this worldview. “Matching,” 113.

308 For instance, D’Arcy also directly responds to Nygren’s critique from a contemporary Catholic perspective, claiming that “Eros and Agape are not enemies but friends.” D’Arcy, Mind, 304. Nevertheless,
conception of love has likewise been questioned. 309 It is also questioned whether desire can be excluded from the Christian conception of love. 310 Perhaps the strongest criticism of Nygren, despite his claim to not be making a semantic argument, is the apparent biblical testimony against Nygren’s motifs. 311 Such criticisms recall the primary issues that have recurrent in the historical theology of love and will be seen further in the contemporary conflict of interpretations between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models.

Conclusion

As has been seen, throughout the historical conceptions of divine love, many important aspects of divine love remain prominent and under contention. The historical discussion of divine

309 “Although he contends that agape is the only authentically Christian love, I join others in disagreeing with this contention.” Oord, “Matching,” 114. Cf. D. D. Williams, Spirit.

310 Brümmer, while dealing with similar categories of gift and need love, is highly critical of the sharp dichotomy that Nygren proposes. For him, the separation of love from desire is unnecessary. “This would amount to accepting a form of quietist ‘pure love’ which, as we pointed out in section 4.1 above, renounces all desire, including the desire for God.” Brümmer, Model, 137. However, C. Osborne criticizes Brümmer, stating: “While otherwise sensitive to some of the inadequacies of previous work on the subject, still starts by adopting and developing categories of love on the lines of C.S. Lewis’s ‘need-love’ and ‘gift-love’, which leaves us stuck in the motivational contrasts Nygren so disastrously proposed.” Eros, 6.

311 Geraint Vaughan Jones says, “There are enough exceptions, however, and examples of overlapping, to show that the hard-and-fast distinction upon which Nygren and others insist cannot be maintained, and the infrequency of the use of agape in the Synoptic Gospels is striking; agapao is often used in the sense of philo.” “Agape and Eros: Some Notes on Dostoevsky,” ExpTim 66 (1954–55): 3. Cf. Roy F. Butler, The Meaning of Agapao and Philo in the Greek New Testament (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado, 1977), 70. Oord presents a sustained criticism of Nygren’s biblical interpretation, finding numerous examples that, he contends, contradict Nygren’s thesis. He writes, “Nygren’s thesis that agape is the only authentically Christian love—excluding all other loves as legitimate—collapses under a careful examination of Scripture. His thesis cannot stand because it is not supported by the very structure he assumes to be its primary foundation: the Bible.” Oord, “Matching,” 123. James Moffat points out that agape is used to convey meanings that fall outside of Nygren’s definition of agape. Love in the New Testament (New York: Harper, 1930). Further, Rist contends that Nygren has simply selected “those passages which might suit the theory that agape and eros are inhabitants of different worlds and then dragoon the other passages into harmony.” John Rist argues, however, that “they are both recognized in the New Testament.” “Some Interpretations of Agape and Eros,” in The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 172.
love displays a great deal of continuity with the Platonic and Aristotelian ontologies and theories of love. Specifically, the pre-eminent features of deity as simplicity, timelessness, perfection, self-sufficiency, immutability, and impassibility, retain priority down through the ages in the theologies of Augustine to Aquinas to Luther. Despite the radical upheaval between the Catholic and Protestant traditions in the reformation, the conception of God as a whole, and divine love specifically, remained relatively constant. While the meaning and nature of human love is diversely conceived, divine love is restricted by the possibilities afforded by the divine ontology. Specifically divine love must be unilateral, unmotivated, unaffected, gratuitous beneficence, which entails no passion but rather, purposive rationality.

However, the classical views on divine ontology, and thus divine love, have been increasingly questioned. In the next chapter, the immanent-experientialist model represents the primary alternative to the classical models and their contemporary modification, which is represented by the transcendent-voluntarist model. As shall be seen, the contemporary conflict of interpretations between these models revisits the issues that have been introduced in the survey above. Specifically, the question of the mutuality of the divine-human relationship becomes prominent. Further questions also arise, for instance, whether love is beneficence in part or in whole, or whether aspects such as desire, enjoyment, and/or appraisal of value are permissible for conceptions of divine love. Moreover, what is the extent of divine love, and how does this correspond to God’s relatedness or unrelatedness to the world and its history? As shall be seen, these issues are integrally connected to the issues of ontology and metaphysics. With these considerations in mind, we now turn our attention to an influential, recent evangelical modification of divine love in Carl F. H. Henry. This is followed by a direct assault upon the classical conception that many view to be the most compelling alternative to traditional conceptions of divine love, that of Charles Hartshorne.
CHAPTER 3

CONFLICTING MODELS OF DIVINE LOVE

Introduction

This chapter presents an analytical description of the transcendent-voluntarist model and the immanent-experientialist model, focused upon selected exemplars of both models. Carl F.H. Henry’s conception is a well-known and influential exemplar of the transcendent-voluntarist model, and Charles Hartshorne’s seminal process theology is representative of the immanent-experientialist model.¹ To provide context to understand these models of divine love one must look at the methodological and ontological frameworks, respectively.² Because the conceptions of divine love flow out of the respective ontologies, they will be understood more easily after the introduction of the theological systems. First, the basic methodological tenets will be summarized, followed by the transcendent-voluntarist model’s intentional modification (at least in presentation) of some aspects of classic theism. The ontological framework will then be examined, especially the emphasis on the sovereignty of the divine will and the closely related axiomatic conceptions of simplicity, timelessness, omniscience, immutability, and omnipotence.

Then, the divine relationship to the world will be addressed regarding divine transcendence and

¹ The term voluntarist is being utilized to denote that the divine will is the basic factor in the universe. It does not connote, however, that the will is necessarily in opposition to reason or the intellect.

² The need for a treatment of ontology is increasingly important. D. D. Williams expresses this quite clearly saying, “Why this concern with ‘being’? . . . Our answer can be put quite simply—it is beings who love.” Spirit, 9. D. D. Williams also states that “the traditional Christian interpretations of love have been largely influenced by one kind of philosophical thought about being.” Ibid., 122. Cf. Hartshorne, Vision, 114–20.
immanence, freedom, and providence. This leads to the conception of election love, which is required by the wider ontology of the transcendent-voluntarist model.

For the immanent-experientialist model Hartshorne’s basic methodology is presented first. Then, his departure from traditional theology in positing the necessity of the absolute relatedness of God to the world is outlined. This chapter then proceeds to explore Hartshorne’s ontological framework beginning with his process ontology of the world, then his divine ontology of dipolar theism, and concluding with his panentheistic metaphysics of the God-world relationship. Then, the conception of divine love, especially the important aspects of sympathy and value, is examined in light of the ontological framework and its implications for the God-world relationship. The presentation of these two models is followed by an examination of the extent of the conflict of interpretations between the two main models. The extent of the conflict is presented according to numerous recent theologians who express dissatisfaction with the two main models.

The Transcendent-Voluntarist Model

Methodological Framework

Basic Methodological Tenets

Henry’s method is explicitly based upon propositional, biblical revelation, which reveals God in “objectively reliable form.” Thus, the “way of special biblical revelation declares God himself and his revelation to be the only objective intelligible basis for statements about his

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Accordingly, divine attributes are “determined by a logically ordered exposition of an inscripturated revelation.” Every question of divine nature is thus to be subordinated to Scripture, yet also “within biblically revealed principles to the demands of logical consistency.” Yet reason also plays a prime role in Henry’s theological method including the stating and assessing of “the claims of both the theological and secular philosophical traditions.” However, he opposes the traditional “way of analogy” in favor of univocal predication because of the former’s reliance on presupposition. Accordingly, he rejects any method that posits “a divine being or essence ontologically distinguishable from divine personality and knowable apart from God’s selfhood” since “only non-biblical motives would require us to speak of God’s existence

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5 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:100. “The legitimacy of what we may say about God’s being, essence, nature, substance, attributes, or whatever else, stems solely from the living God who makes himself known and from the divinely inspired Scriptures.” Ibid., 5:49.

6 Ibid., 5:132–33. He thus rejects any attempt “to derive a comprehensive analysis of the attributes of God from an a priori metaphysics.” Ibid., 5:99.

7 Ibid., 5:223. He states, “The revelation of the triune God . . . can be significantly maintained only if divine revelation is intelligible and by expounding its content without resorting to paradox and logical contradiction.” Ibid., 5:51.
before we discuss his nature disclosed in divine revelation.”

This leads to opposition toward Hartshorne’s adapted use of the way of analogy.

Axiomatic to this methodology are the requisites of transcendence and immanence requiring both “God’s independence of the created universe,” and a description of “God’s relation to the universe in a way that makes God accessible to human experience and assures knowledge of him as he truly is.”

Henry also presupposes that a distinction must be made regarding “anthropomorphic passages.” Although anthropomorphisms and other wrinkles of divine revelation must be distinguished, Henry generally requires “univocal meaning” to “avoid agnosticism and skepticism” as well as “equivocation.”

He does allow, however, the way of negation and the way of eminence, as long as they are not “separated from divine revelation.”

The requirement of univocal predication is tied to Henry’s supposition of propositional and rational divine revelation, which assumes that God reveals His essence in the Bible and thus humans are not limited to the mere “knowledge of God-in-relation to us” but may ascertain thereby “metaphysical knowledge of God-as-he-is-in-himself.”

8 Ibid., 5:185. The way of analogy “assigns to God in an eminent degree all perfections found in creaturely existence.” Ibid., 5:86. He considers the way of analogy prone to “secretly presuppose in advance certain facts about the very nature of God that it professes to establish only by analogical reasoning.” Ibid., 5:87.

9 Ibid., 5:101.

10 “The Bible requires a distinction between anthropomorphic passages that speak of God’s ‘hand,’ ‘arm,’ ‘eyes,’ and so on, and ontological teaching that depicts personal distinctions in the nature of God. Those who consider the latter just as figurative as the former do so on interpretative principles that erode the reality of God. Scripture itself authorizes and requires a distinction between what we may say literally or figuratively about God.” Ibid., 5:197.

11 Ibid., 5:87. He thus asks, “Does a relational likeness of goodness when predicated of God and man make sense if its ascriptions to both the divine and the human have no univocal overlap? When thus conceived the analogy of proportionality channels into equivocation and hence into agnosticism.” Ibid., 5:86.

12 Ibid., 5:88. Thus, “within the guidance of special revelation both methods [negation and eminence] may be employed simultaneously.” Ibid.

13 Ibid., 5:96. Specifically, he states, “If divine revelation is cognitive and propositional, then God can reveal information about his immanent nature. Because of his intelligible revelation we can speak
caution against the proliferation of divine attributes, especially when based merely upon the nuances of biblical terms.\(^{14}\) This becomes especially important as it relates to the traditional *agape-eros* distinction, as shall be seen.

**Differentiation from Classic Theism**

Henry prefers the term evangelical theism as a descriptor of his doctrine of God. He explicitly differentiates his views from what he calls the Thomistic emphasis on “Greek philosophical motifs” rather than “Judeo-Christian biblical categories.”\(^{15}\) Accordingly, Henry seems to tweak doctrines such as immutability and impassibility, at least as a matter of presentation. However, he still relies on the classic tradition, seemingly assuming that the Nicene and ante-Nicene fathers were biblical in their theology.\(^{16}\) Thus, as shall be seen, Henry’s doctrine has much in common with classic theism. Some might consider it to be a modified or nuanced form of classical theism, and others might see it as a new evangelical theism. Whatever the label, authentically about both his transcendent being and about his relations to man and the world.” Ibid., 5:102. Therefore, Henry believes God’s immanent nature is accessible due to propositional divine revelation while yet implying at least a semantic distinction between God’s immanent and economic natures. However, he does remove the inaccessibility of divine nature saying, if “God’s revelatory activity includes the divine disclosure of truths about God (valid information that stipulates the meaning of God’s redemptive acts and unveils information also concerning God’s transcendental selfhood and his divine goals) then no need arises for such rigid distinction between the self-revealed God and God-in-himself (since in self-revelation God conveys objectively valid knowledge of his eternal nature and will).” Ibid., 5:51.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 5:139. “Scripture is not immune to the use of synonyms. Yet careless scriptural exegesis may dismiss certain significant vocabulary divergences as merely synonymous when in fact they are intended to convey special shades of meaning. In the long run what must decide the adequacy or inadequacy of competing representations of the number and kind of divine perfections is a faithful and consistent handling of the biblical text.” Ibid.

\(^{15}\) He states that Aquinas “orients the doctrine of the immutability of the God of the Bible to Greek philosophical motifs and develops theistic doctrine more in Greek than in Judeo-Christian biblical categories.” Ibid., 5:45. One specific break is the traditional substantialist ontology that Henry considers to be unnecessary. “This realistic, substantialist view elaborated by Roman Catholic theologians in line with Aristotelian metaphysics, Protestant orthodoxy then took over without questioning whether theology based upon special biblical revelation necessarily requires such a view.” Ibid., 5:113.

\(^{16}\) “Contrary to Nicene and ante-Nicene fathers who expounded the doctrine of God in terms of the Scriptures, church fathers familiar with Greek philosophy in some cases readily subscribed to the unbiblical notions that the purity and spirituality of the divine are best maintained by stripping God of all logically meaningful predication.” Ibid., 5:85.
it is clear that Henry’s doctrine can neither be wholly differentiated from the tradition of classic theism nor can it be wholly identified with it. As such, it is a worthy representative of the progression of recent Evangelical thought.

Ontological Framework

In the transcendent-voluntarist model, God “is a sovereign will.” He is conceived as perfect, simple, timeless, immutable, impassible and totally self-sufficient. God is absolutely sovereign and “stands completely and intrinsically independent of the created order.” There is no will that threatens God’s will, and thus non-divine decisions do not determine God in any way. God is prior to and unequivocally other—yet not “wholly other”—than the world.

17 Ronald H. Nash, for instance, does not identify classical theism with Christian theism saying, “It is extremely important to recognize that the relationship between classical theism and Christian theism is a matter of some dispute.” “Process Theology and Classical Theism,” in Process Theology (ed. R. H. Nash; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1987), 3. He summarizes the broad tenets of classic or Thomistic theism using eight attributes: Pure actuality, immutability, impassibility, timelessness, simplicity, necessity, omniscience, omnipotence. Ibid., 8–12. He bases this breakdown on David Ray Griffin, God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976). If classic theism is limited to the above eight attributions it is difficult to see anything like a clean break between Henry’s Evangelical theism and classic theism.

18 C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:130.

19 Henry summarizes his ontology by referring to God as he “who stands, and stays.” Ibid., 5:10. God “stands” means that he “is the personal sovereign containing in himself the ground of his own existence.” Ibid. The “God who stays” is in reference to the “providence” of God and the “eschatological consummation of his dramatic plan.” Ibid.


22 Yet God is not “in all respects wholly other than man who bears his image.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:87. Henry emphasizes: “God is the unique and irreducible Other, the unconditional
wills his own life in absolute and independent freedom; he thus depends on nothing (aseity) and is affected by nothing (impassibility) but rather “sustains himself in voluntary self-determination.”

In other words he is “wholly free to be himself” and there is nothing external or internal to God that is not determined by God himself. Thus, all divine relations are external relations. God is necessary, perfect, and complete. He cannot grow and is “not in process, in a condition of change, [or] in motion toward perfection.” Divine plenitude extends even to his perfections such that each of “his attributes is perfect and unlimited.” Henry is careful to point out, however, that God is “ontologically changeless,” yet not static and thus the “eternal and majestic” one “speaks and acts.”


23 Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 5:214–15. Cf. ibid., 5:69. God’s “self-determination” means “free agency or spontaneous voluntariness. God has free will, a will that is self-moving. His thoughts and acts are shaped neither by external necessity nor by internal limitation except as he is self-determined in what he thinks and does. Only God alone, moreover, is a totally free agent.” Ibid., 5:214–15. Further “God perpetually wills and purposes his own being; this being depends upon nothing external to himself yet is not internally necessitated as if he exists forever whether he wills to do so or not. He wills eternally to be himself in the fulness of his independent vitality, and never ceases to be himself.” Ibid., 5:69.

24 Ibid., 5:69. Even the “attributes or perfections of God are virtues that he himself wills in sovereign freedom. They are not external constraints to which God’s nature and will must conform. . . . God alone establishes truth and the good; they have no existence independently of his will.” Ibid., 5:215.

25 Thus he states, “The Infinite can comprehend the finite without active relationships between the two. But the finite comprehends the Infinite only because the infinite Creator has fashioned the finite and relates himself to it.” Ibid., 5:223.

26 Ibid., 5:12. He states, “God is incapable of increase or diminution.” Ibid.

27 Ibid., 5:22.

28 Ibid., 5:9. But, “if by static is meant indifferent, the complaint can be countered by biblical theology; if by static is meant unchanging, then that is indeed the case. . . . The self-revealing Creator-Redeemer God of the Bible is ontologically changeless.” Ibid., 6:291. God “is the eternally active God. . . . [He] is not an indifferent and static divinity like the impersonal or remote gods of many ancient philosophers.” Ibid., 5:12–13. Similarly, Carson stresses that God is “unchanging in his being, purposes, and perfections” yet this does not necessarily mean that God “cannot interact with his image-bearers in their time.” *Difficult*, 55. Geisler adds, “Neither does impassible mean immobile: God can and does act. However, others do not move Him, for He is the Unmoved Mover of all else.” *Systematic*, 112.
**Simplicity, Essence, and Attributes**

For Henry, in keeping with classic theism, God is absolutely simple, a unity. The absolutely simple and unified God is also triune. The trinitarian persons are not “independent beings” but are “hypostases alongside the living God and as subordinate deputies active in the creation and history of the universe.” This simplicity flows from the unitary and supremely rational divine will. Accordingly, all divine perfections are willed perfections and “God’s essence and attributes are identical.”

**Timelessness and Foreknowledge**

The perfection of God is also associated with divine timelessness. The issue of divine timelessness has been one of great debate, and the nature of the issue and the ongoing debate is well known to Henry, who attempts to avoid absurdity in his conception. Yet, though he

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29 Simplicity means “God is not compounded of parts; he is not a collection of perfections, but rather a living center of activity pervasively characterized by all his distinctive perfections. The divine attributes are neither additions to the divine essence nor qualities pieced together to make a compound.” C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:131. As such, God is “noncomposite, and his essence and existence are identical.” Ibid., 5:132. Geisler sees God’s absolute simplicity as vitally connected to God’s “pure actuality.” *Systematic*, 30. For Geisler’s articulation of the continuity with the classical Christian tradition see ibid., 30–57.

30 He states “that three eternal persons coexist within the one divine essence—[this] is the distinctive Christian affirmation about deity.” C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:197.

31 Ibid. These hypostases “are not simply divine representatives but personal realities whose being and that of the loving God are somehow integrated.” Ibid.

32 “The God of the Bible is a sovereign will; as such he is a living unity of perfections that coordinately manifests the divine essence.” Ibid., 5:130.

33 Ibid. Therefore, “all God’s attributes known through his self-revelation are to be identified with what theologians properly designate as God’s being, essence, nature or substance . . . . The divine essence is not to be differentiated from the divine attributes, but is constituted by them; the attributes define the essence more precisely.” Ibid., 5:127. Grudem comments, “Every attribute is completely true of God and is true of all God’s character.” *Systematic*, 179. As unified and yet distinct all “divine attributes in the nature of God” require “equal ultimacy.” C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:52. Therefore, “all divine attributes are one in God . . . differentiated only within the created situation,” and thus “mutually inclusive.” Ibid., 5:132. Moreover, all “the divine perfections apply equally to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.” Ibid., 5:186.

34 He even states that the explicit biblical teaching is “inconclusive” on the matter. Ibid., 5:268. For Henry “God is not in time” but that “does not mean He is timeless in such a way as to negate time . . .
attempts to make qualifications to preserve coherence, he maintains the traditional doctrine of
timelessness in its essential points, in accordance with his other ontological suppositions such that
the perfection of God includes perfect, time independent (timeless) knowledge.\footnote{35} For Henry, the
very omniscience of God is bound up with timelessness and the two cannot be separated.\footnote{36} Hence,
not only is divine knowledge atemporal and \textit{a priori}, it is derived solely from divine decree, never
from non-divine objects.\footnote{37} Thus, there is no real distinction between foreknowledge and
foreordination.\footnote{38} Although Henry seems to go out of his way to leave room for the significance of

The supremacy of eternity over time is not the Greek notion of timelessness which negates or annuls
time . . . in which the whole creaturely world loses significance from an eternal perspective.” C. F. H.
Henry, \textit{Notes}, 132. For a recent defense of the traditional view of divine timelessness see Paul Helm, “Is
God Bound by Time?” in \textit{God under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God} (ed. D. S. Huffman and E.
L. Johnson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002).

\footnote{35} He states, “What creaturely minds grasp in their time sequences God knows immediately as a
comprehensive totality: his decree to create a specific universe involves knowledge of all its eventualities
sovereignty imply that divine knowledge is timeless and rule out temporal succession in the activity of
divine knowledge.” Ibid., 5:270.

\footnote{36} “It is futile, therefore, to try to preserve God’s omniscience if his timelessness is denied. Some
theists redefine divine eternity in terms of everlasting temporality and thus try to preserve divine
omniscience. . . . But if God is a being to whom temporal predicates apply, then he has time-location.” Ibid.
For him, God knows everything “in a single act” but this does not require a “temporal Now” but a “timeless
intellectual vision whereby he eternally knows all things.” Ibid., 5:271.

\footnote{37} God’s “knowledge of man and the world has its source in his self-knowledge, because God
knew what he would make. God’s knowledge of what will be is grounded in his knowledge of his eternal
purpose.” Ibid., 5:269.

\footnote{38} Ibid., 5:277. “Given the view of God’s timeless eternity, the distinction between divine
foreknowledge and divine foreordination falls away.” Ibid., 5:284. However, though he is adamant that
God’s knowledge is based on his own decree, he concurrently contends that “God has knowledge of the
universe as a created reality. He knows it now not simply as something purposed from eternity, but as a
creaturely reality preserved and judged by him and in which he manifests his grace.” Ibid., 5:277. Although
if read in one way this might imply that God does in fact have knowledge based on the reality of the world,
in conjunction with the rest of Henry’s statements this does not seem to be the intended meaning.
Therefore, to be consistent, this statement could not be taken to mean that God “now” knows what he did
not know before but rather it means that due to God’s omniscience he is aware of the situation that is
“present” for the world. Henry unequivocally states, “The fact of divine omniscience does not imply that
God’s knowledge is dependent upon his creation.” Ibid. Nevertheless, Henry can say that “God does know
human decision and human activity in its dramatic day-to-day and age-to-age occurrences. He distinguishes
the presently actual in the space-time realm from the yet future and from the irrecoverable past.” Ibid. This
is possible because all reality is based on divine decree. “Christian theology separates God’s intrinsic
nature (known on the basis of his self-revelation) from his works—creation, preservation, providence,
redemption, and so on—by delineating the decrees. These decrees relate only to realities and relationships
outside God, that is, to whatever depends optionally on his will.” Ibid., 6:80.
space and time, this does not negate his position that God is utterly timeless. God’s knowledge is thus based on his eternal decree and is not a knowledge derived from being in time or dependent upon contingencies; all reality is determined and known according to divine volition. The equation of foreordination and timeless foreknowledge has implications for predestination and human freedom. Henry’s solution is the compatibilist view that freedom is not removed but humans act in accordance with their own volitions. In “compatibilism,” freedom does not entail

39 He states, “The time sequences of human history are crucially important both in God’s sight and in man’s. The space-time universe owes its very existence and continuance to God, and is the cosmic setting for the divine incarnation in Jesus Christ, the final triumph of righteousness, and the doom of injustice.” Ibid., 5:277. He adds, “God is not limited to simply one track of relationships to the temporal order; he knows all historical factualities and contingencies through his eternal decree, and he knows them in personal presence in the historical order.” Ibid., 5:276. Elsewhere he states, “The triune God not only has eternal personal relationships within his own timeless being, but also engages in interpersonal patterns with creatures to whom he manifests himself in righteousness and wrath and love and mercy.” Ibid., 5:275.

40 He states, “The biblical view, it seems to me, implies that God is not in time; that there is no succession of ideas in the divine mind; that time is a divine creation concomitant with the origin of the universe; that God internally knows all things, including all space-time contingencies; that this knowledge includes knowledge of the temporal succession prevalent in the created universe. But God’s nature need not itself be time-structured in order for him to know simultaneously all events and also to know them in the way that his creatures know them.” Ibid., 5:276. Here “in the way” must mean in the sense that he knows them truthfully, certainly not “in the way” in the sense of manner of knowing.

41 Although God has knowledge of succession he does not have “an a posteriori knowledge somehow derived through his observation of the universe, even if that knowledge is said somehow to transcend time.” Ibid., 5:279.

42 It is “the purposing will of God, and not omniscience, that governs the certainty of events.” Ibid., 5:284. “There can be no other ground of divine foreknowledge of nonexistent processes, events and creatures if they were not divinely purposed. God’s purposes are eternal, and effectuate all futurities.” Ibid., 5:283–84. For an excellent and thorough collection of the ongoing contemporary debate on foreknowledge and free will see Robert Kane, ed., The Oxford Handbook of Free Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For open theism’s critical analysis of God’s foreknowledge in relation to his freedom see Pinnock et al., Openness; William Hasker, God, Time, and Knowledge (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Clark H. Pinnock, The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Academie Books, 1989). Open theism has been challenged in numerous responses; one prominent example is Norman L. Geisler, H. Wayne House, and Max Herrera, The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2001). For an excellent and brief discussion of the historicity of God and foreknowledge in relation to free will see Fernando Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (ed. R. Dederen; Hagerstown, Md.: Review & Herald, 2000), 105-159. For a critique of timelessness and presentation of God’s historicity and analogical temporality see Canale, Criticism.

43 He contends that “God’s foreknowledge does not involve determination that cancels voluntary action, but God knows what man will voluntarily choose.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:282. That compatibilism is Henry’s position is clear when he states, “Voluntary action does not, however, depend
the ability to do otherwise (libertarianism) but rather means freedom from external compulsion. Therefore, everything ultimately happens according to the eternal divine decree.

Unchanging/Immutable

In accordance with absolute perfection, God is immutable and immune to “increase or decrease.” However, God’s immutability is both moral and ontological. The idea of a suffering God is hence explicitly opposed. God is impassible. There is nothing external to God that can affect him or impinge upon him. Henry is adamant that “the biblical view is that the living God, upon intellectual doubt or divine ignorance, or upon arbitrary subjective power to reverse our each and every decision and deed. It depends rather upon voluntary choice. If humans voluntarily choose to do what God foreknows to be certain, then the conditions of voluntary human agency are fulfilled.”  


C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:287. Yet, beyond this, God’s immutability cannot be limited to “God’s moral nature” but further he is not at all susceptible to “ontological change.” Ibid. Cf. ibid., 5:65.

“God conceived primarily as our ‘fellow sufferer’ is not the immutable God of the Bible. All talk of the final liberation of man . . . must end in a question mark if God himself is a struggling, suffering deity.” Ibid., 5:292. It must be understood, however, that in this model divine impassibility does not mean that God is uncaring or “utterly devoid of any feelings.” Millard J. Erickson, God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 161. Carson states, “God cannot ‘fall’ in love in the way that we do, nor is his ‘love’ suddenly elicited by something he had not foreseen. In that sense, we may usefully affirm God’s impassibility even while we affirm, with the greatest delight, God’s passionate love—indeed, so great a love that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Donald A. Carson, “How Can We Reconcile the Love and the Transcendent Sovereignty of God?” in God under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God (ed. D. S. Huffman and E. L. Johnson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 308. Geisler posits that God may have emotional states but “His feelings are not the result of actions imposed upon Him by others.” Geisler, House, and Herrera, Battle, 170. Moreover, “Scripture does teach that God cannot be acted upon by anything outside of Himself.” Ibid., 171. “God cannot undergo passion or suffering; nothing in the created universe can make God feel pain or inflict misery on Him. This does not mean that God has no feelings, but simply that His feelings are not the result of actions imposed on Him by others. His feelings flow from His eternal and unchangeable nature.” Geisler, Systematic, 112. The central idea is that God cannot be affected, thus if God
alone worthy of worship, is timelessly eternal and that immutability characterizes all his perfections. He does not change either for better or for worse for he possesses all perfections from eternity.” Nevertheless, Henry holds that this “unchanging and unchangeable God” is somehow “active in temporal processes and historical events, and in the incarnation steps personally into history.” Yet, at the same time, Henry is unequivocal “that ontological change is predicable only of the world, and not of God.” While affirming and re-affirming God’s timelessness and immutability, Henry seemingly strains to hold on to God’s interest in the world. It is clear that

has emotions they are purely willed, unaffected emotions.

47 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:289. This is in close keeping with the classical conception of immutability. Bruce A. Ware points out (with numerous examples) that “the idea that a simple being is incapable of change is perhaps the most prominent notion invoked in the rational proofs for divine immutability,” “An Evangelical Reexamination of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984), 151.

48 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:292. This qualification of Henry is perhaps influenced by the modern restructuring that Ware points out: “The doctrine of divine immutability has seen some major restructuring in the modern period. The primary attention that has been devoted to God as the living and active God has called for a restatement of the theological affirmation of God’s unchangeableness so that two fundamental results, one negative and the other positive, could be secured: first, the immutability proper to God must not be conceived so as to allow any threat to God’s free and active love, as is the case when immutability is seen as immobility; and second, the appropriate conception of God’s changelessness provides full and unwavering assurance that the God who shows himself in free and sacrificial love always was, is, and will be the same in and through all changes.” “Evangelical,” 239–40. Accordingly, Ware points out that if in “divine immutability it is meant that God is distant, unfeeling, uncaring, static, and in every way unchanged and unaffected by the human condition, then it is highly doubtful that this conception of God is useful for one’s religious experience.” Ibid., 11.

49 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 5:292. Henry is aware of the biblical texts that are often used to call into question the immutability of God. He points out that some degree of so-called anthropomorphism is to be expected in the biblical text. This, however, implies a break from purely univocal language about God. Nevertheless, “none of these considerations implies that God changes either in his eternal being or his eternal purpose. When all due allowance is made for the literal and objective truth conveyed by figurative statements, divine repentance is itself an anthropomorphic representation.” Ibid., 5:304. Thus “divine ‘repentance’ can be viewed as the temporal fulfillment of a possibility eternally present to God and foreknown and foreordained by him.” Ibid., 5:302–3. See ibid., 5:301ff. for a further discussion of repentance texts.

50 Although “the world does not alter God ontologically . . . that is hardly to say that God is indifferent to the created universe. . . . Nor does God’s immutability dwarf the fact that the incarnation of the Logos conjoins human nature enduringly to the Son of God.” Ibid., 5:292. He also comments, “Surely God realizes values in and through the world; he ascribes worth to the created universe (Gen. 1:9 ff.). But to hold that this requires change in God, or implies that he is personally incomplete, as does process philosophy, is gratuitous and unjustifiable.” Ibid. But in what way can an utterly immutable God “realize value?” That Henry does not actually allow for value to increase in God’s experience or enjoyment is clear in his criticism of George A. F. Knight’s emphasis that “God has gained something throughout the
God is absolute for Henry, that is, all God’s perfections are infinite. But the question then becomes: How can God actually be related to the world at all? Despite this paradox, Henry maintains that God did come to the earth as a human, yet this did not entail a change in divinity. Thus, God is utterly perfect and immutable and history takes place according to his divine decree without affecting Godself.

**Determinism: Sovereignty and Omnipotence**

Henry’s conception of sovereignty and omnipotence might best be summed up: God wills everything. It is not God’s nature that determines God’s will, but vice versa, and God’s will foreordains everything. As sovereign will, God is omnipotent and “exists in absolute plenitude and power.” Thus, a “fixed divine decree” of predestination is central to God’s sovereignty and such an all-encompassing decree includes even the evil in the world, though this does not make God culpable. The divine decree is not to be equated with “mechanical determinism,” which centuries as a result of what has happened in the sequence of time; God has himself grown in experience as a result of his gracious love for man.” Quoted in ibid., 5:306. Henry adamantly opposes this idea commenting, “Advocacy of a changing God is but a confusing declaration that Change is god.”

Rather, “the permanent inclusion even of this glorified human nature in the experience of the Godhead did not involve a new mode of deity, however, even though it brings into profound and intimate interrelationships the timeless experience of God and the context of time-structured experience in which the exalted Christ rules as head of the Church.”

History is determined by the will of God, he “plans and decrees the world and man. . . . He ordains the future.”


C. F. H. Henry states, “The foreordination of an evil act is not itself evil, since God need not will what he wills for the reasons others may will them.” *God, Revelation*, 5:315. The doctrine of predestination is quite important to the transcendent-voluntarist model. However, it comes under severe criticism in different circles. For instance, Thomas Talbott severely criticizes the theory of predestination as “blasphemy” which must “inevitably attribute Satanic qualities to God.”

“On Predestination, Reprobation, and the Love of God: A Polemic,” *The Reformed Journal* 33, no. 2 (1983): 11. He contends that there are several inconsistencies for a loving God to elect some to salvation and others to damnation including: (1) “God himself fails to love some of the very persons whom he has commanded us to love.” (2) “The very
amounts to involuntary causation, but rather to “teleological law,” which includes voluntary causation. Moreover, there is no “ontological or logical or moral order independent of God to which God must conform his omnipotence.” Omnipotence means that whatever God wills he is able to do. The divine will cannot be thwarted nor externally limited or affected since “only the sovereign Lord governs all realities and possibilities.”

God’s Relationship to the World

In this model God’s relationship to the world requires a clear distinction between the merely natural and the supernatural. Henry dismisses naturalism and considers supernaturalism to

God who commands us to love our enemies fails to love his enemies.” (3) “Loving-kindness is not an essential property of God, nor part of his essence.” This includes an argument from logical impossibility: “If loving-kindness is an essential property of God, then it is logically impossible for him to act in an unloving way.” (4) “God is less loving, less kind, and less merciful than many human beings.” Ibid., 13. He also questions, if God doesn’t really love our loved ones, could we really love Him? John Piper responds and accepts “Talbott’s statement that the doctrine of predestination implies that there is nothing beyond God’s own will and nature which stops him from saving people. . . . I also accept the inference that there are people who are not objects of God’s electing love.” Ibid., 10. Piper responds that God does show kindness in the sense of common grace to all, and this relates to the kind of love that humans are called to show in differentiation from the election love, which it is not proper for humans to exercise. Ibid., 10. Thomas Talbott’s view culminates in universalism (The Inescapable Love of God [Parkland, Fla.: Universal, 1999]) whereas Piper’s amounts to double predestination.

55 C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:50. It is the “doctrine of God’s eternal decrees” that distinguishes the biblical view of predestination from mechanical determinism.” Ibid., 6:80. Henry is wary of all-pervasive causation and claims that “in the Bible creation is not a mechanistic causal reality; it involves, rather, a constant reenactment of God’s presence and power. It is important to distinguish voluntary from involuntary causation.” Ibid., 6:49.

56 Ibid., 5:319. However, “God’s will or nature implies certain limitations on his actions and normatively defines the very conception of omnipotence in terms of his own omnipotence. That God will not alter his own nature, that he cannot deny himself, that he cannot lie and cannot sin, that he cannot be deceived, and that, moreover, he cannot die, are affirmations which historic Christian theology has always properly associated with divine omnipotence and not with divine limitation or divine impotency, because the ‘possibility’ as stated is a logical impossibility.” Ibid.

57 Henry sees God’s omnipotence “in terms of his free will that is grounded in his nature yet not necessitated by it. God discloses in his omnipotence that he is able to perform whatever he wills.” Ibid., 5:325. This excludes the conundrum of God creating a rock that is too heavy for him to lift since “God himself is the ground of all possibility. To postulate contradictions constitutes nonsense; logically impossible projections can hardly impose actual limits on divine sovereignty.” Ibid., 5:319.

58 Ibid., 5:318. “No one can frustrate God’s will.” Ibid.
be “the only logically consistent alternative.”59 In contrast to secular representations, God is not at all dependent upon nature, but absolutely independent. He is “eternally perfect and not in process of development or growth,” creator “ex nihilo” and most certainly “not himself the substance of the universe.”60 Creation is based on divine volition and not subject to any constraints, compulsion, or external motivation whatsoever.61 Central to Henry’s view of transcendence is the “emphasis on God’s objective ontological transcendence of the universe.”62 However, though God “transcends the created universe,” he is also “pervasively immanent in it.”63 In fact, Henry may even speak of “Christianity’s insistent emphasis on divine immanence,” though he cautions against the extremes of transcendence and of immanence that might teach that God is in any way to be identified with the world (immanence) or that God is utterly detached and unrelated to the world (transcendence).64


60 C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:27. Cf. ibid., 6:33. God is the “absolute transcendent Being . . . independent of all compulsory relations to anything and anyone outside himself; he is the ultimate source of all reality and of all authority.” Ibid., 6:37.

61 God is the creator of all and thus “ontologically other than the created universe . . . creator ex nihilo of the cosmic process, the ultimate cause of all that is.” Ibid., 6:37. Cf. ibid., 6:120. God freely created the world. It “is a wholly contingent reality, not a product of divine necessity. Divine creation is not motivated by some inner divine need or lack.” Ibid., 6:111.

62 Ibid., 6:43. God is “totally distinct in being from the world of finite things.” Ibid., 6:38. He alone “has aseity; alongside God nothing has an independent reality. He is the absolute creator and sustainer of the universe.” Ibid., 6:120.

63 Ibid., 6:36. He is the transcendent one and yet “the living and eternal God [who] is personally present and active in the universe by preserving it and by working out his sovereign purposes in and through it.” Ibid., 6:35. Thus, “divine transcendence and immanence are corollary conceptions. God is not a divine being who acts only behind, outside or between cosmic and historical processes; he is present in these processes and works in them. The universe does not exist without his support and concurrence. God both acts on the events of nature and history from without and is purposefully and meaningfully engaged within the universe as well. He is not indifferent to the world and to man.” Ibid., 6:48.

64 Ibid., 6:25. For Henry, God is not “wholly remote from nature” yet neither may he be identified with the world such that the world is “necessary to God’s being.” Ibid., 6:39.
It remains difficult, however, to conceive of divine immanence in the universe if God “retains his independence of space-time realities in whole or in part,” and is thus utterly transcendent of space and time.\(^{65}\) Henry himself recognizes the issue at hand and asks, “If God is eternal, transcendent being, how, it may be asked, can he act in the world? The answer given by biblical theism is that God acts by predestination and that he is immanent in as well as transcendent to his created universe.”\(^{66}\) Thus divine immanence is equated with God’s causation of the world according to eternal predestination. This is in accord with the impassibility of God, which entails that all divine relations must be such that they do not impinge upon God (external relations) but rather “God’s thoughts and will are the ultimate cause of the creation” past, present, and future.\(^{67}\) Thus, divine “action” is non-spatio-temporal, expressed “in repetitive cosmic processes and events, or in once-for-all acts.”\(^{68}\)

**Election: The Predestinating Freedom of God**

Clearly, the sovereign will of God is vital to the transcendent-voluntarist model wherein, through eternal decree, God is omnicausal.\(^{69}\) The centrality of God’s sovereign will is emphasized further in the doctrine of election. For Henry, predestination is an essential “theme” that “the

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\(^{65}\) Ibid., 6:34. “As the personal and free creator and preserver of the universe he [God] is immanent throughout the cosmos; he fellowships with ‘his own,’ moreover, although even in the most intimate relationships with his creatures he retains his independence of space-time realities in whole or in part.” Ibid.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 6:48.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 6:49.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 6:50.

\(^{69}\) “God is the supreme and sovereign rational will.” Ibid., 6:15. “Standing perpetually in providential relationships to man and the world, God is no less implicated in the falling of the rain than in the resurrection of the Redeemer.” Ibid. “If you throw a pair of dice, what numbers come up lies in the determination of God.” Carson, *Difficult*, 49. However, Henry also speaks of secondary causes. C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 6:48–49. Yet, he also questions whether secondary causes ought to be considered at all. Ibid., 6:49.
Bible itself thrusts upon us.” Predestination flows from God’s absolute freedom and lack of any external necessity. Henry does not shrink from utter determinism, even comparing humans to inanimate objects controlled by the sovereign decree. Divine election is “pretemporal, superhistorical eternal election. . . . Its existence is suspended on the eternal plan of the unchanging God who is free to decree as he pleases and who in his ‘good pleasure’ decrees a space-time matrix that by his willing becomes as necessary as is God himself.” However, he emphasizes that “divine decree is not, however, identical with the external events, since God’s thoughts become creative only through an act of divine will.” God’s providence is thus not the same as God’s decree but, rather, illustrates the living God, the one who “stands,” “stoops,” and “stays.” Such providence, however, operates according to God’s timeless, absolute decree. Accordingly, providence is not general but specific, amounting to meticulous providence.

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70 Ibid., 6:76. “The singular uniqueness of Judeo-Christian revelation rests upon the governing premise of divine election; the truth of revealed religion stands or falls on the factuality of that election.” Ibid., 6:83.

71 “At the heart of the election doctrine throbs God’s freedom. God is not bound by any necessity of nature to the universe. . . . He is free to create if and as he wills, free to provide or not to provide salvation for fallen creatures, free to covenant or not to covenant with the Hebrews or any other peoples or with no one at all.” Ibid., 6:76.

72 Henry is adamant that “everything that God does is the outworking of his sovereign decree. In this respect man is no different from the stars or from the sands of the sea; that humans stand at a definite place in history is no more an accident than that the planets move in their orbits and that the nations have their given bounds.” Ibid., 6:78.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid. One especially troubling statement says, “God still wills what he willed in eternity past, although now he wills the effects of what he willed in the eternal decrees; and in all that he wills, he remains, moreover, the living God.” Ibid., 6:85. Of course, this statement is riddled with the language of temporality, but if God is completely independent of spatio-temporality, how could it be that he “now” wills?

75 “God who stands—who eternally exists—and who stoops—first in voluntarily creating the finite universe and then in voluntarily redeeming his fallen creation—is also God who stays to preserve and to renew and finally to consummate his purposive creation.” Ibid., 6:455.

76 Henry claims, “The biblical view of providence is dramatically specific; it unqualifiedly affirms particular divine providence, that is, that God works out his purposes not merely in life’s generalities but in
Emphasis on unilateral divine volition gives rise to the objection that “such divine foreordination or election casts God in the role of an arbitrary despot indifferent to human choice.”  

Henry expresses concern over theories that “erode moral responsibility and significant human choice, and that obscure divine election of both Jesus Christ as the messianic substitute, and of sinners in Jesus Christ their Savior.” Accordingly, he attempts to leave room for the ethical responsibility of humans. Of course, it must be remembered that freedom, in Henry’s system, is compatibilistic, meaning that freedom does not require the “freedom of contrary choice” or the ability to do otherwise than one does. Thus all reality still stems from God’s eternal decree according to his “one sovereign purpose.” This includes the outcome of the details and minutiae of life as well. . . . Nothing falls outside God’s will and concern. . . . Even seemingly chance events should be considered divine providences.”

Ibid., 6:459. This assures God’s final victory in bringing the greatest good out of all things. Ibid., 6:483. He criticizes: “This is in marked contrast also to process theology whose God suffers along with the world. . . . Process theology can therefore offer no final guarantee of victory; the ultimate outcome remains in doubt.”

77 Ibid., 6:78. Henry dismisses this complaint as usually coming from “Western secular humanists and atheistic existentialists who consider man himself and not God personally determinative and creative in regards to truth, morals, and human destiny.”

78 Ibid., 6:82. Confusingly, he also states, “Apart from personal faith the fact of divine election does not of itself guarantee participation in the benefits of redemption. Scripture correlates divine predestination with the indispensability of personal spiritual decision and faith in the Savior.”

79 For instance, he writes, “Nor is the God of the Bible the sole volitional agent that pantheism projects. If divine omniscience is said to mean that God makes the only decisions and is the only volitional agent, then human decisions and deeds become totally irrelevant to man’s final destiny. The fact is that even the most predestinarian passages of Scripture (e.g., Acts 2:23) emphasize man’s accountability for his actions.”

80 Ibid., 6:82. Further he maintains that “all Christians, whatever doctrine of election they hold, insist that God preserves man’s responsible moral agency and that divine election in no way transforms human beings into robots. Scripture affirms that God foreknows human actions as aspects of his plan; while these actions are certain as to their future occurrence, human beings are nonetheless ethically responsible for their personal actions.”

81 Ibid., 6:84. “To be morally responsible man needs only the capacity for choice, not the freedom of contrary choice. Man is accountable for the choices he makes even if his sinful nature vastly restricts that range of choices. Human beings voluntarily choose to do what they do. The fact that God has foreordained human choices and that his decree renders human actions certain does not therefore negate human choice.”

82 Ibid. Here, it seems that Henry muddles the conversation by not clearly distinguishing between (1) the lack of alternatives due to divine decree and (2) the lack or lessening of alternatives due to the depravity of human nature.

83 Ibid., 6:84. “The divine decrees coalesce in God’s one sovereign purpose; his plan is a comprehensive unity. . . . God’s decrees will eventuate with certainty whether they come to pass solely by
individual human salvation, for God does eternally reject some and not others.\textsuperscript{82} Henry’s emphasis on God’s absolute sovereignty leads to the question of theodicy. The extent of divine determinism is beyond question when he states, “God created a universe in which humans cannot act other than they voluntarily do.”\textsuperscript{83} Yet, though God predestines all history he “does no evil”; God is the “cause” of evil but Henry is not willing to call God the “author” of evil.\textsuperscript{84} In the eschaton, “God’s providential purpose and presence in history and experience subordinate all the pain and suffering of regenerate believers to a higher good” yet in the meantime, God’s purpose is “partially revealed yet somewhat inscrutable.”\textsuperscript{85}

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his own causality or through the agency of his creatures.” Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{82} He states, “Barth’s denial that God hardens and rejects some persons clearly runs counter to what Scripture itself teaches.” Ibid., 6:102. “The scriptural good news is not an eternal salvific election of all mankind in Christ that no one can resist or annul; it is the fact, rather, that the holy Lord has chosen some who despite the wickedness of humanity can through personal faith in Christ experience forgiveness of sins and renewal.” Ibid., 6:104. For him, even “verses that imply God’s sincere and strong wish for human salvation are not necessarily inconsistent with the divine election of only some to eternal life. Those who contend that it would impugn divine love and justice were God to elect only some fallen creatures without extending the same prerogatives to all are mistaken. . . . God shows his love in electing some undeserving human beings to salvation and his justice in redemptively passing over others who are equally undeserving.” Ibid., 6:106–7. That Henry nevertheless struggles with the tension regarding predestination and human responsibility is evident. He states, “While God’s sovereignty is absolute it is not tyrannical; he does not use his power unjustly and he coerces no one into personal salvation apart from individual decision for Christ. . . . On the other hand human unbelief cannot and will not frustrate God’s election of some” even though “that election is ineffective, however, without individual repentance and faith in Christ.” Ibid., 6:107.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 6:273.

\textsuperscript{84} “God does not sin.” Ibid., 5:283. God “does not even stimulate evil desires in man.” Ibid., 6:86. Cf. Carson, \textit{Difficult}, 56. In fact, C. F. H. Henry contends that Isa 45:6–7 “speaks of Yahweh as creator of both good and evil, and in this sense, therefore, as their cause.” \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:293. Moreover, “since the distinction between good and evil is grounded in God’s will, the sovereign God in some sense creates sin. But to say that God commits sin is unthinkable, for Scripture throughout depicts sin as abhorrent to him.” Ibid., 6:294. Henry proposes a “distinction . . . between cause and author” such that “God can be an ultimate cause of evil, as orthodox theism conceives him, without himself being an aspect of evil, or of evil being an aspect of him as its cause.” Ibid., 6:293–94. God’s “decree renders certain not only good acts but wicked acts as well” but “God is not a sinner” and “himself effectuates no acts as sinful.” Ibid., 6:86.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 6:304, 296.
God Who Stays, Lives, and Becomes

As the one who stays, God is always there. Among God’s many actions, he “publishes his holy will to the human race, as the living God relates himself to the forces of the cosmos and the experiences of mankind, hears the prayers of his creatures, providentially governs the fortunes of the redeemed (Rom. 8:28) and sovereignly influences the direction of human history toward the sure and final triumph of righteousness.”  

Of course, this is all understood within the context of the eternal divine decree. Surprisingly, Henry leaves room for the “becoming” of God but only when contrasted with the static nature of Greek philosophy and the contemporary misapplication of process philosophy. God comes in “personal divine relationships to the created finite universe,” yet this coming, and all that it entails, is purely voluntary” and “in sovereign determination,” exemplified in Christ’s incarnation, the “divine condescension.”

The incarnation also provides the context of “divine becoming” as “forcibly stated in the prologue of John’s Gospel: The Word became flesh.” Such divine becoming is strictly limited to the incarnation. However, the incarnation does not require alteration of the divine nature, and indeed could not, since the divine and human natures are mutually exclusive and “distinct

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86 Ibid., 5:81.

87 “To be soundly scriptural any exposition of God must deal with all three: God’s being, God’s coming and God’s becoming. In the Christian view divine becoming is a climactic reality that contrasts at once with ancient Greek notions of abstract being and becoming, and with modern process philosophy misconceptions of divine becoming that postulate change in the very nature of God.” Ibid., 5:56. Rather, being and becoming correspond to the “eternal world” and the “spatio-temporal world” respectively. Ibid., 5:57.

88 Ibid., 5:53.

89 Ibid., 5:57.

90 For Henry, “this is the only doctrine of divine becoming authorized by Scripture.” Ibid., 5:58. However, this “becoming” is not really becoming for Henry. He appeals to the exegesis of C. K. Barrett who “says of egeneto in John 1:14: ‘It cannot mean “became,” since the Word continues to be the subject of further statements—it was the Word who “dwelt among us,” and whose glory “we beheld”; the Word continued to be the Word.’ Barrett thinks the sense may be that ‘the Word came on the (human) scene as flesh, [as] man.’” Ibid., 5:59.
ontological entities.” Thus, the divine becoming in the incarnation, whatever it may mean, most certainly does not mean that God changes.

### Divine Love

#### Divine Paternity

A prominent metaphor for God’s relationship to the world is that of father. God is the “almighty sovereign” and “personal father” and yet “also self-giving lover.” However, for Henry, God is the father of his chosen rather than the father of all in an undifferentiated sense. At the same time, God is the creator of all and in this sense one may speak of a universal love in a limited sense. Yet, the special fatherhood of God is based upon divine election. Although they

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91 Ibid. Henry frames his view in keeping with Chalcedon of “one person (divine), two natures (divine and human)” in that “the Logos did not become a human person at all.” In other words God does not become “a creature . . . [thus] to formulate divine becoming in this way makes it seem the absolute antithesis of divinity.” Ibid., 5:60. Henry thus positions his view directly against process theology. Ibid., 5:62.

92 Ibid., 6:322.

93 Thus he states, “The notion of El as father of all, moreover, cannot be squared with the particular Hebrew view of Elohim as father of the chosen people Israel.” Moreover, “reluctance of Old Testament writers to speak of God’s fatherhood in a universal sense reflects theological commitments. . . . Such emphasis explains why Yahweh’s fatherhood is specially correlated with Israel.” Ibid., 6:307. He even states, “That God’s love reaches beyond Israel is only implicit in the Old Testament. Even the reference to Yahweh’s universal fatherhood (Mal. 2:10) is connected more with his creation of all mankind than with his love.” Ibid., 6:345.

94 “God being the God that he is, his love is for all he has made.” Morris, Testaments, 80. There is a kind of universal divine fatherhood, but differing from the special elective fatherhood. “Like Judaism Christianity, too, affirms a universal divine fatherhood on the basis of creation and acknowledges the special fatherhood of the Creator-Redeemer God in the Old Testament community of faith.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:323. J. I. Packer speaks of this motif as the universal and particular divine love. Particular love reaches those whom God has sovereignly elected to love while universal love corresponds to God’s common grace. “The Love of God: Universal and Particular,” in Still Sovereign; Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge & Grace (ed. T. R. Schreiner and B. A. Ware; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 356. Thus God “loves all in some ways” and he loves “some in all ways.” Ibid., 283.

95 “For the Jews divine fatherhood was no abstract cosmological principle that reflects God’s relationship to the universe, but rather Yahweh’s personal relationship to the people of God’s choice.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:310.
are related, Henry distinguishes “divine paternity” from “divine love.” Salvation is not conveyed “on the basis of divine paternity alone, but especially in view of divine agapē which, as divine self-giving, gains in Christ a decisive significance for human destiny.” Thus, emphasis on God’s election fatherhood “prevents attaching to it a sentimental universalism that robs divine paternity of moral meaning.”

**Holiness and Justice**

This relates closely to the absolute holiness, righteousness, goodness, and justice of God, which are very important to Henry’s conception of divine love. The goodness of God is closely related to his love such that “Scripture everywhere views God’s righteousness as coextensive with his love.” Mercy is likewise closely connected to divine love, yet not required by the divine nature. Divine justice, however, is to be differentiated from divine benevolence.

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96 Ibid., 6:322. “The New Testament makes plain that God’s love is more than paternal benevolence; it is a divine gift manifest in Jesus Christ. . . . It is because of God’s agapē and man’s appropriation of a divinely gifted redemption, and not simply in view of divine paternity, that regenerate sinners can once again be called the sons of God.”

97 Ibid., 6:322–23.

98 Ibid., 6:316. “Only as God’s redeeming love is additionally implied by references to his fatherhood can salvation be associated with the term Father.”


100 Ibid., 6:308.

101 See the chapter “The Holy Love of God” in C. F. H. Henry, Notes, 103–13. There he states regarding the impoverished view of God’s holiness, “God’s love then tends to be a concurrence in man’s imperfections, or a certain divine sympathy which tolerates the temporary identification of sub-divine ends as legitimate human goals, or a partnership in which God and man strive together for higher ideals without any genuine sense of man’s moral and spiritual discontinuity with the essential divine holiness.”

102 For Henry, “it is the God who regards sin solemnly who is the God of holy love—and none other.”


104 Justification from divine wrath is a “voluntary act of mercy” and “does not flow from the justice of God as an inner necessity of God’s nature.” Moreover, divine love does not dissolve “the need of substitutionary and propitiatory atonement.” C. F. H. Henry, Himself, 80. “The witness of Scripture is that divine love and divine righteousness, already united in the simplicity of God, find their historical meeting ground the reality of justification by faith.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:356. Of course, in the simplicity of God, “love and righteousness (or holiness) express different aspects of the same quality in God’s being.” Kuhn, “God,” 53.
Henry is concerned that divine love might eclipse the reality of divine holiness, goodness, justice, and judgment. He therefore insists on biblical divine wrath that “preclude[s] any promotion of love at the expense of righteousness.” Divine wrath, including the terror of hell, is real. Divine love does not remove this biblical emphasis or the fact that God must be “placated.” Paradoxically, it seems that divine wrath may be elicited, whereas divine love cannot be.

However, divine “love does not intercept God’s final punishment of evil; in fact, God vindicates his essential nature by eschatological retribution.” However, divine wrath should not be thought of as “an uncontrollable outburst of passion.” Divine wrath is rightly understood within the context of “the one sovereign God, the self-revealing God of holy love.” Thus, Jesus is just as much the “revelation of divine wrath” as the “revelation of divine love.” In all this,

102 “If there is in God no divine perfection of justice distinguishable from sheer benevolence then there need be no justification—indeed, there can be no justification.” C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 6:356.

103 Henry blames “exaggerated and distorted concepts of divine love” and “sentimental alternatives supposedly grounded in divine love” for the downplaying of divine holiness and judgment. Ibid., 6:328. Cf. C. F. H. Henry, *Notes*, 107. Morris points out that “we often confuse love with sentimentality. . . . There is a stern side to real love.” *Testaments*, 25.


105 Ibid., 5:303. “God is not a vague universal cosmic love but is wrathful toward fallen humanity and needs to be placated.” Ibid. “That God’s enmity toward sinners is not merely a passive attitude but one of active hostility may seem incompatible with the doctrine of God’s love. Yet it was while we were considered God’s enemies that Christ as the gift of divine love died for us.” Ibid., 6:358. “Christ, *agapē* incarnate . . . makes it patently obvious that no correct view of final judgment can be elaborated that empties hell of its terrors and depicts God’s last judgment as benevolent toward the impenitent and ungodly.” Ibid., 6:351–52.

106 Ibid., 6:353. The alternative, “self-cancelling justice is not only unbiblical, it also implies amoral love.” Ibid., 6:354. He states that “outside the Biblical tradition, wherever the attributes of holiness and love are applied to deity, the application is such that either the divine love or the divine holiness is seriously compromised.” C. F. H. Henry, *Notes*, 103.

107 Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1955), 184. Carson also emphasizes the controlled nature of this anger saying, “God’s wrath is not an implacable, blind rage. However emotional it may be, it is an entirely reasonable and willed response to offenses against holiness.” *Difficult*, 69.


109 Ibid., 6:332. He goes on, “Divine love and mercy open a way of escape from divine wrath:
divine judgment is perfect and God will be shown as “holy, loving, and compassionate, and indeed working all things for good to believers, and by his sovereignty sheltering even the fallen cosmos and history from purposeless destruction.”

**Love and the Divine Essence**

Although, the concept of love is very important to the transcendent-voluntarist model, Henry maintains that God’s essence should not be limited to love. Love is not “exhaustive of the totality of God’s being, [but] is nevertheless intrinsic to God’s very nature.” The main rationale for this decision is Henry’s apparent fear that love will dominate the discussion of God’s nature to the exclusion of other aspects. However, some that align with this model in most other ways maintain that God’s very essence is love. The difference in this model minimally

Christ’s substitutionary, propitiatory death provides deliverance from both the present wrath and the wrath to come.”

110 Ibid., 6:334. For Henry, wrath is not merely an outgrowth of divine love since the terms for wrath certainly “do not intrinsically express divine love; only the grace of God can mitigate such actions against the sinner.” Ibid., 6:327. Therefore, the “wrath of God is not . . . simply the reverse side of his love, although that may well be the case in his relations with the objects of his election. . . . Among the people of God what provokes God’s wrath is insensitivity to his love while among unbelievers it is enduring hostility that perpetuates God’s wrath.” Ibid., 6:331.

111 Ibid., 6:303.

112 Ibid., 6:348. “Love is not accidental or incidental to God; it is an essential revelation of the divine nature, a fundamental and eternal perfection. His love, like all other divine attributes, reflects the whole of his being in specific actions and relationships.” Ibid., 6:341.

113 He is therefore concerned about making one understanding of an attribute dominate the entire ontology such that “when we ascribe goodness to God properly, we at the same time ascribe justice and omnipotence. If we ascribe love in a way that moderates divine righteousness, or righteousness in a way that cancels mercy, then we depict the totality of God’s nature improperly.” Ibid., 5:135. “If God’s nature is self-communication which goes ‘out of Himself’ to others, then ‘creation’ becomes a necessity, the universe a necessary ‘emanation,’ for God’s nature can hardly be conceived out of necessary relations to the universe.” Ibid., 5:117.

114 For instance, both Carson and Morris consider love the very essence of God; however, they do not focus on ontological implications from this position and seem to be more interested in affirming love as a foundational to how God should be understood. Carson states, “Love is bound up in the very nature of God. God is love.” *Difficult*, 39. Morris also unequivocally sees love as the essence of God since God is
impacts the definition and nature of love itself. Although Henry does not allow for any one “attribute” to be central or the sole essence, he actually makes every attribute, rightly understood, the essential attribute, due to the co-inherence of the divine attributes in divine simplicity.115 Thus, God is love, yet not to the exclusion of other perfections of his unitary nature.116 Since God’s essence is all his attributes and all attributes are mutually inclusive, there can be no tension between love and “other” attributes in the divine simplicity, and love, rightly conceived, would still be applicable to sum up the nature of God.117

Departure from the Classical Model of Divine Love

This model of divine love interacts with the critique of the classical Greek idea of God, specifically the concept that God does not love anything outside of himself.118 In doing so it recognizes some of the shortcomings of classical theism. D. A. Carson frames the issue well when he asks, “What does such love look like in a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign, love “means more than that God is loving; it means that love is of the essence of his being.” Testaments, 136.

115 Thus “all God’s perfections are equally ultimate in the simplicity of his being.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:132. He states, “We insist on the unity of the divine essence in which any and every divine attribute implies the others.” Ibid., 6:322. Moreover, “all God’s attributes have an absolute divine character; each attribute is involved in every other attribute.” Ibid., 5:135. Thus he can state, “God and holiness, and God and love, are mutually exhaustive synonyms; Scripture itself testifies that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:16), and not simply that love is in God.” Ibid., 5:132.

116 In other words, just as long as the conception of divine love already took into account the mutual inclusivity with the attributes of justice, omnipotence, and the like, God’s essence may be thought of as love in this qualified sense. For instance, Henry allows that “no doubt an effective discussion of divine attributes requires an orderly arrangement and exposition involving logical priorities. But such exposition does not require certain divine perfections to be submerged to others on the premise that some attributes are ontologically inferior.” Ibid., 5:136.

117 The love of God is thus foundational to the whole doctrine of God since “God’s interpersonal love for himself and for his creatures is the measure of all that passes for love in the universe he makes and preserves; it is the shaping principle of his creative and redemptive work.” Ibid., 6:341. On the everlasting nature of this love see Morris, Testaments, 10.

and transcendent (i.e., above space and time)?” Henry differentiates his view from Aristotle’s view, which makes divine love for other than God impossible, contending that “no philosopher has affirmed divine love to be an attribute of the Infinite except through the influence of Christianity.” However, the “God of the Bible . . . is the personal Creator of the universe and the source of redemption.” Accordingly, “whatever Christian theology means by the impassibility of God, it does not mean that God’s love, compassion and mercy are mere figures of speech.” Yet, the break is by no means total. For Henry, divine love is not elicited by anything external to God but is solely motivated by God’s eternal decree.

The Agape-Eros Distinction

That there is a good deal of continuity, though not identity, between the transcendent-voluntarist model and the tradition of love may be seen by considering the traditionally dominant agape-eros distinction. In addressing this issue, Henry rightly acknowledges the complexity

119 Carson, Difficult, 45. Vanhoozer points out that “it is becoming increasingly difficult for classical theists to defend the intelligibility of the love of God as an apathetic and unilateral benevolence.” “Introduction,” 10.


121 Ibid., 5:340. Again, this is in explicit distinction from Aristotle’s unmoved mover. Thus it is “only a deity view which conceives God already as communicative personality that the notion of divine love possesses any genuine meaning at all; a loving God is not a divine hermit.” C. F. H. Henry, Notes, 104.

122 C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:349. In fact, Henry is able to speak of “God as having a tender concern for man, and loving man as sinner as well as creature, despite his moral revolt.” Notes, 109. Carson discourages “attempts to strip God’s love of affective content and make it no more than willed commitment to the other’s good. The philology does not support this view.” Difficult, 46. He is adamant that an emotionless God (such as may be implied in the Westminster Confession of Faith) is “profoundly unbiblical and should be repudiated” though he later argues for a form of impassibility. Ibid., 48. There is a “fervor” to divine love as Morris states that God “does not simply tolerate the people [Judah]—he loves them with all the fervor of his holy nature.” Testaments, 11.

123 Thus, “compassionate response is not induced in God by the distress of creatures, as if they were able to effect a change in the nature of an otherwise uncompassionate being; rather, response is grounded in the living God’s essential nature, that is, in his voluntary disposition.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:349.
involved in the different biblical words for love.\textsuperscript{124} No simplistic distinctions or definitions of biblical words for love suffice.\textsuperscript{125} He thus correctly notes that “it is hardly the case, then, as some exegetes argue, that the Bible gives terms like \textit{agape} a wholly new meaning.”\textsuperscript{126} Yet, on the other hand, he contends, along with Nygren, that there is a unique “biblical view of divine \textit{agapē},” a “distinctive meaning of love, [that] is found exclusively in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures.”\textsuperscript{127} He does, however, qualify this by acknowledging that “to compress the biblical view of divine love solely into the term \textit{agapē} can raise unnecessary misunderstanding.”\textsuperscript{128} Nevertheless, he contends that “the inspired writers deliberately employ \textit{agapē}—both when they speak of self-love and when they refer to neighbor-love.”\textsuperscript{129} He states, “Because of its very colorlessness as a nonbiblical

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} Linguistically, the sharp dichotomy regarding the biblical words for love (such as \textit{philia}) is rejected based on the bare semantic facts. Henry does recognize his dependence upon Nygren’s study stating, “No scholar has contributed as influentially as Anders Nygren to the contemporary contrast of \textit{agapē} and \textit{eros} (\textit{Agape} and \textit{eros}). At the forefront of Swedish theological research into the fundamental motifs of the Christian faith, Nygren emphasizes the distinctive importance of \textit{agapē} for understanding biblical religion.” Ibid., 6:342. He states, “Some scholars have inferred, for example, that all terms for love except \textit{agape} are inappropriate to the God of the Bible; the fact is that Jesus in the Gospel of John uses the verb \textit{phileō} when he states that ‘the Father loves the Son’ (John 5:20), and does so as well when speaking of the Father’s love for the disciples (John 16:27). Jesus’ love for Lazarus (John 11:3, 36), for the apostle John (John 20:2), and for other believers also (Rev. 3:19) is characterized as \textit{phileō}-love. Both \textit{phileō} and \textit{agapaō} are therefore used not only of Christian love for others but also of Jesus’ love for his disciples, as well as for the Father’s love of the incarnate Son. Moreover, the anathema that Paul pronounces at the end of 1 Corinthians (16:22) is directed at those who, amid the problems besetting the congregation at Corinth, ‘love (\textit{phileō}) not the Lord Jesus.’” Ibid., 6:343. His familiarity with the semantic overlap of the terms begs the question as to why he adopts the thematic dichotomy.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Henry emphasizes the fact that “meaning is conveyed not by single words but by logical constellations of words.” Ibid., 6:344.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid. For instance, Henry recognizes the use of \textit{agape} in the LXX for situations such as the lust of Amnon for Tamar his sister (2 Sam 13:15).
\item \textsuperscript{127} C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:343. Although Henry acknowledges many passages that speak of “love” he claims it is used in “God-man relationships much less frequently and much more cautiously than does Greek mythological literature.” Ibid., 6:344.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 6:343. Carson as well recognizes that Nygren’s “understanding of love cannot be tied in any univocal way to the [\textit{agapao}] word group.” \textit{Difficult}, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{129} C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:343–44. He thus adopts the belief that the verb form of \textit{agape} was “an indefinite word often implying no more than to ‘like’ or to ‘be content with’” and could thus be utilized by the Bible with an infusion of the meaning of a rational, willed love. Thus he contends that “The least definite term for love in this classical Greek word cluster was \textit{agapan}, whose common emphasis was a lover’s free and decisive act in behalf of another.” Ibid., 6:345. He cites C. E. B. Cranfield:
term the biblical writers could impart to \textit{agapaō} a highly selective intention and a distinctive connotation.\textsuperscript{130} Furthermore he states, “And, most importantly, when God’s love-relationship to man is in view the New Testament uses \textit{agapē} almost entirely.”\textsuperscript{131} Thus, despite glaring semantic ambiguities, this model utilizes the \textit{agape}-\textit{eros} distinction to ground the specific discussion of divine love in opposition to classical Greek conceptions.\textsuperscript{132} Accordingly, a thematic (as opposed to semantic) distinction between \textit{agape} and \textit{eros} is posited.

Thematicallly, Henry sees \textit{eros} as “essentially one’s quest for a value that compensates for an inner need or defect.”\textsuperscript{133} In another place he states, “\textit{Eros} is self-serving passion; it seeks it

“Although used for euphony as a synonym for \textit{phileō} and \textit{eraō}, \textit{agapaō} lacked the warmth of the former and the intensity of the latter. . . . Of the verbs used for love in classical Greek, \textit{agapaō} was therefore the least specific.” Cranfield, “Love,” \textit{Theological Wordbook of the Bible} (ed. Alan Richardson; New York: Macmillan, 1950), 134. Yet, to be fair to Henry he does reject Cranfield’s contention that \textit{agape} was chosen because it lacked the erotic connotation of \textit{eros}. He does so by referring once again to the instance of Amnon and Tamar. C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:346.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid. Morris accurately points out that the use of the word \textit{agape} “was not entirely new, but it was not common before the New Testament.” \textit{Testaments}, 124. Despite this, Morris also holds to the thesis that the NT writers intentionally employed this word “because they had a new idea about the essential meaning of love. In saying this I am not claiming that the linguistics prove this point.” Ibid., 125. It must be noticed, then, that this is a theological and thematic rather than exegetical and linguistic argument. Thus, he clarifies that “the meaning arises because of the way the Christians used the concept, not the word.” Ibid. In fact, more than once Morris goes out of his way to emphasize that the case cannot be made from the linguistics. He states, “A. Nygren has often been criticized for making too sharp a distinction between \textit{agape} and \textit{erōs}. So perhaps I should repeat that I am not basing my argument on the linguistics, though I find them interesting and see in them a pointer. The main thrust of the argument depends on what the New Testament writers meant when they used the love words, not on their terminology.” Ibid., 128. Carson, however, proceeds with greater caution saying, “There are excellent diachronic reasons in Greek philology to explain the rise of the \textbf{[agapao]} word group, so one should not rush too quickly toward theological explanations.” \textit{Difficult}, 27.

\textsuperscript{131} C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:343–44. Morris also recognizes that \textit{phileo} and \textit{agapao} can, at times, be used interchangeably. Nevertheless, he does not see \textit{phileo} as an adequate representation of love. He states, “We must dismiss this term . . . if we are looking for the essential New Testament idea of love. . . . In short, it does not indicate Christian love.” \textit{Testaments}, 119. However, as shall be seen, the semantic evidence does not seem to support such a dogmatic stance in favor of \textit{agape} as opposed to other NT words for love.

\textsuperscript{132} For instance he states, “Christian love (\textit{agape}) is the antithesis of worldly hate, but it is much more; it is the antithesis of worldly love (\textit{eros}) in all its forms. The gods of our time are but brittle images of \textit{eros}-love.” C. F. H. Henry, \textit{Himself}, 13. “The empirical approach to the nature of God soon coalesced God into man and blurred \textit{agapē} into \textit{eros}.” C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:343.

\textsuperscript{133} C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:343.
objects for the fulfillment of the lover’s own need or gratification.”

Henry locates the problem in this Greek conception of love as *eros* saying, “Here the misunderstanding of love in terms only of *eros* leads Aristotle to reject the very possibility of God’s love for the world or for mankind.”

Thus, Henry’s solution to the classical view of divine love is a re-definition of love. Accordingly, Henry utilizes a concept of love differing from the Greeks, *agape*, which is supposed to suit the timeless and perfect ontology. Hence, *agape* cannot entail anything that contradicts the concept of a simple, timeless, self-sufficient, and immutable God.

**Agape Love as Election Love**

As has been seen, this model of divine love places an emphasis on the distinction between God and the world. God is sovereign and transcendent over the world, and love is freely willed by God with no necessity and no external motivation. Thus, divine love is a sovereign, volitional love, not the result of any “inner divine necessity” or emanation, but rather purely based on the totally free divine volition.

Likewise, there is no external compulsion or even motivation for divine love. God’s love, then, is not an impersonal force but is supremely personal, although exclusive of sexuality. Moreover, interpersonal love is part of God’s trinitarian

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134 Ibid., 6:345. For Morris, “basically, *erōs* is romantic love, sexual love.” *Testaments*, 120. Although Morris points out that *erōs* is not inherently evil, he nevertheless concludes that “love is something quite different from a passionate human longing, even a longing for the good and for God.” Ibid., 123.

135 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 6:343. He comments that the NT avoids *eros* “because of the misconception to which it is prone. The inspired writers deliberately employ *agape*.” Ibid., 6:344.

136 However, Carson adds a very important qualifier saying that “doubtless God’s love is immeasurably richer than ours, in ways still to be explored, but they belong to the same genus, or the parallelisms could not be drawn.” *Difficult*, 48. Thus, there is not an absolute dichotomy between divine and human love.


138 Ibid., 5:297–98. Albert C. Knudson states, “Without personality love would be a mere abstraction.” Knudson, *The Doctrine of God* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1930), 352, quoted in ibid. “Biblical religion is what imparted dimensions and distinctions of love and fellowship found nowhere else; because these terms gain their meaning in a context that heightens rather than lessens personal realities, it
nature. However, God’s love is not only intra-trinitarian but also includes other than God, according to sovereign election.

It follows from the aseity of God that the sovereign, rational will of God is the sole origin of God’s agape love for mankind. As Carson puts it, God “does not ‘fall in love’ with us; he sets his affection on us.” This means that all divine love is predicated solely upon the eternal predestinating divine decree, independent of human action and/or response. Henry adds, “Divine love is here not destructive of reason but is intrinsically rational; man’s love for God, moreover, is not primarily emotional but volitional.” Thus, emotion is de-emphasized in favor of a rational will. Henry thus partially defines agape as “the incomparable love of the holy God seems incredible and it is in fact impossible to ground them in subpersonal or impersonal relationships or processes.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:156–57.

There is an “eternal interchange of holy love between the persons of the self-revealed Godhead.” Ibid., 5:172. “God is continually engaged in intercommunion, in internal self-revelation and holy love. This activity is not an addition to his nature; it is God’s essential being in tripersonal activity.” Ibid., 5:155–56. Cf. Carson, Difficult, 39.

Ibid., 61. Though the will is clearly emphasized Carson does caution that “Christian love cannot be reduced to willed altruism.” Ibid., 28. Nevertheless, he adds that “all of God’s emotions, including his love in all its aspects, cannot be divorced from God’s knowledge, God’s power, God’s will. If God loves, it is because he chooses to love; if he suffers, it is because he chooses to suffer. God is impassible in the sense that he sustains no ‘passion,’ no emotion, that makes Him vulnerable from the outside, over which he has no control, or which he has not foreseen.” Ibid., 60. Yet he claims that God’s love is not to “be dissolved in God’s will,” but is in complete accord with God’s will and thus “unlike ours,” his love does “not flare up out of control.” Ibid. C. F. H. Henry states, “Judaism and Christianity therefore expound a distinctive love relationship between God and the universe and between mankind and God. In the Old Testament God’s love centers in his choice of a people utterly unworthy of his love as a covenant community.” God, Revelation, 6:340. For a homiletical discussion of election love from a Reformed perspective see John MacArthur, The God Who Loves (Nashville, Tenn.: Word, 2001).

C. F. H. Henry, Notes, 111. Accordingly, “God wills to love men and he loves according to his own purpose of election, not according to the actions of men.” Morris, Testaments, 160. Further, “neither his love nor his hate is to be explained by the way men act.” Ibid., 159. Carson also emphasizes what he calls “God’s particular, effective, selecting love toward his elect.” Carson, Difficult, 18.

C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:341. This is expressed further when Henry states that sometimes agape “was used to convey the thought of love that expresses not merely an emotion but rather an act of will; here it borders on the New Testament sense.” Ibid., 6:346. Morris states, “It might be argued that God loves the people because there is something in them that delights him, but . . . it seems that God delights in this people simply because he chooses to do so.” Testaments, 93.
for rebellious sinners whose only destiny would otherwise be unmitigated doom.” Here God’s love is not merited or won by humans, but is totally gratuitous. God does not need to bestow love nor does he gain from the loving relationship, for he already lacks nothing. Love is beneficence, “bestowed not upon a worthy object and not for the personal advantage of the Lover but solely for the benefit of the undeserving recipient.” Hence, the love of God is quite comparable to the grace of God and the divine-human relationship is not reciprocal.

This emphasis on divinely willed love also relates to the theme of election that is prominent in this model; thus Morris states unequivocally that “predestination and love go together.” Thus, the love of God is defined as purely willed by God and uncaused by its object.

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143 C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 6:343. “And, most importantly, when God’s love-relationship to man is in view the New Testament uses *agape* almost entirely.” Ibid., 6:344. Morris defines that divine *agape* “is not a love of the worthy, and it is not a love that desires to possess. On the contrary, it is a love given quite irrespective of merit, and it is a love that seeks to give.” *Testaments*, 128. Any human response is also the work of God and not man according to divine election. Thus, “God produces love in his elect; it is certainly not their own achievement.” Ibid., 182. This is, of course, exactly what Nygren proposed when he said that man loves God “because God’s unmotivated love has overwhelmed him and taken control of him, so that he cannot do other than love God,” which is the “profound significance of the idea of predestination: man has not selected God, but God has elected man.” Ibid., 191. Cf. Nygren, *Agape*, 231.

144 “God loves not because the objects of his love are upright and winsome, but because he is a loving God. . . . The constancy of his love depends on what he is rather than on what they are.” Morris, *Testaments*, 12. C. F. H. Henry adds, “The *agapē* of God confers on the unworthy an undeserved value or boon.” *God, Revelation*, 6:342.


146 In fact C. F. H. Henry goes so far as to say that, “only where the love of God is discerned in terms of grace—in terms of a divinely provided redemption bestowed as unmerited divine favor—that the love of God is conceived aright; in every other religious or philosophical tradition, the divine love is misconstrued.” *Notes*, 108. “Here the Lover does not seek to satisfy some personal lack or to remedy an inner need, for God has none, but bestows a benefit on the one he gratuitously loves.” C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation*, 6:343. Morris sees such an emphasis on the gratuitousness of God’s love in the OT use of the *ahab* word group saying, “These words appear to signify love freely given, love given when there is no sense of obligation. When used to refer to God they imply his grace.” *Testaments*, 12. However, it is questionable whether such a case is semantically demonstrable. Nevertheless, the identification of divine love as self-giving or self-communication, is quite common. For instance, “love in God approaches very nearly the definition given by Charles Hodge of God’s quality of *goodness*, including ‘benevolence, love, mercy and grace.’” Kuhn, “God,” 53. Cf. Carson, *Difficult*, 41; Grudem, *Systematic*, 198; and Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2005), 102.

147 Morris, *Testaments*, 191. As Norman Henry Snaith remarks, “Either we must accept this idea of choice on the part of God with its necessary accompaniment of exclusiveness, or we have to hold a
Divine love is solely based on God’s sovereign decree independent of the nature of the object.\(^\text{148}\)

Although, in this model, all God’s love is solely a product of his free choice, the so-called “elect” are not the only objects of love.\(^\text{149}\) Moreover, God’s love does not diminish his righteousness or holiness, nor preclude his judgment.\(^\text{150}\) This concept of love builds on a concept of God as utterly transcendent and sovereign and is also very closely related to a soteriology of election and sheer gratuity in accord with the idea of volitional, unmotivated, and unaffected agape.\(^\text{151}\)

document of the love of God other than that which is biblical.” The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Epworth, 1944), 139. C. F. H. Henry states, “Yahweh’s sovereign love explains his choice of Jacob; had he wished, might have chosen Esau instead.” God, Revelation, 6:347. Henry adds, “The prophets, especially Hosea, Jeremiah and Isaiah, expound God’s love as the basic theme of his electing work.” Ibid., 6:345.

\(^\text{148}\) Morris thus states, “The constancy of his love depends on what he is rather than on what they are.” Testaments, 12. Packer adds, “The love of God is thus sovereign love, and must always be acknowledged as such.” “Love,” 280.

\(^\text{149}\) Carson, Difficult, 22. “If the love of God refers exclusively to his love for the elect, it is easy to drift toward a simple and absolute bifurcation.” Ibid., 22. For Geisler, God is “omnibenevolent.” Systematic, 367.

\(^\text{150}\) Thus C. F. H. Henry states, “God is love in the sovereign freedom and power of his eternal being, and as such has revealed himself definitively and decisively in Scripture and in Christ. While his election-love is free, nonetheless it is limited in application even as his effective call to the unregenerate is withdrawn at physical death.” God, Revelation, 6:349. In regard to God’s elected people in the OT, Morris points out that they will be punished and judged but “this does not mean that God has stopped loving the people.” Testaments, 24. This is because God’s love is not dependent upon the response of the people. He has sovereignly decreed to love them and nothing can thwart that election love. Interestingly, Morris does acknowledge the OT emphasis that “the Lord’s beloved must live as the beloved of the Lord. If they do not, they cut themselves off from the blessing that God’s love is always offering.” Ibid., 31. This would seem to have to be understood as the ability to cut oneself off from temporal blessing considering that God’s elective love is not dependent upon any condition. Thus he states, “We must clearly recognize that God’s love is unconditional. But it is also true that the God who loves his people loves certain qualities—for example, righteousness.” Ibid. However, God’s love is not dependent upon righteousness for Morris, God’s love “is not a love given to the worthy or to those God charitably assumes to be worthy; it is lavished on sinners.” Ibid., 131. Thus, it seems that ambiguity remains here.

\(^\text{151}\) The emphasis on the soteriological aspect of the God-world relationship is made clear when Carson states, “If the love of God is exclusively portrayed as an inviting, yearning, sinner-seeking, rather lovesick passion, we may strengthen the hands of Arminians, semi-Pelagians, Pelagians, and those more interested in God’s inner emotional life than in his justice and glory, but the cost will be massive . . . made absolute . . . . It steals God’s sovereignty from him and our security from us.” Difficult, 22.
The Impassibility of Divine Love

At the heart of the transcendent-voluntarist model of love is the emphasis that God acts, but is not acted upon. In this way, divine love is not elicited but is uncaused. Henry states, “God’s agape is comprehended in voluntary relationships that stem from his creative and compassionate personality. As represented in the Bible God’s love presupposes the exclusive voluntary initiative of the sovereign divine being whom no external power can manipulate.” Accordingly, God’s love is unmotivated (and certainly unmerited) by any external factors. Hence, since love is based on eternal decree God’s love is constant and steadfast. Accordingly, divine love is non-evaluative and human love toward God cannot bring him value. God’s

152 Thus Morris can state, “God loves not because the objects of his love are upright and winsome, but because he is a loving God.” Testaments, 12. Morris further points out that “two things about God’s love are repeatedly emphasized: it is constant, and it is exercised despite the fact that the people God loves are so unworthy.” Ibid., 100.

153 C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:349. Morris comments, “Men do not persuade God to be loving and gracious—he is loving and gracious by nature.” Testaments, 35. Packer defines four truths regarding agape, in contradistinction to storge, eros, and philia. Agape is (1) “a purpose of doing good to others.” (2) Agape is “measured by . . . what it does, and more specifically by what of its own it gives.” (3) Agape “does not wait to be courted, nor does it limit itself to those who at once appreciate it, but it takes the initiative in giving help . . . and finds its joy in bringing others benefit.” “Love,” 278. Thus, “agape means doing good to the needy, not to the meritorious, and to the needy however undeserving they might be.” (4) Agape is “precise about its object.” Ibid., 279. All of these define the sovereign, impassible, elective love of this model.

154 The love of God is the motivation of His redemptive work, but it is a purely internal motivation. C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:340. Thus Morris contends that “we must see ... in any attractiveness in those God loves.” Testaments, 135. God’s “love emanates from his own character; it is not dependent on the loveliness of the loved, external to himself.” Carson, Difficult, 63. Thus God could say, “I love you anyway, not because you are attractive, but because it is my nature to love.” Ibid.

155 C. F. H. Henry comments, “In interpersonal communion he maintains eternal fidelity in love. He is the steadfast God, not a vacillating sovereign.” God, Revelation, 5:13. “Because God is God he will never cease to love.” Testaments, 77. Morris stresses that “God’s love is firm and sure and steadfast, continuing no matter what happens.” Ibid., 19.

156 Morris states, “But we are all wrong if we think that we are conferring some great favor on God by coming to him. Agapē is not erōs. We do not bring anything valuable to God—in fact, we acquire value only because we are the recipients of his love.” Testaments, 142. Piper adds, “To be God is to be incapable of being a beneficiary of any person of power in the universe.” “How?” 11. Further, “‘God is love’ is this: it belongs to the fullness of God’s nature that he cannot be served but must overflow in service to his creation. The very meaning of God is a being who cannot be enriched but always remains the enricher.” Ibid., 11.
delight is not affected by the actions of human beings, thus whatever is done does not increase or
decrease God’s perfection or love.157 Anything otherwise might signify a lack or a need in God.
Furthermore, since God is not acted upon, human love for him does not affect him.158 In this
model, then, love does not include suffering. Rather divine suffering is ruled out by God’s
absolute immutability, and all kinds of theopaschitis are explicitly ruled out.159 Divine
impassibility is maintained despite the fact of the incarnation: “The premise that Christ who
suffered is true God and true man does not require the conclusion that God suffers.”160 The fact of
the “suffering servant” leads Henry to propose a nuanced (yet strained) form of impassibility in
order to simultaneously maintain the suffering incarnate and divine self-sufficiency.

157 “It seems that God delights in this people simply because he chooses to do so.” Morris,
Testaments, 93. Further, although “it might be argued that God loves the people because there is something
in them that delights him, but there is never an indication of what brings about this delight.” Ibid.

158 It is not clear what C. F. H. Henry means when he states that God’s “love is wounded,
moreover, when they [Israel] are disobedient to his covenant.” God, Revelation, 6:345. This seems to imply
the ability in God to be affected by the obedience or disobedience of His people. Most likely, however, in
the context of Henry’s ontology it cannot mean that God is actually externally affected but rather that this
“wound” is either metaphorical or inflicted by his own sovereign decree. Carson also briefly struggles with
this issue when he questions how one is to reconcile a love “which is clearly a vulnerable love that feels the
pain and pleads for repentance?” John, after all, clearly connects the two.” Difficult, 59. However, he
maintains that any vulnerability does not entail that God is “vulnerable from the outside.” Ibid., 60.

159 “God conceived primarily as our ‘fellow sufferer’ is not the immutable God of the Bible. All
talk of the final liberation of man—psychological, moral, spiritual, political—must end in a question mark
if God himself is a struggling, suffering deity.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:292. The idea of God
suffering is rejected due to what Henry considers “its express incompatibility with Scripture.” Ibid., 6:290.
To affirm “the subjectivity of God in the whole of Christ’s suffering’ and to make ‘God Himself . . . the
subject of the suffering in substitutionary self-surrender’ . . . seriously confuses the scriptural revelation of
Christ’s mediatorship.” Ibid., 6:291. Carson declares, “A God who is terribly vulnerable to the pain caused
by our rebellion is scarcely a God who is in control or a God who so perfect he does not, strictly speaking,
need us.” Difficult, 60. He states further that “at its best impassibility is trying to avoid a picture of a God
who is changeable, given over to mood swings, dependent upon his creatures. Our passions shape our
direction and frequently control our will. What shall we say of God?” Ibid., 49.

Divine Love in History

Divine election love manifests itself in history. God’s love is displayed in the unmerited favor, or grace, that is displayed toward his elect. God is the one who “stoops” in that he “condescends to go to the cross—to death on the cross—in holy covenantal love.” This stooping love is an act of his will; “God voluntarily forsaikes his sovereign exclusivity.” By stating the loving action of God in history, Henry draws the distinction between divine love in action and “the inflexible mathematical regularities of a causal network of nature that are considered benevolent or from the mechanical relationships of an impersonal divine Absolute manifest as nature and man.” Hence, “God freely engages in compassionate and merciful acts.” In the ultimate act of love, Christ exemplifies the infinitude of God’s love. In fact, he states that “Jesus Christ is the meaning of divine agape,” the ultimate manifestation of the love of God.

161 For instance, Henry sees divine love in the creation of man in the divine image, the ejection of Adam and Eve from the garden to avoid eternal sinfulness, the enmity placed between humans and Satan, the promise of victory, the sparing of Noah and his family, and the promise to never again destroy sinful man, among many others. Ibid., 6:346–48.
162 Ibid., 6:349. Henry makes “grace” a significant term for love, in accordance with Nygren’s conception. Beyond this he also refers to divine lovingkindness in terms of grace. Ibid.
163 Ibid., 5:15. In fact, the cross is the ultimate symbol of both the holiness and the love of God. C. F. H. Henry, Notes, 108.
164 C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:15. This is a “stooping that manifested the outgoing righteousness and love of God who stands.” Ibid.
165 Ibid., 6:349.
166 Ibid.
167 “That it is the God of infinite righteousness and love who goes to Calvary to salvage penitent humans is made manifest in word and life by the incarnate Christ. If Jesus does not overtly expound divine infinity in propositional form, he nonetheless exhibits divine infinity, as the Scripture affirms, in his own life by his servanthood.” Ibid., 5:233.
168 Ibid., 6:356. Cf. C. F. H. Henry, Himself, 13. “In manifesting his love in Christ God unleashed a floodtide of agapē into the sin-devastated cosmos.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 6:341. Further, Henry comments, “In the synoptic Gospels, Messiah Jesus is at once subject and object of God’s love. Divine agapē is presented not only in word, but also in the Word become flesh, in the deed supreme; the climactic evidence of the Father’s love is the person and mission of the Son... Christ Jesus is the supreme...
The Relationship of Divine Love to Ontological Suppositions

The transcendent-voluntarist conception of divine love, then, is bound up with the entirety of its ontology. This starting point of a transcendent, immutable, and self-sufficient God places precise limits upon the nature of divine love. For such a God, love cannot be immanent, love cannot change God, and God can have no need or desire of love. Divine aseity rules out divine desire while immutability requires that God be incapable of change or newness. Furthermore, God as perfect could have no deficiency, thus love can add no value or enrichment to the divine life. Accordingly, the thematic eros love is utterly ruled out being impossible according to the nature of deity. On the contrary, God as sovereign, rational will entails a sovereign, rational, and willed love; hence election love. This corresponds to the thematic (but not linguistic) agape. God’s love is thus limited to gratuitous benevolence without regard for its object. God is not at all affected by external reality or the decisions of creatures but orders all history and bestows love sovereignly and independently of external causes. Since God as omnicausal cannot be acted upon; there is no power that could impact divinity; God’s love is unaffected by spatio-temporal reality. In this way, God is impassible. Although the transcendent-voluntarist model insists that God has passions, is not indifferent to the world, and may have compassion and mercy, this does not mean that God can be impacted by other than God. Rather, all God’s “emotions” are caused purely by the eternal decree. Accordingly, God’s relationship to the world is an external one (the relativity required by an internal relation is impossible for a timeless, immutable God). God’s loving action, which is manifested in time and space, thus stems

gift of God’s love to fallen humanity.” Ibid., 6:347–48. Thus “God’s relationship to his covenant people reaches its climax in messianic redemption by suffering love.” Ibid., 6:345. In light of his ontology it is difficult to understand what Henry means here by the words “suffering love.”

Which itself is summed up by Henry thus, “The living self-revealing God is eternally self-sufficient, the voluntary creator of the universe and sovereign monarch of all.” Ibid., 6:67.

Accordingly, Henry considers it “unpersuasive that a deity conceived as self-giving love requires in its reciprocal interrelationships that the universe be an aspect of the divine life.” Ibid., 6:62.
only from the timeless providence of God according to the eternal decree (predestination). God is internally related only to himself as triune, and any potential need for love is fulfilled by intra-trinitarian love.\textsuperscript{171}

Consequently, divine love for other than God is superfluous to God, not only as needed but even as desired or valued. Once again, this fits with the absolute perfection of God, which entails that God is already utterly complete, thus there could be no new experience for God; all is eternally bound in the divine nature according to the eternal sovereign will of God. Moreover, since God is absolutely simple, divine love is but one aspect of describing the utterly unitary essence of God. Love is thus qualified by all other perfections of God, which together are actually merely the simplicity of the sovereign will of God. All history is determined according to God’s sovereignty and omnipotence. God is only the loving father of whom he chooses (election love). Divine love is not opposed to holiness, wrath, justice, and eschatological judgment/damnation—all of which take place purely according to the perfect sovereign will of God. In all this, the transcendent-voluntarist model of love, despite its significant and intentional breaks from classic theism in some areas, is nevertheless beholden to many of the classical axioms (though qualified) regarding divine ontology including transcendence, timelessness, simplicity, aseity, perfection, immutability, impassibility, omniscience, and omnipotence.

**The Immanent-Experientialist Model**

**Methodological Framework**

**Basic Methodological Tenets**

Hartshorne’s stated goal is to free the conception of God from self-contradictions and present a coherent and complementary picture such that God “can be conceived without logical absurdity, and as having such a character that an enlightened person may worship and serve him

\textsuperscript{171} “In classic Christian theism the Trinity of persons within the eternal Godhead serves this purpose [of divine love] very adequately. Depicting divine interpersonal relationships apart from trinitarian
with whole heart and mind.”

It must be noted from the outset that, in contrast to Henry, Hartshorne’s method does not include the requisite of compatibility with the Bible or any other revered text. Rather, his is a natural theology; nature “is the real ‘word of God’ concerning the general structure of the cosmos.” Though he has some regard for what he calls “religious doctrine” in distinction from purely metaphysical viewpoints, he assumes no infallible text but rather seeks the “main kernel of religious doctrine.” In so doing, Hartshorne is more than aware that all proofs will depend upon presuppositions. Despite this, he seeks to produce a meticulously rigorous logic of God, to “discover a logically complete classification of possible ideas about God.” Hartshorne’s method seems to be an eclectic one, utilizing aspects of empiricism in making experience a primary source of information while recognizing the doctrine buttresses the argument that God requires a universe as an object of his love.”


He states, “The validity of revelation, or of religious experience as furnishing knowledge, is not a necessary assumption of the argument of this book.” Ibid., xiv. Thus, although this study will later compare the biblical data to the models of love we must realize that Hartshorne made no attempt to follow such a method. Nevertheless, he allows the possibility that one working from revelation may contribute to the discussion saying, “A theology which in principle accepts revelation as affording knowledge to those able to assimilate it may have light to throw upon truths otherwise likely or perhaps certain to be missed or seen less clearly.” Ibid., 67. However, he frequently questions the epistemological reliability of revelation. See Hartshorne, Divine, 129, and idem, Omnipotence, 41.

He wants to find that kernel “without assuming the infallibility of scriptural texts or their complete consistency.” Hartshorne, Vision, 90–91. Yet, he does not “assume that religion has any kernel that makes sense.” Ibid., 91.

“All proofs for God depend upon conceptions which derive their meaning from God himself. They are merely ways of making clear that we already and once for all believe in God, though not always with clearness and consistency. With no belief in God no belief could be arrived at.” Hartshorne, Vision, 274.

He states, “We have painfully learned (all but one or two groups of philosophers) that the way to evaluate ideas is to deduce their consequences and compare these with the relevant data of experience!” Ibid., 25. However, Santiago Sia questions whether Hartshorne’s approach that assumes God “exemplifies
insufficiency of pure empiricism. Neither does he rule out “a priori analysis,” but for him this refers not to “analysis unrelated to experience, but analysis related to the strictly general traits of experience.” Thus, everything may be judged by “metaphysical necessity or empirical facts.” Accordingly, Hartshorne employs the mutually correcting “criterion of consistency” and that of “adequacy to experience” and what he calls the “ethical sense.” He contends that such rigorous analysis will leave only one coherent conception of God.

Hartshorne posits that “God is the one individual conceivable a priori. It is in this sense that concepts applied to him are analogical rather than simply univocal, in comparison to their

the metaphysical set-up” does not beg the question. “To assert that it [empirical knowledge] also helps us to know God is actually to pre-define the applicability of the metaphysical categories to include God. Instead of showing conclusively that it is indeed God we are talking about, Hartshorne’s metaphysical route is reducible to an explanation of how we can know God, provided God is regarded as coming within metaphysics.” Santiago Sia, “Charles Hartshorne on Describing God,” Modern Theology 3 (1987): 199.


Ibid., Vision, 29.

He contends that the traditional error of pitting one against the other resulted in atheism (pure empiricism) and classic theism (pure rationalism). The resultant classic theism disallowed contingency while including only necessity whereas Hartshorne’s method allows for a necessary and contingent divinity, as shall be seen. “If we exclude contingent knowledge from theology, we thereby deny contingent aspects to God; if we exclude a priori knowledge, we exclude non-contingent or necessary aspects.” Ibid., 61. He states, “Now the only type of theism, which is compatible with the validity (in theology) of both methods, empirical and metaphysical, is second-type theism; for it alone admits contingent features in the necessary being.” Ibid., 64. Accordingly, he assumes the adequacy of the “self-evident formal structures of pure logic and mathematics” and the “data of experience so vivid that . . . they are universally admitted to occur.” Ibid., 62. For a further discussion of method see Charles Hartshorne, Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method (London: S.C.M., 1970).

Ibid., Vision, 125. The priority of experience is clear when he states, “Our only reason for any conclusion is some form of experience, and the harmony of secular experience with religious (as yielding the idea of God) is surely a reason for increased confidence in both.” Ibid., 337. Though he allows ethical judgment to play a large role he points out that “we have an independent check on our ethical insight—the logic of metaphysical concepts; and we have an independent check on our metaphysical reasoning—our ethical sense.” Ibid., 144.

He maintains that “we must strive for formally exhaustive divisions, since to reject at the outset as patently absurd, or to overlook altogether, a formally possible view is to forget that all the views but one will prove patently absurd when their pretended meaning is adequately scrutinized.” Ibid., 82.
other applications.” With this in mind, he determines the nature of God by numerous methods, including the way of analogy. He also favors the way of eminence, for example: “Whatever is good in the creation is, in superior or eminent fashion, ‘analogically not univocally,’ the property of God.” The ways of analogy and of eminence are in contrast to the traditionally predominant way of negation, which Hartshorne considers a great historical error. He contends that “whereas the way of eminence, if consistently executed, treats the categories impartially, the way of negation plays favorites among the categories.” This consistent execution is posited to function by conceiving God “by analogy with our virtues . . . our other-regarding desires, and habits of acting upon them.” Thus, Hartshorne’s method favors “other-regarding” categories, anticipating what he will later define as love itself.

The Polemic against Classic Theism

Hartshorne categorically rejects classic theism, considering it a total failure in maintaining any meaningful relationship between God and the world. He thus frames his

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184 Hartshorne, Divine, 31. Among their other applications are symbolical (or material) and literal (or formal). See Charles Hartshorne, The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1962).

185 Hartshorne, Vision, 59. He cautions against the influence of anthropomorphism while concurrently realizing that the classic reaction, that of negating so-called “human traits,” was itself a great error. He states, “We should be willing to give careful attention to religious anthropomorphism, as well as to philosophical attempts to transcend it, without too much initial confidence that either one, in traditional form, can be entirely accepted.” Ibid., 88–89.

186 Hartshorne, Divine, 77. “Thus knowledge, purpose, life, love, joy, are deficiently present in us, eminently and analogically present in God.” Ibid. Sia explains that for Hartshorne “God is symbolically ruler, literally necessary, but analogically conscious and loving.” “Hartshorne,” 195. However, elsewhere he contends that there is at least some sense of univocal meaning. For Hartshorne, “the formal [or literal] predicates of deity are not exclusively negative, and accordingly, some positive properties of deity can be connoted by non-symbolic designations.” Hartshorne, Logic, 134–35. For “if there is in no sense any univocal meaning then theology is pure sophistry.” Hartshorne, Vision, 194.


188 The alternative is “conceiving him by analogy with our vices, for example, our most truly and deeply ‘selfish’ wish for self-sufficiency.” Hartshorne, Reality, 142.

189 He states, “They made God, not an exalted being, but an empty absurdity, a love which is
system of theology in direct contrast to classic theism, which “turns upon such terms as perfection, infinity, absoluteness, self-dependence, pure actuality, immutability.” Leaving no doubt regarding his stance, Hartshorne states, “I am convinced that ‘classical theism’ (as much Greek as Christian, Jewish, or Islamic) was an incorrect translation of the central religious idea into philosophical categories.” A major factor in this error is the assumption of negative theology. Hartshorne contends that while some attributes of divinity derived from religious experience may be preserved, these must be extracted from the “non-religious tenets” of classical philosophy that have dominated the last two millennia with “an insufficiently analyzed notion of perfection and a preference for materialistic (and prescientific) rather than truly spiritual conceptions.”

simply not love, a purpose which is no purpose, a will which is no will, a knowledge which is no knowledge.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 31. See Shubert Miles Ogden, “Must God Be Really Related to Creatures?” Process Studies 20 (1991): 54–56, and idem, The Reality of God and Other Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 46; Charles Hartshorne, “Redefining God,” American Journal of Theology & Philosophy 22 (2001): 107–13; and D. D. Williams, “The New Theological Situation,” ThTo 24 (1968): 446, and idem, “How Does God Act? An Essay in Whitehead’s Metaphysics,” in Process and Divinity: The Hartshorne Festschrift: Philosophical Essays Presented to Charles Hartshorne (ed. E. Freeman and W. L. Reese; LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1964). For example, “knowledge seems to imply an internal distinction between subject and object—but God is said to be simple. Volition seems to imply change—but God is changeless. Purpose seems to imply a present lack of something—but God is perfect; and for him there is no contrast between present intent and future realization. Love involves sensitivity to the joys and sorrows of others, participation in them—but we cannot infect God with our sufferings since he is cause of everything and effect of nothing), and our joys can add nothing to the immutable perfection of God’s happiness. Though in religion one speaks of ‘serving’ God, in reality, according to technical theology, one can do nothing for God, and our worst sins harm God as little as the finest acts of sainthood can advance him.” Hartshorne, Vision, 114.

190 Hartshorne, Vision, 5. It should be noted, however, that Hartshorne is often criticized for his treatment of classical theism. For instance, although appreciative and somewhat sympathetic to Hartshorne, W. Norris Clarke contends that Hartshorne “systematically misunderstands—to my mind—some of the key metaphysical issues which St. Thomas is trying to come to grips with.” “Charles Hartshorne’s Philosophy of God: A Thomistic Critique,” in Charles Hartshorne’s Concept of God: Philosophical and Theological Responses (ed. S. Sia; Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1990), 103.

191 Hartshorne, Divine, vii. Of Aquinas he states, “[Though] his doctrine was shipwrecked on certain rocks of contradiction, has he not left us an admirable chart showing the location of the rocks!” Ibid., xii. For D. D. Williams, “The result is that the active, temporal, creating, suffering side of God’s being does not come sufficiently into view. It cannot do so because it contradicts the absolutist doctrine of perfection.” Spirit, 100.

192 Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 4. These include timelessness, foreknowledge, impassivity, creation ex nihilo, simplicity, impassibility, and the lack of will related to “anticipatory and consummatory
Perhaps the most troubling aspect of classic theism for Hartshorne is its seeming incongruity with any real relatedness of God to the world, considering it to be “metaphysical snobbery toward relativity, dependence, or passivity.”\(^1\) Such widespread and influential shortcomings have excluded the possibility of God’s enjoyment of the world, since he must “contain actually all possible value” and “being perfect, he cannot change.”\(^2\) The outgrowth of such errors, according to Hartshorne was that “the purely absolute God was, by logical implication, conceived as a thing, not a subject or a person; as ignorant, not conscious and knowing, as indifferent, not interested in things and their relations.”\(^3\) Most important for this study, he contends that classic theism ruled out the possibility of the genuine love of God: “Since love involves dependences upon the welfare of the beloved, and in so far is a passion, God, being passionless, wholly active, is necessarily exempt from it” in classic theism.\(^4\)

**Ontological Framework**

In Hartshorne’s system the God-world relationship is referred to as panentheism (literally “all in God”) meaning that God is essentially related to the world such that God includes the experience.” Hartshorne, *Vision*, 95. It is his contention that such ideas, along with utter immutability, omnipotence which excludes all other power, and either absolute transcendence or absolute immanence, have fueled rejection of theism in general as well as obscured the foundations of “such attributes as love or goodness.” Ibid., 97. For Ogden, classical theism combines “the conceptions of God both of classical metaphysics and of Holy Scripture” and thus posits a God “without real internal relations to the contingent beings of which he is the ground” though also predicing “of God the personalistic perfections found in Scripture, all of which entail . . . real relations.” *Reality*, 140.

\(^1\) Hartshorne, *Divine*, 50. Hartshorne further contends that classic theism “is one-sided, meager, incomplete in its use of experience to arrive at the nature of God.” *Vision*, 125. “It simply denies certain all-pervasive, infinitely fundamental aspects of life—change, variety, complexity, receptivity, sympathy, suffering, memory, anticipation—as relevant to the idea of God.” Ibid.

\(^2\) “From the assumption, God is a purely actual, impassive being, the absolutely independent cause upon which all other things depend, it follows that he contains actually all possible value, or is perfect. Being perfect, he cannot change; possessing all ‘perfections,’ he must know all things by an immutable act above time; he must have power, will, love, all the truly positive attributes in maximal degree.” Ibid., 96.

\(^3\) Hartshorne, *Divine*, 17. Thus, “a well-meaning attempt to purify theology anthropomorphisms purified it of any genuine, consistent meaning at all.” Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, 29.
world and yet is more than the world.\textsuperscript{197} In order to better understand divine love in the context of the God-world relationship, it is important to distinguish between the entities of the relationship (God and the world) and the relationship itself (panentheism).\textsuperscript{198} Thus, this section will first consider Hartshorne’s process ontology of the world (panpsychism), then his divine ontology (dipolar theism), followed by the metaphysics of the relationship between the two (panentheism).

**The Process Ontology of the World**

For Hartshorne, all reality consists of creative minds relating to one another as subjects and objects (panpsychism) within a pantemporal process of events.\textsuperscript{199} Becoming, or “process,” is the basic form of reality in direct opposition to the supposedly static ontology of classic theism.\textsuperscript{200} 

\textsuperscript{196} Hartshorne, *Vision*, 115.

\textsuperscript{197} Hartshorne defines panentheism as “an appropriate term for the view that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative items, and yet, taken as an actual whole, includes all relative items.” Ibid., 89. God thus transcends the world in being more than the world but not in the classical sense of total otherness or distance. This God-world relationship should not be confused with classic theism which posits God as wholly other than the world nor with pantheism which makes God and the world identical. The world is not identical or equivalent to God.

\textsuperscript{198} As shall be seen, the nature of the God-world relationship in Hartshorne’s metaphysics is interdependent such that God and the world cannot exist separate from one another. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity the two may be distinguished analytically.

\textsuperscript{199} The nature of panpsychism will be unpacked further below.

This process ontology is directly contrary to timeless substance ontology such that all reality is temporal and ever-changing. Thus, rather than substances enduring through time, minds exist in successive occasions, or events. In this thoroughly temporalistic ontology, “reality is the succession of units” or “experient occasions.” Time is thus the succession of moments (units) and all reality is consecutive moments consisting of spatio-temporal events. The present is internally related to the past such that the past is included in the present and in that sense permanent. All actuality is thus temporal, and thus continually changing. In this way becoming is “cumulative”; each instant includes the past as relata and partially determines the present.

201 Hartshorne’s “social theory, is temporalistic, the denial of any notion of a purely timeless or immutable existent.” Reality, 134. D. D. Williams states, “Time, freedom, and historical existence are the central realities of our self-understanding.” Spirit, 5. Likewise Ogden writes of “a reality which is through-and-through temporal and social.” Reality, 64.

202 “Events are the final nouns.” Charles Hartshorne, “Strict and Genetic Identity: An Illustration of the Relation of Logic to Metaphysics,” in Structure, Method, and Meaning: Essays in Honor of Henry M. Sheffer (ed. P. Henle; New York: Liberal Arts, 1951), 251. This may be called event pluralism; see Hartshorne, Creative, 173–204. The “absolute identity of the concrete or particular is given in an event or occasion, not in a thing enduring through time” or substance. Hartshorne, Reality, 102.

203 Charles Hartshorne, “Personal Identity from A to Z,” Process Studies 2 (1972): 210. Such experient occasions are also called “unit realities.” He considers these “analogous . . . to momentary human experiences.” Ibid.

204 This theory of time finds its basis in Whitehead’s “epochalism” which Hartshorne also calls “temporal atomism or chronological pluralism.” Charles Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” in A History of Philosophical Systems (ed. V. Ferm; New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 450. “The mathematical continuum of point-instants is the system of all possible divisions of space-time; the atomic-epochal units are the actual divisions at a given moment.” Ibid.

205 Thus previous events are data for present events. This is his asymmetrical theory of time: the past is externally related and “thus the present may contain the past as its relatum without thereby infecting the past with its own presentness.” Hartshorne, Divine, 69. This is based on Whitehead’s doctrine of prehension. Hartshorne sums it up thus: every “occasion has intrinsic reference (somewhat as in Peirce’s theory of reaction) to preceding occasions, with which it has some degree of sympathetic participation, echoing their qualities, but with a new over-all quality of its own as it reacts to them.” Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 451. Thus, “once an event has occurred it is a permanent item in reality.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 35.

206 Hartshorne comments, “Prior experiences . . . are taken into and thus qualify subsequent experiences.” “Personal,” 210.

207 Ibid., 211.
eternal present where being is static. Accordingly, for Hartshorne, becoming is reality and being is an aspect of reality.

The nature of Hartshorne’s “actual entities” or “experient occasions” will be clarified by considering his ontology of panpsychism, which refers to the view that all things (even at the subatomic level) consist of minds (souls) or “units of experiencing.” Panpsychism is a form of idealism that opposes materialism yet differentiates itself from simple idealism in that it supports the reality of the “spatio-temporal world.” Minds, of which all reality consists, function both as subjects and objects relating to one another in a social process. However, the fact that all reality consists of minds should not be taken to mean that every object of human perception is sentient. Rather, all perceived things are actually compounds of “smaller [sentient] individuals.” There are two kinds of compounds, aggregates and compound individuals. Aggregates are not sentient since they do not have a mind (soul), whereas compound individuals have an emergent mind such that the compound individual is conscious, including other

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208 In Hartshorne’s words it is “the view that all things, in all their aspects, consist exclusively of ‘souls,’ [or minds] that is, of various kinds of subjects, or units of experiencing, with their qualifications, relations, and groupings or communities.” “Panpsychism,” 442.

209 Hartshorne even refers to this as “panpsychical realism” as well as “realistic idealism” to emphasize the break from traditional forms of idealism. Ibid. Nevertheless, Hartshorne’s system is not realism in the traditional sense. “The constituents of this world are, for panpsychists, just as real as human minds or as any mind.” Ibid., 442. At the same time he contends that “no one has proved or can possibly prove . . . that there is any ‘matter,’ apart from social terms and relations.” Hartshorne, Divine, 29. Moreover, “it is naive to suppose that merely because molecules, atoms, etc., are invisibly small, they cannot be social beings, in relation to their neighbors, or their constituents, or both.” Hartshorne, Reality, 36. Thus, “mere matter as such is abstract or collective, and that only panpsychism can give content to it as concrete and singular.” Ibid., 101.

210 These minds are themselves extended. Therefore, “extendedness is then not a property capable of distinguishing ‘mere matter’ from mind, since minds, as entering into communal relations with one another, must exhibit extendedness. A mind, according to most panpsychists, is not simply outside the space-time world. It is also not at a mere point in that world, and nothing remains than that it be in an area of the world.” Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 445–46.

individuals but not thereby removing their (or its own) individuality. As shall be seen, in Hartshorne’s system, God is the supreme compound individual.

Hartshorne’s panpsychism is further explained in terms of subject-object relations where every soul or mind functions both as subject and object, in different respects. This is understood within the context of four theses, which attempt a synthesis of realism and idealism. First, the “principle of objective independence,” which maintains that “an ‘object,’ or that of which a particular subject is aware, in no degree depends upon that subject.” Yet, the object is “within” its subject “for relation-to-O includes O.” This is the theory of internal relations, which will be discussed below. Second, the “principle of subjective dependence” means that “a ‘subject,’ or whatever is aware of anything, always depends upon the entities of which it is aware, its objects.” In this way, knowledge is by nature relative. The third principle is that of “universal objectivity,” which states, “Any entity must be (or at least be destined to become) object for some subject or other.” Fourth, the “principle of universal subjectivity” teaches that

212 Here I use the term emergent to mean more than the sum of the parts, in contrast to a reductive view of mind. I do not, however, mean to imply that mind emerges from matter. For a further discussion of the compound individual see Hartshorne, “Compound.”

213 The first two are beholden to realism whereas the last two are related to idealism, with the fourth specifically referring to panpsychism. Though these four theses are at times considered contradictory, Hartshorne considers them to be “complementary or mutually supporting.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 71.

214 Ibid., 70.

215 Hartshorne, *Divine*, 112. See the discussion of internal and external relations below.

216 Hartshorne, * Reality*, 70. Thus, “determinate subject-object relations are found in subjects, not in objects. Subjectivity as such is relativity, objectivity as such is nonrelativity.” Hartshorne, *Divine*, 110. “Nothing is so variously relative, dependent, as the knower.” Ibid., 8.

217 “Minds, as knowers, must somehow contain reference, relation, to their objects, or they are not knowers and (at the limit) not minds; but the entities which certain minds know and call their objects need not have this status in themselves.” Ibid., 105.

218 Hartshorne, *Reality*, 70. Hartshorne explains, “So it may be held that any entity must be known by some subject or other, even though being known by any particular subject is external to the entity.” Hartshorne, *Divine*, 108. He extends this, saying that since “any object is constitutive of the knower, then one’s own being-known, so far as one knows this, is constitutive.” Ibid., 124.
“any concrete entity is a subject, or set of subjects; hence, any other concrete entity of which a
subject, S1, is aware, is another subject or subjects (S2; or S2, S3, etc.).” These four tenets
amount to Hartshorne’s panpsychism, or psychicalism, which he otherwise refers to as the “social
theory of reality.” Thus, all knowers are relative. As shall be seen, God is the supreme, cosmic
mind or soul; and as supreme knower he is supremely relative. Panpsychism thus maintains the
reality of the spatio-temporal world and that the world consists of creative minds.

In Hartshorne’s system every mind is creative, meaning that it possesses some degree of
freedom so that even when acted upon (limited) options remain open for reaction. In other
words, causes are the necessary condition, but never the sufficient conditions, for effects; effects
are not merely the simple result of their causes but each “mind” has the ability to freely react to a
cause within a limited number of possibilities; thus individuals “can only be influenced, they
cannot be sheerly coerced.” In this way every mind is a co-creator of reality such that the whole
world is interdependent; each mind contributes to the reality of all others. In this way, each

219 Hartshorne, Reality, 70. A concrete entity is any particular thing in the actual world, even at the
subatomic level.

220 Ibid., 71. For an early presentation of Hartshorne’s view see Charles Hartshorne, Beyond
importance of panpsychism to Hartshorne’s ontology cannot be overstated. He states, “I agree that the
falsity of panpsychism implies that of much else in my philosophy.” “Could There Have Been Nothing? A


222 All minds have “some degree of freedom or self-determination, even in the lowest orders of
psyches.” Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 371. Thus, “all happenings are to some extent by chance.”
Hartshorne, Reality, 106. “Novelty and freedom are fundamental to life and to all harmony.” Ibid., 51.

223 Hartshorne, Vision, xvi. “The notion of cause as completely determining its effects is a
metaphorical confusion of logical consequence with temporal sequence.” Hartshorne, Divine, 39.

224 Thus every mind contains “a spark of freedom and creativity.” Ibid., 146. “We make each other
what we are, in greater or lesser degree.” Ibid., 29. This interdependence is predicated on process
philosophy’s doctrine of universal creativity wherein “To be is to create.” Hartshorne, Creative, 272.
mind is partially dependent and independent, partially determined and self-determined. Accordingly, each mind plays a part (though by no means an equal part) in interdependently forming each moment of reality (co-creative). This is an indeterministic, non-coercive, creative synthesis of social relativity.

This creative synthesis is predicated upon the relationships of minds to one another—Hartshorne’s crucial theory of internal and external relations. First, we should recognize that relations are identified by Hartshorne in terms of feeling: “That all is psychic means, all is feeling, in reaction with other feeling.” In fact, although it seems to be an imprecise classification, feeling even includes “all the qualitative content of sensation, often classed under cognition.” Minds function as both subject and objects of feeling. As subject a mind is internally related to its object so that its relata is actually included in, and constitutive of, the subject. Thus, an internal relation changes and affects the subject (feeler) of that relation and is inclusive of its object (that which is felt). On this basis, Hartshorne summarizes, “To include

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225 Ibid., 146. Moreover, change is pervasive throughout all concrete actuality such that “with each change we have a new concrete reality, not simply the identical reality with new qualities.” Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, 104.

226 Here social is being used technically to describe minds (subhuman, human, and divine) relating to one another and should not be confused with human social relations.

227 Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 449. Further, “Feelings react with other feelings, but in this reaction is involved some degree of participation in the qualities of these other feelings. A feeling feels the feelings to which it reacts. Feelings echo to some extent the feelings around them, and this is the basis of the possibility of relationships among realities by which they constitute a world of things relevant to one another.” Ibid., 450. Thus “the unity of actuality is given as a felt unity, and its laws are laws of feeling.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 100. Thus feelings are relations between minds, whether immediate and distinct or mediated and indistinct, and this is the basis of all reality.

228 Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 449.

229 Thus “the entity to which the relation is internal is a concrete whole of which the externally related entities are abstract aspects.” Hartshorne, *Vision*, 235. He describes this by stating that the subject must thus be conceived as “‘outside’ the object, as it were surrounding it but not penetrating it.” Hartshorne, *Divine*, 112. For Hartshorne, even human subjects include the objects of their knowledge, though in an imperfect manner. Ibid., 143–44. He states, “If it seems otherwise, this is because of the inadequacy of human personal relations, which is such that the terms are not conspicuously and clearly contained in their subjects.” Ibid., 144. See the discussion of metaphysical contraries below.
relations is to include their terms. Hence to know all is to include all.” On the other hand, a mind functioning as object is externally related such that it is unaffected by the relation. Hartshorne defines that an external relation is “such that the entity [mind] said to be externally related could have been the same had the relations not obtained.” Such subject-object relations are the building blocks of the creative synthesis of social relativity. It should be noted that this doctrine of internal and external relations does not mean that each entity is included in every other entity as a whole, but rather what is known in relation is constitutive of the knower (the subject) without affecting or changing that which is known (the object). There is thus a “mutual immanence of individuals” as socially related, yet this “does not depreciate individual distinctness” but recognizes individuality and distinction between minds, including between God and other minds. Thus every mind functions both as subject and object (according to Hartshorne’s principles of universal subjectivity and universal objectivity) and as such has internal and external relations. All reality is accordingly an interdependent creative synthesis of partially determined and self-determined minds interacting as both subjects and objects in process.

The Divine Ontology of Dipolar Theism

Having considered Hartshorne’s ontology of the world (panpsychism), I will now direct attention to his divine ontology (dipolar theism). Importantly, God is not exempt from the

230 Hartshorne, Divine, 76. This means that “if there is any wholly genuine description of A which entails every genuine description of B, then and only then A is relative to B; but this means that every state description affirming A also affirms B. If there is no wholly genuine description of A entailing every genuine description of B, then and only then is A nonrelative to B; but this means that at least some state description affirms A and denies B.” Ibid., 107.


232 Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 443. Hartshorne comments, “Individuals generally are not simply outside each other (the fallacy of ‘simple location’) but in each other.” Ibid.
metaphysical tenets of panpsychism. Rather, God himself is a mind, but not just any mind. He is the supreme mind, also subject to indeterministic, relativistic, spatio-temporalistic panpsychism. God is not identical to the world but distinct from it, though essentially related. God is partially dependent and independent, partially determined and self-determined; the eminently moved mover of all. He is the all-knowing feeler of all feelings, the supreme mind whose knowledge is perfectly adequate to the state of the world. Such relational characteristics will be unpacked when the discussion moves specifically to the God-world relationship. However, the divine nature must first be discussed since it is important to first understand the differentiation that Hartshorne makes in his usage of absolutist terminology.

Hartshorne’s absolutist terminology of perfection

Hartshorne makes extensive use of terms such as absolute, perfection, necessary, eminent, et al. However, Hartshorne qualifies these terms in a manner that differentiates his usage from the traditional meanings associated with classic theism. Hartshorne finds much of this terminology to be riddled with ambiguities and thus he calls for precision. The key to Hartshorne’s solution to such rampant ambiguity is his re-consideration of the “idea of infinity or...

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231 Ibid., 442. In other words, “‘within’ does not contradict ‘other.’” Hartshorne, Divine, 99–100.

234 The nature of this essential relation will be discussed when attention is turned to the God-world relationship (panentheism).

235 For instance, the very “uniqueness of God is his maximality.” Hartshorne, Vision, 231. He emphasizes perfection as well as the necessity of God’s existence. “God is the only unconditionally ‘necessary’ existent. What is unconditionally necessary in God, however, is not all of God, though it is unique to him.” Hartshorne, Divine, 87. Yet, he also points out that “necessity is a negative or at least an abstract conception.” Ibid., 33.

236 He states, “If there is to be argument about the reality, or even the meaningful conceivability, of an absolute or perfect being, we ought to have before us a systematic analysis of the rationally possible variations or analogous forms implied by the meanings, or at least pseudo-meanings” of such terms. Hartshorne, Reality, 111. Although Hartshorne himself utilizes them extensively, he nevertheless points out “how hopelessly ambiguous phrases like ‘perfect being,’ ‘finite God,’ ‘absolute,’ and the like” are. Hartshorne, Vision, 10. For him, “such insufficiently examined concepts . . . sidetracked theology.” Hartshorne, Reality, 66.
perfection.” He accepts the traditional view that God must be perfect, but he does not accept the traditional meaning of such perfection, finding it “dangerously loaded with the connotation, complete, therefore unincreasable, therefore without relations.” Hartshorne seeks to overcome this traditional notion of absolute perfection that excludes growth by noting three possibilities, specifically that God may be perfect in all, some, or no ways. That God is perfect in all ways (absolute, complete, self-sufficient, etc.) is the conception of classic theism, whereas the position that God is perfect in no ways is atheism. He finds the possibility of complete or absolute actualization, meaning that all of the infinite potentialities are actualized, to be impossible because not all potentialities are compossible. Hartshorne avoids these views by positing that God is “perfect in some ways,” meaning “perfect in one sense and capable of increase in value in another”; this is called surrelativism. The nomenclature of surrelativism, however, emphasizes

237 “Perhaps this idea is ambiguous, perhaps there is a sense in which God should be conceived as perfect, another sense in which perfection cannot apply to God, because (it may be) this sense involves an absurdity or, in other words, is really nonsense.” Hartshorne, Vision, 6.

238 Hartshorne, Reality, 114. He goes on, “Such an idea, however legitimate, is not that of superiority. Non-reflexive transcendence is what has generally been called perfection, with the unproved assumption that to be best among possible beings is necessarily to be in the best (or only) possible state of this best being.” Ibid.

239 Hartshorne thus presupposes as “a minimal definition, God is an entity somehow superior to other entities.” Vision, 6.

240 There simply cannot “be a concrete maximum of attributes like goodness, knowledge, or power.” Ibid., 89. Hence, God is only potentially absolute, not actually absolute since the actualization of all potentialities simultaneously is impossible. Furthermore, “God alone is ‘complete’ in potency. But completeness in actuality (‘pure actuality’) is meaningless, and the attempt to conceive it only results in a concept whose object must be less than the least of actualities because it is not actual at all.” Ibid., 244. Cf. Hartshorne, Divine, 144.

241 Hartshorne, Vision, 158. Cf. Hartshorne, Reality, 156. Hartshorne contends that the primary mistake of tradition was overlooking the categories of “all,” “some,” or “none.” Vision, 33. Cf. Hartshorne, Reality, 112. Thus, there are only three options: first, God is absolutely “perfect and complete” and thus unable to change or “in any way increase in value” the God of classic theism. Ibid., 155. Third, is the view that God is “not in any respect entirely perfect” or atheism. Ibid. The second view, Hartshorne’s model, “is that he is perfect and complete in some respects, but not in all.” Hartshorne, Reality, 155. For Hartshorne, the first view must be dismissed because it leaves God incapable of relationship and the third must be rejected because it proposes a God who is in no way perfect.
that God may increase in value and thus surpass himself, though no others can ever surpass him. Thus he is the self-surpassing surpasser of all.

In this way, Hartshorne defines God’s perfection as perfection in all ways that are meaningful and logically compatible (way of eminence) such that God “has everything in the highest degree which is capable of a highest degree.” However, not only possibility but also admiration comes into play such that God has “all properties that deserve admiration” in “the highest degree admirable.” Of course, admirability is to some extent a subjective category. Beyond the risk of subjectivity, the magnitude of the ambiguity surrounding these conceptions, despite Hartshorne’s modifications, begs the question whether one ought to begin by speaking of God in terms of philosophical perfection at all. He answers, “There is need for perfection, that we may have a cause infinitely worthy of our devotion. For though we may make reservations about all ordinary causes, there must be a deeper cause that we wholly accept (even though we cannot sharply formulate it).” Of course this assumes that perfection of this or any other type is valuable and thus a requisite for a conception of a God worthy of worship. As shall be seen below the commitment to this notion, even with Hartshorne’s modifications, entails other ontological conclusions.

242 Hartshorne, Vision, 97. He determines what is capable of a highest degree by “knowing otherwise of the attributes” and that “they are not deficiencies.” Ibid. He states, “Only essentially negative predicates need or should be absolutely negated of the perfect.” Ibid., 122. Of course the question remains as to the precise differentiation of positive and negative predicates.

243 Hartshorne, Divine, 42.

244 To be sure, Hartshorne tweaks the definitions. However, it is not certain that he escapes from all of the classic presuppositions and/or connotations.

245 Hartshorne, Vision, 158.
The divine nature

God is the supreme mind who functions both as the supreme subject and the supreme object. This is a partial description of God’s dipolar nature or dual transcendence. The dipolar conception of God does not mean that God has a polarized nature but, rather, the same God as supreme mind eminently exemplifies the admirable characteristics of both poles. These ontologically distinguishable yet ontically inseparable poles may be labeled according to numerous metaphysical contraries including: absolute-relative, abstract-concrete, potential-actual, necessary-contingent, and universal-particular, among others.

In Hartshorne’s thinking, God must be supremely admirable, thus having “all properties that deserve admiration.” It will not do to simply attribute to God only the traditional, absolutist categories; this was the mistake of classical theism, which subjectively assumed the superiority of one pole. In direct opposition to this tendency, Hartshorne conceives God as having all admirable properties (as far as compossible) in an eminent manner. For Hartshorne, metaphysical contraries such as necessary and contingent, infinite and finite, absolute and relative, potential and actual, and others may be attributed to the same being (though not in the same sense), and there are estimable and inestimable manifestations of both poles. Here the modification of absolutist language, specifically the categories of all, some, or none become integral to understanding Hartshorne’s view of the divine nature and his application of the

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246 The meaning of God as supreme subject and supreme object will be discussed further below.

247 Hartshorne favored the term dual transcendence later in his career. Although he uses the terms synonymously, it seems he wanted to avoid some of the potentially dualistic connotations of dipolarity.

248 Hartshorne, Divine, 42.


250 The term “compossible” here and elsewhere is used to mean possible in the light of all other relevant factors.

251 Hartshorne, Creative, 268.
metaphysical contraries to the divine nature. The application of absolute in some ways, for instance, leads to the conclusion that God is “unsurpassable except by itself.” This modifies perfection from simple illimitability or “completeness,” to “unsurpassability or maximal value in any respect in which ‘better’ and ‘worse’ are possible, or as the property of that which, in a given dimension of value, could not be better than it is.” This is what he calls “transcendent excellence.” Thus God is perfect in some ways (dipolar theism), but not perfect as utterly complete or infinitely actualized (classic theism). Accordingly, God is not accurately described in monopolar terms where only one aspect of the metaphysical contraries is affirmed. Rather, God must be described in dipolar terms since he eminently exemplifies the admirable characteristics of both poles.

Further application of the categories (all, some, or none) to the metaphysical contraries of necessity and contingency leads to the conclusion that God may be necessary in some ways and yet also contingent. For instance, Hartshorne posits that God is a necessary being, though only in respect to existence. In other words, that God exists is necessary but the particularities of his existence are contingent. Whereas the divine existence is necessary, there are also accidents,

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253 Hartshorne, Vision, 124. “Consequently, if we are to conceive of the truly perfect One, the One who is eminently good, it can hardly be otherwise than as the supreme exemplification of these very ideas, as himself the supremely social and temporal reality . . . the eminently relative One, whose openness to change contingently on the actions of others is literally boundless.” Schubert Miles Ogden, “Toward a New Theism,” in A Colloquium on the Credibility of ‘God’ (New Concord, Ohio: Muskingum College, 1967), 16.

254 Hartshorne, Divine, 21. Thus “‘divine relativity’ . . . includes all the divine absoluteness (or eternity) that logical analysis shows to be conceivable without sheer contradiction.” Ibid., ix.

255 Of course this raises the question of the objectivity of Hartshorne’s conception of God considering a given characteristic may be admirable to some but deficient to others. See Donald Wayne Viney, “Philosophy after Hartshorne,” Process Studies 30 (2001): 211–36.

256 Hartshorne states, “Deity exists necessarily, in a sense in which men, for example, do not, even though not all the factors in God—for example, his actual cognitions—can be necessary.” Divine, 14. Ogden adds, “The scriptural witness to God can be appropriately interpreted only if his nature is conceived neoclassically as having a contingent as well as necessary aspect.” Reality, 122–23. Cf. Ogden, “Toward,” 14. Hartshorne interestingly adds, “If it be thought suspicious that the ontological argument argues from a
and thus contingency, in God. This amounts to Hartshorne’s important distinction (not separation) between existence (that an entity is) and actuality (the particularities of the existing entity). Thus, God’s existence is necessary but his actuality is contingent.

Accordingly, God may be absolute in some ways and yet relative, abstract in some ways and yet concrete, and so on. God as relative is “the integral totality of all ordinary causes and effects” yet as absolute he is “conceivable in abstraction from any particular, contingent being(s).” This divine dipolarity may be further analyzed in terms of a concrete aspect and an abstract aspect of God. Hartshorne builds on his previously discussed theory of relations, which maintains that a subject includes its object. Since the abstract may only function as object, the concrete (as subject) is inclusive of the abstract. In fact, the concrete aspect is all-inclusive.

unique relation of God to existence (though one deduced from the normal relation plus the definition of perfection), let it be remembered that, by definition, God’s relation to every question is unique. He is the unique being, unique because maximal, the only unsurpassed and unsurpassable being (in senses A and R).” Yet, if God is altogether unique, what sense does it make to try to describe him at all?

“In concrete or surrelative aspect, God, like all existents, has qualities that are accidental, that do not follow from any necessity of his essence.” Moreover, “an infinity of accidents must belong to God.” Hartshorne, Vision, 132.

“That God exists is one with his essence and is an analytic truth. . . . But how, or in what actual state of experience or knowledge or will, he exists is contingent in the same sense as is our own existence” Hartshorne, Divine, 87. See Viney, “Philosophy:”

Hartshorne, Vision, 348. It should be noted that God requires particulars, though it matters not which particulars.

Hartshorne defines “the abstract” as “what can be abstracted, detached in thought and, at least potentially, in actuality, from various relationships or contexts, and yet in this detachment still be the identical entity.” Divine, 68.

“The concrete includes the abstract, and since the absolute or immutable is abstract, it can perfectly well constitute an aspect of a being which concretely or as a whole is relative and mutable.” Hartshorne, Reality, 168. Hartshorne contends that tradition reversed the relation between abstract and concrete. “The fact is that traditional theology makes the abstract the basis of the concrete, whereas the reverse relation is logically correct. The abstract is reached by abstracting from some aspects of the more concrete.” Vision, 113.

Therefore, “since the abstract is in the concrete, any concrete case contains the entire unlimited form.” Hartshorne, Divine, 144. Or put differently, “In their abstract or more or less general predicates things do not contain particular other things: but in their concrete being qualify each other reciprocally; and this is the social nature of reality.” Hartshorne, Vision, 296.
The supreme divine mind is both concrete (relative) and abstract (absolute), with the abstract aspect included in the concrete aspect. In this way God can be absolute in some ways without ruling out the divine relativity. God’s abstract or absolute aspect is the abstraction of his essence from his contingent actuality (concrete aspect). In this way God as concrete (relative) is an actual individual consciousness whereas God as abstract (absolute) is non-actual and included in the concrete. For example, God is absolute in that no other can surpass him, yet he is supremely relative in that he is all-inclusive and thus ever-growing according to all growth in the world. Thus God is always superior to every other individual (surrelative). In concrete

Furthermore, in whatever respect God is “Absolute (in eminent sense),” he is the transcendent, perfect one, superior to all others, “the non-reflexive form . . . the abstract maximum; the self-unsurpassing surpasser of all others. (God as mere self-identical essence abstracted from the fullness of his accidents, the contingent contents of his awareness.)” Hartshorne, Reality, 116. Notice that this does not imply that God has an abstract nature in which he is absolute in all ways. On the contrary, the abstract (non-actual or potential) aspects of God are “abstractions” from the concrete (actual). On the other hand, God as concrete is relative. As “relative (in eminent sense; superrelative)” God is “the reflexive form . . . the concrete maximum; the self-surpassing surpasser of all, (God as self-contrasting life, process, or personality).” Ibid. “Relativity is the inclusive, concrete conception; non-relativity or non-reflexiveness (for as we have seen, these go together) is the reduction of this concrete conception to a partly negative and more abstract case.” Ibid., 115.

In this way Hartshorne technically distinguishes: (1) an absolute aspect which is abstract and non-actual, and (2) a relative aspect which is actual as well as “preeminently . . . mutable and passive.” Vision, 128. “The absolute, infinite side is abstract and concerns the divine potentiality or capacity to have values, while the finitude or relativity concerns the divine actuality.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 45. Moreover, the divine absolute aspect “is everything in the form of possibility, nothing whatever in the form of actuality. God merely as absolute is non-actual; God as person [relative] is at least actual.” “What we can clearly infer as to God is only his abstract essence, and the wholly abstract is no actual value.” Hartshorne, Divine, 92.

Hartshorne defines an absolute term as “abstract, object, cause, predecessor, constituent . . . in any relation in which the term is absolute.” A relative term is conversely “concrete, subject, effect, successor, whole.” Ibid., 70.

Surrelativism means “to be absolutely guaranteed superiority to every other individual that comes to exist.” Ibid., 21. This conception of supreme relativity is also called: dual transcendence, absolute-relative ontology, second-type theism, and most popularly process theology. In God’s concrete, all-inclusive, actuality, then, “God himself is a supreme relativist, his absoluteness consisting in the ideally exhaustive way in which he relativizes his evaluations to all factors in the concrete actual world.” Ibid., 129.
actuality, God is supremely relative.\textsuperscript{267} This supreme relativity will be unpacked in the discussion of the God-world relationship further below.

God’s Relationship to the World as Panentheism

**God as Supreme Subject and Supreme Object**

With Hartshorne’s ontology of the world (panpsychism) and divine ontology (dipolar theism) in mind, attention must be turned to the relationship between God and the world (panentheism) so that one may better understand how God can include the world and yet be more than the world without equivocation. Once again, the world is in God, but is not identical or equivalent to God. God as the supreme mind is both internally and externally related to all other minds, yet distinct (non-identical) from other minds. As the supreme mind (and in accordance with the way of eminence) God is the supreme or universal subject. This means that God knows all other minds immediately (directly and non-mediated) with perfect distinctness. Since functioning as a subject entails an internal relation, God includes all objects as the all-knowing and thus all-inclusive mind.\textsuperscript{268} It is in this way that God is supremely relative, the “subject of all change,” being eminently affected according to his maximal flexibility.\textsuperscript{269} It must be understood that though God is the universal subject, related to all minds, he is not the only subject. All minds function as subjects and enter into relationships as part of the interdependent temporal process (creative synthesis). Moreover, being included in God does not remove the distinctness of the individual minds. They retain individual consciousness and some degree of freedom according to

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\textsuperscript{267} God is not merely relative but “super-relative, a ‘super-eminent’ type of relativity, since it involves, as we have seen, an element of absoluteness, of maximality.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 113. For Ogden, God is “the eminently relative One.” *Reality*, 65.

\textsuperscript{268} Thus, “since the omniscient as such knows whatever else exists, the non-omniscient is contained in the omniscient as known in the knower.” Hartshorne, *Divine*, 88.

\textsuperscript{269} Maximal refers to the greatest degree of flexibility which is admirable and compossible. As maximally relative, God “can be all things to all things, whose all-sympathetic teleology assumes all the changing states of the universal striving.” Hartshorne, *Vision*, 259.
the nature of creativity as seen above. The same God is also the supreme or universal object.

Once again, the language of universality does not mean that God is the sole object but rather that because of his greatness (eminence) he is an object (though not the only object) for every subject.270 Thus every mind is related to God, though lesser minds do not know God with perfect distinctness. Only God’s knowledge is perfectly distinct and thus absolute in adequacy.271 The knowledge of other minds is partial and not related to all. God is thus the only supreme mind and he functions both as the supreme subject and the supreme object and all other minds relate to him and to one another as lesser subjects and objects.272 As universal subject of the world, God is thus affected by every event of the world (supreme relativity). God as universal object means, conversely, that the world (every mind) is relative to, and thus affected by, God. Although God is relationally all-inclusive, he cannot be wholly identified with (pantheism), nor wholly differentiated from (classic theism), the world. He includes the world, yet is more than the world (panentheism). This relationship is further clarified in Hartshorne’s organic-social analogy.

The Organic-Social Analogy

Hartshorne’s organic-social analogy is itself an amalgamation of two analogies: the relationship between the human mind (soul) and body and a theory of social reality.273 Since

270 Hartshorne states, “Only God can be so universally important that no subject can ever wholly fail or ever have failed to be aware of him.” Divine, 70. Thus, God as “absolute is [also] object for all subjects.” Ibid. He states, “The absolute is a divine object in the divine subject and for the divine subject. It is an essence, not an existence.” Ibid., 87.

271 This is important because it means that no other mind includes God as a whole, having only partial and indistinct knowledge of him. Thus God is partially in other minds as their object, “in some sense God must be in man.” Ibid., 92. Yet only partially, for instance, human knowledge is often inadequate to its object and thus only inclusive of the limited relata that it knows (feels). However, it must be remembered that being known is an external relation and external relations do not affect the knower. Thus God is not affected by being the universal object but by being the universal subject.

272 Hence, “God is universal object as well as universal subject.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 110.

273 Interestingly, Hartshorne rejects numerous other analogies as useless, or worse. He dismisses any idea of God as monarch out of hand as “the most shockingly bad of all theological analogies.” Vision, 203. He also forcefully rejects the analogy of God as father. Ibid., 175. Cf. Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 56. For him, “much more appropriate is the idea of a mother, influencing, but sympathetic to enhance influence
neither fully encapsulates Hartshorne’s metaphysics, he combines the two. In the mind-body analogy, the God-world relationship is analogous to the human mind-body relationship. He explains that humans have “immediate awareness of the feeling of our own cells.”274 In other words, the human mind is internally related to its body such that the mind is the “supercellular individual of the cellular society called a human body.”275 Likewise, “God is the super-creaturely individual of the inclusive creaturely society.”276 In this way the world is analogous to God’s body, which is “a society of individuals.”277 In this analogy, God’s mind is internally related to his body, such that he is immediately (non-mediated, direct) related to all. Accordingly, the cosmic body is a society of living individuals, specifically of minds (panpsychism).278 God is more than the world in a way analogous to the human consciousness, which Hartshorne considers to be more than the mere human body.279 The world is in God, but God is more than the world, he is the supreme individual of the world.280

by, her child and delighting in its growing creativity and freedom.” Ibid., 58. Yet, even this lacks the sufficient “radical superiority.” Vision, 202.

274 Ibid., 289. “The living human body is a society of cells (relatively low-grade individuals) plus one high-grade individual, the human personality whose body it is.” Hartshorne, Reality, 133. “Thus a body, to the best of our knowledge, is really a world of individuals, and a mind, if the body is one having a mind (or one capable of thinking and feeling), is to that body something like an indwelling God.” Hartshorne, Vision, 177.

275 Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 59.

276 Ibid. Yet “God has no separate sense organs or muscles, because all parts of the world body directly perform both functions for him. In this sense the world is God’s body.” Hartshorne, Vision, 185. Rather, “every physical individual in the Body becomes as a nerve or brain cell to the Soul.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 121. Thus “God’s volition is related to the world as though every object in it were to him a nerve-muscle, and his omniscience is related to it as though every object were a muscle-nerve.” Hartshorne, Vision, 185. Accordingly, “God is that mind which enjoys the fullest intimacy with all things, and therefore in an undiluted sense has all the world for body.” Ibid., 200.

277 Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 59.

278 Hartshorne, Vision, 155.

279 It must be understood that the soul is not “located” in the same manner as visual objects. Minds are neither “simply outside the space-time world” nor located at “a mere point in that world.” Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 445–46.

280 God as the supreme compound individual will be discussed further below and add further
However, the mind-body analogy is insufficient for Hartshorne’s system because the relations in the mind-body analogy are not obvious.\textsuperscript{281} Since God is internally related to all minds and thus all-inclusive, he has immediate (non-mediated, direct) relations. This is illustrated in the social analogy which illustrates that all reality consists of the interaction and interdependency of minds and as such reality is essentially and undeniably social.\textsuperscript{282} The “social” is defined as “the appeal of life for life, of experience for experience. It is ‘shared experience,’ the echo of one experience in another.”\textsuperscript{283} This shared experience, or feeling, is the fundamental characteristic of Hartshorne’s social analogy. He describes it alternately as “sympathetic understanding” whereby we know “others most intimately.”\textsuperscript{284} Importantly, the social analogy illustrates that reality is “pan-psychistic, pan-indeterministic (or pan-creationistic), pan-relativistic, and pan-temporalistic, in the sense that every concrete being [including God] has psychic, free or creative, relative, and temporal aspects.”\textsuperscript{285} Under this analogy “the only conceivable God is a ‘social being whose creatures must also be social throughout.’”\textsuperscript{286} However, the social analogy (in its usual form) is likewise an imperfect analogy since it “does not explain how one mind is able to communicate its clarity. Again, God is not to be simply identified with the world (pantheism) but rather the world is included in God \textit{and} God is more than world (panentheism).

\textsuperscript{281} “For while it is a fact that mind has immediate relations to the body it cannot be said that the nature of these relations is obvious.” Hartshorne, \textit{Vision}, 186.

\textsuperscript{282} For instance “there is no such thing as the mere individual, conscious of himself as such, to whom membership in one or more groups may be added as a complication. We all recognize that to be a human individual, and to be a member of at least one or two groups of such individuals, are inseparable aspects of one and the same thing.” Hartshorne, \textit{Reality}, 53.

\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{284} Hartshorne, \textit{Vision}, 186. “Hence nothing can be social that is without experience. The minimum of experience, let us further agree, is feeling. Creatures are social if they feel, and feel in relation to each others’ feelings.” Hartshorne, \textit{Reality}, 34.

\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 135.

\textsuperscript{286} Ibid., 33.
The Supreme Compound Individual

To better understand the precise nature of God’s relationship to the world, one must go beyond the analogies to the reality of God as supreme individual of the world, his divine relativity and activity, and the nature of the divine-world interaction. First, the inseparability of God from the world must be recognized (panentheism). God is essentially related to the world and thus dependent upon it. In accordance with the axioms of eminence, perfection, and necessity (closely related to his ontological argument) Hartshorne maintains that the possibility of a world that is external to God’s whole being would entail the unacceptable conclusion that there is something greater than God (the world plus God).289 Thus God and the world are inseparable. Although God does not need any particular world, he does need some world in order to exist.290 This means that

feeling to another immediately.” Hartshorne thus posits the combined organic-social analogy in order to make the social relationship explicit while preserving the immediacy (unmediated nature) of the relations; hence “the mind-body relationship is immediately social.”288

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288 Ibid., 187. In the analogy “cells possess humble forms of feeling or desire to reach the position that the human mind influences and is influenced by them through immediate (there is nothing to mediate it) sharing of feeling, with much indistinctness on both sides.” Ibid., 188. He considers this an entirely defensible and appropriate analogy that demonstrates “the doctrine that the world is God’s body, to whose members he has immediate social relations, and which are related to each other, directly or indirectly, exclusively by social relations.” Ibid., 192. “Is this not the principle, and the only principle with any analogy in our experience, by which divine love (free of the ‘indistinctness’ i.e., imperfection) could know and sway the world?” Ibid., 188.


290 M. L. Taylor, God, 354. “It is one thing to say God could exist without us, or without any creature or group of creatures you wish to specify; it is logically quite another to say he could exist were there no creature at all.” Hartshorne, Vision, 108. Some have questioned whether this means there could
God could not have created the world ex nihilo, rather it is necessary that some world always existed. God is thus dependent upon a partially free and undetermined world. This conception of God’s essential relation to the world requires a drastic departure from utter determinism (traditional omnipotence) to a broad indeterminism where both God and non-divine entities are free and partially determined according to the nature of social relativity (the aforementioned creative synthesis of minds).

As the supreme compound individual, Hartshorne calls God “the supreme case of personality.” God is the supreme person, an “individual conscious being.” However, in Hartshorne’s view of temporality as the succession of units, a “conscious being” is itself have been nothing. Hartshorne finds this to be a logical impossibility: “To ask about the possibility of there being no creative process is to ask about the possibility of there being no possibility, even logical, for thought has no other function than to express, guide, or enrich that process.” Hartshorne, “Could?”

Hartshorne sees “creation” as “supreme influence on growth” and sees this as a possible interpretation of Genesis. Vision, 193. The world is not eternal but is created out of a still “earlier world.”

We are “integral self-determined members of his present reality, rivulets poured into his ‘ocean of feeling.’” Hartshorne, Divine, xvii-xviii.

actualized in a specific moment. The conscious being of the next successive moment is thus not identical with the conscious being of the previous moment, but rather is ever-changing in temporal process. This means that the “absolute identity of the concrete or particular is given in an event or occasion, not in a thing enduring through time, like a person or a body.” This is what Hartshorne calls “genetic identity” as opposed to “strict identity.” Genetic identity is “the abstract description of a sequence or group of occasions,” whereas strict identity requires that God in moment A and God in moment B be totally identical, which militates against the notion of an ever-changing temporality. Nevertheless, God does endure through time. He is the supreme conscious being, “an enduring society of actualities, [though] not a single actuality.” God thus has an enduring character (abstract) actualized (concrete) in successive instances. God “is concretely and in part new each moment, and each new divine self sympathizes with its predecessors and . . . anticipated successors.” God is able to sympathize with the past because

295 Hartshorne, Reality, 102.

296 “The merely relative identity of the latter may be called, with Levin and Scholz, genetic identity, Genidentitat.” Ibid. Genetic identity is different from strict identity. Strict identity would hold that John Doe as a child and John Doe as an adult are identical identities; genetic identity holds a looser form of identity over the discontinuous instances of time. Thus he holds, “But John Smith on Monday and John Smith on Tuesday are two realities, numerically as well as qualitatively distinguished.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 104–5.


298 Charles Hartshorne, “The Dipolar Conception of Deity,” The Review of Metaphysics 21(1967): 287. This is in contrast to Whitehead who does define God as a “single actuality” enduring through time. Hartshorne comments, “Here I think Whitehead was just mistaken.” Ibid., 287. Whether God is a single actual entity or an enduring society of actualities is a disputed point among process theists. For instance, Griffin considers the former to be Whitehead’s “greatest blunder.” David Ray Griffin, Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), 152.

299 For Hartshorne, this is analogous to the human person which is an ever-changing being, specifically “a different person every moment; but equally he is the same person every moment.” Vision, 109. Here Whitehead’s concept of the self is valuable. A man is a new “actual entity” in every moment or “specious present.” Character, or the man as self-identical, is an abstraction from the sequence of concrete experiences each with its own intrinsic “subject” or “agent.” Hartshorne, Reality, 209. Hartshorne thus explicitly rejects an ontology grounded in substance. Rather, “events are the final nouns.” “Strict,” 251. This may be called event pluralism; see Hartshorne, Creative, 173–204.

300 Hartshorne, Vision, 351. Indeed, all of reality is not continuous but discontinuous, consisting of
the determinate past is permanent in God’s perfectly adequate memory, thus there is an
“immortality of the past.”

God as the enduring society of actualities is the supreme compound individual of the world. God therefore includes within himself the entirety of reality. God, the supreme mind, is supremely relative as universal subject and is affected by all (supremely moved).

However, it might be wondered how God can be the compound individual of the world and yet not be identical with the world. In other words, in what way is God more than the world (panentheism)? First, if it is true that if God is supremely relative and all-inclusive, then we are members of God and (to a partial extent) vice versa.

As supremely relative, God is all-inclusive. Conversely, to the extent that any non-divine subject knows God (which never amounts to perfect knowledge of God), the known relata is constitutive of and thus included in the non-

discrete instances. For Hartshorne, “the result is that Whitehead has, not a less but a more, ‘personal’ deity than Augustine or Thomas, if personal means being an individual with a character expressible freely in acts of knowledge, choice, and love. God ‘shares with each creature its actual world’; he takes into his actuality, as ‘consequent’ upon process, the life of the world, somewhat as we (in infinitely less adequate fashion) take into ourselves experiences of our friends. He does not plot it all out in eternity, and with a single moveless stare register the result.”


Hartshorne, Vision, 129. “To say an event is ‘past’ for God does not mean that it is absent from his present awareness; it means that it is not the ‘final increment’ of determinate detail contained in that awareness, the final increment being that which involves all the others though it is involved by none, the ‘next to last’ being that which involves all the others but one, and is involved solely by that one, etc. To say a past experience is part of present experience is not a contradiction, for the date of present experience as a whole is the date of its final increment, not of its non-final increments, this being the meaning of date.”

Ibid.

“Are we and God members one of another? Again the answer is, Yes, but with a difference in principle in this supreme case, as contrast it to ordinary ones.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 110. Interestingly, Hartshorne sees the divine mind or soul as analogous to Plato’s “world soul” in the Timaeus, yet this should not be taken to mean that Hartshorne adopts the two-worlds duality of Plato. See ibid., 134. However, it should be noted that each member of God’s body has a minute impact on God as a whole just as “each cell in our body is almost as nothing in comparison with ourselves as conscious individuals.” Ibid., 55. Interestingly Hartshorne appeals to Plato’s analogy of an ideal society in The Republic for support. Hartshorne, Vision, 153, and idem, Omnipotence, 53.
divine knower. This co-inherence is illustrated in the organic-social analogy of Hartshorne. However this does not detract from the individuality of God or that of other minds.

This leads us to the question of extension and the locus of consciousness. It has already been established that Hartshorne builds on panpsychism such that all reality consists of minds interrelating. In this system, extension is thus a property of interrelating minds, but nothing can thus be reduced to mere matter, in fact “‘matter’ is a form of manifestation of ‘mind’ . . . and is nothing simply on its own.” While it is true that aggregates (groups of minds that lack a compound individual consciousness) do not feel, the aggregate is nevertheless made up of individual minds that do feel. All actuality can thus only be reduced to interrelating minds.

There is no mind-matter dualism in Hartshorne’s panpsychism. If minds, then, are not located in matter, where are they? For Hartshorne, minds are not located outside the spatio-temporal world, nor are they located in a point in the spatio-temporal world, but they occupy an area (included in God himself). God as the compound individual of the world, the supreme mind, is likewise not located outside the spatio-temporal world, or in a specific location, but overlaps the entire area of spatio-temporality. This is understood according to the view of God as universal subject and

303 “The conception of God which our argument leads to is that of a social being, dominant or ruling over the world society, yet not merely from outside, in a tyrannical or non-social way; but rather as that member of the society which exerts the supreme conserving and coordinating influence.” Hartshorne, Reality, 40.

304 Hartshorne, “Personal,” 210. For Hartshorne, even “space is essentially a system of relations” such that “the volume even of singulars would be meaningless apart from some community of singulars.” “Panpsychism,” 445–46. Thus, “extendedness is then not a property capable of distinguishing ‘mere matter’ from mind, since minds, as entering into communal relations with one another, must exhibit extendedness.” Ibid.

305 In fact “all individuals apparent to the senses are compounded of numerous much smaller individuals.” Hartshorne, “Compound,” 194.

306 “A mind, according to most panpsychists, is not simply outside the space-time world. It is also not at a mere point in that world, and nothing remains than that it be in an area of the world.” Hartshorne, “Panpsychism,” 445–46. See also Hartshorne, “Compound.” Cf. John B. Cobb Jr., “Overcoming Reductionism,” in Existence and Actuality: Conversations with Charles Hartshorne (ed. J. B. Cobb and F. I. Gamwell; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Hartshorne’s view is in distinction from Whitehead who held God to be spatially nonextended.
universal object. The whole world is inclusive to God as universal subject, thus nothing can be outside him. As universal object, however, God is partially included in every mind and since interrelating minds are extended, the divine supreme mind overlaps the entire spatio-temporal area. Once again, this does not detract from the individuality of the supreme or lesser minds. God and the world are not identical; the world is included in God but God is more than the world (panentheism). Just as lesser minds always retain at least partial creativity (independence and self-determination) as individuals, God likewise retains a partial independence and self-determination as the supreme compound individual. God’s consciousness is not reducible to the parts of the world that are included in himself as the supreme mind. Thus God and the world are inseparably related, yet not identical.

**Divine Knowledge as Supreme Relativity**

As the supremely relative compound individual of the world God is internally related to all minds and thus the immediate feeler of all feelings. As such, God’s knowledge is perfectly adequate to the actual state of the world. This is in contrast to the view of classic theism, which inexplicably reverses the relation between subject and object only when it relates to God himself by positing that God as subject changes the object of knowledge while God himself remains unaffected.\(^{307}\) Classic theism thus makes God’s knowledge omni-causal and thus “constitutive” of the world itself, requiring sheer determinism.\(^{308}\) Hartshorne considers this traditional view of wholly transcendent, unrelated knowledge to be unfounded. Rather, God is the universal subject, partially dependent upon the world but not equivalent to it. This provides an example of the manner in which the same being can be supremely absolute and supremely relative, considering

\(^{307}\) Hartshorne, *Divine*, 8. “It is admitted by Thomists, for example, that God’s knowledge is to his objects as the objects of human knowledge are to the knower! . . . Here the analogy is exactly in reverse.” Hartshorne, *Vision*, 135. He explains that according to classic theism “God knows all things, but in such fashion (it was held) that there is zero relativity or dependence in God as knower, and maximal dependence in the creatures as known.” Hartshorne, *Divine*, 8.

\(^{308}\) Ibid., 123.
Hartshorne’s supposition that the relative (concrete) includes the absolute (abstract) within itself.\footnote{309} This “panentheism,” distinguishes God from the ‘all’ and yet makes him include all” in accordance with the supreme relativity.\footnote{310} Although God is supremely relative and ever-changing, Hartshorne nevertheless holds that “there is in God something absolute or nonrelative, [specifically] his cognitive adequacy.” In other words, God’s cognitive adequacy is absolute in the sense that it is always perfectly adequate to the actual state of the world in any instant, and thus absolutely relative.

Since God is the supremely relative universal subject, the content of divine knowledge is provided by the “total of actuality.”\footnote{312} God’s knowledge, to be knowledge at all under Hartshorne’s definition, must depend directly upon the state of the world in a given instant.\footnote{313} Adequate knowledge is defined in terms of perfect and immediate (unmediated) feeling where “the adequate knower himself is relative, relative to what he knows.”\footnote{314} In fact, Hartshorne states that feeling is “the only adequate knowledge.”\footnote{315} Thus, true knowledge amounts to the knower feeling an object’s feeling as “one’s own” or immediately.\footnote{316} Yet, it is limited to present and past

\footnote{309} “So God, in his relative aspect, is the only unqualifiedly inclusive being, as, in his absolute aspect, he is the only unqualifiedly exclusive one.” Ibid., 94.

\footnote{310} Hartshorne, \textit{Vision}, 348. Nevertheless, “it can be said without equivocation that God is the totality of reality in that God includes all of reality within Godself.” M. L. Taylor, \textit{God}, 345.

\footnote{311} Hartshorne, \textit{Divine}, 122.

\footnote{312} “God knows as actual whatever is actual.” Ibid., 14–15. In this way, “omniscience is an infinite class of relationships.” Ibid., 121.

\footnote{313} “God’s knowledge differentially implies, and thus in our defined sense is relative to, the actual state of all existence, i.e., its relativity is unrestricted in scope.” Ibid., 11.

\footnote{314} Ibid., 121–22. It must be remembered that feeling for Hartshorne includes even cognition. See the discussion of feeling regarding panpsychism above.


\footnote{316} Hartshorne comments, “If we saw the individuality and vividness of the feeling, we would have the feeling.” \textit{Vision}, 163. However, Henry Simoni-Wastila questions whether universal immediate feeling

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knowledge since the future is indeterminate, and, as such, Hartshorne contends that it is unknowable as not “there to be known.” Nevertheless, such perfectly adequate knowledge of the present and past is immediate, with “no error or ignorance” and no vagueness whatsoever, in contrast to the indistinctness of the knowledge of non-divine subjects. Omniscience, then, is direct knowledge with “a certain completeness and clarity of experience” and reality is “the content of such an experience.” Because God is internally related to all and thus all-inclusive, God changes and grows in accordance with the feelings of the world, that is, all of reality. Nothing escapes God’s universal knowledge (feeling). This adequate knowledge (omniscience) is all-inclusive and immediate feeling in accordance with the divine nature of transcendental relativity. In this way, God is supremely relative to the world as the universal subject. Yet, how does God then act? This leads to the consideration of divine will and action.

is in fact possible. For instance, how could God sympathize with the feelings of temporary life and finitude when the divine life is eternal? Moreover, “the idea of God being able to fully appreciate ignorance seems categorically impossible.” “Is Divine Relativity Possible? Charles Hartshorne on God’s Sympathy with the World,” Process Studies 28 (1999): 99.

Cf. Hartshorne, Vision, 98. Cf. Hartshorne, Reality, 201. The “conception of a knower who sees past, present, and future—or all time from eternity—sees them but reserves no right to make further choices with respect to them, is, I submit, a mythical one which fails to describe even what we wish knowledge to be.” Ibid., 91. Cf. D. D. Williams, Spirit, 128.

Cf. Hartshorne, Vision, 38. “All we have to do to conceive omniscience is to banish all such vagueness from the idea of experience, but leave that vagueness which defines the futurity of what is future.” Ibid., 328.

Ibid., 330. Hartshorne refers to this as “absolute distinctness.” Ibid., 325. Once again we see the importance of the absolute as a category of logical reasoning. Hartshorne explicitly tells us that God’s knowledge is not “discursive” but his “field of distinct perception is the de facto whole itself. No thinking is thus needed to get to the whole from the part.” Omnipotence, 93. This implies that God does not “think” at all but merely perceives absolutely in each new instance the whole of actuality that is there to be known.

Cf. Hartshorne, Vision, 14. Such growth includes the “possibility of an increase in aesthetic satisfaction derived from his knowledge.” Ibid., 38. Thus, God “finds his own joy in sharing their lives, lived according to their own free decisions, not fully anticipated by any detailed plan of his own.” Hartshorne, Divine, xvii.

“What God ignores he equally, and thereby, destroys or prevents from occurring.” Hartshorne, Vision, 265.
Divine Power as Persuasive Power

As has been seen, God is the supreme creative being, yet he is not the only creative being in the indeterministic creative synthesis where each mind plays a part as co-creator of reality. Although each mind is undetermined, every mind is also dependent upon other minds, including the divine mind. Since God is dependent (as the supremely relative universal subject), he is partially determined by other minds in the world. Thus, he is not omnipotent in the classical sense of omnicausality. Nevertheless, though God is moved by all events of the world, he retains freedom in reaction to events, such that he is partially self-determined. Thus, God does possess the power to act freely, although, like others, his options are severely limited by other minds. Thus God’s eminent passivity does not equate to total passivity.

God can and does act, but he acts not through coercion (unilateral determinism), but through persuasion. In fact, since an effect is only partially determined by its cause, there is no such thing as sheer coercion. In this way, God may choose his action or reaction, but his choice does not overrule all other choices. Thus, in direct contrast to classic theism, God’s will does not determine reality, but is the most powerful will among other wills. Thus, every entity always

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322 In this way, the world partially determines God since “by sympathetic union with our volitions God wants, not by choice, what we choose to want.” Ibid., 291. Yet God remains free to respond and “the radical difference between God and us implies that our influence upon him a slight, while his influence upon us is predominant.” Hartshorne, Divine, 141.

323 “God presumably wills much that we do not will, but he cannot force our will and hence must enjoy and suffer what we enjoy and suffer on the basis of our limited and faulty willing.” David Platt, “Does Whitehead’s God Possess a Moral Will?” Process Studies 5 (1975): 120.

324 God “is not a supreme autocrat, but a universal agent of ‘persuasion.’” Hartshorne, Divine, xvii, 138. See John W. Lansing, “Persuasive and Coercive Power in Process Metaphysics,” Process Studies 3 (1973): 153–57. “God must suffer all things, for he must participate in all things to know them, but he cannot be said to choose all things, for he has granted choices also to the creatures.” Hartshorne, Vision, 197.

325 Thus, it can be said that God passively wills the desires of other creatures but since all wills are not compossible he actively wills in response to the decisions of other creatures. “God passively wishes with and for the creatures what they wish for themselves, but his activity lies in deciding how to resolve the conflict of interests which he has thus taken into himself.” Ibid., 292. As such, our interpersonal conflicts are “through the divine sympathy made God’s problem of self-harmonization.” Ibid., 293. Although this leaves room for God’s decision it is far removed from the idea of a sovereign will of God.
has the ability to respond to a cause within a limited range of options. Persuasion refers to non-unilateral self-determination which requires other minds to react to God’s movement. Persuasion operates according to the notion of God as supreme object; the world is affected by knowing God (however indistinctly), such that when God moves himself, he thereby creates the necessary condition (but not the sufficient condition) for the effect of the world as social process. In other words, God acts upon the world by persuasion, by moving himself, such that every mind is required to react to his self-movement while retaining some degree of freedom among (limited) options. Because he is universal subject, he is the most moved mover, but the same God is also the universal object and thus the persuasive mover of all, possessing the greatest compossible power.

Since all minds possess some creative power, God cannot possess all the power in the world; he is not omnipotent in the sense of having “all the power that exists united into one individual power.” Thus as opposed to classic theism, he cannot enact his will unilaterally.

326 Hartshorne states, “An object always influences, but cannot dictate, the awareness of itself” and thus “we influence God by our experiences but do not thereby deprive him of freedom in his response to us.” Divine, 141.

327 “Then, as this [divine] object changes, we are compelled to change in response.” Ibid., 139. Further, “God orders the universe, according to panentheism, by taking into his own life all the currents of feeling in existence. He is the most irresistible of influences precisely because he is himself the most open to influence. In the depths of their hearts all creatures (even those able to ‘rebel’ against him) defer to God because they sense him as the one who alone is adequately moved by what moves them.” Ibid., xvii.

328 In other words, due to God’s intimate connection to all minds “to alter us he has only to alter himself. God’s unique power over us is his partly self-determined being as our inclusive object of awareness.” Ibid., 139. He compares this with Plato’s “self moved mover of others.” Thus, “the total or concrete divine mover is self-moving, as Plato correctly said.” Ibid., 142. But this self-movement does not exclude that God is also the most moved.

329 David Basinger sees some inconsistency in the process account. He makes a distinction between “strong” and “weak” coercion, arguing that coercion in the weak sense happens inevitably in human experience and thus it would be expected that God would also exercise the weak sense of coercion. Thus one can grant that God does not totally determine the world and yet leave many questions of God’s influence in the world unanswered. Divine Power in Process Theism: A Philosophical Critique (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), and idem, “Human Coercion: A Fly in the Process Ointment?” Process Studies 15 (1986): 161–71.

330 Hartshorne, Vision, 30. According to Hartshorne, the traditional doctrine of omnipotence “is a
Rather, God has all the power that is compossible with the pan-indeterminism and pan-relativity of the world and in this sense he is “the greatest possible power.”331 God’s power is thus not purely absolute as in classic theism but rather “absolute in adequacy,” it is unrivaled, eminent power. Any individual can influence it, none can threaten it.332 Accordingly, God “takes account of the freedom of others, and determines events only by setting appropriate limits to the self-determining of others.”333 God tolerates the maximal indeterminism that could yet be considered harmonious according to his maximal relativity.334 He thus orders the world so as to prearrange “the course of events so far as it would be friendly to do so.”335 Yet, such prearrangement is severely limited by the nature of social reality.336

331 Hartshorne, Vision, 30. God’s “power is absolutely maximal, the greatest possible, but even the greatest possible power is still one power among others, is not the only power. God can do everything that a God can do, everything that could be done by ‘a being with no possible superior.’” Hartshorne, Divine, 138. Accordingly, for D. D. Williams, “the power of God, however, is not that of absolute omnipotence to do anything. It is the power to do everything that the loving ground of all being can do to express and to communicate and fulfill the society of loving beings. God’s power expresses his love, it does not violate it.” Spirit, 137. Thus Richard Rice states that “God’s power simply is the appeal of unsurpassable love.” Rice, “Process Theism and the Open View of God: The Crucial Difference,” in Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists (ed. D. R. Griffin, J. B. Cobb, and C. H. Pinnock; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 186.

332 Hartshorne, Divine, 134. The “adequacy of cosmic power” means “power to do for the cosmos (the field of divine social relationships) all desirable things that could be done by one universal or cosmic agent.” Ibid. “Adequate cosmic power is power to set conditions which are maximally favorable to desirable decisions on the part of local agents.” Ibid., 135. For Hartshorne, “adequacy is the measure of greatness.” Ibid., 134.

333 Ibid., xvii, 138. “God is supremely sensitive. . . . In his rule he allots to us a privilege of participation in governing which goes infinitely beyond a mere ballot. It means that with every decision, however secret, that takes place in our minds we are casting a vote which will surely be taken account of and will surely produce effects in the divine decisions.” Ibid., 51.


335 Hartshorne, Vision, 105. An aspect of providence is to set “the best or optimal limits to freedom
This leads directly to the question of theodicy, which seems to motivate Hartshorne’s axiomatic conception of pan-indeterminism.337 God cannot prevent evil in the world, but rather enforces “a maximal ratio of chances of good to chances of evil.”338 Conflict is inevitable due to the pan-indeterministic nature of social reality and “tragedy is thus inherent in value.”339 Accordingly, God is not responsible for evil; theodicy is merely a “false problem” that stems from “a faulty or non-social definition of omnipotence.”340 God is rather the one “to whom all hearts are completely open because his sensitive sympathy is absolute in flexibility.”341 This has a deep impact on the concept of love as shall be seen. As the universal object God is the supreme agent of persuasion, himself partially determined, yet nevertheless the most important co-creator of the interdependent creative synthesis of social process.342

(as any good government will do, in its drastically more limited providence).” Hartshorne, Reality, 41.

336 “There is as much that God cannot make us do or be as there is that we cannot make him do or be, and the former ‘cannot’ expresses our deficiency, not God’s.” Hartshorne, Vision, 293. Accordingly, “the [simplistic] alternative, chance or providence, is invalid.” Hartshorne, Divine, 137.

337 See Hartshorne, Logic, 161–90, and idem, Beyond, 111–64. This is at least partially due to a polemic stemming from the issue of theodicy. For instance, Hartshorne contends, “The notion of an all-arranging, chance-excluding Providence is doubly tragic; it is cruel, for it compels us to try to imagine that our worst tortures are deliberately contrived for our own or someone’s good by an allegedly all-loving being, and it is dangerous, for it suggests that we need not use our own resources to avert evil where possible and to help others in danger and privation.” Reality, 107. Moreover, “predestination, in the sense of determination by something less than personal will, would destroy the meaning of love.” D. D. Williams, Spirit, 116. He explicitly rules out the compatibilistic view for stating that “power to cause someone to perform by his own choice an act precisely defined by the cause is meaningless.” Hartshorne, Divine, 135.

338 Hartshorne, Reality, 107.

339 Ibid. Because of the different interests of different organisms “conflict and suffering cannot be wholly excluded.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 127. Thus, there “is no such mixture which would guarantee the elimination of evil; for if there is any freedom in a multiplicity of beings, there is potentiality of discord between them, a potentiality the total nonrealization of which is infinitely unlikely.” Hartshorne, Reality, 190. For “some risk there must be if there is to be any opportunity, any existence in the social sense.” Ibid., 41.

340 Ibid., 41.

341 Hartshorne, Vision, 265.

342 In this way, “God can rule the world and order it, setting optimal limits for our free action, presenting himself as essential object, so characterized as to weigh the possibilities of response in the desired respect.” Hartshorne, Divine, 142.
Thus Hartshorne’s highly complex metaphysical system presents the supreme, all-inclusive mind, which is the compound individual of the world, not identical or equivalent to the world, but more than the world. The divine-world relationship is understood within the context of the indeterministic, relativistic, spatio-temporalistic, panpsychism. All reality is accordingly an interdependent creative synthesis of partially determined and self-determined minds interacting as both subjects and objects in process. Minds are related both internally and externally where the subject of an internal relation includes and is thus affected by its relata and the object of an external relation remains unaffected. God is the supreme subject, internally related to all and thus supremely relative and all-inclusive, as well as the supreme object, an object (but not the sole object) for every subject. The supreme mind as universal subject and object corresponds to the dual transcendence (dipolarity) of the divine nature wherein God eminently exemplifies the admirable characteristics of metaphysical contraries. These poles are ontologically distinguishable yet ontically inseparable such that God is the absolute-relative, abstract-concrete, potential-actual, necessary-contingent, universal-particular, supreme compound individual. For example, God is absolute in that no other can surpass him, yet he is relative in that he is all-inclusive and thus ever-growing according to all growth in the world. Just as the subject includes its object, God as the universal subject (concrete and relative) includes the universal object (abstract and absolute). He is the self-surpassing surpasser of all, the transcendental relativity.

As has been seen, panentheism means that God is internally related to (and thus all-inclusive of) the world, the supremely relative, concrete subject. It also means that God is (imperfectly) known by the world, the absolute, abstract object. Since God is internally related to all minds and thus all-inclusive, he has immediate (non-mediated, direct) relations, meaning that he feels all the feelings of the world and changes accordingly. At the same time, God is neither wholly independent nor dependent, neither wholly determined nor self-determined, but is the supreme co-creator of the creative synthesis. While God is universally affected as universal subject, he may also act by persuasion (not coercion) upon all others as universal object such that
when God moves himself he thereby creates the necessary condition (but not the sufficient condition) for the effect of the world as the interdependent, creative synthesis of social process. God is thus the most moved but also possesses the greatest compossible power. This system determines the meaning of divine love.

Divine Love

Divine love is inseparably linked with the notion of divine feeling as sympathy. This is predicated on God as the all-inclusive universal subject, internally related to all other minds and, thus, feeler of all feelings. This universal and immediate feeling is sympathy. In this way God is possible, the all-sensitive. As such, this universal sympathy is “relative in the eminent sense” and must be understood to include all the joy and suffering of the world by immediate feeling according to God’s “infinite sensitivity.” Thus, God is the all-serving, he “who grieves in all

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344 Hartshorne, Divine, 76. This is necessary according to Hartshorne’s ontology; he states, “It could not be that an inclusive mind excluded the suffering of the world from itself. Nothing is more irrational than the notion of an all-knowing mind that does not know suffering, in the only conceivable way in which suffering can be known—by feeling it.” Reality, 172. Therefore, “divinity is not the privilege of escaping all sufferings but the exactly contrary one of sharing them all. Unlimited companionship in the tragedies which freedom makes more or less inevitable is the theologically most neglected of divine prerogatives.” Hartshorne, Vision, xvi. Yet, though God suffers, “joy predominates.” Hartshorne, Reality, 42.

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griefs.” This is essential to Hartshorne’s conception of love, “whereby what happens in one individual produces partially similar occurrences in another individual aware of this happening.” In other words, literal “sympathy” is integral to the concept of divine love, where God feels “the feelings of all the subjects composing the world.” God is the all-sympathizer as the all-inclusive universal subject.

Value: Ethical Immutability and Aesthetic Perfectibility

Before Hartshorne’s full conception of love is presented, it is important to understand the foundational importance of value to Hartshorne’s conception of love. He frames his discussion of value in the categories of ethics and aesthetics, conceived as appropriate to the different aspects of God as the supreme mind. For instance God is ethically immutable but aesthetically perfectible; this means that God never acts unethically, but he is able to grow aesthetically. God always acts ethically because he always takes account of all the feelings of the world. In this way, then, God is ethically immutable and with regard to ethics is “already as perfect as anything

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345 Hartshorne, Vision, 203. Hartshorne even calls God “the slave, nay, the scourged slave, of all, infinitely more passive to others, more readily ‘wounded’ even, than anyone else can ever be.” Ibid., 204. Yet, though he is “infinitely more passive” than others he is not absolutely passive for “the merely passive, that which has no active tendency of its own, is nothing.” Ibid., 89.

346 Ibid., 186. Thus, “love involves suffering, the freedom to be acted upon by the other.” D. D. Williams, Spirit, 165. Therefore, God as love “is not the being whose life is sheer joy and beauty, but the cosmic sufferer, who endures infinitely more evil than we can imagine.” Hartshorne, Vision, 331.

347 Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 28. Hartshorne describes the Whiteheadian foundation of this concept. For Whitehead “the basic relationship in reality is ‘prehension,’ which in the most concrete form (called ‘physical prehension’) is defined as ‘feeling of feeling,’ meaning the manner in which one subject feels the feelings of one or more other subjects. In other words, ‘sympathy’ in the most literal sense.” Ibid., 27.

348 God’s character of ethical immutability (goodness) consists in the fact that “he guides his action [persuasion] by concern for all the interests affected by his actions [supreme relativity]” and this is the “maximal case of goodness.” Hartshorne, Vision, 36. “There can be no ethical appeal beyond the decision of the one who in his decision takes account of all actuality and possibility.” Hartshorne, Divine, 125. In this way, for God, “ultimately knowing and deciding are mutually inseparable.” Ibid., 126.
In other words, because of his nature as the all-sympathizer (feeler of all feelings) it is necessary that God always act ethically; however, the particular acts of God are not necessary but contingent (relative, concrete). The ethical immutability of God thus corresponds to his abstract aspect, but the particular actions that are always ethical correspond to the concrete, both aspects referring to the same supreme mind, without separation.

Whereas Hartshorne considers it impossible (by the definition of ethics) for God to grow ethically, the area of aesthetics is always open to growth and thus divine happiness is not absolute. Thus, God actually grows aesthetically according to the level of beauty in the actual world. The abstraction from this is that God always has the maximal aesthetic value that corresponds to the world in that moment. However, in each new moment the world grows aesthetically and thus God is ever-growing as the concrete and supremely relative (universal subject) compound individual of the world. For Hartshorne, panpsychism is the maximal ontology of beauty, a “cosmic harmony” of minds. This is according to Hartshorne’s view that “the most generally recognized principle of beauty” is “the principle of organic unity, or unity in variety.” Panpsychism, referring to the pan-indeterministic, interdependent, creative synthesis

349 Hartshorne, Reality, 157. The holiness of God consists in “the single aim at the one primary good, which is that the creatures should enjoy rich harmonies of living, and pour this richness into the one ultimate receptacle of all achievement, the light of God.” Hartshorne, Divine, 128. He thus rejects what he calls the “strange reconciliation of justice and mercy, each somehow an ultimate principle of value.” Ibid. Thus Hartshorne refers to God as a “slave to his goodness.” Ibid., 138. “But he can express this goodness as he pleases in any world arrangement that is not inferior to any possible other, so far as God determined or might determine it.” Ibid.

350 All values are not compossible instantaneously and, thus, “an absolute maximum of beauty is a meaningless idea.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 10.

351 Ibid., 119.

352 Hartshorne, Vision, 212. See John Hospers, “Hartshorne’s Aesthetics,” in The Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne (ed. L. E. Hahn; The Library of Living Philosophers; La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1991). “Since the beautiful must contain contrast, it is as necessary that there be variety, multiplicity, in God as that there be unity.” Hartshorne, Vision, 217. This “unity in variety” is harmony. See Hartshorne, Reality, 45.
of minds, maximizes beauty as an organic unity. Hartshorne’s conception of beauty leads us directly to the importance of value to Hartshorne’s view of divine love.

According to Hartshorne’s aesthetics, change and growth are axiomatic and as such God is the ever-growing compound individual who continues to increase in value. As supremely relative, God experiences all value in the world in accordance with God’s perfect adequacy (internal relation) to the feelings of all as universally related. God as universal subject is thus the universal subject of value. In turn, this means he is also maximally dependent for happiness since, according to Hartshorne’s view of perfection, “the most perfect mind would derive most from the satisfactions of others.” However, God always increases, but never decreases, in overall value. For Hartshorne, this view of a God that ever increases in value is the only

353 Thus, he considers the indeterminacy and unknowability of the future as “essential” to beauty; “in its temporal aspect harmony involves the contrast between expectation and fulfillment. . . . Unforeseen novelty is as essential as the realization of the foreseen.” Hartshorne, Vision, 49.

354 Ibid., 51. This is in direct contrast to classic theism which, according to Hartshorne, posits the “view that the world . . . is strictly valueless to God, an absolute nullity from the standpoint of ultimate truth.” Hartshorne, Vision, 40. Is God “equally incapable of improvement in happiness? How can this be if God loves us, and through love shares in our sorrows, and is grieved by our misfortunes and errors?” Hartshorne, Reality, 157. “That, be we saint or sinner, no matter what we choose to do, it is all just the same to God, for his glory has the identical absolute perfection in either case.” Hartshorne, Vision, 118. But if this is true, if “variety is said not to be a value for God, then one asks, Why a creation at all?” Ibid., 39.

355 Specifically God must feel all since Hartshorne fails “to see any well-authenticated principle of value that justifies us in assuming a divine instance which, without literal containing of all experiences, has the equivalent of all their values.” Hartshorne, Divine, 91.

356 Therefore, “the idea of God is the idea of a being that really is the seat of all value.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 124. D. D. Williams states that each person “has a value for God which is unique and which enhances the life of God himself through whatever of positive value this member contributes.” “New,” 459. D. D. Williams goes on, “Hence we are valued by God for himself as increasing the joy and suffering of his being.” “Situation,” 459.

357 Hartshorne, Vision, 23.

358 Hartshorne comments, “A self-contrasting being surpassing all others will contrast with itself only through increase, never decrease, of value.” Reality, 118. Here Hartshorne refers to self-contrasting to mean that God in moment A is in contrast to God in moment B as the enduring society of individuals that he is. In each successive moment, then, God is the value of all that is actual and since God includes the past in his memory (as internally related to himself) he can only increase in value, but never decrease. This assumes that there is always more joy than sorrow in the world. Thus Hartshorne sums up, “If there is always more satisfaction than dissatisfaction, then God should always have more reason to rejoice than to grieve over the world, and since he can retain the consciousness of past joys, there will always be a net
conception of God that makes the religious view of serving God meaningful; specifically humans serve God by increasing value for him and thus adding to his enjoyment.\textsuperscript{359} God is altruistic in desiring the good of all others, yet, at the same time, because he is all-inclusive, his good brings value and enjoyment to himself (though not unilaterally) since he feels all feeling as the maximal sympathizer.\textsuperscript{360} God thus enjoys ever-increasing value and grows aesthetically (aesthetic perfectibility) while never acting unethically (ethical immutability).

**The Love of God as Divine Sympathy**

The ethical immutability and aesthetic perfectibility of God increases the significance of the divine sympathy. As feeler of all other feelings, God always takes into account the feelings of others in his actions (ethical immutability) and appreciates all value, growing in beauty

\textit{increment} of value accruing to God at each moment.” \textit{Divine}, 46.

\textsuperscript{359} Thus the meaning of life is “to serve and glorify God, that is, literally to contribute some value to the divine life which it otherwise would not have. Altruism toward God would include and embrace and unify all altruism.” Hartshorne, \textit{Divine}, 133. But, “if God can be indebted to no one, can receive value from no one, then to speak of serving him is to indulge in equivocation.” Ibid., 58. He further criticizes classic theism saying, “If God is purely altruistic in relation to men, then men must be purely race-egoistic in relation to him. You cannot be motivated by consideration of the value you contribute to another, if that other is so constituted that he can receive no value from any source. The greatest joy is in giving joy, but we can give none to God.” Vision, 117. Hartshorne further points out the deficiency in the alternative of utter immutability where nothing “could contribute anything whatever to his value or mean anything to him, for to him there would be no more or less but just sheer value.” Ibid., 16. He considers this alternative appalling “for this only means that the particular characters of the objects of his knowledge, or the results of his willing, are to him totally insignificant, which is psychologically monstrous and is religiously appalling as well. (It seems against every word concerning God in the entire Bible, for example, so far as any very direct interpretation is concerned.)” Ibid., 39. Furthermore, “The idea that God equally and solely experiences bliss in all his relations is once for all a denial of the religiously essential doctrine that God is displeased by human sin and human misfortune.” Ibid., 195. “Without such displeasure, the words ‘just’ and ‘loving’ seem mockeries.” Ibid., 195. Cf. Hartshorne, \textit{Reality}, 157. He points out that impassivity or lack of compassion is not at all valued in human beings so why should it be admired in divinity? Hartshorne, \textit{Divine}, 44.

\textsuperscript{360} This should not, Hartshorne cautions, be taken to mean that God is selfish. “God is neither selfish nor unselfish as we exhibit these traits. Rather, God is unsurpassably loving, and that means fully grasping the good of others as \textit{therefore also} divine good. God’s satisfaction includes all the satisfactions of others, integrated on a higher level into the satisfaction which surpasses that of any conceivable other but perpetually exceeds itself as new others arise to enrich it.” Hartshorne, \textit{Omnipotence}, 120. For him, “the only way to avoid a certainly false, purely self-interest theory of motivation, and at the same time do justice to the principle that value lies in concrete individual satisfaction, not in mere collections, is to recognize a superhuman mind.” Hartshorne, \textit{Reality}, 65. One here senses the influence of Kant’s need for the existence of God to ground ethics.
accordingly (aesthetic perfectibility). This of course presumes the ontology of God as the
supremely relative, self-surpassing surpasser of all. This ontology itself determines the shape and
content of divine love, so much so that one might understand everything that Hartshorne means
by “love” without ever seeing him invoke the word. This is because his definition of “love”
comes to be nearly synonymous with his whole theory of social relations.\footnote{Clark M. Williamson comments, “Process theology, per se, is primarily a theology of the love of God.” “Review of the Spirit and the Forms of Love by Daniel Day Williams,” \textit{Process Studies} 3 (1973): 120. D. D. Williams frames the meaning of love in history saying, “The guiding conception which informs our understanding of all love is that love is spirit taking form in history. Love is an expression of spirit. It is spirit seeking the enjoyment of freedom in communion with the other.” \textit{Spirit}, 3.}

God as the supreme mind of the creative synthesis that is social reality is the feeler of all feelings. The feeling of others’ feelings is sympathy and sympathy is love: “to love is to sympathize with, and through sympathy to share in, the changes occurring in the persons one loves.”\footnote{Hartshorne, \textit{Reality}, 160. This is a love “unique in its ability to adjust to others, to yield with infinite versatility of sympathetic desire to all that has desire, and to set limits to the fulfillment of desire not as to something merely alien to himself but as to what he himself would like to enjoy in and with the subjects of the desire. Does this not introduce the tragedy of unfulfilled desire into God? Yes, it does just that. . . . God suffers, that existence is tragic for God. It is tragic for anything that loves those involved in tragedy. And this is why men can literally love God, because he even more literally loves them ‘as he loves himself,’ since by direct sympathetic union they are parts of his internal life.” Hartshorne, \textit{Vision}, 294.} Since God is all-inclusive and supremely relative, he perfectly feels the feelings of all others. This is the perfect adequacy of divine love. Since love is bound to the entire metaphysics of Hartshorne it becomes an extremely elastic phrase that tends to lose uniqueness or specificity the more one comes across it. In this way, love actually describes the essential characteristic of what Hartshorne means by surrelativism, panentheism, and the like. In this way, the meaning of love, divine and otherwise, is required by the ontological suppositions.

There can thus be no doubt that love is a central category of Hartshorne’s divine
ontology.\footnote{Let there be no confusion, “God really is love, without cavil or inconsistency.” Hartshorne, \textit{Reality}, 136. Ogden speaks of “God’s pure unbounded love.” \textit{Reality}, 68. Hartshorne lauds the “magnificent intellectual content—far surpassing that of such systems Thomism, Spinozism, German idealism, positivism (old or new)—[that] is implicit in the religious faith most briefly expressed in the three words, God is love.” \textit{Vision}, ix.} As has been seen, for Hartshorne “love must be identified as feeling” or sympathy.\footnote{\textcopyright 2023 American Society for Philosophical Research.}
Sympathetic love presumes Hartshorne’s theory of social reality. As social, the love of God requires concern for, and real dependence upon, its object such that “love is joy in the joy (actual or expected) of another, and sorrow in the sorrow of another.” As perfectly adequate to the feelings of others God is the one “to whom all hearts are open, and all feelings equally comprehensible.” Yet at the same time, the number of the objects of divine love means that a given object of divine love is not of great individual importance.

The social conception of love is itself the universal and direct sympathy such that God is literally the “all-surpassing form of love.” The whole being of God, the entire divine ontology,

364 “Love is always feeling, whatever else it may be, and feeling has at least the universal dimension of intensity.” Hartshorne, Vision, 266. Elsewhere he states, “God is loving in the sense of feeling, with unique adequacy, the feelings of all others, entirely free from inferior emotions (except as vicariously participated in or sympathetically objectified).” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 39. In this way, “love is more than goodness, wisdom, and power, it is also happiness as partly arising from sympathy with the joys of others.” Hartshorne, Reality, 158. D. D. Williams adds, “To love is to act. Loving involves feelings, emotions, cravings, valuations and sharing, and all these require a movement toward the other, whether it be overt physical movement or the movement of the spirit.” Spirit, 117. Thus D. D. Williams can define it this way: “To love is to accept another who makes his own decisions, including that of the love relationship itself.” Ibid., 116.

365 Hartshorne states, “Either value is social, and then its perfection cannot be wholly within the power of any one being, even God; or is not social at all, and then the saying, ‘God is love,’ is an error.” Vision, 14.

366 Ibid., 116. He pushes this identification of love as sympathy even further stating, “Love is taking the standpoint of the other.” Ibid., 127. However, this can be problematic because it means God must enjoy sadism. “While God may derive value from the pleasure of the sadist, God also experiences the pain of the sadist’s victim and in Whitehead’s view, God would derive greater enjoyment if the sadist and the victim both had their own value experiences enhanced rather than that the sadist achieve his pleasure at the expense of the victim.” Platt, “Does?” 117.

367 Hartshorne, Reality, 35. God’s “spirit embraces all the physical there is with all-surpassing, unstinted love.” Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 45.

368 Hartshorne writes, “Consider now the idea that a loving God would not establish natural laws that make eventually dying a certainty for animals such as we are. God loves us, this I believe. But as what does God love us? I answer, God loves us as what we are, a certain very distinctive species of mortal animal, finite spatially and in careers. We are each divinely loved as rendered individual and definite by this finitude.” Omnipotence, 36.

369 Ibid., 37. “His interest is the universal interest in interests, that is, love in the highest conceivable sense.” Hartshorne, Vision, 164. Such universal and direct sympathy is unique to God, being the all-encompassing subject. Humans “do not ‘love’ literally, but with qualifications, and metaphorically.” Hartshorne, Divine, 36. “God is held to love all, not just a few; always; not just at times; in all their being, not with neglect of this or that aspect; and his influence in the universal society will be paramount and the basis of its integrity.” Hartshorne, Reality, 135. D. D. Williams points out that, in his view, God himself is a
is summed up in the term “love,” which, “defined as social awareness, taken literally, is God.”

Thus, as has been seen, Hartshorne’s definition of divine love requires that God be passible, capable of receiving value, including the continued enrichment (aesthetic perfectibility) of the divine being. This essential ontological attribute is perhaps the capstone break between classical theism and its recent critics. He states, “To love a being yet be absolutely independent of and unaffected by its welfare or suffering seems nonsense.” Moreover, “it is no use to say that God creates the creatures out of generosity or love; for if he loves the valueless, so much the worse for his love, and what but the value of contrast can the creatures add to existence?”

Absolutely Adequate and Perfect Love

With love defined as the feeling of others’ feelings, or sympathy, God’s love is perfect in that it surpasses human love as absolutely adequate, meaning that God feels the feelings of all free and contingent being. “God is the supreme instance of freedom to love. He never refuses to love, but the specific action of his love lies within the mystery of his being which no ontological analysis can fully penetrate or exhaust.” Spirit, 127. For him, “one of the categorical conditions of love is that there must be a transforming relationship without destruction of individuality.”

370 Hartshorne, Divine, 36.

371 D. D. Williams states bluntly, “Impassibility makes love meaningless.” Spirit, 127. Hartshorne considers it “obvious that there must be such a distinction between the generic unchangeable factor and the total value enjoyed.” Hartshorne, Vision, 112. “Is it so strange to say that one who loves perfectly is yet made happier by the increasing welfare of those he loves? Would it not rather be very strange if God who loves us, gained no new joy from our achievements and growth?” Hartshorne, Reality, 155. D. D. Williams concurs that an individual must “risk being changed if they really love.” Spirit, 115.

372 Hartshorne, Reality, 40.

373 Hartshorne, Vision, 39. On the other hand, divine love is not earned by its objects. It should not, then, be thought that the objects of divine love are “worthy”; such a category does not apply since love is “adequate awareness of the value of others, whatever that happens to be.” Ibid., 165. Nevertheless, God does enjoy the value in his objects of love. This seems obvious to Hartshorne, for what kind of a friend says, “the good that results to you from my being and acting is nothing in my life”? Hartshorne, Omnipotence, 119–20. Or what kind of love would say, “I am totally unmoved and ungratified by the benefits my action brings to you. Whether you live or die, enjoy or suffer, is all one to me. My own possession of good is in every respect totally independent of any good in you. I am like the sun, bestowing benefits without the results giving me anything I would otherwise lack. I am absolutely unselfish, that is, I do not rejoice in your joy, or sorrow in your sorrow.” Ibid., 120.
others as the internally related universal subject.\textsuperscript{374} Thus, “God is perfect in love, but never-completed, ever growing (partly through our efforts) in the joy, the richness of his life, and this without end through all the infinite future.”\textsuperscript{375} This kind of “perfect” love is in contrast to love as complete or absolutely maximized such that it cannot grow, which is impossible in Hartshorne’s system.\textsuperscript{376} This break with classical ontology lends itself to Hartshorne’s qualification of the meaning of “absolute” according to the meaning of love.\textsuperscript{377} Thus he states, “It is for love to determine the legitimate scope of the concept of absoluteness, if the hypothesis, God is love, is ever to be tried out at all.”\textsuperscript{378} This scope is determined by drawing out the logical consequences of love as feeling. For Hartshorne, divine love feels and enjoys each incremental gain of the aesthetic value of its object, otherwise it is not really love.\textsuperscript{379} Since God as universal subject

\textsuperscript{374} For Hartshorne, “perfect love” is “absolute adequacy to the object.” Vision, 165. In this way, love is conceived as proportional to the object itself and this “constitutes perfection in the only sense in which love can, without self-contradiction, be conceived as perfect.” Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{375} Hartshorne, Reality, 156.

\textsuperscript{376} Hartshorne states, “Love means happiness varying somehow with variations in the happiness of others, and hence maximally happy love would mean love all of whose objects were maximally happy, an impossibility if the objects are to include created, imperfect beings.” Vision, 135. Cf. Hartshorne, Reality, 121. “If he [God] is perfect in all ways, and if perfect means complete and incapable of enhancement, then the greatest saint can do no more for God than the worst sinner, for neither could possibly add to, or subtract from, what is always wholly perfect. And such a God could not love in a real sense, for to love is to find joy in the joy of others and sorrow in their sorrows, and thus to gain through their gains and lose (or at least, miss some possible value) through their losses, and the wholly perfect could neither gain nor lose. Hence, it could not love in a proper sense.” Ibid., 156. Fiddes states, “To love is to be in a relationship where what the loved one does alters one’s own experience.” Creative, 50.

\textsuperscript{377} Hartshorne asks, “If the absolute ‘loves,’ it does so in an absolute manner, and the question is, what then remains of the meaning of the term?” Vision, 42. One might wonder, then, why Hartshorne continues the use of such classical terms as “perfection.” His answer: “If God is perfect in no way, then he would scarcely deserve our worship, religion would have certainly overpraised him, and we could not rely upon him.” Reality, 156. Thus, “it is precisely love which must be perfect in God—and only love and what is implied by it as perfect—if either love or perfection is to serve as an explanatory concept in cosmology.” Hartshorne, Vision, 50.

\textsuperscript{378} Hartshorne, Vision, 42.

\textsuperscript{379} “We, through our voluntary acts by virtue of which in part we are whatever, at any moment, we actually are, make it possible for God to love us in each new state of our existence and to gain the increment that a new object of love brings, not to the lovingness, but to the total resulting aesthetic value. And that it does depend upon us in part whether the contribution shall be made is not a paradox, but a deduction from the definition of love.” Ibid., 120.
means that his sympathy is perfectly adequate to all objects, divine love does not discriminate. There is no applicability of a divine will that chooses between objects of love, no election love of any kind. Rather, a perfectly loving, a just God must indeed never be moved one-sidedly, by the feelings of some only of the creatures, but always in a way appropriate to all of them at once. This is the meaning of ethical action, response to all on the same terms of adequate sensitivity, and of adequate creative furtherance so far as the various interests of others can be harmonized with the least sacrifice of value.

The Desire and Dependence of Divine Love

The central role of sympathy in Hartshorne’s definition has been clearly stated. However, Hartshorne expands on this definition to include further aspects such as desire. In another definitive break from classic theism, Hartshorne categorically rejects the traditional distinction between agape and eros. He considers the attempt to exclude desire (eros) from the conception of divine love, fundamentally wrongheaded. Hartshorne purposely frames divine love in terms

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380 However, D. D. Williams recognizes the biblical theme of election and interprets it Christologically as the election of the world in willing communion. In the Hebrew Bible “the central meaning of God’s love is that he has chosen to make this one people his own, and this choice is an act of his love.” Spirit, 19. Yet, “the real sense of election is God’s loving communion between himself and his son. This is the spirit of love in God, and in his love God wills communion with all.” Ibid., 36–37. In other words “it is the sense of the New Testament that all are elected to salvation in Jesus Christ.” Ibid., 36.

381 Hartshorne, Vision, 192–93.

382 “It has been the contention of many theologians, most recently Nygren, that the divine love is entirely without ‘need’ or ‘desire’ and has nothing to gain from the good it bestows.” Hartshorne, Reality, 139. He goes on to point however, “I have been told that I here misinterpret Nygren’s intent, but that ‘he lays himself open to this misinterpretation.’ After some discussion with Nygren himself, I am happy to be able to think we are perhaps not far apart. In any case, the following discussion concerns the issue, not any particular theologian.” Ibid. However, it seems that Hartshorne and Nygren were, in fact, very far apart. D. D. Williams is explicit that agape and eros “are not necessarily opposed.” Spirit, 9. Further, D. D. Williams explicitly critiques Nygren’s view of agape. “We can see why it is inadequate to describe agape of God only as the spontaneous, unmotivated, uncalculated self-giving of the Holy God, regardless of the value of its object. Agape is first and primordially the spirit of communion willing the divine relationship between Father and Son as the ground and of the fulfilment of all things.” Ibid., 37.

383 On the traditional agape-eros dichotomy Hartshorne comments, “This is supposed to guarantee the unselfishness of the divine love, whereas (it is thought) the selfish loves, as such, spring from dependence and desire. This, I maintain, is not good religion but bad metaphysics. To will the good of others is the entire positive side of benevolence, and it adds nothing to this to insist that one must not, in willing the good of others, find in this good also good for one’s self.” Reality, 139. Again, he adamantly opposes such a conception saying, “They sought to maintain a distinction between love as desire, with an
of desire, saying, “Love is desire for the good of others, ideally all others, or I have yet to be told what it is.”\(^{384}\) In fact, he locates desire in benevolence itself which “is desire for the welfare of others.”\(^{385}\) Divine desire is not, however, partial or fickle but is “superrationally enlightened, an all-comprehending, never wearying desire for others’ good.”\(^{386}\) Nevertheless, desire entails that God’s happiness is at least partially dependent upon others’ happiness.\(^{387}\) In fact, according to Hartshorne, divine love is not merely desire; it relates to actual need.\(^{388}\) Once again this explicitly denies the classic ontological conception of self-sufficiency.\(^{389}\) This does not mean God would cease to be without sharing in any particular being. None has the power to threaten his existence, but rather, he is dependent upon all beings.\(^{390}\) In positing the divine need for love, Hartshorne is actually merely appealing back to his ontology of the internal relatedness of mutuality. In his element of possible gain or loss to the self, and love as purely altruistic benevolence; or again between sensuous and spiritual love, \(\textit{eros}\) and \(\textit{agape}\). But the distinction between lower and higher forms of love which is alone given meaning by experience—that is, which alone has meaning—is not of this character.” Hartshorne, \textit{Vision}, 116. D. D. Williams adds, “It simply is not true that the \(\textit{agape}\) of the New Testament is nothing but the grace of God poured out without motive upon the unworthy. It is also the spirit of rejoicing, of friendship, and of the new life with its foretaste of the blessedness of life with God and with the brethren in the full freedom of love.” \textit{Spirit}, 46.

\(^{384}\) Hartshorne, \textit{Vision}, 14. Of course, this is closely related to the theme of \(\textit{eros}\). D. D. Williams defines \(\textit{eros}\) as “the love of the beautiful, the true, and the good, the aspiration for fulfillment of the soul’s yearning.” \textit{Spirit}, 2. He distinguishes this from \(\textit{epithumia}\), which he defines as “desire, often with the connotation of impurity or lust.” Ibid., 2.


\(^{386}\) Ibid.

\(^{387}\) Ibid.

\(^{388}\) “God needs only one thing from the creatures: the intrinsic beauty of their lives, that is, their own true happiness, which is also his happiness in through his perfect appreciation of theirs. This appreciation is love, not something extra as a motive to love.” Ibid., 164.

\(^{389}\) “It is often maintained that the only really pure—or, at least, the highest—love is that which springs from no ‘need’ of the beloved, that which ‘overflows’ from a purely self-sufficient being who derives nothing from any, other. This is one of those apparently refined and superior thoughts of theologians which analysis shows to be really crude.” Ibid., 163.

\(^{390}\) “God ‘needs’ happiness in which to share, not because the alternative is for him to cease to be, for this is not a possible alternative, but because the exact beauty of his own life varies with the amount of beauty in lives generally. \textit{Some} other lives he must have, but his perfect power consists in this, that no matter what the creatures do with their free will they cannot bring about the destruction of the cosmos as
system, “the being which God is to gain from us is to be a certain particular case of mutual being, and . . . the only way to enjoy mutuality is to depend for it in part upon others, since such dependence is mutuality, is love.”\footnote{391} Such dependence is necessary for the social theory of reality, the ontology of love. Here we see clearly that Hartshorne’s conception of divine love amounts to a recapitulation of his ontology using the terminology of love. This may be clearly seen throughout his works as his conception of love relates directly to, and is predicated upon, his ontology as a whole.

**The Motivation of Divine Love:**

**Ethics and Altruism**

In regard to social relationships, Hartshorne raises the issue of egoism and altruism. He questions the traditional view that divine love cannot be at all egoistic but must be purely altruistic.\footnote{392} The question of the motivation of love and of the possible increase of love is at the heart of Hartshorne’s differences with traditional views.\footnote{393} Hartshorne challenges this conception saying, “Any conceivable mind will be both egoistic and altruistic, for selfhood is social or nothing.”\footnote{394} He unequivocally rejects the idea that love must be purely altruistic in the sense that the subject has no appreciation or feeling of enjoyment in the act(s) of goodness.\footnote{395} This, of such, they cannot reduce God to solitariness.” Ibid., 164.

\footnote{391}{Ibid., 120.}

\footnote{392}{On the contrary, “it can be shown by many lines of reasoning that the future welfare of others can be a motive as direct and genuine as one’s own future welfare.” Ibid., 146.}

\footnote{393}{For instance, he summarizes that for classic theism God serves others only “in the overflowing expression of his own glory or superabundance, said theologians. But he would have been just as glorious had no creation existed; for God eternally is all value, world or no world. Pure altruism is all we can say, from the side of God.” Ibid., 115.}

\footnote{394}{Ibid., 151.}

\footnote{395}{Because of his social theory of reality even altruism may be identified in “experience as a process of participation in the good of others, so that some sort of value accrues to the self through the very fact that value accrues to another self. This does not mean that all motivation is merely selfish. One may plan the welfare of others in the distant future, and expect no benefit oneself in that future from this welfare.” Ibid., 115. Moreover, because of the intersubjectivity of social reality all beings ought to}
course, amounts to an explicit rejection of the distinction between so-called need love and gift love. Rather, “the ultimate motive is love, which has two equally fundamental aspects, self-love and love for others.” God desires the well-being of all others and as internally related to all, “promoting their welfare contributes to his own.” Conversely, God is the supreme object of love and when one loves God, he being the all-inclusive one, that one thereby also loves others, and even oneself. Divine love, then, necessarily includes divine self-love, and love for God appreciate the good of others as the good of oneself but it is “only through this expected ignorance [that of humans] can there be a non-coincidence between the greater good and the good for self.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 141.

396 “No pragmatic or operational difference can be imagined between this love and the alleged love without need. What is there but word-idolatry in the traditional insistence upon the latter? And what, on any analogical basis, could be meant by perfect altruism or generosity but a complete finding of one’s own good in achieving the good of others?” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 140. Rather, in Hartshorne’s view, “theology may avoid the dangerous situation in which Nygren and many another find themselves of seeing nothing in common or analogous between human love—like that of father for child, or husband for wife, or Jesus for his human fellows—and the divine love. The sublime contrast between human and divine benevolence consists not in the sheer difference between need and no need but in the gap between abysmal ignorance and omniscience, and between partial and shifting inhibition of the interest of others by self-interest, as contrasted to certain and absolute coincidence of other-interest and self-interest.” Ibid., 141.

397 Hartshorne, *Vision*, 151. For D. D. Williams, “God’s agape is motivated in that love seeks out the other.” *Spirit*, 121. This is in direct opposition to the idea of wholly unmotivated love.

398 Hartshorne, *Vision*, 147. Hartshorne explains further regarding self or other motivated love. “Some ethical theories seek to furnish sanction for obligation by arguing that since sympathetic emotions are largely pleasant, it is to one’s interest to cultivate them. This implies that a man asking for a motive for doing good has for the time being ceased to love his fellows. But if the man has really and utterly put aside all concern for others, then almost all that is human must have left him. And insofar as he does still care about other persons, he has a motive for doing good to them—simply that he wants to do so. Must one have a motive for doing what one wants to do? This is to ask a motive for the motive one already has.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 104. He relates this to the tendency of a reader to identify herself with the characters in a book and share in their emotions; thus altruism is identifying oneself with the other. He states, “The very characters in a book and their joys and sorrows can easily mean more to us than our own remote past or future. Of course there are some who will argue that this is because we identify ourselves with the characters. Exactly! That is the point; that is altruism—participating in the life of another so that his needs become yours.” *Vision*, 149. Due to his distinctive view of the ever-different individuality of persons he can even hold that self-love implies “a difference between the self loving and the self loved, and that difference makes room for everything from one’s own future state to other persons, animals, God, as the self which may be loved.” Ibid. It is Buddhists who really went the limit in “qualifying personal identity to allow for partial identity with others.” Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, 107. For an argument that Hartshorne’s view maintains a common view with Zen Buddhism (as interpreted by Suzuki Daisetz) of the concrete in experience see Lawrence Willson, “Suzuki, Hartshorne, and Becoming-Now,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 2 (1975): 169–73. For instance, process, creative synthesis, sociality, and panpsychism are all represented in this form of Zen Buddhism.

399 Thus Hartshorne can agree that “we are told that love for God is to be the all-in-all of our
includes love for others and oneself. Nevertheless, for Hartshorne the fact that divine love includes self-love does not negate that it is also altruistic. Since the divine inclusion of all else does not negate the individuality of the other minds, divine love is not merely self-love. Moreover, God is not selfish but it is simply his nature as the all-inclusive sympathizer that all interests are his own interests. “God’s altruism toward the creatures is the exact opposite of man’s ‘love’ for him, since it is just as free from self-interest as the latter is exclusively constituted by it.” God has only one motive and that is love. Once again, it is manifest that love is itself the essential characteristic of Hartshorne’s ontology. Since all reality consists of minds interrelating (thus sympathizing, or loving) Hartshorne can state, “Apart from all this [love], we

motivation” and loving God is “exactly how we are to love the neighbor.” Omnipotence, 107. In this way, “Spinoza’s saying that we love God with the love with which he loves himself has thus a truth which he did not quite intend. Not that God loves exclusively himself and no other individual, but that God through loving all individuals for their own sakes makes them one with himself, with phases of his own life. Consequently, when we for our part love God this love is a factor in God’s enjoyment of himself, that is, in his self-love.” Hartshorne, Vision, 294.

401 Hartshorne, Vision, 114. This is because, “in God there is indeed a perfect agreement of altruism and egoism. For whatever good God may do to any being anywhere he himself, through his omniscient sympathy, will inevitably enjoy. The future welfare of all beings will be entirely included in the future satisfactions of God. Hence God can make no sacrifices, except in the sense that he does take upon himself the sufferings as well as the joys of his creatures. Theologians apparently sometimes overlooked the fact that such an agreement between love and self-interest depends upon the complete transparency or omniscience of the love.” Ibid., 161.

402 Hartshorne, Vision, 162.

403 For Ogden, “dipolar theism is an analysis in the general terms of philosophy of just that love [eminent love] and its dialectic.” Reality, 68.
have no self. It is our loves that make us anything worth mentioning.”

Hartshorne even goes so far as to proclaim that love “holds the universe together.”

This is understood within the context of panentheism, the metaphysics of “divine inclusiveness.” The very unity and harmony of the world is to be found in the universal sympathy that is divine love, which is “the only theme adequate to the cosmic symphony.”

In this cosmic harmony of divine love, tragedy remains but even it is turned into beauty as far as possible within the context of the panpsychic, indeterministic, interdependent, creative synthesis of minds.

**Divine Love and the Christ Metaphor**

Although Hartshorne does not ascribe the special status to Christ that historic Christianity would, he does point out that “a suffering God has for nearly twenty centuries been symbolized by the cross, while during nearly the same period philosophy has not known how to grasp the idea in technical terms.”

He criticizes classical theology for ascribing divinity to Christ, yet paradoxically denying passibility to divinity.

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406 Hartshorne, *Vision*, 290. Further, “it is love that explains cosmic structure, or the two are aspects of the same thing. What binds many into one is social realization.” Ibid. “Cosmic being is cosmic experience, is cosmic sociality or love.” Ibid., 347. The being “which all qualities embody is either nothing further describable, or it is cosmic love. And conversely, cosmic love is either nothing conceivable or it is the distinctive character of ‘being’ itself.” Ibid., 267. D. D. Williams, however, cautions that God not be thought of in Tillich’s way of seeing God as “being itself” because that would require that God lack “individuality in relationship.” He prefers “Being which is the source of the community of beings.” *Spirit*, 126.

407 Hartshorne, *Vision*, 216. As the universal bond, love is also the ultimate of beauty, “the beauty beyond all others, that with which life has a meaning, without which it does not.” Hartshorne, *Omnipotence*, 14. “The supreme example of such unity is the social harmony which is called love.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 100.

408 “It is through love that tragedy is, not indeed wholly prevented, but made bearable and given whatever beauty it is capable of. The love that can do this is that which expects to share with others the sufferings from which no actuality, human or superhuman—subject as all must be to chance and incompatibility—can entirely escape. . . . In its highest human and superhuman forms it simply is that beauty.” Hartshorne, *Reality*, 108.

409 Ibid., 123. “The cross is a sublime and matchless symbol of this, partly nullified by theological
The incarnation is supposed to solve the problem also. I can only say that if it is Jesus as literally divine who loves men, really loves them, then my point, so far as I can see, is granted. If not, then the problem is unsolved. Instead of simply adding Jesus to an unreconstructed idea of a non-loving God, should we not take him as proof that God really is love — just that, without equivocation?411

He goes on to point out astutely, “In the debate over the divinity of Jesus, this question of a deity who does not escape—or wish to escape—full share in our tribulations, has generally been lost sight of.”412 Neither does the idea of intra-trinitarian love resolve the deficiency of the classic conception since it does not provide an answer to the question of whether or not God truly loves creatures.413 Hartshorne blames this shortcoming on classical ontology, believing that his own ontology allows for a consistent conception of divine love and the God-world relationship.

410 “His [Jesus’] suffering is the exhibition of his perfection, which is not that of impassible being but of love which cannot be impassible.” D. D. Williams, Spirit, 160. Cf. ibid., 166.

411 Hartshorne, Vision, 165. “To say that Jesus was God, then, ought to mean that God himself is one with us in our suffering, that divine love is not essentially benevolence—external well-wishing—but sympathy, taking into itself our every grief.” Hartshorne, Reality, 147. “I suggest that much more than divine benevolence or human kinship was symbolized in the doctrine that the man on the cross was deity. The devotion of Jesus to his fellows was not mere benevolence, a wishing them well, or an eagerness to do things for them. It was a feeling of sympathetic identity with them in their troubles and sufferings, as well as in their joys, so that their cause and their tragedy became his; and he paid the price of a bitter death, rather than weaken the intimacy of his relation to the human lot, with all its suffering and failure. Jesus is a symbol of the solidarity of human weal and woe through sympathy, a solidarity from which the best man will least of all seek to escape.” Ibid.

412 Hartshorne, Reality, 147. However, if God is allowed passivity and relativity then Jesus “can still be, a living and unique symbol of the Christian or tragic view of divine love, a symbol taken as deity partly because in this way attention could be diverted from certain difficulties felt to arise if it be said directly that God sympathizes, suffers, and changes.” Ibid., 152.

413 “The Trinity is supposed to meet the requirements of giving God an object of love which yet agrees with his absolute self-sufficiency, and also an object of love ‘worthy’ to be loved with so perfect a love as the divine. This is done by making the lover and the beloved identical—yet not identical.” Hartshorne, Vision, 164. It “leaves the essential problem of the divine love unsolved. For either God loves the creatures or he does not. If he does, then their interests contribute to his interests, for love means nothing more than this. If he does not, then the essence of the religious belief in God is sacrificed, and one still has the question, How then is God related to the creature’s interests?” Ibid.
Summary of Hartshorne’s System

Thus God as the supreme, all-inclusive mind, the compound individual of the world, not identical or equivalent to the world, but more than the world, is love. Divine love is divine sympathy, the feeling of all others’ feelings, including the desire for the well-being of all the minds that make up the indeterministic, relativistic, spatio-temporalistic, panpsychism of social reality. As ethically immutable, God always loves all others with perfect adequacy yet also grows (aesthetic perfectibility) and enjoys the ever-increasing value of the world that he includes as the supremely relative all-inclusive compound individual of the world. Divine love as love for others also amounts to self-love since God himself includes the others (panentheism), but this does not detract from divine altruism because the divine all-inclusiveness does not remove the individuality of the minds that are included in God. God as universal subject is the supreme lover of all other minds and as universal object he is also the supreme loved one of all other minds (though not the sole lover or loved one). God’s divine love for the world as universal subject eminently affects him, partly determining his life in joy and suffering. The world’s love for God as the universal object deeply affects the world and partly determines the course of reality. God’s love is absolute in that it is absolutely relative; it always corresponds perfectly to all minds. As the supreme mind God is the supreme lover, the eminently relative all-sympathizer, the self-loving lover of all.

[414] The growth or change in the content of God’s universal sympathy, or love, is predicated on the all-inclusive nature of God’s knowledge (feeling) as the supremely relative universal subject. Hartshorne, *Divine*, 17. Love receives new content and value because God changes every instant according to the internally related sum of all changes in the world.
The Extent of the Conflict of Interpretations

Conflicts between the Models

Considering that the process critique of classic theism has already been clearly presented, the transcendent-voluntarist critique of process theology should not be overlooked.\textsuperscript{415} Although Henry recognizes some shortcomings of classic theism and works to correct them, he is nevertheless utterly opposed to the tenets of process theology.\textsuperscript{416} Among the numerous reasons that Henry notes for rejecting process theology, the doctrine of revelation is of great importance. Whereas Henry posits divine revelation as the source of theology, process theology utilizes experience and reason as the fundamental sources.\textsuperscript{417} Henry, moreover, is further irked by the inconsistent use of Scripture that he considers prevalent in process theology.\textsuperscript{418} Another clean break with process theology comes over the process rejection of the transcendence of the


\textsuperscript{416} The extent of C. F. H. Henry’s concern over process theology is evident in that he devotes an entire chapter to it in volume 6 of his \textit{God, Revelation, and Authority}. Henry notes that while process theology attempts “to preserve literally such traditional metaphysical attributes of God as eternity, immutability, impassivity and immateriality, they actually redefine them within the requirements of process theory and preserve them only by linguistic obfuscation.” \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:73. Notably, W. Norris Clarke admits that traditional Christian theism needs to adapt to some process concerns if it is to adequately address God as personal, loving, and involved in the world. \textit{The Philosophical Approach to God: A Neo-Thomist Perspective} (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Wake Forest University, 1979).

\textsuperscript{417} “Process philosophy further dilutes the biblical revelation by excluding propositional conceptual content from God’s self-revelation, and by correlating God’s salvific activity not primarily with historical redemptive acts but rather with man’s inner faith response to an interpersonal divine human encounter.” C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 5:68.

\textsuperscript{418} “There is every reason to press those who occasionally stress the congruity of some of their conclusions with the Bible to indicate on just what basis of scriptural sensitivity they venture these traditional affirmations about God, and by what divine authority they reject other passages that contradict process philosophy perspectives.” Ibid., 5:63. Nash comments, “Most process theologians appear to have a highly selective hermeneutic. Scripture is welcomed as authoritative when it agrees with panentheist opinions.” Nash, “Process,” 22.
sovereign God.\textsuperscript{419} Process theism’s attempt to provide an alternative to a “static” God has rather provided merely a “projected reconstitution of God’s nature [that] actually deprives deity of major perfections and activities characteristic of the living God of the Bible, and results in a view of the divine that is inadequate philosophically, scripturally, and experientially.”\textsuperscript{420} Thus, one can readily see the striking contrast between process theology’s apparent lack of distinction between the natural and supernatural, resulting in some “inner divine necessity,” and Henry’s insistence that the divine nature be understood “in terms of divine voluntarism.”\textsuperscript{421} Whereas Henry posits divine determinism where “every creaturely activity incarnates God’s aims to a higher or lesser degree,” process allows for intersubjectivity in open process.\textsuperscript{422} Thus process theology makes “divine aseity and independence of the universe . . . impossible notions,” undercutting the ground of evangelical theism.\textsuperscript{423}

Another criticism is the supposed lack of personality in process theology, a point of considerable debate even among process theologians.\textsuperscript{424} In conjunction with this, Henry proposes

\textsuperscript{419} C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:59. This includes any intimation that “the universe is necessary to God’s being.” Ibid., 5:217. For instance, the process “theory that created reality is necessary to God, and is in some respects divine, departs in crucial ways from the biblical revelation of God.” Ibid., 5:68. For Carson, any valid doctrine will result in “an understanding of God who is, on the one hand, sovereign and transcendent and, on the other, personal and loving. On set of attributes or characteristics will not be used to domesticate another set.” “How?” 312.

\textsuperscript{420} C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 5:68.

\textsuperscript{421} Ibid., 5:62. Henry claims process philosophy “sponsors a monodimensional view of reality that evaporates the antithesis of supernatural and natural.” Ibid., 6:18. “If God created out of inner necessity as say process philosophers, why as creatures should we glorify and worship him? Would not God’s creation of man and the world simply exemplify ontological determinism? However much process thinkers may relate all the evils in history to divine suffering love, these evils nonetheless become conditions that humans must bear because a self-satisfying deity could not avoid fashioning our universe.” Ibid., 6:289.

\textsuperscript{422} Ibid., 5:178. “Process theology proffers still another alternative. For the biblical doctrine of election it substitutes the much diluted notion of divine persuasion.” Ibid., 6:97. “Most evangelical theists insist, however, that to contradict or to constrict divine omnipotence, transcendence, and independence, undermines a meaningful concept of God.” Ibid., 6:60.

\textsuperscript{423} Ibid., 6:62.

\textsuperscript{424} “Process theology adduces no persuasive considerations for requiring that God be personal; in the absence of divine self-revelation, it cannot effectively refute Buddhist and other nontheistic claims that personal characterization of the absolute falsifies the nature of reality.” Ibid., 5:181. “In the writings of
that process theology lacks “an articulate doctrine of divine self-revelation of a deity who loves the world and man and with whom personal fellowship is possible.” This, in the end Henry believes that process theology “equates God’s being with the being of the universe.” Such a “one-layer view of reality provides no consistent alternative to naturalism.” This “obscures the deity’s ever-active relation to man and the world” by “substituting a necessary divine creation of the universe for voluntary supernatural creation, and by excluding the once-for-all miraculous as a misreading of natural processes.” Moreover, the notion of a becoming God that grows is unacceptable to traditional Christianity. The very idea of a dipolar God is also impossible due to the divine simplicity. This dovetails with the process admission of temporality in the divine nature, which Henry summarily rejects.

some process thinkers, the personal God of theism appears to be replaced by an impersonal God. This is a point of major disagreement among process thinkers.” Nash, “Process,” 16. Donald G. Bloesch criticizes, “Even those who view God in personal terms do not really think of God as an absolute individual who reigns over the universe as a Sovereign Lord (as in Reformed theology).” “Process Theology and Reformed Theology,” in Process Theology (ed. R. H. Nash; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1987), 40.

426 Ibid. Yet, if “equates” means identical, this is not actually Hartshorne’s position.
427 Ibid., 5:142.
428 Ibid., 5:68.
429 “Process philosophy imports change and development into aspects of the very nature of God and consequently speaks of a growing God.” Ibid. Yet, “if God is in fact a growing God, if God does change in important respects, can we any longer confidently and truly say what God in truth is?” Ibid., 6:64. Further, “if God is not sovereign and omniscient but growing, cannot his own ability to tell the truth also expand, and if so, have we any basis for regarding even divine revelation as unsubject to revision?” Ibid.
430 “Any ontological gradation of divine attributes can be carried through only at the expense of God’s simplicity and immutability.” Ibid., 5:135. Henry calls this a “schizophrenic God who embodies radically opposed modes of reality, a deity absolute in some aspects of his nature, but relative in others. Mere semantic manipulation of the metaphor of polarity will not bridge the logical difficulties, however, nor will it obscure the violence done to the nature of the Judeo-Christian God.” Ibid., 6:63. Moreover, “the notion of God as partly nonexistent and yet capable of existing fully is a speculative monstrosity; no philosopher could seriously have proposed such a concept unless he had imbibed modern evolutionary theory too long and too much.” Ibid., 6:65.
431 “Neo-Protestant process philosophers react against the speculative exclusion of time-distinctions from God’s range of knowledge by unjustifiably importing time into God’s very nature and
Moreover, the classic axiom of ontological immutability is removed in Hartshorne’s thought.\textsuperscript{432} Such removal of immutability might cast doubt upon the permanence of God, or whether he might even be destroyed himself.\textsuperscript{433} Thus, Henry contends, “making process or change or growth an ultimate perfection is one of the prime weaknesses of process philosophy.”\textsuperscript{434} In conjunction with the issue of temporality and mutability is the issue of God being enriched or appreciating any external value, which Hartshorne posits as essential to divine love, and Henry rejects as ontologically unacceptable.\textsuperscript{435} Moreover, Henry criticizes the lack of willed providence in process theology’s view of history.\textsuperscript{436} Henry also rejects the process critique that Christianity makes God unrelated to the world.\textsuperscript{437} Beyond this, Henry is also adamantly against process theology’s removal of many other Christian distinctives.\textsuperscript{438} Both the transcendent-

making it an essential aspect of divine life.” Ibid., 5:272.

\textsuperscript{432} Henry criticizes Hartshorne’s attempt to “combine immutability with change” calling it “a feat as difficult as riding two horses moving in opposite directions.” Ibid., 5:290. He criticizes further, “Hartshorne has clearly substituted a conjectural deity for the biblical God who reveals himself. A doctrine of divine ‘immutability’ based on such tortuous exposition is more confusing than true or useful.” Ibid., 5:291.

\textsuperscript{433} “If God’s ontic independence is to some extent denied, so that some aspect of his being or nature depends upon external causes, then these causes could just as readily destroy as constitute his reality.” Ibid., 6:65.

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., 6:66.

\textsuperscript{435} Henry comments, “Involvement of God in temporal processes compromises his divine transcendence and portrays him as becoming progressively enriched in experience with the passing of time. The result of Hartshorne’s panpsychism is loss of the omniscient and immutable God of the Bible; God becomes so meshed with historical processes that he internally experiences the quality of evil and is steeped in inner conflict.” Ibid., 6:272.

\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., 6:457.

\textsuperscript{437} For Henry, God can relate to the world and “God’s absoluteness” is not “incompatible with his real relationship to others.” Ibid., 6:20. Henry states, “Process theologians err twice over when they league evangelical theism with an immovable and uncompassionate Absolute and when they depict biblical writers as champions of a changing God who in some respects depends upon the universe.” Ibid., 6:68. However, “Christian theism disallows intrinsically necessary divine relationships to man and the world, and insists on God’s essential independence” in opposition to process theology’s position of a “mutual relationship” which “obscures God’s causal efficacy in relation to the universe.” Ibid., 6:20.

\textsuperscript{438} For instance, process theology rejects the doctrine of the Trinitarian divine life. Moreover, he notes, “One searches the philosophies of Whitehead and Hartshorne in vain, moreover, for any significant
voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models thus explicitly reject the other’s ontology and in devastating fashion.

The conflict of interpretations between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models of divine love is readily apparent. As has been seen, the transcendent-voluntarist model of divine love retains many of the axioms of classic theism, which were explicitly and enthusiastically criticized and rejected by the immanent-experientialist model. No less enthusiastically has the transcendent-voluntarist model rejected the immanent-experientialist model of love. It seems that such mutual exclusiveness was inevitable due to the utterly conflicting ontologies and the complete dependence of both models of love on them. The respective conceptions of love are bound up in mutually exclusive ontologies. Hence, there could be no resolution of the conflict of interpretations without drastic revision of one or both ontologies. Accordingly, the transcendent-voluntarist model of divine love is irreconcilably opposed to that of the immanent-experientialist model.

Specifically, there is an irreconcilable difference between the transcendent, sovereignly willed, unaffected and unenriched, election love of the transcendent-voluntarist model and the all-sympathetic, immanent, affected and enriched, direct and adequate, desire-filled feeling love of christology.”

439 Mahoney, writing from a Thomist perspective, considers Aquinas’s doctrine of love to be superior because “in Hartshorne’s doctrine God must create some world or the other; in Aquinas creation is totally an act of gratuitous love. The latter is a much freer act of love than the former. And even by human standards the more freely given love seems to be the superior. In Hartshorne’s conception of God in loving he receives as much as he gives; in Aquinas the divine love is so radically different from creaturely love, that the divine love causes the good it loves, rather than being caused by it. Once again by human standards the latter ranks higher than the former, being more altruistic. On both scores the thomistic conception is superior, precisely because God cannot gain anything from his love of creatures, being beyond the realm of being modified.” “Hartshorne,” 137.
the immanent-experiential model.\textsuperscript{440} Whereas in transcendent voluntarism divine love is impassible and divine suffering is impossible, in immanent-experientialism, divine love is supremely passible, all-inclusively sympathetic joy and suffering.\textsuperscript{441} The idea of suffering as part of divine love is categorically rejected by the former model but essential to the latter model. In the former, divine immutability rules out the possibility of God receiving enriching, or value-increasing love, but in the latter, the divine life is increased in value and enriched by internally relating to and receiving each and every instance of love in the universe. In the latter, it is proposed that it is impossible to love an immutable being, whereas in the former a mutable being is unworthy of worship, much less worshipful love.\textsuperscript{442} Closely related is Henry’s charge that process theology “cannot avoid replacing agapē with eros as the nature of divine love.”\textsuperscript{443} Specifically, in the transcendent-voluntarist model God acts in history “out of self-giving love” whereas in the immanent-experientialist model God acts “to expedite his own fulfillment.”\textsuperscript{444} Finally, the immanent-experientialist model indiscriminately universalizes the divine love, in direct contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model, which limits divine love to those whom God

\textsuperscript{440} The models directly rule one another out even at their foundations. For instance, D. D. Williams criticizes the transcendent-voluntarist model saying, “The traditional assertion that the will of God is the ultimate cause of every event cannot be preserved without qualification, because a will which allows no effective power to any other cannot be a loving will.” \textit{Spirit}, 128.

\textsuperscript{441} Hartshorne criticizes, “God’s love for us does not, for classical theists, mean that God sympathizes with us, is rejoiced or made happy by our good joy or good fortune or grieved by our sorrow or misery. Rather God’s love is like the sun’s way of doing good, which benefits the myriad forms of life on earth but receives no benefits from the good it produces.” \textit{Omnipotence}, 4.

\textsuperscript{442} “But humans can hardly be expected to worship everything that concerns their roving intellect; we cannot in any event worship permanently what is but relative and changing, and such entities moreover are hardly worthy of even momentary worship.” C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation}, 6:289.

\textsuperscript{443} Ibid. “It considers the universe in all its development as necessary to God as God is to the world.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{444} Ibid., 6:289–90. “If God ‘creates’ out of inner necessity, and is motivated by eros rather than agapē, his relationship to space-time realities is not that of the Judeo-Christian God. The New Testament nowhere portrays the climax of God’s love as divine-human interdependence or as divine absorption of human wickedness Scripture declares it, rather, to be God’s costly redemption of sinners from the penalty and corruption of their evil ways, a redemption available only to those who turn to the Savior.” Ibid., 6:69.
sovereignly elects to bestow favor upon. It appears evident that both models cannot be maintained simultaneously, and this suggests the possibility for another paradigm of divine love that assumes neither ontology.

Dissatisfaction in Recent Theology

A number of perspectives on divine love do not fit neatly within the transcendent-voluntarist or immanent-experientialist model. Therefore, it is important to take note of some major breaks from both models regarding the concept of divine love. Questions regarding love in the God-world relationship continue to be raised from diverse traditions, ranging to issues of ontology such as immutability, impassibility, determinism, et al. The following discussion will mention a number of areas of dissatisfaction that have been expressed in relation to the two models above including the reciprocality of divine love and the question of whether divine love is to be thought of as pure giving (thematic agape), or as giving and receiving, including brief mention of some inextricable ontological issues. At the outset, it must be understood that the theologians referenced below may voice similar dissatisfaction regarding a particular aspect of divine love and yet hold vastly differing perspectives on other aspects of divine love and/or severe disagreements regarding the underlying issues regarding the metaphysics of the God-world relationship.

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445 “Process theology only adds to its problems by diluting even the love of God. On the one hand, it excludes miraculous divine redemption in deference to evolutionary continuity and scientific uniformity; on the other, it professes to universalize God’s election love of the Hebrews.” Ibid., 6:289.

446 There are many more than two options, however they are framed. See Nash, “Process,” 21.

447 It is not the purpose of this section to provide a summary or overview of the theologians that voice the dissatisfaction but to evidence the call for improvement regarding the theological definition of divine love in the context of the God-world relationship.
The Relationality of Divine Love

A major point of contention has revolved around the notion of reciprocality in the divine-world relationship.⁴⁴⁸ A number of theologians have called for emphasis upon reciprocal divine love—in opposition to the transcendent-voluntarist model—yet not necessarily to the extent of the internal relatedness prevalent in the immanent-experientialist model. For instance, Vincent Brümmer contends that “love must by its very nature be a relationship of free mutual give and take, otherwise it cannot be love at all.”⁴⁴⁹ Elizabeth Carmichael thus promotes friendship love that “embraces both giving and receiving.”⁴⁵⁰ On the other hand, Martin D’Arcy likewise gives a great deal of prominence to both giving and receiving in love; however, rather than calling for reciprocality as it relates to God, he limits divine love to gratuitous self-giving and rules out divine reception of love.⁴⁵¹ Other theologians struggle with the issue of the God-world relationship and reciprocal relations. For instance, Karl Rahner wrestles with allowing genuine relationality to God, maintaining that God in Godself is “strictly nonrelative or absolute” but is “genuinely related to the world in God’s other,” that is, Jesus.⁴⁵² It appears that Rahner recognizes the need for some relationality but nevertheless relegates it to a symbolic relationship that does

⁴⁴⁸ Brümmer points out that, in tradition, “love has generally been taken to be an attitude of one person toward another, rather than as a relation between persons. This way of thinking about love can probably be explained by the fact that western thought has suffered from a systematic blind spot for relations.” Model, 33.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 161. Brümmer defines love as “intentional, evaluative, disposition,” and “reciprocal” and for him love always “entails a desire for reciprocation.” Ibid., 155. He goes on, “Love wants to be returned, required, and in this way fulfilled in a relationship of mutual love. Of course this does not exclude the possibility of unrequited love. . . . In this respect love is more than mere beneficence.” Ibid. Cf. Post, Theory.

⁴⁵⁰ For Carmichael, “the love of friendship alone gives a wholly satisfactory account of love precisely because it embraces both giving and receiving.” Friendship, 4.

⁴⁵¹ “God has shown to us, so far as is compatible with the unchanging plenitude of his nature, a love like to that of self-donating and self-giving.” D’Arcy, Mind, 245.

⁴⁵² M. L. Taylor, God, 193. This seems to be Rahner’s solution to the paradox of God’s utter timelessness and immutability and God’s incarnation and personal action in the world. Taylor critiques that, “unfortunately, the concept of the real symbol does not seem to offer much clarification of how God can be relative in God’s other while remaining in Godself nonrelative.” Ibid., 202.
not touch God in Godself. On the contrary, John Burnaby, an Anglican expert on Augustine’s view of love, criticizes such a “‘one-way’ relationship, a giving without receiving” as “strangely inadequate.” Stephen G. Post also critiques such a view, stating that one-directional love is “essentially negative in that it undermines the circular flow of giving and receiving in which agape is sustained and supported.”

Accordingly, numerous theologians posit that a mutual relationship between God and the world means that God gives and receives. For Thomas Oden, such reciprocality is a feature of all love. On this point, Jürgen Moltmann concurs, seeing divine love as a reciprocal (though unequal) relationship between God and the world. From yet another perspective, Wolfhart Pannenberg adds that love seeks response and as such “lets the other be.” For Sallie McFague, God gracefully loves us and “our responsive love . . . fills a need in God the lover.” For the proponents of open theism, love “involves sensitivity to the other. Because God loves the creatures, he is open to their experiences.” Thomas Jay Oord, a self-described Evangelical-

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455 “God’s love for humanity, like all love, is reciprocal. God prizes the world, and values especially human creatures, who have the freedom and imagination to respond to God and to share with God consciousness and compassion.” Thomas C. Oden, The Living God (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 121. However, he is careful to note that love may include both self-love and unrequited love, “Love may remain completely unreturned without ceasing to be love. Love for one’s beloved is not finally dependent upon its being reciprocated.” Ibid., 120.


457 “The Spirit is the power of love that lets the other be.” Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology (trans. G. W. Bromiley; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:427. Further “it is an element of the creative love that wills the existence of creatures. It waits for the response of creatures in which they fulfill their destiny.” Ibid., 439. Vacek also uses a great deal of language that suggests a reciprocal relationship. For instance, he sees the human response to God’s love as free and unforced. Love, 188–90.

Process theologian, agrees, yet goes further, stating that “all existence is essentially related and reciprocal.”

**Divine Lover as Sole Giver**

In conceptions of love as a reciprocal relationship between God and the world, the aspects of giving and receiving rise to the fore, receiving a great deal of attention in recent discussion of divine love. God as the supreme giver is an ancient conception of God that retains a great deal of traction in recent theology. Many theologians see God as the giver who bestows value on those he loves, rather than recognizing value. This may be called “creative love.” For some, God creates and bestows all value unilaterally; there is no value that God did not sovereignly create. For others, love does not necessarily create its object but does create value in it by loving it. The former view rules out a reciprocal relationship between God and others, while the latter may allow for such mutuality.

The traditional view, adopted by the transcendent-voluntarist model, frames God’s giving as the former type of bestowal love, a pure beneficence (thematic agape). Emil Brunner defines

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460 Oord, “Matching,” 313. For Oord, mutual relationship between God and the world is an ontological kind of friendship love (philia). Oord has recently argued for a form of panentheism that he calls “Essential Kenosis Theology” such that divine love for creatures is necessary and essential to God; “God loves necessarily” and “cannot not love.” Nature, 129. Cf. Thomas Jay Oord, Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2010).

461 Cole-Turner, “God’s,” 26. Singer contends this bestowed value is true of all love, saying, “Love creates a new value, one that is not reducible to the individual or objective value that something may also have. This further type of valuing I call bestowal.” Nature, 5. Cf. Brümmer, Model, 166.

462 For example, Brümmer comments, the “fact that I am loved by another does indeed bestow a value on me which I would not otherwise have had.” Ibid., 131. Singer adds, “Love does not create its object; it merely responds to it creatively.” Nature, 15.

463 In this view: “Love is sheer gratuity.” Singer, Nature, 15. For an interesting discussion of whether it is even conceivable that God extends benevolence to all equally see Paul Helm, “Can God Love the World?” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God (ed. K. J. 208
this as “gracious love.”  God does not receive anything, but only gives. Millard Erickson concurs saying, “[God’s] love for us and for his other creatures is completely disinterested.” C. S. Lewis famously framed this position with the dichotomy between “need love” and “gift love.” Divine love is only gift love but never need love. This distinction is very closely related to the traditional thematic distinction between agape and eros, wherein agape is a purely beneficent love (gift love) and eros is a desirous love (need love). In contrast to the immanent-experientialist model, and in keeping with the transcendent-voluntarist model, this thematic distinction between agape and eros continues to influence recent theologians. For instance, Donald Bloesch explicitly states, “In Christian perspective divine love is agape, not eros.”


465 Erickson, Christian, 319. Rahner also retains the transcendent and gratuitous self-communication which is antithetical to the immanent-experientialist model. For a study of Rahner’s conception from a process perspective, see M. L. Taylor, God. Cf. Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 174.

466 For instance, C. S. Lewis says, “God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them.” Four, 127. H. Ray Dunning frames divine aseity in terms of love, stating that “God’s love is spontaneous. . . . Its cause is contained within itself, not in anything else. It is not called forth by external causes but breaks forth by itself.” Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 1988), 200–201. Dunning goes on to frame the divine attributes in the context of love; see ibid., 200–207.

467 This dissertation has already considered the continuing impact of Nygren’s influential work on this topic. Others have also continued this distinction. Brunner, for instance, stresses the traditional difference between agape and eros and states that, as opposed to eros, divine agape “does not seek value, but it creates value or gives value.” Christian, 186. He believes that this kind of love is completely foreign to human love. Karl Barth maintains the agape-eros distinction, at least in part, saying that agape “has its basis in the good being and action of God” whereas eros is based “in the corruption of man.” Church Dogmatics (trans. G. T. Thomson; 5 vols.; Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 4/2:747.

468 Donald G. Bloesch, God, the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006), 146. Erickson comments similarly, “God’s love is an unselfish interest in us for our sake. It is ‘agape, not eros.’” Christian, 319. Bloesch goes on, “In evangelical religion love is neither unrequited longing (eros) nor submission to a moral code (nomos) but unmerited grace (agape). It is not the passion to possess (eros) nor the duty to attend (nomos) but the loving-kindness that bestows (agape).” God, 148. Further, he states, “God loves us not in order to fulfill himself (he is already fulfilled) but in order to redeem the sinner.” “Process,” 46. Dunning contends that agape “was not generated by the potentiality of its object to meet a need in God. It arose out of the fullness of the Divine Being. It is disinterested love, concern for the well-being of the object, in no way based on the worth of the object.” Grace, 195.
D’Arcy, however, rejects the dichotomy between agape and eros claiming they are “not enemies but friends.” However, for D’Arcy, this rejection only relates to human love since divine love is pure agape (beneficence) without eros. Thus, D’Arcy’s view remains within the traditional conception of divine love.

Despite strong support for the transcendent-voluntarist notion of divine love as pure beneficence (thematic agape), other recent theologians strongly react to this limitation of divine love, considering it to be inadequate as a description. In fact, Moltmann goes as far as to identify God with eros, “the creative Spirit of God is himself Eros, for out of his creations and in his creations his beauty shines forth and again awakens eros in its turn.” Oord contends that all three love archetypes—agape, eros, and philia—apply to aspects of divine love. For him, elements of eros, in the sense of a desirous or value-recognizing love, are apparent in the fact that the trinitarian persons love one another as valuable. Brümmer also vehemently objects to love that is merely beneficence, noting that love “entails beneficence, but unlike beneficence it also seeks a relationship.” Moreover, in purely beneficent love, a giving that excludes divine love that is merely beneficence, noting that love “entails beneficence, but unlike beneficence it also seeks a relationship.”

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469 D’Arcy, *Mind*, 304. He makes an interesting distinction between essence and existence relating to love. For him, the love related to essence is of the mind and refers to a self-love. The love related to existence is passion and other love. *Ibid.*, 318.

470 C. Osborne contends that the distinction is inadequate not just for God but according to a review of the usage of the word in Greek philosophy. She contends that “both eros and agape can be used to designate love characterized by either generous or self-interested concerns.” *Eros*, 70. For her, eros is characteristic of love in the sense of the myth of Cupid which conveys “the inexplicability of loving someone.” *Ibid.*, 72. She thus rejects the dichotomy between acquisitive and generous love.


472 Oord, “Matching,” 336–37. This he does both philosophically and with selected biblical examples, although whether he systematically considers all biblical data to support the ontology underlying his thesis is questionable.

473 He states, “If eros elements are constitutive of divine love in Trinity, this places into jeopardy Nygren’s claim that God’s love is exclusively agape.” *Ibid.*, 138. Moreover, Oord also emphasizes philia, or friendship love which is contingent upon human response. For further information regarding the three archetypes see *Ibid.*, 338–40. Cf. C. A. Boyd, “Perichoretic,” 15–30.

receiving, God may only be “said to care for us but not about us.”

Oden also objects to the dichotomy between *agape* and *eros*. For him, God’s love does include grace (unmerited favor), but it is not thus unqualified benevolence. Oden concurrently employs the thematic categories of *agape* and *eros* in recognition of their co-existence and, even, complementarity in divine love. Accordingly, he unequivocally rejects the separation of *agape* and *eros* that was exemplified in the work of Nygren. In keeping with this rejection, Oord proposes that the only adequate conception of divine love requires give and take. However, before conceptions of divine love as a receiving love are considered, it is important to look at this dichotomy as it relates to election love and universal love.

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475 Ibid., 132. He goes on, “Pure giving without receiving is not love but mere beneficence.” Ibid., 240.

476 “All things are loved by God, but all things are not loved in the same way by God, since there are degrees of capacity, receptivity, and willingness among varied creatures to receive God’s love.” T. C. Oden, *Living*, 118. “For Arminians, God’s love is simply incompatible with unconditional election or irresistible grace within a nonuniversalist scheme.” Roger E. Olson, “Election/Predestination,” in *The Westminster Handbook to Christian Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Knox, 2004), 169. Yet, for T. C. Oden, God’s love is constant and not dependent upon the reception of its objects. In Hosea one beholds the “eternal One who is in love with a beloved partner who tragically does not return that love. Yet God’s way of loving does not cease, as if contingent on its being received . . . [This expresses] the intimacy, constancy, and faithfulness of God’s covenant love.” *Living*, 82.

477 He explains that “love is a confluence of two seemingly paradoxical impulses: the hunger for the desired object [eros] and the desire to do good for the beloved [agape]. One impulse takes and the other gives.” T. C. Oden, *Living*, 119.

478 “Although *agapē* and *eros* seem to be opposites, they may come together and flow in balanced simultaneity and support each other’s impulses.” Ibid. “Both involve a yearning: love as *eros* yearns for the self’s fulfillment through another; love as *agapē* yearns for the other’s fulfillment even at a cost to oneself.” Ibid., 119. Therefore, “to separate *eros* and *agapē* or to oppose them or set them absolutely off against each other as alternatives (cf. Nygren, *Agapē and Eros*) is to view love incompletely and to fail to understand how one dimension may strengthen the other.” Ibid. Similarly, see Post, *Theory*, 33.

479 Oord states, “If a more adequate, biblical conception of divine love is to be offered, one must conceive of this love as involving give and take. God must be mutable and passible if the central biblical notion ‘God is love’ is to make sense. The God whose love is only *agape* (in the sense of *giving*) is a God whose love is incomprehensible.” “Matching,” 277. Oord himself defines *agape* as “an intentional response to promote well-being when responding to that which has generated ill-being.” Thomas Jay Oord, “The Love Racket: Defining Love and Agape for the Love-and-Science Research Program,” *Zygon* 40 (2005): 934.
Election Love vs. Universal Love

The transcendent-voluntarist model promotes election love, that is, love limited by God’s decision as to whom he will love (unto salvation). The immanent-experientialist model on the other hand supposes that divine love is universal and applicable to all, since God is essentially love and, as such, essentially related to all in a sympathetic, indeterministic relationship. This division over particular or universal love remains controversial. Some theologians continue to support the notion that God’s salvific love is reserved for those whom he chooses, in harmony with the transcendent-voluntarist model but in opposition to the immanent-experientialist model. Others contend that God’s love is universal. God extends love to all and this contradicts both the transcendent-voluntarist model and the immanent-experientialist model. Many who accept this second option presume that God has the freedom to love or not to love creatures, but chooses to love all and in such a way that humans have the freedom to respond or not respond to God’s love. Here “love is by definition free.” In opposition to process theology, God has

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480 The position of universal divine love does not necessarily entail universalism in the sense that God saves all. It would lead to universalism if the divine will were conceived as the only will determinative for salvation and God truly desires the salvation of all. However, the position of universalism is itself an implicit critique of the limited election love of the transcendent-voluntarist model, incompatible with the strong emphasis on divine judgment and election of some but not others to the benefit of divine love. One example is the neo-orthodox position that God’s love will overcome his wrath. For a critical discussion see C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, 5:138, 358.

481 This position may also contend that God loves all with “common” love but not with a love unto salvation. So Packer, “Love.” Cf. Vanhoozer, Remythologizing, 151.

482 For Dunning, divine love as a “manifestation” of the divine nature “is universal rather than selective.” God loves “all without discrimination. None is excluded.” Grace, 196–97. Cf. T. C. Oden, Living, and Fritz Guy, “The Universalsity of God’s Love,” in The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism (ed. C. H. Pinnock; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1995), 31–49. Brümmer believes this notion that God unilaterally chooses whom he loves and “causes us to love him . . . seems to turn God into a kind of Heavenly Conquistador.” Model, 159–60. He goes on, “If we are to account for the personal nature of the relation between God and human persons, we shall require a less deterministic view on the relation between grace and freedom than that entailed by this concept of love.” Ibid., 54. Cf. Singer, Nature, 293. Oord comments, “How can we say that God is loving if God arbitrarily chooses not to elect some to receive salvation? Evangelicals in the Arminian, Wesleyan, Holiness, and other traditions have a history of pointing out that this doctrine sacrifices divine love.” “Matching,” 54.

483 Brümmer, Model, 175. This is most commonly considered the Wesleyan/Arminian approach to divine love and T. C. Oden is an excellent exemplar of this viewpoint. See also Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, A
ontological independence from the world. Others support the immanent-experientialist model that God loves all without distinction according to the essential (love) relation of God’s nature.

These categories thus clearly relate to the issue of God’s will and power. The transcendent-voluntarist model’s position that God’s will is primary, and always carried out according to his omnipotence, remains well supported. However, for many theologians, this position would mean that there is no free will for agents other than God. This is especially problematic for those who hold that love requires freedom. The immanent-experientialist

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*Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 1972). The Arminian perspective highlights some drastic differences within contemporary Evangelicalism. “In spite of profound agreement about the basic meanings of election and predestination as expressions of God’s sovereignty in salvation, evangelical theologians fall into sharp disagreement with each other over their precise interpretations.” R. E. Olson, “Election,” 168. R. E. Olson notes three categories: the classical Calvinist, the classical Arminian, and the paradoxical approach. Ibid. Whereas the transcendent-voluntarist model would be most similar to the classical Calvinist view, T. C. Oden represents a classical Arminian view that has significant impact on the conception of divine love. Such an Arminian view reacts against the notion of “restricted love.” See Jerry L. Walls and Joseph Dongell, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 50–55. Pinnock comments, “The future is not settled.” Moreover, God “takes risks and jeopardizes his own sovereignty.” “Systematic,” 125. Cf. Pinnock, *Grace of God.* In this sense, “the fact that God allows us as persons to retain the ability to turn away from him, excludes any form of universalism which holds that God’s love *must* triumph in the end and cause all to love him.” Brümmer, *Model,* 179. Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic,* 1:438.

484 God is free from any necessity to create a world. Rice states, “The world owes its existence to God’s free choice, not to metaphysical necessity.” “Process,” 185. Cf. ibid., 184.

485 Oord, for example, utterly rejects divine determinism in favor of what he calls essential free-will theism. This differs from the second view above, which he calls “provisional” free-will theism, in that God *essentially* loves and *essentially* allows free will, meaning that God lacks the power to unilaterally coerce. Oord, “Matching,” 308, 320. More recently Oord has referred to his view as “Essential Kenosis Theology.” Nature, 129.

486 For instance, Erickson contends that God’s omnipotence controls all of history according to his universal providence: “God is in control of all that occurs.” *Theology,* 437. Furthermore, his “will is never frustrated. . . . What he chooses to do, he accomplishes, for he has the ability to do it.” Ibid., 303. Divine actions are according to the “good pleasure of his will” and as such his “decisions and actions are not determined by considerations of any factors outside himself, but are simply a matter of his own free choice.” Ibid., 304.

487 This is despite the claims of compatibilism that God does not force human actions but renders those human actions certain. Cf. Erickson, *Theology.* Brümmer contends that “such views take love to be a highly impersonal concept and the relationship of love to be a very impersonal manipulative one.” *Model,* 160.

488 Pinnock states, “To the invitation of love, one may respond gladly or refuse. Forced love is a contradiction in terms, and God does not force his love on us.” Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), 74. Brümmer adds that “love is
model contends, on the other hand, that God does not exercise all the power in the world. Although he is the most powerful being, he lacks the power to coercer. Open theism, however, breaks from both models by simultaneously affirming God’s sovereign will and indeterminism, such that God has all power, yet chooses to grant power to agents other than himself and, in this way, others can love God freely. Similarly, for Oden, God’s omnipotence is conceived as not lacking in power to determine the world, yet, purposely leaving room for other agents. Dunning agrees, holding that “God does not determine one’s choices, but He influences them” and this allows for a free love relationship. Thus, God chooses not to exercise the full extent of his power, manifesting “a form of love that lets the creatures have their own existences.” Thus, necessarily free.” Model, 177. “Furthermore, can our relationship to God still count as a personal relationship if on the one hand God’s agape for us is the inevitable result of his nature, and on the other hand our loving response is the inevitable effect of his agape?” Ibid., 134.

Oord concurs, saying, “God does not essentially possess all power.” “Matching,” 314. “God is sovereign because divinity exercises the greatest degree of power and the scope of this power is universal, but nondivine individuals also necessarily possess power.” Ibid. This is very important for Oord since the lack of ability to unilaterally coerce the world frees God from culpability for evil, something that he contends even provisional free-will theism does not. Oord contends: “If God does not care enough to prevent genuinely evil occurrences while having the power to do so, God is not love.” Ibid., 345. Cf. ibid., 320.


Dunning, Grace, 258. God may influence wills not by “coercion” but by “persuasion.” Ibid.

Pannenberg, Systematic, 1:438. If it is “the patience of the powerful who can intervene in what happens but refrains from doing so, and if this patience is shown by his own creatures, then it is a form of the love that lets the creatures have their own existence.” Ibid. Cf. Geddes MacGregor, He Who Lets Us Be: A Theology of Love (New York: Seabury, 1975).
indeterministic love, opposed to the transcendent-voluntarist model, agrees with the immanent-experientialist model that divine love “involves profound sensitivity.” But, in contrast to the immanent-experientialist model, this sensitive love does not mean divine love is involuntary. On the contrary, God has chosen to love the world and to be affected by it, retaining his sovereignty while allowing for mutual relationship. This allows for a sensitive, feeling love where God is not only giver but also a receiver, able to be affected by and receive the love of his creatures. This position requires that God not be impassible as is supposed in traditional theism.

**Divine Lover as Receiver**

The attribute of divine impassibility has come under increasingly harsh criticism, with major implications for the nature of divine love. The closely related ideas of perfection, immutability, and total self-sufficiency are also under increasing scrutiny. Even the somewhat softened version of impassibility promoted by Henry is deemed inadequate because it

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495 For instance, “open theism affirms the process insight that love involves profound sensitivity, but it insists that love is a voluntary commitment.” Ibid. Thus, God limits himself but this “‘kenotic’ act of self-restraint, which is voluntary on God’s part, does not reflect any limitation in God or any ontological diminishment.” Pinnock, “Constrained,” 150.

496 This love is “something contingent upon God’s willing to enter into such a relationship in the first place, to place himself under certain relational constraints, to be limited in his freedom by the existence of a genuinely free other.” Trevor Hart, “How Do We Define the Nature of God’s Love?” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better* (ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 109.


498 Brümmer points out that “the view of divine perfection which was put forward by Plato and was self-evident for a vast number of theologians in the Christian tradition, including Augustine and Nygren . . . turns God into a quietist who avoids vulnerability and suffering by renouncing all desires. Such a God could be infinitely beneficent toward us, but as we have argued at length, he cannot be the God of love.” *Model*, 227.
nevertheless rules out God’s ability to be impacted or affected by the world, in accordance with
the axiom of divine self-sufficiency (aseity). However, it should be noticed that the process
ontology proposed by Hartshorne and others has also been heavily criticized. Nevertheless,
increasing dissatisfaction on the impassibility front is readily apparent. For instance, Evangelical
theologian Bloesch notices the insufficiency of utter divine impassibility. Moltmann reacts
much more strongly to notions of God’s impassibility, stating that a God incapable of suffering
“is poorer than any human . . . he is also a loveless being.” For him, there is a level of intimacy
with the world to the point that God’s “freedom is his vulnerable love, his openness, the
encountering kindness through which he suffers with the human beings he loves.” Numerous
others consider God’s passibility to be integral to his love. However, in contrast to the

499 Karl Barth’s view on this point mirrors Henry. He states that the God of the Bible “can feel and
be affected. . . . He cannot be moved from outside by an extraneous power. But this does not mean that He
is not capable of moving Himself.’ No, God is ‘moved and stirred’ by his own ‘free power’ to relieve our
distress.” Church Dogmatics, 2/1:370. Hart comments on Barth’s doctrine, “He loves us, that is to say, not
out of any lack or need in his own being, but because he wills our existence as an other over against himself
and sharing in fellowship with himself.”

500 See, for instance, Nash, Process.

501 He states, “The classical idea of perfection as all-sufficiency and completeness had indubitably
penetrated Christian thinking and prevented the church through the ages from giving due justice to the
biblical idea of God sharing the pain and suffering of his people.” Bloesch, “Process,” 51. Although no
friend to process theology he even concedes that “the modern process conception of God who shares our
suffering is probably closer to the Biblical view than the Hellenistic conception of a God who is wholly
self-contained, who is removed from temporality and exempt from vulnerability.”

502 Moltmann, Crucified, 222. “God’s being is in suffering and the suffering is in God’s being
itself, because God is love.” Ibid., 227. Thus love is antithetical to impassibility but requires being
vulnerable to suffering and suffering in the sufferings of His objects of love. Moltmann, Trinity, 51–52. But
God does not suffer in the sense of internal relatedness but in voluntary identification. God “opens himself
to the suffering which is involved in love, and yet remains superior to it by virtue of his love.” Moltmann,
Crucified, 230. Divine suffering extends even to the Father: “The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the
death of the Son.” Ibid., 243. This suffering is not “out of deficiency of being” but is “from the love which
is the superabundance and overflowing of his being.”

503 Moltmann, Trinity, 56. For Guy, “divine love” is “vulnerable to disappointment.”

504 In fact, C. Osborne states, “God’s love for us could very well be described as involving
powerlessness and passion, even unseemliness.” Éros, 21. Dunning also allows for divine
immanent-experientialist model, Brümmer contends that God feels but he feels his own feelings not the feelings of others.\(^{505}\)

If God is passible (capable of being affected), then it also follows that he could desire love and enjoy its reception, as the immanent-experientialist model holds. Traditionally, these aspects of divine love have been ruled out according to God’s self-sufficiency, suggesting that if God were to desire or enjoy anything, he must not be totally self-sufficient. However, theologians continue to allow more room for God’s ability regarding the appraisal and appreciation of value,\(^{506}\) the desire for requited love,\(^{507}\) and the divine enjoyment of creatures\(^{508}\) in a mutual suffering/passivity. *Grace*, 195. Cf. Rice, “Process”; Pinnock, “Systematic”; and Jüngel, *Mystery*.

\(^{505}\) Brümmer, *Model*, 149.

\(^{506}\) God is capable of receiving value, or “an increase of his riches and his bliss.” Moltmann, *Trinity*, 121. Cf. ibid., 168. Thus, God can and does desire to receive value from creatures but this is not out of his “deficiency” but out of his “superabundance” and thus does not detract from divine perfection. Ibid., 45. Singer allows for appraisal but not to the exclusion of bestowal, saying, “Love would not be love unless appraising were accompanied by the bestowing of value.” *Nature*, 10. Brümmer also sees the value that God appreciates as bestowed value. “My value as a person is not something intrinsic to me which somehow merits the love of God. On the contrary, it is bestowed on me freely in the love of God.” *Model*, 243. Badcock voices the importance of God’s care for the world. He writes, “If in fact God does care about the world for what it is in itself, if his love for me, in short, can be affronted by my disobedience or confirmed and even deepened by my obedience and faithfulness, then it becomes necessary to say that God’s love, like ours in the Platonic conception, is based on a kind of need.” “Concept,” 41. However, Badcock makes it clear that the language of “need” for God “is strictly speaking, inappropriate for God.” Ibid., 45. Cf. Vacek, *Love*, 163–71.

\(^{507}\) Singer states, “There is no love without desire, and no love is good except as it conduces to someone’s satisfaction.” *Nature*, 148. “When God loves, he desires nothing but to be loved, for he knows that those who love him are blessed in their very love.” Brümmer, *Model*, 236. God may also desire the future value of his creatures. C. Osborne states, “God’s love for the world may be a devotion not so much to the goodness and beauty that the world already possesses as to the realization of his vision of what it might be.” *Eros*, 23. Cf. Robert Farrar Capon, *Hunting the Divine Fox: An Introduction to the Language of Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Seabury, 1985), 38.

\(^{508}\) T. C. Oden states, “God loves all creatures in the twofold sense that God unapologetically enjoys them for their own sake and desires their answering, enjoying love in response to eternally patient, self-sacrificial love.” *Living*, 121. C. Osborne comments, “There obviously are certain things that God obtains from no other source; he cannot obtain the worship of human beings unless they perform it; similarly if he delights in burnt offerings, or contrite hearts, or fine music and art, or upright dealings and acts of mercy and charity, for all these he must turn to the free acts of humankind to satisfy his desire.” *Eros*, 65. Moreover, “to suggest that God did not delight in such things, or did not take any interest in such matters at all, would already imply that God was aloof and careless of humanity.” Ibid.
(though unequal), loving, relationship. While excluded in the transcendent-voluntarist model, these aspects are increasingly promoted among theologians of diverse backgrounds.\textsuperscript{509}

Importantly, however, these aspects of divine love do not necessarily require the immanent-experientialist view of divine ontological dependence but, rather, God may freely will to allow others to affect him, without divine need or vital dependency.\textsuperscript{510}

**Summary of the Dissatisfaction in Recent Theology**

From this survey of the dissatisfaction with both the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models, a number of important issues regarding divine love may be isolated in the form of questions that remain unsettled.\textsuperscript{511} Foremost among these questions is whether God and humans can enter into a reciprocal, or mutual (though unequal), relationship of love. The answer to this primary question is heavily influenced by the answers to a number of closely related ones. For instance, is God the sole giver but never the receiver? In other words, is divine love only pure beneficence (thematic agape) or may it include desire or enjoyment (thematic eros)? Does God only bestow and/or create value or might he also appraise, appreciate, and receive value? Does God choose to fully love only some, or does he choose to love all, or is he essentially related to all such that he necessarily loves all? The responses to these questions are themselves bound up with answers to ontological issues relating to the extent of divine power

\textsuperscript{509} For instance, Erickson rejects the idea of God’s enjoying the world. For him, God merely enjoys himself; “God loves us on the basis of that likeness of himself which he has placed within us. He therefore in effect loves himself in us. This likeness to him, however, is not our own doing, but is present in us because of his unselfish, giving, nature.” *Christian*, 320.

\textsuperscript{510} Thus, God desires and receives actual enjoyment and value from creatures but this is not due to any “need or lack of something in himself.” T. C. Oden, *Living*, 121. Many posit intratrinitarian divine love as the evidence that God does not need love outside of himself, but chooses to desire it. However, others do see these aspects as needs of God. “Only by needing us can God bestow value on us and upon our love for him. If God does not need us, we become infinitely superfluous.” Brümmer, *Model*, 242. Cf. McFague, *Models*, 134.

\textsuperscript{511} Notably, these unsettled issues remain similar to the prominent issues throughout the historical survey of divine love, further confirming the potential importance of a modified approach to these issues.
(coercion/persuasion/other), the meaning of the sovereignty of divine will and determinism or indeterminism; the acceptance, rejection, or qualification of immutability and impassibility; and the nature of divine perfection and/or self-sufficiency (dependence/independence/other). The positions regarding these ontological issues further limit the available options regarding whether God is affected by the world (and if so, whether according to his eternal decree, his ontological sympathetic dependency, or free relationship with others) whether he cares about it or only cares for it, all of which determine whether or to what extent God can enter into a mutually beneficial (though unequal) relationship.

From the numerous breaks from the two main models, substantial questions remain unresolved, giving evidence of the dissatisfaction with both the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models. Moreover, theologians have explicitly called for a more adequate model of divine love. It seems apparent, then, that the extent of the conflict of interpretations between the primary models of this study, as well as the ongoing unresolved questions revolving around divine love, warrants an investigation into the biblical data to ascertain whether progress in overcoming the perceived shortcomings of the models is attainable by utilizing a method for a canonical and systematic theology.

512 “In order for formal Evangelical theology to express the love themes central to the Bible and to Evangelical piety more adequately, an alternative formal theology appears to be required.” Oord, “Matching,” 75–76. Pinnock comments, “Unless we construct a model of the divine somewhere between classical and process theism, I fear that we will lose some of our keenest minds to process liberalism.” “Between,” 317.
CHAPTER 4

A CANONICAL SURVEY OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Divine love is a complex and multifaceted concept throughout the OT. This chapter will present a canonical survey of the prominent themes that illuminate the many facets of divine love in the God-world relationship. Of course, due to the overwhelming amount of data, this survey is necessarily selective in its presentation. The investigative process consisted of a comprehensive reading of the entire OT that analyzed any texts and/or passages that might contribute to potential answers to the systematic questions raised in previous chapters, which revolve around the issue of whether divine love is unilateral or whether God and humans may share a reciprocal (though unequal) relationship of love.

Relative to this broad issue, five questions have been identified as standing at the center of the conflict of interpretations, seen in chapter 3. First, is God the sole giver but never the receiver? In other words, is divine love only arbitrarily willed, pure beneficence (thematic agape), or may it include desire or enjoyment (thematic eros)? Second, does God only bestow and/or create value or might he also appraise, appreciate, and receive value? Third, does God’s love include affection and/or emotionality such that God is concerned for the world, sympathetically or otherwise? Fourth, does God choose to fully love only some, or does he choose to love all, or is he essentially related to all such that he necessarily loves all? Fifth, bound up with this is the question of whether divine love is unconditional or conditional, ungrounded or grounded, and so on.
With such questions in mind, the investigation of the data was conducted by way of a final-form canonical approach that concentrates on interpretation of the text(s) in canonical context.\(^1\) Accordingly, the focus is upon the theological interpretation of Scripture, in accordance with the canonical approach to systematic theology explained in chapter 1. The inductive reading of the OT sought to identify all data that might provide answers to the systematic questions raised by the theological conflict of interpretations over the meaning of divine love.\(^2\) The data extracted from this reading were then analyzed and organized according to the three sections of the OT canon in an ongoing spiral that included both narrowing and expansion of the data when themes became more or less significant than originally thought.\(^3\) Within this process, a number of prominent terms that hold significant implications for potential answers to the systematic questions became apparent. These were investigated from the standpoint of a synchronic-canonical approach. Here the inherent limitations of semantic studies with regard to systematic investigation are recognized, especially the fact that meanings of words vary depending upon their context and usage. Accordingly, it is not the intention of these semantic surveys to reduce the terms to simple definitions, nor to assume that a nuance of meaning in one location can be extrapolated to all other occurrences of a given term.\(^4\) Rather, such surveys seek to identify and summarize the basic meaning denoted by word groups as well as the polysemy and the

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\(^1\) This entails that many of the issues of historical criticism are not germane to this study, and thus do not receive significant treatment. This is especially true of source and tradition criticism. The final-form approach, rather, engages the text as a unified corpus.

\(^2\) See the summary of these issues in the five questions above.

\(^3\) While it is likely that, despite great care, some information has been overlooked, it is hoped that the data presented here will provide significant insight for ongoing inquiry and discussion with regard to an intentionally canonical model of divine love.

multivalency of their semantic range and usage within the canon in order to provide the crucial background for engaging the wider canonical themes regarding divine love.

While the OT data were investigated inductively, this chapter will survey the data deductively by grouping the pertinent content under five rubrics that respond to the systematic questions noted above: the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational aspects of divine love. These rubrics correspond to five aspects of love that provide the outline of a canonical and systematic model of divine love, which is presented in chapter 6. The five aspects may be summarized thus:

1. Divine love is volitional but not only volitional.

2. Divine love is not indifferent or disinterested, but evaluative.

3. God’s love is profoundly emotional though not to the exclusion of volitional and evaluative aspects.

4. Divine love is foreconditional, not altogether unconditional. I have coined the term “foreconditional” to refer to the conception that divine love is freely bestowed prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions.\(^5\)

5. Divine love is multilaterally relational. God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into and/or maintains particular, intimate relationships only with those who respond appropriately.

It must be understood that these rubrics are themselves derived from the canonical data and not presupposed. In this chapter, the OT data that support each thesis are grouped under the corresponding category.\(^6\) Under each of the five categories the data are further organized

\(^5\) See chapter 6 for a more detailed explanation of the foreconditionality of divine love.

\(^6\) Of course, this requires that the grouping of the data is somewhat artificial and some texts are treated more than once. The reason for adopting this organizational structure is to afford an efficient presentation for the reader that highlights the importance of the data as it points toward a wider canonical model of divine love.
according to the three sections of the Hebrew canon: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Further, the brief semantic surveys of prominent terminology relative to the meaning of divine love are interspersed under their corresponding rubrics. Of course, not all terms of any significance can be treated in this chapter. Thus, terms have been selected for more attention according to their explanatory value in accord with the canonical analysis. Accordingly, the most prominent terms are explained at the greatest length. Likewise, the large amount of data precludes an exhaustive presentation of its analysis. As such, this thematic presentation is but a survey of the research conducted.

The Meaning of the בְּהָ Word Group

Before turning to the first of the five rubrics of divine love, this chapter will first present a brief word study of בְּהָ, the most prominent word related to divine love, which overlaps all of the rubrics. It appears frequently with both divine and human agency. The word group includes a great deal of polysemy, similar in this respect to the English term. It may be used to refer to

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7 Such diacanonical presentation respects the canonical groupings of the text without entering into the ongoing debates regarding the authorship and dating of specific passages and texts that continue to elude consensus.

8 The verb בְּהָ appears 215 times in 200 verses and in the noun form בְּהָ 37 times in 34 verses. The verb is usually pointed as a stative in the MT, with the exception of Gen 37:3–4; Deut 4:37; 1 Kgs 11:1. However, it often has a transitive usage; cf. Ernst Jenni, “אהבה,” TLOT 1:46. Because of significant overlap between the nominal and verbal forms of בְּהָ, they will be discussed together. Throughout this and other word studies in the following two chapters, references will frequently be made to the number of times a term appears in the OT or NT. In many cases such word counts are only approximations that rely upon the counts generated by use of Logos and/or Bibleworks software. Further precision regarding such word counts is unnecessary since no great import hinges upon the precise numbers. Rather, the counts are provided to give the reader an idea of the relative frequency of terms.

9 The focus in the main text, in keeping with the scope of the dissertation, is upon divine בְּהָ but it may be helpful for the reader to recognize that interpersonal love is manifested in various types of human relationships including: familial, romantic, friendship, international, king/subject, servant/master, and neighbor/stranger. בְּהָ often appears in reference to the feeling of affection within kinship relationships, especially that of parent-child (cf. Gen 22:2) and husband-wife (see, among many others, Gen 29:18, 20, 30). Of friendship love, at times with fervent emotional attachment, see (among others) 1 Sam 18:1, 3; 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26. בְּהָ likewise depicts romantic affection, passion, and desire (see Cant 1:3–4, 7; 2:4, 5, 7; 3:1–5, 10; 7:6; 8:4). At times it may be associated with sexual intercourse, but most often it is used with reference to the sentiment underlying sexual activity (cf. Gen 24:67; 29:30; Prov 5:19; 7:18; Eccl 9:9). Some have suggested that the original use of בְּהָ stems from the arena of sexual relations, including desire
everything from the most virtuous love of affection and generosity, to a “love” that is more akin to lust and fades quickly after its rapacious selfishness is satisfied (see the examples below). It often denotes affection or fondness for its object, at times of a passionate nature, often with the connotation of devotion with corresponding action(s). Such “affection” may entail romance, lust, desire, devotion, friendship, preference, acceptance, delight, the absence of hatred, et al. With divine agency the word group always manifests the positive and noble aspects of the word group and may be directed at impersonal objects such as righteousness but is most often directed at human beings, usually corporate but also, at times, toward individuals (2 Sam 12:24; Isa 41:8; Neh 13:26; 2 Chr 20:7; cf. Deut 10:18; Isa 48:14; Ps 146:8; Prov 3:12; 15:9).

Divine בֵּהַד for persons, as well as God’s love for justice and righteousness, is a ground of, but not identical to, divine beneficent action (Pss 11:7; 33:5; 37:28) and election (Deut 4:37; 7:7–8). God’s “everlasting love” is itself the basis of God drawing his people with lovingkindness (Jer 31:3). Accordingly, God rescued Israel from Egyptian slavery “because of” [ג] the Lord’s “love” for them (Deut 7:8). Isaiah points back to divine love as the central motivation of the deliverance of Israel, “In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them” (Isa 63:9). Likewise, the divine call out of Egypt is predicated on God’s love for


10 The particular meaning of בֵּהַד is dependent upon its usage in context. While some semantic studies may be greatly benefitted by careful attention to etymology, the etymology of בֵּהַד resists consensus and thus may assist only in tenuous conclusions. Two prominent associations have been proposed. The first is the Arabic *habba*, to “breathe heavily, be excited.” See David W. Thomas, “The Root ‘حب’ ‘Love’ in Hebrew,” *ZAW* 57 (1939), 57–64. Second, the Arabic *‘ihab*, “skin, leather” has been proposed such that “an affectionate feeling in the physical realm was applied to the emotional stimulation which produced it. If this supposition is correct, then the emotional experience is the germ cell for the development of the concept of ‘ahabah.” Godfrey R. Driver, “Supposed Arabisms in the Old Testament,” *JBL* 55 (1936): 111; cf. Hos 11:4.

Israel in their “youth” (Hos 11:1). God refused to listen to Balaam’s attempt to curse Israel and “turned curse into a blessing . . . because” of his love for them (Deut 23:5 [6]). God’s love for Israel is also spoken of as a ground of making Solomon king (1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 2:11; cf. 2 Chr 9:8). Elsewhere such love is the motivation for a substitution, “Since you [Israel] are precious [ךֵּבוּד] in My sight, Since you are honored [ךֵּ REPRESENTATION] and I love you, I will give other men in your place” (Isa 43:4). Likewise, YHWH “loves him [Israel]” and “he will carry out his good pleasure on Babylon” (Isa 48:14). Thus, both divine blessing upon his beloved and judgment on her enemies are grounded in, yet not identical to, divine בַּשֵּׂדַע.

בַּשֵּׂדַע is closely associated with many word groups that are also significant to the meaning of divine love. This word group collocates significantly with language regarding: the seat of emotions (ךֵּבָּד and בַּשֶֹדֶת/ךֵּבָּד), pleasure and/or delight (ךֵּנַּס, בַּשֶֹדֶת/ךֵּנַּס, and many others), compassion (ךֵּנַּס), passion/zeal (ךֵּנַּס), lovingkindness (ךֵּנַּס), favor/grace (ךֵּנַּס), and contrasts frequently with hatred (ךֵּנַּס). Many of these significant collocations appear interspersed throughout the discussion of the important issues below.

There are a number of important, often-disputed, issues related to the meaning of בַּשֵּׂדַע. Many of these touch on one primary issue: whether בַּשֵּׂדַע is primarily (or even exclusively) volitional or emotional. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the volitional aspect of בַּשֵּׂדַע, and there is a great deal of support for such a view. Indeed, the fact that human בַּשֵּׂדַע is often commanded (toward neighbors, strangers, and even toward God) assumes a volitional element

12 Literally, God was “not willing [ךֵּנַּס/ךֵּנַּס] to listen [ךֵּנַּס] to Balaam” but rather “turned the curse into a blessing [ךֵּנַּס/ךֵּנַּס]” (Deut 23:5 [6]). As Gordon R. Clark states, “If they are faithful to Yahweh, he will be faithful to them and to the covenant; he will go on loving them and expressing that love by fulfilling the promises he made to their ancestors.” The Word Hesed, 131. Els refers to this as God “promising his love as a reward for covenant faithfulness.” NIDOTTE 1:283.

13 See Amos 5:15; Ps 119:132; Prov 5:19; 22:11; Esth 2:17.

14 Such issues will only be touched on here and will be more fully treated in the canonical analysis.
though not necessarily to the exclusion of emotion. Likewise, divine בנה has an apparent volitional aspect. The preference and volition of divine בנה is perhaps clearest in those passages that relate to election. Some scholars have incorrectly suggested that בנה refers to “election love,” often conflating בנה with חסד. However, the evidence does not seem to allow for such conflation, nor for בנה to be seen as purely election love. For one thing, if בנה entails election, what is to be made of God’s בנה that extends beyond the elect (Deut 10:18)? Moreover, a strong case will be made in this chapter that love (בנה) is the basis of election, rather than the other way around, and as such, could not be equivalent with election (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:7–8; 10:15; cf. Isa 41:8; Pss 47:4 [5]; 78:68; 2 Chr 20:7). Nevertheless, there is a significant volitional element associated with divine בנה and other terms of love, as will be further seen below (cf. Hos 14:4 [5]).

At times, the correspondence between God’s election and preferential love suggests evaluation. For instance, that God “loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwelling places...”

15 בנה collocates with חסד, “to choose, elect,” in five verses, all related to the divine election of Israel/Judah (Deut 4:37; 10:15; Isa 41:8; Pss 47:4 [5]; 78:68).


17 בנה as the basis of election is widely recognized. See, for instance, Wallis, TDOT 1:104; William A. Dyrness, Themes in Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 59; Clark, The Word Hesed, 263. Even Carl F. H. Henry recognized this. God, Revelation, and Authority (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1976), 2:347. This and other features that distinguish between בנה and election will be discussed further in the canonical analysis.
of Jacob” implies comparative evaluation (Ps 87:2). Elsewhere, God states, “Since you [Israel] are precious [קְדֻשָׁה] in My sight, Since you are honored [网站地图] and I love you, I will give other men in your place” (Isa 43:4). The fact that in such instances people are singled out as recipients of divine חא points to preferential love and may also suggest evaluation. Indeed, חא is often used evaluatively. Thus, God loves justice (Isa 61:8; Pss 33:5; 37:28), righteousness (Pss 11:7; 33:5), his sanctuary (Mal 2:11), and the gates of Zion (Ps 87:2). Likewise, God loves the righteous (Ps 146:8) and the pursuer of justice (Prov 15:9). This evaluative aspect of חא is further apparent in the frequent attention given to misdirected love. It is important to note at this juncture that חא

18 In non-religious use of the term, חא is sometimes associated with evaluative attraction based on beauty. Thus, Tamar was “beautiful” [חא] and Amnon “loved” her (2 Sam 13:1). In Canticles, the woman is described as “beautiful [חא] and delightful [网站地图], My love” (Cant 7:6). This latter term “delightful” is likewise associated with the “love” between Jonathan and David (2 Sam 1:26).

19 Indeed, preferential חא appears frequently with human agency as well. In romantic contexts, Jacob “loved Rachel more than Leah” (Gen 29:30), Hannah is preferred by her husband Elkanah, who “loved” her and thus gave her a double portion (1 Sam 1:5), the king loved Esther “more than all the women” (Esth 2:17), and Rehoboam “loved Maacah . . . more than all of his other wives and concubines” (2 Chr 11:21). In familial contexts, Isaac “loved” Esau but Rebekah “loved” Jacob (Gen 25:28). Israel [Jacob] “loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age” (Gen 37:3–4) and Benjamin is likewise preferred (44:20), both due to Jacob’s preferential love for their mother Rachel. Due to the reality of such preferential love, Deuteronomy puts restrictions in place to protect children in the instance where one wife is “loved and the other unloved [חא]” (Deut 21:15–16). In a number of such cases, preferential love is not merely arbitrary or groundless but evaluative. For instance, Abraham’s love for Isaac as the unique son (Gen 22:2), Isaac’s love for Esau is particularly predicated on Esau’s pleasing skill coupled with Jacob’s taste for game (Gen 25:28), Jacob’s love for Joseph and Benjamin as Rachel’s children (Gen 37:3). Both Rachel and Esther are implicitly preferred based on their beauty (Gen 29:17; Esth 2:7, 17). Within the context of the reality of preferential love, and of a type that clearly includes appraisal, Leah’s notion that Jacob may finally “love” her once she bears him a child makes sense (Gen 29:32). Many other examples of evaluative love from humans appear. See, e.g., 1 Sam 18:16; 2 Sam 1:23, 26; Ruth 4:15.

20 Conversely, the people who “love the LORD” are to hate evil (Ps 97:10; cf. Pss 45:7; 119:113). Elsewhere, the lovers of God are starkly contrasted with God’s haters (Exod 20:5–6; Deut 5:9–10; 7:9–10).

21 Indeed, some objects are worthy of love while others are worthless (cf. Ps 4:2), implying that proper love ought to be directed not toward evil or worthless things, but to good and worthwhile objects. Yet, human חא is commonly misdirected. Some “love being simple-minded” and “delight [网站地图] themselves in scoffing” while “fools hate knowledge” (Prov 1:22). The people ought not to love perjury, which God hates (Zech 8:17; cf. Ps 11:5). Evil is to be hated, good to be loved (Amos 5:15; Mic 3:2; 6:8; cf. Ps 45:7 [8]). Amos negatively states that Israel so “love[s]” to offer sacrifice (Amos 4:5). Further, numerous inappropriate objects of love appear, including: a bribe (Isa 1:23), slumber/sleep (Isa 56:10; Prov 20:13), idolatry (Hos 3:1; 10:1; Jer 8:2), shame (Hos 4:18), Israel’s earnings of harlotry (Hos 9:1), “detestable” things (Hos 9:10), evil (Mic 3:2; Ps 52:3 [5]), perjury (Zech 8:17), “worthless” things (Ps 4:2), oppression
does not necessarily refer to positive, noble, or appropriate love in and of itself. On the contrary, 
may be used in dark contexts, denoting Shechem’s intense feelings of romantic attraction 
and infatuation for Dinah that led to rape and afterward his request for marriage (Gen 34:3). 
is also used to describe Amnon’s temporary, lustful feelings toward his half-sister Tamar, 
which turned to intense hatred after he had raped her (2 Sam 13:1, 4, 15). does not 
necessarily last forever.22 

The evaluative nature (and often emotionality as well) of divine describes its collocation as the antonym of divine hate, whether in reference to categories such as “justice” 
and/or “robbery” (Isa 61:8; cf. Zech 8:17), or the change from divine love to hate toward human 
beings (Hos 9:15; cf. Ps 11:5).24 Thus, rather than being disinterested, purely elective, 

22 Notably, a number of scholars think this instance of merely designates “lust.” Bruce C. 
Birch, “The First and Second Books of Samuel,” in Numbers–Samuel (vol. 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: 
Abingdon Press, 1998), 1303; Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel (NAC 7; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & 
Holman, 1996), 382; A. A. Anderson, 2 Samuel (WBC 11; Dallas: Word, 1989), 175. Wallis suggests that 
this occurrence highlights the emotive nature of both “love” and “hate” since “indeed, love can suddenly be 
turned into hate.” TDOT 1:102; cf. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, 
Notes and Commentary (AB 9; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 324. 

23 For example, love may turn to hate; cf. Wallis, TDOT 1:109. Thus, at one time Saul was said to 
have “loved [David] greatly” (1 Sam 16:21), but this love does not remain when David rises to prominence. 
Later, is presented in a ruse, where Saul’s servants are to make David believe “the king delights [bha] in you, 
and all his servants love [bha] you” (1 Sam 18:22). 

24 and collocate as antonyms many times (in 31 verses), with God and humans as agents. 
Wallis points out that the emotive nature of the term “seems to be supported at least by the fact that this 
emotional feeling which flows out of one’s perceptions is contrasted with hate.” TDOT 1:102. Thus, collocates with the emotions of hate and zeal (Eccl 9:6). With humans as agents, Jacob’s 
preferential love of Joseph breeds his brothers’ hatred of him (Gen 37:4). and depict a husband’s 
preferential love between wives, the one “loved,” the other “hated” or “unloved” (Deut 21:15–16). As 
mentioned above, Amnon’s “love” is replaced by an even greater hatred after he violated Tamar (2 Sam
unconditional love, divine 赟 may often connote appraisal, even delight. Accordingly, 赟 frequently collocates with language of delight, including ︽︾, which may connote delight or desire; and ︽︾/︽︾, which may connote “be pleased with, accept favorably, delight in,” etc. In a number of instances where 赟 collocates with various other words for joy and/or delight, love results in rejoicing in its object. Such examples of divine pleasure and delight also point toward the potential emotional connotations of 赟, which will be discussed further below.

Another recurring misconception, often related to the idea of election love, is that divine 赟 is altogether unconditional, predicated on the unilateral divine will (volition). However, this perspective is in tension with the apparent conditionality and contingency sometimes associated with 赟 (cf. Deut 7:12–13; Ps 146:8; Prov 15:9). Accordingly, what some interpreters deem “unconditional” may more accurately be referred to as “unmerited” or “undeserved” (Deut 7:7; 13:15; cf. Judg 14:16; 2 Sam 19:6 [7]; 2 Chr 19:2). In a number of other instances the two terms are set in direct contrast (Ezek 16:37; Ps 109:5; Prov 1:22; 8:36; 9:8; 10:12; 12:1; 13:24; 14:20; 15:17; 27:6; Eccl 3:8; 9:1). Thus, evil is to be hated, good to be loved (Amos 5:15; Mic 3:2).

Notice the parallel usage of the terms when Saul’s servants are to make David believe “the king delights [︽︾] in him, and all his servants love” him (1 Sam 18:22). Similarly, in Ps 109:17, one “loved cursing” but “did not delight [︽︾] in blessing.” Again, to “desire [︽︾] life is to love “length of days” (Ps 34:12 [13]); cf. 1 Kgs 10:9; Isa 48:14; 2 Chr 9:8. For parallel usage in adjacent verses, see Deut 21:14–15; Isa 56:4, 6.

These two also appear in parallel usage. Thus, the one who “speaks right is loved” and “righteous lips are the delight [︽︾] of kings” (Prov 16:13). Divine 赟 is also explicitly set in parallel to the favor or delight [︽︾] a father has for his son (Prov 3:12).

For instance, consider the collocation of 赟 with ︽︾, which likewise appears to connote attachment, affection, and perhaps even delight (Deut 10:15; cf. Gen 34:3, 8). A psalmist declares, “I will delight [︽︾] in Your commandments, Which I love” (Ps 119:47; cf. Prov 1:22). 赟 further repeatedly collocates with terms of rejoicing such as ︽︾, ︽︾, ︽︾, ︽︾, and/or ︽︾. For example, those who “love” God’s name should be “glad” [︽︾] and sing for “joy” [︽︾] and exult in him (Ps 5:11 [12]). Likewise, even divine delight, joy, and rejoicing appear together, looking to the future when God “will exult [︽︾] over you with joy [︽︾]. He will be quiet [︽︾] in His love. He will rejoice [︽︾] over you with shouts of joy [︽︾]” (Zeph 3:17). See also Isa 66:10; Hos 9:1; Zech 8:19; Ps 40:16 [17] = 70:5; Cant 1:4).

Such divine love is prior to conditions, yet neither purely unilateral nor exclusive of conditionality. Therefore, it may be helpful to refer to it as foreconditional. Related to the question of conditionality and unconditionality is the significant tension between the endurance of divine love in contrast to the apparent possibility of its discontinuance, even divine hatred. On the one hand, God himself proclaims: I have “loved you with” an “everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). On the other hand, at times God himself declares the change from love for his people to hatred [אֱלֹהִים] of them, due to their wickedness, even to the extent that he declares, “I will love them no more” (Hos 9:15).

The above issues are related to the question of whether divine love is unilateral or bilateral. Some scholars have marginalized human love toward God. However, the reciprocal response of human love toward God is integral to his purposes. In human interpersonal love,

29 The inaccuracy enters when that which is unmerited is assumed to also be unconditional. Thus, Snaith comments, “Jehovah's love for Israel was unconditioned by anything in Israel that was good. It was wholly unmerited. It was not in the least degree because of anything in Israel that was good, or beautiful, or desirable. . . . Such is the story of God's unconditioned love.” Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 137.

30 Some scholars mistakenly consider the endurance of divine love to be based entirely on the divine will and thus unilaterally constant and unaffected; cf. Park, “Divine Love in Hosea 11,” 37; Morris, Testaments of Love, 12.

31 See the further discussion of this tension below.

32 Much has been written on the presence or absence of human love for God. Although it is clear that human love toward God is present, especially in the Psalms, a number of scholars have marginalized human love toward God, sometimes suggesting that all or nearly all of the instances are merely the result of the influence of the so-called Deuteronomistic tradition; cf. Els, NIDOTTE 1:279, 283–84; Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 133. Claude Wiener believes love toward God is a relatively late concept, appearing in the prophets and coming to full fruition in Deuteronomy. Recherches sur L'Amour pour Dieu dans L'Ancien Testament (Paris: Letouzey Et Ane, 1957). Cf. G. Winter, “Die Liebe zu Gott im Alten Testament,” Journal of Old Testament Scholarship 9 (1889): 211–46. Moreover, a number of scholars, presumably for theological reasons, see human love as a divine miracle. Thus, both Els and Cranfield quote Barth that God “has to bring about a change in the sinful heart of man to produce true love for himself. Such human love is really a miracle, brought about in a person by God.” Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (trans. G. T. Thomson; vol. 5; Edinburgh: Clark, 1936), I/2: 410, quoted in Els, NIDOTTE 1:283; Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. Richardson), 133. However, reduction of religious love to the Deuteronomist tradition begs the question on at least two points. First, not all of the instances are found in writings generally ascribed to the Deuteronomist(s). Cf. Judg 5:31; Pss 5:11 [12]; 69:36 [37]; Jer 2:2; and even sometimes Exod 20:6. See Els, NIDOTTE 1:283. Second, it raises the question of the speculative nature of the attribution of writings to the Deuteronomist tradition, which approaches the error of pan-Deuteronomism. See, for instance, Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-
reciprocality is often presented as the ideal. In numerous texts it seems to be assumed that רוח ought to be reciprocated, since it is lamented when love is repaid with hatred (Ps 109:4–5), or when Job’s loved ones have turned against him (Job 19:19). David is chastised by Joab for “loving those who hate you” and “hating those who love you” (2 Sam 19:6). Moreover, those who hate God ought not to be loved (2 Chr 19:2). Similarly, consider the exclamation, “May they prosper who love you [human]” (Ps 122:6). Personified Wisdom even proclaims, “I love those who love Me” (Prov 8:17). Thus, רוח often entails relationality that includes proper regard and the expectation of reciprocality.

The ideal of mutual love also appears in the divine-human relationship, evidenced in the abundant expressions of divine רוח toward human beings on the one hand (e.g., Deut 4:37; 7:13; 10:15; 1 Kgs 3:3; Isa 43:4; Ps 146:8), and the abundance of divine commands for his people to love God on the other (e.g., Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:1, 13; 13:3 [4]; 30:6; Josh 22:5; 23:11; Ps 31:23 [24]). Further, רוח depicts not only commanded but also actual human love for God, illustrating the ideal of mutual and reciprocal רוח. In this regard, רוח often collocates with יָתָם, “steadfast love” or “lovingkindness,” especially in the frequent statements that God reciprocates יָתָם toward Deuteronomism (JSOT Supplement; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

33 Notably, even statistical usage hints at this ideal of reciprocality of divine-human love. Els notes that the root is “used 27x when God loves persons, as against 24x when persons love God.” Els, NIDOTTE 1:279. Wallis adds, “The only possible way for Israel to live is in a love, fidelity, and devotion to Yahweh which reciprocates [God’s] love.” TDOT 1:115; cf. Daniel J. Simundson, “The Book of Micah,” in The Twelve Prophets (vol. 7 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 580.

34 Thus, “Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father” (1 Kgs 3:3). Likewise, the psalmist “love[s] the LORD, because” God hears him (Ps 116:1). Abraham is the “friend,” or more literally the “lover,” of God (Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7). In another context God is entreated to “let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might” (Judg 5:31). Those who “love” God’s salvation are those who “seek” God (Ps 40:16 [17]; cf. Ps 70:4[5]). Those who “love the LORD” should hate evil (Ps 97:10). God “keeps all who love Him” (Ps 145:20). In a number of instances, love for God is indirectly stated, via love for a hypostatization of God. For instance, covenant blessings are prescribed to those, even foreigners, who “love the name of the LORD” (Isa 56:6; cf. Ps 5:11 [12]; Pss 69:36 [37]; 119:132). Love is also variously directed at God’s house (Ps 26:8), his salvation (Pss 40:16 [17]; 70:4 [5]), his commandments (Ps 119:47–48, 127), law (Ps 119:97, 113, 163, 165), testimonies (Ps 119:119, 167), word (Ps 119:140), precepts (Ps 119:159), and Jerusalem (Isa 66:10; cf. Ps 122:6). Such indirect reference may be related to the avoidance of pointing human רוח toward God due to its prevalent (perhaps original) function in human
humans who love him (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4). Moreover, God has drawn his people with יָשָׂר according to his “everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). Human יָשָׂר toward God is in direct parallel to human יָשָׂר as God remembers “the devotion [יָשָׂר] of your youth, the love [יָשָׂר] of your betrothals” (Jer 2:2). The יָשָׂר is to love God (Ps 31:23 [24]) and, likewise, God loves justice and does not forsake his יָשָׂר (Ps 37:28). Again, God preserves his יָשָׂר, those who love him and hate evil (Ps 97:10). Nevertheless, the history of Israel portrays and laments God’s repeated position as her unrequited lover (e.g., Jer 2; Ezek 16; Hos 3).

On the other hand, Susan Ackerman has recently contended that the lexeme יָשָׂר is used one-sidedly as the agent is “typically the hierarchically superior party in the relationship” and she extends this view to human and divine-human relationships. While the majority of accounts support this perspective, examples such as Ruth to Naomi (Ruth 4:15) and the slave’s love of his master (Exod 21:5; Deut 15:16) call this into serious doubt. Moreover, the love between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26) and the love of women toward men in Canticles (Cant 1:3–4, 7; 3:1–4) and ultimately the love from humans toward God, both commanded and manifested (see examples above), further cast doubt on this thesis. Although love of a societal inferior toward a superior is less common, it is represented.


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35 Perhaps on this basis the psalmist asks for recognition of his love for God’s precepts and to be revived according to God’s יָשָׂר (Ps 119:159). Further, God loves righteousness and justice and his יָשָׂר fills the earth (Ps 33:5). God has told humans to love יָשָׂר (Mic 6:8).


37 Ackerman unconvincingly explains the former as Ruth having become the superior by marriage and childbirth and the latter as merely a utilitarian expression as per J. A. Thompson, “Israel’s ‘Lovers,’” VT 27 (1977): 475–81. See “The Personal,” 447.

Another major issue concerns how the relationship is to be viewed, specifically whether the divine-human relationship depicts the type of emotional and affectionate manifested in kinship relationships (such as marriage and parent-child) or if it is purely “covenantal” that is descriptive of a legal, lord-vassal treaty relationship. Based on Ancient Near Eastern parallels, William L. Moran suggested that at least in Deuteronomy, belongs to technical treaty language. The rather striking ANE parallels use love terminology to depict relationships between international parties, masters-servants, kings-subjects, etc. Extrapolated from these parallels is the view that such “covenant” is to be contrasted to the kind of affection that often transpires in romantic or parental relationships. Dennis McCarthy built on Moran’s seminal work by suggesting that the divine-human, father-child analogy was itself technical covenant language that undergirded the usage in Deuteronomy, devoid of “any sort of tender love” but focused on fear, loyalty, and obedience, a love that “can be commanded.” In this way, McCarthy connects the father-son analogy to covenant, but in doing so he conflates the

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41 For Moran, “Love in Deuteronomy is . . . in brief, a love defined by and pledged in the covenant—a covenantal love.” Moran, “The Ancient,” 78.  

42 McCarthy, “Notes,” 145. McCarthy seems to find “tender love” in the father-child analogy only in Hosea. He notes two other possibilities: Deut 1:31 and Isa 63:16. The former he sees as dependent on Hos 11 and he suggests that the latter actually speaks of God’s harsh treatment with “no note of tenderness.” Ibid. However, it is interesting that in another work McCarthy acknowledges that Hittite parity treaties were “to create an affective relationship as well as a legal bond” including “passionate rhetoric” as well as “an appeal for the true dedication, not forced acceptance.” Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament (AnBib 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 181.
father-son analogy with his preconception regarding the “Deuteronomistic” theology of בָּנָיה, 
bereft of the affection of kinship relationships.43

However, the influential conclusions of Moran and McCarthy are questionable at some 
points. To be sure, the context of בָּנָיה in Deuteronomy (and likely elsewhere) is covenantal, and 
the numerous ANE parallels that evidence the language of “love” in ANE treaties are indeed 
compelling. Moreover, significant continuity between the covenant language and kinship 
metaphors (parental and marital) descriptive of בָּנָיה in the divine-human relationship and 
elsewhere seems evident.44 However, it is not apparent that either the biblical instances of בָּנָיה or 
its equivalent in ANE literature in covenant contexts are necessarily limited to legality or devoid 
of “tender love.” Nor is it evident that בָּנָיה is restricted to the purely legal aspect of covenant, even 
within Deuteronomy. Numerous reasons for skepticism regarding such a claim may be briefly 
noted, the force of which will increase as this chapter progresses:

1. Biblical texts often switch, with little or no warning, from one metaphor to another in 
describing the divine-human relationship. As such, there is significant overlap between the 
metaphors of covenant, marriage, and parent-child relationships.45

43 For McCarthy, “the very ancient Israelite concept of Israel as Yahweh’s son is very close to, or 
even identical with, the Deuteronomistic conception articulated in terms of the treaty.” “Notes,” 145. As 
support for his view in Deuteronomy, McCarthy notes the parent analogy in Deut 8:5; 14:1. The first is 
what he views as stern discipline, corresponding to covenantal discipline; the second is an explicit link 
between covenant command and the language of sonship; cf. Deut 32:5, 19–20. He mentions as further 
evidence of a connection between covenant and father-child language, Isa 1:2; 30:1–2, 9 and Jer 3:19; 31:1, 
9; Mal 1:6. In another direction with the father-child analogy, J. W. McKay expands on McCarthy’s view, 
arguing for Deuteronomistic dependence upon Wisdom literature as the context, such that the “love” refers 
to the obedience proper to a teacher-student relationship. “Man’s Love for God in Deuteronomy and the 
Father/Teacher—Son/Pupil Relationship,” VT 22 (1972): 426–35.

44 Consider the connection between language of sonship and covenant even in secular usage (2 
Kgs 16:7).

45 For example, consider the mixing of covenant, marriage, and parent-child metaphors in Hosea 
(14:5; 3:1; 11:1, 4) and the parallel of breaking the covenant with harlotry (Ezek 16:33, 36, 37); cf. 
Ackerman, “The Personal,” 447.
2. There is considerable support for the view that covenant language is itself grounded in the more basic kinship language, rather than vice versa.46

3. Divine love is prior to, and in fact the basis of, covenant.47

46 Although vestiges of the once prevalent reduction of covenant and covenant language to its legal aspects remain in some scholarship, studies such as that by Scott Hahn have demonstrated with great force and clarity the foundational nature of kinship to covenant rather than vice versa. Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Duane Smith, while recognizing the usage of בָּהַ in covenant language, comments, “The root ‘hb is first and foremost a kinship term.” “Kinship and Covenant in Hosea 11:1–4,” HBT 16 (1994): 43. “We must not suppose, however, that biblical covenants borrowed their kinship language from the social world of treaties. Both the language of biblical covenant and treaty language developed in a social environment in which kinship was the primary model for understanding all human interaction. It was natural, therefore, that international treaties, national (league) covenants, and individual covenants used kinship to describe their content.” D. Smith, “Kinship and Covenant,” 49. As Cross points out, kinship language was basic to the social organization of West Semitic tribal groups. Moreover, “the language of love (ahabah) is kinship language, the bond that holds together those in intimate relationships, the relationships of family and kindred,” including a basic responsibility for amity toward one another. Frank Moore Cross, From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 5.

Leo G. Perdue likewise questions the priority of ANE suzerainty treaties, seeing such a view as “forced.” Rather, he considers the “theology of covenant” to itself be an expression of “solidarity and community” rooted in the “household.” “The Household, Old Testament, and Contemporary Hermeneutics,” in Families in Ancient Israel (ed. Leo G. Perdue et al.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 240. Ernest W. Nicholson also recognizes the kinship basis of the language of love and, further, rejects dependence upon treaties for such language. He also contends that it would have been distasteful and counterproductive to tell the Israelites that God “loves” them in the same way as a suzerain (e.g., Ashurbanipal or Nebuchadrezzar) ‘loves’ his vassals and that they are to ‘love’ Yahweh as vassals ‘love’ their suzerains.” God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 79. Lapsley likewise believes that love language “is imported into the political realm from family life, where it originated, and that its emotional connotation in that context is transferred to the political context in the borrowing.” “Feeling Our Way,” 355. She further points out the mistake in assuming that “structural and formulaic parallels necessarily express identical content.” Accordingly, the “aptness of the ancient Near Eastern parallels does not ipso facto mean that human love for God in Deuteronomy does not have an important affective dimension.” Ibid., 353–54. Even Moshe Weinfeld recognizes that the “whole diplomatic vocabulary of the second millennium is rooted in the familial sphere.” “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” JAOS 90 (1970): 194.

47 This is true of the covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3) as well as the divine-human covenant relationship. See the canonical analysis below for more discussion of the grounding of covenant in divine love; cf. Quell, “Love in the OT,” 27. R. Laird asserts, “Love is a covenant word because kings borrowed it from general use to try to render covenants effective. They tried to make the vassal promise to act like a brother, friend and husband. It does not follow that God’s love is merely a factor in a covenant; rather the covenant is the sign and expression of his love.” “חסד,” TWOT 306. Likewise, Peter C. Craigie recognizes the similarity between the usage of בָּהַ and ANE treaty language, yet insists, “The language of loving God, however, is not drawn directly from the treaty terminology; rather it is one of the features of the Hebrew relationship to God which made possible the use of the treaty terminology in the first place, and also the use of the father/son analogy.” The Book of Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), 169–70. Likewise, Ronald E. Clements cautions against assuming that the language is “dependent on” such ANE parallels: “It was no mere imitation of an existing covenant
4. The divine commands calling for human love in covenant contexts imply the demand of internal devotion consisting, not merely of outward obedience, but including an inner attitude of wholehearted fidelity (e.g., Deut 6:5). Therefore, loyalty to God and his covenant does not exclude affection and devotion. In fact, it might be argued that enduring loyalty ought to be predicated on such underlying attachment.48


48 Accordingly, Clements finds Moran’s view “strained and implausible in view of the importance of the issue and the widespread feature in Deuteronomy of pointing out the necessity for the nurturing of a right attitude toward God.” “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in *Numbers–Samuel* (vol. 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 343. It is true that similar language of wholeheartedness is also present in the ANE vassal treaties, such as those of Esarhaddon. See D. J. Wiseman, “The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon,” *Iraq* 20 (1958): 14–22. However, such parallels may also have intent that goes beyond purely external behavior, in recognition of the fact that merely external loyalty can change quickly. ANE rulers/masters would likely also desire obedience that is predicated on inward devotion since the most dependable, long-lasting obedience stems from internal loyalty and devotion, not merely external, compulsory, or fear-based external action. As Lapsley points out, “even a modern understanding of ‘loyalty’ is loaded with emotional content, and there is no reason to assume that ancient loyalty did not also involve the emotions in a significant way.” “Feeling Our Way,” 352.

49 Further, Weinfeld, who recognizes the correspondence between **bha** in Deuteronomy and ANE vassal treaties, admits, “In spite of the covenantal overtones, the love imagery in the description of the relationship between God and Israel has an affectionate connotation, especially in poetic texts such as Hosea and Jeremiah. Moreover, even in Deut 6:8 the affectionate connotation comes up when contrasted with the phrase ‘because YHWH hates us’ in 1:27.” *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB 5; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 369. Elsewhere he notices both “affection and emotion” noting Deut 7:8, 13; 23:6 in the love between God and Israel. *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 351. Daniel I. Block also recognizes emotion and “covenant commitment.” *Judges, Ruth* (NAC 6; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 244. Cf. Luc, “The Meaning.”

50 Clark wisely counsels that “it is not wise to import” the entire ANE treaty “background into every use of the word **aheb** in the Old Testament. Nor is it legitimate to insist that every use of the **bha** derivatives carries the full weight of political implications.” *The Word Hesed*, 128. On the other hand, this is not to dismiss the potential political connotations, but rather, to recognize that such overtones need not rule out an affective meaning; cf. P. R. Ackroyd, “The Verb Love—**Aheb**—in the David-Jonathan Narratives: A Footnote,” *VT* 25 (1975): 214. Abraham Malamat notes that the verb **bha** usually refers to an
Some have assumed that if love can be commanded it must be unemotional. However, the kind of human love that God commands appears to include an attitude, even emotion, of love that includes devotion displayed in obedience, service, commandment keeping, listening, and seeking him.  

Such external manifestations must correspond to an internal devotion, which is not devoid of emotion, in order to measure up to the love that God expects. That the nature of this expected love goes far beyond merely external legality is clear in the language used: humans are to love God with all their “heart” [בָּלַע] and “soul” [that is, inner person, פִּנְי], which is language associated with internal emotionality (Deut 6:5; 10:13; 11:13; 13:3; 30:6; Josh 22:5; cf. Josh 23:11). Likewise, God himself will “circumcise” their heart . . . to love” him with all their “heart” and “soul” (Deut 30:6). This is likewise apparent in that the sincerity of love for God can be

51 Some have struggled with the concept of a love that can be commanded. Quell, “Love in the OT,” 25. Bernard J. Bamberger solves the issue by divesting the love toward Yahweh of emotion on the basis that it is commanded. “Fear and Love of God in the Old Testament,” HUCA 6 (1929): 39–53; cf. McKay, “Man’s Love,” 426. Marten H. Woudstra, however, contends that “this is judging the biblical love concept by an extraneous standard.” The Book of Joshua (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 337. He notes, “The Hebrew word for ‘love,’ ḥāḇ, covers the whole range of human affection: sexual love, love of friendship, and love for God. It is more than a voluntary expression of the emotions. It can be commanded, and it expresses itself in concrete acts of obedience to law.” Jeffrey H. Tigay notes, “The idea of commanding a feeling is not foreign to the Torah, which assumes that people can cultivate proper attitudes.” Deuteronomy (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 76. Lapsley likewise contends, “The objection that feelings cannot be commanded relies on the modern notions not only that feelings exist within the private world of the individual, but also that they are uncontrollable. In order to talk about love in Deuteronomy, on the other hand, we must come up with a way to talk about emotion that does not perpetuate the modern propensity to privatize feelings and separate them from action.” “Feeling Our Way,” 365. Cf. Hos 3:1.

52 פִּנְי often refers to the seat of the emotions, the inner person. The term never refers to an immortal soul.

53 “Love and behavior motivated by love are not to be separated from emotion, and yet they are not dependent on emotion, but require wise consideration.” Wallis, TDOT 1:110. Els adds, “Human love
tested. Thus the people are warned that God is “testing” [טס] them “to find out if” they “love” him with all their “heart” and “soul” (Deut 13:3 [4]). This helps explain what some see as a contradiction between a love of obedience and affectionate, emotional love.\(^{54}\) Human love for God is not to be merely external but to spring from an internal disposition. In close association with the religious context of wholehearted love for God, ז愛情 with a human agent is often collocated with fear (awe) and the actions of pursuitseeking, and/or clinging, both toward God and other humans.\(^{55}\) Particularly significant is the association of ז>About and פזב, “to cling,” which connotes the idea of attachment, even at times, attraction.\(^{56}\)

The strong emotional aspect that may be connoted by ז我々 is readily apparent elsewhere, supporting the conclusion that the term does not merely refer to legal aspects when used in covenant contexts.\(^{57}\) The potential passion of ז我々 is perhaps most explicit in its collocations with

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\(^{54}\) The “question has been raised as to how such love as this can be commanded. However, if love is not merely an emotional feeling for a person or a thing, but also involves a behavior that is becoming to love, then it is possible for Deuteronomy to elevate this behavior to the level of a commandment.” Wallis, \(TDOT\) 1:115. Tigay, however, sees no contradiction, “In Deuteronomy, love and loyalty toward God is virtually synonymous with keeping His commandments; it refers to an emotional attachment which is expressed in action (see, e.g., 10:12–13; 11:1, 22).” \(Deuteronomy,\) 67.

\(^{55}\) “‘Love’ designates the emotional feeling of strongly desiring something that flows out of one’s perceptions and as a result causes one to go after (Jer. 2:25b), seek (Prov. 8:17 [Q]), run after (Isa. 1:23), cleave (Deut. 11:22; 30:20; Prov. 18:24), and continue faithful to the loved person or thing.” Bruce K. Waltke, \(The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29\) (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 203. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld adds, “In such contexts the word carries the general connotation of setting one’s heart and mind upon the object mentioned, giving it special attention or dedicating oneself to pursuing it.” “Love in the OT,” \(ABD\) 4:376.

\(^{56}\) Beyond the many appearances associated with the command toward humans to love God (see above) פזב, “cling,” also appears in collocation with ז我々 to describe the friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov 18:24), as a description of Shechem’s “deep attraction” to Tamar (Gen 34:3) and in reference to Solomon’s loving and clinging to many foreign women (1 Kgs 11:2).

\(^{57}\) Luc explains that ז我々 is basically an emotive term. “The Meaning.” Jacob similarly speaks of
the emotions of hate [恨] and zeal [愤] (Eccl 9:6). In one other instance בֵּית is associated with the strong emotion of jealousy describing the potentially great intensity of love, even such that is “as strong as death” (Cant 8:6). Further emotionality is evident as בֵּית collocates once with divine compassion (חֵן): “In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them” (Isa 63:9). בֵּית is often used of intense feelings within the bond of an intimate relationship. This is evidenced in the collocation of בֵּית with זֶה (inner person) and/or לֵב/בַּלְבָּל (heart), functioning as the seat of profound emotions (cf. Ps 119:167). Indeed, the one who loves violence, God’s soul [זֶה] hates (Ps 11:5). In familial contexts, בֵּית often implies feelings of attachment, affection, and care (i.e., Gen 22:2). Strong feelings of attachment are also apparent in the בֵּית of profound friendship between Jonathan and David and also when David remembers Jonathan’s love as “very pleasant” and “more wonderful than the love of women (2 Sam 1:26).

In fact, Jonathan is said to love David, literally, as his own self/inner person (זֶה) (1 Sam 18:1, 3; 20:17). Likewise, בֵּית also may connote passion, which may especially be implied in romantic contexts. In Gen 34:3, Shechem’s soul [זֶה] clung to Dinah, he loved her, and spoke to

“the sense of ardent and voluntary desire contained in the root ‘ahab,’” which is confirmed by comparison to other roots such as חֵן, יָרֵא, and צֶדֶק. Theology, 109. Elaine Adler adds that the verb “commonly expresses the ardent affection conveyed by the English ‘love.’” “The Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1990), 70. Lapsley contends that the term “decidedly involves the emotions.” “Feeling Our Way,” 354. Likewise, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, “Loyalty and Love: The Language of Human Interconnections in the Hebrew Bible,” in Backgrounds for the Bible (ed. M. P. O’Connor and D. N. Freedman; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 225; Georg Hentschel, “‘Weil der Herr euch liebt’ (Dtn 7, 8): Die Liebe im Ersten Testament,” IKZ 23 (1994): 400–408. Quell adds that it “hardly ever loses its passionate note.” “Love in the OT,” 23.

58 Notably, בֵּית does not collocate within a single verse with either חֵן, “compassion, love” or צֶדֶק, “compassion, pity.” However, צֶדֶק and בֵּית do collocate within some larger units, for instance Hos 2:25–3:1; 14:3–4 [4–5]. בֵּית and צֶדֶק, “feel compassion, be sorry, comfort,” collocate three times, all related to humans being “comforted”: Isaac married Rebekah, loved her, and was comforted after the death of his mother (Gen 24:67). David “comforted” Bathsheba and lay with her and she gave birth to a son whom God loved (2 Sam 12:24). Finally, Jerusalem weeps bitterly, with no lovers to comfort her (Lam 1:2).

her heart [םּ] (cf. Judg 16:15). Moreover, the woman in Canticles recurrently references her lover as “you whom my soul loves [םּ]” (Cant 1:7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4). Divine affection is likewise apparent in the kinship analogies of husband-wife and father-son. Thus, הָּֽנַּֽֽוּ is used to depict divine love for his corporate people in analogy to the romantic love of a husband for his wife, wherein the woman is unfaithful (i.e., Hos 3:1). That this analogy connotes intensely emotive הָּֽנַּֽֽוּ is not only implicit in the analogy itself but explicit in its further explication, where infidelity affects God in a way analogous to a scorned human husband (cf. Hos 9:15; 11:8–9). The analogy of the father-son relationship likewise seems to connote affection. Thus, God himself recalls his love for Israel as a youth: “When Israel was a youth I loved Him, and out of Egypt I called [קֶּֽנָּֽו] My son” (Hos 11:1; cf. Prov 3:12). For the reasons I described in chapter 1, such examples of the emotionality of divine הָּֽנַּֽֽוּ (and other instances of divine emotionality) should not be dismissed as mere anthropopathism, in accordance with a final-form canonical approach to theology.

In all, the הָּֽנַּֽֽוּ word group may connote intense affection and emotion, including delight, rejoicing, favor, etc. Further, it does not depict divine love as simply unilateral, but its continuance is presented as an outcome of loyalty to God, and thus apparently reciprocal and evaluative, not disinterested or altogether unconditional (Deut 7:12–13; Ps 146:8; Prov 15:9). The result of divine הָּֽנַּֽֽוּ (including its continuance) is often contingent upon, and appropriate to, the actual state of affairs. Thus, love may turn to anger and back. As such, an apparent tension exists between the depiction of divine הָּֽנַּֽֽוּ as “everlasting” and yet subject to change, even hatred and the discontinuance of love. With this in mind, we turn to the first of the five rubrics regarding the nature of divine love.


60 Although some scholars point to ANE parallels as an explanation for this language as well, Lapsley points out, “No parallel presents itself for the paradox of a god who is sovereign over the cosmos, from whom flows an immeasurable and irrational affection for a powerless group of ragtag slaves. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that God's love for others might also spring from genuine feeling, and not simply from adherence to an abstract idea.” “Feeling Our Way,” 362.
The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that ground the volitional aspect of God’s love and leads to the conclusion that divine love is volitional but not only volitional. That is, God’s love includes a free, volitional aspect that is not essential, necessary, or strictly arbitrary. Further, divine love is not merely volitional. That is, divine love is closely associated with, but not identical to, God’s will and election. Finally, the divine-human love relationship, then, is neither unilaterally deterministic nor essential or ontologically necessary but mutually (though not symmetrically) volitional and contingent. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. What is the relationship of love, the divine will, and election? Is divine love the result of God’s unilaterally arbitrary will? Is divine love to be equated with election? These questions are themselves predicated on thorny questions at the center of the free-will debate, particularly the complex issue of whether God’s will is unilaterally efficacious or do humans possess significant freedom, that is, freedom to do otherwise than they do.

Throughout the OT the concept of love is firmly embedded in relationship. The form of relationship is most often, but not always, that of covenant, which itself is closely associated with the concept of election.61 As such, covenant is an especially important revelation of the divine-human relationship as a whole, and of love in particular. Throughout the canon, covenant functions as a central environment for the divine-human relationship, overlapping significantly with the theme of divine love. While covenant itself is not the object of this study, the basis of covenant (i.e., love) is.62 Moreover, many other oft-referenced facets of love, including election

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61 There are diverse forms of covenant throughout the OT and the ANE, the complexity of which is, at times, staggering. This dissertation operates with the basic definition of Gary N. Knoppers that a covenant is not merely a unilateral or one-sided oath but refers to a “formal agreement involving two or more parties” and consequently, “affects those parties” and are “inevitably bilateral.” “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?” JAOS 116 (1996): 696. Such a basic definition is adopted on the basis of consideration of the OT covenants, which consistently depict mutuality, though not equality or symmetry, in the divine-human relationship, as shall be seen.

62 The rationale for the priority of love as the basis of the covenant will be explained further below.
and beneficence, are often integrally rooted in covenant. Therefore, this study will approach covenant from the standpoint of issues regarding divine election and beneficence. This section of the study begins with a survey of the meaning of the primary term of election in the OT, ḫbə, and the major term for divine grace,_rw. Then, this section will present a survey of election and covenant in the OT that provides necessary background information in order to appreciate the survey of the volitional aspect of divine love in the OT that will conclude this section.

A Brief Survey of ḫbə

Ḥbə is the primary term for election in the OT. The most common meaning refers to choice or selection, often with the connotation of evaluation and examination (cf. Isa 48:10). In some instances, the term refers to a decision or will of someone, without explicit reference to

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63 The word group occurs in verbal (mostly qal but a few niphal) forms over 160 times. It also appears in noun forms ḫbə or ḫbəmi as well as the adjectival ḫbə. On the etymology of the term see John N. Oswalt, "찜", TWOT 100; Emile Nicole, "瘘", NIDOTTE 1:638.

64 Oswalt comments that the ‘root idea is evidently ‘to take a keen look at’ (KB), thus accounting for the connotation of ‘testing or examining’” in Isa 48:10; cf. Prov 10:20. “찜”, TWOT 100. Thus, the “idea seems to be that which has been examined and found to be best or most serviceable.” Ibid., 101. Nicole asserts, “there is no intrinsic difference between secular and theological uses of the word. In both cases the vb. denotes the selection of something or someone from a number of other possibilities.” NIDOTTE 1:638. However, the term is most often used in religious contexts.

65 H. Seebass points out the objective nature of ḫbə, that is, “the principles determining the choice can be scrutinized, and this seems to be characteristic of ḫbə.” This is the “rational element, i.e., the scrutiny of the criteria.” “찜”, TDOT 2:75–76. Accordingly, he views divine ḫbə as intelligible, verifiable, rational, and understandable in accordance with specific purpose; a reasoned and purposeful choice based on rational standards. Ibid., 79, 82–83. “The choice that one makes can be related strictly to an obj.: one chooses the fittest, the most appropriate, the best, and the most beautiful. Because the basic meaning may be ‘to regard precisely’ and the verb can also mean ‘to test,’ this value orientation is surely a primary element. The subj. itself is involved, in fact, because it evaluates, but this evaluation arises from a rational consideration.” H. Wildberger, “찜, 택”, TLOT 1:212. Accordingly, Wildberger suggests that “similarity in form and meaning suggests the likelihood that a relationship exists between the roots ḫbr and ḫbn . . . ‘to select, choose,’ and ‘to test, put to the test,’ respectively. TLOT 1:210. Yet, there also may be the ‘subj.-conditioned, volitional meaning [which] should be distinguished from this obj.-oriented, cognitive meaning: one chooses what one would dearly like to have, what pleases one, what one loves. A strict distinction between the two aspects is impossible. But the second aspect manifests itself very clearly in the translators’ rendering of the word in such passages with ‘to elect’ and not simply with ‘to choose, select,’ occasionally even with ‘to choose for oneself,’ expressing the subj.’s engagement, as well as with ‘to wish for.’” Wildberger, TLOT 1:212. In many instances, “the ‘choice’ transpires in these cases on the basis of a pleasure that is not rationally founded or, indeed, rationally demonstrable.” Wildberger, TLOT 1:213.
evaluation. However, ב is often depicted as on the basis of some evaluation, that is, with reference to some characteristic or quality. Indeed, a number of forms of the word group refer to that which is “choice” or “elect” in an evaluative sense, including superlatives in reference to that which is “choicest” or “best.” Similarly ב is also closely related to desire or that which is desirable.

בר refers to God’s choice or decision especially frequently. The word group is the term par excellence for divine election. The adjective ב is always used of those chosen of God (in 13 verses). ב is used in reference to the vocational (as opposed to salvific) elections of Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, kings/leaders, and the people as a whole. Most often the group is

66 Thus, servants are ready to do whatever the king chooses (2 Sam 15:15). See also 2 Sam 19:38; 1 Kgs 18:23, 25; Isa 7:15–16; Job 9:14; 15:5; 29:25; 34:33; 36:21.

67 Thus, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair and took whom they chose (Gen 6:2). Similarly, Lot “saw” the valley that it was a good land (Gen 13:10) then he “chose” for himself all the valley of the Jordan (Gen 13:11). Many other examples include 1 Sam 17:40; 20:30; Isa 40:20; Job 34:4; Prov 3:31. It also frequently refers to the choice of soldiers, an obviously evaluative choice. See Exod 17:9; 18:25; Josh 8:3; 1 Sam 13:2; 2 Sam 10:9; 17:1; 1 Chr 19:10.

68 Thus, in the niphal ב refers to something that is of superlative quality or value, e.g., the “choicest” gold or silver (Prov 8:10, 19; 10:20; 16:16). Similarly, the qal passive participle ב often refers to that which is choice or select in an evaluative sense and the nouns ב or ב appears as superlatives, referring to that which is choicest or best. ב appears in 18 verses (Exod 14:7; Judg 20:15–16; 20:34; 1 Sam 24:2 [3]; 26:2; 2 Sam 6:1; 10:9; 1 Kgs 12:21; Jer 49:19; 50:44; Ps 89:19 [20]; Cant 5:15; 1 Chr 19:10; 2 Chr 11:1; 13:3, 17, 25:5. It is still debated whether the noun ב, young men, is to be associated with this lexeme. See Oswalt, "בר", TWOT 100–101; Nicole, NIDOTTE 1:638. With regard to the nouns ב or ב, the former appears in 11 verses, the latter in 2 verses. See Gen 23:6; Exod 15:4; 2 Kgs 3:19; 19:23; Isa 22:7; 37:24; Jer 22:7; 48:15; Ezek 23:7; 24:4; 31:16; Dan 11:15.

69 For instance, “a good name is to be more desired [בר] than great wealth (Prov 22:1). In another occurrence it is in parallel to desire, “the oaks which you have desired [בר] . . . the gardens which you have chosen” (Isa 1:29). Those who have rebelled against God are said to have “chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations” (Isa 66:3); cf. Job 7:15.

70 See 2 Sam 21:6; Isa 42:1; 43:20; 45:4; 65:9; 15, 22; Pss 89:4; 105:6; 43; 106:5; 23; 1 Chr 16:13.

71 ב refers to the election of the priesthood (Num 16:5, 7; Deut 18:5; 21:5; 1 Sam 2:28; 1 Chr 15:2; 2 Chr 29:11). Also, reference is frequently made to the “place which the LORD your God will choose” where his name will dwell (Deut 12:5; 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23–25; 15:20; 16:2, 6–7, 11, 15–16; 17:8, 10; 18:6; 23:16 [17]; 26:2; 11:11; Josh 9:27). Later, the reference is to God’s choice of Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:16, 44, 48; 11:32, 36; 14:21; 2 Kgs 21:7; 23:27; Zech 1:17; 2:12; 3:2; 2 Chr 6:5–6, 34, 38; 12:13; 33:7; Neh 1:9; cf. Ps 132:13) and to the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 7:12, 16). It also refers to the election of individuals to positions of leadership (Hag 2:23; Pss 105:26; 106:23; Neh 9:7; cf. Isa 42:1; 49:7), especially kings (Saul – 1 Sam 10:24; 12:13; cf. Deut 17:15; 1 Sam 8:18; 2 Sam 21:6; David – 1 Chr 28:4;
used of God’s election of Israel/Judah, chosen out of love (נֶפֶל) and in affection (בְּחַבָּה) (Deut 4:37; 7:6–7; 10:15) to be a “holy people,” God’s “own possession” (Deut 14:2; cf. Ps 135:4). As shall be argued further below, divine election is often associated, but not to be conflated, with divine love (cf. Isa 41:8; Ps 47:4 [5]; cf. 78:68). Moreover, as shall be examined hereafter, divine election is often depicted as conditional and contingent (cf. 2 Kgs 23:27; Isa 14:1; 41:9; Jer 33:24; Ezek 20:5; Zech 1:17; 2:12, [16]; Ps 78:67–68). Significantly, in a number of instances (רֵשֻׁת) refers to divine desires that are, in some cases, unfulfilled.

Notably, שׁא is often used as the antonym of רֵשֻׁת, to choose, as it appears in Isa 7:15–16; 41:9; Jer 33:24; Ps 78:67; Job 34:33.

For instance, to do righteousness and justice is desired (רֵשֻׁת) by the LORD more than sacrifice” (Prov 21:3; cf. Isa 58:5–6). Similarly, in Ps 132:13 God’s choice of Zion is in parallel with the statement, “he has desired (רְצוֹן) it for His habitation” (Ps 132:13). Moreover, divine desires may be unfulfilled; God will “choose” punishments for the people because he “called, but no one answers”; he “spoke, but they did not listen. And they did evil in [his] sight and chose that in which [he] did not delight” (Isa 66:4).

The term is used in various ways in reference to this special election of God’s people. For instance, they are the people whom God has “chosen” (1 Kgs 3:8), “the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance” (Ps 33:12), “Sons of Jacob, His chosen (נְכָר) ones” (Ps 105:6; 1 Chr 16:13; cf. Isa 43:10, 20; 44:1–2; 45:4; 65:9, 15, 22; 105:43; 106:5).

Notably, נְפֶל is often used as the antonym of רֵשֻׁת, to choose, as it appears in Isa 7:15–16; 41:9; Jer 33:24; Ps 78:67; Job 34:33.

For instance, “God is not the only one who chooses and elects; people
the strong divine volition but also points toward divine evaluation and the exercise of human volition.

A Brief Survey of חנן

חנן is not strictly a term of divine volition but has volitional as well as evaluative elements. The חנן word group is most often translated as favor, or grace. In its most basic sense, this group refers to a positive, favorable disposition and/or action from one to another. It is closely associated with entreaty since it often consists of a free, beneficial disposition and/or action in a situation where the (potential) object of favor is in, or will soon be in, a situation of distress or need. Although in a number of cases the supplicant is unworthy of receiving favor, do too. The OT operates on the assumption that they can also choose their God or gods [cf. Josh 24:22]."  

Because it appears so prominently in the OT canon and overlaps with the five rubrics, but does not fit fully within any of them, it seems best to introduce the term here.

In the ANE the cognates (Akkadian, Ugaritic, Arabic) have a range of meaning similar to that represented by the usage in the Hebrew Bible. Terence E. Fretheim, "חנן," NIDOTTE 2:203. The Arabic 반א to “yearn or long for” or “to feel sympathy, compassion” may form the background of the adjectival חנן, which is often coupled with compassion. דבק. David N. Freedman and Jack R. Lundbom, “חנן,” TDOT 5:23. Freedman and Lundbom suggest that by association with חנן, חנן may also “carry the idea of motherly (or fatherly) compassion.” TDOT 5:25; cf. Exod 22:26 [27]. Dafydd R. Ap-Thomas has suggested a connection to a root [חנה] “to bend, incline” thus seeing the sense of condescension. “Some Aspects of the Root HNN in the Old Testament,” JSS 2 (1957): 128–48. Stoebe thinks it is possible, but Yamauchi finds the suggestion unconvincing. H. J. Stoebe, "חנן," TLOT 1:440; Edwin Yamauchi, "חנן," TWOT 302.

The group appears in the noun חנן (in 68 verses), various verbal forms (in 72 verses), and the adjectival חנן (in 12 verses). Other noun forms include חנן meaning “favor,” appearing only once (Jer 16:13) and two terms that consistently present supplication, usually from humans toward God, but sometimes human to human: פנים (in 25 verses) and רוח (in 18 verses). The verb חנן appears most often in the qal (in 50 verses), followed by the hitpael (in 17 verses), and rarely in the piel (1x) and the poel and hophal (2x). Some have seen a niphal form in Jer 22:23 but the term is more likely a “miswritten form of” חנן, “to sigh.” See Stoebe, TLOT 1:440. In the hitpael, it refers to supplication, the (potential) recipient of which is always human, while the (potential) benefactor may be human or divine. In the qal, it may refer to the disposition and/or action of being gracious or bestowing favor. In human contexts, being “gracious” is clearly described as a desirable virtue (i.e., Pss 37:21, 26; 112:5). With God as agent, the qal is most often used in entreaty, when God is asked to “be gracious,” usually relative to the request of specific action(s) (cf. Isa 33:2 among many others). It likewise appears frequently as the description of God’s beneficent disposition and/or actions, whether requested or received. See Gen 33:5, 11; 33:19; 2 Sam 12:22; 2 Kgs 13:23; Isa 27:11; 30:18–19; Amos 5:15; Pss 59:5 [6]; 102:13 [14]; cf. Mal 1:9; Ps 109:12.

Yamauchi considers it to entail not only a favorable response but a “heartfelt response by someone who has something to give.” TWOT 302. Similarly, Freedman and Lundbom, TDOT 5:26.
the root הֶסֶד itself does not necessarily connote anything about the worthiness or unworthiness of
the supplicant. In many instances, the supplicant greatly desires or needs that which is asked for
and the one who may or may not grant favor is in a position to grant it (cf. Gen 6:8; Isa 27:11;
Amos 5:15; Ps 119:132). In such circumstances, הֶסֶד may be ordinary favor or that which extends
beyond expectations. Importantly, God is never the patient of הֶסֶד except when the term refers to
supplication, in other words, he is never depicted as the beneficiary of הֶסֶד or הֶסֶד.

In human usage, הֶסֶד sometimes refers to qualities, i.e., “gracefulness” (cf. Prov 3:22;
5:19). The term is thus, at times, suggestive of traits that are desirable or favorable. However,
the term most often appears within the context of entreaty, frequently in the expression “find

For instance, many commentators see the use of “favor” for Noah as an instance where the term
denotes approval; see below. In 2 Sam 15:25–26, finding favor with God is put in parallel with the potential

Moreover, although הֶסֶד has been thought to be only from superiors to inferiors (so Clark, The
128; W. F. Loffthouse, “Hen and Hesed in the Old Testament,” ZAW 51[1933]: 30), this is not always the
case when it comes to societal status (cf. Gen 30:27; 47:29). So Freedman and Lundbom, TDOT 5:27;
36–41. However, הֶסֶד does always flow from a situational position where the potential benefactor is in a
position to grant something needed or greatly desired to the supplicant, which is almost always the societal
superior. As Fretheim points out, even “find favor,” the common syntagm of entreaty, “may or may not
specify deference toward the one addressed.” NIDOTTE 2:204.

For various connotations in this general vein see Nah 3:4; Zech 4:7; Ps 45:2; Prov 3:22; 4:9;
5:19; 11:16; 17:8; 22:1, 11; 28:23; 31:30; Eccl 9:11; 10:12. Other uses of הֶסֶד include Deut 7:2, where Israel
is commanded to “show no favor” to the former occupants of the land (Deut 7:2) and Deut 28:50 where a
country is foretold who will “show no favor to the young” (Deut 28:50). Thus, in some instances “one may
gain favor or honor from others by words or deeds (Prov 13:15; 28:23), yet not inevitably so (Eccl 9:11).”
Fretheim, NIDOTTE 2:204.

Freedman and Lundbom state, “The noun is first a term of beauty. It denotes an aesthetically
pleasing presentation or aspect of someone or something, and is properly the beauty of someone or something
possesses. The response to this projection of beauty is also Hen, ‘favor.’” TDOT 5:22. They also point out
that verb may also “be used in an aesthetic sense, ‘possess grace.’” Ibid.; cf. Prov 26:25; 22:11. Fretheim
concurs, seeing “an aesthetic sense for that which possesses an aspect that is gracious, graceful, or elegant,”
which “contributes to the beauty of the world and will usually receive a favorable response.” NIDOTTE
2:204. Thus, a “derived sense is used in Hebrew primarily for the pleasing impression made upon one
individual by another.” Freedman and Lundbom, TDOT 5:22. Stoebe adds that in some contexts, הֶסֶד
“assumes the meaning ‘attractiveness, loveliness’ as a visually perceptible personal or objective
characteristic that can also involve the notions of success and fortune.” See Prov 1:9; 3:22; 4:9; 11:16.
TLOT 1:442–43. However, it is not valid to thus read evaluation into every use of the term, though one
should be aware of the possibility of it.
favor” in one’s sight (סֶרֹ ו + הָנַך + לְ).\textsuperscript{85} This syntagm is used in situations where one is seeking and/or receiving desired or needed favor from another, usually without reference to merit, but not ruling out the possibility that the recipient is, at least relatively, worthy.\textsuperscript{86} The latter seems to be the case with regard to Noah, who “found favor” in God’s sight prior to the flood and, the narrative makes sure to inform the reader, he was “a righteous man, blameless in his time” who “walked with God” (Gen 6:8–9).\textsuperscript{87} However, even when the object of הָנַך appears to be worthy, הָנַך

\textsuperscript{85} The idiom apparently refers to looking at one’s eyes to determine whether one was favorably disposed or not. Fretheim, *NIDOTTE* 2:203. Since “favor is shown on the face,” ancient peoples looked at the eyes while contemporary humans look at the smile. Freedman and Lundbom, *TDOT* 5:24. Moreover, the term for face [יָד] itself is a common term used to express the presence or absence of divine favor, whether it is hidden/turned away, or turned toward someone.

\textsuperscript{86} I say “relatively” because in an absolute sense no imperfect human is worthy of divine favor. Reed, nevertheless, correctly sees evaluation in a number of instances of this syntagm. “Some Implications,” 39. The term is used with humans or God as the potential benefactor. In human usage the pattern is of one seeking and/or receiving desired or needed favor from another, thus Laban from Jacob (Gen 30:27), Jacob from Esau (Gen 32:5; 33:8; 10, 15), Shechem from Jacob and his sons (Gen 34:11), Joseph from Potiphar (Gen 39:4), Joseph from the chief jailer (Gen 39:21), those affected by famine from Joseph (Gen 47:25), Jacob from Joseph (47:29), Joseph from Pharaoh (Gen 50:4), the Gadites and Reubenites from Moses and Eleazar (Num 32:5), the lack for a wife from her husband (Deut 24:1), Hanna from Eli (1 Sam 1:18), David from Saul (1 Sam 16:22; 20:29), David from Jonathan (1 Sam 20:3), David from Nabal (1 Sam 25:8), David from Achish (1 Sam 27:5), Joab from David (2 Sam 14:22), Ziba from the king (2 Sam 16:4), Hadad the Edomite from Pharaoh (1 Kgs 11:14), Ruth from Boaz (Ruth 2:2, 10, 13), Esther from all who saw her (Esth 2:15, 17; 5:2). Notably, many usages in Esther appear to imply that her beauty was the source of her favor, suggestive of the potential evaluative connotations of הָנַך noted earlier (cf. Ruth 2:10, 13). Further, Freedman and Lundbom contend that David “had established a deep relationship with both men [Saul and Jonathan], so much so that הֵנִי implies deep affection.” *TDOT* 5:28.

In theological usage, with God as the potential benefactor: Noah “found favor” in God’s sight (Gen 6:8). Abraham entertains one of three strangers (in an apparent theophany): “Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight” do not pass by (Gen 18:3). Lot, speaking to the “man” who saved him from destruction in Sodom, says, “Your servant has found favor in your sight” (Gen 19:19). Moses found favor in God’s sight (Exod 33:12) and based his significant entreaty upon it (Exod 33:13, 16–17; 34:9). In times of further distress, Moses laments to God why he has “not found favor” in God’s sight (Num 11:11, 15), entreating further divine response. In numerous other instances the syntagm denotes the request, hope for, or reception of favor in God’s sight: to Gideon (Judg 6:17), to David (2 Sam 15:25). Jeremiah 31:2 refers to the Israelites having “found grace in the wilderness.” Favor in the sight of another may also be extended by God (and only by him), from the chief jailer to Joseph (Gen 39:21) and from the Egyptians to the Israelites (Exod 3:21; 12:36).

\textsuperscript{87} Most translations have “finding favor” but some have “winning favor” (e.g., NEB). Interestingly, in Gen 6:8 JPS has “found favor” but in Exod 32, JPS consistently translates “gained my favor.” Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 213. Freedman and Lundbom suggest that “this shows again that the OT has no aversion to merited favor.” *TDOT* 5:31. While Stoebe elsewhere notes
is never an obligation of the one bestowing it. As such, ḫ may be given to a worthy or unworthy recipient, both at the discretion of the bestower. At the same time, nothing in the usage of ḫ suggests that it must be an altogether arbitrary bestowal by the benefactor, and instances such as Gen 6:8 imply evaluation and appreciation of the recipient.

Aside from the expression “found favor,” the term appears in other contexts of entreaty with God as agent, sometimes in benedictory formulas (Gen 43:29; Num 6:25). Interestingly, ḫ is also sometimes spoken of as that which is given on the basis of specific conditions. For instance, the psalmist proclaims that God “will give grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps 84:11). Similarly, those who do not forget Qohelet’s teaching and keep his commandments (Prov 3:1) are those that “will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man (Prov 3:4; cf. 3:5). In another instance, God “gives grace to the afflicted” yet scoffs at the scoffers,” assuming some form of divine appraisal (Prov 3:34; cf. 3:33). On the other

the potentially evaluative connotation of ḫ and ḫ, he appears to reject evaluation with divine agency. He asserts that “no reason for the grace” toward Noah is stated, a view he holds by seeing vv. 8 and 9 as stemming from independent sources, specifically v. 8 (J), v. 9 (P). TLOT 1:444. However, K. A. Matthews comments that “the reason Noah “found favor” is related in the following tōlĕdōt section to his ‘righteous’ conduct” and points to Ezek 14:14, 20. “This infers that Noah’s conduct is related in some way to God’s bestowal of gracious favor” though he nevertheless believes that “‘favor’ remains as God’s sole discretion.” Genesis 1–11:26 (NAC 1A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 346. Reed believes Noah “had given some indication of being worthy of that attitude” of divine goodwill. “Some Implications,” 39; cf. Sarna, Exodus, 213; Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus (NAC 2; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 703–4. Thus, it appears that ḫ may be given subjectively or with a mind toward the objective value or action of the recipient.


89 Stoebbe comments, “The demonstration of ḫēn includes an evaluation of the other so that both, subj. and obj., are considered and both participate, even if in different roles, in the event.” TLOT 1:441; cf. Gen 39:4; Deut 24:1; 1 Sam 16:21–22; 18:1; 25:8.

90 Waltke comments, “The term for ‘grace,’ here denotes the positive disposition of heaven and earth toward the son because of his attractiveness . . . extended voluntarily and unilaterally to preserve a valued relationship.” The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 243. Cf. Michael V. Fox, Proverbs 1–9 (AB 18A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 169. Accordingly, Fretheim notes, “Such favor may be granted in view of positive human response (loyal, Prov 3:3–4; righteous, Gen 6:8–9; repentant, Isa 30:19), but God may withhold such favor (pity) in view of a sinful human response (Jer 16:13) or because of God’s larger purposes (Josh 11:20).” Further, God is entreated specifically not to be gracious (hya) to the “treacherous” (Ps 59:5 [6]). On the other hand, it also may be granted to “those who are not repentant” (Neh 9:17, 31). NIDOTTE 2:205.
hand, God proclaims he will “grant” no “favor” (תָּמִיר) to the people because of their great evil (Jer 16:13).

The adjective תָּמִיר almost always has God as agent, and is descriptive of the attribute of “graciousness,” appearing thirteen times, eleven of which collocate with וְשָׁם as descriptive of God’s compassionate and gracious nature, rooted in the amazing self-revelation of divine character at Sinai.91 In the one exception, the meaning is similar: God will hear because he is gracious (Exod 22:27 [26]). So, divine grace appears to be primarily predicated upon God’s character. At the same time, in a number of instances divine תָּמִיר or תָּמִיר seems to be responsive to people’s appropriate disposition and/or action toward God. In all, the word group may be directed toward qualities that elicit a favorable response, but most often it is used with regard to supplication for gracious action, which is freely, but not necessarily wholly arbitrarily, bestowed upon a worthy or unworthy recipient, one who has responded appropriately toward God (Ps 84:11; Prov 3:1) or not (Neh 9:17, 31), at God’s discretion.92

Election and Covenant in the Torah

Genesis provides the origin of all God-human relations when God immanently creates Adam and Eve, thus framing the primary divine-human relation, that of Creator to his creation, a relationship that is marred thereafter by the Fall. However, the divine-human relationship continues, extending in the form of explicit covenants that God initiated with his people, which include divine election and blessing as prime features that pervade the entirety of the Hebrew

91 Exod 34:6; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; cf. Pss 112:4; 116:5. In Ps 112:4 the agent is unclear, whether divine or human, though the latter is more likely (see the discussion of הַעֲנָיָה). In 116:5 תָּמִיר collocates with the participle form וָשָׁם and the characteristic of righteousness [תָּמִיר).

92 As Freedman and Lundbom point out, “favor can be sought on either the ground of righteousness or the ground of unrighteousness coupled with repentance for sin.” Thus, the psalmist can come with a “consciousness of sin” (Pss 25:16; 18; 45:4 [5]; 51:1 [3]) or “as a righteous person” (Pss 26; 140). TDOT 5:32. However, there is a consistent theme that repentance provides occasion for grace (Isa 30:19; Jer 31:9; Joel 2:13; 2 Chr 30:9; cf., conversely, Isa. 27:11). God is even presented as waiting to be gracious (Isa 30:18).
canon. The main word for this significant theme of election (נָצָא) does not appear with God as agent until Num 16:5. However, the theme of election, in the most basic sense of divine choice, appears much earlier in the Torah. The first significant thematic instance of election is the selection of Noah to build the ark. 93 The language regarding the cause of this election is ambiguous, however, simply stating that Noah “found favor” in God’s eyes (Gen 6:8) and was a “righteous man, blameless in his time” (Gen 6:9). 94 No reason for Noah’s election is explicitly given but Noah’s selection is not depicted as altogether arbitrary but as grounded, at least partially, in Noah’s character. 95 After Noah follows God’s instructions and is delivered in the ark (Gen 6:13–14, 18, 22), God establishes the covenant with the seemingly unconditional promise to never again destroy the earth by flood (Gen 9:11–17).

The call of Abraham represents the second significant thematic election, the initiation of the promise and covenant that founds Israel and undergirds the God-Israel relationship (Gen 12:1–3; 15:18; 17:1–14; 18:19). Once again, no explicit reason for the choice of Abraham is presented. There is, however, an apparent tension between the absence of explicit conditionality of the divine promises and other statements that may imply conditionality, such as the


94 Numerous commentators have noted that Noah is explicitly approved in God’s sight (Gen 6:8–9), in contrast to the evil God had observed pervading the earth (Gen 6:5); cf. Sarna, Exodus, 213; Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 345–46; Stuart, Exodus, 703–4.

95 Fretheim, however, suggests that the divine action is independent of Noah’s character. “The Book of Genesis,” in Genesis to Leviticus (vol. 1 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994), 1:390. Likewise, von Rad, Genesis, 118. However, this begs the question, was it just a coincidence that God chose the one who is described as “righteous” and “blameless” and who would be faithful, the very one who “walked with God” (Gen 6:9)? Wenham sees Noah’s righteousness as ensuring the continuance of divine blessing, including “preservation in the flood” and the consequent covenant, though not necessarily deserved by Noah. Genesis 1–15, 206. Similarly, Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 347.
expectations of human response (Gen 17:1, 9–11, 14). Moreover, Abraham, is not only called, but he is also tested (Gen 22:16–18) and blessings are depicted as consequences of Abraham’s appropriate response (Gen 26:4–5; cf. 18:19). Importantly, the election of Abraham is not presented as exclusive but intended as a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4).

The election of Israel as a nation is predicated on the Abrahamic covenant, and this corporate election is described thematically in Exodus-Numbers. Prior to Deuteronomy the institution of the covenant with the nation of Israel is explained by reference to the Abrahamic covenant (Exod 2:24; 3:6, 15–16; 6:4, 8; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 26:42, 45; Num 32:11) and the election is more explicitly outlined in relation to God’s love in Deuteronomy itself (see the volitional aspect of divine love in the Torah below).

The famous divine statement, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion” (Exod 33:19), has sometimes been taken to

96 Abram is instructed to “walk before” God and “be blameless” prior to a divine declaration of the covenant promises (Gen 17:1) and again commanded after the promises: “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations” and be circumcised with the uncircumcised to be cut off (Gen 17:10–11, 14).

97 Following the Akedah narrative, God swears, “Because you have done this thing . . . indeed I will greatly bless you. . . . In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Gen 22:16–18). Again, the promise of blessing is recounted and said to be “because Abraham obeyed Me” (Gen 26:5). Moreover, previously God had declared, “I have known” Abraham “so that he may command” his descendants to keep God’s way “so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” (Gen 18:19).

Wenham recognizes this conditionality, “the fulfillment of the promise [is] contingent on Abraham’s obedience,” and asserts the “pattern of promise-obedience-fulfillment of promise is ubiquitous in Scripture” thus rejecting Gunkel and Westermann’s assertion that the original form of the promise was unconditional. Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 50. Sarna goes further, believing that Abraham must unequivocally prove his worthiness to be God’s elect.” Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 393. Victor P. Hamilton believes the covenant is primarily “unilateral” yet admits that “the voice of conditionality and mutuality is occasionally heard.” The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50 (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 19.

98 The Abrahamic covenant extends even to the slave who becomes circumcised as a condition of entrance into the covenant (Gen 17:14).

99 It is not presented in detail as רָקה until Deuteronomy though Moses and Aaron are chosen [ךָֽֽהֶֽו] to lead the Exodus.

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mean that God chooses to bestow grace and compassion on some but withholds it from others.\textsuperscript{100}

However, this phrase seems to be an echo of the first call of Moses where the divine name is made known (Exod 3:14).\textsuperscript{101} As such, this \textit{idem per idem} construction, parallel to the original revelation of the divine name, adds to the divine self-description, moving from “I am who I am” to something like “I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show” (JPS). This explanation of divine character serves to emphasize the divine right to bestow mercy on even those who are egregiously undeserving, but does not refer to arbitrary election of those who will receive mercy to the exclusion of others.\textsuperscript{102} In other words, the divine freedom and authority to bestow grace and compassion on Israel, even after such odious rebellion with the golden calf, is highlighted, leading into the fuller expression of the divine character in Exod 34:6–7.

\textsuperscript{100} For instance, see Leonard J. Copes, “רחם,” \textit{TWOT} 842; J. A. Motyer, \textit{The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage} (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 309.

\textsuperscript{101} Stuart states, “The characteristics of Yahweh, namely his grace and mercy, are placed here in grammatical apposition to the name of Yahweh.” \textit{Exodus}, 708; cf. G. W. Ashby, \textit{Go Out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 134.

Election and Covenant in the Prophets

Conceptually, the prophets build upon the corporate covenants in the Torah, and add to them the Davidic covenant and the new covenant. In the prophets, the term election often denotes vocational election. The election of kings is the most prominent type of election throughout the prophets, beginning with the strange case of Saul. His election begins with the people’s desire for a king, regarding which God warns them that they will cry out because of the king whom they have “chosen” (1 Sam 8:18; 10:19), yet they continue to demand a king. Thus, the kingship itself was “chosen” by the people against God’s wishes and despite his warnings (1 Sam 12:12–13, 17).

Nevertheless, God is willing to bless the kingship if the people would “fear,” “serve,” and “listen” to him but, if they do wickedly they and their king would “be swept away” (1 Sam 12:14–16, 20, 24–25). According to the wishes of the people for a king, Saul, the one “whom the LORD has chosen” (1 Sam 10:24), is “anointed” of the LORD (1 Sam 10:1; cf. 9:16–17). Yet, Saul, God’s elect, is eventually rejected by God. Although no explicit reason was given as to why God chose Saul to be king rather than someone else, the reasons for Saul’s rejection are apparent. They include his offering of sacrifice without Samuel at Gilgal (1 Sam 13:8–13) and his disobedience in not utterly destroying the Amalekite king and the plunder of war (1 Sam 15:3, 9–11). On such bases, God declares, “I regret that I have made Saul king” (1 Sam 15:11; cf. 15:35) and Samuel

103 This includes chosen priests (1 Sam 2:28), the election of Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23), and the election of kings (discussed below). Jerusalem is also elect by God (1 Kgs 8:44, 48; 11:13, 32, 36; 14:21; 21:7; cf. Josh 9:27; 1 Kgs 8:16) though eventually God calls her “this city which I have not chosen” (2 Kgs 23:27). Such election appears to extend even to the election of the Messiah, whom God has chosen and delights in (Isa 42:1) but the nation abhors (Isa 49:7). Of course, the referent of these elections is disputed, as are numerous potentially Messianic passages throughout Isaiah. Many believe the referent is Cyrus in Isa 42:1 due in part to parallels with the Cylinder of Cyrus including Cyrus being called by name, chosen, and Marduk being pleased with him. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 211. However, if the referent is indeed the Messiah, such election is clearly not merely subjective, but the election as well as the associated delight quite clearly would be evaluative.

104 Perhaps the translation “regret” is a bit misleading. The term may better be translated, “I am sorry.” As H. Van Dyke Parunak points out, יָּנַּח connotes the sorrow of emotional pain but never the sense of “regret” per se: “A Semantic Survey of NHM,” *Bib* 56 (1975): 519. This is the same term used of God’s sorrow in Gen 6:6, suggesting God “was deeply concerned” and in “grief.” Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 170. For
declares to Saul, “Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king” and in this regard he will not “change His mind” (1 Sam 15:23, cf. 15:26). It is thus apparent that Saul’s election to the kingship was not unconditional. Significantly, the dynasty that is thereafter promised to David was conditionally available to Saul. At Gilgal, Samuel had proclaimed that God “would have established” Saul’s “kingdom over Israel forever” but because of his sin, his kingdom would “not endure” (1 Sam 13:13–14).

Within this context, David is chosen to succeed Saul. The first hint of David’s election comes directly upon the heels of the first proclamation of Saul’s rejection as dynastic king, wherein Samuel proclaims, “The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart” and “has appointed him as ruler over His people.” Yet, importantly, the selection of another is itself “because” Saul had not kept God’s commands (1 Sam 13:14) and thus God has given the kingdom to another “who is better” than Saul (1 Sam 15:26–28). Although scholars have been divided as to whether the phrase “a man after His own heart” is a statement of subjective election or objective evaluation (or some combination), the latter statements suggest evaluation. The narrative of David’s selection is itself telling regarding the nature of this election. First, God declares that he has “seen” (נראים) a king for himself (1 Sam 16:1). Shortly after, Samuel beholds further discussion see the word study of earlier. Bergen comments further, “God is aware of and responsive to choices made by people, reacting favorably only when people choose the option of obedience to the divine will.” 1, 2 Samuel, 170.

The same term, נראים, is used for God’s sorrow (1 Sam 15:11, 35) as well as the declaration that he will not “change his mind” like a human (1 Sam 15:29). The statement in v. 29 conveys God’s resolve to remove Saul and replace him with David, which is beyond revocation, but does not assert that God never “relents,” as such. See the brief word study of נראים later in this chapter.

That is, “election does not have such permanence that it cannot be called into question by the improper behavior of the elect.” H. Wildberger, “נראים,” TLOT 2:654.

Some see this phrase referring to God’s choice, suggesting the translation “a man of his own choosing.” McCarter Jr., II Samuel, 229. Elsewhere, the phrase מִכְּלַדֵּד, literally “according to my heart,” refers to that which is according to one’s desire (1 Sam 14:7; Ps 20:4 [5]). But this begs the question, whether such “desire” is wholly arbitrary or at least partially grounded in objective evaluation, as implied elsewhere (1 Kgs 3:6). Consider also the apparently objective, morally evaluative, usage in Jer 3:15 of the shepherds, after his own heart [מִכְּלַדֵּד], whom God will appoint for his people after they return from apostasy.
Eliab and thinks he must be God’s anointed, but God responds that while “man looks at the outward appearance,” God “looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7), a significant hint of evaluation that reminds one of the somewhat cryptic earlier description, “man after my own heart” (1 Sam 13:14). God successively declares, with regard to brother after brother of David, not “chosen” (1 Sam 16:8–10) until David is brought and God states, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he” (1 Sam 16:12). David later states, God “chose me above” Saul “and above all his house” (2 Sam 6:21; cf. 1 Kgs 8:16). Although God does not specify why David himself is chosen, Saul was clearly rejected because he rejected God, David is “better” than Saul, and God looked upon the heart of David in selecting him. The implication is that David’s election is not arbitrary.  

With this election comes the promise of a dynasty. God declares to David that he will “make a house” for him (2 Sam 7:11) and will “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:13). God will be “a father to him and he will be a son to” God who will discipline his sons if they depart from faithfulness. Yet, divine “lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as [God] took it away from Saul. . . . [David’s] house and [his] kingdom shall endure before [God] forever; [David’s] throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam 7:14–16; cf. 2 Kgs 21:7; Jer 33:17–21). This David later refers to as “an everlasting covenant” (2 Sam 23:5). As such, these promises to David appear to be unconditional, in stark contrast to the case of Saul. But this begs the question, why is such a promise made to David, and by extension, Solomon?  

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108 In support of this view, Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers reference an “element of scrutiny in the root וְצֵל [which] is appropriate to the idea that, for so important an office, Yahweh looks carefully at qualifications before making his appointment.” Haggai, Zechariah 1–8 (AB 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 70. See also such evaluative connotations in the word study of וְצֵל.

109 Roddy Braun contends that “no possibility is entertained that this covenant will be abrogated, or will need to be abrogated (v 13); no less than five times the writer repeats that it will be forever.” 1 Chronicles (WBC 14; Dallas: Word, 1986), 200.

110 Both Birth and Fretheim suggest that God’s election of David is different in kind from Saul’s such that while Saul’s election was conditional, David’s is unconditional. Birch, “First and Second Samuel,” in Numbers–Samuel, 2:1091, 1257–58. Yet, Birch states, “The promise to David does not remove the ‘if’ of moral demand that we associate with God’s covenant given to Israel at Sinai. Even kings may be chastised and made to suffer the consequences of their sin.” “First and Second Samuel,” in Numbers–
seems to attribute this “great lovingkindness” shown to David, including Solomon’s own
kingship over God’s “chosen” people, at least partially to David’s obedience and “uprightness of
heart” (1 Kgs 3:6, 8). Likewise, later, it is declared that Solomon’s kingship is “for David’s sake,”
and “because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from
anything that [God] commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the
Hittite” (1 Kgs 15:4–5).

Further, the promise elsewhere seems explicitly conditional. David himself instructs
Solomon to obey God in accordance with the “Law of Moses . . . so that the LORD may carry out
His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to
walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the
throne of Israel’” (1 Kgs 2:3–4; cf. 1 Kgs 8:25). Again, Solomon is instructed by God himself, “if
you will walk before Me as your father David walked . . . then I will establish the throne of your
kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David” (1 Kgs 9:4–5). Yet, “if you
or your sons indeed turn away from following Me . . . then I will cut off Israel from the land
which I have given them” (1 Kgs 9:6–7; cf. 9:9). Accordingly, the earthly dynasty is not
everlasting. In actuality, Solomon strays from obedience, and God is angered (1 Kgs 11:9–10)
and proclaims, “Because you have done this . . . I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will

\[\text{Samuel, 2:1258. But then, whence is unconditionality? Fretheim suggests that God learned from the}
\text{experience of Saul and implemented a better way. “Divine Foreknowledge, Divine Constancy, and the}
\text{Rejection of Saul’s Kingship,” CBQ 47 (1985): 599–601. Yet, even if one allows Fretheim’s view that God}
\text{lacks foreknowledge (which I do not), it seems difficult to believe God would not anticipate enthroning a}
\text{potentially rebellious king. Why not just make an unconditional commitment the first time? Why not just}
\text{decide to maintain the commitment to Saul despite his rebellion while he was still on the throne, even?}
\text{Fretheim further suggests that the proclamation that God will not “change his mind” in 1 Sam 15:29 refers}
\text{to the surety and permanence of David’s election; cf. also Ps 132:11. However, the apparent conditionality}
\text{of the Davidic covenant elsewhere raises significant questions for such an approach.}

\[\text{111 Many scholars have recognized the conditionality embedded even in the promises of the}
\text{Davidic dynasty. Bergen, }1, 2 \text{ Samuel, 150–51; Ralph W. Klein, }1 \text{ Samuel (WBC 10; Dallas: Word, 1983),}
\text{127; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry (Missoula,}
\text{Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 141–42; John A. Davies, A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual}
\text{Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19.6 (New York: T & T Clark, 2004).}
give it to your servant” (1 Kgs 11:11; cf. 11:33). Yet, the punishment is tempered on account of David and Jerusalem such that God “will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David” but the kingdom will be torn from Solomon’s son though his son will be given one tribe “for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen” (1 Kgs 11:12–13).

Jeroboam is selected in a similarly contingent manner, being given a conditional promise of an “enduring house” if he is obedient to God as was David (cf. 1 Kgs 11:38). Yet, he is disobedient and thus the kingdom is taken from his house (1 Kgs 14:8). Thus began a long line of mostly rebellious kings in both the north and the south of the divided kingdom. Although punishment was tempered and delayed “for the sake of David His servant, since He had promised him to give a lamp to him through his son always” (2 Kgs 8:19), both Israel and Judah ultimately faced destruction (cf. 2 Kgs 23:27).

It seems, then, that while election may be undeserved and foreconditional, its attendant privileges are neither unconditional nor unending. There have been numerous scholarly explanations for the apparent tension between the apparently unconditional promise(s) and, elsewhere, conditionality involved in the attendant blessings of the promise(s). Some interpreters hold that there were at least two streams of history that interpreted the events in contradiction to one another: one viewing the promises as unconditional and eternal, the other viewing them as conditional, or at least tempering them as such. Another possibility is that, considering the evident conditionality and the removal of the earthly kingship, the promise was never intended to be viewed as unconditional. A third possibility is that the election, covenant, and attendant

112 Jeroboam succeeds Solomon as ruler over 11 tribes but one tribe will remain with Solomon’s son, “for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 11:32), and again “for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes” (1 Kgs 11:34), “that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name” (1 Kgs 11:36).

promises were unconditional in some respects, but conditional in others. This study favors the third option, which is bolstered by reference to parallels in ANE literature.\textsuperscript{114} This potential solution will be addressed in a bit more detail later, along with further mention of the potential interpretive value of comparison to ANE covenant genres, especially that of grant.

The apparent tension between elements of conditionality and unconditionality continues throughout the latter prophets, and into the writings. Much of Israel’s identity is as God’s “chosen” people (Isa 43:10, 20; 44:1–2; 45:4; 48:10; 65:9, 15, 22).\textsuperscript{115} God has “chosen” and not “rejected” Israel (Isa 41:8–9; cf. Jer 33:24; Zech 3:2). However, the people are not always faithful to God, despite his repeated pleadings for them. Indeed, in numerous instances, God’s desires are unfulfilled. For example, God “longs [\(\pi\sigma\pi\)] to be gracious” to his people” (Isa 30:18) but his compassion is interrupted by human apostasy.\textsuperscript{116} Further, God does not desire or have “pleasure” (\(\pi\xi\)) in the death of the wicked but desires repentance (Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11). However, many reject him.\textsuperscript{117} Therefore, God’s will is not unilaterally efficacious; some factor(s) bring about

\textsuperscript{114} This is the view of many scholars. See McCarter Jr., \textit{II Samuel}, 207–8; Weinfeld, “The Covenant”; Weinfeld, \textit{Deuteronomy 1–11}, 370. Consider also John H. Walton’s helpful presentation of covenant jeopardy, which maintains that God does not revoke his covenant promises but “there is a necessity for the human party to obey God.” \textit{Covenant: God’s Purpose, God’s Plan} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 113. Walton suggests that failure by the human party to meet covenant responsibilities might amount to “benefit jeopardy” or “abortive jeopardy,” among others. In the former, the human party’s failure to meet covenant responsibilities puts them in danger of losing the benefits of the covenant (cf. Lev 26:14–30; Deut 28:15–68; 1 Kgs 9:6–9). In the latter, failure “on the part of the human party prior to or soon after ratification [of the covenant] could jeopardize their involvement in that phase of the covenant.” For example, if “Abraham had not left his home and family to go to the land God showed him, the covenant would not have been made with him.” \textit{Covenant}, 97. In this way, he contends that human rebellion against God can “render the covenant ineffectual.” However, “this does not mean that the covenant is null and void, but that it is rendered ineffectual in terms of its intended purpose.” Walton, \textit{Covenant}, 97.

\textsuperscript{115} It should be remembered that often the identification of the “chosen” is disputed. The passages here appear to be in reference to Israel.

\textsuperscript{116} This is important for it means that God makes his action dependent upon contingencies. The language of intense waiting implies once again the divine emotion of wanting to be gracious but not being able to tolerate the state of affairs (in regard to justice, not sheer capability).

\textsuperscript{117} Although God has no pleasure in anyone’s death, “Yahweh will not impose his grace on a rebellious people. They must accept responsibility for both the course of their lives and their destiny. Without repentance God cannot forgive and the death sentence remains inevitable.” Daniel I. Block, \textit{The
states of affairs contrary to God’s will, which causes him grief (cf. Lam 3:32–33). Accordingly, that election is not constant with regard to Israel is apparent in the forecast that a time will come when God “will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel” (Isa 14:1). Likewise, in Zechariah it is foretold that God will “again choose Jerusalem” (Zech 1:17; 2:12). Further, humans are said to have “broke[n] the everlasting covenant” (Isa 24:5; cf. Jer 6:30). Conditionality is further evident in that people are exhorted to listen to and come to God and he “will make an everlasting covenant with” them, “according to the faithful mercies shown to David” (Isa 55:3). Apparently, even this “everlasting covenant” requires a responsive relationship. Again, God declares that he loves justice and thus declares his intention to faithfully recompense Israel with an everlasting covenant and with blessing denoting a link between love, justice, and blessing (Isa 61:8–9). Indeed, God looks forward to a day when the “whole house of Israel” will serve him, he will “accept [נָשַׁה] them” and their gifts as a “soothing aroma” and bring

Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24 (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 589. Thus, “God desired to deliver, but he would bring judgment if necessary.” Lamar Eugene Cooper Sr., Ezekiel (NAC 17; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 193.

118 Ben C. Ollenburger suggests, “These texts stress the permanence of God’s choice, and thus of Jerusalem/Zion.” “The Book of Zechariah,” in The Twelve Prophets (vol. 7 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 754. Similarly, see Gary Smith, Isaiah 1–39 (NAC 15A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 306. Oswalt suggests, “This election does not speak so much of Israel’s status before God as it does of the individual Israelite’s experience of him. God’s choice of Israel to be the bearers of the covenant was fixed in God’s promise to Abraham. But any specific group or generation of that people had to receive the choosing for themselves.” Yet, whatever may come, “God will once again choose.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39 (NICOT; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1986), 312. Yet, the very fact that Israel must be chosen again points to an aspect of impermanence. Watts suggests, “Again’ is needed in the context where such election has been set aside to allow judgment to do its work.” John D. W. Watts, Isaiah 1–33 (WBC 24; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), 202. Such lapses of election are consistently attributed not to divine arbitrariness, but to the failure and rebellion of God’s covenant people. Indeed, here “election is not deterministic and that the correlation of divine election and human submission to obligation is taken very seriously.” Wildberger, TLOT 1:221–22.

119 However, Wildberger points out that “Lev 26:44 expressly emphasizes the notion that this judgment may be understood as abandonment to destruction. The dissolution of the covenant is not at issue.” TLOT 2:659. See also Jer 31:37.

120 There is some ambiguity as to whether the phrase נָשַׁה נַעַרְנָה is a subjective or objective genitive. That is, are the “mercies” those shown by David toward God, or by God toward David? See the discussion in the word study of נָשַׁה.
them to the land of Israel (Ezek 20:39–42). Thus, ultimately, God forecasts a new covenant, not like the one the people broke (Jer 31:31–32) but one in which God will put his law within them and write it on their heart (Jer 31:33) and its endurance will be sure (Jer 31:35–37; cf. Jer 32:38–41; Ezek 16:59–63; 37:21–28). The key to this future, idyllic relationship is the concept of a new heart provided by God, such that the relationship will be wholehearted and internal (cf. Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26).

Accordingly, it seems that Israel is not automatically privy to the Davidic promises. God’s word will accomplish his “desire” (רָצוֹן) (Isa 55:11), his anger accomplishes his purpose (Jer 23:20), he is the father (Isa 64:8) and the potter (Isa 64:8; Jer 18:1–10). Yet, God expects appropriate response, that is, requited love. The elect king is to, in effect, fulfill that which was already prescribed in the Mosaic covenant, which itself exists only because of God’s love for Israel’s forefathers (Deut 4:37; 7:7–8; 10:15), and his lovingkindness and compassion bestowed upon them, especially after rebellion (Exod 33:19; 34:6–7).

Similarly, in Amos, the special status of the people before God brings special responsibility. Thus, God declares, “You only have I chosen [יְבַעַר] among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). God took the initiative, and his love is the basis for the relationship, but

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121 God himself recounts the up and down history of his special relationship with Israel, from the day he “chose Israel and swore” to them in Egypt (Ezek 20:5) they rebelled with idolatry despite God’s instructions and, thus, he “resolved to pour out” his “wrath on them” (Ezek 20:8). Yet, for his name he delivered them repeatedly but they likewise rebelled repeatedly, making God furious, an emotion that he tempered, and did not destroy them (Ezek 20:9–24). In the promised land, their rebellion continued, even in child sacrifice (Ezek 20:31) yet God resolved that he would bring them back through discipline, even into the “bond of the covenant,” purge the rebels and bring them out of sojourn but not to Israel (Ezek 20:38).


123 Thus, the Davidic covenant is a sub-covenant of the Sinaitic covenant and, therefore, also includes conditionality. See Roy Gane, “Covenant of Love: Syllabus for GSEM 538 Covenant-Law-Sabbath” (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1997), 32–35.

124 The verb here, יְבַעַר, connotes an intimate relationship, thus alluding to the special status of Israel before God as elect. Andersen and Freedman rightly point out, “Yahweh is the ‘God of Israel,’”
he expects all the more an appropriate response from his people. Within this context, the idea of a remnant becomes highly significant; some of God’s “chosen” are spared and heirs to the inheritance (Isa 65:8–9), and there is a “blessing” in them, God’s people who “seek” him (Isa 65:10). However, there are others who were “called” but neither listened to nor answered God and forsook him, chose what displeased him, and thus face destruction (Isa 65:11–12). This posits the distinction between a “believing [faithful] remnant” who are heirs to the promises and the unbelieving who ultimately face destruction. In all this, though God’s promises never fail, election is depicted as conditional and not unilateral, irresistible, or constant.

Election and Covenant in the Writings

The Writings build upon a very similar framework to that of the prophets with regard to election. As in the prophets, the term הַיַּעַר often refers to vocational election, especially the election of Israel (Pss 33:12; 47:4 [5]; 78:67–68; 132:13; 135:4). Notably, Israel is chosen as God’s “inheritance” (Ps 33:12) and “His own possession [nַּלְגֻּשׁ]” (Ps 135:4). As such, God’s

“although v 2 states the case in absolute terms, these should be taken as relative rather than exclusive: I have given you more attention than any other people; therefore I expect more from you than from them. I will punish you more than them.”

Francis I. Andersen and David N. Freedman, Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 382. This may have served as a corrective against those who thought election relieved them of responsibility. Donald E. Gowan, “The Book of Amos,” in The Twelve Prophets (vol. 7 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 369–70. On the contrary, “Israel was about to learn that their special relationship carried with it special responsibility and accountability.”

Billy K. Smith and Frank S. Page, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah (NAC 19B; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 71.


126 Though some scholars think that the idea of a “believing” remnant is late, Oswalt points out that “all the prophets, at least from Elijah and Elisha onward, divided the nation into those who obeyed God and those who did not.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 645; cf. Deut 28–29; Isa 3:10; Jer 24.

127 Election in the Writings also includes that of priests (1 Chr 15:2; 2 Chr 29:11) and kings, Jerusalem (Ps 78:68; 2 Chr 6:5, 34, 38; 12:13; 33:7; Neh 1:9), and the temple itself (2 Chr 7:12, 16; 33:7). Reference is also made to the election of Abraham (Neh 9:7; cf. Ps 105:9–12 = 1 Chr 16:16–19) and of Moses and Aaron (Ps 105:26). The Abrahamic covenant, the product of this election, is itself presented as “everlasting” in 1 Chr 16:16–19 = Ps 105:9–12; cf. Ps 111:5, 9.
people are cherished by him, a special treasure (מַעֲנֵי), implying evaluation (cf. Prov 21:3).  

Elsewhere, the psalmist speaks of God’s “desire” (ישון) for the mountain of his dwelling (Ps 68:16 [17]). Likewise, God has “chosen” (נָשָׁת) and “desired” (ישון) Zion (Ps 132:13); it is to be his “resting place forever” for he has “desired [ישון] it” (Ps 132:13–14; cf. 2 Chr 7:16). The term for desire here is a strongly emotional term, sometimes connoting an intense craving.  

Moreover, ...
divine election is not unconditional or unilaterally effective as God is provoked by Israel’s evil (Ps 78:58–59) and “rejected [םֵאַב] the tent of Joseph, and did not choose [נַחֲלָה] the tribe of Ephraim” (Ps 78:67), but he “chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved” (Ps 78:68).\footnote{Andersen and David N. Freedman, 
\textit{Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} (AB 24; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 565–66. JPS translates the phrase, “When I chose them.” The noun occurs in 7 verses with the connotation of desire, longing. The collocation of נָאָב + נְאָב appears in Deut 12:15, 20–21; 18:6; 1 Sam 23:20; Jer 2:24. A different noun of this lexeme, נַחֲלָה, represents desire in the form of a craving for someone of something; it is never used with divine agency.}

Further, the Davidic election is once again a prevalent theme in the Writings, perhaps most clearly depicted when David recounts that God “chose” him to be king “for He has chosen Judah” and “He took pleasure [נָאָב] in me to make me king over all Israel (1 Chr 28:4; cf. 2 Chr 6:5–7). Further, Solomon’s election is also prominent; God himself declares, “I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him” (1 Chr 28:6; cf. 1 Chr 17:13; 28:5). Again, as in the Prophets, the promises attending this election within the Davidic covenant are frequently spoken of as everlasting. For instance, God proclaims that he will “establish” Solomon’s “throne forever,” be a father to him, and not take away his נָאָב as from Saul (1 Chr 17:12–14). In numerous other instances the covenant is spoken of as everlasting.\footnote{This appears to be in reference to the removal of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem, which is itself a precursor to further judgment against Israel, yet also, by extension, highlights appraisal of respective nations.} Indeed, it is declared, “If his sons forsake” the commandments then God will punish them but “will not break off [his] lovingkindness from him. . . . My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of my

Andersen and David N. Freedman, 

\footnote{This appears to be in reference to the removal of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem, which is itself a precursor to further judgment against Israel, yet also, by extension, highlights appraisal of respective nations.}

\footnote{Thus, God declares, “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever” (Ps 89:3–4 [4–5]; cf. 89:19–21 [20–22]). Notice the qal passive participle used here with reference to David’s election, which often connotes the evaluative sense of being choice, of good quality, like choice soldiers, chariots, cedars, etc. Further, “My Lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and my covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever” (Ps 89:28–29 [29–30]; cf. 89:2 [31]). See also 1 Chr 22:10; cf. 2 Chr 13:5.}
lips. Once I have sworn to My holiness; I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever and his throne . . . shall be established forever” (Ps 89:31–37 [32–38]).

Yet, despite all of this, the Psalmist laments the apparent reality that God has “cast off and rejected” and even “spurned the covenant of your servant” and “profaned his crown in the dust (Ps 89:38–39 [39–40]) and asks, “Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?” (Ps 89:49 [50]). Accordingly, the attendant privileges of this election are repeatedly declared to be conditional. For example, God himself declares to Solomon, “If you walk before Me as your father David walked” keeping the commandments “then I will establish your throne as I covenanted with your father David . . . but if you turn away and forsake” the commandments and serve other gods “then I will uproot you” (2 Chr 7:17–20). Likewise, David exhorts Solomon to serve God wholeheartedly for “if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever” (1 Chr 28:9).

Many other statements likewise declare such conditionality. Further, the Davidic promises

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134 As J. Clinton McCann Jr. puts it, here the “metaphor suggests that the Davidic dynasty is an enduring structure of God’s cosmic rule.” “The Book of Psalms,” in 1 & 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms (vol. 4 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 1036. The language here and in 2 Sam 7, upon which this passage is based, has often been associated with the language of a “royal grant”-type covenant. So Marvin Tate, Psalms 51–100 (WBC 20; Dallas: Word, 2002), 427. See the discussion further below.

135 Knoppers believes that “however much 2 Sam 7 and Ps 89 heighten the deity’s obligation to David and his seed, they also contain a bilateral element. In both texts, David’s descendants are not freed from their responsibility to obey Yhwh (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:31–33).” Gary N. Knoppers, 1 Chronicles 10–29 (AB 12A; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 672. Cf. idem, “Ancient Near Eastern.” Notably, God’s faithfulness (חׁנָנָה) and lovingkindness (דָּוִדָּם) are emphasized throughout the Psalm (both appearing seven times) and it forms the crux of the Psalmist’s final question, is God no longer faithful? As Tate puts it, “The perplexity and hurt are not resolved in this psalm; the matter is left open. The speaker cannot solve the problem.” Psalms 51–100, 429.

136 Thus, David states to Solomon, “Then you will prosper, if you are careful to observe” God’s commandments (1 Chr 22:13). God declares of Solomon, “I will establish his kingdom forever if he resolutely performs my commandments and My ordinances (1 Chr 28:7). Likewise, Solomon recounts God’s declaration to David: “You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk in My laws as you [David] have walked before Me” (2 Chr 6:16; cf. 6:42). Cf. Ps 89:32 [33]; 1 Chr 28:10; 2 Chr 15:2. Elsewhere, the conditionality is also explicit: “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimony which I will teach them, their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever” for “the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation” calling it his “resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it” (Ps 132:11–14). Here and elsewhere the Psalms presume what is implicit elsewhere, namely that the Davidic promises
remain integral to the divine acceptance or rejection of succeeding kings. Eventually, despite the Davidic covenant, destruction comes, even upon Jerusalem (2 Chr 36:19). In all there is repeated contingency despite the supposed unconditionality of the divine promises. The depiction of election and covenant in the OT thus suggests significant conditionality in the divine-human relationship.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the Torah

The volitional aspect of love is evident in Exod 33:19 where God has the right to freely bestow mercy and compassion on the undeserving but is not compelled to do so. The volitional aspect of divine love is further apparent in the relationship between love and choice, which is clarified in three primary passages in Deuteronomy, all of which depict divine love as the cause of the divine choice of Israel (Deut 4:37; 7:7–8; 10:15). First, “because” God loved (יהוה) Israel’s forefathers he chose (ברקם) their descendants (Deut 4:37). Second, “Not because you were more numerous than all other peoples did Yahweh delight [חקל] in you, therefore he chose [ברקם] you when you were the least of all peoples, because of the love [حب] of Yahweh for you, and he kept the oath which he swore to your fathers” (Deut 7:7–8). Third, “Yet in your fathers Yahweh

are meant not merely for kings but, through them, belong to the people as a whole.

137 God was with Jehoshaphat “because he followed the example of his father David’s earlier days and did not seek the Baals” (2 Chr 17:3). Similarly, Hezekiah and Josiah “did right in the sight of the LORD” like their “father David” (2 Chr 29:2; 34:2; cf. 11:17). On the other hand Ahaz “did not do right in the sight of the LORD as David his father” (2 Chr 28:1).

138 This is despite the fact that even in the midst of evil, God “was not willing to destroy the house of David because of the covenant which He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and his sons forever” (2 Chr 21:7).

139 Thompson comments, the “basic condition [of the Davidic dynasty] was that David’s descendants should walk in God’s law.” J. A. Thompson, 1, 2 Chronicles (NAC 9; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 229.

140 See the discussion of this verse above where it is demonstrated that the text does not refer to the arbitrary bestowal of compassion on some and not others.

141 My translation. I have departed from the NASB translation, both here and in Deut 10:15 below, because the translation “set His love” or “set His affection” in 7:7 and 10:15 respectively (likely influenced
delighted [נאה] to love [והו] them. Therefore he chose [יהוה] their seed after them, even you, from all the peoples as it is this day” (Deut 10:15). These texts do not address the cause of divine love itself but, importantly, distinguish between love and choice, the former consistently being identified as the source of the latter. As such, divine love and choice cannot be synonymous. Israel is the recipient of divine choice and affection (הכוונה) because of God’s love for their fathers, first, but also because of his love for them. Since divine love is the basis of election, it is likewise the basis of covenant. Further, in Deut 7:7 and 10:15, significant import hinges upon the meaning of the rare term נאה, an emotive term, which may denote clinging, attachment, longing, attraction, being drawn to, desire, and/or delight in something or someone. נאה implies that the

by the LXX “προκύπτω” for נאה, meaning to “choose, decide, prefer, or commit oneself to”) is misleading when the meaning of נאה is considered intertextually. Lapsley refers to this as an “evidently emotional attachment.” “Feeling Our Way,” 361. Further, “Somehow, God's love for Israel is born out of a feeling, and that feeling has moral weight and relates in a significant way to the actions God takes on Israel's behalf (Deut 7:8).” Lapsley, “Feeling Our Way,” 368.

My translation. In both cases, I have translated vav with יְהוָה as a vav of consequence “therefore he chose” in accordance with the usage in Deut 4:37 where the parallel statement is predicated on “because” [יהוה] and the vav with יְהוָה is thus a vav of consequence. Lapsley translates, “Yhwh became attached to Israel's ancestors in love and chose their seed after them.” Lapsley, “Feeling Our Way,” 361.

Shafer sees this as reference to “a cosmic deity who loved the fathers, made covenant with them, and acknowledged their reciprocal faithfulness to his covenant by choosing their seed.” Byron E. Shafer, “The Root bhr and Pre-Exilic Concepts of Chosenness in the Hebrew Bible,” ZAW 89 (1977): 39. Tigay suggests that “Israel’s ancestors earned God’s love” through “fidelity” as “explained in Genesis.” Deuteronomy, 57.

Some scholars have seemed to conflate love and choice. So Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 134. Merrill is likewise representative of such a perspective. He suggests that in “covenant contexts these verbs are synonymous.” Thus, in his view, “love and hate are not emotive terms but technical language to speak of divine election for salvation and service.” Deuteronomy, 180–81. But, contra Merrill, since election is consistently described as a consequence of God’s prior love here, it cannot therefore be synonymous.

Cf. Pss 78:68; 47:4 [5]. That God’s choice is explicitly predicated on his love, as its basis, is recognized by numerous scholars, despite the traditional conflation of love and choice; cf. els, NIDOTTE 1:285; Dyrness, Themes, 59, Clark, The Word Hesed, 131, 136; Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, 179–80; Christensen, Deuteronomy 1–11, 159, 204; Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, Jeremiah 26–52 (WBC 27; Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 108. Jacob comments that “the origin of election is found in love, that is to say in the spontaneous movement which carries one being toward another being with the desire to possess it and to find some satisfaction in that possession.” Theology, 108. Even Egyptian parallels depict divine activity toward Pharaoh “as a result of my love for you.” See Jan Bergman, “והוה,” TDOT 1:100.

ץא is a somewhat rare term, appearing in only 13 verses, yet it is very closely related to יְהוָה
kind of love that God has for his people is not detached, but includes tender feeling, affection, and emotion. Yet, divine love here describes more than God’s emotive affection for Israel. Here, divine love is also committal, signified by the action of choice, explicitly appealing to a prior commitment, the promise to the patriarchs. In this way, the volitional aspect of divine love is complementary to evaluation and emotion.

and plays a prominent role in passages that speak of Israel’s election in divine love. The non-personal usages of ג文化传媒 refer to bands in the construction of the sanctuary (Exod 27:17; 38:17, 28), thus suggesting derivation from a root meaning of bind, adhere, unite, or stick together; cf. Good, “Love in the OT,” IDB 3:165; Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1–11, 360; Gerhard Wallis, "חשק,” TDOT 5:261. The usage in interpersonal contexts also implies such a connection. For instance, in Gen 34:8 (Shechem for Dinah) it means “longing” or even “passionate desire.” See Els, NIDOTTE 1:280. Deut 21:11 utilizes the same term of a man’s desire for a beautiful woman among the captives whom he would like to marry. It is used of other desires as well (1 Kgs 9:1, 19; 2 Chr 8:6; Isa 38:17). The same term is used to describe the one who has “loved” [ג文化传媒] God and “therefore” God will deliver him (Ps 91:14). In this way, from a survey of OT usages it is clear that the term does not connote “choice” in the sense of arbitrary election. Rather, the normal meaning would seem to entail passionate love, delight, and/or desire.

However, some scholars nevertheless suggest an elective connotation. Wallis recognizes the connotation of “inward devotion to or pleasure in a project” in human usage (1 Kgs 9:19). TDOT 5:262. However, he believes the theological usage is correctly associated with decision and “does not suggest a sudden surge of emotion; it presupposes not just an unconditional erotic attraction but also a reasoned and unconditional decision . . . a conscious attitude of devotion.” Ibid., 262. Merrill, not surprisingly, sees ג文化传媒, חניך, and חשך as “essentially synonymous as their usage elsewhere clearly shows.” Deuteronomy, 203. However, in my view, both err in projecting the meaning of choice onto the two other verbs, which by their function are not synonymous but merely interrelated. Coppes sees it as purely on the basis of divine volition but also “deep, inward attachment.” "חשק,” TWOT 332.

On the other hand, many scholars have suggested meaning more in line with the etymology and usage of the term throughout the OT. BDB simply suggests the meaning “to love, be attached to.” "חשק," BDB, 365. Similarly, HALOT suggests, “be attached to” or “to love” and that there may be a relationship to the Arabic ‘aṣīqa, ‘love passionately.’” "חשק," HALOT, 362. Robert Alter translates ג文化传媒 as “desire” in both Deut 7:7 and 10:15. The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary (New York: Norton, 2005), 917, 933. HCSB translates “devoted” in both instances. JPS is inconsistent, translating “set his heart” in Deut 7:7, but “was drawn in His love” in Deut 10:15. Similarly, Craigie suggests in Deut 10, God “was drawn to your fathers to love them.” The Book of Deuteronomy, 204. The NKJV is likewise inconsistent, translating “set His love” and “delighted” (Deut 7:7; 10:15). Els and Snaith likewise see ג文化传媒 as meaning “delight.” Els, NIDOTTE 1:280; Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 135. Talley sees this as “God’s desire” by choice and including emotion. "חשק,” NIDOTTE 2:318. Duane Christensen interprets that God has “fallen in love” with them. Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12 (WBC 6B; Dallas: Word, 2002), 204. Eichrodt sees this as “free affection” and points out “the emphasis on the emotional element” in this term. Theology, 256; cf. Tigay, Deuteronomy, 56. Weinfeld even suggests “‘lusted after you’ or ‘hung on you.’” Deuteronomy 1–11, 360. Lapsley contends that the verb “denotes affectionate love, desire, yearning, or longing—sometimes with a sexual connotation (Gen 34:8; Deut 21:11) but always with an affective dimension.” “Feeling Our Way,” 360.

147 In Els’s analysis, ג文化传媒 in these verses signifies, among other things, “an emotive event, expressing a divine feeling of love.” NIDOTTE 1:280.
Further, divine love is here unmerited and foreconditional, that is, prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. Israel is not chosen because of its merit but precisely because of God’s prior love (Deut 7:7–8; cf. 9:4–5).\textsuperscript{148} God does not need to love Israel, he is the sovereign of the universe (Deut 10:14); to him belongs all that is, yet he loved and chose Israel, “even” her “above all peoples” (Deut 10:15). This divine choice is necessarily in contrast to the “nations” that will be driven out of the land, since the specific divine blessing of inheritance is preferential and mutually exclusive to the blessing of those who already occupy the “promised” land (Deut 4:38). Accordingly, Israel is holy, “chosen” for God’s own “possession out of all the peoples” on earth (Deut 7:6). As such, divine love is depicted as differential. However, God’s action is not altogether arbitrary since the former occupants are dispossessed of the promised land because of their wickedness (Deut 9:4–5; cf. Gen 15:16). Moreover, divine love does not exclude non-Israelites since God “does not show partiality nor take a bribe” and God loves even the alien (Deut 10:17–18).\textsuperscript{149} As such, divine love may be differential, but is not altogether exclusive.

Although the status of God’s elect is unmerited it is nevertheless conditional and must be maintained by appropriate human response to God (Deut 7:9, 11–13; 10:16). This implication also appears in that Israel is a “holy people to the LORD,” which is in parallel to the fact that they are “chosen . . . to be a people for His own possession” (Deut 7:6; 14:2). The syntagm “holy” and “to the LORD” connotes not only that the people were set apart by choice, but also that they now have a responsibility to maintain holiness. This responsibility is also indicated by reference to the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{148} Cf. Snaith, \textit{The Distinctive Ideas}, 135, 137; Eichrodt, \textit{Theology}, 256. See also Deut 32:10; Hos 11:1, 3; Jer 3:4; Ezek 6:6, 8; 7:4–6; Jer 31:9, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Lapsley makes a compelling case that further points to the emotive nature of divine love. She comments that “an emotional dimension to this divine love for the stranger flows logically from the concern for the inner life that is present in the preceding verses.” “Feeling Our Way,” 361. She further points out that the love that humans are to show for the alien is likewise emotional since they are to remember what it felt like to be a stranger and this “act of emotional imagination will stir feelings of compassion. Out of this affective response will arise love for the stranger, which then takes form in practical action.” Ibid., 363.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
conditionality associated with this phrase elsewhere in Deuteronomy (14:21; 26:18–19; 28:9). Moreover, the word “possession” (הַלְגָּס), often translated “treasured possession,” has significant connotations of pleasure/delight, predicated on the condition of human fidelity, and is elsewhere closely associated with holiness to the LORD (Exod 19:5–6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; cf. Mal 3:16–18). Thus, even within the context of election, human responsibility and corresponding divine evaluation are highlighted. As such, God’s choice itself imposes conditions. This will become especially clear as the canonical analysis proceeds.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the Prophets

The primary term for election (רָכַב) only collocates with הַלְגָּס once in the Prophets, referring to “Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham my friend [גָּזָר]” (Isa 41:8). Here, as in the Torah, the election of Israel is predicated on prior love

150 For instance, “the LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments” (Deut 28:9). Moreover, Christensen points out that as elect they “must maintain a ‘priestly’ level of holiness.” Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12, 291. Similarly, see Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, 179; Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in Numbers–Samuel, 2:350; Tigay, Deuteronomy, 87; Wildberger, TLOT 1:214, 216.

151 הַלְגָּס appears in 8 verses in the OT. Two are in reference to treasure of gold and silver (Eccl 2:8; 1 Chr 29:3), one is a direct allusion to Deut 7:6; 14:2 describing God’s choice of Israel as his הַלְגָּס, absent reference to holiness (Ps 135:4). In each of Exod 19:5–6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18–19, הַלְגָּס is related to holiness and explicit conditions or instructions. For example, “if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My הַלְגָּס” (Exod 19:5) a “holy nation” (Exod 19:6). Mal 3:16–18, absent the term holy [יָדִיד], nevertheless implies active holiness for “those who fear” God and “esteem His name,” which are those of whom God speaks when he declares, “They will be Mine . . . on the day that I prepare my הַלְגָּס” (Mal 3:16–17) and God “will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked” (Mal 3:18). As such, הַלְגָּס is clearly a term that expects obedience and its privileges are predicated on maintenance of relational holiness to God. As such, it appears to be an evaluative term. Israel’s special status as הַלְגָּס is only possible because of God’s election in the first place, but God’s initiative must be appropriately responded to in order to continue.

Greenberg associates this term with the Akkadian, sikiltu, denoting valuable, private property but coming to refer in theological usage to “objects diligently and patiently acquired” and in this way a “dear personal possession.” “Hebrew segulla: Akkadian sikiltu,” JAOS 71 (1951): 174. “A royal seal of Abban of Alakh designates its owner as the sikiltum of the god, his ‘servant’ and ‘beloved.’ A letter from the Hittite sovereign to the king of Ugarit characterizes his vassal as his ‘servant’ and sglt, ‘treasured possession.’” Sarna, Exodus, 104. Thus, the term “expresses God’s special covenantal relationship with Israel and His love for His people” and the contexts in which it appears “uniquely emphasize the inextricable association between being God’s הַלְגָּס and the pursuit of holiness.” Ibid. Thus, God “owns everything, but Israel is his favorite possession.” William H. C. Propp, Exodus 19–40 (AB 2A; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 157.

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beginning with Abraham. In Isa 41:8, there are many possible referents of the phrase, the “LORD loves him,” within the context of a declaration that God will deliver Judah from Babylonian captivity. The text may refer to Cyrus, to Israel in a collective singular, the author or speaker of the text, or even to the Messiah himself. In light of various plausible interpretations it seems unwise to try to draw far-reaching conclusions from this text.

152 Clark likewise makes this connection of love leading to choice in Deut 7:7–8; 10:15; Isa 41:8 and Pss 47:5; 78:68. The Word Hesed, 130. J. A. Motyer agrees, saying, “election arises from divine love, but it issues in responsive love.” Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 312; cf. Isa 41:8–9. As Oswalt puts it, “My friend . . . suggests that election is not an austere, judicial act but is rooted and grounded in love, both the love of God for the chosen and the love of the chosen for God.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 90. Els believes that Abraham “the friend of Yahweh, on account of his intimate relationship with God, is seen as the model of piety.” NIDOTTE 1:286. Some have seen in this a reference to ANE covenant language. See Thompson, “Israel’s ‘Lovers’”; Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1–11, 371. See also the discussion of the relationship of love to covenant language in the word study earlier.

153 Some who believe it refers to Cyrus as the agent of deliverance, whom God has chosen (Isa 44:28; cf. 45:1; 46:11), and here “loves,” believe this is an instance of the term “love” signifying election. Oswalt sees the referent as Cyrus, seeing “love” as “an expression of the election of Cyrus for the task at hand.” Though he acknowledges, “It may also, though not necessarily, express a special affection for the man who would accomplish God’s purpose for him.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 277; cf. Wallis, TDOT 1:113. Importantly, even if the referent is Cyrus it does not require a conflation of הֵסֶד with חֵסֶד. It may, in fact, be pointing to a divine affection for the person he uses to accomplish his purposes. Others who see this as Cyrus associate it with suzerain-vassal language, for which there is very specific support in relation to an ANE text regarding Cyrus as the “friend” of Marduk. Motyer connects this to the “Cyrus Cylinder account that Marduk, angered by the Babylonian kings, scourged all the lands for a friend. . . . He called Cyrus . . . went at his side like a friend and comrade.” Isaiah, 380. In this vein, Blenkinsopp sees Cyrus and the referent and interprets “love” in a political rather than emotive sense, like the love of an overlord for his vassal. Isaiah 40–55, 294; cf. James Muleinburg, “Isaiah 40–66,” in Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah (ed. George A. Buttrick; vol. 5 of IB, ed. George A. Buttrick; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1956), 560. If Israel is the beloved, God’s affection for his people would reasonably provide the basis for God’s action against unmerciful Babylon (Isa 47:6). If the referent is the author or speaker of the verse, the phrase the “LORD loves him” belongs with the immediately previous phrase “who among them has declared these things.” Christopher Seitz believes that “the Lord loves him,” strictly speaking, is not an answer to the question, “Who among them has declared this?” If the question is not rhetorical only, an alternative reading would be, “The Lord loves the one who declared this.” Here, then, the declarer would be from Israel, perhaps the author of the discourse. “The Book of Isaiah 40–66,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel (vol. 6 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2001), 419. Finally, if it refers to the Messiah it would refer cryptically to the Messiah’s ultimate work of the restoration of God’s people. I believe the most likely referent is Israel, in part because God’s love for Israel is frequently the motivation of divine deliverance elsewhere in Isaiah (Isa 43:4; 63:9; cf. 41:8) as well as throughout the prophets. The nearest textual antecedent is Israel in 48:12. However, the language in vs. 14, if the object of “love,” is Israel would require Israel to be both in the second person, “you,” earlier and in the third person as this object. This is possible considering the call for people to assemble. The text may shift between speakers, or have one speaker refer to the assembly by use of a collective singular. The LXX reads ἡγεῖσάν σε, “loves you,” which would make the referent Israel. Some amend the verb חֵסֶד from 3ms to a participle. See Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 40–55, 292.
Perhaps the most frequently cited passage regarding the use of כָּרָה in close association with election appears in Mal 1. God declares at the outset of Malachi, “I have loved you,” connoting not only past love but also his ongoing love for his people, that is, “I have loved and continue to love you” (Mal 1:2). But, unappreciative, the people ask, “How have you loved us?” In other words, where is the evidence of God’s stated love? The implied accusation is that God has not fulfilled his covenant promises. God answers that he “loved Jacob” (Mal 1:2) but “hated Esau,” though they were brothers (Mal 1:3). That this refers to Israel and Edom, the descendants of Jacob and Esau respectively, seems clear in the foreground of the passage (cf. 1:3–5). A couple of major interpretive issues present themselves with regard to this passage. First, many scholars have considered the idea of God’s hatred of Edom to be too harsh and that, rather, the language of “hate” merely refers either to God’s loving Edom less than Israel, or simply not loving Edom. The latter perspective has downplayed, or even denied altogether, the emotionality of one or both of the terms, כָּרָה and כָּרָה. Second, there has been some tendency to

154 The usage of “Esau” and “Jacob” to refer to Edom and Israel respectively throughout Obadiah (especially 10) seems to parallel the usage here. Scholars, however, disagree on whether the reference also refers to the individuals Jacob and Esau, a question that arises primarily due to Paul’s usage of this passage in Rom 9:13. A number of scholars find reference to both the individuals and nations. Verhoef, *The Books*, 202; E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi* (NAC; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 256; Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi* (AB 25D; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 164. In my view, the primary emphasis is on the nations of Israel and Edom, yet the reference to the progenitors of both nations also draws attention to the historical reversal of birthrights, pointing toward election.


157 This will be discussed further below.
conflate הָעֵשוֹת with “election” as if the two were synonymous. 158 This often dovetails with the supposition that God’s love is altogether unconditional. 159

First, let us consider the issue of whether the term “loved” should be interpreted as chosen in this passage. There can be little doubt that this passage is associated with, and indeed appeals to, election. However, if “I love you” simply means “I have chosen you,” what does it add to the first affirmation that preceded the question? 158 The people’s question itself presumes election as the supposed legitimation for their complaint, implying something like, “you ought to have loved us, but you haven’t.” God does not seem to be ignoring the question and merely restating his election of Israel. Rather, God seems to be appealing to his election of Israel to make the point that he has, in fact, manifested love toward Jacob’s descendants. But this claim is not evidenced by reference to the mere fact that he elected them in the past, but rather by reference to

158 For instance, both Snaith and A. E. Hill view הָעֵשוֹת as synonymous with choice. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 133; A. E. Hill, Malachi, 147, 165. Clendenen equates it with election and God’s ongoing fidelity. Clendenen, Haggai, Malachi, 247. Similarly, Verhoef, The Books, 196. Els sees both a “definite act of election in sovereign grace” but “not apart from a secondary semantic component of a feeling of affection.” NIDOTTE 1:282. The determinist view of this “love” and “hate” has been to equate this with God’s inscrutable, eternal decree of predestination to salvation (Jacob) or to damnation (Esau). However, some who equate election and love do not see this as election unto salvation. For instance, Verhoef, The Books, 198. Clendenen views Israel’s election as unto salvation, but not necessarily to the exclusion of the salvation of individual Edomites. Haggai, Malachi, 253. Others see the election as one of “position” and “historical task.” Gottlob Schrenk, “ἐκλέγωμαι in the New Testament,” TDNT 4:179. John M. P. Smith rejects the interpretation that this represents “the doctrine of predestination” altogether. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi (ICC 25; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), 21. Likewise, Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 10:637.


“God’s ‘love’ was in no way conditioned by the moral qualities of its object, but emanated from his sovereign will and mercy. This ‘love’ is undefinable in terms of more or less.” Verhoef, The Books, 200–201. Thus Clendenen can proclaim “God’s choosing Jacob and his descendants meant that he established a permanent relationship with Israel as a whole. . . . Regardless of how often they strayed from him, he would be faithful to them by his grace until his work in them was complete.” Haggai, Malachi, 253. However, to say God’s love is unconditional begs the question regarding the foreground of Malachi. See below on Mal 1:8–10. It also demands an explanation for the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C. or Jerusalem in 586 B.C. While God always faithfully fulfills his promises, God’s people may forfeit the reception of God’s love and eventually cut off relationship with him (see the further explanation of this in chapter 6). However, God continues to work with a faithful remnant according to his plan.

160 To put it another way, if one simply translates הָעֵשוֹת here as equivalent to הָעֵשוֹת, the passage would read, ‘I have chosen you,’ says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have you chosen us?’ ‘Was not Esau Jacob’s
the evidence that he has loved them throughout their history and even now. This is highlighted by comparison of Jacob and Esau’s descendants. Both are progeny of Abraham and Isaac, yet Israel has been specifically privileged in God’s love toward them.

Significantly, neither Jacob nor Esau deserves to receive divine love, rather they both deserve destruction. Yet, God has manifested his ongoing love in having been compassionate and patient with Israel, despite their rebellion and continual slander of his name (cf. Mal 3:6; 2:11). Such unmerited favor and preservation is a consequence of God’s fidelity to the covenant, itself begun by election. Here, the unmerited election itself is not the love of God, but divine love is demonstrated in that God has mercifully and compassionately restored Judah and remains in covenant relationship despite her many shortcomings. As such, the contrast of God’s treatment of Israel and Edom demonstrates not only that he has loved Israel but is to point toward how he has done so historically.161 Thus, election and love are to be differentiated in this passage, the former highlighting the fact that Israel has neither deserved nor merited God’s love.162

Furthermore, it is important to briefly address the issue of conditionality that is apparent with regard to God’s treatment of both nations. First, it is important to recognize that Edom is not subjectively rejected by God, nor are its people treated unfairly. Rather, the Edomites are responsible for their fate, having rejected and forfeited available divine blessing and thus deserving destruction.163 On the other hand, while God’s love toward Israel is certainly

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161 Although the precise manner of Edom’s downfall is not historically clear, Edom became a desolation while Israel was restored. Some believe Edom fell to Babylon around the time of the fall of Jerusalem, others think it was during the Persian-Egyptian wars, and still others relate it to the Nabateans ca. 5th century BC. For a discussion of these issues see Verhoef, The Books, 203–4.


163 Judgment against Edom is often described as “because” of their evil actions; cf. Ezek 25:12–13; 35:15; 36:5; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:9, 11; Obad 10–14; Lam 4:22. Elizabeth Achtemeier comments that God responds to the questioning of his love by pointing to the fact that “Edom has not gone unpunished for his violation of his brotherly covenant with Israel.” Nahum-Malachi (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 176.
undeserved, it is not depicted as altogether unconditional. God expects his love to be reciprocated by his people, and the remainder of Malachi testifies to God’s desire for, and expectation of, a responsive relationship with Israel.\textsuperscript{164}

The second primary interpretive issue of this passage is whether divine love and hate here denote affectionate emotion, or are merely technical terms for election/acceptance and rejection. It is not altogether clear whether the terms love and hate refer to divine emotions.\textsuperscript{165} However, the foreground of the passage implies that they do connote emotion when God is said to be “indignant [טָעָה] forever” toward Edom (Mal 1:4).\textsuperscript{166} Supporting this is the fact that divine נָאָה is

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Thus, God “does not reject arbitrarily.” Rex Mason, \textit{The Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi} (New York: Cambridge UP, 1977), 141. Rather, “Edom brought divine judgment upon themselves.” A. E. Hill, \textit{Malachi}, 167. Clendenen takes the compatibilist view that Edom’s “destiny” is explained “both by the divine word and by their own wickedness.” \textit{Haggai, Malachi}, 257. Harris adds, “It does not necessarily follow that Esau was hated before he was born. This statement is quoted from Mal 1:3 which was written long after Esau had lived his predominantly secular life.” Further, “the condemnation of the lost is . . . upon the basis of their own sin.” R. Laird Harris, editor’s note in Gerard Van Groningen, “\textit{נָאָה},” \textit{TWOT} 880. Keil and Delitzsch contend that though “no explanation is given here of the reasons which determined the actions of God . . . with God anything arbitrary is inconceivable.” \textit{Commentary}, 10:637. It is also important to recognize that God did not always “hate” Edom, but has shown concern for them elsewhere (cf. Deut 2:5).

\textsuperscript{164} A. E. Hill suggests that here, as in Deuteronomy, ‘אַהֲבָה points to the “duty to reciprocate God’s love.” \textit{Malachi}, 147; cf. ibid., 165; cf. Mal 2:11. J. M. P. Smith points out, “Yahweh loves” Israel but “her own sinful conduct prevents her from enjoying the full fruitage of that love.” \textit{A Critical}, 19.

\textsuperscript{165} The \textit{qal} perfect 1ms, רכָּב עָלָה, appears to be a \textit{qal} quasi-fientive, which is a verb that “exhibit[s] both stative and fientive characteristics” and “denote[s] a mental or psychological state and take[s] an object.” Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, \textit{An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax} (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 365, 491. Cf. A. E. Hill, \textit{Malachi}, 147; Laetsch, \textit{Bible Commentary}, 510. A. E. Hill thus appears to be correct in viewing it as a “durative stative perfective,” which indicates “an ongoing emotional response,” which he believes is further implied by the people’s question. \textit{Malachi}, 147–48; cf. Waltke and O’Connor, \textit{An Introduction}, 365, 491. Verhoef likewise sees this as “based upon God’s continuous love during the whole of Israel’s history.” \textit{The Books}, 195. Eileen M. Schuler, on the other hand, sees it as a simple statement about God’s present love. “The Book of Malachi,” in \textit{The Twelve Prophets} (vol. 7 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 854.

\textsuperscript{166} God elsewhere displays negative emotions toward Edom. See Ezek 25:14; 36:5; cf. Isa 63:1–6. Moreover, as A. E. Hill points out, Edom was guilty of doing the things that God hates (Deut 16:22; Pss 5:6 [5]; 11:5; 129:5; etc.). \textit{Malachi}, 152. Some scholars suggest the absence of feeling or personal animosity in this passage. Clendenen considers love and hate “to be figurative, pointing to God’s sovereign election in choosing by his grace to form a relationship with some of his creatures and to leave others to pursue their rebellious desires to their own destruction.” \textit{Haggai, Malachi}, 372; cf. Schuler, “The Book of Malachi,” in \textit{The Twelve Prophets}, 7:856. Snaith recognizes that the language used in the passage in fact presents a hatred that is “active, even virulent, to the highest degree” but ascribes it to the human author rather than God in accordance with the so-called “damn Edom” theology. \textit{The Distinctive Ideas}, 133–34. A. E. Hill

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often clearly emotive throughout the OT (cf. Isa 1:14; Jer 12:8; 44:4; Hos 9:15; Amos 5:21; 6:8; Pss 5:5–6 [6–7]; 11:5) and is never depicted as arbitrary.\textsuperscript{167} With regard to divine love, in the foreground of Malachi, Israel continues to depart from God in iniquity, not entreating his favor (אֵל; Mal 1:9), therefore, God is “not pleased” (אני) with them and will not “accept” (itorio) or have pleasure in them (Mal 1:10; cf. 1:13).\textsuperscript{168} Such evaluative and emotive terminology suggests that earlier in this chapter does, in fact, connote divine affection.\textsuperscript{169} This would be further supported by parallel expressions of intensely emotive and affectionate elsewhere, especially those in the latter prophets, which will be considered further below.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the Writings

In the Writings, Israel’s election is likewise grounded in love and depicted as explicitly conditional. Thus, God chooses (יהוה) the inheritance for Jacob “whom He loves” (Ps 47:4 [5]).\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{167} That divine hatred is often of an emotive nature is further evidenced by other terms of negative evaluation and/or rejection that collocate with divine הָבָה, including עֶבֶר (Deut 12:31; Isa 1:13–14; Jer 44:4; Amos 5:10; 6:8; Ps 5:5–6 [6–7]; Prov 6:16) andโลם (Amos 5:21). See the word study of הָבָה later in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{168} The terms אני and הָבָה together serve to convey the absence of God’s delight in their object. That these terms are evaluative here is clear in v. 8, in the rhetorical question that assumes a negative response, Would your governor “be pleased [atorio] with you?” See also the respective word studies of these terms in the evaluative section. The idiomatic language of entreaty in v. 9, literally “soften the face” [ לכלך + הָבָה], suggests God might be persuaded to be favorable toward Israel, which seems to place divine pleasure beyond that of the unilateral divine will. For the idiom elsewhere see Zech 7:2; Dan 9:13. However, though God is responsive to humans, he desired and delights in true, heartfelt worship and obedience, but theirs is a token offering, and of an inferior nature, at that (Mal 1:8; cf. Isa 29:13). Moreover, divine evaluation is likewise apparent in the foreground of Malachi. For instance, a book of remembrance is made of those who “fear the LORD.” In the future, God says, “They will be Mine . . . on the day that I prepare My own possession [为主体]” and there will be a distinction between the righteous and the wicked (Mal 3:16–18). Further, conditionality is explicit throughout the book; the people must turn to God in order to receive divine blessing (Mal 4:6).

\textsuperscript{169} A. E. Hill sees “an ongoing emotional response” in יְשֵׁב. Malachi, 147. Moreover, Els notes what he calls “a secondary semantic component of a feeling of affection.” NIDOTTE 1:282.

\textsuperscript{170} That is, out of God’s love for Israel, he provided their land, their inheritance, and glory for them. Although it is possible to translate Jacob as a reference to the patriarch himself, it seems the
Likewise, the bestowal of land “forever” is spoken of as predicated on “Abraham [God’s] friend” (2 Chr 20:7). Similarly, God “chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved” (Ps 78:68). In such instances, love is in a similar relationship to election as that which was seen in the Torah (Deut 4:37; 7:7–8) and in the Prophets (Isa 41:8), namely election on the basis of, or as a manifestation of, divine love.

Importantly, the context of Ps 78:68 evidences that at least some types of divine election are both evaluative and not unilaterally effective. God is said to have been provoked and made jealous by Israel’s evil (Ps 78:58). Thus, he was “filled with wrath” and “greatly abhorred Israel” (Ps 78:59) and, accordingly, “rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim” (Ps 78:67), but he “chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved” (Ps 78:68). Notably, God’s rejection of Israel stems from their idol worship. God is presented as being moved to intense, negative emotions and removes the ark, and thus his presence, from their midst. On the other hand, Judah is elected as the locus of worship, meaning that God’s presence will be among them, for God loves them. As such, this divine choice of election is presented as both evaluative and neither wholly arbitrary nor ineradicable. Such a relationship between election and elements of divine love also appears with regard to the Davidic dynasty. Solomon’s king-making is specifically seen as based upon God’s love for his people (2 Chr 2:11 [10]; 2 Chr 9:8). Similarly, Solomon is made king according to God’s lovingkindness to David (2 Chr 1:8). In all this, divine election is neither strictly arbitrary nor unilaterally constant and may be associated with emotion and desire.

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171 It is not entirely clear whether it is the land or the friendship with Abraham that is forever; the former seems more likely due to the prevalence of אֶֽנְּכָּ֣ה as a reference to the divine promises.

172 L. C. Allen believes that here “Solomon’s obedience is in view as a condition for the dynastic continuity. In fact, the motif of royal obedience accompanies the references to the divine promises in 1 Kgs 8:26 and the parallel 2 Chr 6:17.” “The First and Second Books of Chronicles,” in Kings–Judith (vol. 3 of
The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that ground the conclusion that divine love is not indifferent or disinterested, but evaluative. The term “evaluative” refers in this context to the appraisal, appreciation, and/or reception of value from external agents. First, divine love is explicitly depicted as evaluative throughout the canon. Second, divine love includes appropriate self-interest that is not exclusive to other-interest. Third, humans may bring value to God through the prevenient and ongoing action of God, especially the mediation of Christ. Thus, God can and does receive love and may enjoy, delight in, and garner pleasure from his creatures. His own delight is voluntarily bound up with bringing genuine pleasure, joy, and delight to those very objects of his love. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Can God be the beneficiary of human action? What about self-interest? Is self-sacrifice and/or self-abnegation the ideal of love? Is divine love indifferent and/or disinterested? Does God’s love include delight and/or enjoyment of his creatures, including their loving response toward him? This section of the study begins with a survey of the meaning of prominent terms relative to God’s evaluative love.

The Semantics of Divine Delight

A Brief Survey of חפץ

The word חפץ has the basic meaning of desire or delight, often of an emotive nature, which may be manifested in the wish for something or someone. It is thus often used of

NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1999), 473.

The noun appears in 37 verses, while the verb appears in 70 verses, always in the qal, and the lexeme appears as a verbal adjective in 12 verses. The etymology of the term is “obscure, since all its occurrences are relatively late” and limited. G. Johannes Botterweck, “חפץ,” TDOT 13:92.

For Leon J. Wood, “The basic meaning is to feel great favor towards something” with considerable “emotional involvement.” With both divine and human agency it means “to experience emotional delight.” “חפץ,” TLOT 1:310. Talley calls it the “direction of one’s heart or passion” and “conveys a passionate emotion for an object.” “חפץ,” NIDOTTE 2:232. For David Toshio Tsumura, it is that “which preoccupies one’s thought and will.” The First Book of Samuel (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.:
evaluative delight in a person or object. With personal objects it may connote affection and joy in another. An unfulfilled wish may be seen as a desire, a fulfilled wish may bring delight. In other words, when something would be a source of delight, but is absent, the sense is desire, want, or wish. In this way, the term sometimes takes on the connotation of that which one wishes, especially the will of a sovereign. However, it is not merely a subjective expression of the will, but relates to the unfulfilled or fulfilled wishes of its agent, which are grounded in objective reality. In various usages, is closely associated with בַּחֲנָה, sometimes set in parallel (cf. Ps 109:17).

is often referred to divine desire and delight. With regard to the former, it may refer to various things that God wants to take place, often with a strong sense of that which he will

Eerdmans, 2006), 402. In one instance (Job 40:17) there is a second root, which means “to let hang.” Also, in some instances in Ecclesiastes the term takes on the meaning “‘business or facts’ of life.” W. E. Staples, “The Meaning of Hephes in Ecclesiastes,” JNES 24 (1965): 112; cf. Eccl 3:1, 17; 5:8 [7].

Thus, it may refer to that which elicits delight (Isa 54:12; Prov 3:15; 8:11; Eccl 12:10) or things that ought not be delighted in (Pss 40:14 [15]; 68:30 [31]; 70:2 [3]; 109:17; Prov 18:2). Of such delight or pleasure see 2 Sam 24:3; Isa 13:17; Prov 31:13. It may also refer to joy or rejoicing (Ps 35:27). See the examples with divine agency below.

See Botterweck, TDOT 13:94. Thus, it may be used of the presence or absence of delight in romantic relationships (Gen 34:19; Deut 21:14; Esth 2:14; cf. Deut 25:7–8) or in non-romantic interpersonal relationships such as Jonathan’s great affection for David (1 Sam 19:1; cf. 18:22; 2 Sam 20:11; Esth 6:6–7, 9, 11).

Of the will or desire of a sovereign see 1 Sam 18:25; 2 Sam 23:5; 1 Kgs 5:8–10; 9:1, 11; 10:13; Eccl 8:3; 2 Chr 9:12). It may also refer to general desires, such as for life (Ps 34:12), a haven (Ps 107:30), for family (Job 21:21), and the desires of the poor (Job 31:16). In many instances, the term appears to merely denote one’s will or wish (1 Kgs 13:33; Jer 42:22; Eccl 3:1, 17; 8:6). It can thus be used in a request (1 Kgs 21:6; Ruth 3:13; cf. Cant 2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

“The confusion lies in English, where ‘purpose’ and ‘pleasure’ are not closely related” as they are in בַּחֲנָה. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 581.

The wicked “loved cursing” but “did not delight [בַּחֲנָה] in blessing” (Ps 109:17). Further, Saul’s servants are to make David believe “the king delights [בַּחֲנָה] in him, and all his servants love” him (1 Sam 18:22). בַּחֲנָה is also used in parallel to “desire [בַּחֲנָה]” for life as one who “loves length of days” (Ps 34:12 [13]). Divine delight is likewise associated with בַּחֲנָה toward Israel. The Queen of Sheba states, “God . . . delighted [בַּחֲנָה] in you [Solomon]” making you king “because” God “loved Israel” (1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 9:8). Talley suggests that בַּחֲנָה is possibly a “synonym for בַּחֲנָה.” NIDOTTE 2:232. Botterweck likewise suggests בַּחֲנָה, בַּחֲנָה, and בַּחֲנָה as being used synonymously. Botterweck, TDOT 13:95.

On the other hand, in numerous instances it is descriptive of the delight of humans for God or
accomplish. If one asserts that the divine will is always unilaterally enacted, then a divine desire, in the sense of “want,” would be nonsensical. Yet, many instances of this term refer to divine desires that remain unfulfilled. For instance, God proclaims, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked” but “rather . . . that he should turn . . . and live” (Ezek 18:23; cf. 18:32; 33:11; cf. also, Isa 66:4; 65:12). Likewise, God “desire[s] truth in the innermost being” from humans who are, on the contrary, quite sinful (Ps 51:6 [7]). As such, God’s desire is not always efficacious.

The evaluative, and often emotive, sense of this terminology is further apparent in its frequent portrayals of divine delight. For instance, God “delights” in righteousness, justice, and the things of God. See Isa 58:2, 13; Mal 3:1; Pss 1:2; 16:3; 40:8 [9]; 73:25; 111:2; 112:1; 119:35; Neh 1:11; 2 Chr 28:9. It may also refer to the lack of delight in the things of God (Jer 6:10; Job 21:14; cf. Job 9:3; 13:3; Eccl 12:1).

For instance, Isaiah states, “The LORD was pleased for His righteousness’ sake To make the law great and glorious” (Isa 42:21). Further, God declares of Cyrus, “He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire” (Isa 44:28; cf. 48:14). Again, God declares, “My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure” (Isa 46:10). In an apparent Messianic reference, “the LORD was pleased to crush Him . . . and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand” (Isa 53:10). Moreover, God’s word does not return “without accomplishing what [he] desire[s]” (Isa 55:11; cf. Hos 10:10). In all, God “does whatever he pleases” (Ps 115:3; cf. Jonah 1:14; 135:6). Consider the study of Avi Hurvitz, who looks at all the occurrences of the syntagm לְכַל, of God (Isa 46:10; Jonah 1:14; Pss 115:3; 135:6) and, once, of a human sovereign (Eccl 8:3), and finds that they refer to the unlimited power of the sovereign within the realm of jurisprudence. “The History of a Legal Formula: kōl 'ašer-hāpēs 'āšāh (Psalms cxv 3, cxxv 6),” VT 32 (1982): 257–67. He also points out the more prevalent idiom, do what is good in your sight (רְצָא + שָׁנָה; cf. 2 Sam 10:12). The term may also refer to God’s desire to execute, or not execute, judgment. Thus, Manoah states that God did not desire to kill them (Judg 13:23). Eli’s sons “would not listen to the voice of their father [Eli], for the LORD desired to put them to death” (1 Sam 2:25; cf. Job 33:32). In Proverbs it is used of divine sovereignty where it is stated, a “king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes” (Prov 21:1). Importantly, however, the rest of the chapter evidences that whatever this verse refers to, it does not appear to refer to utter determinism. For instance, the next verses speak of every man’s way being right in his own eyes and God’s desire (רְצָא) of righteousness rather than sacrifice (Prov 21:2–3). As such, God’s fervent desire, coupled with his sovereignty/omnipotence, means that he will bring about that which he sets his heart on. But, these do not refer to determinism as is seen elsewhere.

Both usages of רְצָא are complementary, not contradictory, if the underlying meaning of “desire” is kept in mind as something willed, which, when not effectuated, amounts to something wanted. Thus, both aspects of meaning may be in play when God as potter remakes the vessel into what “it pleased the potter to make” (Jer 18:4).

Wood points to the evaluative sense in stating with regard to this term, “The object solicits favor by its own intrinsic qualities. The subject is easily attracted to it because it is desirable.” TLOT 1:310; cf. Botterweck, TDOT 5:104.
righteousness (Jer 9:24; cf. Mic 7:18) and takes no pleasure in wickedness (Ps 5:4 [5]). Further, God “does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure [נֵחֵשׁ] in the legs of a man,” but he “favors [נָרֵא] those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness [נָאַל]” (Ps 147:11; cf. Isa 56:4; Ps 37:23). Moreover, נָרֵא repeatedly manifests God’s delight in human fidelity as opposed to purely external ritual and sacrifice. God’s delight in human beings is often the grounding of his beneficent action. For instance, David declares, “He rescued me, because He delighted in me” (2 Sam 22:20 = Ps 18:19 [20]; cf. 22:8 [9]). On the other hand, with regard to those who choose their own ways and delight in abominations, God will “choose their punishments” because they “chose that in which I did not delight” (Isa 66:4; cf. 65:12). God even looks forward to his future delight in his restored people (see Isa 62:4; Mal 3:12). Thus, נָרֵא has the ability to depict the amazing sovereignty of God and yet his affection for and attachment to human beings whom he values and who may bring him great delight and enjoyment.

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184 In a negative evaluative sense, God refers to Coniah and Moab as an “undesirable vessel” (Jer 22:28; 48:38; cf. Mal 2:17). Israel is “like a vessel in which no one delights” (Hos 8:8). God says explicitly to his people, “I am not pleased with you” and thus will not accept their offering (Mal 1:10). Moreover, he “takes no delight in fools” (Ecc 5:4 [3]); cf. Job 22:3.


186 Importantly, the sense is not that God does not desire the very sacrifices he has prescribed, but that the value of the sacrifices lies ultimately in the internal disposition of the offerer. This common sentiment is expressed in various ways. See 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:11; Hos 6:6; Pss 40:6 [7]; 51:16–17, 19 [18–19, 21]; cf. Isa 58:3.

187 Thus, Talley states, “If the passion of God’s heart is for someone, then the subsequent action is blessing (cf. Num 14:8; 2 Sam 22:20; Ps 18:19 [20]; 41:11 [12]), but if God’s heart is against someone, then the subsequent action is punishment (cf. Mal 2:17–3:7).” Talley, NIDOTTE 2:232.

188 Joshua states, “If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us” (Num 14:8). Similarly, the psalmist says, “By this I know that You are pleased with me, Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me” (Ps 41:11 [12]). The Queen of Sheba declares that God “delighted in” Solomon to make him king “because the LORD loved Israel forever” (1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 9:8). On the other hand, David notes the possibility that God will “have no delight” in him but merely states, “Let Him do to me as seems good to Him” (2 Sam 15:26). God wants the best for his people; he “delights” in his servant’s prosperity (Ps 35:27).
A Brief Survey of בַּּלְּמָה

The meaning of בַּּלְּמָה is often similar to that of גָּדְלָה with which it frequently collocates. It refers to strong delight in something or someone, often including the connotation of acceptance. It sometimes refers to one’s desire or will, in a few cases describing the divine will. The term most often has God as agent. Notably, בַּּלְּמָה collocates in parallel with love in description of God’s affection for his people, “whom the LORD loves he reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights” (Prov 3:12; cf. 16:13; Jer 14:10). The aspect of acceptance flows from the prevalent usage of בַּּלְּמָה in sacrificial contexts to describe an offering.

189 It appears in verbal [ראת– in 54 verses] and nominal [רמות– in 56 verses] forms, which will be treated together for the purposes of this survey.

190 G. Gerleman explains that “the two roots are used synonymously to a great extent (Psa 147:10 par.). But they have each undergone unique developments in varied directions.” "患上," TLOT 1:466.

191 Barstad comments, “The basic meaning of the verb is best defined as ‘be pleased with, find good or pleasant, love, like, wish for,’ etc.” H. M. Barstad, “רצה,” TDOT 13:619. Gerleman adds that lexical evidence shows that “the verb was used almost exclusively as an expression of a positive assessment: ‘to find something good, be pleased with something’” and “the abstract form רמות most often indicates the subjective sentiment of pleasure.” G. Gerleman, “רצה,” TLOT 3:1259–60. However, many occurrences appear to be, at least partially, rooted in objective qualities and/or actions and others are ambiguous in this regard. He adds, “The root finds greatest usage in theological language: to indicate divine pleasure.” Gerleman, TLOT 3:1260. Likewise, Norman Walker comments, “The root meaning of רמות is two-sided, namely will and pleasure, whether oneself or another.” “Renderings of רָסִים,” JBL 81 (1962): 184; cf. Terence E. Fretheim, “רצה,” NIDOTTE 3:1186; William White, “רצה,” TWOT 860. Thus, the term may be used in human relationships of one received “favorably” (Gen 33:10) or of evaluative favor that might result from action (1 Sam 29:4; Prov 14:35; 16:13; Esth 10:3; 2 Chr 10:7; cf. Prov 23:26) or simply that which is acceptable (Prov 10:32; cf. 11:27) or of “good will” (Prov 14:9). On the other hand, some are pleased with that which should not be accepted as pleasing. There are those who “approve” of the words of the foolish (Ps 49:13 [14]), are “pleased” with a thief (Ps 50:18), delight in falsehood (Ps 62:4 [5]). In other instances, the term seems to denote bestowed favor. For example, the king’s “favor is like a cloud with the spring rain” (Prov 16:15), like “dew on the grass” (Prov 19:12; cf. Job 20:10). In some texts, the term has been thought to belong to a separate lexeme, בַּּלְּמָה II, meaning to buy or pay or possibly even atone, though others think it is merely an expansion of meaning that can usually be explained by the nuance “accept.” Lexicographers remain split on the issue. Richard E. Averbeck, for instance, contends there “may be some reason to believe that two original words are represented.” “רצה,” NIDOTTE 3:1187. The separation is partially dependent upon ANE cognates, but there based on singular occurrences and thus indeterminate. Ibid., 1186. Possible occurrences include Lev 26:34, 41, 43; Isa 40:2; Job 20:10; 2 Chr 36:21. Barstad, however, rejects the categorization and suggests the translation “accept” in many such cases, related to the so-called “credit terminology.” TDOT 13:624–25. Likewise, Gerleman suggests that some such occurrences mean “accept” with the neutral or negative meaning to let something come to one. TLOT 3:1259–60.

192 Of divine agency see Pss 103:21; 143:10; Ezra 10:11. Of human agency in this respect see Gen 49:6; Neh 9:24, 37; Esth 1:8; 9:5; Dan 8:4; 11:3; cf. 11:15, 36. Here is the meaning of “choice, liking,” that
that is pleasing, and thus acceptable to Yahweh through which its offering may be reckoned pleasing. Indeed, God looks toward a future when all Israel will serve him and “there [he] will accept them” (Ezek 20:40), “as a soothing aroma” God “will accept” them (Ezek 20:41). In one instance, divine election collocates with God’s πλήρωσις in such a way that leaves the impression of evaluative pleasure of a passionate nature: God states, “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom my soul [inner person] delights” (Isa 42:1; cf. 1 Chr 28:4). This use extends to other ways in which one might please, or be acceptable to, God. Like γνώμη, the term πλήρωσις (when negated) is frequently used to describe God’s displeasure in sacrifices that are merely offered by external ritual, absent the corresponding internal devotion and fidelity that is actually the object of God’s desire and pleasure. Thus, even in such cultic contexts, it is clear that God has profound desires and he is affected by the people’s disposition toward him; God’s delight is is, they could do “whatever they liked.” Barstad, *TDOT* 13:628.

193 The acceptability of offerings is conditional upon many aspects of the offering and its proper performance (see Lev 1:3–4; 7:18; 22:19–21, 25, 27). The term thus connotes that a sacrifice is “well-pleasing.” See Rendtorff, *Die Gesezete*. Indeed, “the effect of a sacrificial offering depends on whether it pleases God.” Gerleman, *TLOT* 3:1260–61. See also Barstad, *TDOT* 13:621–22. The intended result of such offerings is clearly stated; it is “so that [the offerer] may be accepted” by God (Lev 19:5; 22:29; 23:11; cf. Exod 28:37 [38]).

194 Notice, the use of the term “soul,” referring to the inner person [αὐτή], as the seat of delight, connoting profound emotion. Barstad comments of 1 Chr 28:4, “David was chosen to be king because Yahweh took delight in him (rsh).” *TDOT* 13:620.

195 Thus, πλήρωσις often occurs with reference to the request, expectation, and/or actuality of being accepted favorably by God (Deut 33:11; Isa 60:7; Pss 19:14 [15]; 40:13 [14]; 119:108; Job 33:26; Eccl 9:8; cf. Ps 77:7 [8]). It can similarly refer to an “acceptable” or “favorable” time (Isa 49:8; 58:5; 61:2; Ps 69:13 [14]).

196 See Mic 6:7–8; Ps 51:16 [18]; Prov 15:8. Indeed, the people’s offerings are ineffectual insofar as they are merely attempts to assuage God without true repentance (Hos 8:13). Thus, human offerings may be rejected by God (see Jer 6:20; Amos 5:22, 24, 26; Mal 1:8, 10, 13; 2:13). But God looks forward to a day when human hearts will truly be set toward him and he will delight in their offerings (Isa 56:7). Some have posited a critique by the prophets of the priestly system of “crediting of offerings.” Cf. Barstad, *TDOT* 13:622. However, others have, rightfully in my opinion, pointed out that the criticism is not of the cult perse, but of merely external offerings without internal devotion. See, for example, Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 145.
evaluative, grounded in the disposition of his people.197 The divine-human relationship that is
symbolized in cultic ceremony is not automatic, but points to a deeper reciprocal relationship that
God desires with his people, and delights in when such is present.

Moreover, the הָרִיא word group is not restricted to sacrificial contexts but is “a central
theological term expressing fundamental relationships between God and human beings.”198
Elsewhere, divine evaluation of humans is evident such as when God examines or “tries” [יַּעֲשֵׂ] the
heart and “delight[s] in uprightness” (1 Chr 29:17). Further, God “does not delight [יָכֹל]” in a
horse’s strength and “does not take pleasure [יָכֹל]” in man’s legs (Ps 147:10). Rather, God
“favors [יָכֹל]” those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness” (Ps 147:11).199 On the
other hand, because the people have “loved to wander . . . therefore the LORD does not accept
them” (Jer 14:10), when they call, God is “not going to accept them” (Jer 14:12). Similarly, both
positive and negative divine evaluation are evident by explicit contrasts between that which is
pleasing to God or not.200 Finally, הָרִיא also may be used to describe the manner of God’s actions,
as the grounding of his beneficence.201 It is thus starkly contrasted with divine anger and thus
appears to depict the opposite, more enduring emotion akin to love.202

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197 הָרִיא also often appears in religious contexts of human delight toward the things of God. For
instance, David proclaims that in his “delight in the house” of God he has provided his treasure for the
temple (1 Chr 29:3). God’s servants “find pleasure” in Zion (Ps 102:13 [15]). The psalmist proclaims to
God, “I delight to do Your will” (Ps 40:8 [9]; cf. 2 Chr 15:15).


199 See also Hag 1:8; Pss 5:12 [13]; 145:16, 19; 149:4; Prov 3:12; 8:35; 16:7; cf. Job 34:9. As
Fretheim notes, “The striking language of God’s delighting . . . demonstrates that feelings are not foreign to
his experience of the world.” Fretheim, *NIDOTTE* 3:1186.

200 For instance, “A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight”
(Prov 11:1; cf. 15:8). Likewise, the “perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless
in their walk are His delight” (Prov 11:20). Likewise, see Prov 12:2, 22.

201 For example, God “favored” his people in giving them the Promised Land (Ps 44:3 [4]) and
later “showed favor” to his land in restoring Jacob (Ps 85:1 [2]). See also Pss 30:7 [8]; 51:18 [20]; 89:17
[18]; 106:4; Prov 18:22; cf. Isa 40:2. See also its usage in benedictory formulas (Deut 33:16, 23–24; 2 Sam
24:13).

202 For instance, God declares, “In My wrath I struck you, and in My favor I have had compassion
The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in the Torah

Divine evaluative pleasure, delight, and even enjoyment appears in numerous instances in the Torah, often in cultic contexts. For instance, in the aftermath of the flood God “smelled [םינש] the soothing aroma” of Noah’s offering and then proclaims that he will never again destroy all living things with a flood (Gen 8:21). The phrase “soothing aroma” (םינש חרב) may be literally rendered quieting or soothing odor and is often used, mostly in the Torah, to denote sacrifices acceptable to God. The implication appears to be that God was pleased by the offering and/or offerer and thus the promise.

Interestingly, Genesis is the only case where God is said to “smell” the offering, though elsewhere he requested to do this (1 Sam 26:19). Moreover, God could refuse to smell (Lev 26:31). Hamilton suggests that references to “God’s olfactory sense” are “to be understood as anthropomorphisms.” Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17 (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 308. Likewise, von Rad, Genesis, 122. It is notable that this narrative does not include a divine craving to eat the sacrifice(s) as in ANE parallels. (Cf. Gilgamesh, ANET, 95, where “hungry gods . . . crowded like flies around the sacrifices”); cf. Sarna, Genesis, 59.

See Exod 29:18, 25; 29:41; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3:5, 16; 4:31; 6:15, 21; 8:21, 28; 17:6; 23:13, 18; Num 15:3, 7, 10, 13–14, 24; 18:17; 28:6, 8, 13, 24, 27; 29:2, 6, 8, 13, 36; cf. Ezek 6:13; 16:19; 20:28; 20:41. There is an interesting play on words between the name Noah and an offering that is soothing (חרב), perhaps highlighting that Noah as offerer is a ground of divine pleasure/acceptance. Sarna, however, suggests the phrase is used “in a specific technical sense, divested of its literal meaning. It simply connotes God’s acceptance of the sacrifice.” Sarna, Genesis, 59. Although its repetition does suggest technical meaning, it is not altogether clear that this requires divesting it of its explicit sense.

There is disagreement whether the offering is propitiary or a thank offering. Wenham believes both are appropriate. Genesis 1–15, 189–90. See also Mathews, Genesis 1–11:26, 393. He further goes on to note common objections to the idea that “this offering changed God’s attitude to mankind”; (1) “an aversion to allowing any significant role to ritual,” and (2) the fact that God had already proclaimed his gracious attitude toward Noah previously (8:1). He, however, sees continuity of “very clear interest in cultic and priestly concerns that runs through Gen 1–8” and believes that God’s disposition toward Noah was not the object of change, but his attitude toward humankind in general “turned around.” Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 189–90. Wenham, however, does believe that the ultimate reason for the acceptance still resides in “God’s antecedent purpose, whereby he appointed the sacrificial system as a means of atonement for reconciliation between God and man.” Ibid., 190. Other commentators also recognize that God is here presented as affected by the offering. Matthews believes that “Noah’s worship soothed the broken ‘heart’ of God, which had been injured by man’s wickedness” and God thus “shows his pleasure” and “as a result of Noah’s offering, God determines in ‘his heart’ . . . to stay any future curse and destruction.” Genesis 1–
nuance of favorable acceptance of sacrifice. Such acceptance is based upon numerous conditions, including but not limited to the quality of the sacrifice, proper age, proper ritual, etc. (Lev 1:3–4; 22:19, 21, 27; cf. 23:11). Offerings may be rejected by God if they do not meet the prescribed criteria (Lev 7:18; 19:7; 22:20, 23, 25). However, the crux of the issue is only indirectly the acceptance of offerings, since it is through the cultic system that the people are to be accepted. Thus, the importance of various ritual elements is described “that you may be accepted” (Exod 28:37 [38]; Lev 19:5; 22:29). The implication is that God once again takes delight in his people as a consequence of the proper human response. This assumes divine responsiveness to human beings and appraisal of their actions.

Evaluative pleasure also appears when Joshua, while pleading with Israel to trust the Lord to deliver the Promised Land, states, “If the LORD is pleased [�אנ] with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us” (Num 14:8). Here, although the land had already been promised, Joshua sees reception of it as contingent upon divine delight. Israel’s fidelity toward God brings him pleasure, specifically; the Lord “delighted” (כמחצית) or “rejoiced” to prosper Israel (Deut 28:63). Yet, on the other hand, disobedience brings it about that the LORD will delight [�אנ] to destroy Israel (Deut 28:63). God also looks forward to a future restoration, predicated

11:26, 392–93. Fretheim suggests that the sacrifice pleased God out of Noah’s devotion. “The Book of Genesis,” in Genesis to Leviticus, 1:393. John Skinner states, “That the pleasing odour is not the motive but merely the occasion of his gracious purpose (Knobel) may be sound theology, but it hardly expresses the idea of the passage.” A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 158.

206 also appears in benedictions, in the request of favor [�אנ] upon the sons of Jacob and their progeny (Deut 33:16, 23).

207 Divine delight is elsewhere presented by the term כמחצית, with the connotation of evaluation and enjoyment. However, Tigay sees the term in a volitional sense, “was determined to . . . will be determined to.” Deuteronomy, 272; cf. Yochanan Muffs, Love & Joy: Law, Language, and Religion in Ancient Israel (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992). However, כמחצית consistently refers to exultation and joy and does not appear to connote “determined” anywhere in the text. Importantly, every other usage where God is the agent the term seems to refer to rejoicing (Isa 62:5; 65:19; Jer 32:41; Zeph 3:17). Thus, it may be that here the term connotes divine delight in the people even in times of trouble and acts appropriately to their actions for their ultimate good. Thus, Christensen translates, “And it shall be just as YHWH took delight in you by doing good for you and by multiplying you so YHWH still takes delight in

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on appropriate human response, when he will “again rejoice [םֵאָה] over you for good, just as He rejoiced [םֵאָה] over your fathers” (Deut 30:9–10). Here, not only divine evaluation but also emotionality is apparent in God’s delight in his people, which is responsive to their disposition and/or action(s).

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in the Prophets

In the prophets, God’s love is also often presented as evaluative. For instance, God states that he “loves justice” but “hates robbery,” and recompenses the just accordingly (Isa 61:8). Likewise, God describes himself as the “LORD who exercises lovingkindness [שָׂאָה], justice and righteousness . . . for I delight [שָׂאָה] in these things” (Jer 9:24; cf. Isa 16:5; Mic 7:18).

Accordingly, God “delight[s] in “loyalty [שָׂאָה] rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings (Hos 6:6; cf. 4:1; 1 Sam 15:22; Mic 6:7–8). As Andersen points out, “Hesed is a matter of ultimate concern for Yahweh. The use of this emotional word, rather than one that emphasizes formal authority or power, matches the expressions of disappointment and anguish at the people’s inconstancy (v 4).”208 Conversely, God is displeased by merely external obedience and hates wickedness. For instance God declares that he has no “pleasure” (*Dv) in the blood of sacrifices (Isa 1:11), his soul “hates” (Esh) the festivals and feasts, which have become a wearisome burden to him (Isa 1:14).209 Again, God “hates” and “rejects” their festivals and does you.” Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12, 696. See the further discussion of this term and others in the discussion of Zeph 3:17 later in this chapter.

208 Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 430. “By using hesed for what Israel does for God, Hosea is able to emphasize that observance of the decalogue is not just something that God commands, but is more importantly what God desires or asks from Israel. Even though God is powerful and Israel dependent, hesed is nevertheless an attitude and action that Israel is somehow free to offer or to withhold. Divine judgment might ‘coerce’ such behavior, but judgment by its nature cannot produce the free and willing behavior and commitment that is essential to hesed. Thus in speaking of Israel’s hesed to God, Hosea is able to convey both the freedom of Israel within the covenant relationship and also the deep and urgent desire of God for Israel’s free response.” Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” 4:380. See the word study of *שָׂאָה* later in this chapter.

209 Motyer points out, My soul hates is equivalent to “I hate with all my heart.”” Isaiah, 47. On divine weariness with Israel’s antics see also Mal 2:17.
not “delight in” (or “smell,” ניח) their assemblies (Amos 5:21), thus he will not “accept” or “delight” (תִּכְנַשׁ) in them (Amos 5:22). Likewise, God “does not take pleasure” in Judah’s guides because they have wickedly misled the people (Isa 9:17). He is “not pleased” (יָשָׁר) with Israel despite their entreaty of favor and hope for grace and will not “accept” (תִּכְנַשׁ) their offering (Mal 1:9; cf. 1:13). In every case, God’s displeasure with his people corresponds to his evaluation of their evil.

That God’s pleasure and displeasure is not arbitrary but evaluative is especially evident when God refers to those who may receive blessing if only they “choose what pleases [יָשָׁר]” him (Isa 56:4), in contrast to those who do not receive blessing because they “chose that in which [God] did not delight [יָשָׁר]” (Isa 65:12). As such, the choices of human beings may bring pleasure, or deny delight, to God himself (cf. Hag 1:8). God’s pleasure or delight is spoken of as a grounding of beneficence. Thus, David states, “He rescued me, because He delighted in me” (2

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210 Literally, God will not “smell” their solemn assemblies. This is in contrast with his acceptance of the “pleasing aroma” of sacrifices. See the discussion of Gen 6:8. Likewise, God takes “no delight” in the people [יָשָׁר] (Hos 8:13; cf. Jer 14:10), and is not “pleased” [וָשָׁר] with their sacrifices (Hos 9:4). Here, the people’s offerings are ineffectual insofar as they are merely attempts to assuage God without true repentance. God’s evaluation thus looks at the inward motivation and devotion to God, since “the Lord himself does not need the sacrifices like gods and goddesses in other religions.” Thus, “sacrifice without obedience as well as the fat of rams without attentiveness” is worthless to him. Tsumura, The First Book of Samuel, 402; cf. Douglas K. Stuart, Hosea-Jonah (WBC 31; Dallas: Word, 1987), 110. God desires true faithfulness, and will someday again take pleasure [וָשָׁר] in their offerings (Mal 3:4), but not while the heart of his people is far from him. This term וי refers to that which is “pleasan” or “pleasing,” a term that points to objective approval or disapproval. Clendenen points out, “It is a synonym of rsh and of ḥps in Mal 1:8, 10, 13; and 2:17.” Hagai, Malachi, 390–91.

211 Contrast this with God’s willingness to accept [יָשָׁר] the offerings and sacrifices of faithful foreigners (Isa 56:7). The acceptance or rejection is thus not arbitrary, but grounded in God’s evaluation of the offerer.

212 Thus, “the LORD saw [יָשָׁר], and it was displeasing [וָשָׁר] in His sight that there was no justice [יָשָׁר]” (Isa 59:15). God “does not accept” the people and “remember[s] their iniquity” because they have “loved [יָשָׁר] to wander” (Jer 14:10). Not only does this shed light on the purity of the divine character but it also denotes the evaluative nature of divine delight, similar to the exhortation to “hate evil, love good” (Amos 5:15).

213 Quite clearly, then, “That which distinguishes persons acceptable to God from those who are unacceptable is their commitment to God’s will and to God’s ways (cf. 1:19).” Watts, Isaiah 34–66, 249. The point regards “what kinds of behavior please God.” Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 508.
Sam 22:20 = Ps 18:19 [20]). In all this, God has no “pleasure” (גֵּד) in the death of the wicked, desiring repentance instead (Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11). Thus, God’s evaluative pleasure extends to the plan of salvation, even the sacrifice of his “chosen one in whom [his] soul [inner person] delights [גֵּד]” (Isa 42:1; cf. v. 21). Yet, God “was pleased [גֵּד] to crush” the servant, a willing guilt offering, and thus the “good pleasure [גֵּד] of the LORD will prosper in His hand” (Isa 53:10).

Accordingly, God’s love is such that he often manifests emotions of delight and/or joy over his people. God refers to Israel/Judah as “His delightful [צָלִית] plant” (Isa 5:7), his “pleasant [צָלִית] field” (Jer 12:10), and within the context of robust emotive language speaks of “Ephraim My dear [רָנַף] son” as “a delightful [צָלִית] child” (Jer 31:20). His people are

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214 McCarter Jr. comments that this denotes affection and preference. II Samuel, 468. The following verses denote the context of this “preference,” which is clearly evaluative approval rather than arbitrary selection among equivalent potential objects of favor (cf. 2 Sam 22:21–27). Divine evaluation is also prominent in David’s statement regarding the uncertainty of his kingship while fleeing, specifically whether God will find favor in him, and thus return him to the city, or not delight in him (2 Sam 15:25–26). Notice the parallel between God’s delight and finding favor in his eyes. Similarly, Sheba ascribes Solomon’s kingship to God’s love for Israel and his delight in Solomon (1 Kgs 10:9). Likewise, divine “favor” or “delight” [גֵּד] is the root of compassion, in direct contrast to wrath [גָּרֶנֶח], a source of punishment (Isa 60:10). All this is in accord with God’s right as the creator of all and by his great power to bestow blessings on “the one who is pleasing in My sight” [גָּנִית] (Jer 27:5). Although it is possible to read this to mean that God arbitrarily and altogether subjectively bestows blessings on whom he will, the covenant context of Jeremiah would seem to rule out such an interpretation. Rather, this seems to assert God’s sovereignty and ability to bless those who please him, or to those who might bring about that which ultimately pleases him.

215 Greenberg calls this “an impassioned declaration of his desire that the wicked repent and live.” Ezekiel 21–37 (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 675.

216 Here again, the “soul,” often the seat of emotions, is the seat of divine delight. As Watts puts it, “What is done with the ‘soul’ comes from the heart.” Watts, Isaiah 34–66, 119.

217 Here, God’s pleasure seems to be indirect. It does not refer to some sadistic enjoyment of the servant’s suffering but to the ultimate desires of God, which may be brought about by the sufferings. See the discussion of this in chapter 6.

218 There can be little question that such language is deeply emotive due to the mention of the yearning of God’s heart and compassion in the foreground (Jer 31:20). This does, however, raise the question with regard to what God finds delightful in Israel at this time. Nevertheless, the term here for delight (צָלִית), in noun form, is used in only nine verses and is often clearly in reference to objective delight, that is, delight for an object that warrants it, for instance God’s testimonies (Ps 119:24), law (Ps 119:77, 92, 174), commandments (Ps 119:143), etc. Moreover, wisdom had her “delight in the sons of men” (Prov 8:31). Wisdom was daily God’s delight (Prov 8:30) and the men of Judah “His delightful
“precious” (םַשֶּׁם) in his sight, “honored” (ךָּזָּה), and “loved” (וֹכֵל) (Isa 43:4). Moreover, God refers to his people as “the apple of his eye” (Zech 2:8). God looks forward to the end of Israel’s forsakenness when she shall be called “My delight is in her” for “the LORD delights in you” (Isa 62:4). Furthermore, the people will be a source of God’s delight, even “as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you” (Isa 62:5).

Thus, the day will come when God himself “will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them . . . with all [his] heart and with all [his] soul” (Jer 32:41). Similarly, God looks forward to a future wherein weeping and crying will be removed and “I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people” (Isa 65:19).

In the future, God’s people will serve him and he will “accept them” as “a soothing aroma” (Ezek 20:40–41; cf. Gen 6:8).

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219 Cf. Exod 19:5. Notably, God acts on the basis of this love for his people to “give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for you life” (Isa 43:4). In other words, God’s valuation of the people is a grounding of substitution. Oswalt thinks this is not because of “intrinsic worth in the one being ransomed, but because of who God is and what he sees in them.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 134. O. Palmer Robertson likewise believes, “Them he loves because he loves them (Deut. 7:6–8). Not in them or for anything in them is to be found the reason for his love. In the nature of God himself may be discovered the only explanation of this love.” The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 341. However, is it not likewise possible that God finds worth in his beings, value with which he himself imbued them, looking past their shortcomings in love? According to Motyer, these terms “speak of the value the Lord sees in his people (precious: cf. Eph 1:18), the dignity (honoured) he has conferred in calling them his, and the love (Dt. 7:7–8) which undergirds all.” Isaiah, 332.

220 Cf. Deut 32:10; Ps. 17:8, literally, “little man of his eye.” It is elsewhere clear that God does appreciate beauty, even the beauty that he himself creates, “I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it” (Ezek 31:9).

221 Once again, note the intensity added by the phrase “with all my heart and with all my soul,” denoting the object of God’s cognitive and emotive personality. Notably, “only here in the OT is the expression ‘with all my heart and with all my soul’ used in reference to God.” Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, 521.

222 Watts comments, “Undoubtedly God’s tears had flowed for both the city and his people many times during the previous four centuries. Finally this can be reversed.” Isaiah 34–66, 354. Moreover, God “will rejoice because his compassionate heart will no longer be wrenched and torn by those things that wrench and tear at ours.” Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 657–58.
Zephaniah presents perhaps the height of this apparently eschatological divine delight. In “that day” of deliverance, God the mighty warrior “in your midst . . . will exult [חָגֵג] over you with joy [חג]. He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice [גאש] over you with shouts of joy [תּוֹנָה]” (Zeph 3:16–17).

Notice the rich and intense divine joy, which nearly exhausts the available terminology and might best be described as exuberance, even perhaps “ecstasy.”

Clearly, God may be pleased or displeased in correspondence with the specific actions/reactions of his people. As such, divine pleasure, or the lack thereof, is clearly represented as evaluative, corresponding to the presence or absence of the desired state of affairs. For this reason, the height of his joy is

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223 Numerous suggestions have been made regarding the meaning of “keeps silent in his love.” The LXX and Peshitta read, “he will renew you in his love.” However, the most natural reading is “silent in his love.” Keil and Delitzsch helpfully suggest, “Silence in His love is an expression used to denote love deeply felt, which is absorbed in its object with thoughtfulness and admiration.” Commentary, 10:461. Similarly, Robertson points out that הנ딩 is usually intransitive, thus denoting the “inward condition of the subject,” thus this describes God as contemplating his people in love. The Books, 340. Theodore H. Gaster also rejects the LXX reading, suggesting an intended contrast between “keeping silent and bursting into song” rendering the latter as a concessive clause, “Though now He be keeping silent about His love, He will then joy over thee in a burst of song.” “Two Textual Emendations,” ExpTim 78 (1966–67): 267.

224 A brief look at these terms may further highlight divine delight. חג consistently means exult or rejoice and appears in various instances with human agency. Sometimes it appears alone, connoting exultation, joy (Isa 62:4 [5]; 64:5 [4]; 66:14; Ezek 21:10; Pss 19:6 [5]; 119:14, 162; Job 39:21; Lam 1:21). It is often closely associated with other terms for rejoice, as it is here, such as רצון (Pss 40:16 [17]; 70:4 [5]; Lam 4:21), both פלא and חים (Ps 68:3 [4], both פלא and חים (Isa 66:10; Job 3:22), and חים (Isa 35:1; 65:18; Ps 35:9). In divine usage, the term clearly denotes divine joy, even rejoicing (Isa 62:4 [5]; 66:19; Jer 32:41; cf. Jer 49:25; Isa 60:15; Jer 49:25; Lam 2:15). הנ딩 is a very frequent term of joy, gladness, and/or delight. It refers not to lasting joy, but to a spontaneous emotion of rejoicing, even exuberance. E. Ruprecht, “שמח,” TLOT 3:1273. “The root š-m-h denotes being glad or joyful with the whole disposition as indicated by its association with the heart (cf. Exod 4:14; Pss 19:8 [H 9]; 104:15; 105:3), the soul (Ps 86:4); and with the lighting up of the eyes (Prov 15:30).” Bruce K. Waltke, “שמח,” TWOT 879. It mostly refers to human joy but does appear a few times with divine agency in both verbal פלא and nominal forms (Isa 9:17 [16]; Zeph 3:17; Ps 104:31). שמח, another prominent term of joy, often of shouting or singing, appears with God as subject only here in Zeph 3:17. Finally, שמח refers to gladness, rejoicing. Wood comments that this root connotes great “emotional involvement.” TLOT 1:310. It appears with divine agency not only in Zeph 3:17 but also Isa 65:19.

225 Robertson, The Books, 340. Robertson calls this “a rapturous description of the love of God for his people. . . . Delight, joy, rejoicing, and singing on God’s part underscore the mutuality of emotional experience felt by God and the redeemed.” Ibid., 339. Indeed, in Zeph 3, “Zion is exhorted to sing (רננוי); [God] rejoices with singing (רננוי). Jerusalem shall rejoice (שמח); [God] delights over Jerusalem with joy (شيخ). The whole scene depicts a grand oratorio as God and his people mutually rejoice in their love for one another.” Ibid., 340.
reserved for the day of ultimate restoration when reality will be in perfect accord with the divine will.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in the Writings

Although Eliphaz, Job’s so-called friend, gives voice to the common misconception that God does not actually enjoy or appreciate human beings (Job 22:2–3), the evaluative aspect of divine love is likewise presented in the Writings. For example, God “loves [בוח] the righteous” (Ps 146:8). He himself is righteous and “loves righteousness,” the upright “will behold His face” (Ps 11:7; cf. Pss 33:5; 37:28; 99:4, 8). God’s delight is itself sometimes directly connected to love proper. Thus, God “reproves” those he loves (בוח) like a father to his son in whom he “delights” (ﬠש) (Prov 3:12). Likewise, just as the upright person’s prayer is God’s

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226 Eliphaz rhetorically asks whether a “vigorous man” is “useful” [יצר] to God (Job 22:2) or whether God has any pleasure [ призна] in human righteousness, or “profit” [יצר] in perfection (Job 22:3; cf. 35:7). Eliphaz therein assumes that God can neither use, nor pleasure, nor profit from the actions of human beings. “The point of the verse is that God is not advantaged by good deeds. He is distant and detached . . . transcendent” and “indifferent toward all people.” Robert L. Alden, Job (NAC 11; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 230. Apparently, Eliphaz “wishes to refute Job’s implication from his disputation that since there are wicked people who enjoy prosperity all their lives there may be righteous people who endure calamity in spite of their righteousness (ch. 21). Eliphaz counters this position with the premise that a person cannot benefit God. . . . This means then that misfortune can have its cause only in human sin, never in God’s sovereign purpose acting toward an individual irrespective of his righteousness or wickedness. In other words it is unfathomable to Eliphaz that God would permit a righteous person to endure a season of misery even though he has been faithful in obeying God.” John E. Hartley, The Book of Job (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 325; cf. Marvin H. Pope, Job (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 150. There is “in Eliphaz’ position a dual stripping of biblical faith: God is depersonalized by a mechanical view of justice, and moral deeds possess only utilitarian value for mankind.” Hartley, The Book of Job, 325. Of course, Eliphaz and Job’s other friends are shown to be incorrect (they have not spoken of God “what is right”) and thus strongly rebuked by God at the end of the book (Job 42:7–8). Such statements are therefore not representative of the true nature of God. See the discussion of the temporary and partial suspension of the consequences of evaluative judgment in chapter 6, which sheds light on these issues.

227 The “righteous” are within a passage that emphasizes God’s beneficence toward the needy, the blind, the orphan, etc. “While it may seem that ‘the righteous’ (v. 8c) do not belong in this series, we must remember that it is precisely ‘the righteous’ in the psalter who are constantly besieged, assaulted, and oppressed (see Ps 34:19).” McCann Jr., “The Book of Psalms,” in 1 & 2 Maccabees, 4:1264.

228 Craigie comments, “Because God is righteous, he loves righteous deeds (v 7), implying either that he loves to do righteous deeds, or loves those that do righteous deeds; in context, the latter is more likely, so that there is here a confident expression of the love of a righteous God for a righteous person.” Psalms 1–50, 134. Thus, “God’s judgment follows his evaluation of people.” Duane A. Garrett, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs (NAC 14; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 126–27.
delight (גֶּא), he loves (עָשָׂר) the pursuer of righteousness (Prov 15:8–9). These passages, as well as others, clearly associate divine love with objectively evaluative, divine delight. Further, as in the prophets, divine delight (גֶּא) also may be the cause of rescue (Ps 18:19 [20]), which David frames as “reward” and “recompense” according to his “righteousness” and “cleanness” (Ps 18:20 [21]).

Thus, God “takes pleasure (נֵס) in His people” (Ps 149:4; cf. 77:8–9). On the other hand, God does not take “pleasure” (נֵס) in evil but “hates” (שָׂר) those who do evil, destroys those who speak falsehood, and “abhors [שָׂר] the man of bloodshed and deceit” (Ps 5:4–6 [5–7]; cf. 106:40). God’s “soul” (לֵב) hates (שָׂר) the one who “loves” (שָׂר) violence (Ps 11:5). Whereas God does not “delight [נֵס] in the strength of the horse” nor “take pleasure [נֵס] in the legs of a man,” he “favors” (נֵס), or takes pleasure in, those “who fear Him” and “wait for His lovingkindness” (Ps 147:10–11). Similarly, whereas “the perverse in heart are an abomination [שָׂר] to the LORD, the blameless in their walk are His delight [נֵס]” (Prov 11:20). As in the prophets, divine

229 Thus, Daniel is God’s beloved, or one of “high esteem” (שָׂר) (Dan 10:11). Choon-Leong Seow renders this, “Greatly beloved,” “literally, ‘a man of lovableness.” “Ecclesiastes (AB 18C; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 243. John E. Goldingay points out, “Like words such as שָׂר ‘love,’ שָׂר suggests both a feeling and an attitude that expresses itself in being drawn toward the object of love and committing oneself to it (Isa 53:2; Pss 19:11 [10]; 68:17 [16]). . . . Daniel is one to whom God is committed. As we have seen, he has prayed as persona grata to Yahweh.” Daniel (WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 256. Good adds, this “denotes something highly desirable and precious.” “Love in the OT,” JDB 3:165. Likewise Stephen R. Miller, Daniel (NAC 18; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 251; cf. Gen 27:15; Ezra 8:27. Further, God “delighted [נֵס] in” Solomon and set him on the throne out of love for Israel (2 Chr 9:8).

230 Mitchell Dahood translates, “He [God] brought me out of the broad domain, liberated me because he loved me. Yahweh rewarded me because I was just, because my hands were innocent he repaid me.” Psalms 1–50 (AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 102. The foreground likewise speaks of the keeping of God’s commandments and God’s reciprocal relations, “with the kind [נֵס] You show yourself kind [נֵס]; with the blameless You show yourself blameless; With the pure You show Yourself pure, And with the crooked You show Yourself astute” (Ps 18:25–26 [26–27]). Thus, “there was a reciprocal dimension to the relationship with God, by which the faithful, the blameless, and the pure could expect God’s faithful response, while the twisted could expect tortuous returns.” Craigie, Psalms 1–50, 175. Notably, it is not that his behavior guaranteed a turbulent-free life, for the king had been assailed by enemies, but the assertion is that God heard him when he cried because he had been faithful.

231 See the discussion of the emotive nature of these statements in the section on the emotionality of divine love.
appraisal is again evident with regard to God’s delight in, or desire for, heartfelt, sincere devotion to him, which is contrasted with merely external sacrifices by various phrases. 233 Such instances speak to the wholeheartedness expected by God from his people; external sacrifices of themselves are not pleasing to God but an internal spirit of devotion to God is his delight. In many other instances, God’s evaluative delight appears throughout the Writings. 234 Such examples are clearly evaluative, distinguishing between moral qualities in the identification of the object of divine delight. God’s pleasure and delight are thus evaluatively responsive to actual objects yet distinct from the scale of evaluation that human beings may employ. 235 Accordingly, divine love, as well

232 JPS translates, “the LORD values those who fear Him” (Ps 147:10).

233 Thus, God does not “delight [כָּרְ晫] in sacrifice” nor is he “pleased [כָּרְ晫] with burnt offering” but the “sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart,” which he “will not despise” (Ps 51:16–17 [18–19]; cf. Ps 40:6 [7]; 69:31; Prov 15:8–9). In one such instance, כָּרְ晫, the usual term for election, signifies such evaluative desire. Specifically the doing of “righteousness and justice is desired [כָּרְ晫] by the LORD more than sacrifice” (Prov 21:3). Here, כָּרְ晫 (in niphal participle) clearly connotes more than indifferent election but seems to connote the divine evaluation and even appreciation of good conduct; cf. Prov 22:21. This evaluative sense of כָּרְ晫 is not surprising when it is remembered that the word group often refers to that which is “choice” or the “choicest” in the sense of being the most desirable or precious. See the word study earlier in this chapter. As Roland E. Murphy comments, “The contrast is not between the relative values of sacrifice and prayer, but between the reaction of God and the contradictory actions of human beings. It is the sacrificer, not the sacrifice, that is the issue.” Proverbs (WBC 22; Dallas: Word, 1998), 112. Thus, “the criterion for God’s favor is not simply the scrupulous performance of ritual but the ardent pursuit of serving others along with it.” Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 621.

234 Thus, as upright and faithful himself, God “loves [כָּרְ晫] righteousness and justice” (Ps 33:5). Again, he “loves justice” and does not “forsake His godly ones” (כָּרְ晫) whereas others are cut off (Ps 37:28). Further, a just weight (Prov 11:1), the blameless (Prov 11:20), those who deal faithfully (Prov 12:22) and the prayer of the upright (Prov 15:8) are each characterized as God’s “delight” (כָּרְ晫). These are in contrast to a false weight (Prov 11:1), lying lips (12:22), and the sacrifice of the wicked (15:8), which are all viewed by God as an “abomination” (כָּרְ晫). God does not take “pleasure [כָּרְ },{כָּרְ晫] in wickedness” (Ps 5:4), “takes no delight [כָּרְ晫] in fools” (Eccl 5:4 [3]) and may be otherwise “displeased” (כָּרְ晫 כָּרְ晫) (Prov 24:18). Further, the man whose way is “pleasing” (כָּרְ晫) to God is blessed (Prov 16:7; cf. 12:22). As Waltke paraphrases Prov 12:22, on the other hand, “liars so repulse his nature that he casts them aside.” The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 539. Further, the one who finds wisdom “finds life and obtains the favor [כָּרְ晫] of the LORD” (Prov 8:35; cf. 12:2). Likewise, God “surrounds” the righteous man with “favor” (כָּרְ晫) (Ps 5:12; cf. Prov 3:3). Wisdom personified is God’s daily, intense “delight” (כָּרְ晫 כָּרְ晫) (Prov 8:30). The Hebrew term כָּרְ晫 כָּרְ晫 signifies “intense delight.” See the discussion above. Some translations (e.g., NIV) ascribe the delight to “wisdom” not to God. So Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 420–21. However, the noun כָּרְ晫 כָּרְ晫 in the construction would seem to imply that wisdom is the object and God the subject of the delight, as the LXX interprets. Cf. Jer 31:20. This is the position of Fox who comments, “God gets amusement from his creatures.” Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 287.

235 Morris cautions, “It is going too far to suggest that these passages teach that the righteous are so meritorious that they win the love of an otherwise unloving God.” Testaments of Love, 95. However, this
as its antonym hatred, is not altogether indifferent, but may be grounded in objective appraisal. It is thus neither undifferentiated nor altogether constant.

The Evaluative and Emotional Aspect of Divine Hatred

At the juncture of the evaluative and emotional aspects of divine love is the contrast of God’s hate. The most prominent term of negative divine evaluation is שָׁנָא, the antonym of בְּחַה, which is most often used in religious contexts.²³⁶ The root most often refers to the emotional feelings of disdain or hatred for something or someone.²³⁷ However, the intensity of the negative feelings and/or evaluation can vary greatly from the most intense loathing or abhorrence of something, or someone, to a mild aversion.²³⁸

As with בְּחַה, שָׁנָא often refers to the emotions between a man and a woman in a romantic and/or erotic relationship. For instance, Leah is said to be “hated” by her husband Jacob (Gen 29:31, 33; cf. Deut 21:15–17; 22:13; 24:3).²³⁹ Many consider this usage, and others like it, to could be taken to present a false dichotomy because divine delight could be evaluative but still not amount to winning or meriting God’s love.

²³⁶ The word group appears in verbal (139 verses), nominal (16 verses), and adjectival forms (1x). In ANE cognates the term appears often in northwest Semitic languages with significant parallels meaning “to hate.” See A. H. Konkel, “שָׁנָא,” NIDOTTE 3:1257; Ernst Jenni, “שָׁנָא,” TLOT 3:1277; cf. the Aramaic cognate in Dan 4:16. The term is used some 31 times in direct contrast to בְּחַה as its antonym.

²³⁷ It “expresses an emotional attitude toward persons and things which are opposed, detested, despised and with which one wishes to have no contact or relationship. It is therefore the opposite of love.” Groningen, TWOT 880. Lipinski adds that the verb “refers to an emotional condition of aversion that OT anthropology locates ‘in the heart’ [בְּלב] . . . or in the” שָׁן. E. Lipinski, “שָׁנָא,” TDOT 14:64; cf. Lev 19:17; 2 Sam 5:8; Ps 11:5.

²³⁸ “The gamut of feelings of dislike are included in the scope of שָׁנָא; it may express the most intense hatred of the enemies of God (Ps 139:21–22), or that of a violent enemy (25:19), but it may simply express that which is to be avoided, such as serving as a guarantor for a debt (Prov 11:15), the feelings of aversion for a poor man (19:7), or the aggravation of a neighbor who visits too often (25:17).” Konkel, NIDOTTE 3:1257. Jenni concurs, “The semantic scope . . . reaches from the strongly affective ‘to hate’ . . . to a somewhat diluted “to feel aversion for, not want, avoid.” TLOT 3:1278.

²³⁹ Similarly, in the situation where a man has two wives “one loved and the other hated” the law protects the children of the “hated” wife from losing any birthrights (Deut 21:15–17). In both of these passages, as well as Prov 30:23, שָׁנָא is a qal passive participle. שָׁנָא also refers to a man who, after consummating the marriage, “hates” his wife and charges her with having not been a virgin (Deut 22:13, 16) and to a man who “hates” his wife to divorce her (Deut 24:3). Many have seen שָׁנָא in such contexts as
merely depict a mild contrast with בָּחָן and thus render the term “unloved” or “unpreferred.”

However, there is simply not enough information to determine the intensity of the בָּחָן in the situations above. Elsewhere, an intensely emotional contrast is apparent, as in the dark narrative of Amnon and Tamar. After Amnon rapes his half-sister, it is said that “hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her” (2 Sam 13:15). Likewise, בָּחָן appears within sibling relationships, referring to quite intense, and evaluative, animosity. For example, Joseph is hated by his brothers because they see that their father “loved him more than all his brothers” and they come to hate him “even more” after he tells them his dream (Gen 37:4–5, 8). Absalom hated Amnon for raping his sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:22). In both of the above cases the reason for the animosity is clearly given. Likewise, in a non-kinship relationship the cause of hatred is explicit; Ahab hates Micaiah because he never prophesies good for him (1 Kgs 22:8; 2 Chr 18:7).

Thus, hatred is often explicitly predicated on some objective reality.

technical language for divorce. Lipinski comments that while it is a technical term used “in connection with divorce” the use of the term in Hebrew “leaves no doubt that this verb expresses an emotional condition implying the wish for separation or removal from the ‘hated’ person.”

For instance, Konkel comments, “The use of loved and hated to describe the attitude toward a preferred wife as opposed to the one who was tolerated or even rejected (Gen 29:31, 33) lends to hate the sense of being unloved or not chosen, or even abandoned and rejected.”

Jenni comments, “In reference to the relationship between man and woman, šn’ usually implies a contrast to the expected or prior relationship of love: ‘to hate’ (Ezek 23:29) signifies, then, ‘to love no longer, develop dislike for,’ etc. (Deut 22:13, 16; 24:3; Judg 14:16; 15:2; 2 Sam 13:15).”

In a couple of instances, prior hatred is referenced. Isaac asks Abimelech why he came to him, “since you hate me and have sent me away from you” (Gen 26:27). Jephthah says similarly to the elders, “Did you not hate me and drive me from my father’s house? So why have you come to me now when you

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241 With regard to Leah, commentators have long proposed that בָּחָן is here merely a reference to the absence of love. However, it is not unreasonable to think that Jacob may have felt some animosity, whether overtly or suppressed, toward Leah considering the fact that he never intended to marry her and worked an extra seven years for her sister, Rachel, due to Laban’s deception with which Leah apparently went along. It is plausible that, as such, Jacob did have some degree of disdain for Leah.

242 Further emotional contrast is apparent when Delilah complains to Samson, “you only hate me, and you do not love me” when he will not give her truthful information regarding the source of his strength (Judg 14:16; cf. Judg 15:2).

243 In a couple of instances, prior hatred is referenced. Isaac asks Abimelech why he came to him, “since you hate me and have sent me away from you” (Gen 26:27). Jephthah says similarly to the elders, “Did you not hate me and drive me from my father’s house? So why have you come to me now when you
Evaluation and/or emotion is often apparent by reference to the context. Thus, it is clear that ꜱﬓ connotes evaluation when God praises, “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness” and therefore God has anointed him above others (Ps 45:7 [8]). Similarly, those who “love the LORD” are exhorted to “hate evil” (Ps 97:10; cf. Amos 5:15; Prov 8:13; 27:6; Eccl 3:8; 9:1). There are many other examples of the term ꜱﬓ being used in a clearly evaluative manner. Thus, it appears that an evaluative element is consistently present such that even when the reason for hatred is not explicitly given there appears to be something operative that goes beyond merely arbitrary decision. The emotionality of the term is likewise evident in many occurrences. For instance, God will bring judgment on Edom according to their anger (נֹרַע) and envy (נֹרַע), which they showed because of their hatred of Israel and Judah (Ezek 35:11; cf. 35:6). Likewise, the passion of hatred is apparent in another collocation with the emotion zeal (נֹרַע) (Eccl 9:6). With divine agency, the word group is consistently used in an explicitly evaluative manner and often with a clear indication of emotionality. For example, God loves justice but

are in trouble?” (Judg 11:7). Consider also the presence or absence of prior hatred as the determinative factor between murder and manslaughter (Num 35:20; Deut 4:42; 19:4, 6, 11; Josh 20:5).

ꜱﬓ also often appears with specific counsel, including the command to not “hate your brother in your heart” (Lev 19:17; cf. Zech 8:17) and to help the animal of the one who hates you (Exod 23:4–5). The term is also often used with regard to proverbial advice. See Prov 10:12, 18; 11:15; 15:17; 25:17; 26:24, 26, 28.

Similarly evaluative is Jehu’s chastising of King Jehoshaphat for helping the wicked, and thus loving “those who hate the LORD,” thus provoking God’s wrath (2 Chr 19:2). David is chastised by Joab for “loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you” when he is mourning for Absalom (2 Sam 19:6).

This is true even if evaluation is not always accurate or warranted or worse, perverted, such as Amnon’s hatred for Tamar after defiling her. See Exod 18:21; Amos 5:10, 15; Mic 3:2; Pss 26:5; 31:6 [7]; 36:2 [3]; 50:17; 101:3; 109:5; 119:104, 128; 119:113, 163; 120:6; Prov 1:22, 29; 5:12; 8:13, 36; 12:1; 13:5, 24; 14:17, 20; 15:27; 19:7; 29:10, 24; Job 34:17; Eccl 2:17–18.

Emotion is also evident when ꜱﬓ is collocated with “soul” or “inner person” (שֵׁנָה), which is often used as the seat of emotions (2 Sam 5:8). Further, the presence or absence of animosity or hatred can make the difference with regard to whether there is murderous intent. If one kills another out “of hatred, or threw something at him lying in wait” the penalty is death (Num 35:20; cf. Deut 4:42; 19:4, 6, 11; Josh 20:5) but if there is no malice the person may be restored by the congregation (Num 35:25).
hates robbery (Isa 61:8). He himself declares, “I hate [literally, My soul (זֶר) hates] your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me, I am weary of bearing them” (Isa 1:14).

God is even said to hate human beings with the connotation of both evaluation and emotion. For instance, God says, “My inheritance has become to Me like a lion in the forest; she has roared against Me; Therefore I have come to hate her” (Jer 12:8). Again, God “came to hate” his people at Gilgal and will drive them out of his house because of their wickedness and “will love them no more” (Hos 9:15). Likewise, God hates “all who do iniquity” (Ps 5:5 [6]; cf. Mal 1:2–3). That this is evaluative and emotional is evident in the verses before and after. The next verse declares, in parallel, he “abhors” (זָנַב) the man of bloodshed and deceit” (Ps 5:6 [7])

Further, God “hates” the idolatrous pillar (Deut 16:22), the “abominable [בּוֹר] acts that the other nations have committed (Deut 12:31; cf. Prov 6:16), evil and perjury (Zech 8:17), and divorce (Mal 2:16). Notably, emotive content is apparent in that Prov 6:16 depicts that which is an abomination to God’s soul. Indeed, God hates such abominable acts so much that he has continually sent his prophets to declare on his behalf, “‘Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate’ (Jer 44:4). Similarly, God says, “I hate, I despise [זָנַב] your religious feasts” (Amos 5:21). By the use of strongly emotive terminology, God has “sworn by Himself [זֶר]” and declared “I loathe [זָנַב] the arrogance of Jacob, and detest [זָנַב] his citadels” (Amos 6:8).

On the other hand, humans may also hate God or his people. The participle of זָנַב frequently refers to a hater or haters of an individual or group, often of those who hate God’s people. זָנַב also appears frequently in the participle to refer to those who hate God, often with the further statement that God will repay them for their hatred (cf. Exod 20:5 = Deut 5:9). See also Num 10:35; Deut 7:10; 32:41; Pss 21:8 [9]; 68:1 [2]; 81:15 [16]; 83:2 [3]; 139:21; 2 Chr 19:2. The term is similarly used to refer to those whom God’s people “hate,” the very same who will oppress her (Ezek 16:37; 23:28–29; cf. Isa 60:15; Ps 139:21–22).

This is in contrast to their position as the “beloved” of his “soul” (Jer 12:7). Here, “the Lord declares that he ‘hates’ his people, the very people who had earlier been described as his ‘beloved.’ Once again we catch a glimpse of the pathos of God (cf. 9:1–10).” Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–25 (WBC 26; Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 184. Earlier, the Israelites had falsely accused God of hating them and thus bringing them into the wilderness to suffer (Deut 1:27; cf. 9:28).

At times, God’s declaration “I have loved Jacob” but “I have hated Esau” (Mal 1:2–3) has been interpreted as a simple contrast between the election of Jacob and Esau, conflating the terms “love” and “hate” with choose and not choose, respectively. However, in every other case, God’s hatred toward human beings is prompted by evil and God’s response is appropriate to the actual state of affairs. Accordingly, in light of the fact that all other instances of divine hatred are not arbitrary but evaluative (and most are explicitly emotive) as well as a number of intertextual hints in Malachi (and the wider canon) that suggest divine animosity toward Edom, this passage should also be seen as an instance of evaluative and emotional divine hatred. For a further explanation of this position, see the discussion of this passage in the canonical analysis earlier in this chapter in the section on the volitional aspect of divine love in the prophets.
where the previous verse stated, “You are not a God who takes pleasure [גֵּדֵל] in wickedness” (Ps 5:4 [5]). Similarly, God examines, or “tests” (סְתַּמֵּץ), the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul [מָעָע] hates” (Ps 11:5). The evaluation is evident by reference to examination, and intense emotionality is clear by the use of the divine soul, the seat of emotions, as the agency of hatred. Notably, in the above instances, reasons for divine hatred are explicitly given, so the divine hatred is anything but arbitrary.  

That divine hatred is often (and likely always) of an emotional nature is further evidenced by other terms of negative evaluation and/or rejection that collocate with divine מָעָע including סְתַּמֵּץ (Deut 12:31; Isa 1:13–14; Jer 44:4; Amos 5:10; 6:8; Ps 5:5–6 [6–7]; Prov 6:16) and מָעָע (Amos 5:21). A brief look at the usage of these terms with divine agency may further clarify negative evaluation.

The word group סְתַּמֵּץ appears frequently, referring to loathing, detesting, or abhorring something or someone. The noun סְתַּמֵּץ frequently refers to abominations, or those objects/occurrences that are detestable to God and provoke his anger. For instance, with idolatrous “abominations” Israel “provoked” God to anger (Deut 32:16). Israel frequently partakes in such abominations and is not ashamed of them (Jer 6:15; cf. 7:10; 8:12) despite God’s consistent pleadings (Jer 44:4). As such, they made God’s inheritance an abomination (Jer 2:7; cf. 252). The language of “soul” (נֶפֶשׁ) clearly denotes emotionality as elsewhere. Such hatred is here based on examination. “The verb סְתַּמֵּץ, translated ‘scrutinize,’ implies ‘testing, proving, assaying.’ And the testing of metals was done by fire.” Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1–50, 133. Dahood, however, sees the human as the subject of hatred. He translates, “Yahweh is the Just One who will indeed assay the wicked; So that he who loves injustice hates his own life.” Psalms 1–50, 68. Such a translation is possible (cf. Prov 29:24), but the parallel with Ps 5 strongly suggests a divine subject. Likewise, cf. Isa 1:14; Amos 6:8; Prov 6:16.

Van Groningen likewise comments, “God’s hatred for idols and feasts is also directed against people, e.g., Esau (Mal 1:3; Gen 27; Pss 5:5 [H 6]; 11:5). In each case the character and/or activities of the hated ones are expressed; thus God is opposed to, separates himself from, and brings the consequences of his hatred upon people not as mere people, but as sinful people.” TWOT 880.

“Pagan worship practices, deceit and insubordination within the covenant nation, and superficial worship of Yahweh constitute three major realms of abhorrent activities.” Michael A. Grisanti, “תעב,” NIDOTTE 4:314. A few examples are given in the main text of a much longer list of things that are abominations to God.
Isa 1:13). As with hatred, an abomination, or that which prompts divine loathing, is evaluatively evil or negative. Frequently, Proverbs contrasts that which is an abomination (קְּנֵה) to God with that which is his delight (יָעַר), clearly connoting both positive and negative divine evaluation.255 God’s abhorrence extends to human beings, like his hatred. Thus, the one who does abominations or “detestable things” (קְּנֵה) is “detestable [קְּנֵה] to the LORD” (Deut 18:12; cf. 25:16).

Likewise, God “abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit” (Ps 5:6 [7]). Further “the devious are an abomination to the LORD; But he is intimate [נֵחָה] with the upright” (Prov 3:32). Because of their evil “the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people and He abhorred His inheritance” (Ps 106:40). Thus, divine abhorrence is directly tied to evaluation; divine abhorrence toward human beings is grounded in their evil, not in an arbitrary divine decision. The abominations of God’s people try God, so that he is “no longer able to endure it” and thus destruction is brought upon them (Jer 44:22) and the absence of divine pity (זָרָה) and compassion (חֵינָה) results (Ezek 5:11; 7:4, 9).256

The verb קָזַח often refers to the action of rejection, which is associated with God’s hatred and at times the disposition from which they spring.257 God had promised a limitation to his

255 Thus, “a false weight is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight [יָעַר]” (Prov 11:1). Similarly, the “pervasive in heart are an abomination to the LORD, but the blameless in their walk are His delight [יָעַר]” (Prov 11:20). Likewise, “Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight [יָעַר]” (Prov 12:22). Again, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight [יָעַר]” (Prov 15:8). In the same vein, “The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves [נֵחָה] one who pursues righteousness” (Prov 15:9). Similar evaluation is present in ANE parallels. For instance, “this verse has a parallel in Amenemope, chap. 10, ‘Do not speak falsely to a man, the God abhors it.’” Murphy, Proverbs, 92.


257 “The rather rich spectrum of usages indicates that one can assume the basic meaning ‘to want nothing to do with.’ . . . The verbal notion has a marked emotionally charged, irrational aspect; one rejects something because one neither no longer can nor wishes to identify inwardly with it.” Wildberger, TLOT 2:653. “Reasons for this distaste need not be stated and often are not. Yet the LXX’s relatively frequent translation of μ’s with εὐδοκεῖν should be noted: one abhors something because one has come to the awareness that it has no significant value for one.” Ibid. The verb occurs in 69 verses; in the qal (65 verses)
animosity, to not reject them so as to destroy them (Lev 26:44). Yet, as they rejected his covenant “the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel” (2 Kgs 17:20). God also says, “I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen” (2 Kgs 23:27; cf. Amos 5:21). As such, it sometimes seems to the people like they have, in fact, been utterly rejected. Thus, God reassures, “You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you” (Isa 41:9). Yet, in distress the people of God can be compared to a “wife of one’s youth when she is rejected” (Isa 54:6).

Israel provoked God such that he was “filled with wrath and greatly abhorred Israel (Ps 78:59). Thus, he “rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim” (Ps 78:67).

Thus, the question to God, “Have you completely rejected Judah? Or have you loathed [כָּכַל] Zion?” (Jer 14:19; cf. Jer 2:37; 6:30; 7:29). In Lamentations, one wonders if God has “utterly rejected” (כָּכַל) them and is “exceedingly angry with” them (Lam 5:22). Later, the psalmist laments, “You have cast off and rejected, You have been full of wrath against Your anointed” (Ps 89:38 [39]). Yet, ultimately, God proclaims that he will not “cast off [כָּכַל] all the offspring of Israel” (Jer 31:37; cf. 33:24, 26). However, all this is not arbitrary, but it is directly related to and in the niphal (5 verses). The noun כָּכַל appears only once, meaning “refuse” or trash (Lam 3:45).

This term is often used as the antonym of כָּכַל to choose, as it appears here (Isa 7:15–16; 41:9; Jer 33:24; Ps 78:67; Job 34:33. Eugene H. Merrill, “כָּכַל,” NIDOTTE 2:834.

Further, consider the verb כָּכַל, “to abhor, reject,” which does not appear often (10 x) and does not collocate with כָּכַל. However, it does collocate with כָּכַל in a number of instances (Lev 26:15, 43–44; Jer 14:19) and likewise portrays divine animosity toward human beings. Levine suggests, “The primary image seems to be that of physical spoilage, or filth.” Baruch A. Levine, Leviticus (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 184. Milgrom adds, it “conveys the notion of ‘nausea, loathing.’” Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27 (AB 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2301. Thus, God proclaims that if they are faithful he will dwell among them and his “soul” (כָּכַל) will not despise them (Lev 26:11). Notice כָּכַל, the seat of emotions. But if their soul abhors his ordinances (Lev 26:15; cf. 26:43) and they spurn God, then God’s “soul shall abhor” them (Lev 26:30). Yet, the divine abhorrence will only go so far. For “in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject [כָּכַל] them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God” (Lev 26:44). Thus, in times of distress it is asked of God, “Have You completely rejected Judah? Or have You loathed Zion?” (Jer 14:19). Other instances of the term include Ezek 16:5, 45; 2 Sam 1:21; Job 21:10. Consider also God’s spurning (כָּכַל) of his people, likewise in response to their evil (Deut 32:19; Jer 14:21; Lam 2:6). Importantly, this term most often refers to the people spurning God.
Israel’s choice. Just as Saul was rejected as king because he rejected God’s word (1 Sam 15:23; cf. 15:26; 16:1; Hos 4:6; 9:17),²⁶⁰ the people have “rejected” the LORD (Num 11:20; 1 Sam 8:7; 10:19), his commandments (Lev 26:15, 43), the land (Num 14:31), his statues and his covenants (2 Kgs 17:15; cf. 17:20; Ezek 5:6; 20:13, 16, 24), the law of the LORD (Isa 5:24; cf. Jer 6:19; Amos 2:4), and the word of the LORD (Jer 8:9).

This brief survey demonstrates that God’s hatred, abhorrence, and rejection of human beings are consistently grounded in evaluation of them that prompts negative divine emotions, often of an intense nature. Such negative evaluation is the apparent opposite of divine love and delight seen earlier. Thus, divine displeasure is quite prominent, further grounding the fact that God’s emotions are frequently depicted as affected and evaluative. With this in mind, we turn to the emotional aspect of divine love.

The Emotional Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that support the conception that God’s love is profoundly emotional though not to the exclusion of volitional and evaluative aspects. In this dissertation, an emotion is loosely defined as any feeling(s) that may be affected by external stimulation. At the same time, emotions are not necessarily determined by external stimulus to the exclusion of other mental factors including volition, evaluation, etc. First, love may be, at once, emotional and responsive to command. Second, God’s love is consistently depicted as intensely affective and emotive. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Is divine love emotionally responsive to human disposition and/or action? If so, what kind of emotions are exhibited and on what occasions? Is God concerned about/affected by the world? Do the lives of creatures make a difference to God’s own life? Are emotions

²⁶⁰ Importantly, “Yahweh’s rejection is not capricious. . . . It is a reaction to the failure of the king.” Wildberger, TLOT 2:654. Kaiser comments that such statements refer “only to individual participation and not to the abiding promise which remains open to all who will believe.” Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “asn2,” TWOT 488; cf. Walton, Covenant, 102–3.
mutually exclusive to volition, that is, can emotional love be commanded? This section of the study begins with a survey of the meaning of prominent terms relative to God’s emotional love and then proceeds with the canonical survey of divine emotions.

The Semantics of Compassion and Passion in the NT

A Brief Survey of חֵרֵם

The word group חֵרֵם generally refers to compassion.261 The basic meaning of חֵרֵם, the noun from this root, is “womb.” Both the verb (probably denominative from the noun) and abstract plural form of the noun denote compassion and tender-feelings, apparently based on the idea of חֵרֵם, “womb,” and, accordingly, referring to a “womb-like mother love.”262 As such, the word group can refer to the “seat of emotions” or the profound emotions of compassion and/or affection of one for another.263 חֵרֵם includes mercy but is more than mercy; it is an emotional love, a compassionate affection that often is manifested in merciful, non-obligatory action that goes beyond reasonable expectations. Quell thus calls it “the strongest word for love that biblical

261 The lexeme appears in the nominal חֵרֵם (37 verses), verbal חֵרֵם (43 verses), and two forms of adjectival חֵרֵם (13 verses) and once as חֵרֵּם (Lam 4:10). This count does not include the occurrences of the singular noun that means “womb.” Moreover, it also does not include the usage in the “names” in Hos 1:6, 8. The word also appears in Aramaic once (Dan 2:18). There is not a significant difference between the connotation of the nominal and the verbal form, thus the two shall be treated together.


263 Tate, Psalms 51–100, 14; cf. Coppes, “חֵרֵם,” TWOT 842–843; Wilhelm Gesenius, “חֵרֵם,” Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures (Oak Harbor, Wash.: Logos, 2003), 766. Thus, Janzen comments that it “refers to the feeling a mother has for the children whom she carries and feels in her womb, then carries in her arms and nurses at her breast, and afterward continues in faithful compassion toward them.” Exodus, 252.
language has.\footnote{G. Quell, “Jesaja 14, 1–23,” in Festschrift Friedrich Baumgärtel (ed. L. Rost; Erlangen: Universitätsbund, 1959), 140, quoted in Watts, Isaiah I–33, 202. Gowan contends that it “needs to be given a stronger emotional quality than the word ‘mercy’ usually has.” Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 236.} It is closely associated with some word groups that are also significant to the meaning of divine love. This word group collocates especially significantly with lovingkindness (אֱלֹהֵי), grace (נָחָר), and other terms for compassion (שָׁלוֹם, חָסְדָּא, and שָׁלוֹא).\footnote{See the discussion further below.} It further complements divine justice (סַדְרָה),\footnote{Indeed, God exhorts human beings to “dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion” (Zechariah 7:9). Thus, “the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice” (Isaiah 30:17-18). Similarly, God proclaims he will betroth his people to him in “righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion” (Hosea 2:19).} may be grounded in divine pleasure and act alongside divine passion,\footnote{In one instance, אֱלֹהֵי associates with divine pleasure מְנֻנָּא as the grounding of divine compassion, as opposed to wrath as the grounding of judgment (Isaiah 60:10). In another instance, the absence of God’s compassion is lamented and the absence of his zeal מְנַעֻר and the stirrings of his heart are questioned (Isaiah 63:15). On the other hand, God proclaims that he will “restore” and “have mercy” on Israel and “be jealous” for his holy name (Ezekiel 39:25).} tempers and overcomes wrath,\footnote{See the discussion below.} and is contrasted with being cruel (יָרְץ).\footnote{This כָּרָא is a clear antonym of אֱלֹהֵי. Those who have no mercy are cruel (Jeremiah 6:23; 50:42; cf. Proverbs 12:10).}

264 The discussion of the overlap with the אֱלֹהֵי word group will take place in the word study of אֱלֹהֵי later in this chapter.

265 See the discussion further below.

266 In three instances, it is used with אֱלֹהֵי, each referring to the lack of compassion and pity in the context of war, one from the Medes to the Persians (Isaiah 13:18). In two of those instances, אֱלֹהֵי, חָסְדָּא, and לְמָדָא all appear together, expressing the lack of compassion from God toward Jerusalem (Jeremiah 13:14), and Nebuchadnezzar toward Judah (Jeremiah 21:7). It also collocates with the אֱלֹהֵי lexeme, twice in allusions to Exod 34:6–7, with the mention of God’s “remitting” (Joel 2:13; Micah 4:4). In another instance, the absence of God’s compassion is lamented and the absence of his zeal מְנַעֻר and the stirrings of his heart are questioned (Isaiah 63:15). On the other hand, God proclaims that he will “restore” and “have mercy” on Israel and “be jealous” for his holy name (Ezekiel 39:25).

267 It further complements divine justice (סַדְרָה), may be grounded in divine pleasure and act alongside divine passion, tempers and overcomes wrath, and is contrasted with being cruel (יָרְץ).
God is by far the most common agent of נָחַל, it is one of the essential elements of God’s self-revelation of his character, manifested in action. The first appearance of נָחַל with God as agent takes place in the midst of dire need for forgiveness after Israel’s rebellion with the golden calf where God’s freedom to bestow compassion on the undeserving is put in action (Exod 33:19) and God reveals his character as “the LORD, the LORD God, compassionate נָחַל and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exod 34:6). This adjective נָחַל appears thirteen times altogether, and in every instance, with the likely exception of Ps 112:4, God is the agent. The close association of God’s compassion and graciousness is evident in that eleven of the thirteen instances are paired with words from the root נָחַל. Further, God’s נָחַל is great and abundant, denoted numerous times by the syntagm נָחַל with נָחַל. Over and over again throughout the OT the amazing compassion of God is recounted as unfailling and a basis of his merciful, redemptive action. These ideas will be taken up further in the canonical analysis below. Here, a few characteristics of this word group should be noted before moving on.

272 See the discussion of this verse in the canonical analysis below.

273 Ps 112:4 appears to associate the attributes “gracious and compassion and righteous” with the “upright” human agent, which would be the only time where נָחַל is used of a human. For this reason many have interpreted the text to refer to divine agency. If it does refer to God, it would seem to parallel Ps 116:5, which uses נָחַל, נָחַל, and נָחַל of God, although not in this order. On the other hand, if it is of human agency the four descriptors may form a chiasm: נָחַל, נָחַל, נָחַל, נָחַל. Both interpretations are possible but the latter interpretation is more likely absent the presupposition that humans cannot manifest true נָחַל and considering that the entire chapter is about humankind.

274 See Exod 34:6; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; cf. Ps 112:4. Sometimes this syntagm is an unmistakable, extensive allusion to Exod 34:6, together with “slow to anger” and abounding/great in נָחַל (Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17). At other times the pair form a simpler refrain (Pss 111:4; 112:4; Neh 9:31; 2 Chr 30:9). Some instances of either the longer or shorter form reverse the order of the pair in Exod 34:6, reading “gracious and compassionate” (Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Pss 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; Neh 9:17, 31; 2 Chr 30:9). Finally, one instance of נָחַל appears with a participle of נָחַל (נָחַל נָחַל), God is the “gracious” and “righteous” and “compassionate one” (Ps 116:5); cf. Isa 49:15. The adjective appears without נָחַל only twice (Deut 4:31; Ps 78:38).

275 See 2 Sam 24:14; Isa 63:7; Pss 51:1; 69:16; 119:156; Dan 9:18; Neh 9:19, 27, 31; 1 Chr 21:13), and once “exceedingly great” נָחַל נָחַל) (1 Chr 21:13). This is similar to the many usages of נָחַל נָחַל.

276 See Pss 103:4; 119:156; Lam 3:22; Dan 9:9, 18.
First, divine רָחֵם is responsive and profoundly emotional. Over and over again the term exhibits intense feelings of affection and/or compassion for the plight of human beings.  

It often appears not merely as a willed affection, but actually affected and/or aroused, an emotion that is responsive to the actual state of affairs. At times, the striking magnitude of God’s tender compassion is compared to that of a father and/or mother for their children (Isa 49:15; Jer 31:20; Ps 103:13; cf. Isa 63:15). Second, and closely related, the emotion comes to fruition in a corresponding action that goes out toward one who is in distress or needs help. With divine agency, God’s compassion often results in beneficence, forgiveness, and the removal of anger (cf. . . .

277 With human agency the term also refers to strong emotional feelings of love and compassion between family members including: Joseph for his brother (Gen 43:30), a mother for her endangered infant (1 Kgs 3:26), and a father for his children (Ps 103:13). In the first two, רָחֵם is collocated with הבצק to form a phrase that connotes profound and intense emotion. When Joseph saw Benjamin, he “was deeply stirred . . . and sought out a place to weep . . . and wept” (Gen 43:30). JPS translates, “he was overcome with feeling toward his brother and was on the verge of tears.” This emotion is so strong it is apparently “beyond his ability to control.” Clark, The Word Hesed, 148. This same collocation refers to the mother “deeply stirred” over her infant in the baby custody case before Solomon (1 Kgs 3:26); cf. Ps 103:13; Zech 7:9.

278 With divine agency see, for example, Jer 42:12; Neh 9:27. Many have thus suggested that רָחֵם is compassion from a superior to an inferior. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 527; Stoebe, TLOT 3:1227. Coppes suggests this is usually the case. “רָחֵם,” TWOT 841. While this is true for the majority of cases, the psalmist declares, “I love You, O LORD” (Ps 18:1 [2]), the only occurrence where רָחֵם is in the qal and the only instance of God as the object of רָחֵם. This one case of divine רָחֵם toward God would rule out the universality of such a trend, if it is taken as a valid instance. Many have considered this to be a textual corruption or scribal gloss, especially since this phrase does not appear in the parallel in 2 Sam 22:2. However, textual data favor its validity and the proposed emendations are not very compelling; cf. Simian-Yofre, TDOT 13:444. Simian-Yofre points out that “Ps. 116, which appears to presuppose Ps. 18 . . . uses ‘ḥb instead of ῥhm’ and thus sees Ps 18 as an Aramaism. Ibid.; cf. Stoebe, TLOT 3:1227. Coppes sees it as a valid expression of the Psalmist’s love for God. “רָחֵם,” TWOT 841; cf. Good, “Love in the OT,” IDB 3:165. In the absence of compelling data to the contrary, this study considers the text to be a valid representation of human love (רָחֵם) toward God. For our purposes, then, it seems best to recognize that רָחֵם most often (but not always) connotes beneficence from one in a position to bestow mercy on one in need. Girdlestone, accordingly, states that רָחֵם expresses “a deep and tender feeling of compassion, such as is aroused by the sight of weakness or suffering in those that are dear to us or need our help.” Robert Baker Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 108; cf. Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. Richardson), 131; Clark, The Word Hesed, 148; Butterworth, “רָחֵם,” NIDOTTE 3:1093; Simian-Yofre, TDOT 13:451. The negated word group with human agency may also refer to the absence of compassion, especially in the context of war (Isa 13:18; 47:6; Jer 21:7; Amos 1:11). Although Michael A. Fishbane suggests the interpretation of “friends, allies” for רָחֵם here, it does not fit the broader meaning of the term. “Treaty Background of Amos 1:11 and Related Matters,” JBL 89 (1970): 313–18; idem, “Additional Remarks on ῥνμή (Amos 1:11),” 91 (1972): 391–92. Simian-Yofre points out, “Etymological evidence stands in the way of accepting Fishbane’s proposal to translate rahamin as ‘friends, allies.’” TDOT 13:448. Robert B. Coote agrees with Fishbane on the legal meaning, but not with regard to his suggested etymology. “Amos 1:11: RHMYW,” JBL 90 (1971): 206–8. Within such a context, the lack of “mercy” is like cruelty וַאֲשֶׁר הָיָה הַחְפָּרִים שָׁפְנוּ (Jer 6:23; 50:42; cf. Prov 12:10).
Exod 33:19; 34:6). Accordingly, divine זך is repeatedly contrasted with God’s wrath. Third, God’s זך extends far beyond the covenant and any responsibility and/or expectations, moral or otherwise, due to his willingness to bestow compassion on the undeserving out of his profound love. Divine זך is freely given and unmerited. Fourth, divine זך is, nevertheless, not unilaterally constant. Rather, it is conditional upon various factors. Such contingency of divine compassion, including that it may be withdrawn, is well attested. Fifth, God’s compassion is both particular and universal. On the one hand, God’s compassion extends universally. He “is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works” (Ps 145:9). However, as shall be seen

279 See also 1 Kgs 8:50; Isa 55:7; Jer 30:18; 42:12; Ezek 39:25; Hos 1:6; 2:23; 14:3; Mic 7:19; Zech 1:16; 10:6; Dan 9:9. The results of divine compassion further include the bestowal of goodness (Isa 63:7), renewal of election (Isa 14:1; cf. Zech 1:16–17), betrothal to him (Hos 2:19 [21]), and all kinds of blessing, such as the relieving of hunger and thirst (Isa 49:10). God may even extend זך through human agents (Gen 43:14; 1 Kgs 8:50; Jer 42:12; Ps 106:46; Neh 1:11; Dan 1:9).

280 Deut 13:17 [18]; 29:28; 30:2–3; Isa 54:7–8; 60:10; Jer 12:15; Zech 1:12; Pss 77:9; 78:38. Divine compassion is thus, as it were, the antidote to divine wrath, the former far outlasting the latter (cf. Isa 54:10; Jer 33:26). As has been seen, the lasting nature of this compassion surpasses even that of a mother for her young child (Isa 49:15; cf. 49:13).

281 Thus, Simian-Yofre comments, “When the people suffer affliction, rhm can denote the unmerited revelation of Yahweh’s benevolence.” TDOT 13:442. Often, there is no semblance of an external basis upon which God ought to bestow compassion. Nevertheless, humans continually call upon God to respond in compassion with the expectation that he will hear and respond (1 Kgs 8:50; Hab 3:2; Pss 25:6; 51:1; 69:16; 79:8; 119:77; Dan 2:18 [Aramaic]; 9:18). However, it is important to recognize that this call is not based in any obligation of God, nor external warrant but, rather, humans appeal because they recall God’s past compassion, and ultimately, his character (cf. Exod 33:19; 34:6–7). See also 2 Sam 24:14; 1 Chr 21:13; Pss 40:11; 102:13; Lam 3:32.

282 Why is God’s compassion bestowed some times and not others? Numerous grounds of divine compassion are apparent, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, including divine freedom, zeal for his name, the responsiveness of the people, etc.; cf. 2 Kgs 13:23; Jer 42:12; Ezek 39:25. The contingency of divine compassion and factors involved will be discussed further below.

283 See Deut 13:17–18 [18–19]; 30:2–3; 2 Kgs 13:23; Isa 55:7; Jer 42:12–16; Ps 103:13; Prov 28:13; 2 Chr 30:9. The withdrawal of divine compassion is evident in the frequent references where compassion has been withdrawn or withheld (Isa 9:17 [16]; 27:11; 63:15; Jer 13:14; 16:5; Hos 1:6–7; 2:4; Zech 1:12; Ps 77:9 [10]). However, it must be understood that the withdrawal of divine זך is never depicted as an arbitrary whim of God, but always stems from the persistent and egregious shortcomings of the people. God wants to be merciful and manifest his love (cf. Isa 30:18; Lam 3:32–33). See the canonical analysis for discussions of these and other verses regarding divine compassion.

284 Thus, God’s compassion is not restricted to his covenant people or elect. Elsewhere, it is also clear that זך extends beyond Israel/Judah, since the neighboring nations may receive divine זך in Jer 12:15, though conditionally.
below, this need not entail that divine \( \varphi \) is universal or constant in every respect. Some people are privy to divine compassion while others may forfeit it. Nevertheless, God desires to continually bestow compassion on human beings; it is an integral facet of God’s love.

**A Brief Survey of \( \varphi \)**

The word group \( \varphi \) denotes the very strong emotions of ardor and intense passion, related to a basic sense of zeal, passion, or jealousy, for that which belongs to one, or envy for that which belongs to someone else. As such, it is closely associated with God’s love for his people. However, the term is never used to denote divine envy, but always for that rightful passion that God has for the exclusive relationship his people are to have to him, analogous to that which spouses ought to have in a marriage relationship. In English usage, however, the

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285 Many have suggested a connection to the Arabic *qana’a* meaning intensely red, thinking that this lexeme derives from that redness of face associated with intense emotion. Sarna, *Exodus*, 110; “\( \varphi \),” BDB, 888; Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 216; Thomas B. Dozeman, “The Book of Numbers: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Numbers–Samuel* (vol. 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 201. However, the etymology is uncertain and other scholars have suggested the link is tenuous at best. G. Sauer, “\( \varphi \),” *TLOT 3*:1145; E. Reuter, “\( \varphi \),” *TDOT* 13:48. Although etymology is uncertain, “the meanings of cognates in other Sem. languages roughly correspond to the semantic range of the Heb. root.” H. G. L Peels, “\( \varphi \),” *NIDOTTE* 3:937. In human usage the emotionality of this term is readily apparent, often responsive to the infidelity of a loved one. See Num 5:14–15, 18, 25, 29–30; Prov 6:34; 27:4; Cant 8:6; Eccl 9:6.


287 Longman notes that two kinds of relationships qualify for appropriate jealousy, the husband-wife and divine-human relationships. “God’s jealousy is an energy that tries to rescue the relationship. Similarly, a man and a woman can have only one spouse. If there is a threat to that relationship, then jealousy is a proper emotion. All this is because so much hangs on the integrity of relationship. It is so basic, so deep, that it stirs up strong emotions and passions.” Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 212.
term jealousy has primarily taken on the negative connotation of envy, whereas in Hebrew the basic lexeme אַנְקָיָה may refer to a positive emotion that results in action protective of a rightful possession or relation, or it may relate to a negative, inappropriate, destructive emotion akin to envy or covetousness. The combination of אַנְקָיָה + preposition ב suggests the latter negative emotion of envy (e.g., “envy” in Prov 3:31), never used of God, whereas the construction of אַנְקָיָה + ל suggests the former, an appropriate passion or righteous ardor with action on behalf of its object, of both humans (e.g., “zealous” in 1 Kgs 19:10) or of God (e.g., Zech 8:2). As such, the negative connotations of “jealousy” are often absent from the term אַנְקָיָה and such negative emotion is never connoted by the term with God as agent.

אַנְקָיָה describes a crucial divine characteristic: God’s passionate love for his people, which is displayed in fiery jealousy when his people are unfaithful to him. This stands in contrast to

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288 The group is manifested in the substantive עם אַנְקָיָה (43 x), the verbal (34 x), mostly in piel (30 x), but in a few instances hiphil (4 x), and two adjectival forms אַנְקָיָה (6 x) and אַנְקָיָה (2 x). The majority of occurrences of the root in the substantive are related to divine passion (24 x) and the adjectival forms are only descriptive of God.

289 See Gen 26:14; 30:1; 37:11; Isa 11:13; Ezek 31:9; 35:11; Eccl 4:4. Numerous cautions to not be “envious” of evil in various forms appear (Pss 37:1; 73:3; Prov 1:31; 14:30; 23:17; 24:1, 19; Job 5:2).


291 For this reason, Peels believes that “the translation ‘jealous’ is, therefore, [often] inadequate.” NIDOTTE 4:939. Cf. Mordechai Cogan, 1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 386. See also H. A. Brongers, who thinks a more general meaning of being angry better suits the term. “Der eifer des Herrn Zebaoth,” VT 13 (1963): 280. However, while recognizing that the common negative connotation of jealousy may be reason to substitute a word like passion, Longman points out that “it is important to understand that the Bible affirms a proper type of jealousy, a desire for someone else that tolerates no rivals.” Longman III, Song of Songs, 211.

292 Thus God is repeatedly presented as a “jealous God” אַנְקָיָה תָּמָר (Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15) or אַנְקָיָה תָּמָר (Josh 24:19; Nah 1:2), always in the context of the exclusive worship required by God. Sarna translates this as “an impassioned God.” Exodus, 110. This denotes God’s “intolerance of rivalry or unfaithfulness.” Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1–11, 208. Eichrodt considers this to be the “basic element in the whole OT idea of God.” Eichrodt, Theology, 210. As such, it “concerns the central characteristic of OT belief: Yahweh’s demand that he alone be worshiped, enshrined in the great commandment.” Reuter, TDOT 13:53. Thus, Nahum speaks of God as a God “jealous and avenging” toward his enemies (Nah 1:2; cf. Isa 59:17; Zeph 1:18; 3:8) and עם אַנְקָיָה is used in the metaphor that describes God as a “warrior” who will
depictions of other gods in the ANE who may be envious of one another but no deity manifests “zeal in relation to his worshiper.” In contrast, God is never jealous of other gods or idols or any kind of being, but is passionate for his name and his people. Accordingly, it is used of God’s passion for Israel as her husband in the marriage analogy (cf. Ezek 16:38, 42; 23:25). As such, קנא is an intensely emotive term that assumes divine passibility and may be manifested negatively, against the unfaithful, or positively, on behalf of his people and against her oppressors. Due to theological presuppositions, קנא has sometimes been interpreted as a mere anthropopathism. However, such a position requires appeal to extra-biblical suppositions and

“arouse His zeal” (Isa 42:13).


294 Although the term is used of God only with explicit reference to the marriage analogy in Ezekiel, many scholars have sensed the connotation throughout the wider usage of the term. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 296; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 65; Sarna, *Exodus*, 110; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 227; Prop, *Exodus 19–40*, 615; Coppes, “‘Kena,’” *TWOT* 802. Reuter points out that though the language is different, since Hosea does not use the lexeme קנא, “in substance . . . the similarity to Hosea is unmistakable.” Reuter, *TDOT* 13:54. In such usage, the term represents “the fire of divine passion, Yahweh’s enthusiasm for his covenant relationship with Israel . . . arising out of the profundity of his covenant love.” Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 211. See Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9; Num 25:8, 11; Deut 29:20 [19].

295 Throughout Israel’s history they made him “jealous with strange gods” and “provoked” him (Deut 32:16, 21; 4:24–25; Ps 78:58). It is noteworthy that in all four instances of קנא in the hiphil God is the patient (Deut 32:16, 21; Ezek 8:3; Ps 78:58). Elsewhere, Israel’s infidelity occasions divine jealousy (1 Kgs 14:22; Ezek 5:13; 8:3, 5; 16:38, 42; 23:25; Pss 78:58; 79:5). Thus, he is explicitly caused to be jealous by idolatry. Divine jealousy is associated with numerous other terms for divine anger as well, denoting the result of his passion directed at unfaithfulness of evil.

296 Isaiah specifically describes God’s “zeal for the people,” which prompts divine judgment (fire) on her enemies (Isa 26:11; cf. 42:13). See also 2 Kgs 19:31; Isa 9:7; 37:32; 63:15; Ezek 35:6; 36:5; 38:19; 39:25; Joel 2:18; Nah 1:2; Zech 1:14; 8:2−3. In such contexts, “God is understood as watching jealously/zealously over his people” in his love. Reuter, *TDOT* 13:57; cf. Peels, *NIDOTTE* 4:939. Brueggemann puts it this way, “Negatively, this jealous God is one of deep moral seriousness who takes affront at violations of commands, so that the cost of the affront endures over the generations (34:7b).” Positively, this jealous God is one who practices massive fidelity [“ט”] to those who are willing to live in covenant (34:6–7a).” Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in *Genesis to Leviticus*, 1: 842. Stuart adds, “We would especially remind the reader that God’s jealousy, including the demand that he be exclusively worshiped, does not arise from petty motives but from beneficent ones. The problem with idols is not that they make God feel bad but that they cannot save, thus keeping from salvation those he wants to see gain eternal life. His hatred of idols reflects his love for us, not any insecurity with regard to himself.” *Exodus*, 724.

297 For instance, Brongers refers to divine jealousy as “a crude anthropopathism” from which the interpreter would like to spare God. “Der eifer,” 276; cf. to a lesser degree, Sarna, *Exodus*, 110; Sauer,
does not do justice to the textual data. In all, this term denotes God’s intense, impassioned interest in his people, particularly the special and sacred relationship between them.

Concern, Compassion, and Passion in the Torah

God speaks the world into existence (Gen 1) yet intimately forms man from the ground, breathes life into him (Gen 2:7–8), and even “walks” in the garden seeking fellowship with humans (Gen 3:8). However, the Fall presents a serious rupture in the divine-human relationship, significantly altering the level of intimacy going forward. Nevertheless, God remains intensely interested in, and concerned for, the world despite the rebellion of his creatures. In the aftermath of the Fall, God finds a way to continue his presence among his people through the sanctuary. Thus, God is concerned about his people and does not abandon them. He regards,

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298 Reuter rightly points out, “this concern only serves the Stoic notion of divine impassibility, which is inconsistent with the biblical understanding of God but is often espoused nevertheless by both Christian and Jewish theology, creating problems of exegesis.” TDOT 13:53; cf. Tigay, Deuteronomy, 66. See especially the discussion of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms in chapter 1.

299 This “term emphasizes that God cannot be indifferent to His creatures and that He is deeply involved in human affairs.” Sarna, Exodus, 110. Thus, “God’s “jealousy” clearly has the best interest of his creation in view. Just as a screeching mother mockingbird terrorizes any feline that comes near her nest, so the Lord zealously hovers over his own to avert any rival to his sovereignty and centrality.” Robertson, The Books, 60.

300 Although source criticism assumes discontinuity between the two creation accounts, this sympathetic canonical reading considers the viewpoints as complementary unless such a view is necessarily incoherent. The intimacy of the second depiction of the creation of humankind is quite striking. Derek Kidner comments, “Breathed is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was giving as well as making; and self-giving at that.” Genesis (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 60. Further, “walks” (περιπετεύομαι) is a hitpael, which “suggests iterative and habitual aspects.” Hamilton, The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17, 192. In other words, the text implies that God often walked in the garden. Consider a similar usage of the term to signify God’s presence in the sanctuary (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15 [14]; 2 Sam 7:6–7).

301 Fretheim comments, “These chapters imply that the divine sovereignty in creation is understood, not in terms of absolute divine control, but as a sovereignty that gives power to the created for the sake of a relationship of integrity. Such a view involves risk, since it entails the possibility that the creatures will misuse the power they have been given, which does occur.” Fretheim, “The Book of Genesis,” in Genesis to Leviticus, 1:356.

302 Thus God is also said to “walk among” his people and be their God, a reference to his presence in the sanctuary and a subtle suggestion of the partial restoration of the special Edenic relationship (Lev
sees, and takes appropriate action. God hears and responds accordingly. God remembers and moves. He delights, and, at times, grieves, over his people. Altogether, a striking picture is presented of a God who is deeply interested in human affairs, who notices the goings on of history, who is consistently concerned about and invested in the world, and such concern spurs him to appropriate action. Accordingly, God is recurrently presented as affected by, and responsive to, his people. Yet, due to the immense holiness of God on the one hand and the sinfulness of the people on the other, a palpable tension is woven throughout the OT that provides numerous pictures of heightened divine emotion, even grief, anger, and jealousy, yet divine concern, compassion, and lovingkindness reign supreme.

26:12; cf. Deut 23:15 [14]; cf. 2 Sam 7:6–7; 1 Chr 17:6).

For instance, God looks (παραδείγμα) upon Abel and his offering with approval, in contrast to the disapproval and disregard (παραδείγμα ράπτοντα) for Cain and his offering (Gen 4:5); cf. Gen 4:10, 13–15.

For instance, in the midst of the flood, God “remembers” (σκύπτειν) Noah (Gen 8:1; cf. 9:15–16), which leads to the recession of the waters. Importantly, divine remembrance does not depict “calling to mind” so much as a focus on the object of memory. See Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26, 382*; Sarna, *Genesis, 56*; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17, 299*. As the focus changes from universal to more local concerns in the patriarchal narratives, God continues to display intimate personal concern for his people. He spares Lot from destruction on the basis of remembrance of Abraham (Gen 19:29). In the Akedah narrative, he is Yahweh-yireh, “the Lord sees” (Gen 22:14; cf. 22:8). He does not forsake (πέφυκέν) his lovingkindness toward Abraham but guides Abraham’s servant in the search for a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:27). He promises not to abandon Jacob (Gen 28:15). Further, God manifests personal concern for Hagar, giving “heed” (παρατηρεῖν) to her distress (Gen 16:11; cf. 21:17) and for Leah, Jacob’s “unloved” and barren wife, both seeing and hearing her plight (Gen 29:31–33; 30:17; cf. 30:22) blessing both with a child; an explicit connection between favorable divine action and divine concern is thus apparent (cf. Gen 21:17; 30:22). Similarly, God “saw” Jacob’s affliction by Laban, and provided for him (Gen 31:42). God “heard” (παρατηρεῖν), “remembered” (παραδείγμα), “saw” (παραδείγμα) and “took notice” (παραδείγμα) of Israel in Egyptian bondage and delivered them (Exod 2:23–25; cf. 3:7–8, 16; 4:31; 6:4–5) for he was “indeed concerned about” them (Exod 3:16; cf. Gen 21:1). In Exod 2:23–24, direct responsiveness is evident even in the number of verbs. Israel cries out by use of four verbs and God’s taking notice of their cry is also expressed by four verbs. Sarna, *Exodus, 13*. Likewise, a number of scholars recognize that God’s action is a response at least partially caused by entreaty. Stuart, *Exodus, 103*; Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in *Genesis to Leviticus, 1:706*; cf. 1 Sam 9:16. On the other hand, God also hears Israel’s grumblings and complaints (Exod 16:8; Num 11:1; 12:2; Deut 1:34) and responds in kind. God lovingly and patiently leads and guides his people like a shepherd (Exod 15:13). Such expressions collectively refer to God’s attention. The sense is not that he previously could not see or hear, had forgotten, or was unconcerned, but that now God is about to respond to his people with power. Stuart claims, “The different wordings [including paqad] are all variations of an idiom that is essentially a synecdoche—a part for the whole—in which because of God’s nature, his own overt mention of his being aware automatically implies additionally his determination to act.” *Exodus, 123*. Of course, depending upon the situation, God’s action could be negative or positive.
For instance, at the observance of the extreme wickedness on the earth before the flood, God is deeply “grieved [עָנָא] in his heart” and “sorry” (חָטָא) that he made humans (Gen 6:6–7).305 In this context, the reference is clearly to God’s deep emotion of sorrow and grief. God is pained by the wickedness on the earth and responds with judgment: the flood (Gen 6–9).306 The appearance of profound divine sorrow is striking in that it depicts God in terms of passibility nearly from the outset of the Genesis account. The term חִדָּה is also used to describe God’s “compassion” toward his people (Deut 32:36) and appears in the description of Moses’ pleading with God to turn (חָמָה) from his anger and even change (חִדָּה) his intention toward his people, eventually resulting in a re-institution of the broken covenant relationship (Exod 32:12) and God does, in fact, relent (Exod 34:14).307 However, God is certainly not altogether passive; there are

305 God is not just “grieved” but “grieved to his heart,” emphasizing the intensity of the divine emotion. Thus, Matthews speaks of “God’s fervent passion” and his “wounded ‘heart’ filled with pain,” which “conveys the emotional response of God” and even “emotional anguish.” Genesis 1–11:26, 341–42; cf. von Rad, Genesis, 118. “In other words, he felt the bitter rage of someone whose closest friend had been terribly wronged. This is the anger of someone who loves deeply.” Wenham, Genesis 1–15, 146. Sarna, however, for apparently non-textual reasons, sees this as an anthropopathism. Genesis, 47. The lexeme עָנָא appears only a few times in the Torah, all in Genesis (3:16; 5:29; 34:7; 45:5). Beyond the usage of divine grief here in Genesis, God is also said to be “grieved” by rebellion (Isa 63:10; Ps 78:40). The meaning of עָנָא with human subjects may denote physical pain, such as that in childbirth (Gen 3:16; 1 Chr 4:9) or in toil (Gen 5:29; Isa 14:3; cf. 58:3; Ps 127:2; Prov 5:10; 14:23; Eccl 10:9), or by extension denotes emotional suffering, such as the grief of Dinah’s brothers after she was raped (Gen 34:7) or the potential grief of Joseph’s brothers over selling him into slavery (Gen 45:5), and various other kinds of emotional grief (1 Sam 20:3, 34; 2 Sam 19:2 [3]; 1 Kgs 1:6; Isa 54:6; Prov 10:22; Neh 8:10; 1 Chr 4:10–11). It is also used in reference to the “distortion” of God’s words (Ps 56:5) or to a “harsh” word (Prov 15:1), a grievous way (Ps 139:24). This is not to be confused with בֹּלֵם meaning make or shape, the nominal form of which refers often to idols.

306 God’s action is prompted by his observance (יָבִיא) of the extent of evil (Gen 6:5, 12) in contrast to God’s sight (יָבִיא) of his creation, which was good (Gen 1:31), and Noah whom God saw (יָבִיא) as righteous (Gen 7:1). Sarna suggests that “the LORD saw” has “juridical overtones, implying both investigation of the facts and readiness for action.” Genesis, 47. Thus, later God “saw” Israel’s idolatry and spurned them (Deut 32:19). This may be why the Israelites invoke God to “look upon” how Moses has made them odious to Pharaoh (Exod 5:21).

307 חָטָא, the most prominent term related to compassion other than חָמָה, may take on various meanings, depending upon its context and form, which include: to comfort or have compassion, be comforted, or comfort oneself, to mourn or be sorry, and to relent/change one’s mind. However, the common theme throughout its usage is that חָטָא often appears in a situation that prompts intense grief or regret and connotes the emotion and/or active response to that situation. Thus, the feeling of sorrow or regret is associated with the action of repenting, that is, changing action accordingly. Thus, Stoebe groups the meaning into two categories “‘be comforted’ and ‘be sorry’ in the broadest scope.” Stoebe, “חָטָא,” TLOT
some decisions of God that he will not change, thus the declaration, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent [hitpael)” (Num 23:19; cf. 1 Sam 15:29).\(^\text{308}\)

\(^{308}\) Similarly, 1 Sam 15:29 states, God “will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.” These verses have sometimes been taken to mean that God can’t actually relent or change his mind. However, both of these occurrences use כותב to contrast with one who would not keep his word, thus implying that here the declaration is to emphasize the surety and irrevocability of God’s decision in that specific instance. Moreover, with regard to the usage in 1 Sam 15:29, within the same chapter it is said twice, both before and after the above statement and in the same form (niphal), that God was “sorry” (כותב) he had made Saul king (1 Sam 15:11, 35). This is an apparent contradiction unless one understands that contextually the meaning in 1 Sam 15:29 appears to relate to the finality of God’s rejection of Saul, not the nature of God. An explicit usage of such finality of divine decision appears in a divine declaration in Jeremiah, “I have spoken, I have prepared, and I will not change My mind” (Jer 4:28). That this is not a blanket policy appears clear in that later God himself declares at length that he will indeed relent in accordance with human repentance (Jer 18:1–10 et al.). In this way, the term is used in a number of instances in the niphal to show that God’s decision is final, whether positively (Ps 110:4) or when God carries out judgment without relenting (1 Sam 15:29; Jer 4:28; 20:16; Zech 8:14) and in one such instance the lack of כותב is collocated with the lack of relenting (כותב) and pity (כותב: Ezek 24:14). In such usages the term refers to the finality of the divine decision, not to the ontological possibility of divine relenting. Butterworth notes, “God does not capriciously change his intentions or ways of acting. It is the change in Saul’s behavior that leads to this expression of regret.” “נחם,” NIDOTTE 3:82. Some scholars, however, relieve the tension by simply positing that the term is “anthropopathic” and thus “from man’s limited, earthly, finite perspective it only appears that God’s purposes have changed.” Marvin R. Wilson, “נחם,” TWOT 571. For a response, see Peckham, “The Possible Potter,” 130–50. Although some scholars have suggested that God is absolutely immutable, numerous scholars recognize that the Bible depicts God as capable of changing direction and thus not ontologically immutable in this sense. Indeed, several texts
Divine passibility and emotionality are further apparent in that God is often provoked to anger (יָרָה), that is, “vexed” by Israel’s evil, often in the form of idolatry, due in part to his great love and passion (חמד) for his people (Deut 32:16, 21; cf. Exod 32:11; Ezek 16:42; Ps 78:58). Though the OT unashamedly depicts divine anger, God’s wrath is never arbitrary but is always a result of human action that provokes God because he loves his people so deeply. In the aftermath of Israel’s apostasy with the golden calf, God’s anger runs high with “burning anger” (Exod 32:11) but God is successfully entreated by Moses to turn from his anger, eventually resulting in a re-institution of the broken covenant relationship (Exod 32:12–14; 33:12–34:10; cf. Gen 18:22–32; Lev 26:41–42, 45; Num 14:13–19; Deut 3:23; 9:25–28). Out of this exchange in which God suggest that “to repent concerning [threatened/real] calamity” is “fundamental to the divine nature.” Block, Judges, Ruth, 131. Van Dyke Parunak points to the underlying conception of comfort, consolation or compassion and asserts that the root entails both “change” and sorrow “in the sense of emotional pain,” even at times sympathy, but no “suggestion of regret.” Parunak, “A Semantic Survey,” 513, 532. See also Stuart, Exodus, 672; Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in Genesis to Leviticus, 1:932; Peckham, “The Passible Potter”; Terence E. Fretheim, The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); David N. Freedman, Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:409–46; Terence E. Fretheim, “The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk,” Horizons in Biblical Theology 10 (1988): 47–70. God can and does relent, but in some situations he will not relent. As such, God can and does change direction, and can be affected by human affairs, but he is nevertheless sovereign. Paying attention to the form and context of יָרָה is essential to understanding its meaning in the Old Testament.

Craigie sees not only anger but also sorrow in the context of Deut 32. “The behavior of the Israelites vexed God; he had a fatherly concern for them as his sons and daughters, so that to see them rejecting his love caused him not only anger, but also pain . . . for a loving Father finds it hard to look on while his children invite disaster by their sinful behavior.” The Book of Deuteronomy, 383. Such apostasy brings real pain and vexation (יָרָה) to God, a recurring theme throughout the OT (cf. Deut 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 32:16, 19, 21; Judg 2:12; 1 Kgs 14:9, 15; 15:30; 16:2, 7, 13, 26, 33; 21:22; 22:54; 2 Kgs 17:11, 17; 2 Kgs 21:6, 15; 22:17; 23:19, 26; Isa 65:3; Jer 7:18–19; 8:19; 11:17; 25:6–7; 32:29–30, 32; 44:3, 8; Ezek 8:17; 16:26; 20:28; Hos 12:14 [15]; Pss 78:58; 85:4 [5]; 106:29; 2 Chr 28:25; 33:6; 34:25; cf. Deut 32:27). In one such instance, due to such provocation, God is said to “spurn” the people, which means to treat them with contempt (Deut 32:19). Yet, God looks forward to a time when he will be vexed “no more” (Ezek 16:42). It also refers to various kinds of provocation and vexation in human usage (1 Sam 1:6–7, 16; Pss 6:7 [8]; 10:14; 31:10 [9]; 112:10; Prov 12:16; 17:25; 21:19; 27:3; Eccl 1:18; 2:23; 5:17; 7:3, 9; 11:10; 32:9; Neh 4:1 [3:33]; 4:5 [3:37]; 2 Chr 16:10). Craigie points out, “the anger of God is an awesome and terrible thing exactly because it follows from a rejection of the equally pervasive love of God.” The Book of Deuteronomy, 384.

Moses persistently entreats God, reminding God of his declaration that he had “found favor” in God’s sight and pleading that God would act on that basis (Exod 33:12–13, 16; cf. 34:9) to which God agrees (Exod 33:17), resulting ultimately in forgiveness, the renewal of covenant, and a wonderful self-revelation of God’s character (Exod 33:19; 34:6–7). The importance of this cannot be overestimated. Israel’s very “election is surely at stake because God is now prepared to annihilate her completely (cf. Deut
enters into personal give-and-take dialogue with Moses, he responds to Moses’ request to see his glory (Exod 33:18) by proclaiming that he will make all of his goodness pass by and “will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show” (Exod 33:19, JPS). This emphatic phrase that binds divine compassion and graciousness with God’s very name is further elaborated in what has become perhaps the *locus classicus* of all OT texts on God’s character, Exod 34:6–7.\(^{311}\) “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exod 34:6). As in Exod 33:19, the proclamation of divine character is explicitly associated with his name, which is, among other things, compassionate and gracious. They are presented as core characteristics of God associated with, and perhaps descriptive of, his enduring, longsuffering patience signified by the idiomatic expression that God is “long of nose” (מָֽצֶל). Since anger was metaphorically seen in the nose (think red) the length signifies the length of time it would take for one to become angry.\(^{312}\) In other words, God has great capacity to overcome his anger at sin and bestow grace and compassion. Yet, God is not compelled to be gracious. On the contrary, God has every right to destroy the people for their apostasy. Yet, his compassion reaches beyond the blessings and curses of covenant, providing a means for continuance of what would otherwise be a shattered relationship.

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9:8; Num 14.11f; Ezek. 20.13ff.).” Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 567. However, as Stuart comments, “God never desired to destroy his people in the first place, so he was willing to relent in response to Moses’ appeal (v. 14). Nevertheless, the threat was genuine rather than theoretical, and the response of God reveals his willingness to respond to prayer. Indeed, this is one of many passages in Scripture that demonstrate God’s responsiveness to the prayer of a righteous person prayed not for selfish reasons but out of a desire to see God’s will accomplished.” Stuart, *Exodus*, 672. Elsewhere, God repeatedly hears entreaty and responds (Deut 5:28; 9:19; 10:10; 26:7). God’s anger also may be “turned away” by swift action to deal with evil (Deut 13:17–18; Num 25:11) and/or priestly intercession (Num 16:41–50).

\(^{311}\) One need only consider the amount of allusions to this text throughout the OT to recognize its pervasive influence. For instance, consider Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; 31–32; Pss 86:15; 103:8, 17; 145:8; Jer 32; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3. Moreover, this “is the only place [in the OT] where God actually described Himself, listing His own glorious attributes.” J. Carl Laney, “God’s Self-revelation in Exodus 34:6–8,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 158 (2001): 36.

\(^{312}\) Cf. Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in *Genesis to Leviticus*, 1:946. See also the
This divine forbearance, grounded in his character of compassion and graciousness, among other attributes, is thus essential to the divine-human relationship; without divine compassion there could be no God-human relationship. Thus, throughout the Torah, compassion continues to function as the grounding of entreaty and the basis of deliverance (cf. Gen 19:16). Likewise, the divine graciousness (נאמנ), as a characteristic of God, depicts his willingness to hear and respond to entreaty, closely associated with his compassion as in 34:6, but also independently portrays that he will hear the one who cries out, for he is “gracious” (Exod 22:27 [26]). As such, divine compassion is depicted as the most profound, rich, and intense mother-love, providing forgiveness and comfort (cf. Isa 49:15). Nevertheless, alongside divine compassion, there is a balance between divine mercy and justice, stated without equivocation in Exod 34:7, which will be addressed further in its relation to lovingkindness below.

As seen above, divine compassion is a ground of entreaty and is itself often conditional. Thus, the people are instructed to turn to God in times of distress (Deut 4:30) for he is “a compassionate God” (נאמנ הב) and he will not fail or forget his covenant (Deut 4:31). God may thus work through discipline to bring his people to a state of repentance that may, in turn, affect his disposition toward them. Such “discipline” is explicitly noted just a few verses later in Deut 4:36, and elsewhere connected with fatherly discipline (cf. Deut 8:5). Nevertheless, continued rebellion will result in the execution of divine judgment but, when Israel acts faithfully (following, fearing, keeping, listening, serving, clinging), God will turn from “burning anger” to show “mercy” (חסד) and “have compassion” (נאמנ) (Deut 13:17–18 [18–19]). Similarly, if God’s people will make a heartfelt return to God in wholehearted obedience, then God will “restore,”

313 In Gen 19:16 Lot’s deliverance is predicated on the “the compassion [נאמנ] of the LORD.”

314 God’s wrath itself appears here as a corrective to Israel, prompting them to repentance for their ultimate good. As Tigay puts it, Deut 4:30 “suggests a cause-and-effect relationship between distress and repentance: when the exiles see that worshiping idols brings them no relief in exile, they will return to the
and “have compassion” (נָאֹר) on, Israel (Deut 30:2–3). Notably, God’s compassionate response includes circumcision of their hearts to love (לְקוֹרֶב) him in return (Deut 30:6). Thus, even after apostasy, compassion is available to Israel, but true repentance is required. It is in this line of thought that God lays out clear covenant options before his people: life and prosperity or death and adversity, they must choose (Deut 30:15–20). In this way, the divine-human relationship is at least partially dependent upon the disposition and actions of the covenant people, according to whether or not they choose to receive his grace.

In the divine character, compassion is complemented by passion, God is both רָפָא בּוּ (Deut 4:24) and נוֹמַק בּוּ (Deut 4:31). God’s passionate love for his people is manifested in righteous jealousy when his people are unfaithful to him. Thus, God declares of himself, “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous [רָפָא] God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9). Thus, Israel is Lord and obey Him.” Deuteronomy, 54.

315 JPS translates, “God will restore your fortunes and take you back in love.” Cf. ibid., 400. Craigie points out, the people had to turn to God and “only then could they expect to know once again his compassion (v. 3).” The Book of Deuteronomy, 363.

316 Wallis comments that here “Yahweh’s love for his people and Israel’s love for her God are interwoven. But Yahweh is always the one who takes the first step in love, and Israel must actively respond to this love. . . . A failure to love and obey Yahweh brings a curse on Israel.” Wallis, TDOT 1:116.

317 The very promise (נָאֹר) is contingent on the people responding to God in love (Deut 30:20).

318 “The God who is impassionate (qanna’) because of the sin of the people (v 24) turns into a compassionate God (‘el rahum) after Israelite repentance (v 31).” Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1–11, 207.

319 The association between divine love and passion is well-recognized. Weinfeld comments, “The basic meaning of qa’, which is ‘jealousy’, applies also to passionate love. Love causes jealousy, and jealousy brings anger that burns like fire (Deut 4:22; 23:21–22).” Ibid., 296. Craigie comments, “The language is stern, but it is closely related to the theme of the love of God in Deuteronomy.” The Book of Deuteronomy, 138; cf. Christensen, Deuteronomy 1–11, 87; Buis, Le Deutéronome, 59. See the word study on רָפָא previously.

320 Based on the association between love and “jealousy,” Weinfeld suggests the “possibility that the term ‘el qanna’ refers not only to the clause of punishment, but also the clause of divine grace” in Deut 5:9–10. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1–11, 296. The literary structure supports this view since רָפָא בּו appears as an overall characterization, followed by a negative idea introduced by a participle which is followed by a positive idea introduced by another participle.” Roy Gane, email message to author, January 18, 2012.
not to worship any other God for his “name is Jealous, [he] is a jealous God” (Exod 34:14; cf. Deut 4:24; 6:14–15).\footnote{For Exod 34:14, Stuart suggests another translation, “You must worship no other god, because Yahweh is jealous for his name. He is a jealous God.” Stuart, Exodus, 724.} Significantly, if jealousy is a part of God’s very name, then his character must be relational, since his jealousy is only occasioned by the divine-human relationship.\footnote{Reuter points out that “if jealousy is a critical element of the name of Yahweh” then “our attention must turn at once to the relationship between Yahweh and his worshipers.” TDOT 13:54.} Israel repeatedly made God “jealous with strange gods” and “provoked” him (Deut 32:16, 21). As such, God is deeply affected by Israel’s spiritual adultery. Such divine passion is very strong and the consequences of infidelity are serious.\footnote{In a striking instance, Phinehas puts an end to egregious sin in the camp by execution of the participants (Num 25:8), which turns away divine wrath. In reference to this, God explains that Phinehas “was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy” (Num 25:11). Likewise, the intensity of divine jealousy is clear in that God’s anger and jealousy will burn against the man who defiantly turns to serve other gods, and God will not forgive him (Deut 29:20 [19]).} Yet, as mentioned above, divine passion is never envious but always refers to God’s appropriate passion (אִנְקָשׁ) in the context of exclusive relationship.\footnote{In other words, this is a “justified jealousy of Israel’s God.” John I. Durham, Exodus (WBC 3; Dallas: Word Books, 1987), 286. “The basis for this jealousy of Yahweh is the expectation of undiluted loyalty” from “those who, having promised to have no God but him, have gone back on that promise” showing that they actually “hate” God. Ibid., 287.}

In all this, throughout the Torah, God’s compassionate and passionate concern is evident. Thus, it is fitting that near the end of the Torah, God is said to “encircle,” to “care for” and “guard” Israel “as the pupil of His eye” (Deut 32:10; cf. 2:7; 11:2). Divine concern is here depicted “like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spreads His wings and caught them, and carried them” (Deut 32:11). God cares for his people. His compassion goes beyond covenant to the depth of mercy that is the character of God. In fact, divine compassion is expected to finally triumph in vindication of God’s people; God will “have compassion [אֵנְקָשׁ] on His servants” when all their strength is gone (Deut 32:36; cf. 31:6, 8, 16–17).
Compassion and Passion in the Prophets

God is likewise deeply concerned for human beings throughout the prophets. He is thus responsive to them, positively or negatively, appropriate to their disposition and/or action toward him. He sees, hears, answers, and remembers. Such concern is especially manifest in God’s responsive compassion and passion.

Divine Compassion

In the prophets, God’s compassion is especially prominent, often associated with divine grace. The God of compassion is likewise the great comforter as well as a loving, interested shepherd. Yet, the intimate image of the shepherd cradling his little lambs is surpassed when God’s comfort and compassion (Isa 49:13) are compared to that of a woman nursing her child. Despite Israel’s feeling of forsakenness and being forgotten (Isa 49:14), God declares he will no more forget them than a “woman [could] forget her nursing child” or lack “compassion [Ξητή] on the son of her womb” (Isa 49:15). God’s compassion is thus depicted with the most vivid imagery of personal affection known to humanity.

Though God is often provoked to wrath by his people, he is affected even more by their suffering (Judg 2:18; 10:16; Isa 63:15; Hos 11:8). God is even depicted as sympathetically feeling Israel’s suffering. He is “afflicted in [all] their affliction” yet provides deliverance in love and mercy (παντεία) (Isa 63:9). In this way, divine compassion seems to restrict the extent of divine


326 God is he who “will tend his flock. In His arm he will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes” (Isa 40:11; cf. Isa 49:10). Of God as comforter see Isa 12:1; 40:1; 49:13; cf. 51:3, 19; 52:9; 57:18; Jer 31:13; Zech 1:17.

327 This translation follows the Qere, να, “to him.” However, the Ketiv is κατ, which is also in LXX, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate. Interestingly, according to Watts, 1Qisa3 has κατ. Isaiah 34–66, 326. Although this is ambiguous, it does give an important textual possibility for the Qere. If one follows the Ketiv, numerous translation possibilities arise, which affect the whole clause. For instance, LXX reads οὐ πρέσβυς οὐδὲ ἐγγέλος ἄλλ’ αὐτός κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτόις, “not an envoy or angel but the Lord Himself saved them,” reading οὐκ not ἐγγέλος and translating πρέσβυς. However, this seems to be a synthetic attempt to remove the importance of the mediatorial role of the angel and is not compelling. Watts translates “In all
anger and wrath such that God’s anger may be “turned away” and effectively replaced by comfort (Isa 12:1). However, while divine compassion may suspend or reduce deserved punishment, it does not overrule justice. Joel, alluding to the classic self-revelation of Exod 34:6, encourages the people to return to God in heartfelt repentance “for He is gracious and compassionate” (Joel 2:13). True repentance will prompt the divine response of passion (אֵרֶם) and compassion (מַעֲנֵי) (Joel 2:18) resulting in deliverance and blessing (Joel 2:19). Here, divine compassion and grace are by no means automatic, but rather, contingent upon human response. Likewise, the people are exhorted to “hate evil, love good and establish justice” and then God “may be gracious to the remnant” (Amos 5:14–15). In this way, divine favor and/or compassion often serve as grounds of deliverance and the reduction or removal of divine wrath and punishment. Thus, “the LORD was gracious [נָאָרֵי] to [the people] and had compassion [מַעֲנֵי] on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (2 Kgs 13:23; cf. Isa 49:10; 63:7). Importantly, divine compassion is not restricted to the covenant people. Rather, even the foreign lands may receive compassion in the wake of judgment (Jer 12:15–17). Likewise, Jonah 4:2 depicts God’s their affliction he did not afflict,” which follows the Ketiv but does not disrupt the parallel verb of affliction. Ibid. However, elsewhere in Isaiah it is clear that God did “afflict” them. God’s judgment had fallen on the people. He is even said to have “become their enemy” (Isa 63:10; cf. Deut 31:17; 2 Chr 15:6; Neh 9:27, 37). It seems best to utilize the Qere in accordance with most translations and see this as a depiction of divine sympathy. So Joseph Blenkinsopp translates, “In all their afflictions he too was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and his pity, he himself redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them for all the days of old.” Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 19B; New York: Anchor Bible/Doubleday, 2003), 252; cf. Judg 2:18, where Stoebe suggests the most accurate reading is to “feel sympathy for.” TLOT 2:738.

For example, asked to choose the agent of punishment in the aftermath of his census, David chooses to “fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great” as opposed to that of man (2 Sam 24:14; cf. 12:22). David’s confidence in divine compassion is not displaced but neither is punishment annulled. Rather, after significant, but far from total, angelic destruction the angel prepares to destroy Jerusalem, but “the LORD relented [נָאָרֵי] from the calamity” declaring “It is enough” (2 Sam 24:25). Thus, “so real was the Lord’s mercy that he was unwilling to pursue the killing further and was grieved because of the calamity.” Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 479.

God promises to “have compassion on” the peoples and “bring them back” each to their land and then “if they will really” learn the ways of his people they will be built up, but the alternative is destruction (Jer 12:15–17). “The text betrays a powerful universalistic impulse. The Lord invites and welcomes all the ‘neighbors’ into the community of faith that is constituted by Israel. The invitation is real.” Patrick D. Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel (vol. 6 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.:
compassion toward the people of Nineveh and God responds to their heartfelt repentance (cf. 4:10–11). Over and over again in the prophets, God is thus presented as moved, deeply affected, and responsive to sincere entreaty and supplication. For instance, God is “moved to pity [σπέρμα] by” his people’s “groaning” (Judg 2:18), “could bear the misery of Israel no longer” (Judg 10:13), and is “moved by prayer” (προσευχή) for the land (2 Sam 21:14). He is eager to relent

Abingdon Press, 2001), 680. “This is an extraordinary statement, nothing less than a conditional, Sinai-type covenant offered to the Gentiles. Yahweh’s compassion is not conditional upon them learning his peoples’ ways, but conditions will come afterward. Verse 17 tells us what will happen if these conditions are not met.” Jack R. Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 663; cf. J. A. Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 362. Thus, here compassion appears prior to conditions but along with conditions for its continuance, providing a probationary opportunity for the nations to turn toward God. F. B. Huey Jr. adds, “The verses teach the freedom of choice with which God has endowed the human race. We are free to accept his lordship and be blessed or to reject him and experience punishment.” Jeremiah, Lamentations (NAC 16; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 141–43.

330 God even has compassion (σπέρμα) for the animals (Jonah 4:10–11). S. H. Blank comments, “Man’s troubles are matched and dwarfed by God’s own hurt.” “‘Doest Thou Well to Be Angry?’ A Study in Self-Pity,” HUCA 26 (1955): 36. In that instance, Nineveh was afforded probation through the reluctant preaching of Jonah. At times, God’s relenting is according to his lovingkindness (Ps 106:45; cf. Dan 1:9). In still other accounts, divine compassion is set in parallel to the action of sparing (σώζειν) (Ps 72:13). As McCann Jr. puts it, “Motivated by compassion, impelled by grace, God sets things right.” “The Book of Psalms,” in 1 & 2 Maccabees, 4:1148.

331 When God’s people cry out, he hears, and is “moved to pity [σπέρμα] by their groaning” resulting in deliverance (Judg 2:18). Here, the term for “groaning” (προσευχή) appears with a causative mem, indicating the causal relation between God’s hearing of Israel’s pain and his feelings of compassion for them. Cf. Block, Judges, Ruth, 130. Here, the usage “signifies sorrow at the hurt or pain of another and a desire to come to the victim’s aid.” Dennis T. Olson, “The Book of Judges,” in Numbers—Samuel (vol. 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 756; cf. Robert G. Boling, Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary (AB 6A; New York: Doubleday, 1969), 75. Many scholars note that the text here, as in Exod 2, makes no explicit mention of repentance. God appears to be moved out of his compassion for his people. Cf. Block, Judges, Ruth, 130.

332 Within the context of judgment, even after God had declared “I will no longer deliver you” (Judg 10:13), when the people turn to God and away from their foreign gods, “He could bear the misery of Israel no longer,” connoting deep affection and passibility (Judg 10:16). This is a statement of deep affection. Literally, “his soul was shortened at the trouble of Israel” (Judg 10:16). In the only other three instances where the syntagm ἡμιορίβη + ἐπικυρία appears it refers to humans who have grown weary or become impatient (Num 21:4; Judg 16:16; Zech 11:8). A similar phrase appears elsewhere in a question form, “Is the Spirit [σπέρμα] of the LORD impatient [ἐπικυρία]? [w]” (Mic 2:7); cf. Robert D. Haak, “A Study and New Interpretation of QRS NPS,” JBL 101 (1982): 161–67. Traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean that God responds favorably because of the genuineness of Israel’s repentance. However, Block thinks that God “has grown tired” of Israel’s “call for help” and “may be dismissing the Israelite actions as further evidence of their iniquitous condition. The words themselves are ambiguous, but there is rejection in Yahweh’s voice” due to the intolerability of Israel’s “present efforts . . . and the attempts to wrest deliverance from him.” Judges, Ruth, 348–49. However, this has been questioned. D. T. Olson thinks God does favorably
(זָמַי) if only his people will repent (זָמַי) (Jer 18:1–10), but he will not do so forever (cf. Jer 15:6). 334

Accordingly, notwithstanding the immensity of God’s tender regard for humans, divine compassion toward rebellious humans is not extended forever. 335 It may be forfeited and removed by God. For example, God declares numerous times in succession, “My eye will have no pity [שָׁוָא] on you, nor will I spare [בָּשָׁוָא] you,” 336 as the consequence of Israel’s evil conduct (Ezek 7:4; change his plans, but merely because of Israel’s great suffering, while knowing that their repentance is “temporary and shallow.” “The Book of Judges,” in Numbers–Samuel, 2:824–25. The text denotes both repentance and action, which elsewhere seems to denote genuine repentance (Judg 10:15–16). It is, however, impossible to judge with certainty the motivations of Israel. Even if Block’s interpretation is correct, God is likewise moved emotionally by the situation, albeit in the opposite direction.

333 Later in Israelite history, God is said to be “moved by prayer” (יָרָאת יְהוָה) for the land (2 Sam 21:14; cf. 2 Sam 24:25; 1 Kgs 8:50–53). Notably, God does not reject his people despite numerous affronts, but remains concerned for the well-being of his people. God “sees” affliction and responds in deliverance (2 Kgs 14:26) and manifests patience and unwillingness to destroy Judah despite the abundance of iniquity committed in Israel (2 Kgs 8:19).

334 Thus, God repeatedly presents himself as an object of entreaty. God is open, and often responsive to, supplication (1 Kgs 8:33, 47, 59; 9:3), even human wrestling with him (Hos 12:4 [5]). Jeremiah 18:1–10 is perhaps the capstone passage that lays out such divine willingness to relent in accordance with human repentance. If humans change course, God’s responsive action will change accordingly. However, such relenting is not endless (Jer 15:6; 1 Sam 15:29). God may become “tired of relenting” (Jer 15:6). “In mercy Yahweh will relent (ניham) for so long, but finally he will grow weary of relenting.” Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 389–90. The term, with God as subject, most often appears in the niphal, denoting at times relenting, or changing course in action (2 Sam 24:16; Isa 57:6; Jer 26:19; Joel 2:13–14; Jonah 3:9–10; 4:2; Amos 7:3, 6) or regretting (1 Sam 15:11, 35); at still others God is “moved to pity” (Judg 2:18). For a further discussion of divine relenting see the word study of צמָא.

335 For instance, at times the apparent absence of divine compassion is lamented by the covenant people (Zech 1:12). Further, Isaiah speaks of a time when God will “have compassion [בָּשָׁוָא]” and “again choose Israel” (Isa 14:1; cf. Mic 7:20). Someday, God will “return” to Jerusalem with “compassion” (Zech 1:16), he will “comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem” (Zech 1:17; cf. 2:12 [16]).

336 The terms יָשָׁוָא and בָּשָׁוָא collocate frequently, both referring to pity and/or compassion and closely associated with בָּשְׁוָא and, at times, בָּשָׁוָא. They often appear together with reference to the lack of compassion and pity in the context of war whether from humans (Isa 13:18; Jer 21:7) or from God (Jer 13:14; Ezek 24:14). The phrase (or similar) “My eye will have no pity (גֵּט + בָּשָׁוָא) and I will not spare [בָּשָׁוָא]” appears frequently in Ezekiel (Ezek 5:11; cf. Ezek 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:10; cf. 9:5; 16:5; Deut 13:8 [9]). Apart from one another, both lexemes often continue this meaning related to pitying or sparing. בָּשָׁוָא often occurs in the idiomatic expression, the eye will (not) pity (גֵּט + בָּשָׁוָא) and refers to a lack of concern or compassion for its object, with both human (Gen 45:20; Deut 7:16; 13:8 [9]; 19:13; 21; 25:11 [12]; cf. 1 Sam 24:10 [11]) and divine subjects (Ezek 24:14). In one instance with God as subject, the idiom is positive, when God declares, “My eye spared them” (Ezek 20:17). בָּשָׁוָא may appear with a positive meaning elsewhere as well, thus the king “will have compassion [בָּשָׁוָא] on” the poor (Ps 72:13). The term is also used in entreaty; God is called upon to “have compassion” on Nehemiah (Neh 13:22) and “spare” his people (Joel 2:17). Finally, whereas...
Thus, the interruption of divine compassion is not isolated, but recurs in response to the people’s disposition and/or actions toward God in rejecting his overtures.

Without fail, the lack or removal of divine compassion is the divine response to human infidelity (cf. Jer 2:32). Even God’s compassion and mercy have a limit; divine compassion is neither constant nor immutable, but conditional within a real, historically significant relationship.

Jonah’s compassion extends to a mere plant, God’s compassion (swx) extends to the people, and even animals, of Nineveh (Jonah 4:11).

The swx word group likewise continues the concept of compassion and/or sparing when it is used elsewhere. It may refer to human compassion, such as that felt by Pharaoh’s daughter upon seeing the baby Moses on the river (Exod 2:6; cf. 1 Sam 23:21; 2 Sam 12:4, 6; Zech 11:5). However, as above, the verb frequently refers to the action of sparing (1 Sam 15:9, 15; 2 Sam 21:7) or not sparing (1 Sam 15:3; Isa 9:19 [18]; 30:14; Jer 50:14; 51:3; Hab 1:17; Prov 6:34) something or someone from destruction in battle. At times, it appears in laments over the apparent lack of divine compassion and/or sparing (Job 16:13; Lam 2:2, 17, 21; 3:43) or in God’s own declaration that compassion is or will be absent (Jer 15:5; Zech 11:6). On the other hand, it also describes the presence of divine compassion. God sent prophets because of his compassion on the people, but the people scoffed at them and, consequently, Babylon had no compassion on them (2 Chr 36:15–17). Yet, Joel speaks of a day when God “will be zealous [swx] for His land and will have pity on His people” (Joel 2:18; cf. Mal 3:17). In all this, God has “concern” for his own holy name (Ezek 36:21). Likewise, positive, is the noun hlm.x, which appears in only two instances, describing the “compassion [hlm.x] of the LORD [that] was upon” Lot when the men took he, his wife and two daughters out of Sodom (Gen 19:16) and in close relation to divine love in the recollection of the Sinai narrative, “in His love [hbm.x] and in His pity [hlm.x] [God] redeemed [lgl] them” (Isa 63:9). As such, both swx and hlm.x can be used in reference to the presence or (when negated) the absence of compassion, most often referring to the specific action of sparing or not sparing something or someone.

The people have pushed God too far. Katheryn Pfisterer Durr comments regarding Ezek 8:18, “By their actions, God insists, ‘they are putting the branch to my nose!’ (MT, ‘their nose,’ a deliberate scribal emendation). The meaning of this action is obscure; scholars have identified it as a gesture of entreaty, an obscene gesture, or a euphemistic reference to ‘breaking wind.’ Whatever the phrase’s literal referent, its present use is probably metaphorical: Just as a painful blow provokes outrage, so also Judah’s deeds unleash divine wrath,” “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel (vol. 6 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2001), 1176. Their “impurity has become so great that only a thorough purge of land and people can eradicate it.” Ibid., 1166. Thus, “as people have behaved, so they shall be treated; one’s fate is merely the outworking of one’s action. Yahweh will personally guarantee that this occurs. He will not permit any hint of pity to interfere with his determined action.” Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24, 250. Elsewhere God also refuses to respond to entreaty (Jer 11:11; Mic 3:4; Zech 7:13).

Thus, God “will not have compassion” nor “be gracious” to his people who lack discernment (Isa 27:11; cf. Mal 1:9). Likewise, God is adamant that, at times, he will not “relent” (swx) nor have “pity” (swx) nor “be sorry” (swx) but will judge “according to your ways and according to your deeds” (Ezek 24:14; cf. Zech 11:5). God has tried to restore this people. Verse 13 literally reads I purged you, “i.e., I applied cleansers to you to no avail. This may be a metaphor for the graduated futile chastisements inflicted on the people in the manner described in Lev 26.” Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 503.

God has not been unfaithful to them but they have continually rebelled and “have forgotten” him “days without number” (Jer 2:32). The imagery is that of a bride who would not forget her attire, yet Israel, God’s bride, has forgotten him, her husband.
The removal of divine compassion is poignantly displayed in the husband-bride metaphor of Hosea. The spiritual adultery of Israel is depicted and its results upon the divine-human relationship appear even in the names of Hosea’s children. One is named “Lo-ruhamah,” which God interprets to signify, “I will no longer have compassion [נָעַם] on the house of Israel, that I would forgive them” (Hos 1:6; cf. 2:4 [5]; 2:23 [25]) though compassion appears to remain, at least temporarily, for Judah (Hos 1:7). Divine compassion is removed on the explicit basis of “harlotry” (Hos 2:4 [6]) that brings considerable grief and anguish to God himself (Hos 11:8, see The Hebrew of vv. 6–7 is notoriously difficult. The phrase could be rendered, “I will no longer love [have compassion on] the house of Israel, but I will surely forgive them” (Hos 1:6). But this appears to make little sense as a whole. Some have viewed the text as corrupt and requiring emendation to fix the difficulty. Others have interpreted, “I will no longer show Israel love by forgiving them.” Cf. William Rainey Harper, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea (New York: Scribner, 1905), 214. Others interpret וַעֲלַי as, usually translated “forgive,” in its more basic sense of “lift” or “carry” to mean that Israel will be carried away, or God’s compassion will be taken away. The former are represented by Thomas E. McComiskey, The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary (3 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992), 1:21; James L. Mays, Hosea, a Commentary (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 22. The latter is represented by Hans W. Wolff, Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 8. Another option, championed by Andersen and Freedman, is that the whole of what follows the negative expression “I will no longer” (הֲדוֹאָה יָבוֹא) is governed by it, thus the following elements of the passage might mean, “never again will (1) I have pity on the house of Israel, (2) I make the slightest move to forgive them, (3) I have pity on the house of Judah, and (4) I, Yahweh their God, rescue them.” They point to Jer 3:2; 22:10; Num 23:19; Mic 7:1; Isa 38:18 as analogous instances of such rare grammar. Hosea, 189. Fensham, however, rejects this view, stating that “in verse 7 the stress on [יָבוֹא יָֽהָוֶה] by placing it before the verb shows that a contrast is expressed.” F. Charles Fensham, “The Marriage Metaphor in Hosea for the Covenant Relationship between the Lord and His People,” JNSL 12 (1984): 76. Garrett thinks that the text should be left to stand as a paradox, seeing a similar dual statement in 1:9–10. Hosea, Joel (NAC 19A; Nashville, Tenn.; Broadman & Holman, 1997), 61–62. He observes, “Of course Hosea loved Lo-Ruhamah! Could God abandon his love for Israel? On one level the answer is yes—he could give them over to the most terrible suffering—but on a deeper level it is impossible: “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? . . . My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused” (Hos 11:8). This inconsistency is the language of the vexation of a broken heart—and it also reflects the mystery of a God whose ways are above our ways.” Ibid., 62. Yet, this would raise questions for Hos 9:15, which has its own tension with Hos 11. See the discussion of both further below. There is no compelling reason to depart from the traditional rendering, which would see in these verses the rejection of Israel, likely fulfilled in the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C., but the postponement of Judah’s punishment. In fact, the kind of tension seen in these verses is apparent throughout the book. Perhaps it is meant to be cryptic, less a foretelling of what will occur and more a declaration of God’s profound grief at the rupture of his special relationship with Israel and Judah. However, the Hebrew is understood and applied to the two nations; the theological point regarding the removal, or at least suspension, of God’s compassion/love is striking and sets up a tension that continues throughout the book of Hosea. As Simian-Yofre sees it, “Yahweh [is] torn between love and punishment, pity and pitilessness.” TDOT 13:443.
The case is similar throughout the entire latter prophets; the temporary lack of divine compassion (Cf. Isa 27:11) is not attributed to God’s unilateral decision but is the direct result of the unwillingness of God’s people. They were afforded every opportunity for repentance and trust but they “were not willing” (Isa 30:15) even though God “longs to be gracious” (παισί) and “waits on high to have compassion on” them (Isa 30:18). The compassion of God is here represented as an internal commitment such that Israel’s rebellion affects the inner life of God, so even God must wait for them to be ready to receive his compassion. In the meantime, God’s desire is unfulfilled, he longs to be compassionate and seeks them out, but they are obstructing the relationship. Still, he will respond and be gracious at the sound of their cry, when he hears, he will answer (Isa 30:19). As such, divine compassion is manifestly contingent upon the state of relationship. Although compassion cannot be earned, it must be received; God’s call seeks to evoke response (cf. Jer 42:10–16). In the future, God will reclaim his people, betroth them to

341 Although it is possible to see the lack of compassion on her children as an extended penalty of their “mother’s” adultery, it is more likely that the reference is to her children who are also taking part in adultery in like manner as their “mother.” This would fit the historical reference to Israel and Judah. Thus, Stuart translates, “I can have no compassion on her children, Because they are prostituting children.” Hosea-Jonah, 42.


343 The extent to which God goes in seeking reconciliation is displayed in God’s own language. He continually and persistently called to his people, signified by the idiomatical language of “rising up early and speaking.” But the people “did not hear,” God called but they “did not answer” (Jer 7:13; cf. 7:25; 11:7; 25:3–4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14–15; 44:4). Elsewhere, despite being forgotten and mistreated, God searches (שָׂרֵג) and seeks (שָׂרֵג) for (or inspects) His people, even “as a shepherd cares [שָׂרֵג] for his herd . . . so I will care for My sheep” (Ezek 34:11–12). Some have considered this text to be corrupt. However, in its final form, Darr points out the potential evaluative connotation of this seeking. “The piel verb from the root bagar can mean ‘to seek’ but also ‘to inquire’ in the sense of inspecting something.” “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:1466; cf. Lev 13:36; Lev 27:33. Likewise, Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 700; Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24, 289.

344 The construction יָרַע יֹעַר inf. abs + qal imperfect emphasizes the certainty that God will be gracious when they call.
himself in righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, and compassion (Hos 2:19 [21]) and will “have compassion” on them, so that those who were not his people will be his people and he will be their God (Hos 2:23 [25]). Likewise, God will “strengthen,” “save,” and “bring back” Judah “because” he has “had compassion [ἐλασμόν] on them and they will be as though [God] had not rejected [παραφθάνον] them” (Zech 10:6; cf. Jer 33:25; cf. Zeph 2:3, 7).

Thus, over and over the familiar pattern appears. Even though the “stirrings” of the divine “heart,” “compassion,” and “zeal” are temporarily “restrained” (Isa 63:15; cf. 63:10), there is hope for the future when God will again comfort his people even “as one whom his mother comforts” (Isa 66:13). Likewise in Jeremiah, though divine compassion may be evoked, it may also be revoked. In response to human rebellion, God “withdraws” his “peace,” and his “lovingkindness and compassion,” resulting in discipline (Jer 16:5; 30:14). Yet, in the wake of justly deserved divine punishment, God will “have compassion [ἐλασμόν] on his dwelling places” (Jer 30:18). On the basis of God’s enduring love (Jer 31:3), he will “turn their mourning into joy

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345 “The woman’s repentance and return to her husband then become the first and vital act in the process of rehabilitation. Hosea, however, contends that the initiative always remains with the husband (Yahweh), though it is only effective when there is a response (v 17b).” Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 264. Thus, the “broken covenant could be mended because Yahweh’s love was stronger than his wrath.” Ibid., 219; cf. Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 54. This tension between the apparent removal and, conversely, continuance of love will be taken up further below.

346 Further demonstration of the depth of divine compassion and passion appears by way of an idiom that literally rendered means the murmur, roar of turmoil of your internal organs. Oswalt phrases it as “the rumbling of your innards.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 612. It here connotes the kind of distress that is often accompanied in humans by intestinal aching. This profound divine affection, sympathy, and interest in his people results ultimately in God’s purpose of restoration. “The outcome (restoration) is rooted in the deep feeling of God, the parental compassion that is moved to care and tenderness in the presence of the pain of the child (cf. 31:20).” Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:808.

347 In fact, God himself says he “wounded” Israel “with the punishment of a cruel one” (יַעֲשָׂרֶה), depicted as “incurable,” but this is because of the great iniquity of the people (Jer 30:14–15; cf. 15, which clearly shows the reason for their punishment). Such punishment is just, signified here by the term רָעָם, elsewhere “discipline,” which the people consistently refused to accept (Jer 2:30; 5:3; 7:28; 17:23; 32:33). The “cruelty” could refer to the punishment itself or perhaps the mediatorial agent of punishment, Babylon (cf. Jer 6:23; 50:42).

348 In this context, the compassion is elicited by the taunts of the nations that no one cares for God’s people (Jer 30:17). Apparently, God’s compassion is at least partially motivated by the
and will comfort [הענ] them” (Jer 31:13). He will “certainly remember” his “dear son . . . a delightful child,” his “heart [that is, innards, [הдумал] yearns [הוא] for him” and God will “surely have mercy on him” (Jer 31:20; cf. 33:25–26). 349 Thus, God introduces a heartfelt call to repentance (Jer 31:21–22). The depth of divine emotion expressed here is astounding. God deeply longs to love and continue loving his wayward people, and this expression leads into the famous proclamation of the new covenant (cf. Jer 31:31–34).

Likewise, while Israel deserves severe punishment for her adulterous ways, God appears to be conflicted, “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions [פרים] are kindled [רחם].” (Hos 11:8–9). 350 Consequently, the fullness of representation of divine character. For instance, God will restore the people and “have mercy” (רחם) on them but in the context of jealousy for his “holy name” (Ezek 39:25; cf. Ezek 20:21–22; 39:27). Thus, Block comments that “Ezekiel recognizes two motivational factors underlying Yahweh’s restorative actions, the first relating to the need of his people, and the second to concern for his name.” The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24, 486. “Yahweh’s actions toward his people, both punitive and salvific, are played out before the worldwide audience.” Ibid., 487. He further notes that “Israel’s election was particularly to be a witness to the nations of the uniqueness of Yahweh.” Ibid.

349 This idiomatic syntagm of yearning innards appeared also in Isa 63:15. Thompson comments, “The very vivid anthropomorphism depicts God’s stomach being churned up with longing for his son.” The Book of Jeremiah, 575. The word “heart”—[הдумал] internal organs, inward parts, bowels, belly—is often used in the sense of womb and stomach. It is used in instances of intense physiological pain (Job 30:27; Ps 22:15) but more frequently to denote intense human emotions (Isa 16:11; Jer 4:19; Lam 1:20; 2:11). Stoebe thus correctly sees this as “expanded parallelism” that “approximates rahamim.” Stoebe, TLOT 3:1226. The collocation of [veal] and [veal] or [veal]—murmur, roar, sometimes meaning arouse—appears five times (Isa 16:11; 63:15; Jer 4:19; 31:20; Cant 5:4). Elsewhere it describes the inner feelings of emotional lament for Moab (Isa 16:11). In Cant 5:4 it depicts the erotic feelings of an aroused woman. [veal] with [/calendar] describes the “pounding” of Jeremiah’s heart, in parallel to the anguish ([calendar]) of his innards (ירカテゴリ) (Jer 4:19).

350 The two human instances (Gen 43:40; 1 Kgs 3:6) and this divine one are the only three instances where [calendar] relates to emotions. Only in one other instance does it appear at all, of skin becoming hot in the sun (Lam 5:10); cf. Stoebe, TLOT 3:1226; Butterworth, “רחם,” NIDOTTE 3:1093. Further, “The word [calendar] occurs only here, in Isa 57:18, and in Zech 1:13. The emotion is one of compassion and pity; it describes the desire to bring consolation. As such it is close in meaning to rahamim.” Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 589. Garrett comments, “Abruptly, Yahweh enters what can only be described as distraught self-questioning. Like a father who is at wit’s end over what to do with a wayward child, Yahweh is here at a loss as he tries to resolve his compassion for Israel and the punishment demanded by their sin. One may of course regard this as metaphor, as language that somehow puts divine love into terms that a human can understand, even though God himself does not really experience self-doubt and anxiety over issues of justice and mercy.” He goes on, “While accepting the fact that God transcends our metaphors and that theological doctrines about the impassability and foreknowledge of God should never be
God’s anger is not executed (Hos 11:9). Although destruction will come, there will be a future when anger will be removed and divine love toward his people will be restored (Hos 14:4 [5]).

Such acute idioms of divine emotion thus appear recurrently throughout the prophets, evidencing God’s deeply affective nature. Far from being aloof, God is profoundly impacted by the evil and sufferings of his people yet desires to restore and reclaim them into intimate relationship with himself.

Such intense emotionality is likewise depicted when God describes his momentary forsaking of his people as an “outburst of anger” in stark contrast to his “great compassion,” which is displayed with “everlasting lovingkindness” (Isa 54:7–8). Although God may act in a torrent of anger, divine compassion is greater and exponentially more lasting than any “negative” emotions. Moreover, in spite of the obvious contingency of divine compassion, the wellspring of divine sympathy and God’s unwavering benevolence endures beyond all expectations. God’s jettisoned, texts such as this should be allowed to speak to us in the power of their raw emotion. It is precisely in texts such as this that the love of God becomes a vivid reality and not a barren abstraction.”

“It is significant that the attribute of God to which the OT returns again and again is his compassion: his tenderness and his ability to be touched by the pain and grief of his people. His transcendence and almighty power are never forgotten, but it is his compassion to which they return with wonder again and again.” Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 299; cf. Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC 8; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 309.

Consider also the poignant metaphor of God depicted as the attentive owner and caretaker of his much-cherished vineyard (Israel). The vineyard owner’s painstakingly presents tender care to his vineyard, providing everything for it, but it nevertheless produces only worthless grapes though it should have produced good grapes (Isa 5:2). Therefore God cries out, “judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?” (Isa 5:3–4). Despite God’s all-encompassing labor and consistent beneficence, his people have turned away from him. There is nothing left for God to do except carry out judgment and destruction in response to the absence of justice and righteousness in his vineyard (Isa 5:5–7).

“It is deep/great compassion, love which overflows, love in its passionate reality.” Motyer, Isaiah, 448. “Thus God is passionately concerned about us and the thought that we should corrupt and destroy ourselves stirs him to the depths. How much better a father who knows what his child is doing to himself or herself and is angry about it than the one who neither knows nor cares what is happening.” Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 421.
good will toward his people is more lasting than the hills and the mountains. God declares, “My lovingkindness will not be removed from you. And My covenant of peace will not be shaken, Says the LORD who has compassion on you” (Isa 54:10). Accordingly, God implores the “wicked [to] forsake his way . . . return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on Him” and “abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7; cf. Zeph 3:17). He wants to remain near, to be found by them, but the opportunity will not be available forever. Thus, although divine initiative is primary and his benevolence endures, the fruition of divine compassion and pardon is predicated on human response. There is thus a tension between the permanence of willed divine compassion and the potential transience of efficacious, received divine compassion. God persistently wills, and longs for, a harmonious reconciliation with his wayward people, and his compassion and grace make such reconciliation possible, but he does not unilaterally effectuate relationship.

**Divine Passion**

Without equivocation, then, the latter prophets present God as personally concerned about his covenant people. However, such concern may turn into righteous indignation when God is “grieved” (נִצָּנָה) by rebellion (Isa 63:10). As in the Torah, God is repeatedly provoked (נָאְפָס) by Israel’s apostasy with idols, bringing him pain and vexation and spurring him to anger. In one instance among many, God refers to Israel as “a people who continually provoke Me to My face” (Isa 65:3). Whereas, God “cared” (כָּרָא) for Israel in the wilderness, Israel became proud and

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354 Yet, even this comes on the heels of a rupture of the relationship. Thus JPS translates, “my loyalty shall never move from you . . . said the LORD, who takes you back in love.” Cf. Jer 33:25. God further promises an “everlasting covenant” that is “according to the רֵשָׁע of David” (רֵשָׁע דָּוִד), specifically unto those who “incline” their “ear,” “come,” and “listen that [they] might live” (Isa 55:3). It is not altogether clear whether the phrase רֵשָׁע דָּוִד refers to the רֵשָׁע shown to David or the רֵשָׁע David showed toward God. Either way, the point is that such a relationship may yet be restored to God’s people, if they will respond to him.

355 Further, they are to “seek the Lord while he may be found; Call upon Him while He is near” (Isa 55:6).

forgot God, resulting in divine wrath, which itself is compared to that of a “lion,” a “leopard,” a “bear robbed of her cubs,” a “lioness,” or “wild beast” (Hos 13:5–8).\(^{357}\) Thus the Israelites have brought their own destruction (Hos 13:9). Divine anger (יַעֲנָי) may be evoked by, and persist against, the godless and the evildoer and, accordingly, God will “not take pleasure [יַעֲנָי] in their young men” nor “have pity [יָעֵס] on their orphans or their widows” (Isa 9:17 [16]).\(^{358}\) Similarly, God often becomes indignant at evil, usually toward his covenant people, but his indignation also falls upon the other nations, especially in response to their cruel oppression of his people.\(^{359}\)

God’s profoundly emotional concern and compassion correspond to his intense, passionate love for his people. This is especially manifest in God’s desire for exclusive relationship with them.\(^{360}\) Accordingly, when his people stray into spiritual adultery it is manifested in jealousy, anger, and zeal. On the other hand, it can also denote the divine passion for his people in a positive sense, manifested against her oppressors. God is a holy and jealous God [יָעֵס־יָרֵא], and therefore he takes sin seriously and his offers of forgiveness are not endless 20:28; Hos 12:14 [15]).

\(^{357}\) Some consider יַעֲנָי in covenant contexts to be a technical term for the recognition of treaty parameters. Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Treaty Background of Hebrew Yada’,” BASOR 181 (1966): 37. However, as with יָעֵס, it is a mistake to reduce the meaning of the term to mere legality on the basis of ANE parallels, especially when it is likely that such treaty language itself borrows from the more basic kinship language. Nicholson contends that where יַעֲנָי is used with divine agency it means “something like ‘know someone for one’s own,’ ‘choose and make someone one’s own.’” God and His People, 80; cf. Eberhard Baumann, “יָעֲנָי und seine Derivate,” ZAW 28 (1908): 22–41. Sakenfeld suggests that treaty language is not mutually exclusive to the other, more intimate, connotations of יָעֵס. The Meaning of Hesed, 171.

\(^{358}\) Importantly, even the orphans and widows are represented as evildoers. Blenkinsopp translates, “so the Sovereign Lord had no mercy on their youths, no compassion on their orphans and widows, for they are all ungodly and wicked.” Isaiah 1–39, 216.


\(^{360}\) God “loves them so much that he wants their undivided love in return. He will not share them with any other god.” Trent C. Butler, Joshua (WBC 7; Dallas: Word, 1984), 275. God’s jealousy cannot tolerate . . . undivided love and wants the same [devotion] from them.” Butler, Joshua, 275.
(Josh 24:19). Accordingly, Judah’s infidelity with false gods provokes God to severe jealousy (1 Kgs 14:22; cf. 14:15) for he deserves and requires the exclusive loyalty of his people. Such infidelity is frequently presented as adultery; Judah is the wife who runs after many “lovers” (Ezek 16:33, 36–37; 23:9, 25; cf. Ezek 23:5–7, 22). Here, divine jealousy amounts to unrequited love; God is like a scorned husband passionate for his wayward beloved. However, the divine jealousy (יהוה) and anger (זעם) may be “pacified” in the carrying out of discipline. In this, God himself will “calm” or satisfy (름) his “fury” (יירע) (Ezek 16:42) and thereafter may again “care” for his people (Ezek 36:9). Yet, in all this, divine discipline is a manifestation of his love-seeking relationship.

Accordingly, God’s negative emotions, themselves an outgrowth of his profound concern for his creatures, may be quite intense; God describes his temporary forsaking of Israel as “an outburst of anger” and “in My wrath I struck you,” though this is contrasted with his everlasting love.
lovingkindness and favor (תַּם) manifested in compassion (Isa 54:8–9; cf. Isa 47:6). Likewise, the overall conditionality of the covenant relationship is in full view when the continuance of divine blessing is jeopardized “because of” Israel’s continued provocation of divine anger with their “Asherim” (1 Kgs 14:15–16). God may be offended to the point that his “heart [יָד] would not be with this people,” even if Moses and Samuel were among them, for he is “tired of relenting” (Jer 15:1, 6). However, despite the intensity of divine anger at times, Jer 23:20 implies that God controls his emotions: His anger is not “turned back” until the divine purposes are carried out. Likewise, in God’s purpose his anger will be “spent,” his wrath “satisfied,” and God “appeased” (טָמַם), this God has spoken in his passionate “zeal” (תַּם) (Ezek 5:13). Again, divine anger, though intense, does not continue forever unabated, but he himself will calm his fury and be vexed “no more” (Ezek 16:42).

Divine jealousy may also be an immense positive for God’s people. It may be prompted by the “insults of the nations” against his people, provoking him to act in “jealousy”—even “fiery jealousy” (זַהְת) and in “wrath” (Ezek 36:6; cf. Zeph 1:18; 3:8). Likewise, God describes his great and exceeding jealousy for “Jerusalem and Zion” (Zech 1:14), which amounts to him being “very angry” with the oppressive nations (Zech 1:13, 15; cf. 8:2). Likewise, God is “exceedingly jealous” for Zion, “with great wrath” he is “jealous for her” (Zech 8:2). Jealousy for his beloved and, thus, anger towards her oppressors, results in the divine declaration of a future


365 The use of “my heart,” or rather my soul (יָד), once again presents God as an emotional being.

366 Such wrath is neither “arbitrary” nor “impulsive” but is part of God’s “historical self-manifestation.” Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24, 211. See the discussion of יָדו earlier.

367 While he was “only a little angry” the oppressors “furthered the disaster,” pushing him to severe zeal (Zech 1:14). While he is motivated by his passion, “Yahweh is motivated by pure compassion. Thus the two grounds for God’s work of salvation are his covenant bond with the people and his merciful nature.” Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 351.
return to Jerusalem with “compassion,” which will result in the blessing of overflowing prosperity when God will “again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem” (Zech 1:16–17; cf. 2:12 [16]).

Elsewhere, Joel locates divine jealousy as an emotion contingent upon the repentance of the people, while also pre-emptive of the insults of the other nations (Joel 2:17): “Then will the LORD be jealous [קָרַס] for his land, and pity [טָנוּף] his people” (Joel 2:18). Zephaniah likewise speaks of the Lord’s great “wrath” and “the fire of his jealousy” (אַלְכָּה יְהֹוָה נְאַה) on the day of retribution (Zeph 1:18). Yet, divine wrath is in favor of all those who “wait” for him on that coming day of “indignation, “burning anger,” “fire,” and “zeal” (Zeph 3:8). Thus, although God is “slow to anger and great in power” he punishes the guilty (Nah 1:3). Toward his enemies, God is “a jealous [קָרַס] and avenging God” a “wrathful” one who “takes vengeance” (Nah 1:2).  

368 The actual repentance of the people is not reported, though it seems that they did, in fact, repent. James L. Crenshaw thus points out, “One could argue that YHWH’s compassionate character as announced in 2:13b pertains regardless of human response” yet “the context of the second chapter in Joel argues against this emphasis on ignoring human conduct.” Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 24C; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 148. “When either [the land or people] suffered, it aroused strong and deep emotions in his heart. He had now rushed to show his passionate concern, his keen ardor which would not allow his rights to be infringed. This zealous or jealous love is a passion that in the OT can show itself in judgment upon Israel, but here it is protective, and is to cause Yahweh to drive away the trespassers from his property.” Leslie C. Allen, The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), 87; cf. Ezek 39:25; Zech 1:14; 8:2.

369 Kenneth L. Barker states that God’s caring jealousy is “the stimulating force behind the decisive turn in redemptive history: the ‘small remnant’ and the coming of the Messiah are the result of God’s burning love for Israel.” Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah (NAC 20; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 169–70.

370 Coggins suggests this reading would have the shock value of “a deliberate dramatic device’ in which ‘the two great Canaanite deities, El and Baal’ are “used as alternative designations of Yahweh.” Thus, “jealous El, avenging Yahweh, angry Baal.” R. J. Coggins and S. P. Re’emi, Israel among the Nations: A Commentary on the Books of Nahum and Obadiah (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), 21. Some have taken the phrase, “keeps [קָרַס] wrath,” as an indication of divine self-control. Robertson, The Books, 62. Others, however, believe it simply refers to God’s ability to become angry. Duane L. Christensen, Nahum (Anchor Yale Bible 24F; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 179. Thus, “zeal describes Yahweh’s affective nature. He feels strongly and reacts vigorously to the behavior of his people. So God’s compassionate beneficence as well as his wrath is contained in the notion of Yahweh’s devotion or ‘zeal’ for Israel; the tone and measure of Yahweh’s passionate reaction depends on whether his people uphold or break the covenant.” Meyers and Meyers, Haggai, Zechariah 1–8, 120.
Yet, he is “good” and “knows those who take refuge in him” (Nah 1:7). As such, jealousy itself seems to be a manifestation of the intense emotionality of divine love. It is manifested negatively when God is jealous toward Israel due to her infidelity, but positively when God is jealous for Israel due to outside forces. In both cases, God is the passionate lover.

Compassion and Passion in the Writings

God’s concern is once again on display throughout the Writings where God is depicted as hearing (𐤀𐤃𐤃) and “inclining” his ear to the humble (Ps 10:17; cf. 40:2). God cares (ḵrź) about and remembers (ḇr) his people. He sees (ṯḵr) and he hears (ḇḇḇ) human cries (Ps 106:44; cf. Ps 139:3) and remembers (ḇr) “His covenant,” even relenting (ḇḏ) according to his great lovingkindness (Ps 106:45). He is concerned for, and responds to, those who respond to him.

371 “This ‘knowing’ of the Lord must be understood in the full biblical sense of ‘loving’ with the most intense care.” Robertson, The Books, 70. Likewise, Barker, Micah, 178.

372 “The Bible thus speaks unashamedly of Yahweh’s passion, presenting him as an intense and passionate Being, fervently interested in the world of humans.” Baloian, NIDOTTE 4:380.

373 The idiom “inclining” his ear is גנב לובב לובב. As such, “God has heard; God will act.” Craigie, Psalms 1–50, 126. At the dedication of the temple, God himself declares he has “heard” (ḇḇḇ) Solomon and that if his people, in times of distress, will “humble themselves and pray and seek [his] face and turn from their wicked ways,” then God will “hear [ḇḇḇ] from heaven.” His “eyes will be open and [his] ears attentive” to prayers from the temple (2 Chr 7:12–15). Thus, God is “entreated” (ḇḇḇ), “moved by his entreaty” (ḇḇḇ + bḇḇ), and he hears, and responds to, “supplication” (ḇḇḇ) (2 Chr 33:12–13; cf. 30:20; Ezra 8:23). Notably, this is the supplication of the worst king of Judah. This illustrates the heights and depths of the grace and compassion of God. Manasseh certainly did not deserve grace but he received it, yet for him even that grace was conditional. God “responded” to his entreaty. “Even a religious renegade like Manasseh could be restored to blessing.” L. C. Allen, “First and Second Chronicles,” in Kings–Judith, 3:636.

Daniel notes the failure of the people to have “sought” God’s favor (Dan 9:13). Thus, he himself pleads for God to “listen” (ḇḇḇ) to his supplications, “O my God, incline Your ear and hear [ḇḇḇ]! Open Your eyes and see [ḇḇḇ] our desolations” (Dan 9:17–18; cf. Ps 116:1; Neh 1:11). He goes on, “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action!” (Dan 9:19). “The picture is of a person bending the ear in order to hear more clearly. God was being asked to listen intently to the prophet’s prayer (and possibly also to the insulting words being spoken about Yahweh by the heathen). The Lord was then implored to ‘open’ (‘open please!’) his eyes and observe the plight of the Jewish people and the condition of Jerusalem.” Miller, Daniel, 249. Yet, even when supplication is made, it is not “on account of any merits” of the asker, “but on account of [God’s] great compassion” (Dan 9:18). God responds to such heartfelt entreaty (Dan 9:23; cf. Ezra 8:23; Neh 9:17, 19, 27).

374 Elsewhere, in the midst of terrible divine judgment, God himself is concerned, he “saw [ḇḇḇ] and was sorry [ḇḇḇ] over the calamity” and declared “it is enough” (1 Chr 21:15; cf. Lam 3:33). The verse
not forsaking (נשׁ) those who “seek” (מְשָׁא) and trust in him (Ps 9:10). This abundance of divine concern and emotion consistently evidences the passibility and relationality of God. Such awareness and responsiveness to the actual state of affairs are most prominently depicted in terms of divine compassion and passion.

**Divine Compassion**

God is consistently represented as the compassionate (וגד) one (Pss 40:11 [12]; 103:8; 119:76–77; Lam 3:22), one who comforts (חסן) humans, denoting God’s devoted and compassionate attention to his people (Pss 23:4; 71:21; 86:17; 119:76; 135:14; cf. 77:2 [3]; 119:82). The intimacy of such divine compassion is illustrated when it is compared with a father’s compassion for his children, specifically directed toward “those who fear him” (Ps 103:13; cf. 17, 18). Further, both compassion and graciousness are central characteristics of God who is repeatedly described as “gracious and compassionate” (Ps 111:4; cf. 77:7 [8]; 102:13 [14]; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; Neh 9:31; 2 Chr 30:9) and these two characteristics are further linked with divine righteousness (Ps 116:5; cf. 112:4). The bestowal of such divine compassion is dependent upon (albeit not unilaterally) the divine will (Ps 135:14) and, at times, an apparent ground of God’s grace (Ps 51:1), deliverance (Ps 69:16), and/or redemption (Ps 103:4). As compassionate, God is responsive and is thus implored to remember his compassion and his lovingkindness, which “have been from of old” (Ps 25:6; cf. vs. 7). While, God’s “mercies [חסן] are over all his works,” thus implying an aspect of universal compassion (Ps 145:9), God is “near

implies that God is affected by the sight of the affliction and relents in sorrow (cf. Gen 6:6). See also the word study of נשׁ. The term appears elsewhere in the Writings with regard to divine relenting (Pss 90:13; 106:45) or not relenting (Ps 110:4). See also the word study of נשׁ.

375 Specifically, “children” is in parallel with “those who fear him,” implying that God’s children are none other than those who fear him.

376 Such depictions of the divine character are dependent upon the locus classicus of divine self-revelation in Exod 34:6–7. Psalm 112:4 is a potential example of this divine attribute, but more likely it is in reference to a human agent though scholars are divided on this point (see the discussion regarding this in the word study of נשׁ).
to all who call upon Him . . . in truth” (Ps 145:18). Accordingly, over and over such divine compassion is sought (Ps 51:1; Dan 2:18; Neh 1:11), as well as grace (Pss 51:1; 56:1; 119:32; Job 8:5; Dan 9:13, 17–18), evidencing the widespread understanding that God may be affected, hear, and respond to entreaty. As such, neither divine grace nor compassion is depicted as altogether unilateral.

Indeed, while divine grace and compassion may be unmerited they are not indifferent to human response. God is entreated to “turn” and be “gracious . . . after your manner with those who love your name” (Ps 119:32). God “scoffs at the scoffers” but “gives grace to the afflicted” (Prov 3:34). Confession and the forsaking of transgressions will “find compassion” (Prov 28:13). God is “gracious and compassionate” and will “not turn his face away from you if you return to Him” (2 Chr 30:9). However, when God sent his “messengers” the prophets to call the people back to Him “because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place,” they were “continually mocked” and “scoffed at . . . until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy” (36:15–16) and destruction came, and God “had no compassion” on any of them (2 Chr 36:17). The tension, here and elsewhere, between the “gracious and compassionate” God and the lack of efficacious compassion on historical occasions, is not due to a conflicted divine nature, character, or will, but is consistently tied to the actual state of affairs, specifically the resolve of Israel to repent or remain in apostasy.

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377 Thus, human supplication makes a difference, though it is only viable because of God’s “great compassion” (אֱלַוּחַ) (Dan 9:18; cf. 9:9; Pss 78:38; 79:8 [9]). God’s compassion is so immense that David would rather receive chastisement directly from him rather than any human, for God’s “mercies [אֱלַוּחַ] are very great” (1 Chr 21:13).

378 This implies a condition of grace, i.e., not scoffing. Thus, here divine grace is not altogether arbitrary. Fox translates, “As for the scornful—them he scorns, but upon the humble he bestows favor.” Proverbs 1–9, 162; cf. Ps 18:25–26 [26–27] = 2 Sam 22:26–27. According to Murphy, “The sense is that he [God] ‘outscoffs’ the scoffers.” Proverbs, 23.

379 Here, as elsewhere, God’s compassionate and gracious nature seems to provide the occasion for repentance; cf. Jer 12:15–17.
The expectation that God will be compassionate is so strong that its apparent absence is lamented (Ps 77:7 [8]). Yet, even in times of the apparent absence of God’s mercy there is hope predicated upon God’s amazing character. Thus, Ps 102 speaks of a future when God will arise and have compassion (זמר), because it is “time to be gracious [נער]” and “the appointed time has come” (Ps 102:13 [14]). Although explanation is not given as to the nature of the “appointed time,” God is clearly not compelled to bestow compassion, but does so according to his designs while also being affected by the actual state of affairs. Accordingly, God’s compassion, as his lovingkindness, never fails, his faithfulness is great (Lam 3:22). He does not desire to execute judgment, indeed, he unwillingly causes grief (Lam 3:32–33) but he will nevertheless “have compassion according to his abundant lovingkindness” (Lam 3:32).

Perhaps the abundance of divine compassion is most clearly represented in Nehemiah’s reflection upon Israel’s history, specifically the pattern of apostasy > loss of blessing > return > restoration of blessing > apostasy, and yet, divine compassion. While God is a God of forgiveness, grace, compassion, patience, and lovingkindness, the people stubbornly refused to listen to or remember God’s deeds, nevertheless God, in his “great compassion,” did not “forsake” them but continued to guide them (Neh 9:17, 19). However, due to their continued rebellion they were given to their oppressors. Yet, when they “cried” to God he “heard from heaven” and compassionately delivered them (Neh 9:27). Nevertheless, “as soon as they had rest, they did evil again” and thus God “abandoned them to the hand of their enemies” (Neh 9:28). But the people “cried again” and God again “heard from heaven” and “many times . . . rescued them according to [his] compassion” (Neh 9:28) and in God’s great compassion did not destroy or forsake them, for he is “a gracious and compassionate God” (Neh 9:31), the “great,” “mighty,” and “awesome,” “who keeps covenant and lovingkindness” (Neh 9:32; cf. Neh 1:5). Again,

380 “The psalmist ventures to remind God of the ruined state of Jerusalem, in order to arouse compassion. He appeals to Yahweh’s faithfulness, to the covenant relationship that still binds Yahweh to Israel and Zion.” L. C. Allen, Psalms 101–150, 21.
appeal is made on the basis of God’s gracious and compassionate character, with the recognition that “You are just in all that has come upon us; For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly” (Neh 9:33; cf. 13:22). In all this, though the primary reason for grace and compassion is found in God’s character and willingness to bestow grace and compassion, the reception of this grace and compassion is dependent upon the human reception, specifically hearing, obeying, turning, and thus manifesting their love for God.

**Divine Passion**

Divine concern is also manifested in indignation due to God’s people continually provoking him to vexation and the execution of judgment. Psalm 78 presents a compelling summary of this continual provocation in the history of Israel. Despite God’s care for them, his people forgot his deeds and rebelled against his commandments (Ps 78:10–11). He brought them out of Egyptian bondage miraculously but they continued to rebel, even testing God with their complaints and infuriating him even unto fiery wrath (Ps 78:15–21, 31). However, despite judgment they kept on sinning (Ps 78:32). When times became severe they “remembered,” “returned,” and sought God “diligently” (Ps 78:34–35). However, before long, they returned to covenant breaking and deceit (Ps 78:36–37). Yet God, “being compassionate, forgave” and “did not destroy them. . . . Often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath” (Ps 78:38). Notably, God has control over his anger, which is counteracted by his compassion. Despite such divine mercy, the people repeatedly rebelled, “grieved” ([בַּעֲנַי]), “tempted, “and “pained” God (Ps 78:38).

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381 “God would have been ‘just’ in putting an end to these rebellious people. Yet he kept on loving, guiding, and delivering them (Exod 32:10; 33:5).” Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NAC 10; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 241. H. G. M. Williamson suggests that this depicts a “God who, powerful as creator, had bound himself to them [the people] in a covenant promise that he had moved in deliverance to uphold and realize. . . . While they therefore offered no excuse on their own behalf, they appealed to the contradiction between their present circumstances and what they perceived as God’s immutable purposes toward them. The future might still be open, but in its own way the conclusion of the prayer breathes an atmosphere of strong faith and hope in spite of all the present, contradictory circumstances.” *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC 16; Dallas: Word, 1985), 319.
Even after God established them in the Promised Land “they provoked [nûr] him” and “aroused His jealousy [kî]” with idolatry (Ps 78:58) such that God was angry and “greatly abhorred Israel” (Ps 78:59). This prompted God to remove his presence from Israel (Ps 78:60) and, finally, select Judah as the place of his presence (Ps 78:67–68). However, despite all of this, God goes on to shepherd Judah “according to the integrity of his heart” (Ps 78:72).

The themes present in Ps 78 appear throughout the Writings, and indeed throughout the entire OT. The emotional response of divine anger is complemented by a broad range of emotions, including divine grief, pain, vexation, displeasure, jealousy, and even hatred, abhorrence, and loathing. Elsewhere, in response to infidelity, God often becomes angry in his wrath (2 Chr 19:2). At times, God is so deeply aggravated that he even hides his face (Ps 30:7), a strong sign of disapproval and removal of divine presence and beneficence (cf. Ps 77:8–9). Notice the intense divine feeling in his statement: “For forty years I loathed [kî] that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways” (Ps 95:10). That generation “tested” and “tried” God (Ps 95:9) and he resolved (literally “swore” in his “anger”) that they would not enter into his rest (Ps 95:11). This is profound, raw emotion. Over and over again, Israel provoked (nûr) God with their idolatrous infidelity (Pss 78:58; 106:29; 2 Chr 28:25; 33:6; 34:24–25; cf. 85:4). Israel’s infidelity thus prompts him to passionate, righteous jealousy (kî) (Pss 78:58; 79:5; cf. Cant 8:6). Even so, God’s anger may be turned away by entreaty

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382 nûr and kî are both in the hiphil, an explicit statement of humans causing God grief and pain.

383 This specifically depicts the removal of the ark from Shiloh. Notably, Ps 78:65 uses two analogies that describe God as rousing from sleep like a drunken warrior as he acts to place the ark in Jerusalem. The analogous, metaphorical, nature of this imagery is clearly depicted by the preposition z in both cases; cf. Isa 40:28; Ps 121:4.

384 The divine passion (kî), whether in verbal or nominal, is infrequently represented in the Writings (Pss 78:58; 79:5). Interestingly, the emotion of jealousy is associated with love and the “flame of Yahweh” in Cant 8:6 (cf. Deut 32:21–22). Although some commentators have seen the use of “Yah” as a superlative, primarily because the divine name is avoided elsewhere (so Longman III, Song of Songs, 213), it is more likely that it is indeed intended as a reference to the divine name. See the extended discussion in Richard M. Davidson, Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 621–32. Sauer interprets kî here as “passionate love.” Sauer, TLOT 3:1146. Weems
and/or supplication (2 Chr 12:12; 30:8). Even in his anger, God remains receptive to the sincere cries of his people who humble themselves (2 Chr 2:6). Moreover, God does not desire to act in wrath, but even in times of judgment God “does not afflict willingly” (Lam 3:33). Ultimately, the anger (שָׁאָר) of God is only a moment in contrast to his favor (שָׁלוֹש), which lasts a lifetime (Ps 30:5).

**Conclusion**

In all this, God is presented as being profoundly interested in, and moved by human affairs. On the one hand evil provokes him to anger, but on the other, his passion and compassion may be elicited by repentance and entreaty, leading to the removal of wrath, forgiveness, and deliverance. As such, throughout the canon, God is presented as emotional, affected by human actions, experiencing feelings of sorrow, grief, and passionate love, moved to anger by evil and yet compassionately responding, even relenting, according to human entreaty. God is thus presented as sympathetic, deeply affected by the sorrows of his people, willing to hear, answer, comments, “Human passion is compared to ‘a mighty/raging flame’ or ‘a flame of fire from Yahweh/God.’ Human love can be as intense as divine love, but divine jealousy can be as intense as human jealousy.” Renita J. Weems, “The Song of Songs,” in Proverbs–Sirach (vol. 5 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1997), 430. Davidson compellingly argues that the reference here presents the very best of romantic, human love as ultimately flowing from that reciprocal divine love God manifests toward his people, “a spark off the Holy Flame.” Davidson, Flame of Yahweh, 630. See also Larry L. Lyke, I Will Espouse You Forever: The Song of Songs and the Theology of Love in the Hebrew Bible (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2007).

385 Prior to this, notice the reciprocality involved in that God declares to Judah, “You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak” (2 Chr 12:5); cf. 1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 15:2; 24:20. Here, “it was by humbling himself before the Lord that Rehoboam escaped (12:7), but he also adds the note that there was ‘some good’ in Judah. The good is left undefined—it may have been the very acts of contrition themselves, the many faithful in the kingdom, the residual benefit of God’s promises to David, or simply the favor shown to his people Israel.” Raymond B. Dillard, 2 Chronicles (WBC 15; Dallas: Word, 1987), 100–101.

386 Notably, this suggests that God’s will is not omnicausal, the sole determiner of history, while at the same time recognizing God’s direct and powerful agency in history.

387 Thus, “weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning” (Ps 30:5). Both “favor” and “anger” are here clearly emotional. Craigie states, “Anger is the divine response to human sin; favor is the divine response to goodness, but also to repentance.” Craigie, Psalms 1–50, 254.
and comfort. His compassion is passionate, profoundly deep and intense, the magnitude of which is astounding. Although divine compassion is not constantly applied, its lasting nature stands in stark contrast to the fleetingness of divine anger. Nevertheless, even divine compassion has a limit; it is not inexhaustible. Divine compassion is thus, to some extent, contingent upon the actual situation and disposition of the people. In this way the efficacy and manifestation of divine compassion fluctuates, not because God is capricious, but in direct relationship to the vacillation of his wayward people. Divine compassion is assiduous but not immutable, highly emotive but not beyond divine control. At the same time, there is a real give and take that is presented as affecting God himself, and it is within this divine passibility that the contingency of covenant election is situated. God has real emotions that respond to human action(s). He thus remains compassionate, willing to turn in favor toward those who sincerely turn to him. In all this, even in divine wrath, it is unmistakable that God is personally invested and interested in his creatures.

Kinship Metaphors

The relational responsiveness that provides the context for divine-human relationships including election, covenant, and blessing, as well as aspects of conditionality and unconditionality, is conveyed quite powerfully in kinship metaphors. These stand at the junction of the emotional aspect of divine love and the foreconditional and reciprocal aspects of God’s love, depicting the strong affection as well as the reciprocity expected of the divine-human relationship that God seeks with his creatures.

Kinship Metaphors in the Torah

The parent-child analogy appears in numerous instances that build upon the covenant but describe a relationship that surpasses mere legal responsibility in the imagery of familial, kinship love.\footnote{It has been suggested that the covenant itself is a father-son relationship, at least in} For instance, God considers Israel “My people” (Exod 3:7), even “My son, My firstborn”
(Exod 4:22). He is deeply concerned about them and goes to great lengths to deliver them from bondage (Exod 4:23). In reflection upon God’s action in Israel’s past history, they are reminded that God “carried” them “just as a man carries his son” (Deut 1:31). Further, God disciplines Israel even as a “man disciplines his son” (Deut 8:5), a loving discipline that is ultimately for their “good” (Deut 8:16; cf. Deut 4:36–37; Prov 3:11–12; 13:24). Certain behavior is expected of God’s children because they “are the sons of the LORD” (Deut 14:1), “a holy people” whom the LORD has “chosen” as his “own possession” (הָיוּ בְּנֵי יְהוָה) (Deut 14:2). Israel’s election, or adoption, itself expects the responsibility of those adopted.

This parental analogy reaches its pinnacle in the Torah within the extended poetic imagery of Deut 32. Israel has “acted corruptly toward” God and the people are “not His children, because of their defect” (Deut 32:5). God is their “Father who has bought” them, made, and established them (Deut 32:6). He is said to have “found” Israel “in a desert land,” a “howling waste of wilderness” and “encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye” (Deut 32:10). This divine concern is then depicted as “like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spreads His wings and caught them, and carried them” (Deut

Deuteronomy. See, for instance, the seminal article of McCarthy, “Notes”; cf. 2 Kgs 16:7. While the two are certainly complementary and overlapping, however, the particular nuances of each descriptor of the divine-human relationship ought to be retained as well. Kinship language underlies language of covenant throughout the ANE, so covenant language is based on kinship, not vice versa. See the discussion in the vocabulary study above.

Although LXX has “my people” instead of “my son,” the MT is almost surely correct. Israel’s status as “firstborn” implies that God has others, pointing toward universal fatherhood. Stuart points to God’s “concern for the son’s suffering,” an “empathetic attention.” Stuart, *Exodus*, 151. According to Driver, Israel is here “brought into the closest and dearest relation to God.” S. R. Driver, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1911), 31. Note that Israel is called God’s firstborn even prior to the institution of the Mosaic covenant (Exod 4:22). Further, this comparison is heightened by the tenth plague against Egypt’s firstborn, which God characterizes in response to their bondage of his “firstborn” (Exod 4:23).

“The comparison to a father’s discipline indicates that the discipline, whether punitive or not, is administered with love.” Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 93. Likewise, Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 186.

The idiom “little man in his eye” denotes the reflection of the object of sight in one’s pupil. “Since protecting the eye is a reflexive action, the pupil is an effective simile for the object of protective care.” Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 304.
However, they forgot the God “who begot” them, who gave them “birth” (Deut 32:18) and went after false gods and he “spurned them because of the provocation of His sons and daughters” (Deut 32:19). He hides his face from them because they are “sons in whom there is no faithfulness” (Deut 32:20). In their rebellion they made him jealous and “provoked” him to “anger” (Deut 32:21; cf. 32:16), resulting in the execution of divine judgment. But, in the future, God “will have compassion on His servants” (Deut 32:36), indeed, he “loves” them (Deut 33:3).

In some passages the language of divine fatherhood and election implies adoption (Deut 14:1–2; 32:6, 10; cf. Exod 4:22). However, the parent-child metaphor freely alternates between language of adoption and language of begetting/birth. Throughout such usage, the parent-child metaphor corresponds to the covenant relationship, but signifies that the divine-human relationship goes beyond the legal, perhaps utilitarian, relationship between the typical suzerain and vassal. Rather, divine fatherhood operates within profound personal relationship that is presented as affectionate, loving, devotedly interested, and intimately concerned, feeling sorrow, passion, and intense anger at Israel’s evil, but also compassion and the desire to bring them back. Thus, this parental love acts not only in tender caretaking, but when necessary, in discipline, itself corresponding to that real love that goes beyond surface sentimentality to the desire of ultimate well-being for its object.

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392 This is quite a striking analogy: “Apparently the eagle taught its young to fly by throwing one out of the nest, and then swooping down and allowing the young bird to alight on its mother’s wings. The poetry illustrates vividly God’s dealings with his people, casting them from security to the fierce wilderness, but remaining beneath them to give them strength for the fearful experience, and gradually teaching them to ‘fly’ on their own.” Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 381.

393 As Brueggemann puts it, “Yahweh’s resolve is not just that of a political sovereign (though it is that), but is also the passion of a parent who will see about the honor and well-being of the beloved heir and firstborn.” Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in *Genesis to Leviticus*, 1:720.
Kinship Metaphors in the Prophets

In the prophets, the divine-human relationship is often depicted by the use of the parental and marriage metaphors. Both metaphors overlap with the covenant(s) and with one another and, in doing so, manifest the emotive background of the divine-human relationship, which includes God’s profound and lasting affection for his people as well as his desire for reciprocal love. The central themes that utilize both kinship metaphors are God’s enduring and faithful affection and their continual infidelity. Both are used (sometimes overlapping) to depict God’s tender affection on the one hand and Israel’s unfaithfulness on the other. For instance, divine fatherhood can extend to the individual, the covenant people, and all humans universally. Thus,

Although a broad pattern emerges, in some instances the imagery has a complex relationship to Israel’s history such that the precise human referents of the metaphor are not always entirely clear. This brief survey will highlight the broad themes that often frame instances of love in the divine-human relationship, giving little attention to the details and intricacies regarding historical referents, in order to better serve the purposes of this study.

This brief survey is not intended to be exhaustive but serves the purpose of orienting one to the overarching metaphors that often overlap with love and describe the context of the divine-human relationship. For further information regarding these metaphors in the Bible, see Adler, “The Background”; David Tasker, “The Fatherhood of God: An Exegetical Study from the Hebrew Scriptures” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2001); Patterson, “Parental Love.” Interestingly, whereas the parental imagery is common in language depicting the relationship between ANE gods and humans (especially with regard to kingship), the language of marriage for the deity-human relationship is unique to the Bible. No ANE deity is “called the ‘husband’ of its nation.” Likewise, “nowhere else in the Ancient Near East is a pact or covenant found between a god and his/her worshipping community” that entails exclusive fidelity. Adler, “The Background,” 1–2, 5.

Cf. Adler, “The Background,” 72. There is a clear association between such metaphors and the covenant, by nature of the history of the parties. However, while covenant and the metaphors are closely related, they should not be conflated. The metaphors convey information about the divine-human relationship that should not be reduced by assuming it is only referencing the legal aspects of the relationship. For further information on the conflation of covenant with other metaphors, especially the father-son relationship, see the discussion earlier in the word study of בֵּית. With this in mind, the intense emotionality of these metaphors should be recognized rather than explained away. Such emotionality within these metaphors is widely recognized; cf. Tigay, Deuteronomy, 56; Fretheim, Exodus, 77; Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 176; Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–25, 64; Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:608–9; Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20, 303. “A wife of youth” suggests all the passionate devotion of a young married couple with the bright hopes of their early married life.” Motyer, Isaiah, 447. Similarly, see Adler, “The Background,” 70; cf. Eichrodt, Theology, 251–52. As Garrett points out, “The marriage between Yahweh and Israel is the covenant, but this particular analogy for covenant implies more than either of the other two standard analogies, a contract and a treaty” since “a marriage . . . is an act of love.” Hosea, Joel, 93; cf. D. Smith, “Kinship and Covenant,” 45. As such, covenant and the emotionality of kinship are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.
God utilizes the father-son imagery in describing the promise of his enduring faithfulness to Solomon, saying, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me,” which will include establishing his throne forever, disciplining him when necessary, but never removing his יְהוָה (2 Sam 7:13–15). In another sense, divine fatherhood is universal. He is the creator of all (Mal 2:10). As father, God is presented as the one who discovered Israel as a foundling in the wilderness, took her even in her amniotic fluid, washed her, and adopted her (Ezek 16:3–6). Similarly, God proclaims, “When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son” (Hos 11:1). He taught Ephraim to walk, gathered him in his arms, healed him and will continue to guide them (Hos 11:3–4). God spoke of his people as “sons who will not deal

397 This language has significant parallels in ANE literature. Weinfeld has connected this with language of adoption coupled with the granting of kingship. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” 90–93; cf. Knoppers, 1 Chronicles 10–29, 670. However, Cross helpfully emphasizes, “It should be stressed that adoptive sonship places obligations of kinship on the father, as is generally recognized, and also on the son, which is often forgotten. Kinship obligations are necessarily mutual. In the language of kinship-in-law, the so-called Davidic Covenant, the same is true. . . . There are no ‘unilateral’ covenants in a kinship-based society.” Cross, From Epic, 14.

398 When God found her, she was still in her amniotic fluid, with uncut navel cord, unwashed, and unwrapped, abandoned and abhorred. The adoption is evident in the phrase, “Live!” (Ezek 16:6). The child had been abandoned, since the biological parents had relinquished all rights and left her for dead. See Meir Malul, “Adoption of Foundlings in the Bible and Mesopotamian Documents: A Study of Some Legal Metaphors in Ezekiel 16:1–7,” JSOT 46 (1990): 97–126.

399 This is apparently language of adoption and may recall Deut 4, 7, and 10 where love precedes divine election. Here God loves Israel, then calls them his child; cf. Exod 4:22. Notice the JPS translation, “I fell in love with Israel when he was still a child; and I have called him My son Ever since Egypt” (Hos 11:1). This love itself is far more than the election that springs from it, but, when compared intertextually throughout Hosea, points to a profound affection within a give-and-take relationship (cf. Hos 3:1; 9:15; 11:8–9; 14:4 [5]). Yee points out this give and take in that “in the other retrospects, God’s election is juxtaposed with Israel’s desertion to the gods of Canaan (9:10; 10:1–2). The more God ‘called’ Israel, the more he abandoned God to worship the baals (11:2). The son thus disowns himself from his parent, just as the wife/Israel rejects her husband (2:2a).” Gale A. Yee, “The Book of Hosea,” in The Twelve Prophets (vol. 7 of NIB, Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 277.

400 These verses shift without warning to the metaphor of Israel as a beast of burden, in continuity with Hos 4:16; 10:11. Andersen and Freedman, however, believe that “taught to walk” and “took them in My arms” are incorrect interpretations since “a na’ar is not an infant that must be taught to walk,” Hosea, 579. Adopting the more traditional view, Stuart points to the “image of the tender, patient parent training a child to walk, he proclaims his own innocence. There is both irony and pathos in these words. He had held little Ephraim’s hands as Ephraim took his first hesitant steps, and cared for him when he was sick. . . . Yet Ephraim did not even acknowledge this compassionate attention.” Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 178; cf. Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 223. The Hebrew of v. 4 presents significant interpretive problems (which many attribute to textual corruption) as is readily apparent by comparing modern translations. Andersen and Freedman

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falsely” (Isa 63:8) and he thus, among other things, redeemed them in love and mercy (Isa 63:9; cf. 63:16; 64:8). The depth of God’s affection is apparent in that his compassion surpasses that of a mother for her infant (Isa 49:15). When Israel grew up, God entered into a marriage covenant with her so that she became his (Ezek 16:8).401 He cared for her, lavishing her with gifts of fine clothing, adornments, and fine food (Ezek 16:9–13). God later looks back on this time with both fondness, recalling Israel’s former, youthful devotion (והָ), and the love (הָ) of her betrothals, and yet sorrow at what she has become (Jer 2:2).402

suggest the translation, “I was a guide for Ephraim. I took from his arms the bonds of men. They did not acknowledge that I had healed them, That I had drawn them with cords of love on their jaws, That I treated them like those who remove the yoke. They did not heed (his plea) and made (him) prevail” (Hos 11:3–4). Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 574. Yee suggests that “the MT seems to conflate two images for Israel here: Israel as son and Israel as heifer.” Yee, “The Book of Hosea,” in The Twelve Prophets, 7:277. So also Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 179; Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 224. The reference to lifting the yoke from their jaws in 11:4 would seem to relate to the similar image in 10:11 where Ephraim is referred to as a “trained heifer” who is harnessed by God. If this is correct, Yee suggests the rendering “cords of human kindness” and “bands of love” as references to “the reins that control the animal.” She points to a similar conflation in Jer 31:28–20. Yee, “The Book of Hosea,” in The Twelve Prophets, 7:277. It is difficult to point to a specific translation and interpretation with certainty, but the significance seems to be captured well by Huey, who reads this as a comparison of “the Lord’s patience with Israel to a workman gently and compassionately correcting and leading an animal to food (11:4).” Huey Jr., Jeremiah, Lamentations, 270. Yet, the people’s refusal was a continual and purposive rebellion as God describes it: They were “bent on turning from Me” (Hos 11:7). Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 574. Notice the potential parallel to Jer 31:3 by the collocation of הָ + הָ. Ibid., 581.

401 Literally, he spread his skirt (wings) over her, a custom signifying betrothal. See P. A. Kruger, “The Hem of the Garment in Marriage: The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8,” JNSL 12 (1984): 86; Moshe Greenberg, Ezekiel 1–20 (AB 22; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 277. This shift from adopted daughter to wife is perhaps shocking to contemporary readers, but this is yet another example of the unexpected shifts from one metaphor to another. Here and elsewhere, the metaphors are intermixed in order to convey the content regarding the relationship most powerfully. For similar overlaps see Jer 3 and Hos 1–2. Further, God “swore” (והָ—the language of covenant promise) to her and “entered into a covenant” so that she became his. This has parallels in the Elephantine marriage vow, “She is my wife and I am her husband.” See R. Yaron, Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 46. Cf. Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17. The Elephantine marriage vow is, of course, strongly reminiscent of the divine language of covenant-making, “I will take you for My people, and I will be your God” (Exod 6:7; cf. Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4 24:7; 30:22; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 37:23; Zech 8:8; 13:9).

402 The use of הָ may be doing double-duty as a reference to the covenant relationship but also pointing to the language of affection and tender emotion drawn from interpersonal relationships. Neither connotation excludes the other. Some have spoken of this as a “nomadic” or “desert ideal,” a reference to the initial period of marital devotion of Israel toward God. Fox thinks this is mistaken with regard to Jer 2:2, which he sees as specifying God’s unmerited love and devotion. Michael V. Fox, “Jeremiah 2:2 and the ‘Desert Ideal,’” CBQ 35 (1973): 441–50; cf. Robert P. Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). Some see this as a direct contradiction of the history. Ibid., 120. Similarly, Lundbom views this as “pure romanticism.” Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20, 253. However, many
Yet, God is repeatedly presented as a disrespected and unloved father or a scorned, cuckolded husband, the victim of unrequited love. The people’s disloyalty is expressed by their depiction, on the one hand, as rebellious, faithless children (Isa 1:2, 4; 30:9; Hos 11:2) who dishonor their father (Mal 1:6) and only seem to call to him as “my father” when they are in need (Jer 3:4; cf. Isa 63:16) and, on the other hand, as an extremely promiscuous and adulterous wife, continually going after her “many lovers” (Jer 3:1; cf. Isa 57:6–8; Jer 2:24–25; Ezek 16:15, 25–26), abandoning God (Jer 3:20), and forgetting him “days without number” (Jer 2:32), who even pays her “clients” rather than receiving payment from them (Ezek 16:33–34). Their rebellion brings divine discipline (Isa 63:10; Ezek 16:42–43) and the rupture of the special relationship between God and his people. They have no rightful claim to the continuance of the special relationship as “wife” (Jer 3:1) or as God’s children (Hos 1:6, 9; 2:4; cf. Jer 4:22). Thus, God scholars view the language as not merely wishful, but also factual. Israel was briefly devoted, though inconsistent. Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–25, 24, 52; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 162–63; Huey Jr., Jeremiah, Lamentations, 62; Michael DeRoche, “Jeremiah 2:2–3 and Israel’s Love for God during the Wilderness Wanderings,” 45 (1983): 364–76. Importantly, Ezek 16:8–14 likewise depicts the wilderness era as a time of “close fellowship with God” despite also noting the extent of Israel’s later corruption (Ezek 20:5–26). Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 163.

The imagery of adultery is quite frequent throughout nearly all of Hosea as well (cf. Hos 4:12, 15, 18; 5:3–4, 7; 6:10; 8:9; 9:1, 10). She is even said to have “played the harlot” with “every passer-by who might be willing” (Ezek 16:15; cf. 16:25–26) as well as having committed child sacrifice and other atrocities (Ezek 16:20–22). Their depravity is even compared to a donkey in heat, a powerful metaphor of their adulterous ways (Jer 2:24–25).

Jeremiah 3:1 raises the prospect that no reconciliation may be possible by reference to the law in Deut 24:1–4 that prohibits a man from remarrying a woman who has since been re-married to another and divorced. Miller thinks God’s affection is so great that he “is willing to violate God’s own law . . . if the people will return.” “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:603. However, as Thompson points out, Israel had not married one lover but “was a prostitute to several lovers.” The Book of Jeremiah, 191. Yaron, further, stresses that “too exacting a standard must not be applied to a text which is not legal.” R. Yaron, “Restoration of Marriage,” JJS 17 (1966): 3. Likewise, Craigie wisely cautions not to press the marital law imagery, since the prophet “freely adapts it to his immediate purpose.” Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–25, 51.

Hosea is thus commanded to name his children Lo-Ruhamah (no compassion) and Lo-Ammi (not my people) to symbolize God’s fractured relationship with such children of harlotry (Hos 1:6, 9; cf. 2:4) though later God hopefully reverses these names to Ruhamah and Ammi (Hos 2:1 [3]). Here, the imagery of unfaithful children and adulterous wife come together in the complex analogy of Hosea, where an adulterous wife and her two children appear to represent Israel and Judah, perhaps with Israel depicted as the mother and one of the children. Andersen and Freedman suggest the land as mother, Jezreel as all Israel, Lo-Ruhamah as Ephraim and Lo-Ammi as Judah. Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 288–89.
sent them away and gave Israel a “writ of divorce” (Jer 3:8; cf. Isa 50:1; Hos 2:2).\footnote{This is specifically in reference to the northern kingdom, Israel, and was to hopefully deter Judah from her adultery, but it did not do so (Jer 3:8). Notably, adultery should have incurred the death penalty (cf. Deut 22:22) but God compassionately issued only a writ of divorce, which corresponds to something less than adultery (cf. Deut 24:1). There has been some disagreement over whether God ever actually divorced Israel, especially considering the cryptic phrase in Isa 50:1 where God, defending himself against the charge that he abandoned his people, asks, “Where is the certificate of divorce by which I have sent your mother away? Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away” (Isa 50:1). Some have taken this to mean that God never gave them such a writ of divorce and that the people’s inability to produce one will drive that point home. Thompson, \textit{The Book of Jeremiah}, 191. This is in accord with the view that God and his “wife” were merely separated but not divorced in Hos 1–2. Andersen and Freedman, \textit{Hosea}, 220–24. On the other hand, some see this as God calling for the writ of divorce to point out the charges that were brought against them, that God did not abandon them but the other way around. Both options could fit the meaning of Isa 50:1 in isolation but, of the two, only the latter accords with Jer 3:8. Cf. Thompson, \textit{The Book of Jeremiah}, 196.}

God’s passion regarding his “wife” is nevertheless evident. She is his “beloved” who by vile deeds has forfeited her place in his house (Jer 11:15). Therefore he has “forsaken” his house and “abandoned” his inheritance, given the “beloved of [his] soul” into the hand of her enemies and has even “come to hate her” (Jer 12:8–9).\footnote{The language “beloved of my soul” is intensely emotive suggesting that the hatred, as parallel antonym, is as well. Miller points out, “the pathos of the whole section is caught up in that one sentence, with its identification of the one whom the Lord has given over to her enemies as ‘the beloved of my heart.’” “The Book of Jeremiah,” in \textit{Isaiah–Ezekiel}, 6:679. Lundbom likewise notes the import of the expression, manifesting God’s “deep love for his people.” \textit{Jeremiah} 1–20, 654.}

Nevertheless, despite their unfaithfulness and apostasy, God in his graciousness and love maintains a seemingly heartfelt call for their repentance and return (Jer 3:12–14, 22), upon which the restoration depends (Jer 4:1; cf. 31:21–22; Hos 2:2 [4]; 10:12; 14:1–3 [2–4]).\footnote{“By her faithlessness Israel [had] forfeited a father-child relationship and an inheritance.” Huey Jr., \textit{Jeremiah, Lamentations}, 77–78. Yet, “God had a special desire to give them the best, a delightful land, the most beautiful patrimony in all the world. But if that were to be the case, Israel would need to call Yahweh \textit{My Father} in utter sincerity and not turn back.” Thompson, \textit{The Book of Jeremiah}, 207. “The woman’s repentance and return to her husband then become the first and vital act in the process of rehabilitation. Hosea, however, contends that the initiative always remains with the husband (Yahweh), though it is only effective when there is a response (v 17b).” Andersen and Freedman, \textit{Hosea}, 264. Lundbom notes that in 4:2 the language is from the Abrahamic covenant, pointing out that “the Abrahamic covenant is being subjected to conditions,” specifically that Israel’s “role in mediating grace to the nations . . . is made conditional.” Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah} 1–20, 327.}

However, the exact referents are not entirely certain.
If they will but return, God will adopt (or re-adopt) them, promising to set them among his sons, give them a pleasant land and the most beautiful inheritance; they will call him father (Jer 3:19) and he will heal their faithlessness (Jer 3:22). Likewise, in response to their repentance and recognition that in God “the orphan finds mercy,” God declares, “I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them” (Hos 14:3–4 [4–5]). Once again, out of his surpassing affection and “everlasting love” (Jer 31:3) for Israel, even his firstborn Ephraim (Jer 31:9), God exclaims, “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him” (Jer 31:20). Therefore, though they broke (גַּשָּׁם) their covenant with him, their husband, he will make a new covenant with them which shall endure (Jer 31:31–36; cf. Ezek 16:60–62) and “betroth” his people to himself “forever,” in “righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, compassion, and faithfulness (Hos 2:19–20 [21–22]).

In that future, her shame will be forgotten, “For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth” (Isa 54:4–5). God has called her “like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one’s youth when she is rejected” (Isa 54:6), for he “forsook” her for a “brief moment” but will gather her with “great compassion” (Isa 54:7); he hid his face in a momentary “outburst of anger”

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409 The continuance of his love for her, despite her infidelity, is modeled in the command to Hosea, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel” (Hos 3:1). As Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr. put it, “Beyond all the requirements of the covenant regulations, God continued to love those who had long since ceased to love him and earnestly desired their return to him.” Jeremiah 1–25, 57.

410 Notice the adoption language of fatherhood and inheritance. Further, “the reflective nature of these verses illuminates the warmth and love that lie permanently in the heart of God. He is disappointed at failure but still loves and still desires repentance (3:22). It is important to retain memory of this deep compassion when we read the prophet’s declarations of judgment (4:5ff.); in judgment, the compassion is still present, hoping beyond the judgment for a restoration of the relationship of love.” Ibid., 64.

411 There can be little doubt that the people recognize themselves as the “orphan.”

412 He will be called “Ishi” (my husband) and no longer “Baali” (my master) (Hos 2:16 [18]) and will make a covenant with them (Hos 2:18 [20]) and have compassion on she who was Lo-Ruhamah (no
but will have compassion with “everlasting lovingkindness” (Isa 54:8). Thus, she will no longer be called “forsaken” nor her land “desolate” but she will be called “My delight is in her” and her land “married” for God delights in her and will marry (or re-marry) her land (Isa 62:4). Likewise, God will claim them as his own cherished “possession” (הַלֵּבָע) and “spare” (ハイן) or have compassion on them even as a man has compassion on the “son who serves him” (Mal 3:17).413

Kinship Metaphors in the Writings

The intimacy of the divine-human relationship is once again described in the Writings in terms of kinship. In this section of the canon, however, the overwhelming prevalence is the parental metaphor, whereas the marriage metaphor is rare and somewhat cryptic. With regard to the latter, there are two primary instances where the marriage metaphor may be discerned. One is within a wedding song describing the marriage of a king and a princess, which typologically points to the divine-human relationship (Ps 45:9–14).414 Similarly, Song of Songs may typologically point to the love between God and his people, specifically by reference to the flame of Yahweh (Cant 8:6).415 If such instances are indeed types of the divine-human relationship, they...
manifest a profound, passionate love of God for his people, in continuity with that which has already been seen in the earlier sections of the OT.

The parental metaphor is more explicit in the Writings, used in numerous instances with regard to the Davidic dynasty, specifically David and Solomon. God proclaims to David regarding Solomon, “I will be his father and he shall by My son” along with the promise of unceasing lovingkindness (1 Chr 17:13; cf. 22:10; 28:6). The Psalms similarly recall this time regarding David, “He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God . . . I also shall make him My firstborn” (Ps 89:26–27 [27–28]). Moreover, God’s decree is recounted, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You” (Ps 2:7). The metaphor also extends beyond individuals to the community of God’s people, evidencing his interest and concern for their well-being. God is “a father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows” (Ps 68:5 [6]; cf. 10:14). Fatherly divine love extends to compassion as well as discipline. Thus, “just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him” (Ps 103:13). Yet, “whom the LORD loves [םֵרֶד] He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights [רַע]” (Prov 3:12; cf. Ps 89:30–32 [31–33]). Thus, even divine discipline is grounded in the intimate and compassionate, fatherly love of God. It is his deep affection that prompts God to care enough about his people to discipline them. In all, kinship descriptors of the divine-human relationship

416 This language has significant parallels in ANE literature. Weinfeld has connected this with language of adoption coupled with the granting of kingship. “The Covenant,” 190–93; cf. Knoppers, 1 Chronicles 10–29, 670.

417 The NT identifies this as Messianic (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5).

418 L. C. Allen suggests the reading, “As tender as a father’s affection for his children, has been Yahweh’s affection for those who revere him.” Psalms 101–150, 25. Notably, the children in the analogy appear to be “those who fear him,” thus contingency is built into the kinship relationship in this instance.

419 Notice the connection between love and delight, presenting the strongly emotional fondness and affection God has for his people.

420 Correction, only necessary in a non-ideal world, implies cognizance and concern for the actual situation of the son. This is in accord with the proverb, “Discipline” is withheld by the father who “hates” his son, but the one who “loves” his son “disciplines him diligently” (Prov 13:24; cf. 15:10). God desires

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appear in continuity with those in the Prophets, although they are less frequent. They manifest that profound affinity that God has for his people, and desires from them in return.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the OT, kinship imagery depicts God’s affection for his people, like the enduring and deep compassion of parents for their children and the passion of a husband for his exclusive marital relationship. It is interesting to note that marriage and adoption are both voluntary, rather than merely natural, relationships. This implies that the divine-human relationship is voluntary rather than necessary. At the same time, deep and intense affection is evident both in such metaphors and elsewhere throughout the OT, which suggests relationship that is not only volitional but also profoundly emotional. Similarly, the ongoing maintenance of the relationship is conditional. The divine-human relationship is thus depicted as both more than voluntary (involving pathos and compassion) but also not less than voluntary. God is the devoted parent and faithfully loving husband, yet dishonored and scorned, his overtures rejected in a repetitive cycle of unrequited love. God is thus the wounded lover and the pained, rejected father. Yet, he is nevertheless the sovereign God who continuously acts to call his people back, whether by wooing them or disciplining them toward repentance, and he forecasts a day of final and ultimate restoration and delight that he will bring about for those who respond to him. This provides the striking context of divine love, set within a reciprocal, give-and-take relationship with his people, as shall be seen below.

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his people to experience blessing, but they must respond to him in loyalty. Therefore, he disciplines them. “Although the reproof may be harsh, it is actually a sign of the LORD’s love, not of his wrath, for it concerns those whom the LORD loves.” Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29*, 249. Garrett further points out that discipline goes beyond punishment: “While the idea of punishment is certainly present (cf. Job 5:17–18 and 2 Sam 7:14), ‘discipline’ primarily involves teaching or training rather than punishment for wrongdoing. It is analogous to military training, in which, although the threat of punishment is present, even stern discipline is not necessarily retribution for offenses. Hardship and correction are involved, however, which are always hard to accept.” *Proverbs*, 81. However, this does not mean that all suffering is a result of discipline or divine action.
The Foreconditional Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that support the conclusion that divine love is foreconditional, not altogether unconditional. By the term “foreconditional” I mean that God’s love is offered prior to any conditions but not exclusive of conditions. Accordingly, that God’s love is foreconditional affirms that:

1. Divine love is prior to any human initiative or response—it holds sole primacy regarding the divine-human love relationship.

2. God chooses to bestow his love prior to and independent of human merit.

3. God’s love expects and ultimately requires, an appropriate human response, even if that response is merely the intention of responding to God in love.

First, divine love is prior to all other love and conditions though it is not thereby altogether unconditional. Second, divine love is unmerited but not altogether unconditional. Third, divine love, as evaluative, is also conditional and may be forfeited. Therefore, it is not strictly unmotivated, spontaneous, disinterested, indifferent, or unconditional. Fourth, divine love is unconditional with respect to God’s volition, but conditional with respect to divine evaluation. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Is divine love altogether unconditional, spontaneous, or ungrounded? Is divine love mere beneficence? Is divine love altogether unmerited? Can divine love be forfeited, lost, or discontinued and, if so, how and why? This section of the study begins with a survey of the meaning of the important, complex, and multifaceted term נְפַלְיָה. This is followed by a brief survey of the conditional aspect of divine beneficence in the OT before a canonical survey of the foreconditionality of divine love.
The Meaning of בָּשָׂד

בָּשָׂד is one of the most significant descriptors of God’s character in the entire Scriptures. It is a purely relational term, describing interpersonal attitudes and/or actions as well as divine-human attitudes and/or actions, the majority referring to the divine-human relationship. It is often translated as lovingkindness, steadfast love, loyalty, goodness, faithfulness, mercy et al. It may connote love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, yet also faithfulness, loyalty, and strength. Perhaps Gowan puts it best when he writes that בָּשָׂד “cannot be adequately translated by anything short of a paragraph.” As with בָּרָא, בָּשָׂד has a wide range of meaning. It is often a basis of many kinds of beneficent action. The purpose of this brief semantic overview is not to search for a narrow or monolithic definition of the term, but rather to view its range of meaning in order to better grasp its relationship to the topic of this study.

421 It occurs 251 times in 245 verses. The etymology is uncertain and unhelpful in determining the meaning; cf. Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “חסד,” TDOT 5:45; H. J. Stoebe, “חסד,” TLOT 1:449. בָּשָׂד occurs primarily in the noun form (248 times in 243 verses) with the verbal form appearing only in two verses, which are identical (2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]). The vast majority of instances are singular. The plural appears only 16 times in 15 verses. Over half of all occurrences of בָּשָׂד appear in the Psalms. Three of the 245 occurrences are of a variant meaning of “shame” or “insult” (Prov 25:10; 14:34; Lev 20:17). Beyond the 245 uses of בָּשָׂד, the adjectival בָּשָׂד appears in 32 verses, mostly in the Psalms (25 verses).

422 Zobel counts 63 out of 245 as בָּשָׂד within the divine-human relationship. Zobel, TDOT 5:45.

423 Gowan, Theology in Exodus, 236. Walker cautions against “too sharp a distinction between God’s love (’hb) and his faithfulness (ḥsd) . . . hsd may clearly refer to either ‘love’ (kindness, mercy, favor) or ‘faithfulness.’” “Love,” in Current Issues (ed. Hawthorne), 279. Hesed is further associated with, among other things, truth, faithfulness, compassion, righteousness, justice/judgment, goodness, redemption/deliverance, etc.

424 There are numerous cries for salvation, rescue, and/or deliverance on the basis, or “because of,” God’s בָּשָׂד (Ps 6:4 [3]). בָּשָׂד may thus be the basis of remembrance (Ps 25:6–7), deliverance (Pss 69:13 [14]; 86:5; 144:2), help (Ps 94:18), salvation (Pss 31:16; 109:26; cf. 119:41), redemption (Ps 44:26), preservation (Ps 61:7), satisfaction (Ps 90:14), comfort (Ps 119:76), revival (Ps 119:88, 159), even the cutting off of enemies (Ps 143:12), and a host of other benefits (Pss 69:16; 119:124, 149; 143:8). God’s בָּשָׂד and truth “continually preserve,” he does not “withhold” his “compassion” (Ps 40:11). He saves and “sends forth His lovingkindness and truth” (Ps 57:3). “He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God” (Ps 98:3). God may even extend בָּשָׂד through other human beings (see Gen 39:21; Ezra 7:28; 9:9; Dan 1:9). In the plural, בָּשָׂד is a term for God’s beneficent action itself (lovingkindness—Pss 66:20; 85:7 [8]; 86:13; 90:14; 94:18; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 2 Chr 1:8).

425 A plethora of studies have been conducted regarding the meaning of בָּשָׂד, with sometimes
ает most often with God as agent and is strictly relational, connoting a positive disposition and/or action(s) toward another.\textsuperscript{426} Within such relationality, divine אמת is responsive and expects appropriate response. Specifically God’s אמת is often in response to a pre-existing relationship and/or various actions of human beings including fidelity and supplication. As such, the divine-human אמת assumes a reciprocal, though unequal, relationship. However, divine אמת is consistently presented as voluntary and free.\textsuperscript{427} Perhaps the greatest example of this, among others, appears in the narrative of the golden calf, when divine אמת, among other divine characteristics, is bestowed upon a people who have just forfeited all covenant rights in an egregious manner (cf. Exod 32–34).

Out of that wider Exodus narrative come two seminal statements that go to the very root of the OT understanding of God and אמת. The first appears within the Decalogue. Although God will visit iniquity to the third and fourth generations, divine אמת will be shown to the thousandth generation of those who love God and keep his commandments (Exod 20:6 = Deut 5:10; cf. Exod 34:7; Deut 7:9; Jer 32:18). The second seminal statement is perhaps the \textit{locus classicus} of divine character (Exod 34:6–7). In the golden calf narrative, and indeed recurrently throughout Israel’s widely different conclusions regarding the meaning of the word. Secondary studies will be engaged as they relate to the issues that come up in surveying the usage of אמת.

\textsuperscript{426} Likewise, with human agents, the root אמת sums up all that is virtuous in behavior. In intimate relationships of family and/or friendship that means treating loved ones as such. In political relationships that is being faithful to responsibilities and reciprocating past favors. In religious relationship that is fulfilling all of the covenant desires of God: hearing, doing, obeying, worshipping exclusively, etc., but doing all this out of devotion, that is, from the heart.

\textsuperscript{427} For instance, Lot declares that he has “found favor in your sight” and “you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me” (Gen 19:19). Abraham’s servant requests that God show “lovingkindness” to Abraham in granting success in the search for Isaac’s bride (Gen 24:12; cf. 24:14) and then praises God “who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and truth” implying that God was free to do otherwise (Gen 24:27). Jacob, as a precursor to his request of deliverance from Esau, declares that he is “unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness” (Gen 32:10). Later, divine lovingkindness is said to have been removed from Saul, but God promises that such will not depart from David’s son (2 Sam 7:15). Solomon praises God for having dealt in great אמת toward David by fulfilling his promise (2 Chr 1:8–9). In all of these examples, God need not have manifested אמת, but אמת is predicated upon God’s voluntary association.
history, God goes far beyond covenant responsibilities, or even moral expectations, by continuing in **הוהי** toward a stiff-necked, rebellious, unworthy people who had forfeited all covenantal privileges. In the aftermath of Israel’s great apostasy (Exod 32), God describes himself as “abounding in lovingkindness and truth” as well as “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger (Exod 34:6), the one “who keeps lovingkindness for thousands” the forgiver of all kinds of sin, yet also the punisher of the guilty (Exod 34:7). Thus, “as it stands in Exodus, the passage is a beautifully balanced statement with regard to the two most basic aspects of the character of God—His love and His justice. It is significant that love holds the primary place.”

This seminal statement of divine character and **הוהי** manifests associations that appear many times elsewhere, including goodness, compassion, graciousness, truth, and forgiveness yet never injustice (Exod 33:19; 34:6–7). These characteristics also often appear alongside **הוהי** in contexts where someone requires mercy, which often result in forgiveness. Although forgiveness

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429 This seminal passage is recurrently alluded to, often in the context of further entreaty. After one such allusion, entreaty for pardon is predicated “according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness” (Num 14:18–19). Similar allusions occur throughout the OT, often the basis of similar appeals (Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Neh 9:17; 31–32; cf. Ps 86:15; cf. Pss 103:8; 145:8). The importance of **הוהי** to the divine character is also seen in its frequent occurrence as the basis of praise. Appropriately, divine **הוהי** is also a basis of effusive praise and thanksgiving (Exod 15:13; Pss 31:7, 21; 92:2; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31; 136:1–26; 138:2; cf. Jer 33:11; Ezra 3:11; 1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 20:21). God is to be “blessed” (Ps 66:20), his **הוהי** is to be praised and proclaimed (Pss 59:16–17; 63:3; 89:1; 101:1), not hidden (Ps 40:10), walked in (Ps 26:3), and thought of (Ps 48:9). Moreover, **הוהי** is not just characteristic of God, it is his “delight,” which he expects of humans (Hos 6:6), and delights in exercising, along with justice and righteousness (Jer 9:24). He is unique as the pardoner, the one who passes over rebellion, who does “not retain His anger forever, because He delights [**הוהי**] in unchanging love [**הוהי**]” (Mic 7:18; cf. v. 20). Similarly in the Psalms, **הוהי** takes on even greater prevalence as a descriptor of the divine character, in fact, as a summative term that, amidst other rich language and imagery, intends to encapsulate God’s relationship to his people. He is the God of **הוהי** (Ps 59:10 [11]). God is the one “who redeems . . . who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion” (Ps 103:4). With him there is **הוהי** and abundant redemption (Ps 130:7). It is characteristic of divine virtues and governance, thus, “righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You” (Ps 89:14; cf. 85:10).
is not significantly associated with רֵעָה in human interpersonal usage, it becomes quite important to the ongoing divine-human relationship within which רֵעָה takes place. רֵעָה is often a basis (often alongside goodness, compassion, and/or grace) of the removal of divine wrath (Isa 54:8; Mic 7:18; Lam 3:31–32) as well as the expectation, request, and/or reception of forgiveness and/or deliverance (i.e., Num 14:19; Pss 25:7; 51:3). This willingness to overcome sin and the disruption of the relationship manifests the steadfastness of God’s commitment, which is the only way that the God-human relationship can continue. In this way, the ultimate (but not exclusive) ground of divine רֵעָה is God’s free, loving character. As such, רֵעָה is closely associated and collocates significantly with all the divine virtues including his love (רֵעָה), 430 compassion (רֵעָה), 431 and goodness (רֵעָה), 432 which are manifested in his voluntary association with humanity. 433

430 Divine רֵעָה itself is an explicit ground of רֵעָה. God declares his “everlasting love” and “therefore” has drawn the people with רֵעָה (Jer 31:3). According to Bowen, God shows רֵעָה because he loves. Boone M. Bowen, “A Study of Chesed” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1938), quoted in Clark, The Word Hesed, 18. The close connection is also apparent in Jer 2:2, where God remembers human רֵעָה and love toward him. On the other hand, God is often said to respond with רֵעָה toward humans who love him (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4; cf. Pss 119:159; 37:28; 97:10).

431 In one instance, compassion is on the basis of רֵעָה (Isa 54:8), but most often they are side by side as grounds of positive divine action and are not clearly distinguished. As such, in many of the collocations a beneficial action is either promised, expected, requested, and/or received on the basis of divine רֵעָה and compassion (Isa 63:7; Hos 2:19 [21]; Pss 25:6; 40:11; 51:1; Pss 69:16 [17]; 103:4; Lam 3:22, 32). Likewise, the two terms collocate in the locus classicus of the divine character. God is compassionate as well as abounding in lovingkindness (Exod 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17), attributes that provide the foundation of divine forgiveness. The endurance of both is emphasized (Isa 54:10; Lam 3:22). They are both “from of old” (Ps 25:6), bestowed on “those who fear” God (Ps 103:11, 13). Both may be withdrawn or withheld (Jer 16:5; cf. Ps 40:11) or appear to be absent (Mic 7:19–20; Ps 77:8–9 [9–10]). Both are thus grounds of the continuance of the divine-human relationship, in which divine forgiveness and deliverance are so often needed. God’s רֵעָה as steadfast loyal love, and רֵעָה as God’s compassionate, tender feelings for his people, together ground God’s beneficent actions, especially those that extend into the realm of need.

432 There is a great degree of overlap between the terms, but their semantic ranges are distinct. Goodness is an aspect of רֵעָה, but רֵעָה is more than goodness. For one thing, רֵעָה entails particular interpersonal relations while רֵעָה may be used more abstractly. As such, רֵעָה is always good, but goodness is not always רֵעָה. Zobel comments, “What is meant by hesed can almost be paraphrased by the expression ‘do good.’” TDOT 5:47. For further consideration of the overlap see Stoebe, “Die Bedeutung,” 244–54. He suggests the original meaning of רֵעָה was “goodheartedness, kindness” and that רֵעָה gradually replaced רֵעָה in late writings. In divine usage, the collocation is most often used to praise the character of God in the refrain, he “is good” and “His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Jer 33:11; Pss 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; 1 Chr 6:34; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3; cf. Ezra 3:11). Similarly, God is praised for the “great goodness toward the house of Israel,” according to his compassion and the abundance of his רֵעָה (Isa 63:7; cf. Ps 63:3 [4]).
God’s commitment, reliability, steadfastness, and fidelity to the objects of His "hesed" is further emphasized in the frequent collocations of תְּרוּעָה, צְדָקָה, or אָדַם, all of which connote aspects of truth and faithfulness. In circumstances that require forgiveness also overlaps somewhat with grace, although the quality of loyalty and steadfastness distinguishes the terms, being essential to "hesed" but not to צְדָקָה. It must be recognized in all this that divine "hesed" surpasses

Thus, both terms together describe and extol God’s virtuous character (cf. Pss 86:5; 25:7; 69:16 [17]; 109:21). See also Mic 6:8; 2 Chr 6:41; Prov 14:22; Judg 8:35; 2 Sam 2:6; Esth 2:9.

433 Due to such associations many scholars see an emotional aspect as a connotation of צְדָקָה. "Hesedh, then, implies relationship and indicates a deep, lasting affection." Morris, Testaments of Love, 68. Clark spoke of it as “an emotion that leads to activity beneficial to the recipient.” Clark, The Word Hesed, 267. Zobel sees צְדָקָה as “involv[ing] an emotional element,” even early, which becomes clear in its association with צְדָקָה. TDOT 5:53. Snaithe sees emotionality based on his view that צְדָקָה has etymological roots in the Arabic term meaning “eager, ardent desire.” The Distinctive Ideas, 106. Propp believes that "hesed is an emotional state motivating action.” Exodus 1–18, 532.

434 Often the terms צְדָקָה and צִדָּק, “truth,” appear together in the syntagm צְדָקָה צִדָּק both with human and divine agency. At times, this syntagm signifies the steadfast faithfulness in human relationships (Gen 24:29; 47:29; Josh 2:14), or is descriptive of virtue (Ps 25:10; Prov 3:3) and/or the consequences of virtue (Prov 14:22; 16:6; 20:28; cf. 2 Sam 15:20). However, it appears most often with divine agency, signifying the steadfastness and faithfulness of divine צְדָק (Gen 24:27; Exod 34:6; Pss 40:10–11 [11–12]; 57:4; 61:7 [8]); 85:10 [11]; 86:15; 89:14 [15]; 138:2). In other instances, the two terms demonstrate the close connection between them as descriptors of the basis, or description, of virtuous action requested, received, and/or expected of God (Gen 32:10 [11]; 2 Sam 2:6; Mic 7:20; Pss 69:13 [14]; 115:1; 117:2). צְדָק is not synonymous with צְדָקָה, since the latter alone can be used in non-personal contexts, but the syntagm magnifies the commitment, reliability, trustworthiness, faithfulness, and fidelity aspects of God’s צְדָק; cf. Clark, The Word Hesed, 256; Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 34. Many scholars have seen the syntagm צְדָק as a hendiadys with צְדָק serving to accentuate or emphasize the divine commitment. Clark, The Word Hesed, 255; Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 102; Zobel, TDOT 5:48; Umberto Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 440; E. A. Speiser, Genesis (AB 1; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 180. As Sarna puts it, “The combination of terms expresses God’s absolute and eternal dependability in dispensing His benefactions.” Exodus, 216. A number of scholars, however, see these as two separate attributes of God. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 242; Laney, “God’s Self-revelation,” 46; Alfred Jepsen, “ךֵדָק,” TDOT 1:314. As Clark puts it, “The genuineness, permanence, and reliability is not so much an attribute of hessed as of the parties who are involved in the hessed. . . . The relationship between them is an unwavering, enduring, reliable commitment to each other in which hessed is the appropriate action.” The Word Hesed, 254–55. See also Ps 57:10 [11]; cf. 108:4 [5]. צְדָק also collocates closely with two other terms that have meanings related to צְדָק (truth): צִדָּק and צִדָּקָה. צִדָּק describes God’s character of faithfulness (Deut 7:9; cf. Ps 89:1 [2]). Likewise, God’s continued צִדָּק and צִדָּקָה are variously described and praised (Pss 92: [3]; 98:3). See also Pss 36:5 [6]; 89:2 [3]; 100:5; 89:24 [25]; 33 [34]; 49 [50]). In all this it is clear that the qualities of truth and faithfulness are inherent in צְדָקָה, though צְדָק is more than these qualities.

435 In divine usage, the two terms appear in parallel and signify beneficence. See Gen 19:19; 39:21. The close association between the terms also allows for either to serve as the apparent basis for the other (see Gen 47:29; Ps 51:1 [3]). Both terms most often appear in the many instances of the locus classicus, denoting God’s gracious character and abundant lovingkindness (Exod 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah
responsibilities and/or expectations since forgiveness and grace are never deserved and God’s fidelity extends far beyond that which is required, or could be reasonably anticipated. This surpassing and superabounding aspect often connoted by הֵסֵד alone is magnified in the syntagms “abundance of הֵסֵד” (מִשְׁלָח + הֵסֵד) of “greatness of הֵסֵד.” However, this does not mean that justice is ever shirked. Divine forgiveness does not include ignoring or overlooking sin. Importantly, divine הֵסֵד is associated with justice in many significant ways especially in collocations with the lexemes מְשׁאָל and מְשַׁא. God forgives but does not thereby forsake justice; God is the one “who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth” (Jer 9:23; cf. Pss 33:5; 89:14). As

4:2; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17). Thus, הֵסֵד overlaps with grace in being a favorable disposition and/or resulting in favorable, often gracious action. But the terms are not synonymous. Stoebe, TLOT 1:456. They collocate together in contexts where mercy, forgiveness, or some kind of special favor is needed by the patient. Thus, their significant overlap is not surprising considering the history of Israel’s frequent need for grace. In such contexts, הֵסֵד has the ability to overlap with יִד/יִדוּנָי, yet surpasses יִד/יִדוּנָי in its other connotations of steadfastness, loyalty, appropriate response, etc. הֵסֵד goes beyond all responsibilities and in this respect overlaps יִד, but entails more than the surpassing of responsibilities. הֵסֵד is more than beneficence; it presumes loyalty and, often, faithfulness to a past relationship or mutual activity while יִד is that element of favor in general, often unmerited. Thus, הֵסֵד often contains יִד in its expression, but the two terms are not to be conflated.

Two main differences have been popular among scholars: the difference between the terms with regard to responsibility/obligation and the difference regarding relative status. Lofthouse thought יִד was only appropriate “just where there was no tie or claim,” whereas הֵסֵד requires “some recognised tie.” Lofthouse, “Hen and Hesed,” 33. Likewise, for Snaith, הֵסֵד is bilateral, but יִד is unilateral, and the bestowal of יִד is out of pure generosity, never responsibility. The Distinctive Ideas, 128. However, one should take care to recognize that something may be undeserved yet, at the same time, not given entirely arbitrarily. Lofthouse also viewed יִד as only from superior to inferior. Lofthouse, “Hen and Hesed;” 30; cf. Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 128. Clark agreed with the superior-inferior relation for יִד but thought it irrelevant for הֵסֵד. The Word Hesed, 215. However, Reed correctly notes that יִד does not require a superior-inferior relationship, but more importantly emphasizes the capacity of the giver of יִד for goodwill. Further, he considers יִד to be quite complementary to הֵסֵד, perhaps even as a basis of הֵסֵד. Reed, “Some Implications,” 36–41.

436 For the former see Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Isa 63:7; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Pss 5:7 [8]; 69:13 [14]; 86:5, 15; 103:8; 106:7, 45; Lam 3:22; Neh 9:17; 13:22. For the latter see Gen 19:19; Num 14:19; 1 Kgs 3:6; Pss 57:10 [11]; 86:13; 108:4 [5]; 145:8; 2 Chr 1:8.

437 The three terms are collocated together in numerous instances. For example, God “loves righteousness [יִד] and justice [מסָר]; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord” (Ps 33:5). See also Pss 89:14 [15]; Isa 16:5; Jer 9:23 [24]; Hos 2:19 [21]. In other instances, הֵסֵד is closely tied to יִד. For example, “lovingkindness and truth have met together; righteousness [יִד] and peace have kissed each other (Ps 85:10 [11]). See also 1 Kgs 3:6; Hos 10:12; Pss 40:10 [11]; 36:10 [11]; 103:17; Prov 21:21. Similarly, the close bond is seen with מסָר. See Hos 12:6 [7]; Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9; Pss 101:1; 119:149. This term is also related to the כפָּשַׁת. God loves justice (מסָר) and does not forsake his כפָּשַׁת (Ps 37:28; cf. 149:9), he guards the paths of justice, preserves the way of the כפָּשַׁת (Prov 2:8).
such, ṣêm overlaps with both mercy and forgiveness, on the one hand, and justice on the other, tying them together (Ps 85:10).\footnote{Hesed is also sometimes associated with strength such as in the parallel, “In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength [2] you have guided them” (Exod 15:13); cf. Ps 144:2. Some have viewed one of ṣêm’s basic meanings as strength when used with divine agency. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 94–95; cf. W. E. Vine, “Loving-Kindness,” Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 143; cf. especially Lester J. Kupyer, “The Meaning of Hesed Isa 40:6,” VT 13 (1963): 491–92. But Sakenfeld suggests that ‘‘strength’’ is not an additional, independent meaning of the word but rather a particular emphasis within the larger framework of meaning evoked by the term.” The Meaning of Hesed, 223.}

At this point it will be helpful to address a number of issues related to the interpretation of ṣêm including whether ṣêm is strictly “covenant love,” always takes place in mutual obligatory relationships, flows only from superior to inferior, or may be reciprocal, everlasting, or conditional. Some of these may be illuminated by an example or two; others may await potential resolution by way of the larger canonical analysis. Within the following issues, the broader question of the nature of the relationship within which ṣêm takes place rises to the fore. The divine-human relationship that provides the environment of ṣêm is often, though not always (cf. Job 10:12), a covenant relationship. Thus, ṣêm is manifest in relation to the Abrahamic (Gen 19:19; 24:12, 14, 27; 32:10; Exod 15:13; cf. Mic 7:18, 20), Mosaic (Exod 20:5–6; 34:6–7; Deut 5:10; 7:9, 12), and Davidic covenants (2 Sam 7:15; 22:15; 1 Kgs 3:6; 8:23; 2 Chr 1:8; 6:14, 42), and is also in close reference to the proclamation of the new covenant (Jer 31:3).\footnote{This is by no means an exhaustive list.} Accordingly, there are a number of close collocations of ṣêm and ṣwb.\footnote{In some instances God is described as the keeper of covenant and ṣêm (Deut 7:9, 12; 1 Kgs 8:23; Neh 1:5; 9:32; 2 Chr 6:14; Dan 9:4). A number of these instances point to some degree of mutuality, specifically that God keeps covenant and ṣêm with those who love him (Deut 7:9 et al.). The ṣwb are likewise described as “those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice” (Ps 50:5). Such mutuality also appears when ṣêm is said to be to those who keep the covenant (Ps 25:10). To David, God proclaims he will keep his ṣêm and confirm his covenant (Ps 89:28 [29]; cf. Isa 55:3). In parallel, God proclaims that his ṣêm will not be removed, nor his covenant of peace shaken (Isa 54:10). Speaking of God’s deliverance in the past, God remembered the covenant and relented according to his great ṣêm (Ps 106:45). The two terms with human agency only collocate once, when David asks for ṣêm from Jonathan, and appeals to the}
For this and other reasons, ḥesed has often been described as “covenant love,” or at least as
the “norm of conduct” in a relationship of “mutual rights and duties.” However, it is important
to recognize covenant is not always in the background of ḥesed. In fact, ḥesed is not restricted to a
formalized relationship of any kind, and, even within a covenant context, may operate outside as
well as above and beyond the restrictions of ḥanash. Moreover, ḥesed is often manifested in
situations that go far beyond any reasonable expectations (covenant, moral, or otherwise). Divine ḥesed also extends beyond the covenant people in numerous examples.

As such, ḥesed is a concept alongside that of covenant, but not subservient to covenant.

While covenant responsibility is often present, the actual ground of divine ḥesed goes beyond
covenant responsibility. Indeed, covenant itself originated in the free decision of God.

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441 Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 68. “God's hesed can only be understood as Yahweh’s covenantal
relationship toward his followers.” Ibid., 102. For him, the terms are not synonymous but require one
another, though in some parallel usages they may have the same meaning. Ibid., 47. Hesed is the “very
essence of a berith,” yet, at the same time, ḥesed is the “result” of the covenant. Ibid., 55, 68, 102. As such,
they are “mutually contingent upon one another.” Ibid., 47. However, for Glueck ḥesed could take place
beyond formal covenants, but only within relationship with mutual commitments of obligations. Norman
Snaith went beyond Glueck’s view to assert that ḥesed is “covenant love” specifically “eagerness,
steadfastness . . . mercy, loving-kindness” but “all within the covenant.” Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 94–

442 Numerous scholars recognize that ḥesed is not restricted to covenant. Clark, The Word Hesed,
192; Morris, Testaments of Love, 69; Harris, “Ḥesed,” TWOT 306–7; Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” 4:379;
Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 145; Goldingay, Daniel, 241–42; Zobel, TDOT 5:53, 61; Stoebel, TLOT 1:455, 460;
Alfred Jepsen, “Gnade und Barmherzigkeit,” KD 7 (1961): 265. Cross points to the more basic category of
kinship, suggesting that not only ḥesed, but also ḥesed “originally was a term designating the loyal and loving
behavior appropriate to kinship relationship.” From Epic, 5.

443 For reasons that will be seen later in the study, I also do not believe God is internally obligated,
but the usage of ḥesed is not sufficient to determine this position.

444 Naomi calls for God to show ḥesed to Ruth and Orpah, non-Israelites (Ruth 1:8; cf. 2 Sam 15:20).
Perhaps even clearer is Jonah’s lament that God is a God of ḥesed, among other attributes, which led to the
suspension of judgment against Nineveh (Jonah 4:2). Such universality of divine ḥesed is likewise implied in
that the entire “earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD” (Ps 33:5; cf. Pss 36:7 [8]: 117:1–2; 119:64;
145:8–9); cf. Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” 4:379; idem, The Meaning of Hesed, 127; Gerald A. Larue,
the other hand, Clark thinks ḥesed is restricted to God’s covenant people. Clark, The Word Hesed, 145.
belongs to the God-human relational context of which covenant is the most prominent descriptor. As such, ḥesed exemplifies the best, the ideal, of that relationship as well as other divine-human relationships, while covenant itself is grounded in the character of God and his decision to enter into special relationship with human beings.\(^{445}\)

The supposition of ḥesed as a covenental term is closely related to the debated position that ḥesed always takes place only within a “mutually obligatory relationship.”\(^{446}\) While Glueck believed that ḥesed always “connotes mutual obligation” between parties, others have emphasized the ideas of voluntary kindness, mercy, and/or grace, as opposed to obligation.\(^{447}\) In this latter perspective ḥesed as duty gives way to ḥesed as the free actions of a benefactor.\(^{448}\) Sakenfeld rightly points out that the request or situational expectation of ḥesed is always one that the potential grantor could

\(^{445}\) Further support for this view will become clearer as the study progresses.


\(^{448}\) Stoebe explicitly rejects obligations, seeing ḥesed as a “kindness . . . not a duty.” Stoebe, *TLOT* 1:454. In his view, ḥesed is “the spontaneous demonstration of a sincerely friendly attitude.” Ibid., 1:455; Cf. Stoebe, “Die Bedeutung,” 244–54. Stoebe refers to 1 Kgs 20:31 as a prime example, when the servants entreat Benhadad to humble himself before the “merciful kings” of Israel who will perhaps spare him; cf. 1 Sam 15:6; 2 Sam 2:5; 10:2; cf. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 236. Andersen also recognizes that ḥesed is “outside the domain of duty and obligation” yet a “promise to do hesed can bring it within the domain of commitment.” “Yahweh, the Kind and Sensitive God,” in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox* (ed. P. T. O’Brien and D. G. Peterson; Homebush West, Australia: Lancer, 1986), 81.
deny. In other words, there is no enforceable obligation for ḥesed to be granted. That the benefits of divine ḥesed are not automatic, but require voluntary divine response, is apparent in the numerous requests, some for ḥesed (Gen 24:12, 14; Ruth 1:8; 2 Sam 2:6), some on the basis of ḥesed (Gen 19:19; 24:27; Num 14:19; 2 Chr 1:10; 2 Chr 6:42; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5; 9:17, 31–32; 13:22; cf. Ps 42:8). While the prevalent covenantal context creates a divine responsibility that calls for ḥesed, God, by nature, is not externally obligated to bestow ḥesed. At its core, then, ḥesed includes voluntary positive disposition and/or action toward another.

However, although there is no enforceable obligation, there is often the expectation, or even moral responsibility, that ḥesed should and/or will be granted. Indeed, in many instances of ḥesed a covenant responsibility provides the context, though this responsibility is to be distinguished from an enforceable obligation. At this juncture, a point of clarification will avoid confusion with regard to use of the term “obligation.” The word “obligation” may be used in various senses, but for our purpose we can distinguish between “hard” and “soft” obligations.


450 The volitional nature of ḥesed may also be demonstrated in that God “commands His lovingkindness” (Ps 42:8). Sakenfeld comments, “The sovereign freedom of God and his strong commitment to his chosen people were held together in a single word,” that of ḥesed. The Meaning of Hesed, 238–39; cf. “Loving-Kindness,” 142. ḥesed does appear in collocation with “oath” in numerous instances, but often the oath is called upon to ensure that ḥesed will take place, which seems to assume the absence of existing, legal obligation (Gen 21:23; Josh 2:12). Thus, in instances of divine agency, the oath appears to be an additional ground of entreaty that God “ought to” provide deliverance (cf. Deut 7:12; Ps 89:49; Mic 7:20).

451 Sakenfeld stresses the “inability for an act of hesed to be required or compelled” as a distinctive feature of ḥesed. The Meaning of Hesed, 45.

452 Ibid., 234. Larue points out that “passages, such as Ps. 25:6, 7; 106:1, 7, 45; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31; 138:8, suggest that Yahweh ought to show hesed as a moral imperative to a distressed people or else fall short of moral responsibilities.” “Recent Studies in Hesed,” 4.

453 Sakenfeld unfortunately uses the word “obligation” ambiguously, at times allowing it and in other instances rejecting it. Cf. The Meaning of Hesed, 3, 6. She seems to be assuming the type of distinction made above.
The former is the sort of obligation that is enforceable and, as such, is binding with regard to external factors, while the latter refers to responsibilities that may include expectations, perhaps “good faith,” and even moral value, but are not enforceable and thus always maintain volitional freedom. With this distinction in mind, soft obligations may relate to ḥesed, while it appears that hard obligations do not. Thus, ḥesed is the volitional, non-coerced disposition/action toward one another that often meets and/or exceeds responsibilities.

Although mutual “hard” obligations do not pertain to ḥesed, the question of mutuality of ḥesed in general is also a point of dispute, and merits clarification. As has been seen, ḥesed presumes some kind of relational responsiveness, whether within a pre-existing relationship, or an informal one begun by positive action. Moreover, a number of instances have demonstrated not only relationality but, more specifically, the expectation and/or presence of an appropriate (reciprocal) response (cf. 1 Sam 20:8, 14). However, some scholars deny the reciprocal nature of ḥesed.

Indeed, some scholars have contended that humans never direct ḥesed toward God. However, a number of instances seem to display human ḥesed toward God. For example, God...
himself declares his remembrance of “the devotion [דְּשַׁדְּד] of your [Judah] youth, the love [חֲשַׂדְתּ] of your betrothals, your following after Me in the wilderness” (Jer 2:2). In another example, Nehemiah entreats God to “remember” him for his deeds and “not blot out my loyal deeds [דְּשַׁדְתּ] which I have performed for the house of my God and its services” (Neh 13:14; cf. 2 Chr 32:32; 35:26). Another pair of instances exemplifies a contrast between the endurance of divine דְּשַׁדְתּ and the transience of human דְּשַׁדְתּ and, in so doing, also implies human to divine דְּשַׁדְתּ. God declares, “What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty [דְּשַׁדְתּ]”  

457 Numerous scholars recognize that there are examples of human דְּשַׁדְתּ toward God, including Good, “Love in the OT,” IDB 3:168; Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 128; Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 56–63; Stoebe, “Die Bedeutung,” 244–54; Stoebe, TLOT 1:458–59; Vine, Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 142; Baer and Gordon, NIDOTTE 2:213. However, in order to differentiate human דְּשַׁדְתּ toward God from human דְּשַׁדְתּ, some suggest viewing the former as piety. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 94, 128; Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 58. Sakenfeld qualifies that Israel’s responsibility is “to him, not for him. Since God is understood as all-powerful and self-sufficient, Israel’s דְּשַׁדְתּ obviously cannot be an action of the powerful for the weak, an action of deliverance or rescue or protection.” The Meaning of Hesed, 173–74. Andersen views human דְּשַׁדְתּ toward God only in the indirect sense, that is, by doing it to other human beings. “Yahweh, the Kind and Sensitive God,” 81. It seems that the relative scarcity of human to divine דְּשַׁדְתּ is not because it is outside the bounds of the meaning of the term, but that relative usage is much less because the situations where God may be the beneficiary are so rare in the Hebrew Bible.  

458 Some have attempted to dismiss this as an inaccurate statement, claiming that this is just a metaphor displaying God’s wishful remembrance but that Israel never displayed such דְּשַׁדְתּ. Carroll, Jeremiah, 120. Fox interprets God as the subject of both דְּשַׁדְתּ and דְּשַׁדְתּ, akin to unmerited grace. For him דְּשַׁדְתּ is always a “one-sided boon or favor.” “Jeremiah 2:2,” 443; cf. Clark, The Word Hesed, 198; Jepsen, “Gnade und Barmherzigkeit,” 268. With this view in mind, Zobel thus concludes, “Even though . . . this interpretation of Jer. 2:2 is nothing more than a suggestion worth considering, his fundamental conclusion stands: in view of the frequency with which our term occurs in the OT, a single passage cannot bear the burden of proof. Human beings can receive the kindness of Yahweh, but they cannot do him acts of kindness.” TDOT 5:62. DeRoche, on the other hand, makes a compelling case that this is an instance of human דְּשַׁדְתּ toward God by, among other things, a structure that alternates between human agency and divine agency in Jer 2–3. “Jeremiah 2:2–3,” 369. Numerous other scholars also see this as a legitimate example of human דְּשַׁדְתּ toward God, including Good, “Love in the OT,” IDB 3:168; Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 105; Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 60; Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 173; Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–25, 24; Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:597; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 162; Stoebe, TLOT 1:460. See the further discussion in canonical analysis.  

459 Here, the reference to God’s house suggests an indirect reference to God himself. Another potential example of human דְּשַׁדְתּ toward God is the mention of two kings whose positive actions are referred to as “deeds of devotion” (2 Chr 32:32; 35:26). Since the Chronicler is mostly concerned with matters of worship, it would seem that these deeds are most likely referring to faithfulness toward the true worship of Yahweh.
is like a morning cloud And like the dew which goes away early” (Hos 6:4; cf. Isa 40:6). In a number of other potential cases of human חסד toward God the object of חסד is unclear.

460 That this is apparently toward God seems evident in that two verses later the context is God’s delight for חסד more than for sacrifice (Hos 6:6). In a likely related text, NASB translates חסד as “loveliness” poetically, that all its “loveliness is like the flower of the field” (Isa 40:6). So also NKJV. JPS translates חסד here as “goodness.”

461 A number of instances consist of the command of humans to manifest חסד with the object of such חסד uncertain. For instance, Hosea counsels, “return” to God and “observe kindness and justice” (Hos 12:6 [12:7]; cf. Mic 6:8; Hos 10:12; Zech 7:9; Prov 3:3–4). Moreover, that God expects human חסד is apparent in that he laments the people’s lack of חסד (Hos 4:1; cf. 6:6). In these examples, it is uncertain whether the object of human חסד is merely other humans, or directly/indirectly God as well. It seems likely, however, that in many such instances both relations with God and fellow human beings are in view, since God is consistently interested in both vertical and horizontal relationships (cf. Prov 19:17). On the other hand, humans who have engaged in idolatry are characterized as those who “forsake their חסד” (Jonah 2:8). Since idolatry is a sin against God himself, this text implies that humans ought to maintain their חסד toward him in true worship. Sakenfeld thinks that human חסד toward God is the issue of every instance of the term in Hosea (2:19 [21]; 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:12; 12:7). “Love in the OT,” 4:380. She believes that, in Hosea, חסד connotes all of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of justice, “that is, hessed represents the entire decalogue in a single word.” Ibid., 380; cf. Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 57; Stoebel, TLOT 1:459. A number of cases call upon God to bless humans for their חסד (Ruth 3:10) or for divine vengeance when expected חסד is absent (2 Chr 24:22). As Sakenfeld puts it, “The alternative of hessed toward God or only among people is falsely posed because, for the OT, both belong together.” Stoebel, TLOT 1:459.

The uncertainty is also apparent with regard to two ambiguous syntagms. First, in the two instances of the syntagm חסד”—יהי חסד, it is unclear whether it is a subjective or objective genitive. In the first, the people are called to come to God and he will “make an everlasting covenant with you” (Isa 55:3). Whether this means the covenant will be made according to the חסד God showed toward David, or because of the חסד David showed is not certain. Likewise unclear is the petition of God to remember חסד—יהי חסד (2 Chr 6:42). Is the petitioner asking God to remember his חסד toward David, or bless on the basis of David’s חסד? In each case, both options are possible since the promise of divine חסד toward David and his house is well-represented on the one hand (i.e., Ps 89:50), but also there is the implication that David’s progenitors are blessed on account of David’s faithfulness (cf. 1 Kgs 11:12–13; 32–34; 2 Kgs 8:19; Ps 132:10). For the position that God is agent see Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 40–55, 367; Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40–66,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:482; Zobel, TDOT 5:58; Baer and Gordon, “חסד,” NIDOTTE 2:217; H. G. M. Williamson, “‘The Sure Mercies of David’: Subjective or Objective Genitive?” JSS 23 (1978): 31–49. On the other hand, Dillard thinks David is the agent of חסד in the usage in 2 Chronicles as a “periphrastic allusion” to Ps 132 where “the faithful actions of David are in view.” Dillard, 2 Chronicles, 51–52; cf. Isa 63:7; Pss 89:2; 107:43; Lam 3:22. It is also unclear what is meant by the syntagm בחקם חסד או חסד על התנשא (1 Sam 20:14; 2 Sam 9:3). It could be that David shows God’s חסד toward other human beings or it may refer to merely human חסד, perhaps as a superlative (in the sense of relationship to God, not in the sense of denying the “religious significance” of the divine name). See David Winton Thomas, “A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” VT 3 (1953): 215. Finally, the agent in Prov 16:6 is also unclear: “By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil” (Prov 16:6). Here, “lovingkindness and truth” seems to be in parallel to “fear of the LORD” and as such, would appear to describe the disposition and/or action(s) that God expects/desires. On the other hand, it is possible that it is the divine “lovingkindness and truth” in view here, especially considering the connection to the term “atonement” (חסד). See also 2 Chr 6:42; 1 Sam 20:14; 2 Sam 9:3.
Moreover, the adjectival ҳәәдә also appears to be a manifestation of human ҳәәдә in relationship to God. For instance, “with the kind” (ҳәәдә) God shows himself “kind” (ҳәәдә) (2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]). The parallel statements suggest reciprocity, divine ҳәәдә bestowed on the human ҳәәдә. Although it is not altogether clear whether ҳәәдә refers to those upon whom God bestows ҳәәдә, or those who manifest ҳәәдә, the latter appears to be the case in numerous instances that highlight the character of the ҳәәдә (Mic 7:2; 2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]). ҳәәдә sometimes seems to refer to Israel as a whole (Pss 148:14; 149:1) but in other instances it seems to connote a more restricted group of “the faithful within Israel” (Pss 31:23 [24]; 37:28). That ҳәәдә is not restricted to those who receive but never bestow ҳәәдә is evidenced in that God himself is twice referred to as ҳәәдә (Jer 3:12; Ps 145:17).

One reason for rejection of reciprocal ҳәәдә by some scholars is the assertion that ҳәәдә flows only from a superior agent to inferior patient, which of course denies the possibility of bilateral ҳәәдә. Although the majority of instances appear to flow from a superior to inferior (with regard

462 Similarly, righteous humans are “men of ҳәәдә” (Isa 57:1; cf. Prov 11:17).

463 This would be consistent with similar theological positions elsewhere (cf. Exod 20:6 = 5:10; 7:9; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4).

464 It appears to refer to qualitative evaluation in some instances (Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 2:9; 2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]; Mic 7:2; Pss 4:3 [4]; 12:1 [2]; 37:28; 43:1; 86:2; 97:10; Prov 2:8). In some occurrences, it is not clear whether evaluation is involved (Pss 16:10; 32:6; 116:15). At other times it may be a term for the priests (2 Chr 6:41; Ps 132:9, 16) or perhaps to the entire camp (Pss 30:4 [5]; 31:23 [24]; 50:5; 52:9 [11]; 79:2; 85:8 [9]; 89:19 [20]; 145:10; 148:14; 149:1, 5, 9).

465 For instance, the ҳәәдә are described as “upright” (רֵֽעֵי—Mic 7:2) and blameless (שֶׁמֶֽחַ—2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]). Baer sees ҳәәדә as “denoting the one whose life is lived in accordance with the principles of ҳәәדә.” Baer and Gordon, “ҳәәдә,” NIDOTTE 2:213; cf. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 110; Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 68. Sakenfeld notes ambiguity between the people as a whole and the upright, but recognizes many evaluative usages. Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 179; cf. Stoebe, TLOT 1:462–63. But Harris cautions, “Whether God’s people in the OT were called hāsid because they were characterized by hesed (as seems likely) or were so called because they were objects of God’s hesed may not be certain.” “ҳәәדә,” TWOT 307.


467 Fox asserts, “hesed is always conferred by a superior upon an inferior (in status or power).” Proverbs 1–9, 144; cf. Ugo Masing, quoted in Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 6–7. It has been pointed out, however, that the disproportionate number of “instances of hesed as a divine characteristic” may skew

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to status), there are many examples in human interpersonal usage of either the request, or the showing, of 使者 from a societal inferior to a societal superior (Gen 20:13; 2 Sam 2:5; 3:8; 16:17; 2 Chr 24:22). Thus, a more nuanced view has been proposed, that in human interpersonal usage使者 only takes place from a circumstantially, or situationally, superior to inferior. In other words, the person receiving the使者 must be in a situation of need or significant distress in relation to the superior, without regard to societal status. This view has some merit since within human relationships,使者 consistently refers to beneficent actions, thus appearing within the context of a benefactor-beneficiary relationship. Most often (if not always) within human relationships, the beneficiary is the situationally inferior party with regard to the beneficence at hand. This is not surprising since in order for one to request or receive使者 they must be in a position to benefit from it, if it is to have any value worth mentioning. As such, the relative status of the parties with regard to使者 may be accidental, and perhaps it is more precise to recognize that使者 takes place from a benefactor to a beneficiary, but does not in every case require need, though most cases may presume need or significant distress. As such,使者 is something important to the beneficiary, but not always needed (e.g., Gen 24:12, 49; 2 Sam 9:1). Further, in some instances the benefactor

a conception of使者 as only from superior to inferior since “hesed, when used of God, will, by definition, involve relationships of superior and inferior.” Baer and Gordon, “חסד,” NIDOTTE 2:212.

Sarah to Abraham (Gen 20:13), the spies to Rahab (Josh 2:12–14), Jabesh-Gileadites to King Saul (2 Sam 2:5), Hushai (potentially) to David (2 Sam 16:17), Abner to Ishbosheth (2 Sam 3:8), Jehoida the priest toward King Joash (2 Chr 24:22). This also seems to be the case when Abimelech asks Abraham to show him使者 going forward (Gen 21:23). But Sakenfeld suggests that Abraham is the stronger party with God’s support. The Meaning of Hesed, 72. Another example is the使者 between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 20:8, 14–15). Those who assert the restriction of使者 from superior to inferior contend that David was the inferior when he is requesting使者 but Jonathan looks forward to a time when David will be king and thus will, in the future, be the superior. Cf. Josh 2:12–14; Judg 1:24; 8:35; Job 6:14. Consider also the occurrences of human使者 toward God, discussed further above.

Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” 4:378. She gives credit for this to her expansion of the interpretation of Hills. The Meaning of Hesed, 12; cf. ibid., 7, 234; Clark, The Word Hesed, 267. However, Sakenfeld sees this reversed in the instances of human to divine使者. She ascribes this reversal to what she views as Hosea’s intention to shock his hearers. The Meaning of Hesed, 175.

Importantly, however, a beneficial action may or may not be altruistic. So, also, Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 235.
and the beneficiary may be bilateral such that both parties may be able to do חסד toward the other, in different ways (e.g., Josh 2:12).

Another possible reason for this denial of reciprocal חסד is ambiguity regarding the meaning of “reciprocal.” It is possible for “reciprocal” to refer to an action that expects, or receives, an equal reaction, that is, חסד for חסד. If the term “reciprocal” is restricted to this quid pro pro type of mutuality, it would be inaccurate to ascribe to חסד universally since such one-to-one correspondence of חסד is only rarely seen in the text. On the other hand, if “reciprocal” refers to the broader idea of a relationship wherein an action of חסד is often responsive to a previous relationship and/or action and/or expects a positive response, if applicable, in the future, then it is appropriate. Sakenfeld seems to react negatively to the first usage, whereas many scholars seem to intend the latter when they use the term “reciprocal,” which may be called appropriate responsiveness. In this dissertation, I use the term reciprocal with reference to the latter, a relationship that expects or receives appropriate response. A relationship of חסד seems to expect that חסד would flow from either agent to the other, if the appropriate circumstance(s) obtained (Josh 2:12–14; 1 Sam 20:8, 14–15; 1 Sam 15:16; 2 Chr 24:22).

In all this, reciprocality does not necessarily mean equality or symmetry, either of the agents or of the respective actions.

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472 Sakenfeld rejects the idea that חסד is “mutual exchange” but rather (in human relationships) it is the unilateral act of a situationally superior toward inferior. The Meaning of Hesed, 50. But she recognizes חסד may be “dependent on something prior.” Ibid., 50. Further, she allows that once her thesis regarding situational superior-inferior relationships is in view, “reciprocity need not be utterly rejected, for it occurs when there is a reversal of circumstances” as in the case of Rahab. Ibid., 7. Thus, in her view, “While hesed is not exchanged quid pro quo, it is rooted in responsibility, and the reference to a prior action concretizes that responsibility.” Ibid., The Meaning of Hesed, 91.

473 In other words, an individual in a חסד relationship, or having received חסד, ought to reciprocate if possible.
With these qualifications in mind, רְשֵׁד may be spoken of as reciprocal in that it assumes a bilateral relationship. At times, רְשֵׁד is responded to with רְשֵׁד; at other times רְשֵׁד is responsive to a previous positive action or a pre-existing relationship; in still other instances, רְשֵׁד seems to initiate a relationship but expects appropriate future response, including רְשֵׁד if a situation arises that warrants it. Thus, רְשֵׁד operates within a context of relational, voluntary, reciprocal responsibility. This not only explains the human interpersonal usage of רְשֵׁד but also fits with both human רְשֵׁד toward God and divine רְשֵׁד toward humans.

Another major interpretive issue is the tension between the endurance, on the one hand, and contingency, on the other, of divine רְשֵׁד. The OT consistently affirms the amazing endurance and persistence of divine רְשֵׁד, even to the thousandth generation (Exod 20:6; 34:6–7; Deut 10:5 et al.). God himself proclaims his “everlasting lovingkindness” with which he promises, “I will have compassion on you,” and contrasts this with the momentary hiding of his face “in an outburst of anger” (Isa 54:8). Similarly, divine lovingkindness flows from “everlasting love” (Jer 31:3) and itself is “everlasting” (Jer 33:11). Indeed, divine רְשֵׁד is “from everlasting to everlasting on those

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474 Thus, in some instances an initiating action of רְשֵׁד is reciprocated by רְשֵׁד (Gen 21:23; Josh 2:12–14; cf. Ps 109:12, 16; Ruth 2:20).

475 Human רְשֵׁד takes place in a number of pre-existing relationships including marriage (Gen 20:13), familial/kinship (Gen 24:49; 47:29), friendship (1 Sam 20:8, 14–15; 2 Sam 9:1, 3, 7; Job 6:14), or a political relationship (2 Sam 3:8; 2 Sam 16:17). In other instances, רְשֵׁד is requested, received, or unexpectedly absent on the basis of, and appropriate to, some previous action (Gen 40:14; Judg 1:24; 1 Kgs 2:7; Judg 8:35; 2 Sam 10:2; 1 Chr 19:2; cf. Prov 14:22). In such instances רְשֵׁד is descriptive of reciprocal (though not necessarily equal) relations. That is, רְשֵׁד is often a response to a prior beneficial action that created the expectation (but not necessarily a duty) of response by the one who is, at that time, the beneficiary. Although in many (if not all) of these instances existing relationships may also be discoverable, the emphasis appears to be on prior action. In some sense, every human interaction is based on relationship to some degree, even if that relationship is merely belonging to common humanity.

476 In another rare variation, the initial action alone is described as רְשֵׁד, with an appropriate response or the expectation thereof (1 Sam 15:6; 2 Chr 24:22; cf. Ruth 3:10). Thus, רְשֵׁד may take place within a pre-existing relationship or on the basis of a previous action that precipitates a response of רְשֵׁד, or rarely, רְשֵׁד may be depicted as initiating a relationship. In one rare divergence of usage, רְשֵׁד seems to be an outcome of the king’s pleasure and/or desire for Esther (Esth 2:9, 17). Sakenfeld believes this late usage is explained by the meanings of מ and רְשֵׁד having “fallen together” by the time of this writing. The Meaning of Hesed, 235.
who fear him” (Ps 103:17). In many other instances the steadfastness of God’s ḥesed is proclaimed, even to the extent that it is spoken of as everlasting, and thus, seemingly impossible to forfeit.477

Yet, removal of divine ḥesed also occurs. God declares he has “withdrawn . . . peace [סבל] . . . lovingkindness and compassion [חסדך]” (Jer 16:5). In numerous contexts, it appears to be assumed that God could remove ḥesed.478 For instance, God is praised as the one “who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and truth,” implying that he could do so (Gen 24:27; Pss 98:3; 106:45). Similarly, God is often entreated to continue his ḥesed: “Do not turn away the face of Your anointed; remember Your lovingkindness to Your servant David” (2 Chr 6:42; Ps 36:10 [11]; cf. 138:8). At other times, ḥesed appears to be absent, leading to the people’s lament, “Has his lovingkindness ceased forever?” (Ps 77:8), “Will your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Abaddon?” (Ps 88:11), “Where are your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?” (Ps 89:49). The contingency of divine ḥesed is likewise implied throughout Hosea. For example, God pleads a case against Israel because of

477 Thus, Snaith comments, “the chessed of God . . . is everlasting, determined, unshakable.” The Distinctive Ideas, 102. Similarly, Zobel suggests ḥesed is “characterized by permanence and reliability.” TDOT 5:57. In comparison to mountains and hills, which may be shaken, divine ḥesed “will not be removed” (Isa 54:10). In Hosea this lasting lovingkindness is associated with betrothal when God speaks of his people, “I will betroth you to Me forever . . . in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and compassion” (Hos 2:19 [H 2:21]). Again, his “lovingkindnesses never cease, For His compassions never fail” (Lam 3:22). His ḥesed “is great” and his “truth” is “everlasting” (Ps 117:2). Indeed, “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness” (Ps 103:11; cf. Pss 36:5 [6]; 57:10; 108:4). Divine ḥesed is “precious” (Ps 36:7), it “endures all day long” (Ps 52:1), it is “better than life” (Ps 63:3) and is even depicted as pursuing David for his lifetime (Ps 23:6). Interestingly, a large number of the statements regarding the persistence of divine ḥesed are in reference to the Davidic covenant (dynasty). 2 Sam 7:15 declares, God’s “lovingkindness shall not depart from” David as he removed it from Saul (cf. 2 Sam 22:51; 1 Chr 17:13). Divine ḥesed to David “will be built up forever” (Ps 89:2 [3]). “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him” (Ps 89:28 [29]; cf. 18:50 [51]), “I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness” (Ps 89:33 [34]). Similarly, God declares regarding Solomon, “I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you” (1 Chr 17:13). Finally, in a common refrain of praise, God’s ḥesed is proclaimed as everlasting (Pss 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1–4, 29; 136:1–26; 138:8; cf. Jer 33:11; Ezra 3:11; 1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21), his faithfulness to all generations (Ps 100:5). As such, divine ḥesed is steadfast and extremely long-lasting.

478 Baer and Gordon acknowledge, “Numerous texts witness to at least the hypothetical possibility of losing God’s ḥesed or of having it taken away.” “חסד,” NIDOTTE 2:215.
their lack of faithfulness, kindness, and knowledge (Hos 4:1). God laments Israel’s lack of loyalty (Hos 6:4) and they are punished because he “delight[s] [הֵסֶד] in loyalty rather than sacrifice” (Hos 6:6). Thus, in numerous instances, there is a clear tension between the permanence of divine 되שה and its contingency, even removal. The possible forfeiture of 되שה dovetails with the significant conditionality of divine 되שה apparent in numerous instances. Although 되שה is ultimately grounded in the divine character, the reception of 되שה sometimes indicates the fidelity of the recipient of 되שה, implying conditionality and the expectation of responsiveness. For example, the divine lovingkindness will be shown (להשביח) to the thousandth generation of those who love God and keep his commandments (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10). The conditional human reception of 되שה is likewise explicit in numerous other instances. While divine 되שה is ultimately grounded in God’s love,

479 In some instances, “God’s hesed is conditional, dependent upon the good repair of the covenant relationship that it is up to Israel to maintain.” Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” 4:379. Sakenfeld goes so far as to suggest that 되שה “may even be ‘deserved’ at the same time that it is freely given,” as in the case of Joseph. The Meaning of Hesed, 102; cf. ibid., 97. Glueck, similarly, believes it is given to the “worthy.” Hesed in the Bible, 99. As Sakenfeld notes, “The person’s right relationship to God is not stated as a basis for the hesed” yet she notes that in some circumstances it is clear “that the individual is acting in obedience to God or is doing the morally upright [thing] against difficult odds and hence is ‘deserving’ of divine assistance.” Ibid., 236; cf. idem, “Love in the OT,” 4:379; Glueck, Hesed in the Bible, 81, 89.

480 In Deut 7:9, God is the “faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” Likewise, Deut 7:12, “because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them” God “will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore” (Deut 7:12). Here, 되שה is explicitly (though not necessarily exclusively) predicated on appropriate human behavior. Accordingly, Solomon declares that God has “shown great lovingkindness” to David “according as he walked before [God] in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart” and God has “reserved for him this great lovingkindness” (1 Kgs 3:6). God is likewise the one “keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness” to his “servants who walk before [him] with all their heart” (1 Kgs 8:23 = 2 Chr 6:14).

Conditionalitv is further apparent when God exhorts his people to come to him and listen “and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David” (Isa 55:3). Psalms also depicts divine 되שה as an appropriate response to human action. Thus, “with the kind You show Yourself kind; with the blameless You show Yourself blameless” (2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]). Likewise, some entreaties assume such mutuality, asking God to “continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart” (Ps 36:10 [11]; cf. Ps 40:10–11 [11–12]). Again, “lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, For You recompense a man according to his work” (Ps 62:12).

Similarly, “he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him” (Ps 32:10; cf. 17:7). His 되שה is “great” and “from everlasting to everlasting” for “those who fear Him” (Ps 103:11, 17). “Abundant lovingkindness” is available to all who call upon him” (Ps 86:15). The “LORD favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness” (Ps 147:11). “All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies” (Ps 25:10). Moreover, God’s “eye . . . is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness” (Ps 33:18; cf. 33:22). Both Daniel and
compassion, and goodness as a part of his character and an outgrowth of his free decision to 
bestow חסד on human beings, the bestowal of חסד is not altogether unilateral. There is relational 
responsibility, conditionality, and a divine expectation of appropriate response at work. However, 
while God always meets and/or exceeds his responsibility, humans consistently fall short of 
theirs. Yet, divine חסד often overcomes even human shortcomings, another manifestation of the 
freedom of חסד, which manifests itself beyond the bounds of covenant and/or obligation. At the 
same time, divine חסד is clearly (partially) contingent upon human response.

The conditionality and potential forfeiture of חסד thus posits a crucial tension between 
“everlasting חסד” and the potential of removal and/or forfeiture thereof. This tension is not 
unlike that already seen with regard to divine בונס. Moreover, such questions are not unique to חסד 
but pertain to numerous themes related to divine love. Perhaps the key is apparent in Ps 103:17, 
which states: Divine חסד is “from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.” Here, 
everlasting חסד is directed specifically toward those who respond appropriately to God. Thus, as 
shall be further explained in the canonical analysis, divine חסד, like other aspects of divine love, is 
not unconditional but foreconditional. That is, God freely bestows חסד prior to conditions, will

Nehemiah recognize the unworthiness of humans to receive God’s mercy but base their supplication on 
“the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and 
keep His commandments” (Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5). Nehemiah later entreats remembrance because of his efforts 
to purify Israel, asking, “have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness” (Neh 
13:22; cf. Pss 26:3; 119:159; 143:8). In such occurrences, the reception of חסד is tied to fidelity to God. 
Finally, in a couple of instances, requests for divine חסד are based on prior acts of human to human חסד. See 
Ruth 1:8; 2 Sam 2:6. In both instances, divine חסד is hoped for/expected on the basis of human to human 
חסד, implying that חסד to Naomi/Saul is indirectly חסד to God. Sakenfeld suggests that such requests are 
technical language that presume the discontinuance of a relationship such that only God could do חסד in the 
future. The Meaning of Hesed, 107–8. Yet, though that may be the occasion of the blessing, the request is 
nevertheless predicated on previous action.

481 Baer and Gordon recognize the tension but offer no solution. “It may finally be impossible to 
square such agonized questioning with the frequent confident assertions that חסד is eternal. Perhaps this 
very tension reminds us of the relational core at the center of this concept. God’s steadfast love, the biblical 
theologian might conclude, is not a mechanical tool to be used in a crisis, nor a philosophical absolute to be 
taken for granted. Rather, it is a quality of relationship that is to be sought again, appropriated, and 
treasured in the covenental partner’s every needy moment.” “חסד,” NIDOTTE 2:216.
never remove ḏṣ ḥ arbitrarily, but expects appropriate response upon which the continuing relationship within which ḏṣ ḥ takes place is conditional.

In all, ḏṣ ḥ is relational conduct and/or attitude in accord with the highest virtues (love, loyalty, goodness, kindness) and beneficial to another, which meets and exceeds all expectations (often manifested in mercy and forgiveness), in which the agent is ontologically free to act otherwise, and is responsive to and/or creates or maintains the expectation (but not hard obligation) of appropriate response from the recipient. Since it describes the attitude of the agent who characteristically acts in such a way, a ḏṣ ḥ disposition often becomes the basis of entreaty for ḏṣ ḥ action. From the perspective of the (potential) beneficiary, ḏṣ ḥ is a disposition and/or action that will fulfill a need or important desire. ḏṣ ḥ may take place in human non-religious relationships, from humans toward God, but most often from God toward humans.

Divine ḏṣ ḥ is grounded in the divine character of love, compassion, goodness, faithfulness, and justice. It is free and voluntary, but not altogether spontaneous, often taking place within the commitment of the covenant relationship, but not restricted thereby. It is a basic grounding characteristic of God that makes the covenant meaningful and reliable. It is unmerited but not altogether unconditional. It includes action that may be one-sided and unilateral, but assumes a relation that will be reciprocated (even if ḏṣ ḥ action in particular is not, or cannot, be). It is from benefactor to beneficiary, not merely quid pro quo, but assumes appropriate responsiveness and expects reciprocation when/if the context arises. In many instances (i.e., with regard to ḥĕḇĕr) God has committed himself to certain responsibilities (soft obligations) to which his faithfulness is unparalleled. However, this is to be distinguished from “hard obligations” since (1) there is no external obligation upon God due to the simple fact that there is no one capable of

482 Divine ḏṣ ḥ thus may flow beyond the covenant, beyond responsibility, even beyond moral duty to the unworthy, those who have forfeited any claim thereto (as in Exod 34:6–7).
enforcement, and (2) the very language used of God with regard to ḥesed presumes the lack of ontological obligation.

As such, divine ḥesed may be responsive to virtue and/or entreaty, yet may be withdrawn or withheld according to the state of affairs. As such, divine commitments are voluntary responsibilities and thus moral expectation and the divine name (character) are involved, but God remains volitionally free. Divine ḥesed is extremely steadfast, reliable, and enduring, yet likewise expects appropriate response from humanity and is often depicted as contingent, yet goes well beyond what would be considered normal grounds for forfeiture. Accordingly, it often takes on the connotation of mercy and forgiveness and results in the removal of wrath and the bestowal of blessings, especially deliverance. Thus, divine ḥesed often surpasses the bounds of expectation and exceeds all moral responsibility. As such, divine ḥesed is an aspect of his character of goodness, but is not mere clemency or beneficence but, rather, consists in always doing that which is best, righteous, and just, always and without fail.

The Conditional Aspect of Divine Beneficence

As has been seen, some have defined divine love in terms of beneficence. For this reason it is important to briefly examine the nature of divine blessing and its place in the divine-human relationship. Divine goodness is a central characteristic of God himself (Exod 33:19), which is consistently manifested in actions of beneficence. However, though blessing appears most often within covenant, blessing is not limited to the immediate recipients of the covenant, but is

483 Divine blessing (כְּבוֹד) toward human beings is an especially prominent feature that runs from the creation narrative to the end of the Hebrew Bible, often related to covenant and promise (Gen 12:2; 17:16–19; 18:12; Exod 19:4–6; Lev 26; Deut 1:11; 2:7). Divine blessing appears to flow from divine lovingkindness, and does so in such a way that God is not obligated to manifest lovingkindness, but expected to do so based on his character (cf. Gen 24:12, 14, 27; Ps 69:13, 16). Further, election is another basis of divine blessing. Thus the one who is blessed (כָּבוֹד) is the one whom God chooses (כְּבוֹד) and “bring[s] near” (כָּבוֹד) (Ps 65:4 [5]). Notably, however, just previously it is stated, “to You all men come” (Ps 65:2 [3]). Tate comments, “The request in v 5 seems to support the interpretation that the worshiping community is intended here; all those who are acceptable in the worship of Yahweh, and potentially every Israelite—and if v 3b has a universal expectation, every human being who comes to Yahweh.” Psalms 51–
intended to extend beyond Abraham or Abraham’s progeny as a universal blessing mediated through Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:2–3; 17:4–6; 26:4).\(^{484}\) Moreover, divine blessing is not depicted as purely unilateral beneficence. On the contrary, although it flows from God’s character and freedom and is, as such, unmerited and seemingly prior to any conditions (foreconditional), it nevertheless often betrays underlying contingency, especially in accordance with covenant conditionality.

To be sure, at times blessing is mentioned without causal explanation and may be extended unilaterally. However, in many instances, divine beneficence is depicted as conditional upon appropriate human response. Such human responsibility tied to the contingency of divine blessing is apparent in the Abrahamic covenant in numerous instances. Thus, God states that he “will greatly bless” Abraham “because” he did not withhold his son from God (Gen 22:16; cf. 18:19; 26:4–5).\(^{485}\) The responsiveness of the divine-human relationship is perhaps most starkly

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\(^{484}\) Notice also the examples of mediated blessing to others through Abraham’s progeny, for example, blessing to Laban through Jacob (Gen 30:27, 30); to Potiphar and his house through Joseph (Gen 39:5). Moreover, other nations are mentioned as people to whom God has granted land. He refuses to give Israel “as little as a footstep” of Edom’s land (Deut 2:5), similarly Moab (2:9) and Ammon (2:19). As Tigay puts it, this “indicates the universal dominion of God and His involvement in the history of all nations.” *Deuteronomy*, 24. Likewise, Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 108; cf. Deut 32:8; Amos 9:7. Further, foreigners may also be privy to the covenant blessings if they align themselves with the LORD, keep God’s Sabbath, choose what pleases God, love the name of the LORD, and keep the covenant (Isa 56:4, 6–7). Thus, foreigners become part of the “chosen” by choosing to please God. Such conditions are similar to those expected of God’s people already within the covenant ( Isa 58:13–14). This is in accordance with other hints throughout the prophets of God’s concern for all peoples. “This is what God longs for in his people, and if anyone will do this, their parenthood or their body has nothing to do with their acceptability.” Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 458. Watts views this as meaning, “Commitment and acceptance of responsibility are more important than the birthright. Cf. the story of Esau and Jacob in Gen 25:29–34. . . Israel/Jacob also despised his birthright. Now others, more worthy, are invited to enter into it.” Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 249. Thus, “all who do justice and righteousness and hold fast to the divine covenant are God’s servants.” Seitz, “The Book of Isaiah 40–66,” in *Isaiah–Ezekiel*, 6:485.

\(^{485}\) Sarna suggests that at first in the Abrahamic narrative, “blessings are pure acts of divine grace” but later “these are presented as rewards for Abraham’s devotion to God.” *Genesis*, 154; cf. Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” in *Genesis to Leviticus*, 1:835. Hamilton concurs, but believes that the order gives priority to “promise” and “grace.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 116. Fretheim explicitly recognizes that the promise of God was “thereby made conditional” in the sense that “God could not have used a disloyal Abraham for the purposes God intends.” “The Book of Genesis,” in *Genesis to Leviticus*, 1:497. Similarly, Wenham recognizes the “meritoriousness of Abraham.” *Genesis 1–15*, 111.
manifested by the strange “wrestling” of Jacob with the divine “man” culminating in the reception of blessing (Gen 32:25–28).\(^{486}\) The conditionality of the divine-human relationship also appears throughout Exodus (Exod 1:20), especially with regard to the Mosaic covenant (Exod 19:5; 23:25; 32:29).\(^{487}\) Such covenant conditionality, tied to blessings and curses, is also prominent in Leviticus (Lev 26:3–17, 40–44).\(^{488}\) Likewise, it is clear elsewhere that the continuance of divine blessing is dependent upon the maintenance of the covenant relationship (Deut 4:40; 5:16; 18; 10:12–13; 11:13–15, 22–23, 26–28; 15:4–6; 19:13; 28:1–2, 58, 62; Josh 22:2, 5; 23:11–13).\(^{489}\) Thus, God expects reciprocal response from his people, which will result in

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\(^{486}\) This is a powerful narrative example of the connection between human action and divine response with regard to divine beneficence. It is clear in the narrative that nothing Jacob could do would force God to bless him, for the “man” is able to injure Jacob by a mere touch (Gen 32:25), yet the divine “man” nevertheless wrestles with Jacob. That the “man” is, in fact, divine is explicit in Gen 32:28 (cf. Hos 12:4–5).

\(^{487}\) God is good (בָּרָא) to the Hebrew midwives who “fear God” and spare the Israelite infants (Exod 1:20). Those who obey and keep God’s commands are promised covenant blessings (Exod 19:5), but only “if” they choose to serve God (Exod 23:25). In Exod 19:5, “the birth of ‘Israel’ as Yawheh’s people” is contingent upon “affirmative response.” Durham, *Exodus*, 262. In the aftermath of the golden calf apostasy, divine blessing is explicitly contingent upon the people’s repentance and dedication to the Lord (Exod 32:29).

\(^{488}\) Divine blessings are contingent upon human response, specifically walking in, keeping, and doing the divine prescriptions (Lev 26:3–4, 6). Simply put, “Obedience to God’s will brings reward; disobedience brings dire punishment.” Levine, *Leviticus*, 182; cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Book of Leviticus,” in *Genesis to Leviticus* (vol. 1 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994), 1179. Specifically, God will respond and turn toward the people and confirm the covenant and dwell among the people, walk among them, and be their God and not reject them (Lev 26:9–12); the opposite will take place if they reject God (Lev 26:17). In effect, it seems that “without obedience to the commandments there can be no blessing.” Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in *Numbers–Samuel*, 2:351.

\(^{489}\) The conditionality may be summarized thus, “the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God” (Deut 11:27–28). Even the reception of the land is explicitly conditional (Deut 11:22–23). Further, the command to love God wholeheartedly, which includes obedience, appears over and over again in Deuteronomy and elsewhere. For example, see Deut 6:5; Josh 22:5. In all this, God deeply desires to bless the people, but his doing so is contingent upon not only their external obedience, but also upon their internal disposition (cf. Deut 4:40; 5:29; 6:24; 12:28). Robert B. Coote summarizes thusly, “Obey the law and take the land; continue to obey the law or lose the land.” “The Book of Joshua,” in *Numbers–Samuel* (vol. 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 710. Woudstra thus notes, “There is a point when God abandons sinners to their wicked desires.” *The Book of Joshua*, 337–38. Thus, “it matters whether God’s own people remain unified and work together toward the purposes of God. God has chosen in some way to be contingent on active human participation in the ongoing drama of God’s saving ways with God’s people and the world.” D. T. Olson, “The Book of Judges,” in *Numbers–Samuel*, 2:790.
blessing. For example, God is gracious and compassionate, giving food to “those who fear him” for he “remember[s] his covenant forever” (Ps 111:4–5). Likewise, the one who retains “kindness and truth” will “find favor” (שׁוּכָה + וָתָר) and “good repute” or success/kind approval (כָּוֶס) with “God and man” (Prov 3:3–4; 12:2; cf. Ezra 8:22). Conversely, the absence of divine blessing is often directly responsive to the people’s disposition and/or actions. Importantly, God himself who hears (שָׁמַע) the cries of Israel (Exod 2:24; 6:5) expects them to hear/obey (שָׁמַע) his commands (Exod 15:26; 19:5). Likewise, God remembers (זָכָר) his covenant with Abraham (Exod 2:24) and institutes ritual to bring about remembrance (זָכָר) of himself (Exod 20:24). Similar reciprocality is present in the language of Leviticus where the people are commanded to walk in God’s commands (Lev 26:3) and God will walk among them (Lev 26:12). God will not “abhor” them (Lev 26:11) if they do not “abhor” his commands (Lev 26:15) and vice versa (Lev 26:30, 43–44). Ultimately, God loves them (Deut 7:7) and wants to be loved in return (Deut 6:5). Thus, God is responsive to the disposition of his people, all the while modeling the type of disposition they ought to manifest toward him. Thus, the human response to God requires more than external actions. It requires a change in heart (Lev 26:42; cf. Deut 10:16).

Reciprocality is also evident in a benedictory proclamation; Jabesh-gilead is to be “blessed of the LORD because” of the kindness they showed in burying Saul (2 Sam 2:5–6).

In this context, four factors of divine blessing are present: the divine character, the covenant, divine action (remembering the covenant), and human response (God-fearing). Priority is here given to the divine character of grace and compassion and his positive action, but contingency is clearly displayed in regard to whether or not potential objects of blessing “fear” God. Further, God “blesses” the “righteous man” and “surrounds him with favor” (Ps 5:12; cf. 37:28). The “good” one obtains divine “favor” (שׁוּכָה) but the wicked will be condemned (Prov 12:2). Similarly, “when a man’s ways are pleasing [תּוֹכַח] to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov 16:7). Likewise, the one who is attentive to the “word” and trusts God “will find good” and is “blessed” (Prov 16:20) just as God is “good” to those who “wait for him” and “seek Him” (Lam 3:25; cf. Ruth 3:20). Reciprocality is likewise implied in the statement, “Delight [Protect] yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps 37:4). Those who “love” the name of God exult in him, take refuge in him (5:11 [12]) and are the righteous that God blesses (5:12 [13]). Likewise, various blessings are associated with proper human disposition, including: loving righteousness and hating wickedness (Ps 45:7), loving God’s name (Ps 69:36), walking in God’s way (Pss 119:1; 128:1), and fearing God (Pss 128:1; 103:11, 13, 18; Eccl 8:12). Likewise, God states that he will deliver someone, “because He has loved [יָהוּד] Me,” that is, “known My name” (Ps 91:14).

In this context, both זָכַר + וָתָר and כָּוֶס appear to be evaluative. “The root meaning of sekel (var. sekel) is ‘vision,’ ‘perception.’ It almost always refers to (1) perception from the standpoint of the perceiver. The possessor of sekel sees a situation clearly and is consequently discerning and circumspect. Sometimes sekel refers to (2) perception from the standpoint of the object, i.e., the way others see a person” (Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 147; cf. 1 Sam 25:3; Esth 2:7; Gen 29:17; 39:6; Ps 111:10; Prov 3:4; cf. HALOT 1328. See also the word study of תּוֹכַח on זָכַר + וָתָר. Further, although Fox is adamant that the כָּוֶס here “can only be God’s kindness toward the pupil” and thus cannot be human כָּוֶס (Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 144), the more likely (and common) reading is that people are being encouraged to act loyally and faithfully. So Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 241; Murphy, Proverbs, 121; cf. Prov 20:28. See the discussion in the word study of כָּוֶס above.

For instance, the opposite of divine blessing is manifested in reaction to Judah’s unfaithfulness when God declares, “You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken [יָהוּד] you to Shishak” (2 Chr 12:2, 5).
even the lack of blessing and the execution of divine judgment is directed toward disciplining Israel with the hope that they will turn back so that the relationship can be restored (Deut 8:5). 494

Significantly, the contingency of divine blessing is set alongside the contingency of divine love, specifically “because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them. . . . God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. He will love you and bless you and multiply you” (Deut 7:12–13; cf. 2 Sam 22:20–25). 495 Likewise, humans are thus to turn from idolatry and return to God, in order to receive the full measure of divine beneficence and mercy. If they will but return, God will “love them freely” (Hos 14:1–4 [2–5]; cf. Joel 2:12–14). On the other hand, Israel’s continued disloyalty removes the divine blessing such that God has “withdrawn” his “peace” from the people, even his “lovingkindness and compassion” (Jer 16:5; cf. Jer 14:10).

Conditionality must not be confused with merit. Divine blessing is not deserved based on Israel’s “righteousness” (Deut 9:4). On the contrary, Israel has “provoked” God to “wrath” over and over (Deut 9:7). Nevertheless human action may contribute to divine pleasure (cf. Num 14:8), or, on the other hand, it may obstruct divine love, and may even eventually prompt God to

Similarly, “the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chr 15:2). When the people seek God “with their whole heart” and “earnestly,” God “let them find Him” (2 Chr 15:4, 15) and “gave them rest on every side” (2 Chr 15:15; cf. Jer 29:13–14). Thus, the continuation or disruption of the covenant blessings is clearly predicated on the human response. The relationship, then, is not presented as one unilaterally predicated on the divine will.

494 Cf. M. F. Rooker, Leviticus (NAC 3A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 318. “By reason of Israel’s continued provocation of God, its troubles will also become more aggravated, not as a retaliatory device on God’s part, but as a further stimulus to capture their attention. . . . The same love of God that sent the word of the prophets will not send a message of love in the tragedies of life, hoping that the nation will be forced by desperation to cry out to God for forgiveness and love once again.” Kaiser Jr., “The Book of Leviticus,” in Genesis to Leviticus, 1:1180.

495 Notably, divine blessing is also connected to divine delight when David proclaims that he has been rescued “because” God “delighted in” (יָרַע) him (2 Sam 22:20). David goes on to describe his “reward” and “recompense” as a consequence of his own fidelity to God (2 Sam 22:21–25; cf. 1 Kgs 3:6), culminating in the refrain, “with the kind You show yourself kind, with the blameless You show Yourself blameless” (2 Sam 22:26; cf. 22:27).
dispossess a people. In this way, divine blessing is gracious but requires ongoing reciprocation. Thus, Judges differentiates between the “lovers” (בְּרָאָשִׁים) and “haters” (שׁוּמִים) of God; the former will be blessed, the latter cursed (Judg 5:31). Nevertheless, while human reciprocation may be a proximal cause of the maintenance of divine blessing, its origin, and the primary ground of its continuance, is explicitly located in divine love (Deut 4:36–38; 7:8; 23:5).

Furthermore, the divine disposition toward the people, although it may be affected, is not wholly dependent upon the human response but, rather, God resolves to be ready to respond even when his people have forfeited all privileges (Lev 26:40–44). Indeed, whereas divine beneficence may be interrupted, it appears that divine benevolence remains. God seems to continually seek and forecast a state of affairs when he can abundantly bless the people. God desires to bless the people and has the power to do so since “nothing is too hard for him” (Jer 32:17, 27) yet God gives to each “according to his ways” and the “fruits of his deeds” (Jer 32:19). The people suffer not because of God’s will but because they continually provoke God

496 Thus, “that the Israelites are undeserving is not incompatible with his [Moses] frequent admonition that obedience to the commandments is a precondition for the conquest (see, e.g., 4:1; 6:18–19). That condition applies to their behavior from now on (see 10:16): future obedience is indispensable for the conquest, but it will not be the reason why God chose to give the land to Israel.” Tigay, Deuteronomy, 97. Likewise, see Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, 193–94, 211, Christensen, Deuteronomy 1–11, 184.

497 God will hear and remember the covenant if the people confess and respond to him (Lev 26:40, 42) and in all this God will refuse to reject (רָצָא) and abhor (לֹא יִתֵּן) his people or break (לֹא יִשֵּׁה) the covenant even when they reject and abhor (לֹא יִתֵּן) him (Lev 26:44). This is only explained by the proclamation, “I am the Lord their God” (Lev 26:44). This “underscores the significance of YHWH’s fidelity to his covenant. . . . Israel will continue as his people, and the covenantal promises will remain in force. This statement belies the claim that divine mercy is absent in priestly theology.” Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27, 2337. Levine suggests, “No matter how disloyal the Israelites have been, the Lord remains their God and will restore them.” Leviticus, 192.

498 Thus, God’s stirring declaration, “Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” (Deut 5:29; cf. Deut 4:40; 6:24; 12:28).

499 Thus, if they persist in evil, God will “set [his] eyes against them for evil and not for good” (Amos 9:4; cf. Lev 26:17; Deut 31:17–18). “To ‘fix one’s gaze on’ (לָצֵית) is usually a sign of favor (Gen 44:21; Jer 24:6). Here, however, its purpose is for harm (לָצֵית).” Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 392. Thus, it is evaluative and responsive. Perhaps this conditionality is nowhere more apparent than in Jer 18:7–10 where the divine intention is represented as directly contingent upon human response, and God will “relent” according to the actions of his people.
to anger through spiritual adultery and wickedness, yet God looks forward to a day of restoration that he will enact and thus “rejoice” over his people “to do them good” (Jer 32:30–42) with the bestowal of such goodness and peace that it will cause the nations to tremble (33:6–9; cf. Zech 10:6; Zeph 2:7). In spite of human shortcomings, God’s enduring commitment to covenant remains, while nevertheless partially contingent upon human response.

The pervasive conditionality in the OT therefore suggests that divine blessing is not purely arbitrary beneficence but is often responsive to the divine-human relationship. Thus one finds a conditional/unconditional motif that weaves itself through the complexities of the divine-human relationship, complexities that betray a fundamental place for a relational give and take between God and humans. In all this, while divine blessing need not be motivated or initiated by human action or obedience, to some extent ongoing divine blessing is presented as dependent upon human response to God’s initiative and providence. God desires to pour out his blessings, but the actual reception of God’s covenant blessing is often presented as contingent upon human fidelity. In other words, it is consistently God’s will to continue the blessing relationship, to be with his people, to not forsake them, but he leaves the decision in their hands. Since the reasons for the absence (or lessening) of divine blessing are not to be found in God’s goodness or character, nor in God’s election, there must be other factors at work, especially including the disobedience and apostasy of the people. At no point has God merely failed to follow through on his end of the covenant; the failure to receive promised divine blessings is presented as due to human transgression of appropriate response to God.

However, it is important to note that although the covenant relationship posits a specific modus operandi regarding blessings and curses, not all blessings fit neatly within such a framework. First of all, divine blessings are not restricted to the elect but, rather, God is “good to

500 Nevertheless, despite the anticipation of a future full blessing in Zechariah, the contingency of the divine covenant remains in view, allowing for the possibility of its removal (Zech 11:10).
all” (Ps 145:9). Yet, he specifically “keeps” those “who love Him while the wicked are destroyed (Ps 145:20; cf. 70:4 [5]). Here there is a clear differentiation between universal and particular blessing, as has been seen elsewhere in the OT.501 Presumably, there are aspects in which God blesses all people yet other aspects that operate in response to human disposition and/or actions.

Second, questions regarding the correspondence between human actions and divine blessing arise. To be sure, human response is an essential (necessary, but not sufficient) component of covenant blessing. The covenant relationship cannot continue forever without positive human response in accord with the expectations of God. Yet, the priority of the divine initiative is evident. However, humans often do not receive their just deserts, as is also clearly represented in the OT, especially in Job and Qohelet (cf. Eccl 3:16–17; 8:12, 14; 9:2). Thus, there is not always a one-to-one correlation between behavior and the reception of blessings or curses. Accordingly, positing a thoroughgoing “theology of (immediate) retribution” would create a significant tension.502 However, the complexity in the operation of the divine-human relationship, as presented in the OT, resists positing a simplistic, one-to-one relationship between the occurrences of an individual’s earthly life and their faithfulness to God. Moreover, the Bible operates with a tension between the present and the future. As such, often retribution, whether positive or negative, operates as deferred rather than immediate. It becomes apparent as the canon progresses that ultimate justice awaits the eschaton (Rev 20). These dual tensions of the

501 As L. C. Allen comments, “First, the whole creation is dependent on Yahweh’s providential work. . . . Second, Yahweh’s loving care is demonstrated especially to that group of people privileged to invoke this name in worship, the community of Israel.” Psalms 101–150, 373.

502 Even texts that may be read as positing a view of immediate retribution in isolation are clarified by wider contextual interpretation. For instance, Ps 18:25–26 [26–27]) posits, “With the kind You show Yourself kind; With the blameless You show Yourself blameless; With the pure You show Yourself pure, And with the crooked You show Yourself astute.” However, the context of this verse demonstrates that the king’s enemy has assailed him (Ps 18:17–18 [18–19]). Thus, God hears his cry in accordance with his faithfulness, but such faithfulness has not preserved him from all misfortune. As Craigie puts it, “He had lived a life of moral integrity, he had walked in God’s ways. . . . The assault of enemies had not been a consequence of his behavior; it did not reflect divine judgment. So he had been able to call for divine deliverance, and deliverance had come.” Psalms 1–50, 174–75.
presence/absence of retribution and the present/future become perhaps more prominent in the NT, as shall be seen. Aside from this tension, the contingency that is evident throughout the OT, with regard to the reception of divine blessings, assumes that God takes account of the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of covenant conditions. If God does, in fact, take into account human actions that affect (yet not determine) the bestowal of blessing, then divine beneficence is not wholly unilateral and, of necessity, God’s nature is capable of seeking and appreciating reciprocal response. With this in mind, attention now turns particularly to the foreconditionality of divine love in the OT.

The Foreconditionality of Love in the Torah

The priority of divine love is explicit in the unmerited election of Israel (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:7–8; 10:15). Israel was the object of God’s love prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions (cf. Deut 9:4–5). The priority of God’s love is further apparent from the first appearance of ἁμαρτία in Genesis when Lot describes his deliverance from Sodom by the phrase “you have magnified your lovingkindness” (Gen 19:19). Abraham’s servant praises God for “His lovingkindness and truth” in guiding him to a bride for Isaac (Gen 24:12, 27; cf. Gen 32:10 [11]). Notably, the servant’s praise implies that God could have withheld his lovingkindness, which is thus depicted as free and voluntary.

Divine love is also amazingly enduring as appears so poignantly as in the narrative of Exod 32–34 where God freely grants mercy and compassion to an undeserving people who have forfeited the privileges of their special relationship with God. In so doing, God manifests his own nature as “abounding in lovingkindness and truth” in close association to his being “compassionate and gracious” and longsuffering (Exod 34:6–7; cf. 33:19). God’s willingness

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503 Here, the syntagm ἁμαρτία ἀνέθετο appears, which emphasizes the commitment, reliability, faithfulness, steadfastness, and fidelity of the divine ἁμαρτία. It appears elsewhere in the Torah in Gen 24:27; cf. Gen 32:10 [11].
to overcome sin and the disruption of the relationship manifests the steadfastness of his commitment, which is the only way the divine-human relationship can be continued.

However, although divine love is amazingly enduring, it is not strictly unconditional. Rather, divine love is foreconditional. That is, God’s love is bestowed prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. As has been seen earlier, divine ṣĕw is conditionally predicated on the human response of love for God. God will visit iniquity to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, but divine ṣĕw will be shown to the thousandth generation of those who love (צָֽכֵֽא) him and keep his commandments (Exod 20:5–6 = Deut 5:10; cf. Exod 34:7; Deut 7:9; Jer 32:18). ṣĕw is thus unmerited, though not thereby altogether unconditional as shall be seen further below.

Deuteronomy 7:7–13 further illustrates the foreconditionality of divine love in one of the fullest expositions of how love is to operate within the divine-human relationship. First, divine love is prior to human response and unmerited. “Not because you were more numerous than all other peoples did Yahweh delight [פקְּתֵֽא] in you, therefore he chose [נַ֣֔סֶע] you when you were the least of all peoples, because of the love [חַֽהְוָֽא] of Yahweh for you, and he kept the oath which he swore to your fathers,” delivered and redeemed them (Deut 7:7–8). Divine love is thus prior to conditions (foreconditional) and, at the same time, unmerited. However, it is not unconditional. God is “the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness [ נכָֽא] to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut 7:9) yet “repays those who hate Him to their faces” (Deut 7:10). Therefore, Israel is to “listen” to, “keep,” and “do” all of God’s commands (Deut 7:11). “Then it shall come about, “because [צַֽהְכִּֽא] you listen to these judgments and keep and do them,” God “will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your fathers” and “He will love you and bless you and multiply you” in

504 My translation. Notably, Jacob points to the picture in Hos 9:10 of God finding Israel like grapes in the wilderness, suggesting that “Israel must therefore have had some trait to arouse Yahweh’s interest, but this passage, unique of its kind, might also mean that the impossible had become true, and so put in relief the extraordinary and miraculous character of election.” Theology, 110.
numerous ways (Deut 7:12–13, emphasis mine). Thus, although the origination of divine love is foreconditional and unmerited, the continuance of his love (as יְרָאָה and בַּשָּׁם) and the attendant, promised, covenant blessings are all likewise contingent and conditional upon the human response, often love that is to be manifested in devoted loyalty and obedience.

The Foreconditionality of Love in the Prophets

The priority of divine love is also apparent in the Prophets. For example, while Solomon was an infant “the LORD loved him” (2 Sam 12:24). Such love is obviously prior to any conditions that Solomon could have possibly fulfilled, though it is associated with the Davidic covenant. Just as divine בַּשָּׁם was bestowed foreconditionally (prior to any conditions) upon Solomon, the endurance of divine יְרָאָה is predicted by God in a prophecy shared with David. Specifically, God promises to treat Solomon as a father would his son, including necessary correction and discipline (יִתְּנֶה), yet never to take away his lovingkindness, which itself results in continued blessing (2 Sam 7:13–15; cf. 2 Sam 22:51). Solomon himself predicates this on

505 The vav consecutive at the start of Deut 7:13 implies that v. 13 is likewise a result of Israel’s appropriate response. Thus, listening, keeping, and doing the divine judgments (Deut 7:12) are the condition that God will “love you [בַּשָּׁם] and bless you [בַּשָּׁם] and multiply [יְרָאָה] you” according to the divine promise (Deut 7:13). Quell notes that this verse indeed “links the love of God with blessing as a reward which Yahweh will give for covenant faithfulness. Hence the thought of love unintentionally acquires a note of Do ut des.” “Love in the OT,” 33. However, he incorrectly believes this connection to law robs love of “its best part, its freedom.” Notably, even that which God had promised (swore) is presented as explicitly conditional upon the ongoing relationship. However, as Craigie points out, “This did not mean that obedience merited divine blessing, but rather that obedience maintained the proper covenant relationship with God; and his people could experience the blessing of God only when the covenant relationship, which involved reciprocal responsibilities, was properly maintained.” The Book of Deuteronomy, 180. Divine love is thus relationally beneficent. Divine blessing originates in the promise (Deut 1:11; 2:7) and thus, ultimately, in love. On the other hand, destruction will come “because” (בָּלַא) of disobedience (Deut 8:20). Cf. Deut 13:3–4; 19:9.

506 This divine love entails not only a positive divine disposition toward Solomon, but also grace toward David manifested in a visible marker of the continuance of divine love in the aftermath of his sins with Bathsheba and against Uriah.

507 Here, then, God promises to really care for Solomon, not indifferently, but including the discipline that truly accompanies love. Cf. Deut 8:15; Prov 3:11–12.
God’s “great lovingkindness” to David “according as he walked before [God]” faithfully (1 Kgs 3:6).  

The surpassing endurance of God’s love is abundantly evident in his continual love to an undeserving and ungrateful people who even have the audacity to question his love (cf. Mal 1:2–5). In some instances, divine love is spoken of as “everlasting.” God is said to show his lovingkindness to David “forever” (2 Sam 22:51; cf. 2 Sam 7:13–15). The everlasting nature of divine πατρίδια even becomes part of a frequent refrain, “the LORD is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Jer 33:11). Further, God declares his intention to “betroth” the people to him “forever” in righteousness, justice, lovingkindness, and compassion (Hos 2:19 [21]).

In this regard, consider the fluctuation between the potential rupture of the divine-human relationship and its continuance that appears in Isa 54. Israel is compared to a “wife forsaken and grieved in spirit” and “rejected” (Isa 54:6). God even admits, “For a brief moment I forsook you, But with great compassion I will gather you” (Isa 54:7). Moreover, in contrast to his “outburst of anger,” which amounted to the hiding of his face “for a moment,” God, the redeemer, will “with everlasting lovingkindness . . . have compassion” on his people (Isa 54:8). Moreover, God’s “lovingkindness will not be removed” and his “covenant of peace will not be shaken, Says

508 As such, Solomon appears to be the benefactor of something akin to a covenant of grant that God made with David. God shows “great πατρίδια” in reciprocation of David’s faithfulness. Cf. 1 Kgs 15:4–5. See the discussion further above.

509 Elsewhere, the Israelites rebelled and “grieved His Holy Spirit” (Isa 63:10) and God’s “zeal,” “mighty deeds” and the “stirrings” of his heart and compassion appear to be “restrained” (Isa 63:15). Yet, God’s anger is not “forever [πέπιπτον], because He delights in steadfast love (πατρίδια) (Mic 7:18). Thus, he will again have compassion, forgive, and give truth to Jacob and πατρίδια to Abraham (Mic 7:20).

510 This phrase is quite frequent in the Psalms (cf. Pss 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1–4, 29; 136:1–26).

511 For the similar analogy, see Jer 2:1; Hos 3:1, see the previous discussion of the familial analogies.

512 Notice the allusion to perpetual covenant with Noah in v. 9–10.
the LORD who has compassion” (Isa 54:10; cf. Isa 55:3). While divine anger, manifested in rejection, is a momentary torrent, divine love is manifested in great compassion and endures beyond mere covenant stipulations, making a way for reconciliation. Nevertheless, it is not altogether constant.

Perhaps the foremost passage regarding the enduring nature of divine love is found in Jer 31. Within the context of the need for Judah to turn to God, specifically that he will be found if they seek with all their heart (Jer 29:13), and in the aftermath of God’s punishment and exile of them for their harlotries (Jer 30), God declares the depth of this love. Even after all that has transpired between the covenant partners, he will be their God and they shall be his people (Jer 31:1), they have found “favor,” and the covenant will be restored to a remnant (Jer 31:2). It is within this context that God himself declares, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness” (Jer 31:3). First, this is a glorious affirmation of the longsuffering and overarching nature of divine love, itself the basis of God’s continued drawing in lovingkindness. This new covenant points to a further work of God that provides the possibility of an ongoing, intimate, covenant relationship between God and his people. Although God will punish iniquity, the results of which reach even to future generations, God’s

513 Oswalt suggests that God’s “heseed, that gracious, giving loyalty that, if given half a chance, will beggar itself for the beloved. It is not a spineless sentimentality that is blind to our human condition. Rather, it calls us into the mutual commitment of covenant. But it is that ‘love [that] never fails’ of which Paul knew (1 Cor. 13:8, NIV).” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 423.

514 The opening phrase, ילאה תב;ה, usually translated “everlasting love” might also be translated “love of old” or ancient love. However, such an interpretation would appear to be strained. Moreover, the syntagm of עִבְרֵי שָׁלְ颀 seems to be thematically related to this syntagm and the meaning “of old” applied to שָׁלְ颀 in many such contexts does not fit (i.e., Isa 54:8; cf. 2 Sam 22:51). If such a connotation were present, one would expect עִבְרֵי, so Ps 25:6. Rather, divine עִבְרֵי is elsewhere consistently depicted as “everlasting,” unmistakably so in texts such as Ps 103:17. It seems best to read this as a reference to “everlasting love.”
lovingkindness is transmitted to the thousandth generation (Jer 32:18; cf. Exod 20:6 = Deut 5:10).\textsuperscript{515} Within this context, a future is envisioned in which God will restore, forgive, and be so good to his people that the other nations will tremble (Jer 33:9; cf. Jer 31:31–34; 32:38). In this context, praise will resound for God’s goodness and “everlasting lovingkindness” (Jer 33:11).\textsuperscript{516}

On the other hand, there are numerous instances throughout the prophets that display the conditionality of love, including its potential forfeiture. A most striking and illuminating example is found in Hosea when God’s people become so evil that God “came to hate [יָשֵׁב] them” and declared, “I will love them no more” (Hos 9:15).\textsuperscript{517} Notice the contingency of divine love. It is clearly foreconditional since God “found” them in the wilderness (Hos 9:10) and loved them prior to any human response. However, it is clearly not unconditional since this love is interrupted, even discontinued. Divine hate is here associated with the discontinuance of love, but not indifference. As such, divine love is neither unilateral nor impartially constant. However, God’s final word has not been spoken in Hos 9 but he posits a further, conditional opportunity. If they will but return, God will “heal their apostasy” and “love them freely” (הַּשְּׂגָה יָבִיא), his anger will be “turned away,” and blessings will result (Hos 14:1–4 [2–5]).\textsuperscript{518} The very opportunity of

\textsuperscript{515} This is clearly an allusion to Exod 20:5–6; 3:7; Deut 5:9–10, which Lundbom calls “the divine retribution formula.” Jeremiah 21–36, 512; cf. Jer 31:30. Literally, God “shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them.” The following verse emphasizes that God is just in his dispersal of rewards (Jer 32:19); cf. Deut 24:16; Ezek 18:20.

\textsuperscript{516} Such a refrain appears often throughout the Psalms.

\textsuperscript{517} Further, God declares that they became as detestable as that which they love (Hos 9:10), likely descriptive of their engagement in cultic and sexual evils (cf. Num 25), even eating sacrifices to the dead (Ps 106:28); cf. Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 537. Andersen and Freedman translate, “Because of all their evil in Gilgal indeed there I came to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds, I will expel them from my house. I will never love them again.” Ibid., 536.

\textsuperscript{518} Eichrodt thinks that Hosea’s depiction, which he elsewhere considered the deepest and most advanced, nevertheless is “utterly impossible to rationalize it into a dogmatic statement about the nature of God” where the “most appalling outbursts of anger and the expressions of favour toward the new Israel—I will love them no more’ (9.15) and ‘I will love them freely’ (14.4)—are allowed to stand side by side with no attempt at reconciliation, signifying that on the basis of the prophetic faith at any rate there is no method of reconciling them. The only answer is to flee from the wrathful to the loving God.” Eichrodt, Theology, 253. Thus, he believes that “it can only be understood as the product of faith, breaking through the opus alienum of the divine wrath, to the vision of love as the ultimate and decisive power.” Theology, 253.
returning to God is predicated on divine compassion, yet the reception of divine blessing is nevertheless conditional; if only they will repent, God will “love them freely” (Hos 14:1, 4; cf. Joel 2:12–14). Thus, significant tension appears between the stated endurance, and yet apparent absence at times, of divine love and lovingkindness. How does the repetitive conditionality of the divine-human relationship accord with “everlasting love”?\(^{519}\) The tension is especially apparent in contrast to God’s statement in Hos 9:15 that he came to hate Israel and “will love them no more” (Hos 9:15). If such statements are taken seriously, it appears that divine love is everlasting in some respect(s), yet may nevertheless be discontinued.\(^{520}\) Importantly, the object of this everlasting love appears to be a “remnant” (Jer 31:7–9) within the parental analogy, suggesting limited application of such everlasting love. In other words, divine love itself may be everlasting, but its objects may not be constant. Thus, the love relationship will ultimately continue only for those who are a part of the new covenant.

In this regard, consider the striking presentation of the simultaneous continuance of God’s love for his people and yet restriction from actively loving them that appears in Jer 11, further highlighting these issues. Because of their continual apostasy, even breaking (נָשָׁה) the covenant (Jer 11:10), God will “not listen [שָׁמַע] when they call” (Jer 11:14). Even though they are his “beloved” ()init) they lack the right to his house because of their “vile deeds” (Jer 11:15; cf. 8:5).\(^ {521}\) In one sense, the people continue to be viewed as God’s “beloved” yet the love

However, this tension is not a contradiction in light of the concept of foreconditionality.

\(^{519}\) Keown, Scalise, and Smothers suggest that “the unique description of the divine love as אָהֶב, “everlasting,” moves beyond the conditional promise in Deut 7:9, no longer counting generations or sins. It is the LORD’s constant commitment to Israel that bridges the generations and makes restoration possible.” Jeremiah 26–52, 108. However, contra Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, it does not seem Jeremiah moves beyond conditionality at all, especially in consideration of the wider themes of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 18:7–10), not to mention further tension between these themes throughout the prophets.

\(^{520}\) Consider the continuity between this conception of divine love and Walton’s view of covenant jeopardy. Covenant, 94–107.

\(^{521}\) Whereas God is steadfast in love, “Jerusalem is distinguished by its steadfastness to rebellion and evildoing.” Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20, 509. In fact, God declares that even “a remnant will not be left
relationship is ineffective and broken. Thus, it appears that divine benevolence, which stems from
his foreconditional love for Israel, is maintained, while his beneficence is interrupted by their
apostasy. In other words, the love God desires to manifest remains thwarted by the rebellious
actions of the object of that love. In this way, the foreconditional divine love is subject to
conditions in the actual history of the relationship.

Divine love is not, in this passage, impartially constant or undifferentiated. On the
contrary, it is extremely passionate. God may, at least temporarily, forsake (יָשֵׁר) his inheritance by
giving the “beloved” (יהב אılma) of his “soul” (נפש) to her enemies (Jer 12:7), noting that he has
actually “come to hate [יהב] her” (Jer 12:8). There can be no mistaking the profound passion of
God for his people, as the beloved of his very soul, yet even this intense affection does not
prevent such passion from turning to hatred. It appears, then, that the apostasy can go so far that
the people can cut themselves off from divine love such that even if Moses and Samuel were
present, God declares, “My heart [יהב] would not be with this people” (Jer 15:1). Israel’s
continued disloyalty removes the divine blessing such that God has “withdrawn” his “peace”
to them” (Jer 11:23). The lack of a remnant is apparently in reference to the conspirators, not the nation as a
whole (Ezra 2:23).

522 The form יָשֵׁר is a hapax legomenon but with the identical meaning of יָשָׁר “beloved” (cf. Jer
11:15). This phrase “beloved of my soul” is a statement of profound emotion. Notice פנים; the seat of
emotions. Thus, Miller states, “I have given the beloved of my heart into the hands of her enemies.” The
pathos of the whole section is caught up in that one sentence, with its identification of the one whom the
Lord has given over to her enemies as “the beloved of my heart.” “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–
Ezekiel, 6:679. Such expression “is a strong one . . . showing a deep love for his people.” Lundbom,
Jeremiah 1–20, 654. Thus, divine hatred here appears likewise to be intensely passionate. Notably, God
appears to both love and hate Judah at the same time in this passage. Although the emotionality of divine
hatred is often downplayed in some theological circles, the emotionality here is recognized by many
scholars. For instance see Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–25, 184; Miller, “The Book of

523 The situation is so terrible—lying, apostasy, adultery, malfeasance of office, oppression of the
poor—that not even the most successful intercessors could succeed. The Lord’s heart has hardened in the
face of continuing, unrelenting wickedness. The people’s refusal to ‘turn,’ repent, and their refusal to
receive correction is so persistent (e.g., 2:30; 3:10; 5:3; 8:5–6; 15:7) that ‘turning’ is no longer possible.”
Huey Jr., Jeremiah, Lamentations, 157. “As has been seen previously, in all this, it is not God’s decision to
remove himself, but they have ‘done this to’ themselves.” Craigie, Kelley, and Drinkard Jr., Jeremiah 1–
from the people, even his “lovingkindness and compassion” (Jer 16:5; cf. Jer 14:10). As such, despite the enduring quality of divine lovingkindness, it is not unilaterally permanent. God’s love, lovingkindness, and compassion may be withdrawn, contingent upon the actions of the people. In this way, it appears that the reception of divine love by its intended objects can be thwarted while God waits for a “remnant” upon whom he can pour out his blessings. As such, God’s love is, in and of itself, everlasting and granted prior to conditions, but its continued reception is conditional upon appropriate human response. This is the foreconditionality of divine love.

The Foreconditionality of Love in the Writings

The priority of divine love is likewise apparent in the Writings. God is, freely and without prompting, “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth” (Ps 86:15; cf. 103:8; 106:44-45; 145:8; Neh 9:17). Such love is astonishing in its endurance. God’s lovingkindness is frequently spoken of as everlasting, often in the hymn formula, “give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting” (Pss 106:1; 107:1; 118:1-4, 29; 136:1-2, 4-5; Ezra 3:11; 1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21). Elsewhere the same theme is confirmed: God is good, his lovingkindness is everlasting, and his faithfulness is to all generations (Ps 100:5; cf. 89:1-2 [1-3]; 117:2; 138:8). His “lovingkindness . . . endures all day long” (Ps 52:1 [3]).

524 Notably, in Ezra, the paradigmatic refrain comes in the wake of the laying of the second temple’s foundation, itself a historical witness to the numerous sufferings of the exile. Thus, it seems to be understood that even though calamity comes upon God’s people, it is not because God’s lovingkindness has changed.

525 McCann reads this as having universal implications, “Psalm 100 wants us to know that God is shepherd both of God’s people and of the whole cosmos (see Pss 23:1; 74:1; 80:1; 95:7; Ezek 34:11–16).” “The Book of Psalms,” in 1 & 2 Maccabees, 4:1079. Tate translates Ps 89:2 [3], “For I have declared that your loyal-love is built to last forever, (and) that you have fixed your faithfulness in the heavens.” Psalms 51–100, 406. McCann Jr. adds, “God’s steadfast love lies behind and accounts for the origin of the world. . . . The verb makes clear that God’s character, the essence of which is steadfast love, is made known by God’s creating, redeeming, and sustaining activity.” “The Book of Psalms,” in 1 & 2 Maccabees, 4:1224.

526 The term here translated “lovingkindness” is rendered in some translations by the unrelated lexeme נְגוֹיָה, which means shame, reproach, and is thus translated here, “you are a disgrace” (NIV; cf. also
intimacy of the father–son relationship that God enters into with Solomon. God proclaims that he will be a father to Solomon and not take away his נַפְשִׁי from him (1 Chr 7:13; cf. Ps 103:13; cf. 103:17). Thus a personal, moral, and affectionate relationship is established, one that God apparently has the power to end but declares that he will not. Within the context of the Davidic promises, God declares, in accord with his superlative character of faithfulness, righteousness, justice, lovingkindness and truth, that he will keep his lovingkindness forever (Ps 89:28 [29]; cf. 2 [3], 30–32 [31–33]; 18:50 [51]). Even within the context of sorrow and affliction, it is affirmed that God’s lovingkindness itself never ceases, just as his compassions do not fail; “great is [his] faithfulness” (Lam 3:22–23; cf. Ps 33:5). However, such enduring love and lovingkindness are not unilaterally constant.

Rather, the context of Lamentations itself draws attention to the tension between God’s “everlasting” נַפְשִׁי and the suffering and sorrows that befall his people. Such is apparent as well when, at times, the lack of expected lovingkindness is lamented, through questions such as: Will God “reject forever” and “never be favorable [נַפְשִׁי] again?” Has God’s “lovingkindness ceased forever,” his “promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious” or “in anger withdrawn his compassion?” (Ps 77:7–9 [8–10]). Similarly, Ps 88 questions God, “Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave, Your faithfulness in Abaddon?” Further, “You have removed lover and friend far from me; My acquaintances are in darkness” (Ps 88:11, 18). Such lamentation is based on apparent absence, coupled with the expected continuance of divine lovingkindness, etc.527

527 As Tate comments, “The apparent absence of God in the present leads to meditation about the past, when divine love and protection were evident. This makes the present look even worse as the speaker remembers the favor, lovingkindness, graciousness, and compassion of the former days. Even God’s eternal promises seem to have come to an end. In sorrow and abandonment the speaker ponders on the disturbing questions in vv 8–10.” Psalms 51–100, 274–75.
Further, divine love is often spoken of as contingent and conditional, as was the case in the Torah and the Prophets, here most often with reference to divine ἀγάπη. While God himself is the ultimate ground of the bestowal of love and lovingkindness, divine love is not indifferent to the actual response of human beings. For instance, God “keeps” the covenant and lovingkindness to those who “walk before [him] with all their heart” (2 Chr 6:14; cf. Deut 7:9). Likewise, God “keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Dan 9:4; cf. Neh 1:5; 13:22). Similarly, it is prayed that God continue lovingkindness to those who “know” God and his righteousness to those who are “upright in heart” (Ps 36:10; cf. Ruth 1:8). On the other hand, it is prayed that no lovingkindness be extended to the evil one, “because he did not remember to show lovingkindness” (Ps 109:12, 16). Further, expected reciprocality is quite explicit in the statement, “with the kind [πάθις] You show Yourself kind [πάθις]” (Ps 18:25 [26] = 2 Sam 22:26). Accordingly, “all the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies” (Ps 25:10; cf. 25:6, 14). Further, divine “lovingkindness” is seen as the basis upon which God “recompense[s] a man according to his work,” it is here unequivocally conditional (Ps 62:12; cf. 31:23 [24]). Likewise, it is the one with lovingkindness and truth who finds “favor and good repute in the sight of God and man” (Prov 3:4). Similarly, just as the upright’s prayer is God’s delight (יגע), he

528 In Ruth 1:8, Naomi asks God to “deal kindly” with Ruth and Orpah as they “have dealt with the dead and with me.” Robert L. Hubbard Jr. comments, “Here emerges a key theological assumption of the book: the intimate link between human action and divine action. In this case, human kindness has earned the possibility (even likelihood) of a God-given reward. It has even modeled the shape that reward should take. This assumes, of course, that God is so intimately involved in the main characters that he knows their actions. It also assumes that he cares about them—indeed, that he wants to treat them kindly.” The Book of Ruth (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 104–5.

529 However, that this does not require perfect obedience is clear from Ps 25:11. As Craig puts it, “All covenants have two parties, and the lovingkindness of God, the senior partner in the covenant (v 10a), was related to the psalmist’s obedience to the covenant stipulations (v 10b).” Yet, “if God’s response depended upon sinlessness with regard to the covenant stipulations, then there could be no response. And so the psalmist prays again for forgiveness, aware that his ‘iniquity . . . is great.’” Psalms 1–50, 220.

530 Tate translates, “Yours is indeed a loyal-love, O Lord, for you reward each person according to what he [or she] has done.” Psalms 51–100, 117.
loves [רַק] the pursuer of righteousness (Prov 15:8–9). Lovingkindness “surrounds” the one who “trusts in the Lord” (Ps 32:10). He “favors” (רָצוּן) those “who fear him,” that is, “those who wait for His lovingkindness” (Ps 147:11; cf. Lam 3:25). Again, that God is interested in human response is likewise clear in the statement, “the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness” (Ps 33:18). God is thus willing to forgive “all who call upon” him, in his goodness and abundant lovingkindness (Ps 86:5; cf. 33:22). Similarly, “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him” (Ps 103:11). The conditionality on the basis of appropriate response here is obvious.

In all this, there is a striking contingency in God’s lovingkindness. Perhaps the tension between such contingency and statements of God’s everlasting צדקה approaches resolution in the statement, “The lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children, to those who keep His covenant and remember his precepts to do them” (Ps 103:17–18). Here the everlasting promise of צדקה is contained but particularized for those who respond appropriately to God.

At this juncture, it may be instructive to revisit the potential solutions to the tension between unconditionality and conditionality throughout the OT. The tension has been apparent with regard to love, lovingkindness, compassion, and the covenants, and it is not unreasonable to assume that the tension regarding such elements of the divine-human relationship are interrelated

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531 “In other words, the ‘godly one’ (דָּסִיר, v 6) will experience the divine lovingkindness (חסד, v 10).” Craigie, Psalms 1–50, 268.

532 “This love is not to be willfully abused. Its recipients must respond with respectful awe, he says in a triple refrain at vv 11, 13, 17. . . . The activity of God, involving ‘loyal love’ and ‘vindication’ (vv 4b, 6), must find an echo of obedient activity in their lives. . . . ‘Loyal love,’ essentially engenders a corresponding relationship of obligation.” L. C. Allen, Psalms 101–150, 32–33. McCann Jr. suggests, “There seems to be a contradiction: How is it ‘mercy’ if finally it is deserved? And what need is there for forgiveness? This contradiction, or better perhaps, tension, represents the inevitable dilemma for God, who both wills and demands justice and righteousness and yet who loves and is committed to relationship with sinful people.” “The Book of Psalms,” in 1 & 2 Maccabees, 4:1092. While McCann is right to note some apparent tension, it is not correct to conflate conditional with deserved.
and share a common thread. A prevalent position in biblical scholarship has been the belief that
there are at least two, contradictory, streams of thought presented in the OT with regard to this
issue, one positing the unconditionality and everlasting nature of God’s promises, the other
presenting the divine promises as conditional and potentially transient.\footnote{The prevalent view is that the Deuteronomic historian emphasized conditionality upon
faithfulness while another strand, likely the priestly, emphasized the unconditional “perpetual covenant”
harking back to Abraham. Weinfeld, “The Covenant,” 195; idem, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic;
Sakenfeld, The Meaning of Hesed, 149, 237–39.}

On the other hand, a canonical reading of the OT comes to a quite different and, I believe, compelling conclusion: that
the covenant, and its attendant promises and blessings, including divine love, are unconditioned in
some respects, yet conditional in others. At the risk of oversimplification, this view basically
interprets the data to point to the unconditionality of God’s promises in general, but conditionality
with regard to who will or will not be the recipients of such promises (as seems to be the clear
reading of Ps 103:17–18 above).\footnote{To be sure the nature and content (dynasty, land, etc.) of the promises vary considerably
throughout the OT. Without attempting to conflate these promises, the overall unconditionality that a
remnant will be the beneficiary of the fulfillment of those promises, while other potential beneficiaries may
forfeit their place, may be recognized as a broad, overarching theme of the OT that, according to the NT,
finds ultimate resolution in the eschatological kingdom that will be brought about by Jesus Christ; cf.
Walton, Covenant, 94–107.}

God’s love dovetails with this unconditionality and
conditionality by way of its preconditional nature. That is, God bestows love freely to his
creatures preconditionally, but the continued reception of that love, and attendant personal love
relationship with God, is conditional upon appropriate human response to God’s initiating love.\footnote{This points toward the universality and particularity of divine love, which will be briefly taken
up in the next section of this chapter.}

Such a view is bolstered by, though not necessarily dependent on, interesting parallels
between the biblical covenants and the grant type of covenant in the ANE.\footnote{The grant type of covenant basically consists of gifts from a sovereign to an individual and his
descendants who had loyally served him, with the assurance that the gifts will not be taken away from him
or his progeny. Weinfeld, “The Covenant.” It is important to note that Knoppers has compellingly argued
that a covenant of grant genre, as Weinfeld posits, is inadequate to the complexity of covenants in the ANE
as well as to the Davidic covenant in the OT, and misleading with regard to the nature of ANE covenants.
For instance, he points out that ANE land grants (at least in the sources that correspond to Weinfeld’s use)
complexity of both ANE covenants and biblical covenants defies one-to-one correlation with the so-called covenant of grant, the many ANE instances of a promise of blessings that will extend to future generations, independent of lapses in, and therefore punishment of, a particular generation, provide a striking parallel to the interlaced elements of unconditionality and conditionality with regard to the divine-human relationship of the OT.\footnote{537}

Scholars have long made a connection between the supposedly promissory and unconditional Abrahamic and Davidic covenants as a “covenant of grant” in stark contrast to the obligatory (upon the vassal) and conditional Mosaic covenant, akin to the so-called suzerain-vassal treaty type in the ANE.\footnote{538} However, some scholars have recognized that there is apparent

\footnote{537}For the examples of such partially unconditional, intergenerational ANE grants/promises see especially Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern,” 670–97. Importantly, parallels can be found across many genres—“vassal treaties, grants, wills, and adoption documents.” Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern,” 684. As such, “rather than seeing biblical authors as modeling the Davidic promises after either vassal treaties or land grants, it would be more accurate to say that biblical authors draw upon a variety of genres in their presentations of YHWH’s provisions for David’s descendants.” “Ancient Near Eastern,” 674.

\footnote{538}For the distinction between the suzerain-vassal treaty as obligatory, meaning the vassal took on the obligations of the covenant in contrast to the view of the covenant of grant as promissory, where the grantor promises to bestow blessings (dynasty, land) upon the grantee in light of past faithfulness, see Weinfeld, “The Covenant,” 184–85. This view is partially dependent on Weinfeld’s assumption that a covenant is a largely one-sided, rather than bilateral, promise of obligation. Such sharp contrast between the supposed unconditionality of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants versus the emphatic conditionality of the Mosaic has been widely held. See, for instance, George E. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” BA 17 (1954): 50–76. Importantly, Weinfeld does recognize expectation of ongoing faithfulness, but not such that the fulfillment of the promises is conditional upon such faithfulness. In order for the Davidic covenant to qualify as an unconditional covenant, however, the statements of conditionality that pertain to reception of the promises with regard to the Davidic covenant (1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 9:4–9) are presumed by Weinfeld to be the result of Deuteronomistic reduction. “The Covenant,” 195; cf. idem, Deuteronomy and the
conditionality evidenced in texts with regard to both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, neither of which is altogether promissory or obligatory. In fact, since the covenants are integrally related to one another intertextually in the OT, there is significant overlap between the so-called suzerain-vassal type, the grant type, as well as the kinship type of covenant throughout the OT. As such, while these covenants are asymmetrical they are not depicted in the OT as altogether unilateral and one-sided, but are actually bilateral covenants that presume a form of mutuality (though not equality) between God and humans. Such a position asserts itself within a final-form canonical interpretation of the text that takes seriously the consistent presentation of the endurance of God’s beneficence contrasted with the similarly consistent predication of the continuance of such blessings on appropriate human response. Importantly, the language of love itself consistently contains conditionality that presumes a bilateral relationship of give and take, in which God loves human beings and desires to be loved in return. Further implications of

Deuteronomistic. A final-form canonical approach is not at liberty to adopt such a selective reading of the texts that is based on circular reasoning.

A case can certainly be made that the emphasis of the Mosaic covenant (at least in many passages) is on the obligations of Israel toward God while the emphasis of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are on the promises, but neither excludes promises or obligations. In fact, Cross maintains that “there are no ‘unilateral’ covenants in a kinship-based society” and missing this point has led to the “gross distortion” of viewing covenant as unilateral. From Epic, 14–15. Cross further points out the dependence of such a view on extra-biblical presuppositions, commenting on Wellhausen’s view that “the relationship between God and Israel in premonarchical times and in early prophecy was ‘natural,’ spontaneous, free, interior (individualistic). Such language is his inheritance from a philosophical milieu created by idealism and romanticism, borrowed immediately from Vatke, and congruent with Protestant antinomianism.” Ibid., 15.

Knoppers has pointed out the insoluble problems with positing a stark contrast between promissory and obligatory covenants. By extensive reference to ANE parallels, he contends that most covenants are bilateral. This is the case even where the covenant is asymmetrical. The conditions and/or responsibilities may fall more heavily on one party or the other, but this does not amount to an entirely unilateral or one-sided covenant. Rather, “even in the most one-sided arrangements (e.g., Ulmi-Tesup; 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 89) there may be an element of reciprocity. The clearly bilateral dimension of such special relationships is but one more illustration of the complexity of covenant within ancient Israel and the ancient Near East.” “Ancient Near Eastern,” 696.

Davies points out that the Davidic covenant has “an inbuilt expectation of obedience (1 Sam 7:14; Ps 132:12). The tensions which result may not be the result of careless redaction, but the necessary tensions in an account of a relationship with attempts to grapple with the conundrum of a persistent divine commitment and a meaningful human responsibility.” A Royal Priesthood, 181. Cf. Gane, “Covenant of
this approach with regard to divine love and the God-world relationship will be explored in chapter 6.

In all this, there is no actual dichotomy between divine love and justice; אֱלֹהִים is shown toward those who respond to God, and yet, God repeatedly provides occasions for human response according to his compassion, graciousness, and longsuffering. Thus, although God’s love is grounded in his goodness, and prior to any external motivation, it does not appear to be manifested as uninterrupted or unilateral beneficence but, rather, appears within the context of real give-and-take relationship. In all this, God is clearly affected, loving and delighting in goodness, justice, and righteousness, reserving the ultimate reward for the upright.

The Relational and Multilateral Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that support the view that divine love is multilaterally relational. God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into a particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately. First, God seeks and enters into reciprocally responsive love relationships with his creatures, which amount to multilateral divine-human love relationships. Second, though God’s foreconditional love is universal, God does not love all equally and uniformly. God desires a reciprocal love relationship of give and take with all his creatures and initiates the possibility of such a relationship through his universal offer of foreconditional love that enables and calls for a reciprocal response of love. However, not all respond positively. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind.


542 Recall the striking association between divine lovingkindness and justice as well as truth, righteousness, faithfulness, etc. Divine lovingkindness is unquestionably connected to moral categories and, as such, it only makes sense that God’s love would not be antithetical to evaluation or conditionality.

543 I use the term multilateral here and elsewhere because love not only is to flow reciprocally from God to humans and vice versa but also from humans to others, which is indirectly love toward God as well. Further, in the NT, intra-trinitarian love is also added to the mix (see chapter 5). Thus, the relations of divine love are more than bilateral, they are multilateral.
while reading this section. Is divine love unilateral? Is God the only proper agent of love or may there be a reciprocal divine-human love relationship? Is divine love universal or particular? Following on this, might some be loved more than others? What of the concept of eschatological reward and the “remnant”? This section of the study will proceed with a survey of reciprocal love in the OT.

Reciprocal Love in the Torah

In the Torah, there is both particularity and universality to God’s love. The covenant relationship clearly depicts a particular love relationship (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:7–13; 10:15). God’s special love for his people is evident in numerous places. For example, God “loves [בּוֹשָׁן] the people,” all the “holy ones” are in his “hand” (Deut 33:3). However, divine love extends beyond the elect, Israel, to outsiders. God himself showed “His love for the alien” and commanded the Israelites to do likewise (Deut 10:18–19). In this way, the universality of divine love, which is explicit elsewhere, is implied. Thus, there is a contrast between what may be called “insider love” and “outsider love.” Throughout the OT, it becomes clear that God’s intention is to call all peoples to a particular, reciprocal love relationship with himself. Those who

544 [בּוֹשָׁן] is a hapax legomenon and may be derived or adopted from an Aramaic term meaning “bosom,” which would signify “Yahweh’s intense love” for the people. Good, “Love in the OT,” IDB 3:165. However, [בּוֹשָׁן] is interpreted in other ways, most notably as “pure,” which Craigie reads as “Yea, the pure ones of the peoples.” Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, 392. Tigay thinks the text may be damaged and its meaning indeterminate. Deuteronomy, 320. The MT represents the object as plural, “the peoples” (בּוֹשָׁנָּם). Thus, as Tigay notes, if the statement does indeed refer to God “it is a surprisingly universalistic statement for a poem about His protection of Israel.” Ibid., 320–21. LXX, here, represents people as singular. Christensen follows MT, “peoples.” Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12, 836. However, Merrill interprets it as love but restricts its object to Israel. Deuteronomy, 435. Notably, later in this chapter Benjamin is referred to as the “beloved [בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל] of the LORD” (Deut 33:12), “a term of endearment” Ibid., 440.

545 Consider also the universal intent of the covenant promises to Abraham; they were to bless all nations (Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4). Further, the Abrahamic covenant extends even to the slave who becomes circumcised as a condition of entrance into the covenant (Gen 17:14). “The reason for this choice must not be sought in Israel’s importance as a people, but in the unmerited love of God and in his fidelity to the promises (7:6–7). Yet, this choice does not limit God’s rule on earth to this small people, but comes within the framework of God’s plan for the whole world (10:14–15) and is the basis of the obedience and holiness required of Israel (10:15–16; 14:1–2). Israel’s choice is for the purpose of mission (note also Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19:5–6).” Nicole, NIDOTTE 1:641.
have entered into such a relationship will be “insiders” while those who reject God’s overtures will remain outsiders and, eventually, forfeit God’s universal, foreconditional love. In microcosm, the covenant people are treated as objects of God’s insider love though the individuals within the covenant themselves may forfeit God’s love.

God desires that his creatures reciprocate his love and thus enter into an intimate, particular love relationship with him. It should be remembered here and throughout the OT that, as shall be further explained in the coming chapters, human love toward God is itself predicated on God’s prior action. This is apparent in God’s proclamation to his people that he will “circumcise” their “heart . . . to love the LORD your God with all” their “heart” and “soul, so that [they] may live” (Deut 30:6). With this in mind, throughout the Torah, humans are repeatedly commanded to love God. In response to what God has done, the people should “love” him, “always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments” (Deut 11:1).

That is, humans are to love God with all their “heart,” “soul,” and “might” (Deut 6:5). Elsewhere, the command to love God is similarly repeated: Humans are to love God with all their “heart” and “soul” (Deut 10:12; 11:13; 13:3 [4]; 30:6; Josh 22:5), “to fear” him (Deut 10:12, 20; 13:3–4 [4–5]), “walk in His ways” (Deut 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 30:16; Josh 22:5), “serve” him (Deut 10:12; 11:13; 13:3–4 [4–5]; Josh 22:5), and “hold fast” or “cling” (κρατέω) to him (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4 [5]; Josh 22:5; 30:20), to “keep” (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 11:1; 19:9; 30:16; Josh 22:5) and/or obey (Deut 11:13; 30:20) variously his voice, commandments, statutes, commandments,

546 Notice the stark contrast between the lovers and haters of God (Exod 20:5–6; Deut 5:9–10; 7:9–10).

547 That God does not do this unilaterally is implicit in the abundance of commands to love God throughout Deuteronomy and elsewhere. God makes love toward himself possible but does not unilaterally effect it. On the other hand, if God did unilaterally cause humans to love him, why not do so from the beginning and universally? Such a conception would run counter to the OT narrative where God consistently calls human beings to respond to him in love. Clements comments, “There is to be a strong reciprocal bond of affection and commitment between Israel and the LORD as God.” “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in Numbers–Samuel, 2:343. Though Weinfeld sees loyalty and obedience as the primary meaning of the love command, he notes that “love between God and Israel involves also affection and emotion.” Deuteronomy 1–11, 351.
ordinances, and judgments. Likewise, the people are to “take diligent heed to [themselves] to love” God (Josh 23:11; cf. Deut 4:15). The people are similarly exhorted to “love the LORD” for he “preserves the faithful and fully recompenses the proud doer” (Ps 31:23 [24]). Importantly, God expects his people to love their fellow human beings: both neighbors (Lev 19:18) and aliens (Lev 19:34; Deut 10:18–19).

Beyond the many commands of love toward God, evidencing God’s desire for a reciprocal love relationship, there are instances in which humans actually do love God. For example, those who love God and keep his commandments are those who are shown divine lovingkindness (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; cf. Deut 7:9). Conversely, God is “the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness [דבש] to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut 7:9) yet “repays those who hate Him to their faces” (Deut 7:10).

The operation of this reciprocality is evidenced in a seminal statement regarding divine lovingkindness. The first is situated within the third commandment of the Decalogue, which prohibits idolatry. In his passion (שַׁאֲר) for this exclusive relationship, God will visit iniquity to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, but divine lovingkindness will be shown to the thousandth generations of those who love (בְּרֵאש) him and keep his commandments (Exod 20:5–6 = Deut 5:10; cf. Exod 34:7; Deut 7:9; Jer 32:18). Thus, God’s lovingkindness far exceeds divine judgment; the

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548 Literally, they are to be “exceedingly watchful of their souls [inner person] to love” (Josh 23:11). The mention of “soul” implies that this is to be a passionate love, since “soul” is often the seat of emotions.

549 God is faithful (אָדָד) and expects faithfulness. It might be said that divine love is thus faithfully seeking reciprocal faithfulness. Keown, Scalise, and Smothers point out that “God’s love . . . motivated the election of the people and their deliverance . . . and lovingkindness “for a thousand generations’ measures the LORD’s commitment to the covenant.” Jeremiah 26–52, 108.

550 This is not necessarily in contradiction to statements elsewhere that sons are not to be punished for the sins of their fathers (Deut 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6; Ezek 18:20). Here, the consequences of iniquity appear to consist of those that are naturally passed down from generation to generation. It is a fact of life that the quality of a father’s life has significant impact, for good or for ill, on the lives of his progeny. Notably, the range of consequences to the fourth generation would often include contemporaries, thus
consequences of the latter may extend to the fourth generation but \( \text{dsx} \) continues even unto the thousandth generation, though conditionally predicated on the human response of love for God.\(^{551}\)

Here lovingkindness is thus set within the context of a reciprocal relationship predicated partially on human love for God. In this, the importance of the divine-human relationship \textit{qua} relationship is highlighted. God’s passion for this relationship may result in temporary chastening when appropriate, but ultimately divine blessings will overflow upon those who respond to God in love, in accordance with God’s character of steadfast love (\( \text{dsx} \)).

Reciprocal Love in the Prophets

Once again, in the Prophets, God does not love all equally. There is a universal divine love but also a love that is particular and intimate. As has been mentioned already, God wants to include all humans in an intimate love relationship with himself but this requires that humans freely reciprocate God’s love. A number of examples of “insider” love, that is, love that is specially directed toward an individual or a group (going beyond universal love), occur in the Prophets. As in the Torah, the special love that God has for his elect, covenant people is one making it even easier to see how the consequences of a patriarch’s evils may severely affect his family. For a similar view, see Gowan, 	extit{Theology in Exodus}, 238. Likewise, Craigie further points out the intergenerational affects that would stem from children and grandchildren lacking the proper Torah instruction that “was essential to their life and well-being.” 	extit{The Book of Deuteronomy}, 154. Compare, the similar, but nuanced view of Sarna, 	extit{Exodus}, 110. Others think the verse actually refers to the subsequent generations that continue to practice the same sins of the fathers, who will thus face similar consequences. Thus, the phrase “of those who hate me.” Tigay, 	extit{Deuteronomy}, 66; Stuart, 	extit{Exodus}, 454. In any case, this is in striking contrast to the practically everlasting \( \text{dsx} \) promised to those who love God, the “thousands,” which Durham proposes, “might better be read ‘innumerable descendancy.’” 	extit{Exodus}, 287.

\(^{551}\) That is, “the Lord will faithfully reciprocate the devotion and obedience of the people.” Tigay, 	extit{Deuteronomy}, 67. There are a number of ANE parallels to this language. For instance, the first Ketef Hinnom silver plaque speaks of “the covenant-lover and fidelity to his lovers, and among those who keep.” See Propp, 	extit{Exodus 19–40}, 173. It also resembles language from the Sinuhe narrative, “God exalts the one who loves him.” See ibid., 19–40, 173. Based on these parallels, some have reduced love in Deuteronomy to legal obedience devoid of any tender emotion and many others have followed in viewing such language merely as technical treaty language. The seminal studies are Moran, “The Ancient,” 77–87; McCarthy, “Notes,” 145–46. However, this position is not compelling in light of the wider evidence throughout the Torah (and the rest of the canon) where tender emotion is apparent on both sides of the divine-human relationship. Numerous other reasons also suggest that the covenant background of \( \text{bha} \) in the Torah and elsewhere is not mutually exclusive to the concurrent presence of emotional affection. For a further discussion of this issue see the \( \text{bha} \) word study earlier in this chapter.
example of “insider” love (cf. Mal 1:2). Further, God “loved” Solomon as an infant as well as later in his life (2 Sam 12:24; Neh 13:26; cf. 1 Kgs 10:9). Since elsewhere it is apparent that God loves all, this statement must refer to a particular kind of love, otherwise it would be superfluous. In another instance, the “LORD loves him” may refer to Cyrus, or to Israel in a collective singular (Isa 48:14). Either way it manifests God’s particular “insider” love. Abraham is also likely singled out, referred to as God’s friend (Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7; cf. Deut 4:37). The benefits of such “insider” love appear when David describes his “reward” and “recompense” as a consequence of his own fidelity to God (2 Sam 22:21–25; cf. 1 Kgs 3:6), culminating in the refrain, “with the kind You show yourself kind, with the blameless You show Yourself blameless” (2 Sam 22:26; cf. 22:27). The ideal nature of bilaterality is also apparent when, at the dedication of the temple, Solomon refers to God’s “keeping covenant” and “lovingkindness” with those “servants who walk before [him] with all their heart” (1 Kgs 8:23). As in the Torah, God consistently seeks a reciprocal love relationship with his people. Those who are privy to an ongoing, particular, and intimate love relationship with God (thus 552 Though the qal participle in both of these instances may only denote Abraham’s love toward God, it is clear elsewhere that God loved Abraham, not least of which in the numerous references to God’s love of the “fathers” (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:7–8; 10:15). Other potential instances of love for individuals also appear.

553 This “asserts the importance of righteousness and obedience to God’s covenant as moral qualities that God takes seriously. . . . The Lord does regard such qualities, and we are reassured that such values matter in the eyes of God.” Birch, “First and Second Samuel,” in Numbers–Samuel, 2:1367. However, it must be remembered that David himself was surely not perfect. Thus, significantly, “The Lord does not treat all people alike—to do so would demonstrate a moral indifference that is not found in the biblical view of God.” Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 458. Similarly, the promises to Solomon are themselves predicated on God’s “great lovingkindness” to David, which are themselves “according as he walked before [God]” faithfully (1 Kgs 3:6). As such, this special relationship with Solomon is grounded in both the great παινεῖ of God and the prior faithfulness of David. Importantly, this relationship is not unilateral but Solomon is specifically said to have “loved” God, albeit imperfectly (1 Kgs 3:3).

554 Elsewhere, the explicit reciprocality of the divine-human relationship is apparent absent language of divine love when God states, “Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam 2:30).

555 Love is to be reciprocated. Notice, for instance, the assumption that παίνει ought to be reciprocated when David is chastised by Joab for “loving those who hate you” and “hating those who love you” (2 Sam 19:6). Loose reciprocality is also evident in a benedictory proclamation: Jabesh-gilead is to be

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“insiders”) are those who respond appropriately to God in love. Importantly, this particular and intimate love relationship is offered to all humans. Despite the revelatory emphasis on the particular covenant relationship of God with Israel, it is important to recognize that God’s love and care extends beyond the bounds of covenant unto all peoples, though not in an undifferentiated manner. For example, God’s grace, σπαθική, and compassion extend beyond the covenant people to Nineveh, much to the dismay of the reluctant prophet, Jonah (Jonah 4:2, 11). Further, the prophets refer to the universal purpose of the Abrahamic covenant, blessing to the nations, in a number of instances (Isa 42:1; Jer 4:2). Moreover, the covenant blessings are available to foreigners who join themselves to God and keep it (Isa 56:4–8). According to Jer 12:15–17, even the foreign lands may receive compassion in the wake of judgment, if they will respond to God appropriately. In a real, but limited, sense divine fatherhood is universal since he is the creator of all (Mal 2:10). Indeed, God ultimately looks toward a gathering of the nations “blessed of the LORD because” of the σπαθική they showed in burying Saul (2 Sam 2:5–6).

556 God even has compassion [σπαθική] for the animals (Jonah 4:10–11). Blank comments, “Man’s troubles are matched and dwarfed by God’s own hurt.” Blank, “‘Doest Thou,’” 36. Other instances show that God was interested in other nations as well (cf. Jer 32:19; 33:9; Amos 9:7, 12). Divine σπαθική to foreigners also appears in Ruth 1:8; 2 Sam 15:20.

557 Although some have sought to relegate such universal implications to a minority opinion of “Second Isaiah, the passages that are usually quoted as examples of narrow Jewish exclusivism (Ezek. 44:6–9; Ezra 4:1–3) are not aimed at the kind of people being talked about here. What Ezekiel and Ezra were alarmed about is the same thing Isaiah is alarmed about in 57:3–13 and later: pagans . . . who are either open in their unbelief or are masquerading as believers. . . . Isa. 56:1–8 says nothing against that kind of exclusivism, and 57:3–13 and 65:1–7 actively support it.” Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66, 457.

558 God promises to “have compassion” on the peoples and “bring them back” each to their land and then “if they will really” learn the ways of his people they will be built up, but the alternative is destruction (Jer 12:15–17). Here, compassion appears prior to conditions but along with conditions for its continuance, providing a probationary opportunity for the nations to turn toward God. “The text betrays a powerful universalistic impulse. The Lord invites and welcomes all the ‘neighbors’ into the community of faith that is constituted by Israel. The invitation is real.” Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in Isaiah–Ezekiel, 6:680. “This is an extraordinary statement, nothing less than a conditional, Sinai-type covenant offered to the Gentiles. Yahweh’s compassion is not conditional upon them learning his peoples’ ways, but conditions will come afterward. Verse 17 tells us what will happen if these conditions are not met.” Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20, 663; cf. Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 362. Huey adds, “The verses teach the freedom of choice with which God has endowed the human race. We are free to accept his lordship and be blessed or to reject him and experience punishment.” Huey Jr., Jeremiah, Lamentations, 141–43.
to himself (Isa 66:18–22; Hos 14:5–7 [6–8]; Zeph 3:8–9; Zech 2:11). However, only those who appropriately respond to God actually enjoy the intimate, particular divine-human love relationship.

The reality of reciprocal human love toward God, in response to his love, also appears in the Prophets. A particularly clear, indicative example is God’s love for Solomon (2 Sam 12:24; cf. Neh 13:26) and the fact that “Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father” (1 Kgs 3:3). Elsewhere, Abraham is the “friend,” literally the “lover” (זֶבַע), of God (Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7). Further, Judges differentiates between the “lovers” (זֶבַע) and “haters” (פָּשַׁת) of God; the former will be blessed, the latter cursed (Judg 5:31). Elsewhere, God remembers the “love of” Israel’s “betrothals,” in parallel to “the devotion [דר] of [her] youth” and her “following after [God] in the wilderness” (Jer 2:2). In another context, God is entreated to “let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might” (Judg 5:31). In a number of instances, love for God is indirectly stated, via love for a hypostatization of God. For instance, covenant blessings are prescribed to those, even foreigners, who “love the name of the LORD” (Isa 56:6).

Notably, in Zec 2:11 God even declares that “many nations will be joined with” him and “become my people” and he “will dwell in [their] midst.” This is just after a statement of re-election (Zec 2:12 [16]) and is also strikingly reminiscent of divine language of covenant-making, “I will take you for My people, and I will be your God” (Exod 6:7; cf. Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4 24:7; 30:22; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 37:23; Zech 8:8; 13:9).

Notably, Solomon is still sacrificing at the high places, which makes his love for God imperfect. As such, love does not assume perfection. In the following verse, God declares that Solomon is to be called “Jedidiah” (יהדיה), meaning beloved of the Lord (2 Sam 12:25).

Stoebe mentions that as in Jer 2:2, “Deut 7:8 also presupposes God’s love; indeed, in distinction from Hos, ‘حب’ ‘to love’ seems to have become an equivalent for הֵסֶד, even in reference to human love for God. One could ask whether the formula “to love with all your heart, etc.” (e.g., Deut 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:4; 30:6) means to express the unreserved devotion implied by הֵסֶד.” Stoebe, TLOT 1:460. It is perhaps significant that human love toward God is quite prominent in Deuteronomy but altogether absent in Hosea, whereas human חֵסֶד toward God is well-represented in Hosea but altogether absent in Deuteronomy.

Further, a psalmist loves the divine “name” (Ps 5:11 [12]). The inheritance is for “all those who love His name” (Ps 69:36 [37]). God is gracious to “those who love Your name” (Ps 119:132). Love is also variously directed at God’s house (Ps 26:8), his salvation (Pss 40:16 [17]; 70:4 [5]), his commandments (Ps 119:47–48, 127), law (Ps 119:97, 113, 163, 165), testimonies (Ps 119:119, 167), word (Ps 119:140), precepts (Ps 119:159), and Jerusalem (Isa 66:10; cf. Ps 122:6). Such indirect reference may be related to
humans may reciprocate God’s love and thus enter into and/or maintain an intimate and particular love relationship with him.\textsuperscript{563}

However, God’s people may also forfeit God’s love by scorning his overtures. This repeatedly took place in the history of Israel and Judah. Hosea the prophet was called to act out this relationship in his life, by marrying an adulterous woman as a metaphor of the “love” God has for apostate Israel (Hos 3:1).\textsuperscript{564} God is here presented as a wounded lover, a scorned God of compassion, the victim of unrequited love.\textsuperscript{565} Throughout Hosea there seems to be both permanent and transient elements to divine love. God “finds” Israel in the wilderness, yet they


\textsuperscript{563} On the other hand, human קָרֶה is commonly misdirected, often describing Israel and/or Judah’s infidelity and spiritual harlotry (Isa 57:8; Jer 2:25, 33; 5:31; 8:2; 14:10). It is thus used in reference to Judah’s many “lovers” (Jer 22:20, 22; 30:14; Ezek 16:33, 36–37; 23:22; Lam 1:19). Thompson suggests this language has significant connotations of a suzerain-vassal relationship between the people and her “lovers” based on ANE parallels and that in such instance “lover” may mean ally. “Israel’s ‘Lovers.’” However, Ackerman points out that the simultaneous usage of the marriage metaphor and Judah’s adultery requires this passage to also be seen “as dependent upon an understanding of love rooted in the language of interpersonal relationship.” “The Personal,” 448. Cf. Jer 2:33–3:5. Hosea also makes reference to the abundance of spiritual adultery and Israel’s “lovers” (Hos 2:5 [H 2:7]; 2:7 [2:9]; 2:10 [2:12]; 2:12–13 [2:14–15]; 3:1; 8:9; 10:11). Such misdirected love causes non-acceptance with God and remembrance of the people’s sin.

\textsuperscript{564} It is not certain whether “again” refers to God’s statement, thus “the LORD said to me again,” or to the command, thus go “again love.” Scholars disagree regarding the identity of the adulteress “woman [קָרֶה].” Three main views appear: (1) it is another woman, distinct from the one in chapter 1, so Stuart, \textit{Hosea-Jonah}, 64. (2) It is the same woman, whom Hosea had since divorced. (3) It is the same woman to whom Hosea remains married, though she is unfaithful, so Andersen and Freedman, \textit{Hosea}, 295. It does not appear that the reference could be to a different married woman, lest Hosea himself be commanded here to commit adultery; cf. Garrett, \textit{Hosea, Joel}, 99. Thus, the reference must be to the same woman of chapter 1, whom Hosea appears to have divorced yet with whom he is to seek reconciliation. See the earlier discussion regarding Hos 1:6–7. Regardless of the particular historical reference, however, the texts clearly point to God’s continued seeking of a mutual relationship with his people. Notice the wide range of “love” in this passage. It characterizes the emotion of God, symbolized by that Hosea is to display toward his wife, yet the people are “loved” by another, a reference to her adultery, and “loves” raisin cakes, apparently a reference to idolatry. Stuart notes the contrast between God’s virtuous love and that of Israel. \textit{Hosea-Jonah}, 65. Here again, it must be remembered that the term קָרֶה itself does not shed light on the kind, or quality, of love.

\textsuperscript{565} “Yahweh loves Israel—to whom he is married—in spite of the fact that Israel loves other gods. Hosea is to love his wife the way Yahweh loves Israel. This close comparison between God’s love for his people and a man’s love for his wife sums up the story of Hosea’s marriage.” Andersen and Freedman, \textit{Hosea}, 297. This is a passionate love, as Yee states: Love here “characterizes both the profound emotion of Hosea and God.” “The Book of Hosea,” in \textit{The Twelve Prophets}, 7:231.
come to love Baal (Hos 9:10) and become so evil that God “came to hate [אַלּוּ הִה] them there” and declares, “I will love them no more” (אַלּוּ הִה הָעִם אַלָּם) (Hos 9:15). Nevertheless, the interruption of divine love does not amount to a total rejection. Rather, God continues to work with his people, and he promises chastising (שׁוֹנָה) when it is his desire (תַּעֲמַד) (Hos 10:10). A similar pattern is recapitulated in Hos 11, even more poignantly. God declares his profound “love” (רָבָּה) for youthful Israel, whom he called “My child” (Hos 11:1). Such love was manifested in that he “taught” them to “walk” and “took them in [his] arms” though they did not recognize him (Hos 11:3). God goes on to depict Israel as a beast whom he “led . . . with the cords of a man, with bonds of love” (Hos 11:4), but they “refused to return” and for this reason they are to be given over to Assyrian rule (cf. Hos 11:7).

But this divine judgment deeply grieves God, who expresses his anguish: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim?” My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled” (Hos 11:8). Once again, the magnitude of God’s unrequited love is manifested here in divine suffering when the deserved consequences of Israel’s action must be meted out. God then proclaims that he will “not execute My fierce anger” for “I

566 As Wallis puts it, Israel’s adultery “provoked her husband to wrath. His love changed to antipathy. He divorces his wife.” TDOT 1:113–14. As Eichrodt puts it, “Love has turned into a hate that knows neither compassion nor mercy.” Theology, 253. Though he believes, anticipating what comes hereafter, that it “is still the love that woos the nation and suffers as a result of their rejection, not a cold, calculating requital, sealing Israel’s fate. This means that it is still possible to hope for the greatest of all mercies, that even the rejected nation may escape the destiny of judgment, if only they can find it in them to say ‘Yes’ to God’s proposal.” Ibid., 253–54. The animosity is apparent, despite the interpretations of some that this is merely language of covenant rejection. For instance, Stuart claims, “Personal emotions are beside the point. The wrath of the covenant God is the predominating issue.” Hosea-Jonah, 153; cf. Lohfink, “Hate and Love,” 417. Yet, this presumes that wrath is not an emotion and reduces hate to merely technical covenant language. However, the wider context of Hosea points to deep and profound divine emotionality. See also the discussion of divine hatred in the word study of אַלּוּ earlier.

567 See the discussion of Hos 11 earlier in this chapter.

568 This is the strongest emotive language of love. See the discussion of the emotionality of love earlier in this chapter.
am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, And I will not come in wrath” (Hos 11:9).

The possibility of the rupture of God’s relationship with his people is painful to God, even if it is impermanent. Israel was given over to Assyrian destruction that was complete by 722 B.C., showing that divine judgment is not altogether removed by divine mercy, but there is a hope for future (eschatological) restoration (see Hos 14:4 [5] below).

Future restoration of the divine-human covenant love relationship is partially dependent upon the requirement that Israel turn from idolatry and return to God, in order to receive the full

569 Despite the language of parental imagery, God is well within his rights to destroy Israel (cf. Deut 21:18–21). The Hebrew, however, is once again difficult to interpret. A number of interpretive/translation issues arise. First, it is not clear whether God is stating that the fullness of his anger will not be poured out (i.e., utter destruction), or whether the idiom “again” (חַיָּל) means it will not be poured out after the destruction of Samaria, or whether he looks forward to an eschatological situation where his anger is no longer necessary. Another option is also available: Andersen and Freedmen translate by viewing חַיָּל as asseverative rather than negative. Thus God is pouring out his anger, even though it is agonizing for him to do so. Thus, “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I relinquish you, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I deal with you like Zeboiim? My mind is turning over inside me. My emotions are agitated all together. I will certainly act out my burning anger. I will certainly come back to destroy Ephraim. For I am a god and not a human. I, the Holy One, will certainly come into the midst of your city.” Hosea, 574; cf. Lam 3. The meaning of the statement “I am God, and not man” is also unclear since it could mean that he is unlike humans in not allowing his emotions to cloud his judgment, or that unlike humans he is free to follow his emotions that are always righteous; cf. Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 589. Even if the former position is taken it still begs the question: Which emotion is overcome, his love and compassion (Hos 11:8) or his anger and wrath (Hos 11:9)? Some scholars posit that the ultimate end of God’s love is an impossibility, though he could give them over to “terrible suffering.” Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 62. Perhaps it conveys that God, despite the magnitude of emotion, is not determined by that emotion and though extremely angry will not act as a human being would (i.e., total eradication). On the other hand, Andersen and Freedmen posit, with reference to Deut 1:17 and the divine self-declaration of holiness, that “if Yahweh were to give special consideration to Ephraim, he would be acting in a human way. This course he spurns.” Hosea, 589. In this view, restoration comes only after total destruction, that is, resurrection. Ibid., 197; cf. Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Exod 34:6–7. Garrett, on the other hand suggests that the entire passage is patterned after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah but that here God will not carry out his full fury as he did then. Ephraim will be punished but “not suffer the total, irreversible annihilation that Sodom experienced.” Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 228. Further, he translates the final clause אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְבָּא אֶלְb. “I shall not enter the city” rather than “I will not come in wrath” and believes this refers to God’s mercy. Specifically, God being holy would utterly eradicate Israel if he entered the city and “saw” their sins as he did Gomorrah. Ibid., 228–29. Numerous options are plausible. However, regardless of the option that is taken, the clear import for the divine-human relationship is that God desires to not mete out judgment against Israel and is here agonizing over the situation. Historically, judgment did fall on Samaria yet God looked forward to a time of restoration (cf. Hos 14:4 [5]).

570 Thus, Stuart appears to be correct when he states, “This is not a promise of mercy for those alive in Hosea’s day, but for their descendants, the remnant that will follow. To righteous followers of the covenant, those who heeded Hosea’s message, it would nevertheless be a source of great encouragement.” Hosea-Jonah, 182.
measure of divine beneficence and mercy. If they will but return, God will “heal their apostasy” and “love them freely,” his anger will be “turned away” and blessings will result (Hos 14:1–4 [2–5]). Thus, God wants to bestow his love upon the people, but conditions remain for Israel to receive divine love within a sustainable relationship. Divine love is voluntary, yet also contingent upon relationship. Ultimately, God looks forward to the day when he will “exult” over a remnant with joy, “be quiet in His love,” and “rejoice” over them “with shouts of joy” (Zeph 3:17).

Throughout the descriptions of divine love in the prophets, God’s love is emotive, within a give-and-take relationship, and also evaluative, delighting in justice and human faithfulness. As such, the particular, intimate, reciprocal love that God desires with human beings is not unilaterally effected by him. Rather, he initiates and makes all provisions for such a relationship but it is nevertheless conditional upon human response (i.e., foreconditional).

571 “The theme of God loving this people in spite of their disloyalty reiterates the passionate, tender emotions that Yahweh/husband expressed to his repentant wife (2:19–20; 3:1).” Yee, “The Book of Hosea,” in The Twelve Prophets, 7:295. Andersen and Freedman render, “I will love them generously.” Hosea, 646. Stuart sees this in the sense of an unearned or “voluntary offering” or “offering made out of generosity” such that “Yahweh’s love will again give blessing to his people.” In his view, “Yahweh’s anger will be appeased (cf. 11:9) only by his own grace (cf. 2:16, 17 [14, 15]). Israel remains as undeserving of this merciful forgiveness as she was of her initial election. She will, in the eschaton, receive the blessing of being made faithful (restoration blessing type 3; cf. Deut 30:6).” Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 214–15. Perhaps the sense is that God will be free to love them in all his fullness once the relationship is restored and his anger is assuaged; cf. Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 273–74. Notably, “healing is promised for the repentant nation in the future, whereas no healing was possible in the past.” Hosea-Jonah, 214. Thus, Yahweh will renew their adoption.

572 Eichrodt thinks that Hosea’s depiction, which he elsewhere considered the deepest and most advanced, nevertheless is “utterly impossible to rationalize it into a dogmatic statement about the nature of God” where the “most appalling outbursts of anger and the expressions of favour toward the new Israel—’I will love them no more’ (9.15) and ’I will love them freely’ (14.4)—are allowed to stand side by side with no attempt at reconciliation, signifying that on the basis of the prophetic faith at any rate there is no method of reconciling them. The only answer is to flee from the wrathful to the loving God.” Eichrodt, Theology, 253. Thus, he believes that “it can only be understood as the product of faith, breaking through the opus alienum of the divine wrath, to the vision of love as the ultimate and decisive power.” Ibid.

573 See the discussion of this beautiful passage above. Notice the implication that the object is a remnant in Zeph 3:11–15.
Reciprocal Love in the Writings

The conception of the universality and particularity of divine love within the context of God’s profound desire for a reciprocal love relationship with human beings is further depicted in the Writings, as it was in the Torah and Prophets. Notice the many explicit examples of the ideal reciprocal nature of love. For example, consider the exclamation, “May they prosper who love you [human]” (Ps 122:6). Personified wisdom even proclaims, “I love those who love Me” (Prov 8:17). On the other hand, those who hate God ought not to be loved (2 Chr 19:2). Further, it is prayed that God continue lovingkindness to those who “know” God and his righteousness to those who are “upright in heart” (Ps 36:10; cf. Ruth 1:8). On the other hand, it is prayed that no lovingkindness be extended to the evil one, “because he did not remember to show lovingkindness” (Ps 109:12, 16). Thus, love often assumes relationality that includes proper regard and the expectation of reciprocality.

In such passages the concept of “insider” love, that preferential (and often evaluative) love discussed earlier, appears once again. Yet, while divine love most often appears within the covenant relationship, and thus within an “insider” relationship, in a number of instances it is clear that God’s love extends far beyond the covenant community, indeed even to all humans. Thus, divine lovingkindness (דבש) is said to fill the earth (Pss 33:5; 119:64; cf. 36:7 [8]; 100:5; 574

574 Fox comments, “Behind the concept of mutual love of wisdom and humanity may lie the theme of reciprocal divine-human love. While the theme of mutually divine-human love is biblical (especially prominent in Deuteronomy), the formula of reciprocal love is not (though some statements come very close). There are, however, strong Egyptian parallels. Kayatz (1966:98–102) quotes the formulas on heart scarabs, such as ‘Khonsu loves him who loves him’; ‘Isis loves the one who loves her.’ Kayatz believes that the qualities of loving and being loved are particularly characteristic of Ma’at, the goddess of justice and truth (see pp. 335f). This reciprocity formula, however, is used of a variety of deities.” Fox, Proverbs 1–9, 276. Waltke adds, “Similar statements are made about one’s relation to God (e.g., ‘those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me I will disdain,’ 1 Sam. 2:30; cf. 2 Sam. 22:26 [= Ps. 18:26(27)].” There are also “parallels in the Egyptian wisdom literature. ‘Ptah loves all those who love him and who ask him.’” Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29, 404.

575 Notice, also, in numerous texts it is assumed that זירא ought to be reciprocated, since it is lamented when love is repaid with hatred (Ps 109:4–5), or when Job’s loved ones have turned against him (Job 19:19). Similarly, the psalmist laments that hatred is repaid for friendship (Ps 109:5); cf. Ezek 16:37; Prov 27:6.
576 God “is good to all, His mercies [.isPlaying] are over all His works” (Ps 145:9; cf. 8, 10, 17). 577 Further, God satisfies the desires of humans, indeed “every living thing” (Ps 145:16). Yet, in an apparently special sense, he “will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him” (Ps 145:19; cf. 65:2, 4 [3, 5]). 578 Accordingly, God desires an intimate, particular relationship with all his creatures. 579 However, although such a divine love relationship is available to all, it is not unilaterally bestowed on everyone in an undifferentiated manner (cf. Ps 145:20). Rather, such an intimate, particular love relationship is only effective when humans respond appropriately to God’s foreconditional love with their love toward him in return (cf. Ps 18:25 [26]).

That there is special divine love reserved for some seems apparent from the numerous instances that persons or groups are specified by terms of divine endearment. For instance, God’s “beloved” (םַלְוי) is the object of his blessing (Ps 127:2). As God’s “beloved” (םַלְוי) humans cry out

576 Naomi calls for God to show יִצְדָּק to Ruth and Orpah, non-Israelites (Ruth 1:8; cf. 2 Sam 15:20).

577 While יִצְדָּק has been seen to go beyond the covenant in earlier sections of the OT, there is no explicit mention of that facet of יִצְדָּק specifically in the Writings. On the universality of divine יִצְדָּק see Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” 4:379; ibid., 127; Larue, “Recent Studies in Hesed,” 4. On the other hand, Clark thinks (incorrectly, I believe) that יִצְדָּק is restricted to God’s covenant people. The Word Hesed, 145.

578 The one who is blessed is the one whom God chooses (נְלַכָּה) and “bring[s] near” (נָשָּׂא) (Ps 65:4 [5]). Notably, however, just previously it is stated, “to You all men come” (Ps 65:2 [3]). Tate comments, “The request in v 5 seems to support the interpretation that the worshiping community is intended here; all those who are acceptable in the worship of Yahweh, and potentially every Israelite—and if v 3b has a universal expectation, every human being who comes to Yahweh.” Psalms 51–100, 141–42.

579 This will become even clearer by way of the NT data.

580 Notice again the statement toward God: “with the kind [.isPlaying] You show Yourself kind [.isPlaying]” (Ps 18:25 [26] = 2 Sam 22:26). Elsewhere, the יִצְדָּק are to love God (Ps 31:23 [24]) and, likewise, God loves justice and does not forsake his יִצְדָּק (Ps 37:28). Again, God preserves his יִצְדָּק, those who love him and hate evil (Ps 97:10). That is, “the fervent love of the godly man God requites with confiding love, the entire submission of the upright with a full measure of grace. . . . God’s conduct to man is the reflection of the relation in which man has placed himself to God; cf. 1 Sam. 2:30; 15:23.” Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 5:163. Interestingly with regard to “insider love” יִצְדָּק sometimes seems to refer to Israel as a whole (Pss 148:14; 149:1) but in other instances it seems to connote a more restricted group of “the faithful within Israel” (Pss 31:23 [24]; 37:28). Baer and Gordon, “ימין,” NIDOTTE 2:213.
to God, seeking deliverance (Ps 108:6 [7]; cf. 60:5; 84:1–2). God is said to love (יָרַע) “the gates of Zion more than all the other dwelling places of Jacob” (Ps 87:2). Daniel is told by the angel who has come to enlighten him that he is “greatly beloved” or “esteemed.” Further preference seems apparent in that God loves “Jacob” (corporate Israel) and chooses Jacob’s inheritance (Ps 47:4 [5]). Solomon’s kingship is predicated on God’s love for his people (2 Chr 2:11; 9:8). Further, Solomon himself is declared to have been “loved by God” (Neh 13:26). The bestowal of land “forever” is spoken of as predicated on “Abraham [God’s] friend” (בָּרָאשִׁית) (2 Chr 20:7). God’s love thus manifests particularity and preference and, accordingly, God manifests special concern for those whom he loves.

A number of other examples of “insider” love appear in this corpus as well. For example, God loved Solomon (Neh 13:26), God loves the righteous (Ps 146:8), the one whom he disciplines (Prov 3:12), and the pursuer of justice (Prov 15:9). Thus, it is apparent that God does not love all equally. Indeed, God reserves special love for those who respond appropriately to him. Thus, Daniel and Nehemiah repeat the theme that God “keeps covenant and lovingkindness for those who love him and keep His commandments” (Dan 9:4; Neh 1:5; cf. 13:14, 22).

581 As Tate puts it, “God is reminded that these are ‘those dear to you’ (‘beloved ones’) and ‘those who fear you’ (v 6). The powerful action of the divine right hand is needed for deliverance (see Pss 17:7; 18:36; 44:5 [4]; 74:11; 138:7; etc.). God is implored to respond, ‘Answer us!’ Psalms 51–100, 106. The term יְדִי likewise appears with divine agency in the statement, “God’s dwelling places are ‘lovely’” (יְדִי) (Ps 84:1–2). Elsewhere, the psalmist asks God to keep him as the “apple of the eye” (Ps 17:8). Job also refers to the past friendship (יָדֵי) of God (Job 29:4). There is some disagreement, however, on the precise meaning of יָדֵי in this context.

582 Interestingly, Tate reads this with regard to God’s universal purpose. In his view, this “is a declaration of God’s intention to make Zion the spiritual metropolis of the world.” Psalms 51–100, 392.

583 Interestingly, Nehemiah presents Solomon as peerless: “Among many nations was there no king like him. . . . Nevertheless, the foreign women caused even him to sin” (Neh 13:26). Clearly, God’s love is not reserved only for perfect people.

584 Of course, this hearkens back to the covenant language, especially that of Deuteronomy. Breneman comments, “‘with those who love him and obey his commands’ shows that covenant love or loyalty was to be reciprocal.” Ezra, 171–72. F. Charles Fensham adds, “Love and keeping of the law are thus the two pillars on which the covenant rests.” The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 154–55. “The Lord does indeed make good on his covenant promises and showers his covenant love on ‘all who love him and obey his commands.’” Miller, Daniel, 244. In Neh
Moreover, God “keeps all who love Him” while the wicked are destroyed (Ps 145:20; cf. 70:4 [5]). Again, he “loves justice” and does not “forsake His godly ones” (τεμένος) whereas others are cut off (Ps 37:28; cf. 99:4, 8). On the other hand, God “hates” (καταδιώκει) those who do evil, destroys those who speak falsehood, and “abhors [κατάδιωκε] the man of bloodshed and deceit” (Ps 5:4–6 [5–7]; cf. 106:40). God’s “soul” (ψυχή) hates (καταδιώκει) the one who “loves” (ζητεῖ) violence (Ps 11:5). Thus, there are clear instances of particular love that does not extend to all. God does not love all equally. Yet, this is not due to arbitrariness on God’s part. On the contrary, God is responsive to human devotion toward him (or the lack thereof), specifically wholehearted devotion. He “keeps” the covenant and lovingkindness to those who “walk before You with all their heart” (2 Chr 6:14; cf. Deut 7:9).

In such instances, God’s particular love for those responsive to him is manifest as well as a number of examples of human love toward God. Other examples of human love toward God also appear. For example, the psalmist states, “I love [σπέρμα] You, O LORD, my strength” (Ps 18:1 [2]). Elsewhere, the psalmist “love[s] the LORD, because” God hears him (Ps 116:1). Those who “love the LORD” should hate evil (Ps 97:10). Those who “love” God’s salvation are those who “seek” God (Ps 40:16 [17]; cf. Pss 5:11 [12]; 70:4[5]). Likewise, God states that he will deliver someone, “because He has loved [γάφθη] Me,” that is, “known My name” (Ps 91:14).

13:22, Nehemiah recalls, “I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. For this also remember me” (Neh 13:22). Sakenfeld comments, “Humanly considered, Nehemiah implies that some piety engenders a better possibility for an ongoing relationship with God than does none at all.” The Meaning of Hesed, 165. Fensham adds, “It is clear, however, that Nehemiah besought the Lord to give special attention to what he did. He wanted to receive through his deeds the love of God.” The Books, 265.

585 See the discussion of the emotive nature of these statements earlier in this chapter.

586 Notably, this depicts love motivated by, and grounded in, God’s care. According to Els, “the interior depths of this love is emphasized by the use of σπέρμα (18:1) and γάφθη (91:14).” NIDOTTE 1:286.

587 This term γάφθη is used of God’s love for Israel (Deut 7:7; 10:15), but nowhere else of a human’s love for God. Notice similar reciprocality, absent explicit language of love, elsewhere. God declares, “You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken [μαζεύει] you to Shishak” (2 Chr 12:2, 5). “The formula ‘you have abandoned me; I have abandoned you’ or an approximate equivalent appears in similar speech materials in
Elsewhere, humans are called upon to love God (Ps 31:23 [24] and repeated reference is made to those who love God’s name (Pss 69:36 [37]; 119:132; cf. 119:159, 163), an indirect reference to loving God himself. Within the Writings, then, divine love and lovingkindness once again present a God who is intensely interested in his creation and enters into a give-and-take relationship with human beings. He wants to love all intimately but, sadly, some reject God’s love.

Conclusion

God’s love in the OT takes many forms and displays many aspects. It is the ground of divine-human relationship itself, the explicit cause of election, covenant, and blessing, and the basis of God’s steadfast, tender affection and concern that is manifested in God’s blessings, discipline, and the overall maintenance of the divine-human relationship. Such divine love is volitionally free and not the product of necessity; the basis of election, and consequently, of the covenant relationship itself. While God’s will to love is primary and original, the divine-human relationship assumed in the OT is one of relational responsiveness, often within covenant, but also depicted in complementary, kinship metaphors such as the parent-child and marriage metaphors, both of which connote the voluntary and affectionate nature of the divine-human love relationship. Divine love is also manifested in evaluation. God may be pleased with human dispositions and/or actions, take pleasure, and even delight in his people when appropriate or, conversely, be displeased and provoked by evil.

Closely related to such evaluation, divine love is also emotive, and the plethora of God’s emotions that revolve around the divine-human relationship point toward divine passibility. Because of his profound love for his people, God is concerned, affected, grieved, vexed, and angered at evil, and out of his intense desire to receive the undiluted love and fidelity of his people God becomes impassioned (ἐρωτάσθη) at their unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery. Such passion

1 Chr 28:9; 2 Chr 15:2; 24:20.” Dillard, 100. Similarly, “the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chr 15:2).
may be manifest in anger toward their infidelity, or restoration when others have oppressed them. In response to infidelity, God disciplines his people, again out of his love for them with the hope of ultimate reclamation. Moreover, God responds repeatedly to heartfelt entreaty and is willing to relent of discipline and return in his compassion and graciousness, which far exceed his wrath. God’s compassion even exceeds that of a mother for her newborn; he is exceedingly longsuffering. However, God consistently expects appropriate responsiveness from his people, willing to forgive, but not to the exclusion of justice.

Accordingly, divine love is also foreconditional—bestowed prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. God’s love, as well as the frequent beneficent actions that flow therefrom, is unmerited, but not altogether unconditional. God is the sole initiator, and at times the sole preserver, of the divine-human love relationship. His love endures beyond all reasonable expectations. Yet, the endurance of the relationship in particular is contingent upon appropriate human response, itself enabled by God’s own prevenient action.

Altogether, then, divine love for humans in the OT is voluntary and unnecessary to God himself, yet evaluative and not wholly arbitrary; differential and preferential, yet not altogether exclusive; intensely emotional (compassionate, affected, caring, joyful, even jealous), yet also committal, foreconditional, and unmerited, yet not unconditional, and expectant of the appropriate human response of reciprocal love, faithfully seeking reciprocal faithfulness but often the victim of unrequited love.
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THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE GOD-WORLD RELATIONSHIP

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

John C. Peckham
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CHAPTER 5
A CANONICAL SURVEY OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Divine love in the NT builds on the facets of love discovered already in the OT. Just as the previous chapter, this chapter will present a canonical survey of the prominent themes that illuminate the many facets of divine love in the God-world relationship. Of course, due to the overwhelming amount of data, this survey is necessarily selective in its presentation. The investigative process consisted of a broad reading of the entire NT that analyzed any texts and/or passages that might contribute to potential answers to the systematic questions raised in chapters 2 and 3, which revolve around the question of whether divine love is unilateral or whether God and humans may share a reciprocal (though unequal) relationship of love.

Relative to this broad issue, five questions have been identified as standing at the center of the conflict of interpretations, seen in chapter 3. First, is God the sole giver but never the receiver? In other words, is divine love only arbitrarily willed, pure beneficence (thematic *agape*) or may it include desire or enjoyment (thematic *eros*)? Second, does God only bestow and/or create value or might he also appraise, appreciate, and receive value? Third, does God’s love include affection and/or emotionality such that God is concerned for the world, sympathetically or otherwise? Fourth, does God choose to fully love only some, or does he choose to love all, or is he essentially related to all such that he necessarily loves all? Fifth, bound up with this is the question of whether divine love is unconditional or conditional, ungrounded or grounded, and so on.
With such questions in mind, the investigation of the data was conducted by way of a final-form canonical approach, which concentrates on interpretation of the text(s) in canonical context. Accordingly, the focus is upon the theological interpretation of Scripture, in accordance with the canonical approach to systematic theology explained in chapter 1. The inductive reading of the NT sought to identify all data that might provide answers to the systematic questions raised by the theological conflict of interpretations over the meaning of divine love. The data extracted from this reading were then analyzed and organized according to three sections of the NT canon in an ongoing spiral, which included both narrowing and expansion of the data when themes became more or less significant than originally thought. Within this process, a number of prominent terms that hold significant implications for potential answers to the systematic questions became apparent. These were investigated and are presented from the standpoint of a synchronic-canonical approach. Here the inherent limitations of semantic studies with regard to systematic investigation are recognized, especially the fact that meanings of words vary depending upon their context and usage. Accordingly, it is not the intention of these semantic surveys to reduce the terms to simple definitions, nor to assume that a nuance of meaning in one location can be extrapolated to all other occurrences of a given term. Rather, such surveys seek to identify and summarize the basic meaning denoted by word groups as well as the polysemy and the multivalency of their semantic range and usage within the canon in order to provide the crucial background for engaging the wider canonical themes regarding divine love.

While the NT data were investigated inductively, this chapter will survey the data deductively by grouping the pertinent content under five rubrics that respond to the systematic

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1 This entails that many of the issues of historical criticism are not appropriate to this study, and thus do not receive significant treatment. This is especially true of source and tradition criticism.

2 See the summary of these issues in the five questions above.

3 While it is likely that, despite great care, some information has been overlooked, it is hoped that the data presented here will provide significant insight for ongoing inquiry and discussion with regard to a canonical model of divine love.
questions noted above: the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational aspects of love. These rubrics correspond to five aspects of love that provide the outline of a canonical and systematic model of divine love, which will be presented in chapter 6. The five aspects may be summarized thusly:

1. Divine love is volitional but not only volitional.
2. Divine love is not indifferent or disinterested, but evaluative.
3. God’s love is profoundly emotional though not to the exclusion of volitional and evaluative aspects.
4. Divine love is foreconditional, not altogether unconditional.\(^4\)
5. Divine love is multilaterally relational. God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into and/or maintains particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately.

It must be understood that these rubrics and thesis statements are themselves derived from the canonical data and not presupposed. In this chapter, the NT data that support each thesis are grouped under the corresponding category.\(^5\) Under each of the five categories the data are further grouped under the three categories of Gospel-Acts, Pauline Writings, and General Epistles and Revelation.\(^6\) Further, the brief semantic surveys of prominent terminology relative to the meaning of divine love are distributed under their corresponding rubrics.\(^7\) Of course, the large

\(^4\) I have coined the term “foreconditional” to refer to the conception that divine love is freely bestowed prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. See chapter 6 for a more detailed explanation of the foreconditionality of divine love.

\(^5\) Of course, this requires that the grouping of the data is somewhat artificial. The reason for adopting this organizational structure is to afford an efficient presentation for the reader that highlights the importance of the data as it points toward a wider canonical model of divine love.

\(^6\) Such diacanonical presentation respects the canonical groupings of the text without entering into the ongoing debates regarding the authorship and dating of specific passages and texts that continue to elude consensus.

\(^7\) Of course, not all terms of any significance can be treated in this chapter. Thus, terms have been selected for more attention according to their explanatory value in accord with the canonical analysis.
amount of data precludes an exhaustive presentation of its analysis. As such, this thematic presentation is but a survey of the research conducted. The two most crucial NT terms of love, ἀγαπάω and φιλέω, are discussed first since their NT usage and theological significance transcend any one or two of the themes in the remainder of the chapter.

The Primary Semantics of Divine Love in the NT

The Meaning of the ἀγαπάω Word Group

The ἀγαπάω word group is the most prominent for love in the NT and appears frequently with both human and divine agency.\(^8\) The group displays a broad range of meaning including love that is affectionate, warm, concerned with, and interested in its object(s),\(^9\) love in the sense of high regard, value, and appreciation for its object(s),\(^10\) love that includes enjoyment, pleasure, and fondness,\(^11\) preferential love (whether proper or improper),\(^12\) and love demonstrated in action, Accordingly, the most prominent terms are explained at the greatest length.

\(^8\) It appears over 300 times in verbal (ἀγαπάω), nominal (ἀγαπη), and adjectival (ἀγαπητός) forms combined. ἀγαπάω appears 143 times in 110 verses, appears 116 times in 106 verses, and ἀγαπητός appears 61 times in 60 verses. The group appears most often in the Pauline writings (over 130 times) followed closely by the Johannine works (over 100 times). It appears in the Synoptic Gospels less than 40 times and just over 40 times in the remainder of the NT. In Pauline usage the noun appears much more frequently than the verb whereas in Johannine usage the situation is reversed.


\(^11\) The verb may also mean “take pleasure in.” Danker et al., BDAG, 5–6. Similarly, Louw and Nida, eds., “ἀγαπάω c,” L&N 1:300. With regard to that which would bring pleasure but is not yet enjoyed it can refer to desiring or longing as in the usage of those “who have loved [ἀγαπάω] His appearing” (cf. 2 Tim 4:8). 1 Pet 3:10 connotes “a stronger sense of ‘longing for’ or ‘desiring.’” Moffat, Love, 48.
often of a beneficent nature. Although the ἀγαπάω word group is not exclusively descriptive of divine love, it is often used to describe God’s wonderful, superabundant, magnificent love. Further, though human love of a misdirected or inappropriate nature may occur, love is most often held up as the highest of virtues and described in the most glowing of terms throughout the NT. Each of these aspects may overlap with one another or may be absent from or uncertain with regard to the meaning intended in a particular usage of the word group.

While ἀγαπάω appears relatively frequently in Greek literature from Homer onward, ἀγάπη is not very well-represented in extra-biblical Greek literature, if at all. However, the LXX usage of the word group is abundant and, considering the regard with which NT writers held the OT, is the most significant ground for illuminating the background of the word group familiar to

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13 So Stauffer, TDNT 1:37. “Love leads to action; it is impossible to love someone deeply and not do things for him. Love is eager to serve, to give.” Leon Morris, Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 42. Cf. Spicq, TLNT 1:12. Cf. 1 John 3:18. The noun may also be used simply in reference to the “agape feast” (Jude 1:12).

14 ἀγάπη often appears as an attribute of God, e.g., the “God of love” (2 Cor 13:11) or the “love of God” (2 Cor 13:14) or the most famous statement: “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16; cf. 1 John 4:7). Such divine love, especially toward humans, is manifested in action, often of a salvific nature (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 8:39; Eph 2:4-5; John 3:1; 4:9-10, 16) especially the sending of the Son (John 17:23; 1 John 4:9-10, 14-16; John 3:16-17; 34-35). Likewise, divine love is associated with his “giving” (John 3:16; Rom 5:5; 1 John 3:1). ἀγάπη is likewise an attribute of Jesus. For instance, reference is made to the “love . . . in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 1:14; 2 Tim 1:13). This love of Jesus is also directed toward humans, again often tied to his sacrifice, which itself is the manifestation of greatest love (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16; cf. Rom 5:8). Just as the Father’s love is associated with giving so is the Son’s (Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25; 2 Thess 2:16).

15 Thus, love is “patient,” “kind,” “not jealous,” it “does not brag,” “is not arrogant,” and “never fails” (1 Cor 13:4, 8). Love is also the first among the fruits of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). Further, it “does no wrong to a neighbor” and as such is “the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:10). It is included in the triad of “faith, hope, love . . . but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). Cf. 2 Tim 1:7; 1 John 4:17–18.

16 Whether ἀγάπη is attested in pre-LXX Greek remains disputed. See the discussion of this issue below. ἀγαπάω in classical Greek includes many of the aspects of meaning that become apparent in the NT. It can relate to “being satisfied” to “desire someone or something,” “to prefer” or “to esteem” someone more highly than another and may relate to friendship and even sympathy. It may also refer to God’s preference “for a particular man.” Stauffer, TDNT 1:36. For the primary references of the Greek literature, see ibid., 36–37. Further, the etymology of the root is unclear and thus does not provide much information regarding the NT meaning. So Spicq, TLNT 1:8, Stauffer, TDNT 1:36, W. Günther and H. G. Link, “αγαπαω,” NIDNTT 2:539.
NT authors.\textsuperscript{17} In the LXX, the verb ἀγαπάω most frequently translates the verb זך\textsuperscript{18} and the noun ἀγάπη always translates the Hebrew צך.\textsuperscript{19} The ἀγαπάω group in the LXX, then, may denote much the same, broad meaning as the צך root does in the Hebrew.\textsuperscript{20} In the NT, the ἀγαπάω word group is closely associated in usage with many significant word groups including: love (φιλέω), kindness/mercy/compassion (ἔλεος), good pleasure (εὔδοκία), compassion (οἰκτηριμός and σπλάγχνον), and, in antithetical parallel, hatred (μισέω).\textsuperscript{21} Many of these significant LXX translations and collocations appear interspersed throughout the discussion below.

\textsuperscript{17} So Günther and Link, \textit{NIDNTT} 2:539. See, also William Klassen, “Love in the NT and Early Jewish Literature” \textit{ABD} 4:395.

\textsuperscript{18} ἀγαπάω translates צך over 160 times in the LXX, of human love for God (Exod 20:6) and divine love for humans (Deut 4:37), at times of an emotive nature (Hos 11:1; Jer 38:3), in other instances clearly evaluative (Ps 145:8), and also of love that may be forfeited (Hos 9:15), among many other aspects of צך. The verb also translates תָּשֵׁך once (Ps 108:4), תָּשֵׁךְ once (Hos 8:9), סחי 4 times (cf. Ps 17:2 [18:1]), סחי 4 times (cf. Deut 33:12) and ירָשָׁם 4 times (cf. Deut 32:15), once of דש (Prov 4:3), once of דש (Songs 1:4), and once of דש (Jer 12:7). It also translates a number of other terms once or twice, including a number of terms of delight (listed further below). The verb צך is translated by ἀγαπάω in the vast majority of its occurrences. However, in a few instances it is translated by the φιλέω word group: φιλέω (Gen 27:4, 9, 14, 37:4; Prov 8:17; 21:17; 29:3; Isa 56:10; Hos 3:1; Eccl 3:8), φιλός (Esth 5:10, 14; 6:13; Pss 37:12; 78:19; Prov 14:20; 27:6; Jer 20:6; 37:14) and φιλία (Prov 5:19), and in other instances various compounds from the φιλέω word group (1 Kgs 11:1; 2 Chr 16:10; 19:2; Prov 17:19). In a few other instances צך is translated by terms of the ἐρως word group including ἐρως (Esth 2:17; Prov 4:6) and ἐραστής (Hos 2:7, 9, 12, 14, 15; Jer 22:20, 22; Lam 1:19; Ezek 16:33, 36, 37; 23:5, 9, 22). As such, צך “covers all the wealth of the three Greek terms.” Stauffer, \textit{TDNT} 1:38. The primary “lacking feature,” however, is “religious eroticism,” which distinguishes it from the ANE fertility cults and from the Greek world. Ibid. A few other terms translate צך once in the LXX.

\textsuperscript{19} ἀγάπη translates צך 15 times in 14 verses in the LXX, used of human love toward God (Jer 2:2), evil lust (2 Sam 13:15), and contrasted with hatred (Eccl 9:1, 6). Most, however, appear in Songs (2:4–5, 7, 3:5, 10; 5:8; 7:7; 8:4, 6–7). The noun צך is also translated by the older Greek noun ἀγάπης, which does not appear in the NT (2 Sam 1:26; Ps 108:5; Hos 11:4; Zeph 3:17; Jer 2:33; 38:3). It is also translated by φιλία (Prov 10:12; 15:17; 17:9; 27:5). ἀγαπητός also appears numerous times, most often translating ירָשָׁם or דש. See the discussion of ἀγαπητός in the LXX in the brief semantic study of ἀγαπητός below.

\textsuperscript{20} That is, it is “universally applied to the actions of God and human beings” such that “no field of divine or human affection is excluded.” Georg Strecker, \textit{The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John} (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 146. That this is the case is borne out by a comparison of OT and NT usage. See the discussion of the meaning of צך in the previous chapter.

\textsuperscript{21} Further, ἀγαπάω is associated, to a lesser extent, with χρηστός (kindness), μακροθυμία (patience), παράκλητος (comfort), παραδέχομαι (accept), and δόκιμος (tested, approved). A number of other, less significant collocations will appear in the survey further below.
Despite the wide and significant range of meaning of this word group in the NT some have incorrectly categorized ἀγάπη in narrow terms, with significant theological implications. A common error is the assertion that ἀγάπη is uniquely descriptive of the highest divine love distinct from and exclusive of other, supposedly lesser, terms of love (i.e., ἐρως, φιλέω). Such ἀγάπη flows unilaterally, that is, from God to others but never from others to God. As such, ἀγάπη love is said to be strictly beneficent giving exclusive of receiving, disinterested, directed toward the unworthy and thus non-evaluative, purely altruistic generosity, unconditional, utterly spontaneous, and impassible. These characteristics are often explicitly set in opposition to the purported meanings of ἐρως and φιλέω, respectively, especially the former; making up the oft-repeated agape-eros distinction. However, evidence suggests that the ἀγάπη word group does not exclusively denote pure divine love to the exclusion of all other terminology (i.e., φιλέω). On the contrary, the word group may be used of both divine and human agency and manifests many aspects of love, including negative aspects of love. Here, the most misleading assumptions

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22 When the existence of human love toward God is allowed it is described as nothing more than God’s own love flowing back to himself through a strictly passive agent. Thus, Martin Luther speaks of both faith and love as that which is received from God and the human is merely “like a vessel or tube through which the stream of the divine blessings must flow without intermission to other people.” WA 10.1.1, quoted in Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros (trans. P. S. Watson; London: S.P.C.K., 1953), 735. So, also, Stauffer, TDNT 1:50; Charles E. B. Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book of the Bible (ed. Alan Richardson; New York: Macmillan, 1950), 136.

23 This perspective is most prominently associated with the massively influential work of Nygren, himself apparently beholden to earlier philosophical-theological presuppositions. While Nygren himself was making a thematic, not a semantic, argument, many of his assumptions (whether dependent on his work or not) have spilled over into semantic discussions whether explicitly or implicitly. See Agape and Eros.


25 Accordingly, one should not make the mistake of universally projecting any one of the potential aspects of the word group onto all the instances of the term (illegitimate totality transfer). Rather, the
regarding the meaning of ἀγάπη will be briefly countered by evidence from the usage of the word group.²⁶

First, the ἀγαπάω word group does not, in and of itself, depict the highest love. On the contrary, in numerous instances it depicts inferior kinds/aspects of love, including incestuous and rapacious “lust” and misdirected love.²⁷ On the other hand, God’s love is depicted by both ἀγαπάω and φιλέω (cf. John 14:21, 23; 16:27) and is never misdirected, being unique in quality, purity, and degree. However, such differences between human and divine love are not due to semantic constraints of the terms themselves, but arise from usage within distinct contexts.

Second, the ἀγαπάω word group does not describe unilateral divine love but, on the contrary, demonstrates that divine love is multilateral, since God may not only give, but also receive ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη.²⁸ The usage of the word group demonstrates that love may flow in many directions within various kinds of personal relationships, including from God to humans and vice versa.²⁹ As such, the usage itself reflects the potential mutuality of love, which is also the divine ideal (cf. John 14:20–24; 15:8–12; 1 John 4:8–16). Further, the potential intimacy of ἀγαπάω is contextual usage of the term sheds light on its intended meaning within its semantic range.

²⁶ This will be limited to an overview; the larger force of the evidence will appear within the discussion of the broader categories/questions.

²⁷ Thus, Amnon’s lust for his half-sister Tamar is described by both ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω (2 Sam 13:15). In the NT, Demas forsook Paul because he loved [ἀγαπάω] the evil world (2 Tim 4:10). Rather than loving light, men have loved [ἀγαπάω] darkness (John 3:19). Cf. Pss 11:5; 52:3; Amos 5:15; Hos 9:1; John 12:43.

²⁸ The verb and noun most often refer to interpersonal love, often that which takes place between God and humans. See Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:543; Gerhard Schneider, “ἀγάπη,” EDNT 1:9.

²⁹ Thus, the Father loves the Son (John 3:35) and the Son loves the Father (John 14:31), the Father loves humans (John 3:16; 14:21) and humans love God (1 Cor 8:3; Jas 1:12; 1 John 5:3), the Son loves humans (Mark 10:21; John 13:1) and humans love the Son (Luke 7:47; John 14:21; Heb 6:10), and humans love one another (Luke 7:5; 1 Cor 16:24; 2 Cor 11:11; 2 John 1). Importantly, human love toward God, Jesus, and one another is denoted both by the verb and the noun. Thus, one may not assert that merely the noun ἀγάπη is reserved for divine agency. Note also that John 14:31 is the only explicit example of love from the Son to the Father, though it is implied elsewhere. Finally, it is notable that the command for humans to love one another is often modeled after divine love for them suggesting some continuity amongst such loves (cf. John 13:34; 15:12). For the sake of brevity, only a few textual examples of these love relationships are listed here. The various examples of each will be seen in more detail when they are
apparent when Jesus proclaims his “love” for “his own” \([\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron] \) (John 13:1). Nevertheless, some maintain the unilateral agency of love and insist that all instances of mutual divine-human love are the result of God’s efficacious election love. However, the nature of many of the instances, including characteristics of exhortation and conditionality, militate against such a conception. Such a view appears to be based more on dogmatic presupposition than the canonical text.

Third, \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha\chi\omega\) is not necessarily descriptive of strictly beneficent, disinterested, altruistic, non-evaluative love toward the unworthy. Although divine love is often manifested toward unworthy objects (cf. Rom 5:8), and frequently associated with divine grace, \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha\chi\omega\) love nevertheless manifests evaluation (cf. 1 Thess 5:13). Moreover, the reality of misdirected love discussed within the broader canonical discussion below.

30 Significantly, this also rules out the idea that love for one’s own is exclusive to the concept of \(\phi\iota\lambda\omega\). The adjective \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\tau\tau\iota\varsigma\zeta\) also highlights the relational nature of the word group.

31 Thus, Morris recognizes that “mutual love can be seen” throughout Scripture and is a “distinctive quality of the Israelites’ view of God and man.” Testaments of Love, 42. Nevertheless he subsumes mutual love under unilateral election stating, “God produces love in his elect; it is certainly not their own achievement.” Ibid., 182.

32 The examples that substantiate this claim will be analyzed in the canonical section further below.

33 Contra the contention of Morris and others that “we do not bring anything valuable to God—in fact, we acquire value only because we are the recipients of his love.” Testaments of Love, 142. So Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 135. Spicq similarly believes that “the only adequate translation is ‘love in the sense of charity’; in Latin, caritas or dilectio.” TLNT 1:8. Such caritas entails that the superior’s (God’s) love is generous and the inferior’s (human’s) response is gratitude.

34 Though the two word groups should not be conflated or confused, the \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha\chi\omega\) and \(\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\) word groups collocate in a number of significant instances. For instance, divine “grace” (\(\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\)) is “freely bestowed [\(\chi\alpha\rho\iota\tau\omega\\)] on us in the Beloved [(\(\iota\gamma\alpha\pi\mu\iota\nu\epsilon\omicron\omicron\))” (Eph 1:6). Further, both are associated with God’s redemptive action (2 Thess 2:16; cf. 1 Tim 1:14). The two also often collocate in benedictory formulas and/or greetings (Rom 1:7; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 6:24; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 John 3) and in exhortation to “gracious work” grounded in “love” (2 Cor 8:7). Cf. Luke 6:32, 35; 7:42.

35 In one such instance, \(\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\) is explicitly evaluative and motivated as Paul commands to esteem some very highly “in love because of their work” (1 Thess 5:13). Viktor Warnach states that the verb in the LXX refers to “love in the sense of placing a high value upon some person or thing, or of receiving them with favour.” “Love,” Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology 2:518. Cf. Schneider, EDNT 1:9; Robert Joly, Le vocabulaire chrétien de l’amour est-il original: Philéin et agapan dans le grec antique (Brussels: Univ de Bruxelles, 1968).
suggests evaluation in that love ought to be directed toward appropriate objects.\textsuperscript{36} Even the Father’s love for the Son and for humans is described as grounded and evaluative (John 10:17; 2 Cor 9:7). Further, the adjective \textit{ἀγαπητός} highlights the evaluative nature of the word group as it may refer to the lover’s perception of lovableness.\textsuperscript{37} Those who maintain that God’s \textit{ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη} love is unaffected and non-evaluative contend that instances of delight are simply the result of God’s choice “to delight” and not prompted by the object(s) as such.\textsuperscript{38} However, examples abound to the contrary.\textsuperscript{39} Moreover, evaluation, and even delight, is implied by the collocation of some terms with the \textit{ἀγαπάω} group, that is, when love is associated with being pleased, being accepted, delighted in.\textsuperscript{40}

Fourth, the word group is not altogether unconditional, spontaneous, or unmotivated, despite frequent scholarly rhetoric of this nature.\textsuperscript{41} The purported unconditionality of the \textit{ἀγαπάω}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{36} For example, misdirected love is evident in Matt 6:24; Luke 11:43; John 3:19; 12:43; 2 Tim 4:10; 2 Pet 2:15; 1 John 2:15; Rev 12:11.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} H. G. Liddell-Scott views the classical use as meaning “worthy of love, loveable, dear.” “ἀγαπητός,” \textit{LSJ Abridged}, 4. The adjective generally refers to “one who is in a very special relationship with another,” thus “beloved,” “one who is dearly loved” and/or “prized, valued,” “the object of one’s affection.” F. W. Danker et al., eds., “ἀγαπητός,” BDAG, 7; J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., “ἀγαπητός,” L&N 1:293. Cf. Stauffer, \textit{TDNT} 1:37.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Thus Morris contends, “It might be argued that God loves the people because there is something in them that delights him, but there is never an indication of what brings about this delight.” \textit{Testaments of Love}, 93. “It seems that God delights in this people simply because he chooses to do so.” Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} For instance, the Son is said to love righteousness, a clear indication of appraisal (Heb 1:9).
  \item \textsuperscript{40} For example, Christ is often referred to as the beloved (\textit{ἀγαπητός}) son in whom the Father is well-pleased (εὐδοκέω) (Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 2 Pet 1:17). See also the parallel usage of εὐδοκία, “good will,” and ἀγάπη in Phil 1:15–16. Evaluation is also explicit when Christ is praised for having “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness” (Heb 1:9). Moreover, “whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives [παραδέχομαι]” (Heb 12:6). Here and in the LXX of Prov 3:12 \textit{παραδέχομαι} translates παρέχει, a term of evaluative pleasure. In this instance, then, ἀγαπάω is set in parallel to evaluation. Similarly, the ἀγαπάω word group also collocates with the evaluative term δόκιμος (cf. Jas 1:12).
\end{itemize}
group is conceptually bound up with the assertion that divine love is arbitrary, unilaterally willed, election love. While the ἀγαπάω word group is closely associated with election, the two concepts should not be confused or conflated. They relate not as interchangeable terms/concepts but within a nexus of cause and effect. The conditionality of ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη is readily apparent in NT usage. Thus, the Father loves (ἀγαπάω) humans because they love (ἀγαπάω) the Son (John 14:21, 23; cf. John 10:17; 15:9–10; 2 Cor 9:7; Jude 21). Therefore, it is not true that ἀγαπάω is strictly unmotivated, ungrounded, or the product of strictly unilateral election.

Fifth, the ἀγαπάω word group often denotes emotionality, even divine emotionality. It is thus incompatible with impassibility despite assertions that ἀγάπη is volitional, but not emotional, love. Rather, the usage of ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη includes volition but also manifests emotionality.

42 Thus, Stauffer associates the two concepts in his view that Paul refers to “God’s unconditional sovereignty in loving and hating, electing and rejecting (R. 9:13, 25).” For him, the “love of God implies election” and love itself is simply “the orientation of his sovereign will.” TDNT 1:49–50. Similarly, Morris argues that “God wills to love men and he loves according to his own purpose of election, not according to the actions of men.” Testaments of Love, 160. Cf. Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:544.

43 The ἀγαπάω word group and terms of election are often closely associated in the NT. Thus Paul refers to “those who have been chosen [ἐκλεκτός] of God, holy and beloved [ἀγαπάω]” (Col 3:12; cf. 1 Thess 1:4; 2 John 1). Many other instances appear. See Rom 9:11–13; 11:28; Eph 1:4–5; Jas 2:5. Moreover, in the LXX the ἀγαπάω and ἐκλέγομαι word groups appear in many contexts where love and election are associated (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:7; 10:15; Ps 47:4; 78:68; Isa 41:8; 44:1–2). Election, by way of ἀιρέτιζω, also associates closely with divine ἀγαπάω when the divine voice declares, “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen [ἀιρέτιζω]; my beloved [ἀγαπητός] in whom my soul is well-pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles” (Matt 12:18; cf. 2 Thess 2:13). The ἀγαπάω word group also collocates frequently with language of the divine call. Thus Paul writes to the “beloved,” those “called as saints” (Rom 1:7; cf. 1 John 3:1; Jude 1). See also Rom 8:28; cf. 9:11–13, 25, 29; Eph 4:1–2; 2 Thess 2:13–14; 1 Tim 6:11–12. The relationship between love and election is complex. See the discussion of love and election in the OT as well as the further discussion of the divine will, election, calling and love further in this chapter. See also Wis 3:9; Sir 47:22.

44 Donald A. Carson is thus correct when he states that the very “pattern of relationships” makes it “clear that there is nothing in the words agapē and agapē themselves to suggest that the love of which John speaks is invariably spontaneous, self-generated, without reference to the loved one.” The Gospel according to John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 204. However, aside from semantics, Carson nevertheless asserts spontaneous divine love that is “not the consequence of their loveliness but of the sublime truth that ‘God is love’ (1 Jn. 4:16).” Ibid., 204–5. One the other hand, texts suggest that ἀγάπη does not necessarily continue forever; it can diminish or even die out (cf. Matt 24:12; Rev 2:4).

45 For example, Cranfield contends that ἀγάπη “evidently refers to the will rather than to the emotion, and often conveys the idea of showing love by action.” “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 134. Accordingly, for Spicq ἀγάπη is “the most rational kind of love.” “αγάπη,” TLNT 1:12.
Moreover, the collocation with other word groups in the NT strongly suggests emotionality, including the contrast between love and hate\(^\text{47}\) and the close association with compassion,\(^\text{48}\) mercy,\(^\text{49}\) kindness,\(^\text{50}\) comfort,\(^\text{51}\) and patience.\(^\text{52}\) Likewise, in the LXX the \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) word group is used to translate terms that, in such contexts, connote delight and compassion.\(^\text{53}\)


\(^{46}\) For instance, explicitly emotional \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) is apparent in 1 Pet 1:22 (cf. Col 3:19; 1 Pet 4:8). Notably, \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) appears to be emotional (even visceral) when Jesus looked at a young seeker and “felt a love for him” (Mark 10:21) and when Jesus is said to have loved his own to the end (John 13:1). Some have even suggested that \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\eta\) may include at least some aspects of \(\text{eros}\). Thus, John A. T. Robinson contends that “agape desires response, and desires it passionately. . . . Love yearns for a loving response. In this sense there is a need in the very heart of God, a divine discontent which must ever burn until it be satisfied.” “Agape and Eros,” \textit{Theology} 48 (1945): 99. Klassen further comments, “If ecstasy is at the center of the idea of \(\text{eros}\), then surely there is no true \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) without it; a God who does not care whether people respond is hardly the God portrayed in Hosea or in the NT image of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.” \textit{Love in the NT}, 385. Cf. Phipps, “The Sensuousness of Agape”; Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, \textit{A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism} (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 32; Thomas J. Oord, “Matching Theology and Piety: An Evangelical Process Theology of Love” (Claremont Graduate University, 1999), 184.

\(^{47}\) See Matt 5:43–44; 6:24; Luke 6:27; Rom 9:13; Heb 1:9; 1 John 4:20, all of which will be discussed below.

\(^{48}\) The strongly emotive and visceral word groups of compassion, \(\omega\iota\kappa\tau\iota\rmi\omicron\acute{o}\sigma\varsigma\) and \(\sigma\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\gamma\chi\nu\omicron\nu\), collocate relatively infrequently, but nonetheless significantly, with this word group in the NT. Of \(\omega\iota\kappa\tau\iota\rmi\omicron\acute{o}\sigma\varsigma\) with \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) see Luke 6:36; Rom 9:13, 15; Phil 2:1; Col 3:12. Likewise, a close association between \(\sigma\pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\gamma\chi\nu\omicron\nu\) and \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) is apparent. See Phil 2:1; Col 3:12; cf. Eph 4:32–5:2; Phlm 1:7; 1 John 3:17).

\(^{49}\) In Eph 2:4 divine mercy and love ground divine action. Other collocations include 2 Tim 1:2; Jude 2, 21; 2 John 3; cf. 1 Tim 1:13–14. Terms of the \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) and \(\dot{\epsilon}l\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}\omega\) (“mercy, compassion”) word groups also translate LXX terms in parallel usages such as when God speaks of having struck his people in wrath but “in My favor [\(\pi\gamma\nu\acute{\epsilon} - \dot{\epsilon}l\acute{\epsilon}\omega\)] I have had compassion [\(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) on you” (Isa 60:10). See also Jer 2:2. Likewise the terms collocate to translate God’s \(\pi\gamma\nu\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\) to those who love God, the former translated by \(\dot{\epsilon}l\acute{\epsilon}\omega\) and the latter by \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\dot{a}\omega\) (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4; cf. Ps 119:132). Consider also Ps 33:5; Mic 6:8.

\(^{50}\) \(\chi\rho\pi\tau\epsilon\omicron\acute{o}\omicron\alpha\omicron\omicron\epsilon\omicron\omicron\) (“kind”) is an important characteristic of love, among many others (1 Cor 13:4). See also Luke 6:35; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:32–5:2).

\(^{51}\) God “has loved us and given us eternal comfort [\(\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}k\alpha\lambda\epsilon\tau\iota\varsigma\varsigma\)]” (2 Thess 2:16). See also the collocations in 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:1; Col 2:2; Phlm 1:7.

\(^{52}\) Both \(\dot{\alpha}g\alpha\pi\eta\) and \(\mu\alpha\kappa\rho\omicron\theta\omicron\omicron\omicron\acute{o}\omicron\omicron\) (“patience”) are fruits of the spirit (Gal 5:22) and patience is an important characteristic of love (1 Cor 13:4). See also 2 Cor 6:6; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 1 Tim 1:14, 16; 2 Tim
In all, then, God’s ἀγαπάω/ἀγάπη may be (1) multilateral (giving and receiving), (2) evaluative and appreciative, (3) grounded, motivated, and conditional, and (4) emotional and descriptive of delight and enjoyment. At this point, we will turn to a discussion of the φιλέω word group before returning to a discussion of the supposed uniqueness of ἀγάπη as Christian love.

The Meaning of the φιλέω Word Group

The φιλέω word group is also extremely significant with regard to the meaning of divine love. The basic meaning of the verb φιλέω is to love in the sense of regarding with affection. The noun φίλος signifies a loved one or friend, and the noun φιλία refers to a relationship between loved ones (i.e., friendship). The word group may connote affectionate love, fondness, attraction, concern, special interest, and/or enjoyment/pleasure in or valuing of someone or something. It often appears in the context of close association with the potential connotation of

3:10; 2 Pet 3:8–9, 14–15.

Thus, in the LXX, ἀγαπάω translates a number of terms of delight such as γὰρ (Ps 50:8; Esth 6:9), παθήσῃ (Jer 30:31), πάθη (Ps. 93:19), and πάθησις (Isa 5:7). Moreover, ἀγαπάω translates πάθη 4 times, of the Psalmist’s “love” for God (Ps 17:2; cf. Prov 28:13) and God’s compassion on his people to bring them back (Zech 10:6). Finally, God struck the people in his wrath, but in his favor (ἐλεος) he had compassion (πάθη – ἀγαπάω) on them (Isa 60:10).

The verb appears 25 times in 21, the noun φίλος (which may be active or passive) appears 29 times in 27 verses, and the noun φιλία appears only once in the NT.

See Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:538; Klassen, Love in the NT, 385; F. W. Danker et al., eds., “φιλέω,” BDAG, 1056; J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., “φιλέω,” L&N, 300; Gustav Stählin, “φιλέω, καταφιλέω, φιλήμα,” TDNT 9:117. The group also has many derivatives that consist of compound terms such as φιλαδελφία, “brotherly love,” among many others in biblical and extra-biblical Greek. For this reason Günther calls it “the most general word for love or regard with affection.” Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:538. Philadelphία/φιλαδελφία appears in Rom 12:10; 1 Thess 4:9; Heb 13:1; 1 Pet 1:22; 3:8; 2 Pet 1:7. Many others appear, including love for God (φιλόθεος, 2 Tim 3:4) and love for humans (φιλανθρωπία, Acts 28:2; Titus 3:4). One compound, significant with regard to its usage of storgē, describes an intense affection, heartfelt love, combining two of the words for Greek love into φιλόστοργος translated, “devoted” (Rom 12:10). This comes from the φίλος word group combining with “storgē (stergō),” which refers to “familial affection” and often “refers either to the tender feelings that parents naturally feel toward their children or children toward their siblings and parents, or to the bond that unites husband and wife, and also takes in sympathy for friends and countrymen.” Ceslas Spicq, “φιλόστοργος,” TLNT 3:462, 10. Cf. Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:538; “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 133. Cf. Ceslas Spicq, “Philostorgos (à propos de Rom 12:10),” RB 62 (1955): 497–510. Also, the converse astorgos appears in Rom 1:31; 2 Tim 3:3. Other compounds abound, ranging from various kinds of misdirected love to positive, virtuous, and/or evaluative kinds of love. Thus, compounds
belonging, at times in the sense of friendship or family but extending to virtually any kind of association.\textsuperscript{56}

Most (if not all) of the questions regarding the meaning of \textit{φιλέω} that pertain to the purposes of this dissertation are bound up with the question of the extent of similarity and/or dissimilarity to the \textit{ἀγαπάω} word group. As shall be seen, the meaning of the \textit{φιλέω} word group overlaps significantly with the \textit{ἀγαπάω} word group. In many instances the terms appear to be used interchangeably. Robert Joly’s study has convincingly argued that the \textit{φιλέω} word group was being pushed out of regular use by the \textit{ἀγαπάω} word group by the time of the writing of the NT.\textsuperscript{57}

As such, considering the smaller sample size and the fallacy of arguments from silence, it would be unwise to draw conclusions regarding the semantic range of \textit{φιλέω} based on the way the term is not used in the NT. Moreover, the evidence suggests that one should not presuppose a sharp difference between the meaning of the \textit{ἀγαπάω} and \textit{φιλέω} word groups \textit{a priori}, contra the

\textsuperscript{56} Stählin suggests the basic sense relates to “belonging to” or being “proper to” thus denoting “natural attraction to those who belong, love for close relatives.” Stählin, \textit{TDNT} 9:115. Likewise, \textit{φιλέω} is “love or affection for someone or something based on association.” “φιλεω,” 292. Cf. Günther and Link, \textit{NIDNTT} 2:542; Cranfield, “Love,” \textit{A Theological Word Book} (ed. A. Richardson), 133; Danker et al., \textit{BDAG}, 1056; idem, “φιλεω,” \textit{BDAG}, 292; idem, “φιλος,” \textit{BDAG}, 1059.

\textsuperscript{57} The \textit{φιλέω} group became more and more associated with the sense of “kiss,” a meaning that appears in the NT by way of \textit{φιλέω} (cf. Matt 26:48; Mark 14:44; Luke 22:47) with the corresponding noun \textit{φιλήμα}, which always means kiss (Luke 7:45; 22:48; Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14; cf. Prov 27:6; Song 1:2). However, the kiss in the NT has no sexual connotations but is an expression of “close relationship and the corresponding love.” Stählin, \textit{TDNT} 9:120. As such, Judas’s action is “a basic betrayal of canons of friendship.” F. W. Danker et al., eds., “φιλήμα, ατος,” \textit{BDAG}, 1057. See also the usage of \textit{καταφιλέω}, to kiss, in the LXX and NT (26 times in all).
relatively common assertions regarding the qualitative superiority of the ἀγάπη group. It is the context that sheds light on the intended semantic range of a given term.

The etymology of the root of φιλέω is uncertain, though it is commonly thought to originally refer to love of that which belongs to one or is one’s own. The word group is much more prominent in pre-LXX Greek than in biblical Greek, there often (but not exclusively) referring to the love of friendship, developed by some philosophers (such as Aristotle) into a rather technical term of reciprocity, status, and utilitarian benefit. However, considering the linguistic shift ca. the time of the LXX translation, it would be unwise to draw too much information regarding the meaning of the group from its varied, and sometimes technical, usage in classical Greek. Rather, this work will focus on the usage of the terminology in the LXX and NT, the former due to the familiarity and high esteem in which it would have been held by many NT authors. φιλέω translates μή 10 times in the LXX and μή, to kiss, 14 times. The noun φίλος appears frequently in the LXX, most often translating μή (over 30 times) and μή (10 times).

58 The supposed distinction stems from the assumptions of the superiority of ἀγάπη, which grounds the agape-eros distinction referred to above. This issue will be taken up further below.

59 Stählin, TDNT 9:129. However, according to Stählin in extra-biblical Greek the term also may take on the sense of “that which is chosen.” Ibid., 115. Both aspects are apparent in Jesus’ use. He uses it of his own who are in fact, at the same time, the chosen. Stählin thinks that ιδίος and φίλος are “more or less synonymous” in the NT (cf. John 13:1 and 15:13, 19; Acts 24:33; 27:3). TDNT 9:114. However, John 15:19 is the only instance where φιλέω collocates with ιδίος, “one’s own.” Moreover, the ἀγαπέω group also is used in this manner in some NT instances.

60 See the discussion of Aristotle’s view of love in the historical survey above. Both verb and noun are used of reciprocal friendship in extra-biblical Greek as well as in reference to the “solicitous” and often preferential love of the gods for men. Stauffer, TDNT 1:36, 115. Accordingly, φίλος may refer to one’s close relatives, or to a person or object that is “intrinsic, belonging, proper to,” “beloved,” “dear.” It also translates “φίλος, φιλή, φιλία,” TDNT 9:114, 146. It may also refer to affectionate or romantic love. BDAG, 862.

61 The latter translation usage supports Joly’s contention regarding the linguistic shift of the meaning and usage of the φιλέω word group. Le vocabulaire. See the further discussion of this below. φιλέω also translates μή, of “friends,” in close proximity/parallel to “lovers” in Lam 1:2; cf. Jer 22:22.

62 φίλος appears 180 times in the LXX with Apocrypha but just over 70 times in the OT books. In the OT books it often refers to a covenental friendship.

63 It also translates a number of others terms in 4 occurrences or less including μή (Esth 1:3; 2:18;
The noun *φιλία* mostly translates προσκύνεω (6 times). In the NT, the group is closely associated with the ἀγαπάω word group (see below), functions as an antonym of hate (μισέω), and frequently collocates with language of family.

The verb *φιλέω* is used in the context of numerous relationships and signifies many aspects of love in the NT including self-love, interpersonal love, divine-human love, and intra-trinitarian love. Elsewhere, the verb is used of misdirected love and, in a few instances, of non-

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64 *φιλία* appears 36 times in 35 verses in the LXX (including the Apocrypha) but only 9 times in 8 verses in the LXX OT books. It also translates προσκύνεω and προσκύνεω once each (Prov 7:18; 19:7). In the LXX the term may connote friendship love, erotic *φιλία*, and political *φιλία*. Stählin suggests that in the NT ἀγαπή replaces *φιλία* which, in his view, “may be seen if we compare Prv. 10:12 and Jm. 5:20; 1 Pt. 4:8.”TDNT 9:154. If Stählin is correct in this regard, ἀγαπή would signify true friendship love in such contexts.

65 See Luke 23:12; John 12:25; 15:19; Jas 4:4. In the LXX see the collocation of the two in Gen 37:4; Eccl 3:8; Prov 14:20; cf. Prov 27:6; Lam 1:2. The word group also collocates significantly, but infrequently, with the ἐκλέγομαι word group (John 15:14–15, 19) but it never collocates within a single verse with the κλητός word group.


67 It is used of human love, including self-love (John 12:25) and human interpersonal love of both a familial (Matt 10:37) and associative (John 15:19; Titus 3:15) nature. Frequently it is used of the Father’s or Son’s love for humans (John 11:3, 36; 16:27; 20:2; Rev 3:19) and also describes the Father’s love for the Son (John 5:20). Conversely, the verb also describes human love for Jesus: both the expectation for (Matt 10:37; John 21:17; cf. 1 Cor 16:22) and reality thereof (Matt 10:37; John 16:27; 21:15–17). It never refers to the Son’s love for the Father or human love for the Father explicitly. Human love toward “God” (other than Jesus) by the use of *φιλέω* also does not appear in the LXX. Yet, the noun does refer to Abraham as the “friend of God” (Jas 2:23; cf. 4:4). Moreover, the compound term *φιλόθεος* implies the expectation of such love toward God (2 Tim 3:4; cf. Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1; 1 Cor 16:22). Some in antiquity, such as Aristotle, rejected the idea of human love toward the gods as well as divine-human friendship, in stark contrast to the biblical Greek. See the historical survey of divine love as well as the discussion in Stählin, TDNT 9:115. Also, the name Θεόφιλος in Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1 literally means lover or friend of God. Once again, however, considering the limited sample size it would be unwise to draw conclusions regarding the wider meaning of the term based on the fallacious argument from silence.

With reference to both the love of the Father and Son for humans, all three instances refer to so-called “insider” love. The (potential) significance of this category of love will be taken up in the wider canonical analysis below. Here, however, it should be noted that one should not draw broad semantic conclusions on such a limited sample size. At the same time, it should be noted that the verb *φιλέω* with regard to personal love in the NT is always used within an associative relationship of some commonality, i.e., “insider love,” whereas ἀγαπάω may signify both “insider” and “outsider” love, though it also refers most often to the former. Importantly, the *φιλέω* word group is not strictly limited to insider love since love for the other (including the stranger) is encouraged by way of the compound terms *φιλόξενος* and *φιλόξενια* (1 Tim 3:2; Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2). See also Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34.
romantic kissing. The noun φίλος appears very frequently in human usage, often of “friends,” which itself may range from close and/or well-known friends to favorable acquaintances, guests, or even “political friends.” However, the concept of “friendship” in the NT does not necessarily refer to one of utility or benefit. φίλος also depicts divine-human friendship. The substantive φιλία is used only once in the NT, in the reference to “friendship [φιλία] with the world,” which is hostility (ἐχθρεύομαι) toward God (Jas 4:4). Divine love toward humans is also depicted by the compound term, φιλανθρωπία, “affectionate concern for and interest in humanity,” itself in parallel to the “kindness [χρηστότης] of God” (Titus 3:4).

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68 Such as love of praise (Matt 6:5), status (Matt 23:6; Luke 20:46), and falsehood (Rev 22:15). Of non-romantic kissing see Matt 26:48; Mark 14:44; Luke 22:47. This dovetails with the linguistic shift explanation argued by Joly; see Le vocabulaire.

69 It refers to the centurion’s friends whom he sent (Luke 7:6), a friend of whom a favor is asked (Luke 11:5–8), one who is invited to a feast (Luke 14:10, 12), in close proximity with neighbors to celebrate the finding of the lost sheep or coin (Luke 15:6, 9), the prodigal son’s brother’s friends (Luke 15:29), friends made through use of wealth (Luke 16:9), grouped with parents, brothers, and relatives who will betray them (Luke 21:16), grouped with relatives (Acts 10:24), Herod and Pilate (Luke 23:12), in the sense of “friend of Caesar” (John 19:12), officials of the province who were friends who go to urge him not to go into theater (Acts 19:31), other friends of Paul (Acts 27:3), and “friends” in the sense of the church (3 John 1:15).

70 This is evident in that friends are to share the lot of friends (Luke 12:4) and by the fact that the greatest love is that which lays its life down for friends (John 15:13).

71 In the only instance of someone being called a “friend of God” in the NT, Abraham is “called the friend of God” (Jas 2:23), while a “friend” (φίλος) of the world is an enemy (ἐχθρεύομαι) of God (Jas 4:4). Friendship with God is also indirectly symbolized in parables (Luke 11:5–8; 15:6, 9; cf. Luke 14:10; 16:9). See also Stählin, TDNT 9:164. Further, Christ addresses his followers as his “friends” (Luke 12:4; John 11:11; 15:13, 14; cf. 3:29). Elsewhere, Jesus is referred to as the friend of publicans and sinners (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34). The statement is an attempt to slander Jesus as one who is friends with those whom one should not be friends. At the same time, the statement unintentionally points to the truth that Jesus is, or wishes to be, the “friend” of all. For Stählin, “φίλος is both active and passive. Jesus loves sinners and is loved by them in return, as shown in Lk. 7:37–50 by the washing of His feet, the kiss and the anointing with costly ointment, which are manifestations of grateful love.” TDNT 9:161. Notably, others are spoken of as friends of God in extra-biblical Jewish literature. Ibid., 168.

Thus, in the NT the \( \phi \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) group refers to a number of aspects of love that dovetail with the most important usages of \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \alpha \pi \alpha \omega \) including: the conditionality of love/friendship (John 15:13; 16:27; Jas 4:4), reciprocality (John 16:27; cf. Prov 8:17), emotion and/or passion (John 11:36; Jas 4:4), pleasure, enjoyment, and/or evaluative love (Matt 6:5; 23:6), preferential love (Matt 10:37; John 20:2), concern manifested in discipline (Rev 3:19), and misdirected love (Rev 22:15, among many others). There is no indication that the term indicates an inferior kind of love, and its usage with divine agency indicates strongly the capacity of the term to indicate the highest and noblest aspects of love. With this in mind, we return to the misguided assertion of the uniqueness of the \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \alpha \pi \alpha \omega \) word group over and against the \( \phi \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) word group.

The Association of the \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \alpha \pi \alpha \omega \) and \( \phi \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) Word Groups

In conjunction with the assertion of the uniqueness of \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \varepsilon \pi \eta \) as descriptive of the highest divine love, some scholars have asserted a stark difference between the \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \alpha \pi \alpha \omega \) and \( \phi \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) word groups, often portraying the latter as unsuitable to denote “Christian love.” For instance, some assert that \( \phi \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) is the warmer, more affectionate term and/or specific to reciprocal friendship. 

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73 In the LXX consider the use of the term in the sense of that which is especially liked and/or brings pleasure (Gen 27:4, 9, 14; Hos 3:1; cf. Isa 56:10).

74 Cf. Gen 37:4. See also the discussion of “insider love” further below.

75 In the LXX consider misdirected love of slumber (Isa 56:10) as well as the love of pleasure in Prov 21:17, in contrast to properly directed love of wisdom in Prov 29:3.

76 Morris, Testaments of Love, 119, 263. Spicq, while recognizing parallel meanings in some contexts, contends that \( \phi \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) was “hardly appropriate for expressing a love that unites God and humans and extends even to enemies.” TLNT 1:10–11. For him, the classical meaning “friendship or amity (\( \phi \lambda i \varepsilon \) \( \phi \lambda i \varepsilon \)) moves on an entirely different plane” including the notion of “reciprocity.” TLNT 1:10. Similarly, Singer, The Nature of Love, 1:160. Consider also Wuest’s contention that \( \phi \lambda i \varepsilon \) is a “love of pleasure,” “delight,” and “liking” that “takes pleasure in” while \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \varepsilon \pi \eta \) is a “love of preciousness,” “esteem,” and “prizing” that “ascribes value to.” “Four Greek Words,” 243. Similarly, see Benjamin B. Warfield, “Terminology of Love in the New Testament,” Princeton Theological Review 16 (1918): 195–96.

77 Of the former see Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 134. Of the latter see Spicq, who argues that in extra-biblical Greek \( \dot{\alpha} \gamma \varepsilon \pi \eta \) is used of superior-inferior relations whereas “friendship is properly used only of a relationship between equals.” TLNT 1:13, 10. Cf. Viktor Warnach, Agape: Die Liebe als Grundmotiv der neutestamentlichen Theologie (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1951), 162, n. 1.
The supposed qualitative difference between the terms has been especially emphasized in the narrative of John 21 when Jesus asks Peter three times, “do you love me?” using ἀγαπάω the first two times, while Peter responds affirmatively with φιλέω until Jesus, the third time, also uses φιλέω to which Peter responds a third time with φιλέω (John 21:15–17). Many commentators have asserted that while Jesus asks Peter twice whether he “loves” him with the highest, divine love of ἀγαπάω, Peter is unwilling to assert that he is capable of such love and thus responds with the lesser, φιλέω love. Others have asserted, on the contrary, that Jesus asks if Peter loves him with a weaker form of love (ἀγαπάω), and Peter is actually asserting that he loves (φιλέω) Jesus with great passion and warmth of affection, which Jesus concedes in his third response. Thus, even scholars who see a difference in terms disagree on the nature of the difference, even taking opposite positions.

Yet, in canonical usage the two word groups overlap with regard to the major aspects of love, often being used interchangeably in the NT. This is true with regard to John 21, which

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79 So “Love,” 382; Trench, Synonyms, 43.

reflects Johannine stylistic variation rather than any intended distinction in meaning. Peter’s consternation relates to the threefold repetition of the question, not the variation of verbs. Beyond John 21, the usage of φιλέω and ἀγαπάω in the LXX and NT shows significant overlap. Thus, both terms are used of Jacob’s preferential love for Joseph (Gen 37:3–4; cf. Prov 8:17; Lam 1:2; cf. Tob 6:19). In the NT, both terms are used to describe the Father’s love for the Son (John 5:20; cf. John 3:35), the Father’s love for the disciples because of their love for Jesus (John 16:27; cf. 14:21, 23), Jesus’s love for humans (Rev 3:19; cf. 3:9), Jesus’s love for individuals (John 11:36; cf. 11:5), human love for other humans (John 15:19; cf. 15:19), human love for their

the Greek New Testament (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1977); W. Feneberg, “φιλέω,” EDNT 3:425–26. Stählin suggests that there may have been a distinction in some classical Greek authors such that φιλέω meant “to like” and ἀγαπάω “to love” with “strong feeling, inwardness, devotion, and even passion” yet the two terms “approximate” to one another “in meaning and use” and even in Classical Greek are “often interchangeable.” TDNT 9:116. Spicq, on the other hand, contends that “those who make them synonymous either ignore the semantics of ἀγαπέω or minimize the importance of the scene.” Agape, 3:95.

81 The Johannine penchant for purely stylistic variation is evident in this same pericope where different words are used for the lambs/sheep as well as the commanded activity of tending/shepherding them and of “you know” (John 21:15–17). See Louw and Nida, L&N 2:293; Moffat, Love, 46–47; Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:542–43; Carson, The Gospel according to John, 676–77; idem, Exegetical Fallacies, 53; Beasley-Murray, John, 394; Köstenberger, John, 596; Morris, The Gospel according to John, 771–72. Cf. Edwin D. Freed, “Variations in the Language and Thought of John,” ZNW 55 (1964): 192–93. Moreover, the variation is almost surely John’s since Jesus would likely have been speaking in Aramaic. So Morris, The Gospel according to John, 769; Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), 1103.


83 Indeed, both ἀγαπάω and φιλέω may translate zωή, as they do in the parallel usage in Gen 37:3–4.

84 Nevertheless, Spicq attempts to find a distinction even here. He claims that they are “very close in meaning” here but not identical. In his view, the “religious agape ascending from disciple to Master [John 14:21] is very different from the sensible, emotional warmth” that is φιλέω in John 16:27. Agape, 3:88.
own life (John 12:25; cf. Rev 12:11) and both terms describe the disciple whom Jesus loves (John 20:2; cf. 23:23). Moreover, notice that Christians are the φίλοι (3 John 15) as well as the ἀγαπητῶς (3 John 2, 5, 11). Furthermore, in the NT both are used of preferential love (Matt 10:37; John 11:5; 13:1), misdirected love (Matt 23:6; Luke 20:46; 22:15; Rev 22:15; 2 Tim 4:10; cf. Prov 21:17), conditional divine love (John 14:21,23; 16:27), and love that includes discipline (Rev 3:19; Heb 12:6). Further, the ἀγαπάω and φιλέω word groups collocate frequently with closely related meanings both in the NT and the LXX and both translate the φιλέω word group in the LXX, as seen earlier. Such usage, especially with divine agency, demonstrates that φιλέω is not an inferior type of love but in fact may describe the very love of God. Hence, it is simply incorrect to assert that ἀγαπάω is divine love and φιλέω is a lesser, human love.

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85 Therefore, the only subject-object relations of love that are not described by φιλέω are human love for the Father and Jesus’ love for the Father. However, the compound φιλόθεος does describe “lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:4) and Jesus’ love for the Father is only explicitly stated once, the absence of φιλέω for Jesus’ love for the Father is thus likely merely accidental due to limited usage. Butler thus writes, “For every occurrence of phileo there is an example of agapao expressing exactly the same idea. As a consequence, the only conclusion possible is that agapao and phileo in the New Testament must have the same meaning.” The Meaning, 70. He does recognize, however, that phileo is never used explicitly of human love toward the Father but he does not believe “any importance should be attached to this fact.” Ibid., 57.

86 Lam 1:2 also used both in a sensual fashion. Josephus also alternates the terms stylistically. Further, the φιλέω word group may be used to speak of positive or negative love just as the ἀγαπάω word group may signify positive or negative love.

87 The two collocate interchangeably in John 21:15–16 (see discussion above). In John 15:13, “Greater love has no one that this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Elsewhere, human love toward one another is paralleled with brotherly love (φιλαδελφία) (1 Thess 4:9; so 1 Pet 1:22; 2 Pet 1:7). In one instance, reference is made to a greeting “kiss [φιλήμα] of love [ἀγάπη]” (1 Pet 5:14). Humans are commanded to “love [ἀγάπαω] one another” (John 15:17) while the world “love[s] [φιλέω] its own” (John 15:19). In the LXX, Prov 8:17 uses the terms interchangeably when “wisdom” states “I love [ἀγαπάω] those who love [φιλέω] me.” Likewise, they are used synonymously of the love (ἀγαπάω) of pleasure and the love (φιλέω) of wine, respectively (Prov 21:17). See also Hos 3:1; Lam 1:2; Esth 6:9; Tob (s) 10:13.

88 In light of this evidence, some see the φιλέω and ἀγαπάω word groups as synonymous in the NT while others suggest there is a slight distinction in the wider semantic range although the two terms are used interchangeably in a number of contexts. While one cannot conclusively rule out minor variation of the terms, “certainly there does not seem to be any significant difference in meaning.” Raymond E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I–XII (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1979), 498. So Louw and Nida, L&N 1:293. Butler contends that the two terms are synonymous since, he argues, for every instance of φιλέω there is an example of ἀγαπάω expressing nearly the same idea. See The Meaning, 70–72. Hendriksen, on
Accordingly, numerous scholars have recognized that the semantics of the ἀγαπάω word group do not posit a unique type of divine or Christian love.89 However, notwithstanding this evidence, the contention that ἀγάπη is uniquely descriptive of the highest divine love distinct from and exclusive of other, supposedly lesser, terms of love (i.e., ἐρώς, φιλέω) has remained in some circles and is especially prominent in “popular” theology.90 In this vein, the striking increase of the ἀγαπάω word group, especially the noun ἀγάπη, in biblical Greek when compared with extra-biblical literature around the time of the LXX, has sometimes been referenced as evidence of the uniqueness of ἀγάπη.91 Some have asserted that ἀγάπη in the LXX/NT presents a new, higher


90 For instance, Morris adopts Nygren’s “basic idea of ἀγάπη is that of self-giving love for the unworthy” while allowing that Nygren may have been too sharp in his distinctions between agape and eros and “equated it too narrowly with the use of particular Greek words.” Nevertheless, Morris contends, “there is such a love as he describes as Agape and that it is the Christian understanding of love seems clear. God’s love for us is evoked by God’s own inner nature, not by anything worthy in us” and divine love “evokes a corresponding love within people.” The Gospel according to John, 293. Cf. C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988). For a recent proponent of Nygren’s view of agape see Colin Grant, “For the Love of God: Agape,” Journal of Religious Ethics 24 (Spring 1996): 7.

91 While ἀγαπάω is used relatively frequently in Greek from Homer onward, the noun ἀγάπη is not
form of love unheard of in previous literature. Further, some assert that the NT meaning of ἀγάπη alone presents the highest form of love while the LXX portrays an inferior conception of ἀγάπη. The apparent explosion of the noun ἀγάπη onto the scene has been explained in numerous ways. Robert Joly makes the most compelling argument, widely adopted by

very well represented in extra-biblical Greek literature, if at all. In fact, it remains disputed whether the noun ἀγάπη is attested at all in pre-LXX Greek, though the older noun ἀγάπης is present in classical Greek literature. However, Spicq argues that ἀγάπη is derived from ἀγαπάω and not ἀγαπάεις. TLNT 1:18. Some instances of ἀγάπη in pre-LXX Greek have been suggested. Cf. Stauffer, TDNT 1:37–39. See TLNT 1:14–15, for an overview of the supposed instances of pre-LXX ἀγάπη and Spicq’s reasons for rejecting such instances. Spicq concludes that ἀγάπη is “is proper to the koine.” Ibid., 18. Further, see the conflicting arguments of Stephanie West and R. E. Witt regarding the instance of “pagan” use of ἀγάπη with regard to Isis in P. Oxy. 1380. West argues that this instance is merely a copyist mistake such that ἀγάπη was originally ἀγάθη. “Alleged Pagan Use of Agapē in P Oxy 1380,” JTS 18 (1967): 143. Cf. idem, “Further Note on Agapē in P Oxy. 1380,” JTS 20 (1969): 228–30. Witt, on the other hand, argues convincingly that the text should not be emended and the usage fits with the cult of Isis. “Use of Agapē in P Oxy 1380,” JTS 19 (1968): 211.

Further, whereas the verb φιλέω is more common than ἀγαπάω in extra-biblical literature, in the LXX ἀγαπάω appears roughly 8 times as often as φιλέω and almost 6 times as often as φιλέω in the NT. Feneberg rightly points out that the NT disparity is “doubtless dependent on” the LXX. EDNT 3:425. Moreover, the ἐρωτ is word group, also prominent in extra-biblical Greek, appears only a few times in the LXX and never in the NT. ἐρωτ appears in Esth 2:17; Prov 4:6 (cf. 1 Esd 4:24) and ἐρωστήσε in Hos 2:7, 9, 12, 14, 15; Jer 4:30; 22:20, 22; Lam 1:19; Ezek 16:33, 36, 37; 23:5, 9, 22 (cf. Wis 8:2; 15:6). Of these LXX OT instances only Jer 4:30 does not translate σμ.

92 Trench thus asserts that ἀγάπη was “a word born within the bosom of revealed religion.” Synonyms, 43. Spicq believes that the noun ἀγάπη finds its origin in the LXX as a translation of πνευμ. TLNT 1:14. While doubting the newness of the term itself in the LXX, Stauffer contends that “the whole group of words associated with ἀγαπάω is given a new meaning by the Greek translation of the OT.” TDNT 1:39. Similarly, James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, “ἀγάπη,” in The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1949), 2.

93 Thus, “since the Spirit of revelation has used it to express ideas previously unknown, inquiry into its use, whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint, throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the NT. Cf. however, Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5.” “Love,” 381. Similarly, Morris writes, “Clearly, the use of the term in the Septuagint is a far cry from that in the New Testament.” Testaments of Love, 103.

94 Klassen supposes that the LXX uses this word group because “the Hellenistic Jewish translators sought the least marked Greek term for expressions of love in their sacred texts,” a preference which the NT naturally continued. Love in the NT, 381. Similarly, Stauffer suggests ἀγαπάω was a “colourless Greek word” that was “best adapted to express” the intended meaning of “selection, of willed address and of readiness for action.” TDNT 1:39, 36. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, The Epistles of John (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1982), 254–55. Others have suggested in a similar vein that ἀγαπάω was selected because it lacked the “warmth” and “affective emphasis” of other terms referring to a “will rather than to the emotion” and/or a “sober kind of love.” Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 134; Schneider, EDNT 1:9. It has also been suggested that ἀγαπάω is favored in order to avoid any sexual connotations, especially in contrast to ἐρωτ. Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 134. Cf. Moffatt, Love, 38. However, not only ἐρωτ but also φιλέω and ἀγαπάω “denote sensual love” in extra-biblical literature. Stählin, TDNT 9:115. Cf. also 2 Sam 13:15 and Lam 1:2 in the
contemporary scholars, that the increase in usage of ἀγάπη and the wider word group may be accounted for exclusively on the basis of diachronic linguistic shifts rather than theological purpose(s).  

Nygren, on the contrary, makes much of the fact that Paul overwhelmingly favors the noun ἀγάπη over the verb ἀγαπάω, opposite the more frequent usage of the verb rather than the noun in the Johannine writings and the LXX as a whole. However, Paul’s preference for the noun is not suggestive of a distinctive meaning thereof. The usage of the LXX and NT demonstrate that a sharp distinction between the meaning of ἀγαπάω and ἀγάπη is unwarranted and artificial. In all, while the precise identification of the factors regarding the entrance of the LXX. Morris thinks it was chosen to distinguish from the entire range of meaning of ἐρώτω. However, recognizing that the linguistics do not “prove the point” he emphasizes that the distinctive meaning stems not from the “word” but the “concept.” Testaments of Love, 103, 125, 128. Others have suggested the preference is due to similarity in sound to bha. See a discussion of this in Stählin, TDNT 9:124.  

95 Joly contends the preference for the ἀγάπη word group was present in Hellenistic times and that the change took place for linguistic reasons from the fourth century B.C. on; specifically, philein was moving from “love” to “kiss” (due to the disappearance of the older word for kiss - κνοεῖν) while agapan moved from “be content with” to “love” with some overlap with previous meanings. Le vocabulaire, 33. So Carson, Exegetical Fallacies, 51–52; idem, New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 646; Moisés Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995), 96; Donald A. Carson, The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 27. C. C. Tarelli suggests something similar prior to Joly. “Agapē,” JTS 1 (1950): 64–67. Cf. Barr, “Words for Love,” in The Glory (ed. Hurst and Wright), 6, 11; idem, The Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). Moffat suggests, “So congenial and comprehensive did αγαπάν become in the Christian vocabulary indeed, that φιλέϊν practically disappeared during the second century.” Love, 47. Warfield had also seen ἀγάπη as the word that was current at the time, not as a deliberate choice of the authors, though he nevertheless asserts a contrast between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in John 21. “Terminology,” 184, 196. Contra the claims of Spicq and others that the colorless ἀγάπη words were given a higher meaning in the LXX. TLNT 1:11.  

96 The LXX uses the verb ten times more often than the noun whereas Paul uses the noun twice as much as the verb. Interestingly, Aristotle, in his Nicomachean Ethics, uses philia as a noun far more frequently than as a verb. See Catherine Osborne, Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 24, 25.  

97 On the contrary, Barr states, “in relation to ideas of love, this noun [ἀγάπη] is no more than a nominalization of those same relations and emotions which in verb form were expressed by ἀγαπάν.” “Words for Love,” in The Glory (ed. Hurst and Wright), 8. Cf. Vaughan Jones, “Agape and Eros,” 3. Accordingly, Paul’s more frequent usage of the noun may simply be due to the fact that he uses abstract, rather than active, language regarding virtue and qualities more frequently than some other biblical writers. Moreover, there are some LXX books that also use the noun more frequently such as Canticles and Ecclesiastes. Barr suggests that Paul is adopting a more Hellenistic style in this usage. Holy Scripture, 62.
specific noun ἀγάπη into frequent usage as well as the increased usage of the ἀγαπάω word group in biblical Greek remains beyond certainty, their usage in the LXX connects them with the OT meaning of love, especially that of ἕρα. 98 It is incorrect to suggest that ἀγάπη in and of itself posits a new, higher form of divine love as this overlooks the considerable influence of the OT usage on the NT as well as the compelling linguistic reasons for the increase in usage of the ἀγάπη and the ἀγαπάω word group. With this in mind, attention will now be turned to various themes of love in the NT that relate to the systematic issues pertinent to this dissertation.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that support the conclusion that divine love is volitional but not merely volitional. First, divine love is volitional. That is, God’s love includes a free, volitional aspect that is not essential, necessary, or strictly arbitrary. Second, divine love is not merely volitional. That is, divine love is closely associated with, but not identical to, God’s will and election. Third, the divine-human love relationship, then, is neither unilaterally deterministic nor essential or ontologically necessary but mutually (though not symmetrically) volitional and contingent. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. What is the relationship between love, the divine will, and election? Is divine love the result of God’s unilaterally arbitrary will? Is divine love to be equated with election? These questions are themselves predicated on thorny questions at the center of the free-will debate, particularly the complex issue of whether God’s will is unilaterally efficacious or whether humans possess significant freedom, that is, freedom to do otherwise than they do.

Importantly, Paul may be adopting the Hellenistic style of abstract language without thereby adopting Hellenistic theological/philosophical content.

98 R. E. Brown points toward what he calls a “real concept of ἀγάπη before Christianity” included in OT ἔρα. The Epistles of John, 255.
Before turning to the NT data regarding love and election it is important to first understand the nature of the divine will and election as depicted in the NT. Thus, a brief survey of the semantics and meaning of the divine will and election will be presented prior to the specific association of love and election. Here and throughout this section, NT data will be presented that suggest that the divine will is not the only factor in the divine-human relationship and election is not arbitrary or unilaterally efficacious (cf. 2 Thess 2:10–14).

A Brief Consideration of the Divine Will in the NT

The will of God is a massive concept in the NT, a full discussion of which is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. The significant overlap between the terms and conception of divine love with that of the divine will and election has led some to define love within the context of deterministic election. While it is not possible to address the entire concept of determinism in this space, a strictly deterministic conception runs into large problems in reconciling the biblical data regarding divine love (both in the OT and NT). While the NT presents a robust picture of God’s will and intervention in human affairs, the language related to the divine will and election suggests in numerous places that God’s will is not unilaterally efficacious nor is it always fulfilled. Further, the divine will also shows evidence of being affected and evaluative, related to that which God desires, wants, delights in, etc. If this is so, then one should not assume a unilateral conception of the divine will and/or election, which is then superimposed upon divine love and the God-human relationship. Rather, God allows significantly free beings to

99 For instance, Morris believes that “God wills to love men and he loves according to his own purpose of election, not according to the actions of men.” Testaments of Love, 160. Thus, for Morris unilateral “predestination and love go together.” Ibid., 191. Similarly, see Agape and Eros, 214.

100 Since the priority of the divine will is well-known and well-represented in the Bible and in numerous studies, this section will primarily draw attention to the usages of the divine will that do not appear to fit into a conception of unilateral determinism. Importantly, those sections that depict a robust will and relate directly to divine love will be taken up further below. Moreover, a hypothesis regarding how the perspective depicted here accords with the strong statements often used to assert unilateral determinism will be taken up briefly in chapter 6.
significantly affect the actual course of history. As such, the conception of the divine will in the NT does not support a deterministic metaphysic.\(^{101}\)

The two most significant word groups related to the divine will are θέλω and βουλομαι.\(^{102}\) The NT usage of these terms suggests that they do not necessarily refer to a unilaterally efficacious will.\(^{103}\) The θέλω word group relates to that which is willed, desired, wanted, taken pleasure in, or even liked.\(^{104}\) It may be related to the fulfilled or unfulfilled wish of its agent. The βουλομαι word group similarly relates to that which is wanted, desired, willed, intended and/or planned, whether of volition or inclination, often with the connotation of deliberation.\(^{105}\) With regard to both word groups, which are used very similarly in the NT,\(^{106}\) there are instances of unfulfilled wishes and desires, even with divine agency (cf. Matt 23:37; Mark 7:24; Luke 7:30; Luke 13:34; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9).\(^{107}\) Thus, while both roots often appear in strong statements

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101 This perspective has striking implications for the overall doctrine of divine love, especially when applied to the two main exemplars of models, Carl F. H. Henry and Charles Hartshorne.

102 The verb θέλω appears 208 times in 199 verses. The noun θέλημα meaning will, wish, desire, appears 62 times in 58 verses. Another noun, θέλησις, also meaning will, appears only once (Heb 2:4). The verb βουλομαι appears 37 times in 37 verses. The noun, βουλή, appears 12 times in 12 verses and refers to that which is decided in accordance with the agent’s wishes. Another noun, βουλήμα, appears 3 times.

103 This is not to suggest that the terms could never refer to a unilaterally efficacious will but simply that they don’t require that meaning with regard to the divine will.


105 See D. Müller, “Βουλομαι,” \(NIDNTT\) 3:1015–17; Gottlob Schrenk, “Βούλομαι, Βούλη, Βουλήμα,” \(TDNT\) 1:632. The sense of deliberation also appears in the NT with the sense of “consider carefully, make up one’s mind, decide” (cf. Luke 14:31). H. J. Ritz, “Βούλη,” \(EDNT\) 1:224. Cf. Müller, \(NIDNTT\) 3:1016. Likewise, outside the NT the word group could refer to initial stages as well as the final result of deliberation, resolve. Schrenk, \(TDNT\) 1:633.

106 The original difference in meaning is widely disputed, whether the βουλομαι root was more rational and the θέλω root more impulsive desire or vice versa. See Schrenk, \(TDNT\) 1:629. Cf. also Müller, \(NIDNTT\) 3:1015. Both are significantly associated with terms of “desire, want, wish” and evaluation. J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., “θέλω, θέλημα,” 1:287, 300; idem, “βούλομαι, βούλημα,” 1:287, 300.

107 It would be strange for Jesus to weep over that which he ultimately willed should be the case when he could have just as easily unilaterally willed it to be otherwise! This is contra Schrenk’s contention that “God’s θέλειν is always characterised by absolute definiteness, sovereign self-assurance and efficacy.
regarding the divine will, especially as it relates to his plan of salvation (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28; Eph 1:5, 9, 11), neither root in and of itself denotes a unilaterally efficacious will or divine decree.\(^{108}\)

The important connotation of desire and/or delight that the \(\textit{thel} \omega\) and \(\textit{boi}l\omega\mu\alpha\iota\) word groups often signify is further supported by the Hebrew terms that the Greek word groups translate in the LXX. These most often depict the aspect of that which one desires and which will bring the agent delight and/or pleasure in the OT.\(^{109}\) Further, in some instances, the \(\textit{thel} \omega\) group is

It is resolute and complete willing.” TDNT 3:47. Likewise the textual data directly contradict the overstatement that with divine agency the \(\textit{boi}l\omega\mu\alpha\iota\) word-group “is always a case of an irrefragable determination.” Müller, NIDNTT 3:1017. See, for example, Luke 7:30. Schrenk recognizes “the frustration” of Jesus’ ‘will’ but limits the impact to his merely human will in contrast to other usages which characterize his “omnipotent will.” Schrenk, TDNT 3:48. However, there is no exegetically based method to assign the verb to Jesus’ divinity or humanity. As such, this is a purely speculative argument.

\(^{108}\) This is despite the dogmatic language that is often used such as when Schrenk asserts that \(\textit{thel} \lambda \mu\alpha\iota\) defines “God’s will as His eternal decree of salvation.” Similarly, \(\textit{boi}l\omega\mu\alpha\iota\) Schrenk, TDNT 3:57. Cf. also idem, TDNT 1:635–36; Ritz, EDNT 1:224–25. Limbeck, on the contrary, is correct that with regard to salvation “the human will is not insignificant.” EDNT 2:138. Importantly, Müller correctly affirms, “the NT church does not acknowledge a double predestination in the will of God, whereby from the beginning one section of humanity is excluded from salvation.” Müller, NIDNTT 3:1020. In fact, some instances of human \(\textit{thel} \omega\) suggest the importance of the human will in the divine-human relationship. As Limbeck states, “the call to discipleship in the word of Jesus occurs as inquiry and invitation, not as a ‘must.’” EDNT 2:138. Cf. Matt 15:28; 19:17, 21; Mark 8:34; 9:35; 10:51. Yet, Limbeck mistakenly believes that in John the human will is totally “determined from outside.” EDNT 2:138.

\(^{109}\) In the LXX, the verb \(\textit{thel} \omega\) most often translates \(\gamma\sigma\upsilon\tau\), delight in, have pleasure in, desire (40 times in 38 verses) and \(\pi\varsigma\chi\), be willing, consent (32 times). Thus, it may translate \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\) in reference to explicitly evaluative delight such as God’s lack of pleasure in wickedness (Ps 5:5; cf. 50:18; 56:4; Hos 6:6) or his delight in the Psalmist (Ps 17:20; cf. 21:9; 40:12) and the lack of pleasure when the wicked perish (Ezek 18:23, 32) among many others. The translations of \(\gamma\sigma\chi\) may refer to human willful rebellion against God (Deut 1:26; cf. Ezek 3:7; 20:8) or the Lord’s unwillingness to forgive those who have rebelled against him (Deut 29:19; cf. 23:5). Nineteen times it takes a negative particle to translate \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\), to refuse. The verb also translates the noun \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\) and the verb \(\pi\gamma\tau\gamma\varsigma\) once each (1 Kgs 10:13; 1 Chr 28:4) as well as a number of other terms once each. Beyond its rendering as \(\textit{thel} \omega\), the verb \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\) is also frequently rendered by \(\textit{boi}l\omega\mu\alpha\iota\) (21 times) and \(\epsilon\delta\delta\kappa\varepsilon\omega\) (3 times) as well as \(\textit{thel} \lambda \mu\alpha\iota\) and \(\theta\epsilon\lambda\nu\tau\iota\) once.

The noun \(\textit{thel} \lambda \mu\alpha\iota\) most often translates the \(\gamma\sigma\tau\tau\) word group (20 times) and \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\) (11 times); both terms are significantly associated with divine delight, pleasure, and desire in the OT. For example, see Jer 9:23; Ps 29:6. Other terms are translated by \(\textit{thel} \lambda \mu\alpha\iota\) once. Beyond its rendering by \(\textit{thel} \lambda \mu\alpha\iota\), \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\) is also rendered by \(\textit{boi}l\omega\mu\alpha\iota\) and \(\textit{thel} \omega\) 5 times each, \(\pi\rho\gamma\mu\alpha\iota\), matter, thing, 4 times, and \(\theta\epsilon\lambda\nu\tau\iota\) desired, twice among many others two times or less. The noun \(\textit{thel} \lambda \mu\alpha\iota\) also most often translates \(\gamma\sigma\tau\tau\) (4 times) and \(\gamma\sigma\tau\iota\) (twice). For an example of translating \(\gamma\sigma\tau\tau\) of evaluative pleasure, see especially Ps 146:10. It also once translates \(\pi\gamma\tau\gamma\varsigma\), desire, request, in parallel to “heart’s desire” (Ps 20:3).

Likewise, the verb \(\textit{boi}l\omega\mu\alpha\iota\) most often translates \(\gamma\sigma\tau\tau\) (24 times) and \(\pi\gamma\tau\gamma\varsigma\) (16 times). For translations of \(\gamma\sigma\tau\tau\) with the connotation of divine delight, or the lack thereof, see Isa 1:11; 42:21; 53:10; 65:12; 66:4; Ezek 33:11. Significantly, it appears to refer to the fact that the people would not listen, did evil, and chose that in which God “did not delight” in Isa 66:4. \(\pi\gamma\tau\gamma\varsigma\) is often translated by \(\textit{thel} \omega\) with
closely associated with the terminology of love, often with the connotation of liking, or having pleasure in, something (cf. Luke 20:46; 1 Pet 3:10). The \( \theta \varepsilon \lambda \omega \) group also collocates frequently with that of \( \epsilon \xi \delta \circ k \varepsilon \omega \), such that the divine will (\( \theta \varepsilon \lambda \eta \mu \alpha \)) is in accordance with God’s good pleasure (\( \epsilon \xi \delta \circ k \varepsilon \omega \)) (Eph 1:5, 9; cf. Phil 2:13) or in reference to the lack of divine desire (\( \theta \varepsilon \lambda \omega \)) for or pleasure (\( \epsilon \xi \delta \circ k \varepsilon \omega \)) in sacrifices (Heb 10:8; cf. Pss 50:18; 146:10).

While the various theological interpretations of the meaning of the divine will are the subject of continuous debate, consideration of the NT usage demonstrates that there is nothing inherent in the terminology of will that requires or suggests unilateral efficaciousness. In fact, the usage of the terminology suggests otherwise. At this point, we will turn to a brief survey of NT instances indicating that the divine will is not always fulfilled.

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reference to the people’s unwillingness to obey God (Lev 26:21; Isa 30:9, 15; 42:24; Ezek 3:7). As \( \theta \varepsilon \lambda \omega \) does, \( \beta \omicron \upsilon \omicron \lambda \omicron \mu \\alpha i \) also takes a negative particle to translate \( \pi \\varepsilon \gamma \) 10 times. It also translates some other terms once or twice, including \( \pi \varepsilon \gamma \) once (Isa 1:29). The noun \( \beta \omicron \upsilon \upsilon \omicron \lambda \) most often translates \( \pi \varepsilon \gamma \), “counsel” (70 times), which supports the sense of deliberation noted above. It also translates a number of other terms related to council and/or plot 4 times or less. \( \beta \omicron \upsilon \upsilon \omicron \lambda \omicron \mu \\alpha i \) never appears in the LXX, although Josephus uses it to refer to Pharaoh’s disobedience to the true intention of God in refusing to let Israel go. Cf. Antiquities of the Jews 2.304.

Thus, in Luke 20:46, the scribes “like \( \theta \varepsilon \lambda \omega \) to walk in love robes” and “love \( \phi \iota \lambda \varepsilon \omega \)” respectful greetings in the markets,” etc. (Luke 20:46). In 1 Pet 3:10, “the one who desires \( \theta \varepsilon \lambda \omega \) life, to love \( \alpha \xi \gamma \tau \pi \omicron \pi \alpha \omega \) and see good days” (1 Pet 3:10; from Ps 33:13). See also the collocations in the LXX in 1 Sam 18:22; 1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Chr 9:8; Pss 33:13; 108:17; Isa 48:14. The larger conceptual relationship between love, the divine will, and election is apparent in Eph 1:4–6; see the discussion of this passage with regard to love and election further below. The \( \beta \omicron \upsilon \upsilon \omicron \lambda \omicron \mu \\alpha i \) word group, on the other hand, never collocates in a single verse with the \( \alpha \xi \gamma \tau \pi \omicron \pi \alpha \omega \) word group and only once with the \( \phi \iota \lambda \varepsilon \omega \) word group (Jas 4:4).

See the discussions further below of the largely evaluative meaning of the \( \epsilon \xi \delta \circ k \varepsilon \omega \) word group and the particular meaning of these verses. The sense of choice may also be present when these two collocate as in the usage in Sir 15:15. The \( \epsilon \xi \delta \circ k \varepsilon \omega \) and \( \beta \omicron \upsilon \upsilon \omicron \lambda \omicron \mu \\alpha i \) word groups never collocate in a single verse.

This stands in direct contrast to the misleading, dogmatic statements with regard to the semantics such as when L. Coenen states, “If it be asked what are the principles which underlie God’s choice, the only positive answer that can be given is that he bestows his favour upon men and joins them to himself solely on the basis of his own free decision and his love which is not dependent on any temporal circumstances [in other words it is unmotivated by any external factor].” “\( \epsilon \kappa \chi \lambda \gamma \omicron \eta \omicron \mu \\alpha i \),” NIDNTT 1:542.

Many of the instances below may be sidestepped by the determinist interpreter by assuming that those who do the will of God are actually unilaterally determined to do so by God and that those who don’t do God’s will are explained by reference to a distinction between God’s revealed and hidden will. These dogmatic interpretations will be taken up in chapter 6. In the meantime, the weight of the NT
In the Gospels, the sovereignty of God’s will is emphasized, yet, at the same time, there are numerous instances of the divine will not being enacted. For example, the rejection of God’s will is explicit when the “Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose [βουλή] for themselves, not having been baptized by John” (Luke 7:30). Further, God “desires [θέλω] all men to be saved” (1 Tim 2:4) yet, not all will be saved. Likewise, God “is patient [μακροθυμεῖω] toward you, not wishing [βολομαι] for any to perish but for all to come to repentance [μετάνοια]” (2 Pet 3:9; cf. Ezek 18:32). Yet, it is clear elsewhere in the NT that this divine will that all be saved is not actualized (cf. 1 John 2:17; Heb 10:36). Moreover, the will of Jesus is often evidence surveyed in this chapter suggests that such an interpretation amounts to special pleading.


115 Anton Vögtle contends that this verse excludes the Calvinist/Determinist perspective. Der Judasbrief, der 2. Petrusbrief (Bd 22; Düsseldorf: Benziger Verlag, 1994), 231–32. Cf. Müller, NIDNTT 3:1020. On the deterministic response to such verses see the brief discussion of 2 Pet 3:9 below. Further, a number of exhortations to prove, understand, and do the will of God imply that humans may do otherwise (Rom 12:2; Eph 5:17; 6:6; cf. Col 1:9; 4:12; 1 Thess 4:3; 5:18; cf. Philm 14). While such exhortations are not positive examples of God’s unfulfilled will, such exhortations would be superfluous if God’s will were always carried out. Other texts with such implications appear in the section dedicated to love and election below.

116 The attribute of patience itself presumes the possibility of unfulfilled desire (cf. 2 Pet 3:15). Moreover, prayers are to be made according to His will” and then he will hear (1 John 5:14; cf. 1 Pet 2:15) with the obvious implication that prayers might be made not according to his will, which he will not hear. “It is as we freely yield ourselves to God that he is able to accomplish his will through us and our prayers. In a very real sense, therefore, the accomplishment of God’s will in the world does depend on our prayers.” I. Howard Marshall, The Epistles of John (NICNT; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1978), 245. Cf. Stephen S. Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John (WBC 51; Dallas: Word, 2002), 295. Cf. 1 John 3:22. Further, Hebrews refers to God’s lack of desire (θέλω) for, and pleasure (εὐδοκέω) in, sacrifices and offerings (Heb 10:8; cf. 5; Heb 13:21). Here it is evident that God desires and/or wills that in which he takes delight. See the discussion of εὐδοκεῖν in the section dedicated to divine delight further below.

117 God wants “‘everyone’/‘all’ to come to repentance. . . . God’s will may not be done, but it will not be for lack of trying on his part.” Peter H. Davids, The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude (PNTC; Grand
depicted as an unfulfilled desire. Thus, Jesus’s will is explicitly thwarted or rejected such as when Jesus wanted (θέλω) no one to know of his location but “he could not escape notice” (Mark 7:24) and when he wished the fires of destruction were already kindled (Luke 12:49). Most poignantly, Jesus laments, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted [θέλω] to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling [θέλω]” (Matt 23:37; cf. Luke 13:34; John 5:40). Overall, the divine will may be unfulfilled, or thwarted (at least in its ideal sense), that is, a number of things that God does not want do in fact take place.

Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 281. Similarly, Eric Fuchs and Pierre Reymond believe this text argues against determinism. La deuxième Épitre de Saint Pierre. L’épitre de Saint Jude (CNT 13B; Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Delachaux & Niéstlé, 1980), 115–16. On the other hand, it is sometimes argued that the terms “anyone” and “all” may simply be referring to the addressees of the letter. Cf. Richard J. Bauckham, 2 Peter, Jude (WBC 50; Dallas: Word, 2002), 313; Douglas J. Moo, 2 Peter and Jude (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 188. Thomas R. Schreiner, however, thinks such a restriction is unsatisfying saying, “By extension we should understand 2 Pet 3:9 in the same way as Ezek 18:32. It refers to God’s desire that everyone without exception be saved.” 1, 2 Peter Jude (NAC 37; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 382. Moreover, the wider canonical theology including Ezek 18:32, 1 Tim 2:4 and others suggests that this indeed refers to a desire for universal salvation. Schreiner is representative of those who recognize the problem in this verse but nevertheless maintain the idea of double predestination. He recognizes that in Ezek 18:32 “God’s regret over the perishing of anyone is clear.” Ibid., 381. Yet, he attempts to overcome the dilemma here by distinguishing between God’s “decretive will” and his “desired will” that “God desires the salvation of all in one sense, but he does not ultimately ordain that all will be saved.” Cf. John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 419–20. For Schreiner, “God genuinely desires in one sense that all will be saved, even if he has not ultimately decreed that all will be saved.” He contends that “the Scriptures, if accepted as a harmonious whole, compel us to make such distinctions.” 1, 2 Peter Jude, 382. Marshall, however, comments that assuming that God’s will is always done “in such deterministic terms is inconsistent with the freedom which the Bible itself assigns to God’s children, and it wreaks havoc upon the biblical idea of the personal relationship which exists between God and his children.” The Epistles of John, 245. The deterministic interpretation will be further evaluated in chapter 6.


A Brief Consideration of the Semantics of Election

The instances above that demonstrate that the divine will is not unilaterally efficacious complement the meaning and usage of the terminology of election that will be surveyed below. This is especially true of God’s desire that all should be saved. As will be seen, terms of election often connote the sense of an invitation that may be (or may have already been) accepted or rejected. In this way, “elect” and “called” correspond to those who have appropriately responded, or will do so, to God’s call. With regard to “vocation” the divine call may be particular (i.e., apostolicity) but with regard to a love relationship with God (resultant in salvation) this call is universal. Therefore, the “called” and “elect,” as they relate to the objects of divine love and/or salvation, do not refer to those who are such by God’s unilateral decision. God’s decision to love at all is a necessary but not sufficient condition for “the called” and the “elect.”

The Meaning of the εκλέγομαι Word Group

The εκλέγομαι word group refers to choice or selection, often with the connotation of evaluation and appraisal of that which is distinguished, considered the best, and/or excellent. The word group most frequently refers to divine election, though the verb may refer to human choice. Jesus himself is the truly worthy objective of election, the “choice” one in the sense of εκλεκτός. The adjective εκλεκτός, of that which is “chosen,” appears 22 times in 22 verses. It is used most often as a description of those who are Christians, the “elect” (18 times), but also refers to Christ as elect (Luke 23:35; 1 Pet 2:4, 6) and once of angels (1 Tim 5:21). The noun εκλογή appears 7 times in 7 verses in the NT, always of divine election, which is often in the sense of vocation but many times with soteriological implications (Acts 9:15; Rom 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Pet 1:10). The verb εκλέγομαι appears 22 times in 20 verses with both human and divine agency of the action of choosing. With human agency it may refer to the church’s appointment of someone to office (Acts 6:5; 15:22, 25) or to general human choices of an evaluative nature (Luke 10:42; 14:7). However, by far it most often refers to divine election. Such election may be of Jesus (Luke 9:35), but more often, of humans via the Father or Christ to a particular purpose (Luke 6:13; John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2, 24; 15:7; 1 Cor 1:27–28; cf. Acts 13:17) or of a soteriological nature (Mark 13:20; Eph 1:4; Jas 2:5). In some instances, the distinction between election to a particular purpose and unto salvation is somewhat artificial. For example, John 15 appears to also connote soteriological implications. However, it is clear that some who are “elect” are not thereby saved, as is evident in the case of Judas. It is not always clear where vocation ends and
being desirable, pleasant, highly esteemed, valuable, honorable, and excellent (cf. Matt 12:18; Luke 9:35; 23:35; 1 Pet 2:4). Accordingly, election in the NT may be of an evaluative nature and is evidently not spontaneous or ungrounded in every instance. The range of meaning of the NT terms of election, including the potentially evaluative and/or grounded nature of the word group, is further bolstered by its LXX usage where it translates various Hebrew terms that connote evaluative choice and/or desire. Moreover, the εκλέγομαι word group frequently

soteriological implications begin. One should neither dismiss the distinction nor apply it too rigidly.


123 Importantly, “the act of choosing (and thus the words of this group) includes a judgment by the chooser as to which object he considers to be the most suitable for the fulfilment of his purpose. It is not of vital importance whether it be objective criteria, or subjective feelings and considerations which are paramount in making the decision.” Coenen, NIDNTT 1:536. Selection of an objective nature was often in view by the group in classical Greek where the verb is sometimes used of the choice of that which is most beautiful, of the best quality, or worthy of praise. See Gottlob Schrenk, “εκλεγομαι, εκλογη, εκλεκ ο ,” TDNT 4:144, 182. Similarly, “the election or recruitment of political and military leaders had to do with the merits and the character of the persons chosen.” Gene L. Green, The Letters to the Thessalonians (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 92. This evaluative element may relate to its derivation from “λεγÔ, count, collect, read.” Coenen, NIDNTT 1:536.

124 The adjective ἐκλεκτός most often translates the word group παρασκευασμένος, choose, choice (38 times) and παρασκευασμένος, pure, select (6 times). It often translates πασχάλινος, which may refer to Israel as a whole but often specifically refers to the faithful among the people (cf. Isa 65:9, 15, 22). Of πασχάλινος, consider the significant usage in the statement, “with the pure you show yourself pure” (Ps 17:27; 2 Sam 22:27). It also translates πανσέληνος of that which is an object of desire, 4 times (cf. Hag 2:7) and παντζα twice, of that which has been tested (cf. Isa 28:16), πανσέληνος (of “fat” and thus “choice” livestock or produce) 8 times and a number of others once. In many such instances, εκλεκτός “does not express the fact of being chosen, but in a wider sense factors already present which make choice likely.” Coenen, NIDNTT 1:537. The verb εκλέγομαι most often translates πασχάλινος, to choose, select (34 times). Cf. Ps 77:68. Such usage “denotes the complicated rather than the simple act of will” but the “motive is not indicated by the word.” Gottfried Quell, “Election in the Old Testament,” TDNT 4:148. Moreover, Coenen adds that God’s election is not on the basis of “human qualifications” but “can only be meaningfully maintained” as it “leads to a response to the love of God, to obedience.” NIDNTT 1:538. Some other terms are translated by εκλεκτός once. εκλογή never appears in the LXX.
collocates with the ἀγαπάω word group, especially with ἀγαπητός, the “beloved,” demonstrating its association with love.\textsuperscript{125} It is even more closely associated with the κλητός word group, which will be surveyed below.\textsuperscript{126}

Humans are the most frequent objects of divine election, whether vocational\textsuperscript{127} or salvific.\textsuperscript{128} With regard to the latter, the adjective ἐκλεκτός consistently refers to those who are “the elect,” the chosen of God.\textsuperscript{129} This “elect” often appears to refer to those who will ultimately be saved, at times specifically directed toward those at the end of days.\textsuperscript{130} In such instances, the elect

\textsuperscript{125} Cf. John 15:19; Rom 11:28; Eph 1:4–5; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; Jas 2:5; 1 Pet 2:9, 11. Beyond a single verse see John 15:16–17; Rom 8:33, 35; 9:11–13. These verses will be specifically addressed in the section dedicated to love and election further below. The terms also frequently collocate in the LXX (Deut 4:37; 7:7; 10:15; Pss 46:5; 77:68; Isa 41:8; 44:1–2; cf. Wis 3:9; Sir 47:22).

\textsuperscript{126} Though there are fewer collocations in number, the meaning is more closely related. See Matt 22:14; 1 Pet 2:9; 2 Pet 1:10; Rev 17:14. They also frequently overlap in the LXX.

\textsuperscript{127} Jesus elected some to specific vocations (Luke 6:13; John 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2, 24), which might be forfeited, as in the case of Judas (John 6:70; 13:18). Others are elected by God to missional functions (Acts 9:15; 15:7; 1 Cor 1:27–28; cf. 13:17). One might argue that Judas was elected to fulfill the role of betrayer (cf. John 6:70). So, to a limited extent, Schrenk, \textit{TDNT} 4:173. However, the actions of Judas are severely condemned (Mark 14:21) and if Judas was unilaterally determined to betray Christ then he is also arbitrarily condemned. On the contrary, Judas chose to betray Jesus; he “was a willful devil.” Borchert, \textit{John 1–11}, 276. For the argument that God’s election is not truly frustrated in this instance since “election (in a broader sense) allows for the possibility of human failure” see Köstenberger, \textit{John}, 222. Cf. Adolf von Schlatter, \textit{Der Evangelist Johannes, Wie er spricht, denkt und glaubt: ein Kommentar zum vierten Evangelium} (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1960), 184–85. Notably, in 1 Cor 1:27–28 the election is specifically evaluative since God purposely chooses the “foolish” and “weak” things in the eyes of the world. Compare the narrative of the selection of Gideon’s 300 warriors (Judg 7:2–7). As in the case of Gideon, if God only chose those whom the world viewed as well-suited, the world could easily overlook the action of God in bringing about his purpose.

\textsuperscript{128} Election is frequently with regard to the plan of salvation, thus God “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4; cf. Rom 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28; 1 Thess 1:4). All of these passages, which some have interpreted to refer to unilateral determinism, will be discussed further below.

\textsuperscript{129} See Matt 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; Rom 8:33; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1; 2:9; Rev 17:14; cf. 1 Pet 5:13; 2 John 1, 13.

\textsuperscript{130} It is descriptive of a remnant on whose behalf tribulation will be cut short (Matt 24:22; Mark 13:20), whom false prophets will attempt to mislead, “if possible” (Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22), and whom God will ultimately gather “from the four winds” (Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27) and bring justice (Luke 18:7). The phrase “if possible” could be understood to mean that it is impossible for the elect to be lost. Hagner, \textit{Matthew 14–28}, 706; Blomberg, \textit{Matthew}, 361. Cf. also James A. Brooks, \textit{Mark} (NAC 23; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 214. This might even be taken in the sense that they are unilaterally determined unto salvation. Gregory the Great commented in Homilies on Ezek 1:9, “if they are elect, it is not possible; and if it is possible, they are not elect.” Quoted in Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected Out of the Works of the Fathers} (trans. J. H. Newman;
“must refer to those who have followed Jesus, i.e., Christians.” However, the “elect” do not seem to be unilaterally determined by God since “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). The immediate as well as the wider Matthean context suggests that those who are ultimately “chosen” are those who respond to God (cf. Matt 22:1–13). Likewise, the wider NT data also imply that those who respond appropriately are God’s elect (cf. Jas 2:5; Rev 17:14).

Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842), 264. France, on the other hand, sees this as “an optimistic expectation that their faith will prove equal to the test.” The Gospel of Mark (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 529. Though France’s view might be correct the sense might be stronger, a reference to those who will not be misled but not necessarily that they could not be misled. This may be an example of the “elect” spoken of corporately without reference to which individuals make up that group or a product of divine foreknowledge. Importantly, the NT is consistent that it is those who endure to the end who will be saved (Matt 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13).

131 Hagner, Matthew 14–28, 703. Cf. Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 977. For Joel Marcus, these references are to the “faithful remnant.” Mark 8–16 (AB 27A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 897. Cf. Isa 65:8–10. R. de Vaux describes the prophetic concept of remnant as a holy community that lives in love and fear of YHWH and thus receives his blessings. “Le ‘reste d’Israël’ d’après les prophètes,” RB 42 (1933): 539. There may also be the implication of evaluation if the term translated “justice” (ἐκδίκησις) in Luke 18:7 refers to the “vindication” of the saints. Such evaluative vindication, however, could only take place through the mediation of Christ by his merits.

132 The “many” likely refers to God’s universal invitation (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4; 6; Titus 2:11) as “the πολλοί is probably to be taken as a universalizing Semitism, which can be translated ‘everyone,’” Hagner, Matthew 14–28, 632. So Blomberg, Matthew, 329; B. F. Meyer, “Many [= All] Are Called, but Few [= Not All] Are Chosen,” NTS 36 (1990): 89–97. Thus Jeremias comments, “materially the many represent the totality.” That is, “Mt. 22:14 contrasts the totality of those invited with the small number of the chosen.” Joachim Jeremias, πολλοί, TDNT 6:542. The “few” here, on the other hand, again corresponds to the concept of “remnant.” So Blaine Charette, “The Theme of Recompense in Matthew’s Gospel,” JSNTSup 79 (1992): 150. Cf. Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 891. Even Moo, who takes a deterministic position, recognizes this as “a ‘general’ call.” The Epistle to the Romans (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 530. Here, the “elect” corresponds to the OT category of the “righteous or pious” and as such, “many Jews had received the call, but few had become ‘elect’ by accepting it.” Alan Hugh M’Neile, The Gospel according to St. Matthew (London: Macmillan, 1928), 317. Cf. 4 Esd 8:3. The same phrase is found in Matt 20:16 in some manuscripts but the usage there is most likely not original.

133 “Those responding properly may be said to have been chosen. The elect are the true community of the people God chooses to save, even as Israel had once been so chosen, but those people must freely respond to the Spirit’s work in their lives. . . . Election does not violate free will nor occur irrespective of the man’s conduct.” Blomberg, Matthew, 329. Cf. 2 Esd 8:3. 41. J. Eckert likewise comments, “A predestinarian misunderstanding of the belief in election is thus rejected. . . . The elect are those who have followed the invitation into the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ.” “ἐκλέκτως,” EDNT 4:417. Contra Coenen who thinks that this is attributed “to the divine choice alone.” NIDNTT 1:540.

134 Indeed, those who are “chosen” (ἐκλέκτως) are those who “love God” (Jas 2:5), the “called [κληρονόμοις], chosen [ἐκλεκτοίς and faithful [πιστοίς]” (Rev 17:14), and they are “chosen [ἐκλέκτος] according to the foreknowledge of God” (1 Pet 1:1–2; cf. Rom 8:28–30). The implication of all this is that those who respond appropriately are God’s elect. Indeed, “those who believe and obey are elected.” Schrenk, TDNT 4:187. Cf. Moffat, Love, 202; Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Accordingly, numerous exhortations to the “chosen” suggest human responsibility.\textsuperscript{135} This all supports the interpretation that election is neither unilateral nor unconditional, though it may (or in some cases may not) be foreconditional (see especially Matt 10:22; 24:13; cf. also Mark 13:13).\textsuperscript{136}

As has been seen, in some instances the terminology of election is clearly evaluative (cf. 1 Pet 2:4, 6). However, whether the terminology describes election of a subjective, arbitrary nature or of an objective evaluative nature (or a combination of the two) is not specified by the mere use of the \textit{\iota\kappa\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\mu\alpha\iota\iota} word group. As such, whether or not election refers to God’s unilateral and arbitrary selection of some and not others is not settled by the semantics alone. The words for election should not be considered technical terms for strictly arbitrary, non-evaluative, and/or timeless divine decision. When used with regard to divine election of humans the term may refer to those who are presently part of God’s people and/or those who will finally be among God’s people.\textsuperscript{137} Perhaps in some instances the reference is simply to a corporate group without

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item For instance, “be all the more diligent to make certain about His [\textit{\kappa\lambda\eta\omicron\tau\iota\varsigma}] and choosing [\textit{\iota\kappa\lambda\omicron\gamma\eta\iota}] you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble” (2 Pet 1:10; cf. 3:14; Col 3:12). Paul’s own claim to “endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen” implies the contingency of that status (2 Tim 2:10; cf. Titus 1:1). See also 1 Cor 9:22–23; 1 Tim 4:16. For Schrenk, this demonstrates that “election is not a logical point of rest. It is the serious responsibility which confronts the community with the question of final decision.” \textit{TDNT} 4:188. Cf. Gerhard Delling, “Merkmale der Kirche nach dem Neuen Testament,” \textit{NTS} 13 (1967): 305. As such, the “possibility of falling away is not suppressed.” Schrenk, \textit{TDNT} 4:188. The “elect . . . need to remain faithful from start to finish.” Philip H. Towner, \textit{The Letters to Timothy and Titus} (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 505. Contra George W. Knight, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles} (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 399. Moreover, the “chosen” may correspond to the “faithful” and “holy” (cf. 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 17:14).

\item The parable just prior to this statement speaks of those who rejected the invitation to the wedding feast. See the discussion of this regarding the meaning of \textit{\kappa\alpha\lambda\omega\omicron} below.

\item Stein comments that the “‘Chosen ones’ designates those who have responded to God in repentance and faith and are thus the recipients of his love and grace rather than to the elect by some kind of predestination.” \textit{Luke}, 446. However, Towner argues that the term tends to be used “to refer to those who are at present God’s people.” \textit{The Letters}, 504. In fact, the term appears to be used of those who have responded and are thus presently part of God’s people in some instances as well as those who will finally be part of God’s people in others. This accords with the descriptions of salvation as variously past (cf. Titus
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
reference to which individuals will ultimately be included in that group.\textsuperscript{138} When in specific reference to those who will be saved, however, the individual texts and the wider canonical context suggest that the “elect” identifies those who have responded, or will respond, appropriately to God’s call to salvation (cf. Matt 22:14).

### The Meaning of the καλέω Word Group

The theological meaning of the καλέω word group generally refers to being divinely called and/or invited, including the possibility of having responded affirmatively to the call/invitation.\textsuperscript{139} Whether the call/invitation has been responded to is not indicated by use of the term itself and the root never explicitly refers to an irresistible call.\textsuperscript{140} Indeed, the verb often clearly manifests the sense of an open call in the NT\textsuperscript{141} and in the LXX.\textsuperscript{142} For instance, in one

\textsuperscript{138} For the position that divine election is corporate see William W. Klein, \textit{The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Academie, 1990).

\textsuperscript{139} F. W. Danker et al., eds., “κλή ο,” BDAG, 549; idem, “κλησι,” BDAG, 549. Cf. Karl L. Schmidt, “καλεω, κληςις, αντικαλεω, εγκαλεω, ενκλημα, εισκαλεω, μετακαλεω, προκαλεω, συγκαλεω, επικαλεω, προσκαλεω, εκκλεσια,” \textit{TDNT} 3:487–536; L. Coenen, “καλεω,” \textit{NIDNTT} 1:271–76; J. Eckert, “καλεω, κληςις, κλη ο,” \textit{EDNT} 2:240–44. However, the precise meaning of the terminology depends on the context, since the usage varies. See Charles A. Wanamaker, \textit{The Epistles to the Thessalonians} (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 233. The adjective κλητος (10 times in 10 verses), meaning called or invited, and the noun κληςις (11 times in 11 verses), referring to a calling or invitation, are always used in the NT with reference to a divine call; whether a call to a specific vocation or, more generally, the call to follow Christ. Schmidt thinks all instances refer to the process of salvation since “to become and be an apostle could not be separated for Paul.” \textit{TDNT} 3:494. κληρις is always used in reference to the divine calling of believers (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 1:26; 7:20; Eph 1:18; 4:1, 4; Phil 3:14; 2 Thess 1:11; 2 Tim 1:9; Heb 3:1; 2 Pet 1:10). The verb καλέω appears 148 times in 140 verses, the vast majority of which refer to the basic sense of someone being called by a name or greeted, etc. Nevertheless, many instances of the verb refer to the divine calling.

\textsuperscript{140} On the other hand, Schreiner is representative of those who contend that the divine call is deterministic. Thus, in his view, “those whom God calls are powerfully and inevitably brought to faith in Jesus Christ” and this “call of God is extended only to some and is always successful.” \textit{1, 2 Peter Jude}, 429. Likewise, for Moo the divine call is related to God “irresistibly” bringing about “what he chooses.” \textit{The Epistle to the Romans}, 382. However, the NT usage and LXX background of the term suggest otherwise.

\textsuperscript{141} Thus, Jesus calls his apostles (Matt 4:21; Mark 1:20) and he calls sinners to repentance (Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32). It is apparently a contingent privilege to be “called sons of God” as such blessing is ascribed to peacemakers (Matt 5:9; cf. Rom 9:26; 1 John 3:1). Elsewhere, Abraham is praised for obeying “when he was called,” implying that he could have not obeyed (Heb 11:8; cf. 5:4; 11:18).
parable, Jesus refers to those who refuse a call/invitation (καλέω) to the wedding feast, symbolic of his own invitation to salvation, which might be refused (Matt 22:3–4, 8–9; cf. Luke 14:16–24). Significantly, this parable immediately precedes Jesus’s statement: “For many are called [κλητός], but few are chosen [ἐκλεκτός]” (Matt 22:14). As such, the “called” cannot in every case be identical to the “chosen” and κλητός does not in every case refer to those who will be saved. On the other hand, in many cases κλητός appears to refer to those who have responded

Moreover, the basic action of inviting someone to a gathering appears numerous times in the NT (Luke 7:39; John 2:2; 1 Cor 10:27), taking on theological significance in some of Jesus’ parables (Luke 14:7–10, 12–13). Further, the verb often refers to those whom God has “called” in association with the wider plan of salvation according to which they have been called. See Rom 8:30; 9:24–26; 1 Cor 1:9; 7:17–18, 20–22, 24; Gal 1:15; 5:8, 13; Eph 4:4; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 5:24; 2 Tim 1:9; Heb 9:15; see others interspersed below. Interestingly, this cannot always (if ever) refer to an “eternal” call since in some instances it refers to a particular point in time when one was “called” (1 Cor 7:17–18, 20–22, 24).

142 In the LXX, κλητός refers to guests who were invited, even guests already present at a gathering (2 Sam 15:11; 1 Kgs 1:41, 49; cf. 3 Macc 5:14). It thus renders the passive participle of καλέω, “called,” in reference to invited guests (cf. Judg 14:11). In Zeph 1:7 the term is used with reference to the day of the LORD and in the context of proclamation of judgment, “The LORD has prepared a sacrifice he has consecrated [καλέω] His guests [καλέω – again, passive part.]” (Zeph 1:7). In the other 13 of its 18 appearances in the LXX, the only instances of κλητός in the Pentateuch, it appears in the phrase καλέσαξις where the term translates καλέω. Likewise, κλητός refers in the non-OT LXX to an “invitation” to a gathering (Jdt 12:10; 2 Macc 5:14). The only other instance in the LXX is without significance for the theological meaning of the term (Jer 38:6). The verb καλέω appears 458 times in 432 verses in the LXX, the vast majority of which translates καλέω, “call” (over 340 times), with its various meanings.

143 Thus, Jesus speaks of those “called” (καλέω) to the “wedding feast” who were “unwilling [θέλω] to come” and, accordingly, “those who were invited [καλέω] were not worthy [ἀξιός] and others are therefore invited (Matt 22:3–4, 8–9; cf. Luke 14:16–24). This “invitation implies obedience. . . . Nowhere do we read that those invited are forced to refuse. The whole point of the parable is that one does not have to decline or to appear in an unsuitable garment.” Schrenk, TDNT 4:186. Similarly, France, The Gospel of Matthew, 827; Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 892. Notably, the parable is directed at those who were “chosen” but ultimately reject God’s will for them. Likewise, in Luke 14:16–24 a number of potential guests were invited but they make excuses and refuse to come, therefore the master brings others. Finally, the master proclaims, “none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner” (Luke 14:24). Later in the NT, the verb is explicitly used with reference to a salvific invitation: “Blessed are those who are invited [καλέω] to the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9). This does not necessarily refer to a limited invitation since elsewhere in Revelation those who are “blessed” are consistently those who responded appropriately (Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 22:7, 14; cf. also the context of Rev 19:8).

144 Schmidt contends that this is a dialectical and paradoxical saying that actually means “many are called and yet few are called; many are elected and yet few are elected.” TDNT 3:495. However, Schmidt’s interpretation misses the point of the preceding parable regarding those who rejected the invitation to the wedding feast. On the other hand, Coenen rightly notes that “at least from the standpoint of human response, the circle of the called and of the elect cannot be taken as necessarily coinciding.” NIDNTT 1:274–75.
(and/or will respond) affirmatively to the invitation/call (cf. Rom 1:6–7; 8:28; 1 Cor 1:2, 24; Jude 1; Rev 17:14). Elsewhere, the divine “call” entails the pursuit of the goal or prize (Phil 3:14). Further, language of the divine call to salvation often appears alongside exhortation. For example, Paul implores his audience to “walk in a manner worthy [ἀξίον] of the calling [κληρονομίας] with which you have been called [κληλέω]” (Eph 4:1). Likewise, Paul exhorts the “brethren beloved by the Lord,” those who had been “chosen” (αἰρέω) by God “from the beginning for salvation” (2 Thess 2:13) “that our God will count you worthy [ἐξαίρω] of your calling [κληρονομίας]” (2 Thess 1:11; cf. also 2:14–15). The implication is that God may not deem them worthy and, as such, the call is not unilaterally efficacious. Accordingly Peter exhorts the “brethren” to be

145 These are “those who by their loyalty ratify their calling and election” (cf. 2 Pet 1:10). Moffat, Love, 202. Similarly, Mounce, The Book of Revelation, 319. The “necessary response is seen in their remaining ‘faithful’.” Osborne, Revelation, 624. κληρονομίας is used in reference to those “called . . . with a holy calling” not according to works but according to the divine purpose (2 Tim 1:9) and God will never revoke his call (Rom 11:29). However, the divine call may be rejected by the human. The recipients of “His calling” are those “who believe” (Eph 1:18–19).

146 Notice especially the exhortation to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness” and “take hold of [ἐπιλαμβάνομαι] the eternal life to which you were called [κληρονομότε]” (1 Tim 6:11–12). In many other cases, the context is exhortation (Gal 1:6; 5:13; Eph 4:1; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 2 Thess 1:11; 2:13–15; 1 Tim 6:12; 1 Pet 1:15; 2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10; 2 Pet 1:3).

147 The soteriological intention of this exhortation is evident in the verses just prior (cf. 2 Thess 1:7–10). There is disagreement over whether ἀξίον means to make or deem worthy. Abraham J. Malherbe believes it means here to “make worthy.” The Letters to the Thessalonians (AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 410. Cf. Fee, The First and Second Epistles, 265. However, Wanamaker points out that “with the possible exception of Ep. Diog.; 9:1 no other examples” of the sense “to make worthy” for ἀξίον are known. On account of this we should stay with the normal denotation of the word, “to consider worthy.” The Epistles to the Thessalonians, 233. So G. L. Green, The Letters, 296; James Everett Frame, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1912), 239–40; F. F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (WBC 45; Dallas: Word, 2002); 156. This is “substantiated by” the use of καταξιώματος, to deem worthy, in 2 Thess 1:5. The Epistles, 233. See I. Howard Marshall, “Election and Calling to Salvation in 1 and 2 Thessalonians,” in The Thessalonian Correspondence (BETL 87; ed. R. F. Collins; Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1990).

148 This evaluation of worthiness accords with Paul’s exhortation in 1 Thess 2:12 to “walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls [ἀξίον] you” (cf. also Matt 22:8; Eph 4:1; Phil 1:27; Col 1:10) as well as the numerous other statements about the necessity of divine approval in the final judgment. For G. L. Green, “these citations speak to us of those who are evaluated and found worthy of some kind of honor.” The Letters, 296. This complements the frequent collocation with the language of holiness. For instance, reference is made in the NT to those “called as saints,” the κληρονόμοι ἄγιοις (Rom 1:7; cf. 1 Cor 1:2). These terms (κληρονόμοι and ἄγιοις) collocate in 13 verses in the LXX as κληρονόμοι ἄγιοι, the translation of ἐν παρθένεις, that is, “holy convocation” (Exod 12:16; Lev 23:2–4, 7–8, 21, 24, 27, 35–37; Num 28:25). As such, this
“all the more diligent to make certain His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble” (2 Pet 1:10). 149

Thus, the usage of the word group in the NT (as well as the LXX background of the term) suggests that, contra the tendency of some interpreters to refer to the “called” as those determined to be saved, ΚΛΗΤΟΣ may refer simply to those who are invited but have the ability to decline the invitation (Matt 22:14) whereas in other places it appears to refer to those who have been invited and responded (or will respond, cf. Rom 8:28–29) appropriately to the invitation. 150 As such, it terminology closely resembles language of OT Israel. Further, the “called” are often exhorted to be holy. For example, “God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification (1 Thess 4:7; cf. Heb 2:11; 3:1). See also Eph 1:18; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:15; 2:9. Some scholars argue that “holiness” in such contexts refers to “status” rather than “behavior.” So Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 55. Similarly, Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 12–13; James D. G. Dunn, Romans 1–8 (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 2002), 19. However, while the word group often does refer to such status it may be a false dichotomy to separate the two too starkly. The status expects a corresponding behavior that should be strived for, if not fully attained prior to the eschaton (cf. 1 Thess 4:7; 1 Pet 1:15).

149 “Christ has called the Christian into his kingdom (v 3), promising him immortality (v 4), but an appropriate moral response is required if his final salvation is to be guaranteed. Bauckham, 2 Peter, Jude, 190. Cf. Wisd. 6:17–20. The conditionality here is real: “Virtue will keep one from the disaster of stumbling and never arriving at the eschatological home.” Davids, The Letters, 188. Such diligence is not merely for “subjective assurance” as in the interpretation of Luther and Calvin but “objectively necessary for the attainment of final salvation.” Bauckham, 2 Peter, Jude, 190. So, also Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 305. Cf. Barn. 4:13. So, also Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 305. Cf. Vögtle, Der Judasbrief, der 2, 154; Fuchs and Reymond, La deuxième Épitre, 60.

150 For example, Schreiner contends that ΚΛΗΤΟΣ refers to an “effectual” calling that “overcomes human resistance” and “not merely an invitation” since he believes that “God’s unstoppable purpose in calling believers to salvation cannot be frustrated.” Romans (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 450–51. So, also, Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 530–31, 582. Similarly, Mounce, Romans, 188; Judith M. Gundry Volf, Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling away (WUNT 37; Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1990), 59–60. Cf. Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 13. Klein recognizes that the sense of “summon” could fit as a meaning of this term but favors “designate as” because the former “implicitly includes some response” whereas, in his view, the term should be seen as “strictly God’s action.” “Paul’s Use of Kalein: A Proposal,” JETS 27 (1984): 62–64.

151 Cf. Blomberg, Matthew, 329. Thus, at times Paul speaks of the ΚΛΗΤΟΣ with the “implication that the call is accepted.” Those who are “summoned” for a special purpose will be saved “if their career runs its normal course” but “ἐκλεκτοί only shows that they are in the right way to reach it. . . . If they lose it, they will do so by their own fault.” Sanday and Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 220–21. Likewise, R. C. H. Lenski points out that while in Matthew ΚΛΗΤΟΣ may refer to those who hear the gospel call “irrespective of whether they accept it or not, in the epistles the term is used in the pregnant sense and includes the acceptance.” The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1945), 553. Similarly, see James Morison, Exposition of the Ninth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1888), 69–70. Cf. Morris, The Epistle to the
may be descriptive of the universal call of God to a loving relationship. The καλέω word group collocates significantly with the ἐκλέγομαι word group and often appears with the ἀγαπάω word group as well.

Overall, this understanding of the divine will, calling, and election as not unilaterally efficacious dovetails with the other canonical data regarding divine love. Consistently, the divine-human love relationship is presented as one of give and take. One who wishes to maintain that the divine will, plan, and election are unilaterally effective, amounting to the omnicausality of the divine will, must show how such a presupposition can accord with the inner logic apparent in the rest of the data of Scripture.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the Gospels-Acts

The primary relationship between love and election in the Gospels consists of the overlap between Jesus’ status as God’s chosen and as his “beloved.” Thus, God refers to Jesus as “My Servant whom I have chosen [αἱρετίζω]; My beloved [ὁ ἀγαπητός] in whom My soul is well-

Romans, 332.

Cf. 1 Tim 2:4, 6, which implies a universal call without the explicit language of calling or election. All are called to a relationship with God but not all will respond. “Never is the implication given that God intends to accept some and to reject others. The New Testament affirms absolutely that it is God’s will that all men would come to know him.” B. M. Newman and Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter, 166–67. Likewise, Frédéric Louis Godet argues emphatically that such a call is an “invitation” and “all are alike seriously called.” Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), 323. For others who view God’s “call” as universal see Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle, 553–54; Kenneth Grayston, The Epistle to the Romans (Epworth Commentaries; Peterborough, Eng.: Epworth Press, 1997), 74–75. Cf. Matt 22:14.

Thus, the “beloved” are those “called as saints” (Rom 1:7) and “those who love God” are paralleled with “those who are called” (Rom 8:28). See also Rom 1:7; 9:11–13, 25; 11:29; Gal 5:13; Eph 4:1–2; Col 3:12, 14–15; 1 Thess 2:8, 12; 4:7, 9; 2 Thess 2:13–16; 1 Tim 6:11–12; 2 Tim 2:22; Jas 2:5, 7; 1 Pet 2:9–11; Jude 1. However, Günther goes too far when he contends, “The klētoi (“called”) are the ἀγαπητοί (“beloved”)” (Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12).” Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:544. While the terms may refer to the same group, they are not thereby identical terms. The relation of the two concepts will be clarified as these texts are discussed in the section dedicated to love and election further below.

Thus, not only the internal data regarding the divine will and plan suggest the fallacy of divine omnicausality but also the other data related to my study would require such a view in order to be consistent with regard to the divine-human relationship. See the compelling argument against a deterministic view of divine election in Markus Barth, Ephesians 1–3 (AB 34; Garden City, N.Y.):
pleased [εὐδοκέω]” (Matt 12:18). That Jesus is God’s elect one demonstrates that such election is not arbitrary, since Jesus himself is the uniquely worthy object of divine pleasure and qualified to be God’s “Chosen [ἐκλέγομαι] One” (Luke 9:35).

Election is also closely associated with love in that the very objects of Christ’s greatest love (John 15:13) are those that “did not choose [ἐκλέγομαι]” him but rather, he “chose [ἐκλέγομαι] and appointed [τίθημι] them to bear fruit” (John 15:16; cf. John 15:19). Significantly, however, they are his “friends” only if they obey him (John 15:14) and, as such, this is not an unconditional election.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the Pauline Writings

Although unilateral election is not taught in the Pauline writings, the priority and importance of divine volition to the divine-human love relationship are readily apparent in the correspondence between love and election. The close relationship between calling, election, and love is seen in numerous references to those who are loved by God. Specifically, divine election is predicated on God’s love. Thus, Paul refers to the “brethren [ἀδελφοί] beloved [ἠγαπημένοι] by God” who manifest evidence of God’s “choice [ἐκλογή]” of them (1 Thess 1:4; cf. 3).


155 Moffat comments that beloved and elect are interchangeable in Matt 12:18. Love, 78. However, as shall be seen, the relationship of the two is more complicated, which Moffat himself recognizes. Cf. ibid., 202.

156 Evaluation is further evident in the overlap between this election of Jesus and the parallel statements at the Transfiguration, which refer instead to his status as “beloved” (ἀγαπητός), the one who is pleasing (εὐδοκόω) to God (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; cf. Matt 3:17; 12:18; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). The TR has ἀγαπητός here instead of “chosen” but this is widely considered to be a scribal harmonization. Moreover, Jesus is ridiculed on the cross with the challenge that he should save himself if he is “the Christ of God, His Chosen One” (Luke 23:35). Elsewhere, Matthew records this jeer in explicitly evaluative language: let God rescue him “if he delights [θέλω] in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matt 27:43). The evaluative nature of Jesus’ election will be taken up further below.

157 This complements the OT perspective on love and election (cf. Deut 4:37; 7:7–8). Malherbe renders, “you, whom God loved, he has chosen” and believes the participle here and in 2 Thess 2:13 focuses on “God’s election as an act of love.” The Letters, 105, 110. So G. L. Green, The Letters, 92; D. Michael Martin, 1, 2 Thessalonians (NAC 33; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 57. Fee concurs that “election . . . is always seen as an action of God’s love.” The First and Second Epistles, 31. At the same time, the elect are here those who have already responded appropriately to God (cf. 1 Thess 1:3, 6). So Fee, The First and Second Epistles. Cf. Wanamaker, The Epistles, 77; D. M. Martin, 1, 2
Likewise, Paul refers to the “brethren beloved by the Lord” whom “God has chosen [αἰρέω]158 . . . from the beginning159 for salvation through sanctification” (2 Thess 2:13) who have been “called” that they might “gain the glory” of Christ and are further exhorted to “stand firm” (2 Thess 2:14–15). Importantly, such election is not depicted as unconditional and/or non-evaluative. Rather, in contrast to the elect, those who perish do so “because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Thess 2:10).160 Accordingly, calling and election on the basis of divine love is to be reflected in Christian behavior. Thus, the “chosen [ἐκλεκτός] of God” are said to be “holy [ἁγιός] and beloved [λαμπροῦν]” while being exhorted to manifest love (Col 3:12).161

Second Corinthians 5:14, absent the usual language of election, is sometimes taken to imply that divine love unilaterally determines the actions of its object(s).162 There Paul asserts,

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158 This term might simply mean “prefer.” Elsewhere it refers to that which is selected or a decision made based on preference (cf. Phil 1:22; Heb 11:25).

159 The reading here is uncertain due to a textual variant with manuscript support on both sides. It might have originally read ἀπ’ αρχῆς, “from the beginning” (cf. NIV, RSV, NASB) or ἀπ’ αρχήν, “firstfruits” (NAB, GNB). Cf. Rom 16:5; Rev 14:4.

160 This lack of love for the truth is further associated with unbelief and pleasure [ἐὐδοκία] in wickedness (2 Thess 2:12). In the end, the direction of their affections is related to their decision to neither believe nor love the truth, which condemns them, they have rejected the divine “calling” (2 Thess 2:14). “The causal clause [ἀνατιθήματα] makes clear that they suffer their fate because they have ‘refused to love the truth.’” D. M. Martin, I, 2 Thessalonians, 246. So Fee adds, “They are headed for ‘destruction’ precisely because they ‘were not receptive,’” that is, they rejected the truth. The First and Second Epistles, 294. So Wanamaker, The Epistles, 261, 263; Bruce, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 174; D. M. Martin, I, 2 Thessalonians, 250; George Milligan, St. Pauls Epistles to the Thessalonians: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes (London: Macmillan, 1908), 105. Cf. G. L. Green, The Letters, 323–24; Malherbe, The Letters, 426.

161 This is highly significant that those who are “chosen” and “holy” are here exhorted to act out that holiness. This, along with the OT covenant context of such language, suggests that holiness is not here identical to election but a consequence of election, which itself must be maintained by relationship to Jesus Christ, who expects appropriate human response. Cf. Deut 7:6–11 and Lev 11:44. Thus, God’s “choice souls . . . should inevitably exhibit something of his nature.” F. F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984), 153. See also James D. G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans), 228. Similarly, the “beloved” (ἀγαπητοὶ) are “called [κλητοί] as saints” (Rom 1:7; cf. 9:25).

162 For instance, Murray J. Harris contends, “Christ’s love is a compulsive force in the life of believers, a dominating power that effectively eradicates choice in that it leaves them no option but to live for God.” The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 419. Klassen similarly thinks that “Paul also speaks of the love of Christ as so commanding we have no choice
“the love [ἀγάπη] of Christ controls [συνέχω] us” (2 Cor 5:14) in that one died for all and therefore all died. Commentators hold widely varying opinions on whether this means controls, restrains, embraces, lays claim to, or something else. Although certainty with regard to Paul’s precise meaning signified by this term seems beyond reach, the wider context of this passage (and the canon) demonstrates that, absent contradiction, this verse cannot be in reference to absolute control over human beings, that is, unilaterally efficacious, determinism (cf. 2 Cor 5:9–10). The wider context suggests that Paul here is referring to his feeling of being “obliged” to preach the gospel either because of his cognizance of the depth of Christ’s love for him or out of the zeal of his own love for Christ (cf. Phil 1:23).

Importantly, it is clear elsewhere that the elect are not only those loved by God but those who love God (and others) in return. Thus, the ones who “love God” are in parallel to “those who are called [κλητοί] according to His purpose [προόρισμοί]” for whom “God causes all things to work together for good” (Rom 8:28).

While the determinist may argue that love for God is here the (Gk συνέχω, 2 Cor 5:14).” Love in the NT, 392. Cf. Stauffer, TDNT 1:49.

163 Though many commentators believe this refers to Christ’s love, the genitive construction allows for the possibility that Paul is speaking of human love for Christ, which “restricts” the options available to him in faithfulness to that love. Some commentators even see this as both subjective and objective. So Spicq, Agape, 2:186; Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 120. Paul Barnett, himself favoring the subjective view, nevertheless suggests that Paul may have the objective in mind and intends to compare his former motives of zeal for the name of Yahweh (cf. 11:2) with his current motive of love for Christ, which might be coupled with the “fear of the Lord.” The Second Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT 11; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 288.

164 The precise meaning of the phrase “causes all things to work together for good” is left open due to the availability of numerous grammatical readings. Importantly, however, the text does not require divine determinism or omnicausality and, indeed, hints that human love toward God is itself a factor that

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efficacious consequence of God’s unilateral election, the evidence here and elsewhere suggests otherwise. While it is undoubtedly true that God’s love is the prior and necessary condition of human love in return, it is not itself the sufficient condition of human love toward God. Humans must choose to respond (cf. Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). 

Romans 9–11 and Eph 1 are two of the most significant and controversial passages that deal with the relationship of divine volition, election, and love. After describing God’s election (ἐκλογή) of Jacob over Esau prior to their birth in accordance with his “purpose” (προθεσις), not “because of works but because of Him who calls [καλεω]” (Rom 9:11), Paul quotes from Mal

prompts such divine beneficence. In this way, a “vital ongoing love for God is the necessary prerequisite for his active intervention in the affairs of our life.” Mounce, Romans, 188. Importantly, the phrase does not mean that evil will be suspended or instantaneously reversed for those who love God, but that the ultimate outcome will be good, that is, in the eschaton. So Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 331; Schreiner, Romans, 450. B. M. Newman and Nida seem to capture the intent by reading the text in a way that “assumes that we live in a world in which God has permitted the possibilities of good and of evil; and that even where evil results from the choice of wicked men, God is able to work with those who love him in order to bring good out of the circumstances.” A Handbook on Paul’s Letter, 166. For various options of translation/interpretation see Carroll D. Osburn, “The Interpretation of Romans 8:28,” WTJ 44 (1982): 99–109.

Thus, determinists insist that this is an “effectual calling” and thus unilaterally determined. God is solely responsible for his elect’s love toward him. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 530; cf. ibid., 531; Schreiner, Romans, 450–51; Gundry Volf, Paul and Perseverance, 59–60. Cf. Peter von der Osten-Sacken, Römer 8 als Beispiel paulinischer Soteriologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975), 280. On the other hand, Herman N. Ridderbos argues that Paul’s grouping of God’s “purpose, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification in one indissoluble bond” in Rom 8:28–30 “is not an abstract pronouncement concerning the immutability of the number of those predestined to salvation, but a pastoral encouragement for the persecuted and embattled church.” Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 350.

Godet correctly sees the phrase “to them that love God” in Rom 8:28 as “expressing the condition” of that which follows. Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 322. The phraseology of loving God is consistently conditional in the OT and NT, often supplemented with the promise of reward, as in this case.

Human love is thus a response to God’s “initiative, his prevenient call to such love.” Fitzmyer, Romans, 524. Similarly, Dunn correctly points out, “coerced love is not love.” Romans I–8, 481; B. M. Newman and Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter, 166–67. Even Moo, who elsewhere contends that love toward God is unilaterally affected by God, recognizes that here love toward God “is therefore a qualification for the enjoyment of the promise of this verse” though one “met by all who belong to Christ.” The Epistle to the Romans, 530. So Schreiner, Romans, 450.

Though a full treatment of these passages is well beyond the scope of this work, I will briefly take up each passage, restricting discussion to that which pertains to the purposes of this dissertation.
1:2–3, “Jacob I loved [ἐγαπάω], but Esau I hated [μισέω]” (Rom 9:13). Many have equated love in this context with unilateral “election love.” First, the question arises whether this passage is dealing with salvation or election to something else. Secondly, does the latter statement, “Jacob have I loved,” refer to election in itself? With regard to the first question, election does not appear to relate to salvation, here or elsewhere in Rom 9. Rather, the issue throughout Rom 9–11 is God’s justice in salvation history, specifically the prerogative of God to include believing Gentiles and exclude unbelieving descendants of Abraham. Thus, Paul is not “teaching double predestination” but that God had not failed to “maintain his covenant.”

With regard to the second question, love and election are not identical in this passage. The statement that God loved Jacob but hated Esau in Rom 9:13 is retrospective, quoted from Malachi, written long after the individuals Jacob and Esau have been dead and Edom itself has been ravaged. The election itself, on the other hand, appears in Rom 9:11–12, which refers to

171 Moo contends that here “God’s love is the same as his election.” The Epistle to the Romans, 587. Cf. Morris, Testaments of Love, 159. As was the case with regard to the same phrase in Malachi, some scholars contend that “hated” merely means “loved less.” So Fitzmyer, Romans, 563. Moo contends that “love” and “hate” are not meant at all but merely divine election and rejection. The Epistle to the Romans, 587. So Mounce, Romans, 198–99. On the other hand, Godet correctly argues that these statements “do not signify merely: I have preferred the one to the other” but both are based on a “difference of feeling in God himself,” which consists of “moral sympathy” on the one hand and “moral antipathy” on the other. Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 350. See the discussion of this issue with regard to Malachi in chapter 4.

172 A secondary question is whether Paul refers to the individuals or the nations they represent, a point over which scholars are divided. The flow of Paul’s wider argument suggests that Paul has both the individuals and their progeny in mind (notice the reference in the original context to “two nations” in Gen 25:23). See the discussion of this issue with regard to the original context of Mal 1 in chapter 4.


174 Mounce, Romans, 199. Cf. Dunn, Romans 9–16, 544–46. Since both Isaac and Jacob had older brothers who could have justifiably been chosen by God (Rom 9:6–14), their descendants have no right to complain that God is including those who are not of Abraham’s seed (the Gentiles). That theodicy is at issue is evident in the statements that frame this argument such as “the word of God has not failed” (Rom 9:6) and “There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!” (Rom 9:14).

175 See the discussion of the statement in Malachi in the previous chapter. There it was argued that
the selection of the younger son Jacob over the older Esau in Gen 25:23 and should not be confused with the retrospective statement of God’s love for Jacob (Israel) and hatred of Esau (Edom). Here, as elsewhere, divine election is predicated on God’s love. The potential injustice that raises the question, “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there?” in Rom 9:14 is answered by the fact that neither Israel nor Edom is worthy of divine love. The latter receives its just judgment but the former has received abundant, undeserved mercy that surpasses all expectations. The very fact that Israel has received such extravagant grace when they had no more biological claim as children of Abraham than Edom should logically silence their ungrateful, misguided, and unfounded complaints against God’s justice toward them.

Paul goes on to reinforce this point by referencing the *locus classicus* of Israel’s rebellion and God’s manifestation of his character of love: “I will have mercy [ἐλεήμονα] on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion [οἰκτίρμονα] on whom I have compassion” (Rom 9:15; cf. Exod 33:19). Paul’s point is not that God bestows mercy on some and unilaterally withholds it from others independently of the presence or absence of human response to him. The context of God’s statement in Exod 33:19, to which Paul refers, is the aftermath of Israel’s golden calf apostasy for which they deserved destruction by God. Instead, God was compassionate, gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth (cf. Exod 34:6), freely and of his own volition bestowing undeserved, extravagant mercy on a severely apostate and undeserving people.

love and election are separate concepts that interrelate in Malachi but are certainly not identical. Specifically, divine hatred in the OT is never arbitrary, but always consists of an appropriate response to an actual state of affairs.

176 So Günther who comments, “As in the OT the motive for the election is God’s love.” Günther and Link, *NIDNTT* 2:544. Godet correctly points out that “God’s love toward Jacob is neither *merited* nor *arbitrary.*” *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans,* 350. The wider motivation of God’s love behind all election will be further examined in chapter 6.

177 The question of the justice of God in bestowing such mercy on Israel and not Edom will be taken up in chapter 6. For now it should be noted that nothing that Paul states removes human responsibility. So Schrenk, *TDNT* 4:179. Determinism should thus not be read into Paul’s argument here lest he be depicted as contradicting himself in the wider context of Romans as well as the rest of Pauline literature.
The statement of Exod 33:19 is thus not a negative statement of exclusion from mercy but a positive statement that God has the right to bestow mercy on even the most undeserving. By reminding his interlocutors of this historical mercy shown to Israel, the ridiculousness of the claim that others should be excluded from divine mercy becomes apparent. Or, put positively, if God is able to justly have mercy on Israel after the golden calf rebellion, how much more does he have the right to show mercy to the Gentiles?  

In this way, Israel has no exclusive claim to divine mercy, nor do the people have the right to demand that God show more mercy to them than he has already, for it depends not on the will of a human being, but “on God who has mercy [ἐλεέω]” (Rom 9:16). This Paul further illustrates by reference to Pharaoh whom God used as a demonstration of his power in order that his name would be “proclaimed throughout the whole earth” (Rom 9:17).  

“So then He has mercy [ἐλεέω] on whom He desires [θέλω], and He hardens [σκληρύνω] whom He desires” (Rom 9:18). Once again, attention to the OT context demonstrates that Pharaoh rejected God of his own volition. The text states that he hardened his own heart (Exod 8:11, 28) before it says that God hardened his heart (Exod 9:12). Thus, God gave Pharaoh over to his own decision. 

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178 Fitzmyer points out that Paul cites these words “in order to underscore Yahweh’s freedom of merciful activity; he does not act arbitrarily, as Israel itself knows.” Romans, 567. Likewise, Campbell contends, “These words are intended not as proof that the divine election is arbitrary but as proof to the contrary.” “The Freedom,” 30. Cf. F. Staudinger, “ἐλεέω,” EDNT 1:431; H. H. Esser, “ἐλεέω,” NIDNTT 2:597. Lenski likewise argues that this phrase does not restrict God’s mercy to a select few but, rather, means that God’s mercy is “unrestricted by limits that men may set up. . . . There is no sovereignty which restricts mercy and pity in God.” Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle, 608–9.

179 Notice, there is a missional purpose behind God’s plan.


181 Godet suggests that “hardening” here is the “same idea as that of παραδόσωμι (‘God gave them up’), by which the apostle expressed God’s judgment on the Gentiles for their refusal” of his revelation (Rom 1:24, 26, 28; cf. 2 Chr 36:16). Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 355. Likewise, Fitzmyer comments that this “hardening” is a “protological way of expressing divine reaction to persistent human obstinacy against him.” Romans, 568. Accordingly, the “sovereignty of God does not set aside human responsibility.” Mounce, Romans, 200. Similarly, Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 361. On the other hand, Moo argues the deterministic view that “God’s hardening, then, is an action that renders a
not unilaterally determined Pharaoh’s rebellion but he has used Pharaoh’s rebellion to accomplish his purpose.\(^{182}\)

Paul proceeds to further clarify his point by reference to the metaphor of the potter and the clay (Rom 9:20). God, as potter, has the right “to make from the same lump one vessel \([σκεῦος]\) for honorable \([τιμή]\) use and another for common use \([ἀτιμία]\)” (Rom 9:21). Once again, the emphasis is on Paul’s defense of God’s right to operate in salvation history as he has. Importantly, however, the language that he uses here should not be taken to suggest determinism as if the vessel analogy presents humans as inanimate, impotent objects that are manipulated as puppets or automatons. On the contrary, Paul’s use of the same language elsewhere suggests conditionality and the reality of human volition.\(^{183}\) Thus, Paul writes of “vessels \([σκεῦος]\) . . . some to honor \([τιμή]\) and some to dishonor \([ἀτιμία]\)” and then adds, “if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel \([σκεῦος]\) for honor \([τιμή]\), sanctified, useful \([ἐὐχρηστός]\) to the Master” (2 Tim 2:20–21; cf. Wis 15:7).\(^{184}\)

person insensitive to God and his word and that, if not reversed, culminates in eternal damnation.” *The Epistle to the Romans*, 597. Further, it “is a sovereign act of God that is not *caused* by anything in those individuals who are hardened.” Ibid., 598. Though he also contends that God’s “hardening affects those who have already by their sin deserved condemnation.” Ibid., 600.

\(^{182}\) This issue is itself raised when Paul writes, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” (Rom 9:19). It is essential at this point to recognize that the statement is not Paul’s but one which he presents by way of his interlocutor(s) and thus prefaced by the statement, “You will say to me then” (Rom 9:19).

\(^{183}\) Mounce points out that in v. 22 Paul goes on to extol God’s great patience and in chapter 10 he discusses “the liberty and responsibility of human beings.” *Romans*, 202. Godet argues that “the use God makes of man at a given moment (a Pharaoh, for example, as a vessel of dishonor), far from excluding his moral liberty, supposes and involves it” and he does not assign humans roles “merely arbitrarily.” *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, 358. Cf. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 545.

\(^{184}\) The reflexive force of “cleanses himself” (ἐκκαθάρισεν ἑαυτόν) unequivocally stresses human action, an “individual decision.” Towner, *The Letters*, 541. This is a “general invitation to respond. . . . ‘Anyone’ can become an ‘instrument for noble purposes’ no matter what category applied in v. 20.” Ibid. Cf. G. W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 418; Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (ANTC; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996), 156.
Accordingly, God endures “with much patience [μακροθυμία] vessels of wrath prepared for destruction” (Rom 9:22). Divine patience would be superfluous if God executes his ideal will unilaterally. Such patience therefore implies that God is not unilaterally controlling the circumstances but is longsuffering in order to “make known the riches [πλοῦτος] of His glory [δόξα] upon vessels of mercy [σκεύη ἐλέους]” (Rom 9:23). Such “vessels of mercy” are the “called” (καλεῖ), both Jew and Gentile (Rom 9:24), and Paul alludes to Hosea, “I will call [καλέω] those who were not my people, ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved, ‘beloved [ἀγαπάω]’” (Rom 9:25). Paul thus uses Hosea to demonstrate God’s right to call a people who were not his people, extrapolating from the situation of an apostate people who were reclaimed by God. However, according to the wider context of Rom 9–11, this “call” is not unilaterally efficacious (cf. Rom 9:32; 10:3). Rather, it refers to God’s universal invitation to all peoples, which God has the right to bestow (Rom 10:9, 12–13; cf. 11:22–23).

185 Here, “prepared” (καταρτισμένα) is most likely passive (the middle is possible but rare). The agent is not explicit, the vessels could be thus “prepared” or “fitted” for destruction of their own accord (cf. 2 Tim 2:20–21). The deterministic view takes this as a divine passive. See, for example, Schreiner, Romans, 521–22.

186 Elsewhere, divine patience is afforded to allow opportunity for repentance (Rom 2:4; 1 Tim 1:16). Yet, Moo argues that in this verse God’s patience is not to allow for repentance for God has prepared them “himself for eternal condemnation.” The Epistle to the Romans, 607. The purpose of God’s patience, in this view, is “to show forth his wrath and make known his power.” Schreiner, Romans, 520. Contra Dunn, Romans 9–16, 559.

187 Notice, the intention is explicitly revelatory, to make known the divine character. Staudinger comments that this contrast between vessels of mercy and wrath is made “in order to explain God’s universal (inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles) appointment to glory.” Staudinger, EDNT 1:431.

188 Scholars have long puzzled over Paul’s use of this verse, which is originally directed at the northern kingdom to refer to God’s calling of Gentiles. However, Paul may draw this shocking analogy to drive the point home that they had no more claim to the divine call than do the Gentiles. Cf. Dunn, Romans 9–16, 574–75.

189 Israel did not attain righteousness “because they did not pursue it by faith” (Rom 9:32) and “they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom 10:3).

190 Those of “Israel” could be saved if they would confess and believe in Jesus as Lord (Rom 10:9) since, for both Jew and Greek, God is “Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him” and thus “whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:12–13). This is all in accordance with the NT usage of “call language,” which refers to an invitation that may be (or may have already been)
The call is thus open to all but not all respond. God has not rejected his people (Rom 11:1), but some have rejected him (cf. Rom 11:22–23). Nevertheless, there is a “remnant according to God’s gracious choice” [ἐλαχιστογένεια] (Rom 11:5).191 “Israel” did not obtain what she sought but “those who were chosen [ἐλαχιστογένεια] obtained it” whereas the “rest were hardened” (πώρω) (Rom 11:7). One might at first glance interpret this to mean that only some were arbitrarily selected by God and the rest were arbitrarily rejected by him. However, that this cannot be the case becomes clear later in this chapter. Specifically, conditionality is evident when Paul notes the divine “kindness” and “severity” of God, the latter to those who “fell” (πέπτω) but the former “to you . . . if you continue [ἐπιμένω] in His kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom 11:22).192 Furthermore, those who had fallen away may yet be granted back in “if they do not continue [ἐπιμένω] in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom 11:23).193 Accordingly, Paul could not be talking about unilateral predestination. Rather, those who are “chosen” in Rom 11:7 refers to those who have responded to God in belief and who are, as such, the recipients of God’s undeserved mercy and grace (cf. Rom 10:9, 12–13).

Throughout Rom 9–11, then, Paul has demonstrated that God has bestowed wholly undeserved and extravagant grace and mercy to Israel. This is highlighted once more in Rom accepted or rejected.

191 This does not mean God’s choice of some and not others but refers to God’s gracious decision to continue to be merciful and thus provide the occasion for undeserving humans to accept his loving overtures. Contra Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 677–78. God’s gracious choice to bestow mercy on the undeserving does not rule out the conditions for an individual’s reception of that mercy (cf. Rom 3:22, 25; 4:16).

192 Here it is apparent that “God’s election, though gratuitous, is conditioned by Christians’ responsible fulfillment of obligations to him.” Fitzmyer, Romans, 616. Cf. Mounce, Romans, 221–22. Thus, Paul again “underlines the point that perseverance is a Christian responsibility rather than an unconditional promise.” Dunn, Romans 9–16, 665. Even Moo recognizes that “ultimate salvation is dependent on continuing faith; therefore, the person who ceases to believe forfeits any hope of salvation (cf. also Rom. 8:13; Col. 1:23; Heb. 3:6, 14).” The Epistle to the Romans, 707. Similarly, see Schreiner, Romans, 609, 612.

193 Both conditional clauses use ἐξ + the subjunctive (3rd class condition) and thus suggest that such conditions are “uncertain of fulfillment.” Cf. Wallace, Greek Grammar, 696.
11:28 where Paul states that those who seem to be “enemies” (ἐχρήστος) of the gospel are according to divine “choice [ἐκλογή] . . . beloved for the sake of their fathers” (Rom 11:28; cf. Deut 7:7). 194 Here, one aspect of divine love is contrasted with another. They are in one sense “beloved” but in another sense God’s “enemies” at the same time. This complexity points toward the foreconditionality of love, which will be discussed further below. 195 Accordingly, God has not repented of his “calling” (Rom 11:29) but continued to bear long with his elect because of his love for their forebears, which itself grounded their election in the first place. 196 As such, in this instance divine love for the Israelites defies the expectations of human evaluation in accordance with the salvation-historical divine decision in favor of the progeny of the fathers. However, it should be kept in mind that this forbearance applies particularly to a remnant by faith (cf. Rom 9:6, 27; 11:5, 22–23). 197 In all this, God has not acted unfairly to Israel or anyone else in his calling of the Gentiles to be part of God’s people (cf. Matt 20:10–16). It is worthy of note that immediately following this discourse Rom 12:1 begins with an exhortation for humans to present themselves as holy and acceptable offerings to God. 198

194 “Enemies” could be active or passive but it is most likely passive in parallel with “beloved.” So most commentators. See Dunn, Romans 9–16, 685.

195 Paul is “saying that in connection with the gospel the Jews are the objects of divine hostility” as “they have refused to believe in Christ.” Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 422. In other words, “Israel’s failure to respond made them an enemy of God.” Mounce, Romans, 225.

196 The translation of Rom 11:29 in the NASB and elsewhere misleadingly says that “the calling of God” is “irrevocable” when the term, ἀμεταμελῆς, literally means without repentance. In other words, God has not changed his mind and revoked his call. Nevertheless, such call may be accepted or rejected (Rom 11:22–23).

197 Moo, on the other hand, thinks that all Israelites are blessed as the “beloved of God” due to God’s promises to the patriarchs “but this status will eventuate in salvation only for those whom God individually chooses for salvation in this age (the remnant) and in the last days (‘all Israel’).” The Epistle to the Romans, 731–32.

198 Moo thus comments, “That God’s mercy does not automatically produce the obedience God expects is clear from the imperatives in this passage” but, he contends, it “does impel us toward the obedience that the gospel demands.” Ibid., 749–50.
Elsewhere in the Pauline writings God is said to have “chose[n] us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

In love He predestined us to adoption . . . according to the kind intention of His will.”

Moreover, his “grace . . . He freely bestowed . . . in the Beloved” (Eph 1:4–6).

Here, God’s love is the basis of his plan (προορίζων) of adoption, itself associated with the “kind intention [εὐδοκία] of His will [θέλημα].”

In other words, because of God’s love for his creatures, he has planned to save those who would believe through Christ and this brings him pleasure. Accordingly, God has “lavished” his grace “on us” (Eph 1:7–8) and has made known the “mystery of his will [θέλημα]” in accordance with his “kind intention” [εὐδοκία] that he “purposed [προτίθημι] in Him”

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199 This call to holiness suggests that election includes “responsibility.” Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 100. See the discussion of the many exhortations toward the beloved, called, and elect and especially the relationship to holiness above. Without such holiness “no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14; cf. 1 Pet 1:2, 15–16; Eph 5:27; Col 1:22).

200 The phrase “in love” could belong to that which precedes or follows it. Accordingly, it might be taken with what precedes and could thus describe being “holy and blameless before him in love” ascribing “love” to human agency. Yet, it could also refer to divine love. See ibid., 100–101; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word, 2002), 24. Cf. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians*, 256. On the other hand, if taken with what follows, it would refer to God’s election according to his love. M. Barth thinks both may be intended. *Ephesians* 1–3, 80.

201 Here, “election and predestination are for the state of adoption, and this takes place through the ἠγαπημένος, the elect. The connection here is obviously that the Elect (Christ) bears the elect.” Schrenk, *TDNT* 4:175. Lincoln, accordingly, points out the connection here to the previous language “ἐν Χριστῷ (1:3), ἐν αὐτῷ (1:4), and διὰ Ἡσυχῆς Χριστοῦ (1:5).” *Ephesians*, 26.


203 M. Barth points out the affective nature of εὐδοκία (see the word study below) that here suggests God’s “willingness and joy in doing good are indicated.” Accordingly, this is “far from any idea of arbitrariness.” *Ephesians* 1–3, 81. O’Brien similarly notes that εὐδοκία “signifies not simply the purpose of God but also the delight that he takes in his plans. It has warm and personal connotations, and draws attention to God’s willingness and joy to do good.” O’Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 104. As such, this might be read “the good pleasure of his desire.”

204 Some have asserted that the προ- prefix refers to God’s “pretemporal resolve” (cf. Eph 1:4). In this vein, Bruce smuggles in language of an “eternal decree.” *The Epistles to the Colossians*, 261. Yet, the use of the verb with a human subject in Rom 1:13 indicates that the verb itself, absent contextual considerations, does not necessarily denote an eternal plan or decree. So Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 31.
“In him” those “first to hope in Christ . . . have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph 1:9). Significantly, all this is directed toward those who “having also believed . . . were sealed in Him” (Eph 1:13). While some have interpreted this passage as referring to unilateral deterministic predestination, the passage itself suggests that God has planned all along to lavish his grace upon those who would believe (Eph 1:13), adopting them in Christ because of his love and delighting to save through the gospel, that is, the mystery of his will (cf. Eph 1:7). In all this, the free divine volition is emphasized, but not in such a way that God unilaterally determines the destiny of human beings.

God’s “kind intention” is manifested in Christ’s salvific action, especially the cross. Such language is strikingly reminiscent of Isa 53 where Yahweh is said to be “pleased [םָּסָג] to crush” the servant, that is, Christ (Isa 53:10). Such pleasure does not refer to some divine sadism but to God’s overall delight in the plan of salvation, of which the sacrifice of Christ was an essential part. Notice the purpose “in him” pointing back to the incorporation “in Christ” through adoption. “God’s choice of his people ‘in Christ’ is the new element in election. He is the Chosen One par excellence (Luke 9:35; 23:35)” through whom others are included as God’s elect, adopted children. O’Brien, Colossians-Philemon, 99. Similarly, M. Barth, Ephesians 1–3, 86; Lincoln, Ephesians, 23. Christians are thus “chosen” and, elsewhere, “beloved” through Christ who is the one who is truly “choice” and worthy of love.

Thus, “God’s election” is “a preordination freely given in love (modal)” for which “the mediating function of Jesus Christ is fundamental; through the Son we become sons of God.” However, there is nothing here of a “divine decree concerning the non-elect of humanity by which they have been predestined, without any guilt of their own, to destruction and damnation (Determinism). Such a speculation has no place in this eulogy of thanks and praise.” Rudolf Schnackenburg, Ephesians: A Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 54. As D. M. Martin puts it, “the fact that God chooses is not presented as an act that limits the availability of salvation. There is no direct statement in the New Testament to the effect that the option of salvation is unavailable to certain persons or that God has chosen some for damnation.” 1, 2 Thessalonians, 251–52.
The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the General Epistles—Revelation

As earlier in the NT, the election of Jesus is again depicted as evaluative. Specifically, Jesus is anointed by God because he has “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness” (Heb 1:9; cf. Ps 45:7 [LXX 44:8]). Evaluation is also sometimes apparent with regard to the election of humans. For example, James refers to “my beloved [ἀγαπημένος] brethren” and asks, “did not God choose [ἐκλέγομαι] the poor of this world . . . rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love [ἠγαπάω] Him?” (Jas 2:5). Here, the “chosen” are again identified as “those who love” God. Significantly, the “poor” had already become a descriptor of the pious in OT, intertestamental, and rabbinic literature and it is thus fitting that they are here described as “rich in faith.” Accordingly, the “poor” correspond to those who “love” God, who are, as such, the elect who will enjoy the ultimate reward (cf. Jas 1:12). Elsewhere, Jude speaks of “those who are the called, beloved in God the Father” and “kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1). Once again it is clear that the “called” and “beloved” are not those who are irresistibly called by a


209 The NASB translation “to be rich in faith” inserts the words “to be” whereas the Greek text reads literally “the poor of this world, rich in faith.” Some see this phrase as a reference to eschatological wealth. R. P. Martin, James, 65. So Davids, The Epistle of James, 111–12. Here, the “poor person is the true pious person” and here they are those “rich within that sphere which is called here ‘faith.’” Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greeven, James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 137, 138. In my view, the phrase is qualified by “those who love Him”; both are descriptors of the elect’s faithful response.

210 This phrase “those who love him . . . is older and obviously was already a self-designation of the pious among the Jews.” J. L. Houlden, A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 89. See the discussion of Jas 1:12 and this construction further below.

211 The TR has “sanctified” (ἁγιασμένος) instead of “beloved” (ἠγαπημένος). The former is widely considered a copyist error since the latter has overwhelming manuscript support. See Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 430.
deterministic election, as shown by the further exhortation “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21). Both that divine love is not merely so-called “election love” and that election itself is not arbitrary are further evidenced in the relationship between love, election, and evaluative elements. Significantly, much of the election language in the NT, as it relates to love, overlaps significantly with evaluation, even divine delight. Accordingly, we now turn to the evaluative nature of divine love.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that ground the conception that divine love is not indifferent or disinterested, but evaluative. First, divine love is explicitly depicted as evaluative throughout the canon. Second, divine love includes appropriate self-interest that is not exclusive to other-interest. Third, humans may bring value to God through the prior and ongoing action of God, especially the mediation of Christ. Thus, God can and does receive love and may enjoy, delight in, and garner pleasure from his creatures. His own delight is voluntarily bound up with bringing genuine pleasure, joy, and delight to those very objects of his love. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Can God be the beneficiary of human action? What about self-interest? Is self-sacrifice and/or self-abnegation

212 Contra Schreiner, who contends that “believers have been loved by God the Father, and his effective love is the reason they belong to the people of God.” Ibid. On the other hand, Jerome H. Neyrey correctly takes “beloved” as a term of evaluative appraisal such that “God has deemed them worthy of this benefaction, and so they take honor from being the worthy clients of a worthy patron” while also standing in debt toward “their heavenly patron.” 2 Peter, Jude (AB 37C; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 48.

213 The term “evaluative” refers in this context to the appraisal, appreciation, and/or reception of value from external agents.

214 Those who adopt the presupposition of impassibility contend that God cannot be affected and thus cannot be the beneficiary of any human action. Thus divine love is non-evaluative. The famous agape-eros distinction further contributes to this notion that divine love is non-evaluative. Specifically, if God’s love (signified by ἀγάπη or otherwise) is altogether groundless, unconditional, unilateral, and equated with arbitrary election, then it could not also be evaluative and God cannot enjoy or appreciate the objects of his love nor their love in return. See, for example, Morris, Testaments of Love, 142. Others are mentioned in the general introduction to the ἀγαπάω word group. On the other hand, some argue that even if God were capable of enjoying human beings, humans are incapable of generating value due to their sinful nature.
the ideal of love? Is divine love indifferent and/or disinterested? Does God’s love include delight and/or enjoyment of his creatures, including their loving response toward him? This section of the study will begin with a survey of the meaning of prominent terms relative to God’s evaluative love.

Before turning to the positive evidence regarding the evaluative aspect of divine love, two brief topical summaries will demonstrate the existence and virtue of evaluative love. First, a survey of the numerous instances of misdirected love will show that the NT assumes that appropriate love includes proper evaluation. Second, the objection that true love is altruistic will be briefly examined according to the NT data that support the concept of proper self-regard. After these examinations, attention will be turned to the significant evaluative and appraisal elements apparent in the identification of God’s chosen people (evaluation and election). There, two main terms that overlap between the conceptual spheres of election and evaluative love, ἀγαπή (beloved) and εὐδοκέω (delight or pleasure in), will be examined, thus shedding light on this and the previous section. Further, the even more explicitly evaluative term of pleasure, the ἀρεστός word group, will be surveyed. Then, attention will be turned to the significant NT data on God’s acceptance, approval, delight, and enjoyment, depicting his positive evaluative love, which itself betrays the divine emotionality, as well as the evaluative distinction between love and hate, which, together, lead in to the passionate and emotional aspect of divine love.

Misdirected Love

Numerous instances of love (both ἀγαπάω and φιλέω) demonstrate an evaluative aspect of love by clearly identifying misdirected love, that is, love that is directed toward an unworthy, inappropriate, or even evil object. For example, the scribes and Pharisees “love [φιλέω] the

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place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues” (Matt 23:6). Luke recounts the
same example but uses ἄγαπέω: they “love” (ἄγαπάω) the chief seats in the synagogues (Luke
11:43) but disregard “justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42). Examples of such misdirected
love abound throughout the NT.217 Such misdirected love is itself the reason that Jesus is rejected
by those who “loved [ἅγαπάω] the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John
3:19).218 Humans are not to love the world (1 John 2:15) but Demas “loved [ἄγαπα] this present
world” and thus deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:10).219 Accordingly, “friendship (φιλία) with the world is
hostility [ἐχθρεία] toward God” and “whoever wishes to be a friend [φίλος] of the world makes
himself an enemy [ἐχθρός] of God” (Jas 4:4). Therefore, the object of one’s love is very important
since those who perish, perish because they did not “receive the love of the truth so as to be
saved” (2 Thess 2:10; cf. 2 Tim 4:8). Similarly, in the eschaton, the saints who have overcome
through Christ “did not love their life even when faced with death” (Rev 12:11). On the other
hand, the ones “outside” the holy city are “everyone who loves [φιλέω] and practices lying” (Rev
22:15).220 Many instances of misdirected love refer to a love of attraction and/or enjoyment of its

217 Later, Luke similarly describes: the scribes “like [θέλω] to walk around in long robes, and love
[φιλέω] respectful greetings . . . chief seats” and “places of honor” (Luke 20:46; Similarly, Matt 6:5).
Balaam “loved [ἅγαπάω] the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet 2:15) and Diotrephes “loves to be the first
[φιλοπρωτεύω]” (3 John 1:9). Many compound terms further signify misdirected love including the “love
of money” (φιλαργυρία) (1 Tim 6:10; cf. Luke 16:14; 1 Tim 3:3; Heb 13:5). See also 2 Tim 3:2–4; Titus
1:8.

218 Similarly, some chief rulers who believed in Jesus did not confess him because they “love”
(ἄγαπα) the approval of men rather than “the approval of God” (John 12:43). In contrast, humans are to
love (φιλέω) Jesus above all and such love toward Jesus involves sacrifice such that the one “who does not
take his cross and follow” Jesus is not worthy of him (Matt 10:38).

219 Such misdirected love amounts to hatred for the followers of Jesus since the world “love[s]
[φιλέω] its own” but “hates” those “chosen” by Jesus (John 15:19).

220 The proper direction and quality of love is further explained in various ways. See Rom 12:9;
14:15; 1 Cor 17:14; 2 Cor 6:6; 8:8, 24; 1 Tim 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:10.
object, often with the connotation of strongly liking something. Such love is evil in these cases not because of the preferential nature of the love itself as attraction and/or enjoyment (as some have contended),\(^{221}\) but, because of its inappropriate direction(s).\(^{222}\) Misdirected love is integrally related to a lack of love for God and/or the things of God. Overall, the very fact that objects of love may be appropriate or inappropriate suggests that proper love itself includes appropriate evaluation.

Pure Altruism versus Proper Self-love

The objection to the evaluative nature of love, that true (or pure) love should be strictly altruistic and thus include self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, contradicts the NT data, which recognize an appropriate kind of self-love. For instance, while the NT surely emphasizes the self-sacrificial love of Christ (John 15:13) it also presumes proper self-love.\(^{223}\) Thus, the second of the greatest commandments tells humans to love their neighbor as themselves (Matt 22:37–39; cf. Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; cf. Matt 19:19). Accordingly, at least some kind of self-love is appropriate, contra the notion of “pure love” as wholly altruistic and self-abnegating, exclusive of all self-interest and self-regard.\(^{224}\) At the same time, self-regard is not to be the ultimate object of

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\(^{221}\) For example, consider Nygren’s condemnation of acquisitive or appetitive love in *Agape and Eros*, 128, 210.

\(^{222}\) Smalley correctly cautions, “Perhaps we should not distinguish too sharply between these two connotations of ‘love,’ as ‘love’ and ‘desire.’ ‘Attraction’ is a fundamentally human emotion; the question is whether that attraction is properly motivated, and directed to the right object.” 1, 2, 3 John, 82. Daniel L. Akin adds, “In a sense love is neutral. The object of one’s love or affection is decisive.” 1, 2, 3, John (NAC 38; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 108.

\(^{223}\) Notably, in John 15:13 such love is in the context of friendship; it assumes an existing relationship and is thus not altogether unilateral or “disinterested.” See the discussion of friendship and reciprocal love later in this chapter.

\(^{224}\) Nolland rightly contends that far from utter self-disregard the “text assumes positive self-regard and the care for oneself that goes with this . . . . Even love for God . . . should not be seen, despite all the rigours of discipleship, as extinguishing the significance of our own well-being (cf. Mt. 7:12; Eph 5:29).” *The Gospel of Matthew*, 912. Blomberg also recognizes that while this is “not a call to self-love” it “does presuppose it.” *Matthew*, 335. Cf. also Klassen, *Love in the NT*, 389; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 480; Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 839. This is in direct contrast to Nygren’s ἀγάπη, which is exclusive of all self-love. *Agape and Eros*, 100–101, 130–31. On these commands see Spicq, *Agape*; Furnish, *The Love Command*. 474
one’s love. Thus, Jesus also states, “He who loves \( \phi \lambda \epsilon \omega \) his life loses it, and he who hates \( \mu \sigma \epsilon \omega \) his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (John 12:25). Importantly, the text does not command one to hate oneself but specifically to hate one’s “life in this world.” As such, the emphasis is on that selfishness that values one’s own human existence above the things of God, thus loving the world (through self) rather than God (cf. 2 Tim 3:2–4).  

Moreover, proper self-love is apparent elsewhere in the NT. Thus, NT writers quote Jesus’s love command as the fulfillment of the whole law: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). Paul, in the same vein, contends that the husband is to love his wife as he loves himself (Eph 5:28). Again, each one is “to love his own wife even as himself” (Eph 5:33). Significantly, this is modeled after the way Christ has loved humans who corporately are referred to as his body (Eph 5:25, 29–30). Amazingly, then, Christ’s interest in the church is metaphorically compared to one’s love for their own body, their own self. Accordingly, this manifests the principle that God’s love includes self-interest but such self-interest itself includes the interests of all other beings. In other words, other-love becomes identified with self-love. In this way, divine love is truly sympathetic. The divine life is intimately affected by the lives of his children because he has made their interests his own.

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225 Stählin, on the other hand, thinks this “demands an uncompromising renunciation of self-love.” Stählin, TDNT 9:130. However, the point Jesus is making is not against proper self-regard but against the kind of love that asserts one’s temporal life as the highest value. As such, this does not necessarily amount to utter self-abnegation but to a call of preference for God and the things of God above even one’s own life.  


227 This body language is metaphorical (not ontological) since the combination here of two metaphors (marriage and one’s body), if taken literally, would be mutually exclusive (cf. Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 6:16).  

228 See chapter 6 for a further exploration of this concept.
not “selfish” (1 Cor 13:5) but “recognizes the effect of love upon the lover.” As such, the self-sacrificial love of Jesus in dying for the church that she might be his bride is bound up with his “self-love,” that is, love for his body, the church.

In all this, though divine love is outgoing and (when appropriate) self-sacrificial, it is not therefore self-abnegating. Rather, there is appropriate self-love that is to be contrasted with selfishness. At the same time, there is appropriate sacrificial love, but not all proper love is sacrificial. While self-sacrifice is virtuous in the appropriate circumstances, total and utter self-abnegation is not ideal. Both self-sacrificial love and proper self-love are modeled in Christ who laid down his life for sinners because of his love, but Christ will nevertheless be exalted in the eschaton as is appropriate to him (cf. Phil 2). The exaltation of Christ is not opposed to his love. Divine evaluation in the sense that God is brought pleasure by receiving the love of human beings in no way lessens the quality of divine love. God actually enjoys human beings, delights in them, and is joyous in their joy. His creatures’ best interest is his interest; this is true love.

A Brief Look at Some Terms of Evaluative Divine Love

The Meaning of ἀγαπητός

The term ἀγαπητός generally denotes “one who is in a very special relationship with another,” thus “beloved,” “one who is dearly loved” and/or “prized, valued,” “the object of one’s affection” and, even one who is worthy of love. Accordingly, the term may entail evaluation,

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229 Donald A. Carson likewise contends that love is more than altruism. He points to Paul’s contention in 1 Cor 13 that even the greatest kinds of giving are possible without love: “This surely demonstrates that the love he has in mind is more sweeping than mere altruism, than mere commitment to the good of the other, however self-denying.” “Love,” New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 646.

230 While the wider ἀγαπάω word group to which ἀγαπητός belongs has already been discussed, the importance of the term as it relates to the identification of divine love as evaluative, rather than deterministically elective, warrants a brief survey of the meaning of this prominent NT adjective. This will both clarify the evaluative nature of divine love and support the position presented above that divine election itself is often inclusive of evaluation.

231 Dunker et al., BDAG, 7; ibid., 293. “It is used above all of an only and precious child.” Stauffer, TDNT 1:37. It is thus a strong term of endearment. See Davids, The Letters, 309; B. M. Newman
the lover’s perception of lovableness, and affection, delight, and/or pleasure in someone. In the NT, ἀγαπητός refers to Jesus as God’s beloved son in nine instances, and in such cases the “beloved” status is certainly evaluative since Jesus is the worthy object of divine love. In six of those instances, the evaluative connotation of ἀγαπητός is unequivocally evident when it collocates with εὐδοκέω in describing Christ as the beloved and well-pleasing son of God.

In almost every other NT instance, ἀγαπητός refers to Christians, whether of those beloved by God (i.e., Rom 1:7) or by other humans (i.e., 1 Cor 4:14), in reference to both individuals and groups. The term is thus one of “insider love,” that is, love for special objects of endearment, favor, and affection within the context of a particular, rather than universal, relationship. As such, it naturally relates conceptually to other descriptors of those who are in a special relationship to God such as the elect, called, and/or brethren, and explicitly and Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter, 12. It appears 61 times in 60 verses in the NT.

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232 See Robert A. Guelich, Mark 1–8:26 (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 2002), 34. Liddell-Scott views the classical use as meaning “worthy of love, loveable, dear.” LSJ Abridged, 4.

233 Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Luke 3:22; 20:13; 2 Pet 1:17. While semantically, both non-evaluative selection and evaluative and emotive disposition are possible connotations of ἀγαπητός (at least according to some scholars), theologically, only the latter is available as a coherent option when the referent is the son of God. On the explicitly evaluative delight connoted in many such instances see Spicq, Agape, 1:49–50, 53, idem, “εὐδοκέω, εὐδοκία,” TLNT 2:102. See also the further discussion of these below. All 8 instances of ἀγαπητός in the Gospels refer to Jesus. Cf. also the use of the perfect passive participle of ἀγαπάω with reference to Christ (Eph 1:6). For Bruce these designate Christ as “the supreme object of the Father’s love.” The Epistles to the Colossians, 258. Similarly, Fitzmyer, Luke I–IX, 485–86.

234 Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 2 Pet 1:17. The only other instance describes that Paul and his associates were “well-pleased” to share the gospel with those who had become “very dear” to them (1 Thess 2:8).

235 The only exception is Rom 11:28 where “Israel” is referred to as “beloved for the sake of the fathers.” As such, it often stands in as a description of the “Christian community,” which itself consists of those “beloved of God” who “reciprocate that love.” Strecker, The Johannine Letters, 148.

236 For Stauffer, this is “the preferential love which includes separation and special calling.” TDNT 1:48. But notice, with regard to ἀγαπητός, “preferential” does not mean arbitrary, non-evaluative, or strictly unconditional. See the discussion of insider love further below.

237 Interestingly, ἀγαπητός never collocates with ἐκλεκτός in a single verse but does collocate with the wider ἐκλεγμαι word group 3 times (Acts 15:25; Rom 11:28; Jas 2:5). The close association is also seen in parallel usage such as when Persus is referred to as the “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) and in the next verse...
contrasts with “enemies” (Rom 11:28). Similarly, the perfect passive participle of ἀγαπᾶω often functions in the same manner as ἀγαπητός, referring to those “beloved,” often in the context of election.\(^{240}\) Importantly, however, while the mere use of the term ἀγαπητός does not itself specify how one becomes “beloved,” the usage of the term demonstrates that the status of “beloved” is not unconditionally bestowed, though it may be granted foreconditionally.\(^{241}\) Despite interpretations to the contrary, then, ἀγαπητός should not be conflated with election.\(^{242}\)

Rufus is “a choice (ἐκλεκτός) man in the Lord” (Rom 16:12–13). Both are apparently evaluative descriptions of Paul’s dear brethren. In 1 Pet 2:9, 11 those who were “chosen” (ἐκλεκτός) are also referred to as “beloved” (ἀγαπητός). See also the collocation with ἀφοριστής, “choose, appoint,” in reference to Christ who is also the object of God’s pleasure (ἕδοκέω) (Matt 12:18).

The two collocate only once in a single verse of the “beloved” who are “called [κλητός] as saints” (Rom 1:7). Interestingly, ἀγαπητός, the ἐκλέγομαι word group, and the καλέω word group collocate within 2 verses in Rom 11:28–29, of those who are “from the standpoint of God’s choice . . . beloved for the sake of the fathers” since God’s “calling” is without repentance. Similarly, those who are referred to as “chosen” and “beloved” were “called” by God (1 Pet 2:9, 11). See also 1 Thess 2:8, 12; Jude 1, 3.

Elsewhere, familial association is evident when Paul refers to the “beloved” just after applying God’s covenant promise to be a father to them (2 Cor 6:18–7:1). Similarly, there are numerous references to beloved children (1 Cor 4:14; Eph 5:1; 1 John 3:20; cf. 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 1:2). As such, there is an association with the concept of being adopted into the family of God. Accordingly, Neyrey sees the status of “beloved” (in Jude 1:1) as being “fictive members of God’s family.” 2 Peter, Jude, 48.

The perfect passive participle of ἀγαπᾶω appears 7 times in 7 verses in the NT. There it often appears within the context of calling and/or election. See Rom 9:25; Eph 1:6; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13; Jude 1. The only other instance is with reference to the “beloved city” in Rev 20:9. The passive participle of ἀγαπᾶω also translates γυναῖκα four times in the LXX (cf. Deut 32:15).

Rather, the “beloved” often applies to those who have responded, or will respond, to God’s loving overtures and thus become a part of the people of God (with the possible, but not certain, exception of Rom 11:28). As such, it often is used in reference to those who are “faithful” whether of groups (1 Tim 6:2; 3 John 5; cf. Jas 2:5; Jude 20; Rom 1:7–8; Phlm 1, 5) or individuals (1 Cor 4:17; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7, 9). The “beloved” are thus in Christ; he is who is truly the “beloved” one.

While Christians are both “elect” and “beloved” the terms are not thereby synonymous. Contra Günther and Link’s contention that “agapē is for him [Paul] electing love, as is indicated by his use of ἀγαπητός, ‘the chosen one.’” NIDNTT 2:544. The same error appears when Günther and Link contend that the “κλητοί (‘called’) are the ἀγαπητοί (‘beloved’) (Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12).” NIDNTT 2:544. Christians may be both “elect” and “beloved” in Christ, both of which relate to being adopted into God’s family. In this way there is a close association between election and being beloved, but the connotations of the terms are not synonymous.
Furthermore, various usages of ἀγαπητός in the NT militate against deterministic election while suggesting evaluation and/or emotionality (cf. 2 Pet 3:17; Jude 20–21).\(^{243}\)

This range of meaning of ἀγαπητός, especially its often evaluative and emotive connotations, is further illuminated by a consideration of the Hebrew terms that it translates in the LXX. For instance, out of 17 instances ἀγαπητός translates הַיָּ孳 6 times, always in reference to one’s offspring and thus connoting that which is uniquely and specially treasured with the significant emotional attachment that belongs to the parental bond and affection.\(^{244}\) This sense of emotional attachment to a precious and dear one is also present when ἀγαπητός once renders הַיָּ孳 in the emotionally charged description of God’s affection for, and delight in, his people as his “dear son [ למען]” and “delightful child” for whom his heart yearns (Jer 38:20 [ET 31:20]). A strong sense of endearment is likewise apparent in the 5 instances where ἀγαπητός translates הַיָּ孳,

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\(^{243}\) For example, those who are referred to as ἀγαπητός are often exhorted towards the manifestation of proper Christian behavior, especially holiness (cf. Eph 5:1, 3; 2 Cor 7:1; Jude 10). In many such exhortations it is clear that the ἀγαπητός could fall (see especially 2 Pet 3:17; Jude 20–21; cf. Phil 2:12; 4:1; 1 Pet 2:11; 2 Pet 3:1, 8, 14; 1 John 2:7; 4:7, 11; 3 John 1:11; Jude 1:3, 17). As such, “beloved” is certainly not a unilaterally constant designation (cf. 1 John 3:21).

\(^{244}\) Three of these instances refer to Abraham’s beloved (but not only) son Isaac (Gen 22:2, 12, 16). The other three instances evoke the emotion of sorrow that will be felt in a time of judgment akin to that felt in mourning for one’s הַיָּ孳, only child (Amos 8:10; Zech 12:10; Jer 6:26). הַיָּ孳 itself appears 12 times in the OT, 6 of which are rendered by ἀγαπητός, 1 by the present passive participle of ἀγαπάω, 4 by μονογενής, and once by μονοτρόπους. Eight of the instances of הַיָּ孳 refer to one’s offspring while the other four refer to one’s own life and to the “lonely,” there translated by μονογενής three times and μονοτρόπους once. Because of this association between ἀγαπητός and הַיָּ孳 one frequently finds the equating, or nearly equating, of “beloved” and “only.” So C. H. Turner who argued that ὁ γιώς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός is rightly translated “only son.” “ho huios mou ho agapetos,” *JTS* 27 (1926): 129. Many others have agreed, at least to some extent, with this conclusion. See Louw and Nida, L&N 1:293; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 730; William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 58; John Nolland, *Luke 1:1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Dallas: Word, 2002), 158, 164. Cf. Günther and Link, *NIDNTT* 2:539. However, the meaning of “only” child for ἀγαπητός is “highly unlikely.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 486. As seen above, הַיָּ孳 itself does not always refer to an only child or even a child at all. Isaac was not Abraham’s “only” child, Ishmael was his older brother. Likewise μονογενής does not necessarily refer to one’s only child, or offspring at all, in the LXX or the OT. The terms, rather, denote that which is specially treasured in some special fashion, one that is favored. As such, it is a mistake to identify ἀγαπητός with only child, its connotation is of affectionate love for one specially favored and dear. Indeed there is a significant association between μονογενής and ἀγαπητός, which appears in the LXX and NT and appears often in the church fathers, but the association has μονογενής taking on the connotation of special and treasured in order to overlap with the meaning of dear and beloved proper to ἀγαπητός.
“beloved.” Finally, ἀγαπητός once translates the piel participle of פם (Zech 13:6) and once פם, “beloved” (Isa 5:1). In all this, the term clearly indicates affection in the LXX and often (if not always) does so in the NT as well.

The Meaning of the εὐδοκέω Word Group

The εὐδοκέω word group also overlaps with the categories of election and evaluative love. The word group generally denotes desire, pleasure, delight, satisfaction, approval, preference, and/or enjoyment of an object or course of action. The group often connotes evaluation such that the object of preference or desire is considered to be good, something that might bring pleasure, satisfaction, or benefit and/or is worthy of selection. Importantly, neither the verb nor

245 Four of these instances refer to divine love toward his “beloved” and in the fifth the reference is to a song of love. In one other instance, the LXX translators apparently mistook נין זרי נין from the verb פם and translated it by ἀγαπητός (Ps 67:13). פם itself appears only 9 times in 8 verses of the OT. The other four instances not translated by ἀγαπητός are all used of God’s love and rendered by the perfect passive participle of ἀγαπάω. It has been suggested that the “originally distinct meanings of פם and פם became conflated” in the LXX, “perhaps due to textual variants in the MSS” or “misreadings” or “idiomatic interpretation.” M. Barth, Ephesians 1–3, 82.

246 In two other instances ἀγαπητός appears in the LXX without Hebrew equivalent. It also appears 8 times in 8 verses in the LXX Apocrypha. Cf. the use of ἀγαπητός instead of μορφογενής in Judg (A) 11:34. ἀγαπητός never translates פם in the LXX as it appears to do in the likely allusion to Isa 42:1 in Matt 12:18.

247 Strongly emotive affection is evident with regard to Jesus in Matt 12:18 where Jesus is the “beloved” in whom God’s “soul is well-pleased.” Elsewhere, in human usage emotional affection is likewise explicit. See 1 Thess 2:7, 8. The affective connotation is also apparent in classical Greek. Guelich, Mark 1–8:26, 34.

248 See Spicq, TLNT 2:99; H. Bietenhard, “εὐδοκέω,” NIDNTT 2:817; F. W. Danker et al., eds., “εὐδοκέω,” BDAG, 404; J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., “εὐδοκέω,” L&N 1:289, 361. In classical Greek the term also “means to be well-pleased or content, to consent, to approve.” Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:817. Cf. Spicq, TLNT 2:99. At Qumran the term is primarily one of election, which is not surprising regarding the election theology of that community. However, even there some evaluative usages appear (cf. 1 QS 4.1).

249 See Danker et al., BDAG, 404; idem, “εὐδοκέω,” BDAG, 289, 361; idem, “εὐδοκία,” BDAG, 404. Cf. also Gottlob Schrenk, “εὐδοκία, εὐδοκία,” TDNT 2:741. Thus, εὐδοκία may refer to “that which is desired on the basis of its appearing to be beneficial—‘desire, what is wished for.’” Danker et al., BDAG, 289. The etymology is uncertain; the group may derive from “the hypothetical eudokos, formed from eu, good, and dechmat, to accept.” See Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:817. This would imply evaluation as the usage of the term also suggests. Schrenk, however, thinks that it is “developed from the impersonal εὐ δοκέω τινι πι.” TDNT 2:738. The noun “εὐδοκία is almost completely restricted to Jewish and Christian literature.” Ibid., 742. Cf. Spicq, TLNT 2:103.
the noun refers to arbitrary decision or election. Rather, as one might expect, there is a connection between that in which one takes pleasure and that which one desires, wants, wishes for, and thus wills.

The εὐδοκεῖω word group appears frequently with human and divine agency. With human agency, the word group may refer to: being “pleased” to do something, the evaluative preference of something desirable, or taking pleasure in, or enjoying, doing something (cf. 2 Thess 2:12). With divine agency the word group often refers to that which God is pleased to do, often in reference to the plan of salvation, and also frequently in reference to personal objects of God’s evaluative and affective pleasure or displeasure. The evaluative connotation of the

The verb εὐδοκεῖω appears 21 times in 21 verses and the noun εὐδοκία appears 9 times in 9 verses.

Of the verb, see Rom 15:26, 27; 1 Thess 2:8; 2 Thess 2:12. Likewise, the noun εὐδοκία is used to refer to one’s heartfelt desire (Rom 10:1; cf. 2 Thess 1:11) or good will as motivation to action (Phil 1:15). Rom 10:1 is descriptive of the combination of strong emotion and will in describing Paul’s “heart’s desire” (εὐδοκία τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας) or “what I wish for with all my heart.” εὐδοκέω, 289. Cf. Spicq, TLNT 2:106. 2 Thess 1:11 is here taken as referring to human desire but the genitive may refer to the divine good pleasure. Cf. Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:819–20; Schrenk, TDNT 2:746.

Elsewhere the verb connotes evaluative preference of something more desirable such as Paul’s preference to be with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8; cf. 1 Thess 3:1; 2 Cor 12:10).

Of the verb see Luke 12:32; 1 Cor 1:21; Gal 1:15; Col 1:19. The noun likewise is used in reference to God’s good will or pleasure in the plan of salvation (Matt 11:26; Luke 10:21; Eph 1:5, 9; Phil 2:13).

Thus, Jesus himself is often the worthy object of divine affection and pleasure, the “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) in whom the Father is “well-pleased” (Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 2 Pet 1:17). Guelich correctly points out that this collocation with ἀγαπητός “underscores the primary motif of affection, delight and pleasure inherent in εὐδοκεῖν.” Mark 1–8:26, 34. Similarly, Spicq emphasizes the “affective meaning” such that the “Father’s ‘pleasure’ is the joy of the love that he bears for the Son” and as such “εὐδοκεῖ... exegete[s] the divine agapē.” TLNT 2:102. This positive, affectionate evaluation is not unconditional but may be forfeited for “if He shrinks back, My soul [ψυχή] has no pleasure [εὐδοκεῖα] in Him” (Heb 10:38; cf. Hab 2:4). That this is emotive is clear by the idiomatic use of “soul” or “inner person,” which, by way of the Hebrew idiom, refers to the seat of emotions. Likewise, divine emotionality is evident in this way in Matt 12:18. Consider also the idiomatic usage of the soul, of human agency, in Sir 18:31.

Thus “God was not well-pleased” (εὐδοκεῖω) with most of those who came out of the Exodus (1 Cor 10:5) and took no pleasure (εὐδοκεῖω) in sacrifices which he did not desire (θέλεια) (Heb 10:6, 8). Even those who elsewhere stress the divine will must here speak in terms of evaluation. For example, S. Légasse comments on this verse that “because of their own sin” the “mass of Israelites ... did not obtain what God had provided, and only a minority came into the delight of the divine plan.” εὐδοκεῖω, EDNT 2:75.
The primary dispute with regard to the meaning of the εὐδοκέω word group is whether the term is one of will or evaluation. Some scholars have considered the group with divine usage to refer to God’s eternal, unilateral, and efficacious decree, especially those instances relative to the plan of salvation. However, the question is not whether the εὐδοκέω word group is connected to will; it clearly is, as is evidenced by its close association with the theme and semantics of divine volition and election. Rather, the question is with regard to the nature of the association. There finally, in a difficult-to-interpret verse, the angelic proclamation of Christ’s birth may be translated “peace among men with whom He is pleased” (Luke 2:14) but some may translate “good will toward men.” The former would be contingent and evaluative while the latter could be a general, non-evaluative, arbitrary disposition/will. There is a great deal of dispute about the meaning of this phraseology. See the discussion of this verse in the discussion of the canonical data below.

256 The verb εὐδοκέω appears 38 times in 37 verses in the LXX OT (many more times in the OT Apocrypha) most often translating τὰς (23 times in 22 verses) often of delight, enjoyment. For instance, it refers to God’s lack of delight (θέλω) and pleasure (εὐδοκέω) in a horse’s strength and the legs of a man, respectively. Rather, God “favors [εὐδοκέω] those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness” (Ps 146:10–11; cf. 50:18; 149:4). See also Lev 26:34; Eccl 9:7; Jer 14:10. Beyond its translation by εὐδοκέω in the LXX it is rendered by προσδέχομαι, “accept,” 13 times in 12 verses and by δέχομαι in 5 verses all in the sense of accepting or, on the other hand, not being pleased with rituals/offerings. It is also rendered 5 times by δέκτος in the sense of acceptance, favor. Numerous other terms render it once. εὐδοκέω also translates the related verb γὰρ in 3 instances, all in reference to divine delight (2 Sam 22:20; Ps 50:21; Mal 2:17). It also translates παρέχομαι, to bow down, twice (Gen 24:26, 48) and a number of other terms once, notably including παρέχω, desire, once (Ps 67:17). The noun εὐδοκία appears 10 times in 10 verses in the LXX OT and most often translates γὰρ (7 times). These are all in the Psalms (5:13; 18:15; 50:20; 68:14; 88:18; 105:4; 144:16) often in the sense of “favor” or that which is “acceptable” (Pss 5:13 and 18:15 respectively). Cf. also its translation of παρέχει in Song 6:4. It appears many more times in the OT Apocrypha, 16 times in Sirach alone where it has the connotation of one’s will in the sense of that which is pleasing. Cf. Spicq, TLNT 2:104. Thus, “what pleases the Lord is faithfulness and mercy” or “turning away from evil” (Sir 1:26; 35:16; cf. 32:14; 33:13; 39:18; 41:4) as opposed to the “gifts of wicked men,” which are not “acceptable” to him (Sir 35:3). Beyond its translation by εὐδοκία in the LXX, γὰρ is rendered by δέκτος, acceptable, favorable, in 23 verses; ἀρέστος, pleasing, in 3; and προσδεκτός, acceptable, satisfactory, and θέλητας, will, in 2 instances; and a few others once, notably, ἐπιθυμεῖ in Gen 49:6.


258 See the brief discussion of the collocation of the εὐδοκέω word group with the θέλω word group.
is strong volition involved in many usages but, likewise, clear evaluation and emotion appears. In this way, the dispute appears to be based on something of a false dichotomy between will, emotion, and evaluation. The three are depicted in the use of this term (and elsewhere) as closely interrelated, such that what one wills is, in fact, that which is evaluated as preferable and/or brings one pleasure. The divine will is thus itself in accord with that which pleases God, often explicitly with a view toward appraisal of objective reality. Thus, the explicitly evaluative instances of divine εὐδοκέω (cf. Heb 10:38; 1 Cor 10:5) do not conflict with, but complement the instances where the divine desire and will seem to be highlighted. Accordingly, those instances that speak of God’s purpose in the plan of salvation may simply mean that God is pleased to work out the plan of salvation because of his love for his creatures. As such, the evidence from NT and LXX usage suggests that the term includes the connotation of evaluative preference such that the element of volitional choice is bound up with the direction toward something that is viewed as worthy or bringing satisfaction or pleasure.

in the brief word study of the latter earlier in this chapter. Interestingly, the group never collocates in a single verse with the βολομαι or ἐκλέγομαι word groups and rarely with the καλέω word group, with little significance (2 Thess 1:11; cf. Gal 1:15–16). Importantly, as has been seen above, the major terms of election themselves are not clearly descriptive of determinism. Consider, for example, the meaning of evaluative “desire” and “delight” by way of θέλω and εὐδοκέω in Heb 10:8.

259 For example, Schrenk notes the connection of the term to the theme of election but also notes that of all such terms “εὐδοκεῖν brings out most strongly the emotional side of the love of Him who elects.” TDNT 2:740–41.

260 One selects some thing or course of action because it is “preferred as better” as is explicit in the phrase εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον in 2 Cor 5:8. Ibid., 741. So, also “εὐδοκεῖν,” 361. Thus, the term “implies strong volition, as well as taking pleasure in.” Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 73.

261 In other words, the assertion of determinism does not fit the usage as found in instances such as Heb 10:38 but the usages that appear to strongly assert divine volition are in accord with a view that sees the will, evaluation, and emotion as complementary.

262 Thus, M. Barth states, “Far from any idea of arbitrariness, [εὐδοκέω] has warm and personal connotations. When God’s good pleasure is mentioned, his willingness and joy in doing good are indicated. The happiness that accompanies a radiant good will is implied.” Ephesians 1–3, 81. Similarly, O’Brien affirms that “pleasure . . . signifies not simply the purpose of God but also the delight that he takes in his plans.” Colossians-Philemon, 103.
Other Significant Terms of Evaluative Pleasure

The ἀρέσκω word group refers to that which is pleasing or acceptable.\(^{263}\) The verb ἀρέσκω\(^{264}\) and the noun ἀρεστός\(^{265}\) are often used with both human and divine agency, consistently in reference to grounded, evaluative pleasure.\(^{266}\) εὐαρεστος\(^{267}\) and εὐαρεστεῖον\(^{268}\) likewise refer to that which is well-pleasing, acceptable, even delightful, almost always of pleasure and/or acceptability in the sight of God or Christ, often of an explicitly evaluative nature.\(^{269}\)


\(^{264}\) The verb ἀρέσκω appears 17 times in 16 verses, consistently referring to grounded, evaluative pleasure. For appearances referring to human pleasure see Matt 14:6; Mark 6:22; Acts 6:4–5; Rom 15:1–3; 1 Cor 7:33–34; 10:33; Gal 1:10; 2 Tim 2:4. For instances of divine pleasure see Rom 8:8; 1 Cor 7:32; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:4, 15; 4:1; possibly also Rom 15:3; 2 Tim 2:4. The related term ἀνθρωποπάρεσκος refers to “men pleasers” (Eph 6:6; Col 3:22). In the LXX, ἀρέσκω most often translates χαίρει (21 times), χαίρε, right (6 times), and a number of others 3 times or less.

\(^{265}\) The noun ἀρεστός appears 4 times in 4 verses with both human (Acts 6:2; 12:3) and divine agency (John 8:29; 1 John 3:22). Acts 12:3 may also refer to that which is desirable from a divine perspective. So Bietenhard, \emph{NIDNTT} 2:816. In the LXX it often refers to divine evaluation and translates χαίρε, right (7 times), χαίρετε (3 times), χαίρε (2 times), and others 3 times or less. Often, the Hebrew includes the idiom “in the eyes of,” a clear pointer to explicit appraisal and evaluation. Cf. ibid., 815.

\(^{266}\) In many cases the verb clearly refers to evaluative divine pleasure (cf. 1 Thess 4:1; 1 John 3:22). The related noun ἀρεσκεῖα appears only once in the NT, also of divine pleasure in human conduct (Col 1:10). It thus generally refers to pleasure or the “desire to please.” Bietenhard, \emph{NIDNTT} 2:814. Cf. Prov 31:30. Its evaluative sense is also present in classical Greek where it “denotes the pleasure which men or the gods derive from something.” Bietenhard, \emph{NIDNTT} 2:815. Cf. Malherbe, \emph{The Letters}, 220.

\(^{267}\) The adjective εὐαρεστός appears 9 times in 9 verses, all but one of which refers to that which is pleasing and/or acceptable to God. Humans might be exhorted to be “acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1–2; 14:18) or aspire to please him (2 Cor 5:9; cf. Eph 5:10; Heb 13:21) or are, in fact, “well-pleasing to God” (Phil 4:18; cf. Col 3:20). The one exception that refers to human agency is Titus 2:9. The evaluative sense is also explicit outside the NT as there it refers to “the experience of being pleased because of what another does.” F. W. Danker et al., eds., “εὐαρεστος, εὐαρεστής, εὐαρεστος,” BDAG, 403. Cf. Foerster, \emph{TDNT} 1:456; Bietenhard, \emph{NIDNTT} 2:814. It appears in the LXX only in Wis 4:10; 9:10, both of pleasing God.

\(^{268}\) The verb εὐαρεστεῖον appears only 3 times in the NT, all with reference to pleasing God (Heb 11:5; 6; 13:16).

\(^{269}\) See Foerster, \emph{TDNT} 1:456–57; Bietenhard, \emph{NIDNTT} 2:814–15; Danker et al., BDAG, 403. In the LXX, the verb often translates προσευχόμενος in the sense of walking with God (Gen 5:22, 24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15; Pss 25:3; 34:14; 55:14; 114:9; cf. Sir 44:16). Interestingly, the only instance where the ἀγαπάω word group collocates with the ἄρεσκο word group is in the LXX Apocrypha where it is said of Enoch: “There was one who pleased [εὐαρεστός] God and was loved [ἀγαπάω] by him” (Wis 4:10). Cf. Heb 11:5.
terminology is closely akin to the δέκτος and εὐδοκέω word groups in the sense of evaluative pleasure and/or acceptance. There is also significant overlap with the δόκιμος word group, which points to the evaluative nature of both, since the δόκιμος word group generally refers to that which comes out of examination, inspection, and is found pleasing, acceptable, approved. Finally, there is some overlap with the will of God. Specifically, collocations further demonstrate that the divine will itself refers to that which is pleasing to God. In all, the entire ἄρέσκω word group is frequently used in ways that demonstrate the fact of evaluative divine pleasure.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in Gospels-Acts

In this corpus, the evaluative aspect of divine love is highlighted in God’s evaluative pleasure and affection for Jesus in the divine declarations at Jesus’ baptism and the Transfiguration where Jesus is referred to as the “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) Son in whom the Father is “well-pleased” (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; cf. Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). The various

270 See Louw and Nida, L&N 1:299. The association is not due to collocation but with regard to meaning and usage. Of these groups there are no theologically significant collocations.

271 δόκιμος basically refers to that which has been tested and found worthy, reliable. See Walter Grundmann, “δόκιμος, ἀδόκιμος, δοκιμή, δοκίμων, δοκιμᾶς, ἀποδοκιμάζω, δοκιμασία,” TDNT 2: 255–60. The two word groups overlap in 4 instances, all with theological significance (Rom 12:2; 14:18; Eph 5:10; 1 Thess 2:4). See the further discussion of these verses below.

272 Thus, Heb 13:21 refers to God’s “equipping you in every good thing to do His will [θέλημα], working in us that which is pleasing [εὐάρεστος] in His sight.” Likewise, Paul exhorts Christians to “prove what the will [θέλημα] of God is, that which is good and acceptable [εὐάρεστος] and perfect” (Rom 12:2; cf. Eph 6:6). Not surprisingly, that which is good is also often referred to as pleasing (Rom 12:2; cf. Rom 15:2; Col 1:10; Heb 13:21).

273 While there is some variance between these declarations, their striking similarity points toward a common understanding of the nature of Christ’s incarnate status before the Father. In a number of passages, Jesus is called the “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) Son in whom the Father is “well-pleased” with minor variances (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Two other verses have more significant variations, “This is My beloved [ἀγαπητός] Son, listen to Him!” (Mark 9:7). “This is My Son, My Chosen [ἐλεγμονή] One; listen to Him!” (Luke 9:35). In Luke 9 the TR has ἄγαπητός instead of ἐλεγμονή but this is widely considered to be scribal smoothing of the variant. The origin of the variance between these synoptic statements is impossible to determine with certainty. Moreover, the nature of the interdependence between these statements as well as their usage of the OT is widely disputed. The most commonly suggested OT backgrounds include Gen 22:2; 12, 16; Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1; cf. Exod 4:22–23; Isa 41:8; 44:2. For a detailed summary of the positions often taken on this point see Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 341–43.
statements highlight the strong association between ἐγερπτός, εὐδοκέω, and (to a lesser extent) ἐκλέγομαι. Specifically, the parallel between Christ’s status as “beloved” (ἐγερπτός) and the one in whom the Father is “well-pleased” (εὐδοκέω) points toward the fact that Jesus is the worthy object of the Father’s loving affection and evaluative pleasure. The potentially evaluative connotation of election language is further apparent in the substitution of “chosen one” (ἐκλέγομαι) in place of “beloved” in Luke 9:35. 274 This association is emphatically presented in the similar statement of Matt 12:18: “Behold, My Servant [παιδός] whom I have chosen [αἰρέτιζω]; My beloved [ἐγερπτός] in whom My soul is well-pleased [εὐδοκέω]” (Matt 12:18; cf. Isa 42:1). 276 On the surface, it is possible to view these statements from the standpoint of an arbitrary divine decree, such that all such related concepts are seen as descriptions of the unilateral divine will. However, evidence suggests that the terms in these passages convey evaluation rather than arbitrary, deterministic election. First, this is suggested by what has been seen already in this chapter with regard to the often evaluative connotations of election language. Second, Jesus is explicitly referred to as bringing pleasure to God elsewhere. Third, and perhaps most striking, the wider theological context requires that this language is evaluative since Christ is evaluatively beloved.


Specifically, Jesus is not arbitrarily elected as if he is selected out of a number of potential christs or sons of God. He is the “beloved” Son, the “chosen,” not by selection but by his very nature. Christ is both ontologically and behaviorally beloved and pleasing; he always does the things that are “pleasing” (ἀποστάσις) to the Father (John 8:29; cf. Matt 27:43; Heb 10:38). Accordingly, the NT data show that the status of Jesus declared by the Father in these instances is a genuine, accurate, appraisal of him. He is the “choice” (best) one, the worthy; none other could be chosen in his place as the incarnate Messiah. He is well-pleasing, for in all his actions he elicits delight; he is “beloved,” that is, the Father loves the Son and in such a way that recognizes that the Son is worthy to be loved (cf. John 1:1; Rev 5:2, 4, 9, 12). Such “election” is neither arbitrary nor spontaneous but evaluative; a descriptive rather than prescriptive election.

In the Gospels, language of divine pleasure also appears closely associated with the divine will in the sense that God’s will is toward that which pleases him. Thus, it is the “Father’s

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277 On the other hand, if Christ’s status as God’s beloved, well-pleasing, and elect one is taken to derive from arbitrary and non-evaluative election, it calls into question Christ’s intrinsic status as pre-existent, altogether worthy, and very God and may leave the door open for some form of adoptionism. However, adoptionism of the type that sees Christ elevated to sonship at his baptism (or at any other point) is itself ruled out in the Gospels as Jesus’ sonship is previously affirmed in Matt 2:15; Luke 1:32–35; 2:49; cf. John 1:1–3, etc. Cf. Hagner, Matthew 1–13, 59; Blomberg, Matthew, 82. France correctly sees the declarations of “God’s pleasure” in “obedience” and also “more fundamentally” Jesus’ “own relationship with God.” The Gospel of Matthew, 122–23; cf. ibid., 82. Similarly, Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 158; Hagner, Matthew 1–13, 59. Some, however, see the emphasis on God’s past evaluative choice (so W. L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, 57–58, 320; Joel Marcus, Mark 1–8 [AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 163), while others view the statement as one of present, evaluative approval. See discussion in Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 31. That the approval refers to Jesus’s obedience on earth would complement the following narrative of the wilderness testing in Matthew and Mark.


good pleasure” (εὐδοκέω) to bestow the kingdom (Luke 12:32). In one striking instance, Jesus refers to that which was “well-pleasing [εὐδοκία] in [the Father’s] sight in close proximity to God’s hiding things from the wise and revealing them to infants [νηπιός]” (Matt 11:25–26; cf. Luke 10:21). While one might wonder why God would “hide” divine revelation from anyone it should be remembered that it is God’s modus operandi to eventually give people over to their own desires (cf. Rom 1:24, 26, 28). Here, the νηπιός, the “infant” or “simple-minded,” likely refers to that class of people who have not spurned, but received, God’s gracious revelation instead of their own “wisdom.” That is, God reveals these things to those who will be receptive, not the haughty who do not wish to receive God’s light, preferring their own darkness (cf. John 7:17). Moreover, the wider context of this passage suggests that this statement of Jesus does not refer to the exercise of a unilateral divine will in the sense of deterministic predestination. For example, in the immediate context of Matt 11, Jesus denounces the cities for not repenting, which makes little sense if they could not have repented (cf. Matt 11:20–24, 28).

280 Thus, “God’s pleasure (or will) is manifest in his gift of the kingdom.” J. B. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 495.


282 Thus, France correctly notes that Matt 11:25–26 does not mean that God “pre-selected individuals to be placed in each category; vv. 20–24 have already made it clear that people have a responsibility and a choice as to whether or not they receive his revelation. It is also important to note that this declaration is followed by Jesus’ open invitation to any who are in need (not only the ‘chosen’) to ‘come to me’ (v. 28).” The Gospel of Matthew, 445. Contra those who see this as “the sovereign divine decree.” So Schrenk, TDNT 2:747; R. Mahoney, “εὐδοκία,” EDNT 2:76. Cf. Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:819. Compare the view of Morris who thinks that the “note of predestination here cannot be missed but is to be held in tension with the culpability of those who refuse to believe (cf. vv 20–24).” Leon Morris, The Gospel according to Matthew (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 319. Similarly, Hagner, Matthew 1–13, 318; Blomberg, Matthew, 192–93. Cf. Nolland, Luke 9:21–18:34, 572–73.
It thus seems that the divine pleasure here is not directed specifically toward the hiding of such things from the wise in and of itself but with regard to the wider plan of salvation within which God ultimately gives those who reject him over to their own desires but delights to bestow his blessings on those who respond appropriately to him.  

Moreover, God’s evaluative delight in humans is also conveyed in the Gospels. Thus, if anyone follows Jesus, “the Father will honor [τιμάω] him” (John 12:26). Elsewhere, Moses is said to have been “lovely in the sight of God” (ἀστέριος τῷ θεῷ) (Acts 7:20). This sense of evaluative acceptance also appears when it is said, “In every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome [δεκτός] to Him” (Acts 10:35). Further, Jesus refers to “those who are considered worthy [καταξιόω] to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead” (Luke 20:35; cf. Acts 5:41; 2 Thess 1:5). On the other hand, the one who loves (φιλεῖ) parents or children more than Christ is not “worthy” (ἀξιός) of him (Matt 10:37; cf. 38). Thus it appears that although God does not owe human beings anything (cf. Luke 17:9), he freely bestows rewards evaluatively and not altogether arbitrarily (cf. Acts 13:46). He freely wills to resurrect those who respond to God and are, thus, accounted worthy (through Christ’s mediation).

283 “It is comforting to note that throughout the New Testament the good pleasure or delight of the Father, when positively expressed, everywhere else has as its object Christ and/or the work of salvation in connection with him. It seems logical, therefore, to believe that also here (in Matt. 11:26 and in its parallel Luke 10:21) the positive thought of revealing to babes the things pertaining to salvation is uppermost in Christ’s mind when he mentions the Father’s good pleasure.” Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, 500. So Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, 434; Hans Conzelmann, “συνίημι, σύνεσι, συνε, συνε ο,,” TDNT 7:893. In the Lucan parallel Christ himself “rejoiced greatly” just before he makes the declaration and in the previous verse had counseled his hearers to “rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.” As such, his joy seems to be grounded in the positive divine revelation (Luke 10:20–21). It is therefore likely that God’s “pleasure” is intended in reference to his positive action in salvation since God does not delight in punishment. Cf. Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11.

284 Notice, this word generally means “to estimate, fix the value” and is thus an evaluative term.

285 This is almost surely a divine passive; God is the agent of evaluation. Stein, Luke, 502; Fitzmyer, Luke X–XXIV, 1305.
Another potential instance of divine, evaluative pleasure of humans is found in Luke 2:14 where God is said to have “men with whom He is pleased” upon whom peace is wished. Some have seen this as a reference to divine election, in the sense that God has unilaterally elected some to receive peace. However, grammatically εὐδοκίας appears to be used here to express divine delight. It is likely, then, that those of his good pleasure correspond to those who respond appropriately to him (cf. Luke 1:50). As such, the ἄνθρωπος εὐδοκίας may very well correspond to “elect” insofar as that group is understood as those who respond to the divine call (cf. Matt 20:16; 22:14).

286 Much of the meaning hinges upon a matter of textual criticism. The TR has the nominative εὐδοκία but other texts have the genitive εὐδοκίας. The latter is the preferred reading amongst textual critics as the “lectio difficilior” and is thus the reading adopted here. Cf. Schrenk, TDNT 2:747–50; Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 133.

287 Schrenk views this as “the sovereign good-pleasure of God in the sense of His decree” toward his “elect” with “no place for reflection on the will of man.” TDNT 2:750. Schrenk’s view is based on his dogmatic assumption that εὐδοκία refers to God’s unilateral decree. Similarly, see Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:819. In this view, much is made of the parallel “sons of good pleasure” from Qumran (1 QH 4:32–33; 11:9) on the basis of which ἄνθρωπος εὐδοκίας is believed to reflect “a semitechnical Semitic expression referring to God’s people and having overtones of election.” Nolland, Luke 1:1–9:20, 109. So, also, Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 220. However, it is, first, not certain that this designation itself does not refer to those who are deserving of good pleasure and, second, one need not assume that Luke used the phraseology in the same way as the Qumran community, considering the divergences in their wider theological outlook. Mahoney recognizes the possibility that it refers to human good will but favors that it “points to God’s free decision.” EDNT 2:76.


Elsewhere, the shepherd (representative of Christ) “rejoices” (χαίρει) even more over the one that is found than the 99 sheep that remained (Matt 18:13; cf. Ezek 34:10–11, 13).\(^{290}\) In the Lucan parallel, the joy at this event corresponds to joy (χαίρει) in heaven (a likely circumlocution for divine joy) where there is “more joy” over one repentant sinner than over 99 righteous who need no repentance (Luke 15:7; cf. 5–6).\(^{291}\) Likewise, just as the woman rejoices with (συγχαίρει) her friends upon finding her lost coin so there is “joy [χαίρει] in the presence of the angels of God” (another likely circumlocution for divine joy) over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10; cf. 24).\(^{292}\) That God values humans is likewise explicit in Jesus’ reference to the small value of two sparrows whom God still cares for, conveying that God cares much more for humans who are “more valuable [διαφέροι] than many sparrows” (Matt 10:31; cf. 12:12; Luke 12:6–7).\(^{294}\) Here, divine evaluation is differentiated based on its object, demonstrating that God values human

\(^{290}\) Nolland comments that “more than” here displays profound “pathos” and refers to the “specific value of the particular sheep” as lost but now found. *The Gospel of Matthew*, 743. There is no hint here, however, that the sheep is loved more because it is “the biggest” as in the *Gospel of Thomas*, 107. Rather, “the joy at the restoration of one who had strayed points to the importance of each sheep in the shepherd’s eye.” Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 528.


\(^{293}\) The term διαφέρω means to be superior or worth more. Cf. Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 127. Here, there is “intimacy and endearment.” Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 286. Blomberg sees this as reassurance to the disciples “of God’s fatherly love” through the contrast between “their great worth with the comparatively insignificant value of sparrows.” *Matthew*, 178.

\(^{294}\) Likewise, not one sparrow is “forgotten before God” (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι) (Luke 12:6). Yet humans are “more valuable” (διαφέρω) than many sparrows (Luke 12:7; cf. 12:24). With regard to God’s “care” for the sparrows see Dorothy J. Weaver’s compelling interpretation that in these verses the focus is not on God’s will but on “the presence of God, which supports and sustains the disciples throughout their sufferings.” “Matthew’s Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis,” *JSNTSup* 38 (1990): 206–7. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 286. In my view, the point of this object lesson is not so much about the nature of providence as about the extent of divine concern. This is clearly the case in the Lucan parallel.
beings and is concerned for them in a very specific manner. In all these, divine delight is response to events and thus affected and evaluative.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in the Pauline Writings

As in the Gospels, reference is often made in this corpus to God’s pleasure in close association with his will, often in relation to the plan of salvation. As has been argued above, this may be understood in the sense that God wills or desires that which brings him pleasure rather than assuming that the divine will is unilaterally efficacious but inclusive of evaluation and/or divine pleasure. The evaluative aspect of divine love is further explicit in the striking statement of evaluative divine love found in 2 Cor 9:7: “God loves [ἀγαπάω] a cheerful giver.” This points to an evaluative divine love that goes beyond the sense in which God loves the world generally (cf. John 3:16). Throughout this corpus, the status of “beloved” also points toward divine

295 However, divine concern does not guarantee temporal safety just as sparrows still fall to the ground. Cf. J. B. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 483.

296 Thus, it was “the Father’s good pleasure [εὐδοκεῖον] for all the fullness to dwell in Him” (Col 1:19). God is most likely the intended agent of εὐδοκεῖον though it is grammatically possible to take Christ or the “fullness” as the subject. For a discussion of these possibilities, see Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, 72–73; Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, Colossians (AB 34B; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 210–12; Peter T. O’Brien, Colossians-Philemon (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 2002), 51–53. Thus, “God was pleased to take human form in Jesus” and “God the Father delighted in the fact that Jesus” was fully God. Richard R. Melick, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (NAC 32; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 224. Similarly, God “was pleased” (εὐδοκέω) to reveal His son (Gal 1:15–16) and is “well-pleased” (εὐδοκέω) to save through the gospel (1 Cor 1:21; cf. 1:27). Moreover, Paul speaks of the divine plan (προορίζω) to adopt humans “as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention [εὐδοκία] of His will [θέλημα]” (Eph 1:5). Likewise, “He made known to us the mystery [θέλημα] of His will, according to His kind intention [εὐδοκία] which He purposed [προορίζω] in Him” (Eph 1:9; cf. Phil 2:13). O’Brien correctly comments that the reference here is not merely to “purpose” but to God’s “delight” in his plans. The Letter to the Ephesians, 104. However, many scholars interpret such texts deterministically and assert that the meaning of the εὐδοκέω word group. Cf. Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:819; Schrenk, TDNT 2:747. However, it should be noted that the texts say nothing of the unilateral nature, or otherwise, of the divine intention. Moreover, see the textual evidence referred to above suggesting that the divine will is not unilaterally efficacious, as well as the brief word study of εὐδοκέω, which demonstrates that the term does not refer to a unilaterally, efficacious divine will (cf. 1 Cor 10:5).

297 God “responds lovingly to generosity willed and carried out from the heart. His love is poured out on those who pour out their love on others. Charity is the virtue the Lord loves above all others.” Spicq, Agape, 2:31. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that God loves only the cheerful giver and not others but that God loves the giver in a special way; he delights and approves of that one. Thus, “Paul is affirming that God has a special love for those who are cheerful as they give” and “takes special pleasure in the type of
evaluation. It is frequently applied to human beings and often associated with election (cf. Rom 9:25; 11:28; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13). However, the nature of many of the references to the “beloved” suggests that the category includes evaluation (cf. 1 Thess 1:3–4). For instance, exhortation is frequently directed toward the “beloved” with the expectation of appropriate response and the implication of negative evaluation in its absence. The “beloved” are also frequently referred to in terms of holiness. For instance, the “beloved” (γαπατός) are to cleanse themselves from defilement thus “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1). Further, the implication that the “beloved” include those who have responded in faith is presented in the many references to the “beloved” in terms of having faith (πίστις) (Rom 1:7–8; Phlm 1, 5) or being faithful (πιστος) (1 Cor 4:17; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7; 4:7, 9; 1 Tim 6:2). In all this, the implication is that being “beloved” is not an automatic or unconditional status.

299. Just before referring to “the brethren beloved [γαπάω] by God” and God’s “choice” (ἐκλογή) of them (1 Thess 1:4) Paul spoke of “their work of faith and labor of love [γάπη] and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,” which appears to be an evaluation of them (1 Thess 1:3 cf. 2:4, 8, 10–13).

298. Thus, Paul exhorts the “beloved” to leave vengeance with God (Rom 12:19), “flee from idolatry” (1 Cor 10:14), “be steadfast, immovable” (1 Cor 15:58), “stand firm in the Lord” (Phil 4:1), and exhibit all the characteristics of true love (Col 3:12). It is not always clear whether “beloved” speaks of God’s love for them or Paul’s own love for the recipients of his letter. It may be that a sharp distinction between these two is inappropriate since those beloved by God should also be beloved by Paul as part of the divine family, and thus his “brethren.” Notably, the exhortation in 1 Cor 10:14 comes on the heels of a description of the failure of the initial generation in the wilderness. Thus, the possibility of the forfeiture of election due to divine displeasure is in view (cf. 1 Cor 10:1–6). Evaluation is further apparent when Paul commands, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Eph 5:1). Here, the reference is to “the love his children owe God which answers to and befits his own love.” Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 212. Cf. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, 367; O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, 353. Compare the conditionality of sonship in Luke 6:35–36.

300. Further, they are “called as saints” (Rom 1:7). Likewise, they are the “chosen of God, holy and beloved [γαπατό]” who are nevertheless exhorted to exhibit Christian love (Col 3:12).

301. Bruce states that such statements connote both “affection and commendation.” The Epistles to the Colossians, 43.

302. Indeed, the “beloved” apparently require ministry since Paul’s own work for the “beloved” at
The conditionality with regard to the status of “beloved” is explicit in a somewhat controversial passage that points toward some degree of synergism. Paul writes, “Beloved . . . work [κατεργάζομαι] out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work [ἐνεργεῖ] in you, both to will [θέλω] and to work [ἐνεργεῖ] for His good pleasure [εὐδοκία]” (Phil 2:12–13; cf. 15). First, the divine action of God in willing and working is directed toward his own “good pleasure.”303 As such, the divine will is qualified by “kind intention” not identical to it. While some commentators appear to be uncomfortable with the idea that God acts for his own pleasure’s sake,304 this phrasing points toward God’s intention of delighting in his creatures.305 Some commentators, however, avoid any conception that humans are contributing to their salvation by denying that the verse bears on soteriology, whether by interpreting it in a purely sociological sense,306 or applying it merely to the ethical outworking of salvation.307 However, it

Corinth is for their “upbuilding” (2 Cor 12:19).


304 Some scholars appear to find the idea that God does something “for the sake of his own good pleasure” as “awkward” or even “theologically offensive.” Some therefore contend that ὑπὲρ equals κατὰ or attach ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας to the following sentence. But this is to be rejected since such usage “grammatically . . . has no analogies.” Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 239. So, also O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 288–89. Fee refers to these as “a number of unlikely ploys to get around the ordinary sense of the preposition.” *Paul’s Letter*, 239.


306 This view asserts that the verse is dealing with strictly sociological concerns such that σωματική refers to the “health” or “well-being” of the community. Cf. Michael, *The Epistle of Paul*, 101–2. However, this interpretation is untenable since “out of nearly twenty occurrences of this noun in the Pauline corpus, not one instance requires the translation ‘well-being’; the vast majority require—and all of them admit—the theological sense.” Silva, *Philippians*, 119–20. So, also Melick, *Philippians*, 110; Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 235.
seems much more likely that this text refers explicitly to “human responsibility in [personal]
salvation” within the context of community.\textsuperscript{308} Importantly, this affirmation of the integral nature
of human responsibility need not amount to any suggestion of salvation by works with the
recognition that the divine activity is both prior to, and itself the necessary foundation of, human
action.\textsuperscript{309} If this view is correct, human action is required of the “beloved,” which bears on their
personal salvation while the primacy of divine action is upheld.\textsuperscript{310}

This controversial passage points to questions that underlie the issue with regard to the
status of the “beloved.” That is, are believers beloved because they are elect or vice versa? Are
they beloved because they are holy or vice versa? Are they beloved because they believe or vice
versa? Such questions actually present a false dichotomy. Humans are “beloved” and “elect”

\textsuperscript{307} This perspective views the verses as “ethical” (having to do with “how saved people live out
their salvation”) rather than “soteriological” (having to do with how people are saved). Fee, \textit{Paul’s Letter},

\textsuperscript{308} Silva, \textit{Philippians}, 122. That is, the “engagement of human and divine activity in the total work
of salvation.” Ibid., 120–22; cf. 119. Cf. 2 Pet 1:10; Phil 1:6; 3:7–14. This is supported by the likelihood
that \(\varepsilon\nu\ \upsilon\mu\nu\) does not mean “among you” as in corporate approaches to this verse, but must mean “in you”
as it does with \(\varepsilon\nu\gamma\rho\varepsilon\omega\) in 2 Cor 4:12; cf. Rom 7:5; 1 Cor 12:6; Eph 1:20; Col 1:29. Silva, \textit{Philippians}, 122.
Further, the “motivational” phrase “fear and trembling” is strongly suggestive of true human agency. Cf.
W. Mundle, “\(\phi\nu\beta\),” \textit{NIDNTT} 1:623. On the other hand, see Fee’s seemingly reluctant recognition of this
point. \textit{Paul’s Letter}, 237. As such, “sanctification requires conscious effort and concentration.” Silva,

\textsuperscript{309} Thus, Silva is correct in stressing that human works neither initiate nor contribute to
justification, which flows not from human righteousness but from the divine initiative (cf. Rom 4:5).
Moreover, with regard to salvation, “our activity is possible only because of divine grace.” \textit{Philippians},
122. Yet, at the same time, “because salvation in its entire scope necessarily includes the manifestation of
righteousness in our lives, it follows that our activity is integral to the process of salvation.” Ibid. Cf. Rom
operation here (even if differing on what the goal of the co-operation is) while stressing the overarching
“effective working” of God, which itself enables, supports, or even creates such co-operation. Hawthorne,
103. Many of the commentators above view such works from a compatibilist perspective so that God is
nevertheless the unilaterally efficacious agent behind human action, contrary to the view taken in this
dissertation. Thus, O’Brien emphasizes “the effectiveness of the divine energy” to the exclusion of

\textsuperscript{310} Thus, “our salvation, which we confess to be God’s from beginning to end, is here described as
something that we must bring about.” Silva, \textit{Philippians}, 122. Cf. John Eadie and William Young, \textit{A
Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians} (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1884),
136.
ultimately because of God’s decision to bestow love and choose to adopt those who believe in him. However, the divine initiative is the necessary but not sufficient condition of such statuses. Humans are also expected to respond in love, a response which itself is only possible because of God’s foreconditional, prevenient love.\textsuperscript{311} It is only because of divine grace that humans may be the recipients of the full force of God’s love. Such grace is itself only available through him who is the truly worthy “beloved,” for God freely bestows grace on Christians “in the Beloved” (\(\alpha \gamma \pi \alpha \omega\)) (Eph 1:6). Jesus is depicted as the ultimate object of divine delight, the legitimate “Beloved.”

Since Jesus is the object of divine delight, through Christ humans may also offer acceptable sacrifice, even “fragrant aroma” (cf. Phil 4:18; Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15–16).\textsuperscript{312} Accordingly, Jesus is referred to as “an offering and sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma [\(\dot{o}m\dot{h}n\ e\dot{\omega}d\dot{i}ac\)]” (Eph 5:2).\textsuperscript{313} This hearkens back to God’s delight in the OT, often connected with language of the sacrificial system as pleasing to God.\textsuperscript{314} In these cases, Jesus is the worthy recipient of divine delight as the truly “acceptable sacrifice to God.”\textsuperscript{315} Thus, things sent to Paul

\textsuperscript{311} To say that humans are “beloved” unilaterally because they are elect would require overlooking or sterilizing the force of the exhortations to the beloved and the warning of future evaluative judgment. To say that humans are “beloved” merely due to their response to God would miss the essential divine initiative that makes such response possible.

\textsuperscript{312} Through Christ, Christians are a new priesthood (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:5–6) who may offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5; cf. Heb 13:16). Cf. M. Barth, \textit{Ephesians 4–6}, 559. As Silva puts it, despite the utter, qualitative uniqueness of Jesus’ sacrifice it “does indeed provide a pattern for our behavior.” \textit{Philippians}, 208.

\textsuperscript{313} The phrase \(\dot{o}m\dot{h}n\ e\dot{\omega}d\dot{i}ac\), “fragrant aroma,” is found only here and in Phil 4:18 in the NT. There it refers to gifts sent to Paul, which are “an acceptable sacrifice” and “pleasing to God” (Phil 4:18). Cf. 2 Cor 2:14–15.

\textsuperscript{314} The corresponding OT phrase, \(\pi\nu\nu\ \pi\nu\nu\), soothing aroma, is found some 37 times in the LXX (including twice in the OT Apocrypha). The OT idiom refers to God enjoying the smell of the offering, what M. Barth refers to as a “crude anthropomorphism.” \textit{Ephesians 4–6}, 559. Similarly, John Reumann, \textit{Philippians} (Anchor Yale Bible 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 669. See the discussion of anthropomorphisms and idioms in the methodology section as well as the reality of divine pleasure signified by this language discussed in chapter 4.

for his sustenance are “a fragrant aroma [ὀμήρῳ εὐωδίας], an acceptable [δέκτος] sacrifice, well-pleasing [εὐάρεστος] to God” (Phil 4:18). Similarly, Paul exhorts his hearers, “by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable [εὐάρεστος] to God, which is your spiritual service of worship” (Rom 12:1; cf. 12:2). Further, Paul exhorts Timothy to “be diligent to present [παρίστημι] yourself approved [δόκιμος] to God” (2 Tim 2:15). Again, Paul speaks of the purpose of his function as a minister, which is “so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable [εὐπρόσδεκτος], sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:16;

Ephesians, 355.


317 Notice the same OT imagery of “a fragrant aroma” as that of Christ’s sacrifice in Eph 5:2. Here God is pictured “as literally taking pleasure in the smell of the sacrifices offered by his people.” Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 272. “The picture is that of the ‘aroma’ of the sacrificial fire wafting heavenward—into God’s ‘nostrils,’ as it were. Properly offered, it becomes ‘an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to him.’” Fee, *Paul’s Letter*, 451. Cf. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Amazingly, Paul could “speak of the Philippians’ sacrificial love for him in the same terms that this writer uses for Christ’s sacrifice.” Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 312. Importantly, the symbolism points to “the quality an offering must possess in order for it to be pleasing and acceptable to God (Exod 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9, 13; Ezek 20:41; cf. Eph 5:2).” Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 272. As such, the imagery points “to the immense value of the Philippians’ gifts in the sight of God.” O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 540. On the sacrificial imagery see Michael Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* (SNTSMS 53; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 62–68.


319 To present (παρίστημι) oneself may correspond to the sacrificial metaphor of becoming a pleasing sacrifice to God as well as the legal metaphor of standing before God the judge. It sometimes appears in the sense of “offering oneself as a sacrifice” (Rom 12:1; Col 1:22), sometimes in the sense of “presenting someone before a judge” (Col 1:28; Rom 6:13; 2 Cor 4:14). Towner, *The Letters*, 520. Cf. also Rom 14:10. In either metaphor, divine evaluation and appraisal are explicit; this is the scrutiny of divine judgment.

320 The clause “offering of the Gentiles” may be a subjective genitive, the Gentiles’ offering, or an objective genitive, where Paul functions as a priest offering the Gentiles to God. Cf. Isa 66:20. The majority of commentators favor the latter option, which is also utilized here. See, for example, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 712; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 890; Schreiner, *Romans*, 767. The evaluative meaning, however, does not hinge on the outcome of this decision.

321 εὐπρόσδεκτος carries the basic meaning acceptable and appears four other times in the NT and
Thus, through Christ, humans may be the object(s) of divine delight, even pleasing sacrifices.

God is, accordingly, often spoken of as the examiner, the judge, and humans are likewise often the object(s) or potential object(s) of God’s pleasure. Such approval is not unconditional, for even Paul disciplines himself “so that” he himself “will not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:27; cf. Titus 1:16). Further, “entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings” are to be “made on behalf of all men” for these are “good” and acceptable in the sight of God whose “desire” is that all men be saved (1 Tim 2:1, 3–4; cf. Heb 13:21). Paul further proclaims, “We have been approved by God to be entrusted

appears four other times in the NT of Paul’s service being “accepted of the saints” (Rom 15:31), of the “accepted time,” that is, the day of salvation (2 Cor 6:2; cf. Isa 49:8), of the fact that where “readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” (2 Cor 8:12), and perhaps most significantly in the call to Christians as “a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). It is, of course, related to δικτύο but connotes “an intensive force, ‘fully/very acceptable.’” Harris, The Second Epistle, 585.

Notably, the acceptability of the offering is associated with being “sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” Thus, Moo comments that while “animal sacrifices are replaced by obedient Christians” (cf. Rom 12:1) and “the priest by Christians” (cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9) “to be ‘pleasing to God,’ sacrifices must still be ‘sanctified.’” The Epistle to the Romans, 891. Cf. Ezek 36:22–28.

Thus, the Lord is the one who “commends” (συνιστάμενος) and “it is not he who commends himself that is approved” (Acts 20:18). Apelles is spoken of as “the approved” in Christ (Rom 16:10). Thus, Apelles is “a man of tested excellence.” Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 535. Similarly, Schreiner, Romans, 791. Paul speaks of another’s “proven worth” (Phil 2:22).

Just as δόκιμος refers to having been approved after a test or close examination, its antonym ἀδόκιμος refers to having failed a test and thus being unqualified or, even, worthless. In some instances it refers to the “dross in the silver refining process.” Towner, The Letters, 711. Cf. Prov 25:4; Isa 1:22. Some scholars limit this potential disqualification to the status of apostle rather than to salvation or eschatological reward. So Gundry Volf, Paul and Perseverance, 237. On the contrary, however, Fee points out that in light of the wider context (cf. 1 Cor 10) this parenesis is “that the Corinthians exercise self-control lest they fail to obtain the eschatological prize.” The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 440. Those who argue otherwise usually do so “because of a prior theological commitment, not because of what the text itself says.” Ibid. Garland further comments that though the “implication that one may forfeit one’s salvation may cause theological dyspepsia for some . . . the immortal crown to be worn (9:25) is not a good job-approval rating as an apostle, but salvation. It can be won only if one exercises self-control.” 1 Corinthians, 444. Cf. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary, 316. See also Heb 6:8.

The language here suggests that these prayers may function like OT sacrifices (cf. Lev 1:3). Further, notice the qualification of ἐνώπιος, language of being in the sight of, or coming before one for evaluative judgment. See especially Rom 3:20; cf. 1 Tim 5:4, 21; 6:13; 2 Tim 2:14; 4:1; 14:22; 1 Cor 1:29;
with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing \( \text{\textalpha\textepsilon\textrho\textepsilon\textsigma\textomicron\nu} \) men, but God who examines \( \text{\textdelta\textomicron\kappa\upsilon\mu\alpha\zeta\omicron\omicron\omicron\omega} \) our hearts” (1 Thess 2:4).  

Elsewhere it is likewise evident that humans may indeed bring pleasure, or displeasure, to God (cf. 1 Thess 4:1). Thus, God may be “pleased\[d\] \( \text{\textalpha\textrho\epsilon\sigma\kappa\iota\alpha} \) in all respects” when one walks in a manner “worthy \( \text{\textalpha\xi\omicron\omicron\sigma\omicron\zeta} \) of the Lord” (Col 1:10; cf. 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5). Further, the one who serves Christ by faith “is acceptable \( \text{\textepsilon\iota\alpha\rho\epsilon\sigma\sigma\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron} \) to God and approved \( \text{\textdelta\omicron\kappa\upsilon\mu\omicron\omicron\omicron} \) by men” (Rom 14:18; cf. Phil 4:18; Rom 12:1). Likewise, children obeying their parents is “well-pleasing \( \text{\textepsilon\iota\alpha\rho\epsilon\sigma\sigma\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron} \) to the Lord” (Col 3:20). Accordingly, Paul calls for prayer “that our God will count

[326] This verb, like the corresponding noun \( \text{\textdelta\omicron\kappa\upsilon\mu\omicron\omicron\omicron} \), refers to proving the quality, acceptability, or worth of something by examination and/or testing. Cf. 1 Cor 3:13; 11:28; 2 Cor 13:5; Gal 6:4; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 Tim 3:10.

[327] Notice this clearly evaluative pleasure of God, evidenced by the heart examination by God, which itself qualifies one to carry the gospel. Such divine examination of the human “heart” is prominent throughout the canon. Cf. 1 Sam 16:7; Jer 11:20; 12:3; 17:9; Pss 7:9; 17:3; 139:23; Prov 17:3; 1 Chr 28:9; Rom 8:27; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom 8:27; Rev 2:23. “Despite the fact that [Paul] was chosen by God to be an apostle even before his birth (Gal. 1.1, 15), there was a period during which he was tested and after which God set his seal upon him as one approved for the ministry.” G. L. Green, The Letters, 120. Cf. ibid., 121; Wanamaker, The Epistles, 95; Malherbe, The Letters, 141. Such evaluative election to an office or task fits with the counsel to the churches to examine those who may serve as leaders (cf. Rom 14:18; 1 Cor 16:3; 2 Cor 8:22; 13:7; 1 Tim 3:10).

[328] “Pleasing God means living in a manner consistent with his commands (1 Thess 4:1).” D. M. Martin, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 92. Cf. 1 Cor 7:32–33; Gal 1:10; cf. Rom 15:3. Importantly, “those who are in the flesh cannot please \( \text{\textalpha\rho\epsilon\sigma\kappa\iota\alpha} \) God” (Rom 8:8; cf. 1 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 2:3–4). This does not mean that human beings can never please God in any way but that humans cannot please God insofar as they remain in the control of their inherited carnal nature (cf. Rom 8:9–10). Humans must therefore be adopted in Christ to become pleasing to God (Rom 8:15–17).

[329] Here, divine pleasure is explicitly evaluative by collocation with the term \( \text{\textalpha\xi\omicron\omicron\sigma\omicron\zeta} \), worthy. That God is the one pleased is implied (Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, 47; O’Brien, Colossians-Philemon, 22), though it is possible that the intention is that both God and humans are to be pleased. So Barth and Blanke, Colossians, 178.

[330] Similar evaluation is apparent in the expectations that offspring care for their progenitors “for this is acceptable \( \text{\textalpha\rho\epsilon\sigma\kappa\iota\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron} \) in the sight \( \text{\textiota\nu\nu\omicron\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\iota\omicron\omicron\omicron} \) of God” (1 Tim 5:4). Again, notice the element of presence before God in the context of OT sacrificial language, implying evaluative judgment.
you worthy [ἄξιόν] of your calling [κληρίς], and fulfill every desire [εὐδοκία] for goodness” (2 Thess 1:11). On the other hand, those who killed the Lord and the prophets “are not pleasing [μὴ ἀρεσκόντων] to God, but hostile to all men” (1 Thess 2:15). Likewise, God was not “well-pleased” [εὐδοκέω] with those who rebelled in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:5). Importantly, in these last verses those who are “not pleasing” are among God’s OT elect of Israel. Thus, the distinction between those who are pleasing or approved by God and those who are displeasing to him as well as the status of elect is not the result of arbitrary election but is grounded in the actual state of affairs, specifically the disposition and corresponding action(s) of the human agent(s) toward God.

The importance of this divine evaluation of humans is evident in the frequent exhortations of Paul to “test” or “examine” (δοκιμάζω) themselves to see where they stand (2 Cor 13:5–6) and to be “approved” rather than “unapproved” (ἀδοκιμος) (2 Cor 13:7; cf. Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 11:28; Gal 6:4). Ultimately, the “quality of each man’s work” will be tested (δοκιμάζω) by fire (1 Cor 3:13) and God is himself the examiner (cf. 1 Thess 2:4). Accordingly, Paul

331 Interestingly, if such desire is to be fulfilled automatically the wish becomes nonsensical. In this way, such a “wish” would demonstrate that the election is not unconditional or unilaterally efficacious.

332 Notably, it says “with most of them” he was not “well-pleased,” implying also that there were some (a remnant) with which he was pleased. Of the others, Schrenk contends that this “can only imply rejection.” TDNT 2:741. Similarly, see Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:819.

333 As such, divine pleasure and, apparently, election itself may be forfeited by those who displease God. Fee recognizes their “forfeiture of election—despite their privileges. . . . The vast majority of them experienced God’s judgment and failed of the prize.” The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 450. However, Garland nevertheless sees this as a reference to the “sovereignty and mystery of God’s choice of persons, which is inscrutable to humans.” Nevertheless, he confusingly recognizes that they failed to reach Canaan “because their ‘postbaptismal’ sins were so great” thus resulting in their “forfeiture of election.” 1 Corinthians, 458–59. Accordingly, “God’s choice is not irrevocable.” John S. Ruet, Paul’s First Letter to Corinth (WPC; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 92.

334 Such statements serve a “parenetic function” of calling others to examine themselves to see if they are pleasing God, “since the judgment would provide the final testing not only of unbelievers but also of Christians (cf. 1 Cor 3:10–15).” Wanamaker, The Epistles, 94. “Since they will be ‘examined’ by God at the End . . . they should test themselves now.” Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 562. This test “discloses definitive approval (or otherwise) in the sense of a disclosure of all the factors which contribute to God’s definitive verdict. This may, indeed will, include whether the person concerned shares the rightwised (justified) status of those who are in Christ; but it will also disclose the extent to which their
proclaims it the Christian ambition “to be pleasing” (ἐὐαρέστος) to God for “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:9–10; cf. Eph 5:2). Evidently, behavior is a factor in who is “acceptable” or pleasing to God, with eschatological consequences. Accordingly, in light of such abundant evidence, it is manifestly certain that divine pleasure includes divine evaluation of human beings, which itself relates to careful inspection and judgment. At the same time, one must remember the mediatorial role of Christ as the truly acceptable sacrifice through whom humans may offer acceptable sacrifice.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in the General Epistles-Revelation

In this corpus, Christ is again referred to as the “truly” beloved, the one who is actually worthy of divine love by way of a quotation of the divine declaration of evaluative approval at the transfiguration: “This is my beloved son with whom I am well-pleased” (2 Pet 1:17; cf. Matt 17:5). That Jesus’s election was evaluative is likewise apparent in that Jesus was anointed by God because he has “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness” (Heb 1:9). Christ is himself “a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice [ἐκλεκτός] and precious [ἐντιμός] in the sight of God” (1 Pet 2:4; cf. 2:6–8; Isa 28:16; Ps 117:22 LXX). Moreover, Christ’s status was itself evaluative and conditional since “if he shrinks back, my soul [ψυχή] has no pleasure

work has produced some lasting effect in God’s sight.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 313.

335 “To be pleasing to God means that they will be vindicated and saved at the final judgment.” Schreiner, *Romans*, 741. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 697.

336 Schreiner calls this “God’s imprimatur of approval upon his Son. . . . God was pleased with his Son, Jesus.” 1, 2 Peter Jude, 314–15.

337 Here, there is not only evaluation and appraisal of Christ as the worthy recipient of praise but the reception of Christ’s value is conditional upon human response, that is, belief (cf. 1 Pet 2:7).
[ἐὐδοκέω] in him” (Heb 10:38; cf. Hab 2:4). In all this, Jesus is truly “worthy [ῥεῖτος]” (Rev 5:9).

Human beings are also frequently the objects of divine evaluation, also frequently referred to as “beloved” in this corpus, often corresponding to the “called” or “elect” (cf. Jude 1). Human responsibility and evaluation appear in a number of such references to the “beloved” (ἀγαπησόμενοι). Accordingly, the “beloved” are to “be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (2 Pet 3:14; cf. 3:1, 8). As such, even the “beloved” must “be on their guard” so as not to “fall” (ἐκπιστολή) from their “own steadfastness” (2 Pet 3:17; cf. 1 Pet 2:11). This appears to exclude the concept of a unilaterally determined salvation for the “beloved.” First John 3:21–22 also suggests conditionality relative to human responsibility: “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from

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338 Notice the emotional connotation signified by the OT idiom of “soul” as the seat of emotions.

339 The term is directed to groups (Jas 2:5; 2 Pet 3:1, 8; 1 John 3:2; 3 John 1:2, 5; Jude 1:3, 17) and individuals such as “our beloved brother Paul” (2 Pet 3:15) or “the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth” (3 John 1:1). Sometimes these imply beloved by God and, at other times, they seem to be a general term of the fellow brethren.

340 The “beloved” are often spoken of as having faith and/or acting faithfully (3 John 5; Jas 2:5; Jude 20). Moreover, the author of Hebrews addresses the “beloved” saying, “we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation” (Heb 6:9) and goes on to point out that God will not unjustly forget their “work” and their “love” and encouraging them to “diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end” (Heb 6:10–11; cf. Jude 3, 17). Elsewhere, the “beloved” face great adversity that is for their “testing [πεισμός]” (1 Pet 4:12). Such testing of the “beloved” demonstrates conditionality and the evaluation of the beloved. Peter Davids refers to this as “a refining process that will reveal the genuineness of their faith.” The First Epistle of Peter (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 164–65. Cf. Prov 27:21. Notice the language of Wis 3:1–6, “God tested them and found them worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace he proved them, and as a whole burnt offering he accepted them.” Cf. Sir 2:1–6.

341 The phrase “found by Him” is an explicit indication of divine evaluation. Further, the exhortation assumes that a state of purity is neither automatic nor determined for the “beloved” but requires their diligence.

342 The term ἐκπίπτο “refers to apostasy,” that is, “departing from the Christian faith.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 399. So, also Davids, The Letters, 311–12. Cf. Rom 11:11, 22; 14:4; 1 Cor 10:12; Heb 4:11; Rev 2:5. They can thus fall, they might “lose their eschatological reward,” that is, “those who fall away . . . are destined for eternal destruction. Believers maintain their secure position, in other words, by heeding warnings, not by ignoring them.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 399. Cf. 2 Pet 1:10. Schreiner, however, contends that those who fall away were never part of God’s people in the first place. Ibid., 400.
Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing [ἀφετέρως] in His sight” (1 John 3:21–22; cf. 4:7, 11). The reception of that which is asked for is explicitly contingent upon obedience and being pleasing to God, and is also likely related to the basis of “confidence before God.” Likewise, the “beloved are to be careful and “keep” themselves “in the love of God . . . waiting anxiously for the mercy” of Jesus “to eternal life” (Jude 1:20–21). It is highly significant that the “beloved” have to keep themselves in the love of God. The “beloved,” then, cannot be a group that is such on the basis of unilateral, unconditional election nor is the status as “beloved” an immutable, invariable, one.

Evaluative divine pleasure is further emphasized in this corpus when it is stated that Enoch “was pleasing [ἐυφετέρως] to God” before he was “taken up” (Heb 11:5; cf. Wis 4:10–15). Reference is also made to the “imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit,” which is “precious [πολύτιμος] in the sight [ἐνώπιος] of God” (1 Pet 3:4).

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343 Here, again, the language of “in his sight” makes explicit the action of divine scrutiny, evidencing that God’s pleasure here is not merely arbitrary but is grounded in appraisal of the human response.

344 Cf. 1 John 5:14–15; John 14:14–15; 15:14, 17; 16:23. The conditionality of maintaining this relationship with God is also apparent in the broader context of the verse (1 John 3:10; cf. 3 John 11). John R. W. Stott comments that “there is an objective, moral reason” that God hears and answers prayers, “namely because we obey his commands, and, more generally, do what pleases him. Obedience is the indispensable condition, not the meritorious cause, of answered prayer.” The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 19; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 152. So Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 205; cf. 204–6; Robert Law, The Texts of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of St. John (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 299–300. Cf. R. E. Brown, The Epistles of John, 462; Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 166; Bietenhard, NIDNTT 2:816; Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 142. Marshall, on the other hand, attempts to exclude the possibility that “answered prayer” is a “quid pro quo—God repays us in accordance with what we give him” pointing to this context of a Father-child love relationship “in which all thoughts of our doing good simply in order to win advantages or of God granting favors merely to those who please him are excluded.” The Épîtres of John, 199. Yet, Marshall’s position (1) does not do justice to what the text actually states and (2) appears to include a false dichotomy. With regard to the former, the text explicitly and unavoidably predicates these benefits on obedience and pleasing God. Secondly, God could bestow blessings in response to obedience without requiring either that humans only serve him in order to receive such benefits (i.e., the claim of Satan in Job 1:10–11) or that God only gives good things to those who please him.

345 Carson recognizes that this is “clearly implying that it is possible for Christians not to keep themselves in the love of God.” New Dictionary of Biblical Theology. 648.

346 This adjective means “very precious,” “of great worth” and “is also used of ‘expensive’
“proof” (δοκίμιον) of “faith, being more precious [πολύτιμος] than gold which is perishable, even though tested [δοκιμαζόμενος] by fire” (1 Pet 1:7; cf. 4:12).348

In many instances, the OT language of acceptable or pleasing sacrifice is applied to human actions toward pleasing God. Thus, Hebrews exhorts to “show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable [εὐπροσκύνημα] service with reverence and awe” (Heb 12:28). Through Christ, Christians are a “holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable [εὐπρόσδεκτα] to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5; cf. Heb 9:14).349 Likewise, humans are exhorted to “through Him [Jesus] . . . continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God . . . for with such sacrifices God is pleased [εἰς ὅραμα]” (Heb 13:15–16; cf. Rom 12:1–2).350 In all this, the human is able to offer pleasing sacrifices only through the mediation of Christ who sanctifies them “through His own blood” (Heb 13:12).351 The human life as service to God from the heart

perfume (Mark 14:3), clothing (1 Tim 2:9), and signs of status; note also polytimoterōs (1:7), timios (1:19), time (2:7), entimos (2:4, 6), all terms related to the semantic field of honor and worth.” Elliott, 1 Peter, 568.

347 Notice the evaluative language of “in the sight of.” “Such virtue” is “valuable to God.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 154. So Davids, The First Epistle, 119.

348 “The focus here is on the value of genuine faith in God’s sight on the day of judgment,” which is said to be “of greater worth than gold.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 68. “The eschatological reward will be given to them because of the genuineness of their faith, which is proved by the sufferings they endure.” Ibid.

349 Notably, this verse is couched between the identification of Jesus as the elect and precious stone in 1 Pet 2:4, 6–7. Such “spiritual sacrifices . . . may be understood as all behavior that flows from a transformation of the human spirit by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1:2).” Karen H. Jobes, 1 Peter (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005), 151. Of metaphorical sacrifices in the OT, see Pss 50:13–14, 23; 51:17; 141:2. In the NT, such offerings refer to “an all-out personal commitment to do the will of God” (Rom 12:1).” J. Ramsey Michaels, 1 Peter (WBC 49; Dallas: Word, 2002), 101. Though some have suggested that Paul has the Eucharist specifically in mind here, David Hill argues convincingly that it is the “totality of Christian living” that is in view here and not specifically the Eucharist or any other liturgical element. “To Offer Spiritual Sacrifices’ (1 Pet 2:5): Liturgical Formulations and Christian Paraenesis in 1 Peter,” JSNT 16 (1982): 61.

350 Such sacrifices are not external ritual offerings but the human life itself lived in Christ.

351 “The effective, creative blessing of God will be mediated to the community through the agency of Jesus Christ, enabling them to bring to God through Jesus the sacrifices that please him.” William L. Lane, Hebrews 9–13 (WBC 47B; Dallas: Word, 2002), 565. Thus, “even the worship and praise of the Christian is dependent on the work of Christ for its acceptability.” Davids, The First Epistle, 88. So, also Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 107–8.
thus fulfills the OT sacrifices, which in and of themselves (that is, apart from the heart
motivation) never pleased (ἐυδοκέω) God (Heb 10:6, 8; cf. Ps 40:6).

In all this, then, God’s initiative is primary but not unilaterally efficacious: Humans may
be pleasing to God only through divine action. God is thus working to “equip” Christians “in
every good thing to do His will [θέλημα], working in” them “that which is pleasing [ἐυάρεστος] in
His sight [ἐνόπιος]” (Heb 13:21; cf. 1 John 3:21–22; Jas 1:27). At the same time, pleasing God
is only possible through faith because “without faith it is impossible to please [ἐυάρεστέω] Him”
and such faith includes recognizing that God “is a rewarder [μισθαποδότης] of those who seek
[ἐκζητέω] Him” (Heb 11:6). Thus, pleasing God is not something earned by the believer but it is
nevertheless conditional upon faith, which is rewarded.

The conditionality regarding such divine evaluation extends even to salvation, for
“blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved [δοκιμως], he will
receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love [ἀγαπάω] Him” (Jas
1:12; cf. Jas 2:5; 1 John 5:2; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3). Significantly, the one who is approved
is the one who loves God. Moreover, the reward, the “crown of life,” is eternal life itself.

Importantly, that this does not refer to a unilaterally efficacious divine will is evident in that
Paul goes on to “urge” them in Heb 13:22. Note also the evaluative language “in His sight,” which again
points back to such OT language of the evaluative scrutiny of sacrifices and judgment.

The precise nature of the reward is uncertain, but it is likely that it refers to the ultimate
Epistle to the Hebrews (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 577; Herbert Preisker, “μισθός,
μισθοί, μισθιος, μισθιοτης, μισθαποδοσια, αντιμησηθα,” TDNT 4:701. The human response
to the divine initiative, faith, cannot be separated from faithfulness, which God appreciates.

The one who “endures to the end, then at last, winning final approval, he will receive the final
caracter which will receive the reward” see Davids, The Epistle of James, 79–80. Ultimately, humans may
have confidence in the judgment by abiding in Christ by which “love is perfected with us” since “perfect
love casts out fear” (1 John 4:17–18).

Blessings or promises to those who love God are seen in Exod 20:6; Deut 7:9; 30:16, 20; Judg
Throughout this corpus, that God clearly evaluates human beings, with significant consequences, is firmly asserted while positive evaluation of humans is emphatically located only in Christ.

Love and Hate in the NT

At the junction of emotionality and evaluation is the contrast between the antonyms love and hate, which frequently connote evaluation and emotionality. It has frequently been suggested that in many cases the contrast is idiomatic, amounting to choose and not choose or accept and reject. For instance, Jesus states that one cannot “serve two masters; for either he will hate [μισέω] the one and love [ἀγαπάω] the other” or “he will be devoted [ἀντέχω] to one and despise [καταφρονέω] the other” (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13; cf. 6:26–27). In this instance, some have suggested that it would be unusual for a slave to actually love his master in any affectionate sense; thus the cool and detached meanings of accept and reject are more appropriate. 357 However, it is in fact not unusual to find affectionate love of a slave for their master in antiquity and thus this assumption is invalid (cf. Exod 21:5). 358 Further, the greatest devotion in any

5:30; Ps 5:11; Jas 2:5; 1 John 5:2; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; 2 Tim 4:8. Cf. Deut 6:4. The ones who love God are thus those “in proper covenant relationship with” him who “also ‘love his commandments.’” L. T. Johnson, James, 188–89. See Ps 118:47–48. Cf. Kurt A. Richardson, James (NAC 36; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 77. In rabbinic literature, “‘those that love him’ frequently stands for the pious, being at times an exegesis of Dt. 6:5.” Davids, The Epistle of James, 80. So Dibelius and Greeven, James, 89.

356 Cf. 1 Cor 9:25; 1 Pet 5:4; 2 Tim 4:8 and especially Rev 4:8 where those “faithful unto death” will be given “the crown of life [στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς].” The στέφανος was “the wreath or chaplet” awarded to “victors in games” (cf. 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 2:5) or “to honor public service” or “signify rank” (cf. 2 Sam 12:30; Isa 22:21) but “can also be used generally for any sort of reward.” L. T. Johnson, James, 188. Here, however, the term is qualified by “of life” pointing to the ultimate, eschatological reward of salvation, an “epexegetic genitive.” Moo, The Letter of James, 70. So Davids, The Epistle of James, 80; Dibelius and Greeven, James, 88–89. Cf. K. A. Richardson, James, 77. Cf. Wis 5:15–16.

357 Thus, Hagner suggests that in “the Jewish idiom” of love and hate the latter does not refer to “hatred as we understand the word but is only an emphatic way of referring to the absolute commitment required in discipleship. ‘Hate’ thus equals love less than.” Matthew 1–13, 159. Similarly, Blomberg, Matthew, 124. The contention is based on the supposed “idiom” in Gen 29:31, 33; Deut 21:15. However, see the treatment of the relationship of love and hate in the OT in the previous chapter where it is argued that both often (if not always) refer to evaluation and emotion.

358 Rather, “in the Greco-Roman world the lot of slaves was extremely varied and in many cases was consonant with deep loyalty to and warm affection for the master.” Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew,
relationship stems from a truly affectionate disposition. Here, not only is there a stark evaluative contrast at hand, but the point is that humans are to love God above all else and exclude love for anything that is less than good.

Accordingly, human zeal for God is supposed to be so intense that one would “hate” \(\mu\nu\sigma\varepsilon\omega\) his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters and even one’s own life (Luke 14:26; cf. Deut 33:9; Exod 32:27–29). Similarly, in John the one who “loves” \(\phi\nu\lambda\varepsilon\omega\) his own life loses it but Christians are to “hate” \(\mu\nu\sigma\varepsilon\omega\) their own life in this world (John 12:25). Matthew refers to the one who “loves” \(\phi\nu\lambda\varepsilon\omega\) father or mother more than Me” rather than using the term hate (Matt 10:37). However, he previously refers to enmity \(\varepsilon\chi\theta\.\rho\varepsilon\zeta\) among family members that Jesus brings, thus also referring to animosity akin to the Lucan parallel (Matt 10:34–36).

Again, many have suggested that love and hate in such contexts are merely stand-ins for accepting and rejecting, respectively, divested of emotive content. The assumption is that this

Indeed, absolute loyalty and commitment must include feeling and/or emotion. The greatest loyalty stems, at least in part, from inward, heartfelt motivation. Here, Jesus is using a qal vahomer argument that such loyal love should extend to God much more than it does in natural kinship relationships. The force of the point would be significantly lessened by removing the actual familial affection involved.

Here, the issue is “feelings” for both parties. Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 303.

Such “enmity” points toward the real animosity and conflict that the gospel may elicit from family members. Thus, even though Matthew does not use the term hate, the very closely associated “enmity” implies the same meaning as Luke’s version. Hagner refers to the “hostility now in view—that between otherwise close family members—is described with the metaphor of a “sword.” Matthew 1–13, 291.

call would make “no sense” as a “summation of what God desires.” However, the collocation of μισέω with other emotive terminology (such as καταφρονέω, “despise,” in Matt 6:24 and Luke 16:13, the contrast with ἐκτρέφω, “nourish,” and θάλπω “cherish,” in Eph 5:29; the collocation with ἐπιθυμία “lust, desire,” ἡδονή, “pleasure,” κακία, “malice, evil,” φθόνος, “envy,” and στυγγιτάζος, “hateful,” in Titus 3:3; cf. Gen 37:4) suggests that the term as here used includes emotion, though not “hatred on some absolute scale.” Importantly, in these instances (Luke 14 and Matt 10) the “hatred” is situational. The point is not that one should hate family members absolutely; quite the opposite is true (cf. Eph 6:1–4; 1 Tim 5:8). The assumption is that other loved ones, or love of oneself, may get in the way of commitment to Jesus (cf. Mic 7:6–7; 4 Ezra 6:24). In this regard, there is a pro tanto obligation to hate the obstruction insofar as it obstructs undiluted love for Christ. Importantly, as in the OT, hatred need not function as the superlative term of animosity, as it often connotes in English, but may refer to animosity of varying degrees. Jesus’s call is intended to be radical and startling and should not be downplayed to accommodate contemporary sensibilities. True devotion, allegiance, and loyalty cannot be separated from the inner disposition (i.e., love/affection or hate/animosity; cf. Eccl 3:8). The one who does not have such undiluted love for Jesus is not “worthy [ἄξιος] of him” (Matt 10:37–38).


364 For Carson, “the love/hate contrast reflects a semitic idiom that articulates fundamental preference, not hatred on some absolute scale.” The Gospel according to John, 439. Carson is correct in excluding the “absolute” connotation of the terms, but the terms nevertheless convey more than a tepid preference. Nolland believes the language is “typical Semitic hyperbole” but does not believe that it means “love less than.” Luke 9:21–18:34, 762.

365 This is because “there could be no casual devotion to Jesus in the first century. A decision for Christ marked a person and automatically came with a cost. . . . If one chose to be associated with Jesus, one received a negative reaction, often from within the home.” Bock, Luke 9:51–24:53, 1285.

366 Blomberg points out that “in each case Jesus implies that an unbeliever is initiating the hostility against a believing family member.” Matthew, 180. Fitzmyer thus correctly comments that “one is called to such ‘hatred’ to the extent that such persons would be opposed to Jesus; the choice that the disciple has to make is between natural affection for kin and allegiance to Jesus.” Luke X–XXIV, 1063. Cf. France, The Gospel of Matthew, 409.
The NT thus consistently points to a stark division between those who love God and/or the things of God and those who hate God and/or the things of God. Some are “haters [θεοστυγήτες] of God” (Rom 1:30). The controversy is real. The strong, emotive contrast between love and hate is apparent when James states that “friendship [φιλία] with the world is hostility [ἐχθραία] toward God” and thus “whoever wishes [βούλομαι] to be a friend [φίλος] of the world makes himself an enemy [ἐχθρός] of God” (Jas 4:4). Rejection of friendship with God (cf. John 15:14; Jas 2:23) thus includes both volition (βούλομαι) and hostile emotion (i.e., ἐχθραία). That hatred ought to be evaluative is evident in that Jesus has been “hated . . . without cause” (John 15:25; cf. Pss 35:19; 69:4). It is here implicit that it is unjust to hate someone “without cause.” Would it not then be unjust of God to hate some humans without cause? The logical conclusion is that, as is evidenced in the OT, divine hatred is never groundless but always

367 See the word study of κατι in chapter 4.

368 It is not clear whether this refers to those who hate God or are hated by God. In classical Greek this term is “used only in the passive sense, ‘hated by God, abandoned by God,’” but later in Hellenistic Greek it developed an active sense, ‘one who hates God.’” Fitzmyer, Romans, 289. Moo favors an active sense. The Epistle to the Romans, 120. Similarly, Mounce, Romans, 85; B. M. Newman and Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter, 29; Dunn, Romans 1–8, 68; Schreiner, Romans, 98. Others take it in the passive sense, hated by God. For example, Barrett, A Commentary, 40. Moffat renders, “loathed by God” (James Moffat Translation); cf. NEB. TDNT renders, “despisers hated by God.” TDNT 8:306.

369 This “strife between good and evil is no tepid affair, but one that elicits the bitter hatred of the forces of evil.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 207. Cf. Borchert, John I–II; 186. John 3:19–20 thus speaks of those who “loved [ἠγαπάω] the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” and those who do evil “hate” (μισοῦ) the Light, fearing exposure (John 3:19–20). While Jesus commands Christians to “love [ἠγαπάω] one another” the world will hate (μισοῦ) them just as it hated Jesus since the world “loves [ἱλέω] its own” (John 15:17–19). R. E. Brown contends that, unlike Matt 6:24, here “‘hate’ has its literal sense.” The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI, 686. But this raises the question, how does one know when it has its “literal sense” and when it is “Semitic exaggeration?” The lack of an objective hermeneutic implies that the interpretation is simply beholden to human opinion or presupposition. On the other hand one cannot “love God” and hate his brother (1 John 4:20). Similarly, hating (μισοῦ) Jesus ultimately amounts to hating the Father (John 15:23). “The two are so closely connected that to hate the one is to hate the other.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 604. Cf. Carson, The Gospel according to John, 526–27.

370 Moo sees this against the background of the OT marriage analogy. Here, then, God is the scorned lover by those who choose “friendship with the world.” As such, “‘Enemy,’ especially in light of the OT background . . . must involve hostility of God toward the believer as well as that of the believer toward God.” The Letter of James, 187.
appropriate to the actual state of affairs. Thus, Jesus “hates [μυωέω]” the deeds of the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6) and commends the church of Ephesus for also hating them. Further, the strong emotionality and evaluative nature of God’s displeasure is further noted in that the behavior of self-justifying lovers of money is “detestable” (βδέλυγμα) to God (Luke 16:15).\(^{371}\) Importantly, such animosity is explicitly based on the fact that “God knows” their “hearts” (Luke 16:15; cf. Prov 16:5). Once again, divine animosity corresponds to an accurate appraisal of its object(s), as it always does elsewhere.\(^{372}\) As such, God may hate passionately but never arbitrarily. The antithetical parallel to divine love itself implies the emotional nature of divine love, to which we now turn.

The Emotional Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that ground the conclusion that God’s love is profoundly emotional though not to the exclusion of volitional and evaluative aspects.\(^{373}\) First, love may be, at once, emotional and responsive to command. Second, God’s love is consistently depicted as intensely affective and emotive. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Is divine love emotionally responsive to human disposition and/or action?\(^{374}\) If so, what kind of emotions are exhibited and on what occasions? Is


\(^{372}\) “God’s wrath” is never “arbitrary or whimsical. In Scripture; God’s wrath, however affective, is the willed and righteous response of his holiness to sin, God’s holiness, like God’s love, is intrinsic to the very being of God; his wrath is not.” Carson, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 647.

\(^{373}\) In this dissertation, an emotion is loosely defined as any feeling(s) that may be affected by external stimulation. At the same time, emotions are not necessarily determined by external stimulus to the exclusion of other mental factors including volition, evaluation, etc.

\(^{374}\) It is often supposed that divine love is impassible. The implications of this presupposition are evident in the view that divine ἀγάπη is non-emotive but purely volitional, election love. For example, Cranfield contends that ἀγάπη “evidently refers to the will rather than to the emotion, and often conveys the idea of showing love by action.” “Love,” *A Theological Word Book* (ed. A. Richardson), 134. Likewise,
God concerned about/affected by the world? Do the lives of creatures make a difference to God’s own life? Are emotions mutually exclusive to volition, that is, can emotional love be commanded? This section of the study will begin with the brief introduction of the primary terms related to the emotionality of divine love followed by a canonical survey of the NT data.

A Brief Look at Some Terms of Emotional Divine Love

The Meaning of the \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega} \) Word Group

The basic meaning of the \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega} \) word group may include mercy, lovingkindness, heartfelt concern, compassion and/or sympathy of a strongly emotive character, which is often explicitly manifested in action.\(^{375}\) The verb \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega} \) is often used of divine agency toward individuals (cf. Phil 2:27) or groups of people (cf. 1 Pet 2:10).\(^{376}\) The noun \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \) is also often used of God’s wonderful, abundant, and enduring, but not thereby unconditional, lovingkindness, compassion, and/or mercy (cf. Luke 1:50, 58; Ps 102:17).\(^{377}\) The adjective \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \mu \omicron \omicron \nu} \) appears twice, once of Morris contends that “God’s love is not an emotion conditioned by the kind of people we are.” Morris, \textit{Testaments of Love}, 151. As such, “passion” does not constitute “Christian love.” Ibid., 276. Cf. Stauffer, \textit{TDNT} 1:38; Schneider, \textit{EDNT} 1:9. For William G. Cole, “love in the Hebrew . . . was not ephemeral emotion but steadfast concern, involving the will rather than the feelings.” \textit{Sex and Love in the Bible} (New York: Association Press, 1959), 67. See also de Rougemont, \textit{Love}.

\(^{375}\) See Esser, \textit{NIDNTT} 2:594; F. W. Danker et al., eds., “\( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega} \),” BDAG, 315; idem, “\( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \),” BDAG, 316; Ceslas Spicq, “\( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega}, \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \),” \textit{TLNT} 1:471, 475; Rudolf Bultmann, “\( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma}, \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega}, \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \mu \omicron \omicron \nu}, \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu}, \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu} \), \textit{TDNT} 2:483, 485; F. W. Danker et al., eds., “\( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \mu \omicron \omicron \nu} \),” BDAG, 316. In the wider, secular Greek usage \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \) is a term signifying strong emotion, often prompted by the affliction of another for which one feels mercy and/or sympathy. As such, it was often looked down upon by Greek thinkers as inferior πάθος, emotion, which is not proper, a weakness. Cf. Spicq, \textit{TLNT} 1:471–72; Bultmann, \textit{TDNT} 2:477–78. In contrast to the negative views of compassion in Greek thought, in the LXX \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \) is “exalted” and “becomes a religious virtue and especially a divine attribute.” Spicq, \textit{TLNT} 1:473.

\(^{376}\) In all, the verb appears 29 times in 26 verses and 3 more times (Rom 9:16; Jude 22, 23) with the varying inflectional type as \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega} \). Divine \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \omega} \) further appears in Rom 9:15–16, 18; 11:30, 31, 32 and is implied in Matt 5:7; 18:33, 35; cf. 2 Cor 4:1; 1 Tim 1:13, 16. The verb also refers to human mercy/compassion, often with the expectation that Christians should exhibit it (cf. Rom 12:8; Jude 22, 23).

\(^{377}\) In all, the noun appears 29 times in 26 verses in the NT. Elsewhere divine \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \) is manifest in Luke 1:54, 72, 78; Rom 9:23; 11:31; 15:9; Gal 6:16; Eph 2:4; 1 Tim 1:2; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3; Heb 4:16; Jas 2:13; 2 John 3; Jude 21; cf. 2 Tim 1:16, 18; Jude 2. The noun \( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \iota \varsigma} \) also may depict human mercy, compassion, and/or lovingkindness and is clearly depicted as virtuous conduct becoming a Christian (cf. Luke 10:37; Jas 2:13) and desired by God of human beings (Matt 9:13; 12:7). Another noun (\( \textit{\varepsilon \lambda \varepsilon \iota \mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \nu} \)) refers to the gift itself of alms or merciful bestowal or “charitable deed” whether given or requested (Matt
humans (Matt 5:7) and once of Christ (Heb 2:17). Divine mercy/compassion is consistently active and often manifests emotionality as well as conditionality.

The range of this word group thus corresponds with that of lovingkindness (דְּסָי) and compassion (צַאֶר) in the OT. The overlap of the range of meaning with צאֶר is evident in the frequency with which the word group translates צאֶר in the LXX. The aspects of heartfelt

6:2–4; Luke 11:41; 12:33; Acts 3:2–3, 10; 9:36; 10:2, 4, 31; 24:17). In such a form the indissoluble connection between the disposition of mercy/pity and action is clearly manifest.

Another adjective, ἐλεημόνας (pitiable), appears only with regard to humans, twice in 2 verses, of those who are pitiable or “to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19; Rev 3:17).

ἐλεος is often a grounding (as are other terms of love) of divine beneficence (Eph 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3; cf. Luke 1:54, 78).

For example, it is used of “the tender [σπαλείγχων] mercy [ἐλεος] of our God” (Luke 1:78; cf. Luke 10:33, 37). Likewise, that “mercy” is assumed to be emotive is implied in the story of the one who received mercy but failed to bestow it (Matt 18:33) in the explanation of Jesus that God requires humans to “forgive his brother from your heart” (18:35).

In a number of instances, the reception of divine mercy is conditional upon humans bestowing mercy to one another (Matt 5:7; 18:33, 35; cf. Jas 2:13) or otherwise contingent (Luke 1:50; 1 Tim 1:13; Gal 6:16; Jude 21). At the same time, such mercy is undeserved and unmerited (Titus 3:5). Consider also the correspondence to the notion of צאֶר, which not only included צאֶר from two parties to one another but also צאֶר shown in response to another’s previous positive action (cf. 2 Tim 1:16, 18). Spicq refers to צאֶר as “fundamentally a species of love” noting correctly that “most of its occurrences have to do with God’s mercy or lovingkindness.” TLNT 1:475.

Similar to צאֶר in the OT, in the NT the group never explicitly refers to ἐλεημόν/ἐλεος from a situationally inferior toward a situationally superior but, in all cases where the subject and object are apparent, depicts mercy flowing from a superior to an inferior. There are instances of צאֶר from a situational inferior toward a situational superior in the OT, including human צאֶר toward God, but such instances are a small minority of the total occurrences. There are no direct instances of human mercy toward God in the NT, though God desires mercy (Matt 9:13; 12:7 in OT allusions translating צאֶר). Moreover, as in the OT, some instances of expectation of human to human ἐλεος are likely to be understood as indirect ἐλεος toward God. For example, the scribes and Pharisees are rebuked for neglecting “justice and mercy and faithfulness,” which could be toward humans and/or toward God (cf. Matt 5:7; Jas 2:13). Further, there is some association with grace (χάρις) as both might refer to beneficent action toward (or received by) someone in need. The two word groups collocate closely in 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Heb 4:16; 2 John 3. In the LXX see Gen 39:21; 47:29; Prov 3:3. The two also collocate a number of times in the LXX Apocrypha.

The noun ἐλεος translates צאֶר over 200 times (cf. Exod 20:6; 34:7; Deut 7:9). ἐλεημόνων also translates צאֶר twice (Prov 11:17; 20:6; cf. Prov 28:22) and צאֶר once with God as the subject (Jer 3:12). Even ἐλεημοσύνη, often used of alms or sympathy, translates צאֶר 8 times, second to צאֶר, which it translates 10 times. Accordingly, there is significant overlap between the semantic range of צאֶר and ἐλεος. Spicq points to significant continuity between the terms, contending that the NT takes up “God’s mercy in exactly the same form and continues it.” TLNT 1:476. Beyond צאֶר, ἐλεος also translates צאֶר (6 times), צאֶר, favor, supplication (6 times), צאֶר, righteousness (3 times) and צאֶר, favor, grace (2 times), as well as a number of
concern, sympathy, compassion of the ἐλεέω word group are likewise apparent in the frequent association with OT terms of compassion such as πάθος as well as significant collocations with terms such as οἰκτιρμός, “compassion, pity,” and σπλάγχνον, “tender mercies, compassion.”

Thus, there is a significant correspondence to the meaning of compassion and/or pity. As seen

other terms once. Conversely, beyond its rendering by ἐλεος, πάθος is translated 9 times by the closely related πολλάκλεος, “abundant mercy,” and 9 times by δικαιοσύνη (cf. Gen 19:19), among a number of others once.

Further, in the LXX, the verb ἐλεέω most often translates πάθος (38 times), often of divine graciousness as in Exod 33:19. In many such instances where it translates πάθος in the LXX it collocates with οἰκτιρμός, which itself therein translates πάθος. See the discussion of these collocations below. ἐλεέω also translates πάθος, λύπη, σπλάγχνα numerous times (see regarding these in the main text) and a number of other terms once. Moreover, the adjective σπλάγχνον, which is most often used of God in the LXX, most often translates πάθος (12 times) especially in the statements that God is “merciful and gracious” (οἰκτιρμῶν καὶ ἐλεέων)

(Exod 34:6; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Pss 85:15; 102:8; 110:4; 111:4; 114:5; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). Cf. also Ps 144:8. It also translates πάθος twice and a number of other terms once.

In the LXX, the verb ἐλεέω translates πάθος, compassion, 25 times, often of God’s profoundly emotive compassion as in Isa 38:20 (ET 31:20). Cf. Deut 13:17; 30:3; Isa 30:18; 49:15; 54:8; Ezek 39:25. It also translates πάθος in Hos 2:3. The verb also translates πάθος 7 times, often in the idiomatic expression “my eye will have no pity [πάθος] and I will not spare” (πάθος - ἐλεέω) (Ezek 5:11; 7:6; 8; 8:18; 9:5, 10) and πάθος 5 times, often in the sense of God comforting his people (Zech 1:17; Isa 12:1; 49:13; 52:9). The other translation of πάθος refers to the lack of human sparing in Isa 9:18. The other instance of πάθος is of God’s declaration that he will not “relish” and not “be sorry” (Ezek 24:14). The noun renders πάθος 5 times (Deut 13:18; Isa 47:6; 54:7; 63:7; Jer 49:12) and πάθος once (Hab 3:2). Conversely, beyond its rendering by the ἐλεέω word group, the verb πάθος is translated 12 times by οἰκτιρμός, 4 times by ἀγαπῶ, and once by παρακαλῶ (Isa 49:13). Beyond its translation by ἐλεος, πάθος is most often translated by the noun οἰκτιρμός (20 times) and the adjective οἰκτιρμῶν (7 times) as well as a number of others once.

In the NT the two word groups collocate once in Paul’s quotation of Exod 33:19 in Rom 9:15. In the LXX the two collocate in many significant instances including Exod 33:19, of God’s mercy (ἐλεέω) and compassion (οἰκτιρμός), and 34:6 of God’s compassionate (οἰκτιρμῶν) and gracious (ἔλεος) nature (cf. also the collocation in many allusions to Exod 34:6 including 2 Chr 20:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Pss 85:15; 102:8; 144:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). Likewise, the two collocate in the many other descriptions of God as gracious (ἐλεέων) and compassionate (οἰκτιρμῶν) (Ps 110:4; cf. 111:4; 144:8; Isa 27:11; 30:18). The terms also collocate in many instances where πάθος and πάθος collocate, ἐλεος translating πάθος (Pss 39:12; 50:3; 68:17; 102:4; 102:8; Hos 2:21; Zech 7:9; Lam 3:32). See also 2 Kgs 13:23; Isa 63:15; 1 Macc 3:44; Sir 2:11; 5:6.

The two collocate once in the reference to the “tender [σπλάγχνον] mercy [ἐλεος] of our God” (Luke 1:78). In more than a single verse see the association in Luke 10:33, 37. Since the σπλάγχνον word group is relatively rare in the LXX the two do not collocate often therein (cf. Odes 9:18; Prov 12:10).

In fact, the association is so significant that the NIDNTT groups the three together in its dictionary article. Esser points to the close association of the terms in their original meanings: “In their original use eleos refers to the feeling of pity, oiktirmos, and especially its root oiktos, to the exclamation of pity at the sight of another’s ill-fortune, and splanchna to the seat of the emotions, the inward parts or what today would be called the heart. The corresponding verbs in the active express these feelings shown in the sense of to help, feel pity, show mercy; where they are used in the passive, they express the experience of these emotions.” NIDNTT 2:593.
earlier in this chapter, the word group also associates significantly with the ἀγαπάω word group. As such, the NT meaning is sometimes akin to the English conception of mercy though the concept of mercy does not exhaust the meaning of the term, which likely corresponds to the much richer meaning of ἀγάπη in some usages. While one should not read the entire meaning of ἀγάπη into this term in the NT one should also not be too hasty to exclude the possibility that the rich concept of ἀγάπη may be in the background of many NT usages.

The Meaning of the οἰκτίρω and σπλαγχνίζομαι Word Groups

The οἰκτίρω word group appears infrequently in the NT but with considerable significance, denoting the basic meaning of a highly emotive response to someone’s hardship; compassion, sympathy, mercy, tender feeling, and/or pity. The σπλαγχνίζομαι word group is closely related to the οἰκτίρω word group. It similarly refers to the feeling (or the seat of the feeling) of warm sympathy, pity, and/or compassion at someone’s misfortune, such emotion itself

388 Significantly, they collocate frequently in the LXX in those verses that speak of God’s ἀγάπη toward those who love God translated by ἐγγίζει and ἀγαπάω (cf. Exod 20:6 among many others). See also Deut 5:10; 7:9; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4. In the NT, both are associated in grounding divine action (Eph 2:4). See also 2 Tim 1:2; Jude 2, 21; 2 John 3; cf. 1 Tim 1:13–14 and the discussion of the collocation of these word groups in the discussion of the meaning of the ἀγαπάω word group above.

389 Esser suggests the secular Greek background does not relate to the meaning of the term in the NT but, rather, one must “interpret the LXX translation from the standpoint of the Heb. original, and not the other way round.” NIDNTT 2:594.

390 The noun οἰκτιρμός appears 5 times, twice of human agency as virtuous feeling/disposition (Col 3:12; Phil 2:1) and 3 times of divine agency, once describing God as “the Father of mercies” (οἰκτιρμός) (2 Cor 1:3; cf. Rom 12:1) though such mercy is not unconditional (Heb 10:28). The adjective οἰκτιρμων appears 3 times in 2 verses referring to the characteristic of being merciful and/or compassionate, often descriptive of God as “merciful” (Luke 6:36; Jas 5:11; cf. Ps 102:8), but once of humans who are to be merciful even as God is (Luke 6:36). This likely echoes the OT description of God as “compassionate and gracious” (Ps 102:8 among many others). So Rudolf Bultmann, “οἰκτιρμός, οἰκτιρμος, οἰκτιρμών,” TDNT 5:161. The verb οἰκτίρω appears 2 times in 1 verse, itself a quotation of Exod 33:19 where it translates σέρει in parallel to σέρει, which is translated by ἐλέεισθαι (Rom 9:15).

391 F. W. Danker et al., eds., “οἰκτιρμός,” BDAG, 700; J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., “οἰκτιρμος,” L&N 1:750; H. H. Esser, “οἰκτιρμός,” NIDNTT 2:598. As was the case for the ἐλέεισθαι word group, this emotion was also seen as a “sign of weakness” amongst many Greek philosophers, even a “reprehensible πάθος.” Bultmann, TDNT 5:160. Nevertheless, in classical Greek “mercy is invoked from the deity, or οἰκτιρμόν is predicated of it.” Ibid.
bound up with affectionate love.\textsuperscript{392} The noun σπλάγχνον may refer to the “inward parts” of the body as the “seat of emotions” akin to the functioning of והם in the OT.\textsuperscript{393} As such, it often depicts the “seat and source of love, sympathy, and mercy” or to the “feeling itself” of great “love” and “affection.”\textsuperscript{394} It is most often used of human agency (2 Cor 6:12; 7:15; Phil 2:1; Col 3:12; Phlm 7, 12, 20; 1 John 3:17) but once of divine agency of the “tender [σπλάγχνον] mercy [ἐλεος] of our God” (Luke 1:78; cf. Phil 1:8).\textsuperscript{395} The verb σπλαγχνιζομαι appears only in the Synoptics and refers to highly emotive compassion, always with divine agency (often Jesus) and often prompted by sight and spoken of explicitly as “felt.”\textsuperscript{396} Significantly, it may be forfeited (cf. \textsuperscript{392}\textsuperscript{393} F. W. Danker et al., eds., “σπλαγχνιζομαι,” BDAG, 938, “Compassion involves so identifying with the situation of others that one is prepared to act for their benefit.” Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 407. The Semitic background of the term suggests the meaning “tender mercy.” E. Colin B. MacLaurin, “Semitic Background of Use of ‘en splanchnois,’” 103(1971): 45. Barclay Moon Newman and Philip C. Stine explain the meaning as “to be stirred up with feeling,” a “feeling of pity and love.” A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 279. It is descriptive of a “gut response.” France, The Gospel of Matthew, 373. Silva contends that σπλάγχνα may be used “by metonymy of the affection itself.” Philippians, 48. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (2 vols.; London: SCM Press, 1952), 2:222.


\textsuperscript{394} Danker et al., BDAG, 938. So, also “σπλαγχνιζομαι; σπλαγχνα, ον,” 294; Esser, NIDNTT 2:599; Walter, EDNT 3:266.

\textsuperscript{395} In one instance it literally refers to “intestines” (Acts 1:18).

\textsuperscript{396} It is “literally a movement of the entrails at the sight” to “have a visceral feeling of compassion.” Spicq, TLNT 3:274–75. In 10 of its 12 instances it is passive, the other two are middle (Matt 15:32; Mark 8:2). It most often describes Jesus’ compassionate feelings (Matt 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 8:2; cf. Mark 9:22), very often prompted by the sight of some affliction (Matt 9:36; 14:14; Mark 6:34; Luke 7:13). The only other occurrences are in the symbolic narratives of Jesus, which themselves are themselves descriptive of divine compassion (Matt 18:27; Luke 10:33; 15:20). Only in these symbolic narratives are humans the subject of the verb (the good Samaritan in Luke 10:33, the debt holder in Matt 18:27, and the father in Luke 15:20). As such, “the verb σπλαγχνιζομαι has become solely and simply an attribute of the
Matt 18:27). Two semantically related adjectives also appear: the adjective πολυσπλαγχνος describes God’s abundant compassion (Jas 5:11)\textsuperscript{397} and the adjective εὐσπλαγχνος “tenderhearted, compassionate” of the disposition Christians ought to have (Eph 4:32; 1 Pet 3:8).

While the σπλαγχνίζομαι word group appears more frequently in the NT than the οἰκτίρω word group, only the noun appears (only 3 times) in the LXX.\textsuperscript{398} The σπλαγχνίζομαι word group appears to have come into common use in post-LXX Jewish literature.\textsuperscript{399} On the other hand, though the οἰκτίρω word group is relatively infrequent in the NT, the οἰκτίρω word group appears many times in the LXX, where it is clearly situated amongst the major descriptors of God’s love, mercy, compassion, grace, kindness, and patience.\textsuperscript{400}

divine dealings.” Köster, \textit{TDNT} 7:553.

\textsuperscript{397} For Spicq this depicts the “innate love and compassion and tenderness” of God by way of the metaphor of “having long or abundant entrails . . . the equivalent of polyeleos.” \textit{TLNT} 3:275.

\textsuperscript{398} The three instances are Prov 12:10 wherein it translates בְּמִימָנָה, Prov 26:22 where it translates לְבֶנֶךָ, body, and Jer 28:13 [51:13] where it translates לְבָנַי, gain made by violence. The noun appears 14 times in the LXX Apocrypha as “the seat of natural maternal love (4 Macc 14:13; 15:23, 29), as well as of affection in the larger sense,” Walter, \textit{EDNT} 3:266. The others are 2 Mac 9:5, 6; 4 Ma 5:30; 10:8; 11:19; Ode 9:78; Wis 10:5; Sir 30:7; 33:5; \textit{Pss. Sol.} 2:14; Bar 2:17. The verb appears once in the LXX Apocrypha in 2 Macc 6:8 and εὐσπλαγχνος also appears once in the LXX Apocrypha (Ode 12:7). The closely related verb ἐπισπλαγχνίζομαι appears in Prov 17:15 but without Hebrew original.

\textsuperscript{399} Thus Test. XII demonstrates the predominant use of this word group with the sense of “mercy” and “to be merciful,” replacing the οἰκτίρω word group. Köster, \textit{TDNT} 7:552. Cf. also Esser, \textit{NIDNTT} 2:599. Significantly, it is therein predicated of God and thus may point to the background of the NT’s usage of σπλαγχνίζομαι. Köster argues that this “translation of רַחֲמִים by σπλάγχνα” introduced “in later Jewish writings . . . is undoubtedly the direct presupposition of the NT usage.” Köster, \textit{TDNT} 7:552. On the other hand, however, it is disputed whether Test. XII is actually a Jewish work at all; some have seen it as a Christian forgery and it is unclear whether there is a Jewish predecessor (Vorlage).

\textsuperscript{400} Therein, the verb οἰκτίρω translates מַעַל 11 times in 10 verses including depictions of God’s fatherly compassion (Ps 102:13) and “compassion according to his abundant lovingkindness” (Lam 3:32; cf. Exod 33:19). The others include 1 Kgs 8:50; 2 Kgs 13:23; Ps 101:14; Mic 7:19; Isa 27:11; Jer 13:14; 21:7. It also translates מַעַל in 10 verses, often of divine compassion (cf. Isa 30:18; Ps 101:14). See also \\textit{Pss} 4:2; 36:21; 58:6; 66:2; 76:10; 101:14, 15; 111:5; 122:2. It also translates a number of other terms once. The noun οἰκτήριμος most often translates מַעַל/מַעַל מַעַל in 28 verses, also often of God’s compassion. See 2 Sam 24:14; 1 Kgs 8:50; 1 Chr 21:13; 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 1:11; 9:19, 27, 28, 31; \\textit{Pss} 24:6; 39:12; 50:3; 68:17; 76:10; 78:8; 102:4; 105:46; 118:77; 156; 144:9; Hos 2:21; Zech 1:16; 7:9; Isa 63:15; Dan 1:9; 2:18; 9:9, 18. It also translates מַעַל twice (Zech 12:10; Dan 9:18) and מַעַל once (Dan 4:27). The related noun οἰκτήριμα, which never appears in the NT, translates מַעַל in Jer 38:13. The adjective οἰκτήριμων most often translates מַעַל (12 times), usually of God being “compassionate [οἰκτήριμων] and gracious [ἐγέρμων]” (Exod 34:6). Thus, the profoundly emotive nature of such compassion is evident. It also translates that phrase 9 more
The overlapping, emotive nature of both word groups is further evident by their collocations since both are closely related to the OT concept of ἀγαπάω. The οἰκτίρω word group also overlaps significantly with the ἔλεεω word group, especially as it relates to the notion of sympathy for someone else’s hardship. The σπλαγχνίζομαι word group collocates with the ἔλεεω word group only once, in the reference to the “tender [σπλαγχνον] mercy [ἔλεος] of our God” (Luke 1:78). The οἰκτίρω group also significantly collocates with the ἀγαπάω word group in the admonition “love your enemies . . . Be merciful [οἰκτίρμον], just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36) as does the σπλαγχνίζομαι word group elsewhere. Both groups also collocate with other major characteristics that relate closely to love including “kindness,” “comfort,” and “patience/longsuffering” among others.

They appear in Paul’s exhortations of Christians to “put on a heart [σπλαγχνον] of compassion [οἰκτιρμός]” (Col 3:12) and reference is made to “affection [σπλαγχνον] and compassion [οἰκτιρμός],” likely of the Philippians (Phil 2:1). Both also refer to God’s character, he is “full of compassion [πολύσπλαγχνος] and merciful” (Jas 5:11). The two word groups only collocate once in a single verse in the LXX (Prov 12:10) but that is insignificant considering the scarcity of the σπλαγχνίζομαι word group in the LXX.

Bultmann, TDNT 5:159. Bultmann goes so far as to say, “There is no palpable distinction between οἰκτίρμιν and ἔλεειν or οἰκτιρμοί and ἔλεος” in the LXX. Ibid., 160. See the discussion in the ἔλεεω word study just above this one.

In more than one verse the two are closely related, in Matt 18:27, 33 and Luke 10:33, 37. In the LXX the groups collocate in Prov 12:10 and Odes 9:18.

Some scholars have also suggested that both word groups function much like avgapa,w in the Gospels where avgapa,w is relatively infrequently used. Cf. Köster, TDNT 7:555–56. Both word groups collocate with the ἀγαπάω word group in Phil 2:1 and Col 3:12 and the ἀγαπάω word group collocates with the οἰκτίρω word group alone in Rom 9:13, 15 and the σπλαγχνίζομαι word group alone in Phlm 7; 1 John 3:17. They also collocate within two verses in Eph 4:32–5:1. In the LXX with οἰκτίρω see Pss. Sol. 9:8; Zech 12:10. Neither group ever collocates with the φιλίω word group.

That is, the χρηστός word group, which collocates with both in Col 3:12. See the parallel between the χρηστός and οἰκτίρμοι of God’s character as kind and merciful (Luke 6:34–36). In the LXX it collocates with the οἰκτίρω group in Pss 68:17; 111:5; 144:9.

That is, παράκλητος, which collocates with both in Phil 2:1 and σπλαγχνον in Eph 4:32. It collocates with σπλαγχνον in Phlm 7 and with οἰκτίρμος it depicts God as “the Father of mercies and God
The Meaning of the ζηλω Word Group

The ζηλω word group refers to passion for someone or something, which may take the form of negative jealousy or positive zeal.\(^{408}\) Thus, the group may refer to “holy zeal” (John 2:17; Rom 10:2; 2 Cor 11:2; Phil 3:6; Heb 10:27),\(^{409}\) negative hostility and anger, ill will (Acts 5:17; 7:9; 13:45; 17:5), jealousy as a vice (Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; 13:4; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Jas 3:14, 16; 4:2), or desire toward goals or devotion toward someone (1 Cor 12:31; 14:1, 39; 2 Cor 7:7, 11; 9:2; Gal 4:17, 18; cf. Rev 3:19).\(^{410}\) In all these the emotive, passionate sense is clear whether it is misdirected or positively directed.\(^{411}\) Accordingly, the statement “love is not jealous” (1 Cor 13:4) refers to the negative, misdirected, hostile sense of the term but does not rule out the positive passionate commitment,\(^{412}\) whether manifested by Christians, or that which is of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3).

\(^{407}\) That is, the μακροθυμία word group, which collocates with both in Col 3:12. In Matt 18:26 the debtor pleads for patience and receives compassion (σπλαγχνίζομαι) (Matt 18:27). In the LXX, this group collocates with οἰκτίρω, often in the locus classicus of God’s character (Exod 34:6) and allusions thereto (Neh 9:17; Pss 85:15; 102:8; 144:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). See also Dat 4:27. Therein it collocates with σπλαγχνίζομαι only in Ode 12:7.

\(^{408}\) Albrecht Stumpff, “ζηλο, ζηλω, ζηλωθή, παραζηλω,” TDNT 2:886. The verb appears 11 times in 10 verses. The noun ζηλός appears 16 times in 16 verses and refers to passionate commitment. That is, “the capacity or state of passionate committal to a person or cause.” Ibid., 877. Thus, the related noun, ζηλωτής, “zealot,” which appears 8 times in 8 verses, and frequently in the LXX. For W. Popkes, both “designate a passionate commitment to a person or cause.” “ζῆλευω, ζηλος, ζηλωθη,” EDNT 2:100. In classical Greek the noun may also have positive or negative connotations from “eager striving,” “enthusiasm,” “admiration,” to “jealousy,” “envy,” “ill-will.” H. C. Hahn, “ζηλος,” NIDNTT 3:1166. Another verb, παραζηλω, provoking to jealousy, appears 4 times in 4 verses, once of divine passion (1 Cor 10:22). The closely related verb, ζηλεύω, of intense interest and/or eagerness, appears once, exhorted by the resurrected Christ himself (Rev 3:19).

\(^{409}\) Such zeal toward God may itself be misguided “not in accordance with knowledge” (Rom 10:2). This is the case with Paul’s zeal as Christian persecutor (Phil 3:6). On the other hand, some is positive, “godly jealousy” (2 Cor 11:2). It refers to Jesus’ zeal (John 2:17) and once to God’s own zeal (Heb 10:27).

\(^{410}\) This summary adapts the very helpful outline of these four distinctive usages in Popkes, EDNT 2:100.

\(^{411}\) Likewise with the 8 instances of the noun ζηλωτής, which might be misguided or proper (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13; 21:20; 22:3; Gal 1:14; 1 Cor 14:12; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 3:13). Since the term may be positive or negative, depending on its context, it is especially important to avoid the error of illegitimate totality transfer.
exemplified in divine zeal for his people (cf. Heb 10:27), which itself corresponds to his profound love (cf. 1 Cor 14:1; Rev 3:19; Eccl 9:6). 413 While the word group is used relatively infrequently of divine passion in the NT, it corresponds to the very important καρπος in the OT, which is often used therein to describe God’s passionate love. 414

Divine Mercy, Compassion, and Passion in Gospels-Acts

For obvious reasons, Jesus is the most frequent (but not sole) agent of divine emotion in the Gospels. 415 Christ is depicted as the good shepherd who knows his sheep and they know him. His concern (μέλετ) for them is so great that he is even willing to die for his sheep (John 10:11,

412 That zeal is not always negative is evident in that Paul exhorts them to “pursue love, yet desire earnestly [ζητείν] spiritual gifts” (1 Cor 14:1). Likewise, Christ exhorts those he loves to “be zealous and repent” (Rev 3:19).

413 Significantly, although it is a positive divine attribute in the LXX, Philo, who only uses the term in its positive sense, rules out the concept as inappropriate to God. He criticizes those who speak of God “as they would of men, they add jealousy, anger, passion, and other feelings like these.” However, those who “are initiated in the true mysteries relating to the living God . . . never attribute any of the properties of created beings to him.” Lectures on St. John 113.60–61 (The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson), 163. Further, due to “fear of any kind of anthropomorphising” the idea of passion or jealousy came to be considered inappropriate to God among some Jewish scholars. See Stumpff, TDNT 2:879–80. While it was not avoided altogether the passionate force of the term is evaded, according to Stumpff.

414 See the word study of καρπος in chapter 4. With God as agent, the word group in the LXX refers to the “the intensity, the uncompromising involvement with which God deals with men.” Stumpff, TDNT 2:882: Hahn, NIDNTT 3:1166. Stumpff believes the usage in the LXX classifies it as belonging “to the very essence of God.” TDNT 2:884. The καρπος word group is almost always translated by the ζητείν word group in the LXX. Therein the noun ζητείς always translates the word group καρπος: 28 times it translates the noun παπαρικος and twice it renders the verb καρπος. There it often depicts divine passion (Deut 29:19; Ps 78:5). A different noun ζητετής appears 8 times in 8 verses in the LXX always translating καρπος (5 times, Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15) or καρπος (once, Nah 1:2). In every instance it refers to God’s jealousy; he is a “jealous God” (Deut 4:24). The verb ζητείν almost always translates καρπος (20 times) and also is often used of God’s jealous love (cf. Num 25:13). It also translates καρπος (Josh 24:19) and παπαρικος (2 Kgs 10:16) once. It renders a few other terms once as well. ζητετής never appears in the LXX. The verb ζητετήσιος translates καρπος 3 times (Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 14:22; Ps 77:58) and παπαρικος 3 times (Ps 36:1, 7, 8). The latter is always of human fretting while the former always refers to God being provoked to jealousy.

415 In this dissertation, such emotionality is taken as evidence of divine emotionality. The most powerful evidence for this position is the correspondence between the emotions of Jesus and the emotions exhibited by YHWH in the OT. See the methodology in chapter 1 for a discussion of the wider theological issues and rationale for ascribing Jesus’s emotions not merely to his human nature but to divinity.
This loving concern of Christ for his creatures is further evident in the angst he expresses over the unwillingness of Jerusalem to allow him to save her: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted [θέλω] to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling [οὐ + θέλω]” (Matt 23:37; par. Luke 13:34).

Later, Jesus “saw the city and wept [ἐκλάουσαν] over it” (Luke 19:41). Elsewhere, Jesus manifests anger (ὀργή) and is “grieved [συλλυπέω] at their hardness of heart” (Mark 3:5; cf. John 2:17) thus manifesting sympathetic grief (συλλυπέω) elicited by their callous disposition against God. At Lazarus’s death Jesus is said to be “deeply moved [ἐμβριμάμαι]” (John 11:33), so much so that he

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416 Notice the “reciprocal knowledge” here, which “is not superficial but intimate,” implying love, which is even compared to that between the Father and the Son (cf. John 10:15). Morris, The Gospel according to John, 455. Christ is “deeply concerned for the sheep” with “passions” that are “aroused.” Ibid., 454. Similar concern is demonstrated in action in the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son (Luke 15:5, 10, 19–20).

417 Here, “Jesus’ words betray great tenderness and employ maternal imagery.” Blomberg, Matthew, 350.


419 The verb συλλυπέω in passive as here means “to share in grief, sympathise, console,” never “to be grieved with.” Though Marcus thinks the latter seems to be the meaning required by the context here.” Mark 1–8, 248. So Vincent Taylor, The Gospel according to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1959), 223.


421 This term is used here of inner “anguish.” Köstenberger, John, 339. Cf. John 12:27; 13:21; Esth 4:4. The verb is immediately followed by the reflexive pronoun ἐμαυτόν, “himself.” Some suggest this rendering means that Jesus was master over his emotions. So Morris, The Gospel according to John, 494. B. M. Newman and Nida recognize this possibility but also note it may be a “kind of substitute passive.” A Handbook on the Gospel of John, 371–72. Yet, this seems to read too much into the reflexive, which likely simply connotes the intensity of the emotions. Certainly, no theological case can be made to the effect that Jesus’ emotions were not passive since John 12:27 and 13:21 use the passive form with Jesus as subject.
“wept” (δακρύω)\(^{422}\) (John 11:35).\(^{423}\) The Jews interpreted this as a signal of the degree of Jesus’ love for Lazarus: “See how much He loved [φιλέω] him” (John 11:36).\(^{424}\) This emotion two verses later refers to Jesus as “deeply moved [ἐμβρυμάωμαι] within” (John 11:38). The language used suggests profound emotion, perhaps that Jesus “shuddered, moved with the deepest emotions.”\(^{425}\)

Elsewhere, Jesus displayed the “zeal” (ζηλος) spoken of by the prophet when he cleansed the temple of those who were using it as a place of business, reminiscent of divine zeal in the OT.

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\(^{423}\) Jesus is possibly both grieved and angered at the situation of death, suffering, and lack of faith. Carson believes that Jesus may be both grieved at their unbelief and at the same time “moved by their grief” and “consequently angry with the sin, sickness and death” itself. Here, Jesus is both “angry” and “loving and empathetic” toward the people at once. *The Gospel according to John*, 416. However, there is considerable disagreement among scholars over the nature and cause of Jesus’s emotion in this verse. It is unclear whether Jesus wept for Lazarus or because of the broader misguided feelings and dispositions of the people, or simply was grieved at the situation of death and suffering. The first is rejected by most on the premise that Jesus would have known that he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead and thus there was no cause for weeping. The debate is generally between forms of the second and third options. The interpretation of such emotion is further complicated by the fact that the precise emotion described by ἐμβρυμάωμαι here and in v. 38 is further debated. The term would normally denote anger but the appropriateness of such emotion in this context has been questioned in favor of an emotion akin to compassion or pity. Cf. Lagrange, *Évangile selon saint Jean*, 304–5. Some manuscripts even soften the meaning of “anger” by reading “as if” before it. See R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII*, 426. However, the lexical evidence strongly points toward the meaning of “anger” despite the tendency toward softening the meaning. If this view is correct, what was Jesus angry at? Many contend that Jesus is angered by the lack of faith by those present. For example, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 192–93; Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 400. Or, perhaps Jesus is angered by the pain that sin and evil have caused or even angry toward the agencies of evil themselves. So, among others, Köstenberger, *John*, 339; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII*, 435. For a more comprehensive summary of positions taken on this issue and the arguments behind them see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 192–93; Köstenberger, *John*, 339–40.

\(^{424}\) Many commentators argue that those present misunderstand Jesus’ tears, which were not because of his love for Lazarus but because of his sadness at the disposition of the others present. So, among many others, Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 416; Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 496; Borchert, *John I–XI*, 360. Köstenberger, on the other hand allows that the Jews are “partially correct when they interpret Jesus’ tears as an expression of his love for Lazarus” but “err when they imagine his grief to be in despair.” *John*, 341–42. Similarly, Barrett contends that the Jews here “express the truth without perceiving it” though his “affection” and “love . . . for his own is” far greater than that felt by the mourners. *The Gospel according to St. John*, 400.

The passion narrative also exhibits the strong emotions of Jesus. Jesus greatly desires (ἐπιθυμεῖν) to eat the Passover with the disciples (Luke 22:15). As the cross nears, Jesus is “grieved [λυπέω] and distressed [ἀδημονεῖ]” and states, “My soul is deeply grieved [περίλυπος], to the point of death” (Matt 26:37–38; cf. Mark 14:33–34).

Yet, even in the midst of his suffering on the cross, Christ’s love yet remains, exhibited in his prayer of forgiveness for those who are crucifying him (Luke 23:34).

In a number of instances the love (ἀγαπάω or φιλέω) of Jesus also exhibits emotionality, often responsive to human disposition and/or action. For example, when a man approaches Jesus asking him how to inherit eternal life, Jesus, “looking [ἐμβλέπω] at him, felt a love [ἀγαπάω] for him” (Mark 10:21). Such love is here depicted as prompted by sight; it is thus a passible reaction, corresponding to the frequent instances where Jesus’ compassion is prompted by sight. Importantly, Jesus loves the man before calling him to decision, but response is required for the

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426 This is similar to God’s zeal for his name (cf. Isa 59:17; Ezek 39:25). Borchert comments, “The way Jesus reacted to the Jewish merchandising in the temple troubles some who cannot conceive of a loving Jesus being angry. But spineless love is hardly love. . . . Any theology that is monofocal and fails to encompass both love and judgment ultimately ends up in heresy.” John 1–11, 164.

427 The intensity and depth of this emotion is widely recognized by commentators. For example, Blomberg renders this as “overwhelmed with sorrow.” Matthew, 394. Similarly, Mark 14:33 reads, “very distressed [ἐκθαμβέω] and troubled [ἀδημονέω].” Note once again the idiom of the “soul” as the “seat of emotions,” depicting “deeply-felt emotion, not an outward show.” France, The Gospel of Matthew, 1004.


429 Marcus sees this as “fatherly affection (‘moved with love for him’).” Mark 8–16, 727. France sees an evaluative element noting that ἐμβλέπω denotes a searching look (see 14:67): so far he has passed Jesus’ careful scrutiny, and Jesus is duly impressed.” That Jesus loves him, then, “eliminates any suggestion that that man’s profession is insincere.” The Gospel of Mark, 403. Spicq comments, “Jesus was unable not to love the young man whose sincere and exceptional attachment to God he saw and admired.” Agape, 1:60.
relationship to continue and deepen (Mark 10:21–22). This exhibits the foreconditionality of such love.  

Likewise, emotions appear to be associated with Jesus’ love for Lazarus who is referred to as “he whom You love [φιλεῖω]” (John 11:3; cf.36) and Lazarus, Martha, and Mary are all designated as objects of Jesus’s love (ἀγαπᾶω) (John 11:5). Elsewhere, Jesus “loved [ἀγαπᾶω] His own [ἰδιός] who were in the world, He loved [ἀγαπᾶω] them to the end [τέλος]” (John 13:1).

There seems to be a great depth of love connoted by the expression “to the end,” likely connoting both intensity and endurance.  

Further, Jesus’ love is specifically “for his own,” itself a “term of endearment in some ANE literature.  

Divine beneficence toward humans is itself predicated on “the tender [σπλάγχνον] mercy [ἐλεος] of our God” (Luke 1:78). This terminology suggests that God’s mercy is intensely emotive and profoundly heartfelt. In numerous instances the divine mercy is on display. Jesus speaks of the “Lord” having “mercy” (ἐλεέω) on a man who has received a miracle (Mark 5:19). Further, God has given “help . . . in remembrance of His mercy [ἐλεος]” and has “displayed His great mercy [ἐλεος]” and has shown “mercy” (ἐλεος) in remembrance of the covenant (Luke 1:54, 430 The foreconditionality of divine love will be further discussed below. Stauffer sees this as an example of the responsibilities that come with election. “Jesus loves the rich young ruler with the love of God which summons men to the very highest. But the one who is called starts back.” *TDNT* 1:48. Thus, the man forfeits the conditional reward.


432 James Moulton notes that “ὁ ἴδιος without a noun expressed” appears in the papyri “as a term of endearment to near relations.” *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), 90. See the further discussion of love for one’s own as well as the notion of insider and outsider love further below.

433 σπλάγχνον idiomatically refers to the innards, depicting visceral emotionality. See the word studies above.
58, 72). Divine compassion is depicted as prompted by human need or distress in a number of Jesus’ object lessons. For example, in the parable of the prodigal son, the father saw (οὐράω) his returning son “still a long way off . . . and felt compassion [σπλαγχνύμη] for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed [καταφίλησε] him” (Luke 15:20). Though the son is, by his own admission, unworthy (ἀξίως), the sight of his return causes compassion to well up in the heart of the father, turning to joy and celebration (εὐφραίνω) (Luke 15:19, 24). The emotive nature of the father’s response is emphasized in that he ran to greet him, an undignified response according to the customs and norms of the day. The amazing endurance of the father’s compassion illustrates God’s enduring compassion, which surpasses all expectations.

Jesus is again the most frequent agent of mercy and compassion in this corpus, both descriptive of his divine character of love. Such compassion leads to appropriate action (cf. Matt 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34). Significantly, such compassion is often prompted by the sight of someone in distress, describing an emotive response toward its object(s). For example, Jesus, “seeing [οὐράω] the people, . . . felt compassion [σπλαγχνύμη] for them, because they

434 In one example, compassion is prompted by sight as is often the case of Christ’s compassion. The Samaritan, “when he saw [οὐράω]” a man badly beaten and robbed, “he felt compassion [σπλαγχνύμη]” and “took care” (ἐπιμελήσατο) of the fallen Jew and, in this way, “showed mercy [ἔλεος] toward him” (Luke 10:33–34, 37). Thus, “compassion is that which causes us so to identify with another’s situation such that we are prepared to act for his or her benefit (cf. 7:13; 15:20). Moreover, the content of the term is not significantly different from that of ‘love’ in v 27.” Nolland, Luke 9:21–18:34, 594. So, also Bock, Luke 9:51–24:53, 1032.

435 “All of these details are designed to picture the basic emotion expressed. The scene reminds one of the common picture of soldiers returning from a long separation from their families. The emotion is basic to the love that exists within a family and powerfully portrays the love of God.” Bock, Luke 9:51–24:53, 1314.

436 This conception of fatherly mercy and/or compassion is a significant theme in Luke (cf. 6:36; 8:51; 9:42; 11:2, 11, 13; 12:30, 32).


438 In such instances, the compassion is deeply emotive. Literally it could be rendered “his heart contracted convulsively.” Esser, NIDNTT 2:599. Such compassion of Jesus was “no condescending pity but rather a loving concern.” Stein, Luke, 222.
were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt 9:36). 439 In other instances, compassion and/or mercy is prompted by need or distress, without the mention of sight, often in direct response to a request440 and/or the exercise of faith.441 In a striking example, a man comes to Jesus seeking healing and Jesus is either “moved with compassion” (σπλαγχνίζω) or becomes angry (ὁργίζεσθε) and “sternly” (ἐμβριμάω) warns the man to keep quiet about his healing (Mark 1:41, 43–44).442 It is notable that in this passage Jesus’ action is explicitly

439 Cf. Mark 6:34. Elsewhere, Jesus “saw a large crowd, and felt compassion [σπλαγχνίζω] for them and healed their sick” (Matt 14:14). Yet again, “when the Lord saw [ὁράω] a widow of Nain, He felt compassion [σπλαγχνίζω] for her, and said to her, ‘Do not weep’” and proceeded to raise her son from the dead (Luke 7:13).

440 For instance, a man pleads with Jesus to “have mercy [ἐλέεω]” on his son who is a “lunatic” and “very ill” and “often falls into the fire and into the open water” (Matt 17:15). In Mark’s account the father cries for “pity” (σπλαγχνίζω) and “help” (βοηθεῖσθαι) from Jesus for his son who is often thrown into fire and water by a demon (Mark 9:22). Notice the close relationship of ἐλέεω and σπλαγχνίζω in the parallel accounts. The affirmative response of Jesus in healing the boy indicates that Jesus indeed had mercy/compassion in this instance. Later in Matthew, Jesus heals two blind men in response to their call for “mercy” (ἐλέεω) being “moved with compassion” (σπλαγχνίζω) (Matt 20:30–31, 34). Further, a Canaanite woman pleads for and receives mercy saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed” (Matt 15:32). Later, lepers call to Jesus for “mercy” (ἐλέεω) and are not disappointed (Luke 17:13; cf. 18:13). Elsewhere, without any recorded request, Jesus responds to the hunger of a large group of people, declaring to his disciples, “I feel compassion [σπλαγχνίζω] for the people” because they had not eaten for three days (Matt 15:32; cf. Mark 8:2). France renders this emotion, “Jesus’ heart went out to them.” The Gospel of Matthew, 763. The OT is replete with examples of human entreaty to God for mercy and/or compassion (cf. Ps 132:2–3). Such instances “frequently invoke God’s love as a motive for such assistance.” Marcus, Mark 8–16, 661.


442 In this verse there is “a genuine textual dilemma” as to whether σπλαγχνίζω is original or the term ὀργίζεσθε, which would signify anger, should be read here. Both verbs are used numerous times in Jesus’ ministry. Only a few texts support ὀργίζεσθε but it is the lectio difficilior and preferred by some for that reason, as well as its correspondence to ἐμβριμάω in 1:43 and the fact that it does not appear in the parallel passages in the Synoptics. See, among others, Brooks, Mark, 55; France, The Gospel of Mark, 115; Mark 1–8:26, 72; W. L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, 84. Metzger, on the other hand, argues for σπλαγχνίζω. A Textual Commentary, 76. So, also, Ernst Haenchen, Der Weg Jesu. Eine Erklärung des Markus-Evangeliums und der kanonischen Parallelen (Bd 6; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 94–96. If the reading “anger” is correct, Jesus may be angered not by the man’s request but perhaps at the suffering itself, or perhaps at his sorrow at the lack of faith around him in contrast to this faith-filled request stirs his emotions. For other proposals regarding the reading of “anger,” see Brooks, Mark, 55–56; France, The
voluntary: He states, “I am willing [θελω]; be cleansed” (Mark 1:41). As such, his will appears to be closely associated with being moved to compassion. In all this, Christ is “above all . . . the one who cares.”

However, while divine compassion is unmerited, it is not depicted as unconditional, rather it presumes appropriate response, including showing compassion to others, and can even be forfeited. Jesus quotes from the OT that he desires (θελω) “compassion” (λεος) rather than sacrifice (Matt 9:13; similarly, Matt 12:7). Accordingly humans are expected to reflect God’s character and “be merciful [οἰκτίρμων], just as your Father is merciful [οἰκτίρμων]” (Luke 6:36; cf. Matt 5:44–48). Jesus further states, “Blessed are the merciful [λεος], for they shall receive mercy [λεα]” (Matt 5:7; cf. 5:7; 7:2; 1 John 4:11; Jas 2:13). The reception of divine mercy, then, is conditional upon being merciful. Similarly, Luke quotes from the OT that God’s “mercy [λεος] is upon generation after generation toward those who fear [φοβομαι] him” thus continuing the emphasis on the contingent reception of divine mercy (Luke 1:50; cf. Exod 20:6; Ps 103:17 [LXX 102:17]).

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445 This recalls the expectation of appropriate response within mutual relationship included in the meaning of σιν in the OT. Cf. Bultmann, TDNT 2:482. Interestingly, in one instance, the mercies given by a human being are recognized by God, when an angel appears to Cornelius and proclaims, “Your prayers and alms [Ελεος] have ascended as a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4).

446 For Marshall, the reciprocality of this verse is evident even in the terminology as a translation of σιν in which it “takes on the nuance of an attitude arising from a mutual relationship, ‘faithfulness.’” The Gospel of Luke, 83.
The necessity of appropriate response is highlighted in the parable of the unforgiving servant. The debt holder “felt compassion” (σπλαγχνίζωμαι) for his servant and released him from a massive debt (Matt 18:27). Yet, because of the lack of that servant’s mercy toward his own debtor, the penalty was reinstated (Matt 18:33). This displays conditionality regarding the retention of compassion. The reception of compassion created a moral obligation to likewise show compassion and, thus, the servant should “have had mercy [ἐλεηῶ]” on his fellow slave “in the same way that [the master] had mercy [ἐλεηῶ] on” him (Matt 18:33). As such, divine compassion and mercy are here depicted as foreconditional, that is, they are given to the undeserving servant freely but then forfeited by the failure to show mercy to others (cf. Matt 6:12, 14–15). The foreconditional nature of mercy and compassion complements the foreconditional nature of love, the NT textual evidence for which will be taken up just after this section on divine mercy and compassion.

Divine Mercy, Compassion, and Passion in the Pauline Writings

Divine concern is also evident in the Pauline writings. While God is concerned to prescribe merciful treatment of oxen, he is even more concerned about the merciful treatment and just compensation of human laborers (1 Cor 9:9–10). Further concern is evident in the language

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447 The clause “felt compassion” signifies a decision that is not derived merely from “calculation” but responsive to need. “The king is moved by a visceral compassion (splanchnistheis, Matt 18:27) when he hears his debtor’s supplications and forgives the whole debt; but the latter shuts out all feelings of pity.” Spicq, TLNT 1:476.


449 In all this, “God will treat us according to the way we treat our brethren. The motivation for brotherly compassion is imitation of God; which puts the emphasis on the interiority and sincerity of the forgiveness.” Spicq, TLNT 1:477.

450 Perhaps the greatest evidence of divine concern and passibility is the oft-mentioned suffering (“passion”) of Jesus (Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24).

451 Paul here applies the law against muzzling an ox while threshing paradigmatically to human beings of divine concern. Cf. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 407–8; Thiselton, The First Epistle, 687.
of reciprocal knowledge between God and humans. Some “have come to know God, or rather to be known by God” and thus should not be turning back to “worthless elemental things” (Gal 4:9; cf. 1 John 4:10). Here, the swift transition from knowing God to being known by him by use of the construction “or rather” (μᾶλλον δὲ) emphasizes the priority of the divine initiative without nullifying the human response in such reciprocal, relational knowledge.452 Elsewhere, Paul speaks of being “jealous [ζηλόω] for you with a godly jealousy [θεοῦ ζηλω]; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin” (2 Cor 11:2).453 Apparently, Paul is vicariously manifesting God’s zeal for his people who are to be presented to Christ as a pure bride, mirroring the theme of God’s passionate commitment to an exclusive relationship with his people, found frequently in the context of the marriage metaphor in the OT. Further, divine jealousy, responsive to human action, is apparent in that it is possible to “provoke the Lord to jealousy [παραζηλόω]” (1 Cor 10:21–22).454

Mercy and compassion are also primary characteristics of God as grounds of his actions in the Pauline writings. He is “rich [πλοῦσις] in mercy [ελέος]” and acts for his people “because

452 Thus, “our knowing God is conditioned upon his prior knowledge of us.” Timothy George, Galatians (NAC 30; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 314. Cf. F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Galatians (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 202; Ronald Y. K. Fung, The Epistle to the Galatians (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 189. Some may view the phrase μᾶλλον δὲ as a retraction of the first statement. However, the same construction elsewhere may be rendered “all the more” (Acts 5:14) or “yes, rather” in the sense of moreso (Rom 8:34) and “but especially” and “but even more” (1 Cor 14:1, 5). It may also have a contrasting sense as rather or instead (Eph 4:28; 5:11). The point is not that humans may not know God. That would contradict Jesus’ statement of reciprocal knowledge of his own in John 10:14. Rather, the point is that any conception that human beings come to know God through their own initiative is utterly false. Such language of reciprocal knowledge is closely associated with love.

453 The genitive here might be subjective or objective. If the former, it represents God’s own jealousy for his people, parallel to that in the OT. So Stumpff, TDNT 2:881; Hahn, NIDNTT 3:1167. However, it might be a genitive of quality or of origin. See Popkes, EDNT 2:100.

454 While someone might argue that the following clause, “we are not stronger than He, are we” (1 Cor 10:22), means that we are not strong enough to provoke God to jealousy; this would contradict the clear OT teaching that God was often provoked by his people. Rather, the reference to God’s strength seems to refer to foolishness of provoking God since we are weak and unable to withstand divine wrath. See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 474.
of His great love with which He loved” humans (Eph 2:4; cf. Phil 1:8; Eph 4:32).\textsuperscript{455} Again, God’s “kindness” (χρηστότευς) and “love [φιλαθρωπία] for mankind appeared” and “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy [ἐλεος], by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4–5).\textsuperscript{456} There is, then, a close association between divine mercy and love and both function, among other elements including love proper, as the ground and motivation of God’s loving action(s), in contrast to human merit.\textsuperscript{457}

However, as in the Gospels, the reception and/or retention of divine mercy is not strictly ungrounded or unconditional. For example, Paul is called by divine mercy to apostleship, an undeserved yet not wholly arbitrary or non-evaluative call. The evaluative aspect of the call is apparent in that Paul is thankful that God “considered [him] faithful” and used him despite his former antagonism to Christianity. He was “shown mercy because” he “acted ignorantly in unbelief” and “for this reason” he “found mercy” in accordance with the “more than abundant . . . grace of our Lord” and “the faith and love [ἀγάπη] that are in Christ Jesus,”\textsuperscript{458} in order that the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{455} Here, the motivation of God’s action is described. It is an emotive motivation: “διά plus the accusative of words for emotion indicates motivation.” Lincoln, \textit{Ephesians}, 100. Also, O’Brien, \textit{The Letter to the Ephesians}, 166. Cf. Exod 34:6; Deut 7:7–9. Elsewhere, the Christians are exhorted to “Be kind [χρηστότευς] to one another, tender-hearted [ἐυσπλαγχνος], forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph 4:32). Further, Paul himself “longs” (ἐπισποθέω) “with the affection [σπλαγχνον] of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:8). It is not clear in this latter instance whether the genitive is one of source such that the affection Paul feels comes from Jesus or one of quality, that Paul feels affection akin to that felt by Jesus. Perhaps Paul does not intend a fine distinction between these two. “Paul loves them as Christ loves them and because Christ loves them through him.” Hawthorne, \textit{Philippians}, 29. See Fee, \textit{Paul’s Letter}, 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{456} This is likely related to the frequent basis of God’s actions in his abundant lovingkindness (cf. Num 14:19; Neh 13:22; Pss 25:7 [24:7]; 51:1 [50:3]; 106:45 [105:45]; 109:26 [108:26]; 119:88, 124, 149, 159 [all Ps 188]; Lam 3:32, all of which translate ἔσοι with ἐλεος). Such mercy further amounts to the divine healing of Epaphroditus, upon whom God had mercy (ἐλεος) (Phil 2:27; cf. 2 Cor 4:1–2; 1 Tim 1:2).
  \item \textsuperscript{457} Such “salvation was totally unmerited, since we were dead in our trespasses.” O’Brien, \textit{The Letter to the Ephesians}, 164. Cf. Lincoln, \textit{Ephesians}, 100.
  \item \textsuperscript{458} It is not clear who the agent of such love is, whether Christ or Paul. For a discussion of this see G. W. Knight, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 98.
\end{itemize}
“perfect patience” (μακροθυμία) of Christ might be demonstrated as an “example” in Paul (1 Tim 1:12–14, 16; cf. 1 Cor 15:9–10). Accordingly, Paul is “by the mercy of the Lord trustworthy” (1 Cor 7:25; cf. Rom 12:1). It is especially striking that the reception of mercy was predicated on Paul’s ignorance. As such, divine mercy is here manifested as both unmerited and evaluatively responsive. Similarly, it is interesting that Paul calls for God’s “mercy” (ἐλεος) to be granted to Onesiphorus and his house, “for[o] he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me—the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord” (2 Tim 1:16–18; cf. Col 3:12). Elsewhere, Paul states, “those who will walk by this rule, peace [εἰρήνη] and mercy [ἐλεος] be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16; cf. Heb 10:28). At the same time, while divine mercy is neither arbitrary nor

459 Importantly, this phrase is intensive referring to the immensity of God’s patience but does not denote that it is “unlimited.” So Towner, The Letters, 149. That God’s mercy is not unlimited is apparent in the OT and NT.

460 That is, though Paul had acted in ways that made him undeserving of mercy, he does not depict divine mercy as arbitrary or non-evaluative. Rather, he speaks of being considered faithful and notes that his ignorance was taken into account as a rationale for mercy. Accordingly, divine mercy is not merely unilateral or arbitrary but may take into account its object. G. W. Knight contends that “because” (ο[τί]) does not describe “the reason that Paul was shown mercy, as if his ignorance made him worthy and therefore elicited the mercy” but explains why such sins were not the “defiant or high-handed sin mentioned in the OT” (cf. Num 15:30, 31). The Pastoral Epistles, 96. Cf. Towner, The Letters, 140. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., on the other hand, speak of this as a “negative cause of the divine mercy. God demonstrated mercy to Paul because Paul was ignorant of the true nature of Jesus as Lord and Savior. . . . Paul did not sin against better knowledge and commit a willful sin (Heb 10:26).” I, 2 Timothy, Titus (NAC 34; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 73–74. Accordingly, Paul’s ignorance can be a basis (not the basis) of mercy without thereby meaning that Paul was in any way worthy. The ultimate priority of God’s graciousness is not lessened by such evaluation.

461 This seems to correspond to the reciprocal nature of ἀγάπη in the OT rather than a purely unmotivated mercy. Accordingly, the “elect” are expected to manifest such compassion (cf. Col 3:12).

462 It is probable that “Israel of God” is epexegetic, in apposition with those who walk by the rule. Many interpreters read it this way. For example, J. Louis Martyn interprets, “As to all those who follow this standard in their lives, let peace and mercy be upon them, that is to say upon the Israel of God.” Galatians (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 559. So, Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians (WBC 41; Dallas: Word, 2002), 298. Cf. Ps 125:4–5. On the other hand, some scholars insist that the term “Israel” is never applied to Gentile Christians elsewhere in the NT. So Ernest De Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (ICC 35; New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 358. But this is not compelling (cf. Rom 9:6 for example). Longenecker correctly argues that it is not impossible that Paul refers to the Gentile converts of Galatia throughout this verse thereby focusing on the essential question of the book: “Who really are the children of Abraham? (cf. esp. 3:6–9, 14, 16, 26–29; 4:21–31),” the answer being: those in Christ. Galatians, 298. See the detailed discussion in ibid., 297–98.
altogether unmotivated, it is undeserved and merited and available to all (cf. Rom 9:15–18; 11:30–32). Everyone is undeserving of God’s mercy but God has the right to bear longer with some than others (cf. Rom 9:23) in accordance with his wider plan of salvation. In all this, God is the “Father of mercies [οἴκτυρμοῦ] and God of all comfort [παράκλησις]” (2 Cor 1:3).

Divine Mercy, Compassion, and Passion in the General Epistles-Revelation

Divine emotion is further evident in that God “remember[s]” and has “concern” (ἐποικέπτομαι) for humankind (Heb 2:6). Accordingly, God “took them by the hand to lead them” but “they did not continue in” his “covenant, and” therefore he “did not care [ἀμελεῖ] for them” (Heb 8:9). Here, then, divine concern is conditional and may be forfeited. Yet, later, God declares, “I will be merciful [[Iλεῷ] to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (Heb 8:12). Elsewhere God’s care is the basis of putting trust in him as Peter exhorts, cast “your

463 For instance, consider the oft-misunderstood proclamation of Exod 33:19, quoted by Paul, “I will have mercy [ἐλε.ravel] on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion [οἴκτυρμο] on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). In Exodus, the quoted statement of Rom 9:15 denotes that God is able to have mercy on the Israelites even though they have sinned with the golden calf. How much more is God able to have mercy upon the Gentiles in NT times? Such compassion and mercy are undeserved but God has the right to bestow it on the undeserving. See also Rom 9:16–18 and the discussion of these verses as well as the wider meaning of Rom 9–11 under the volitional nature of divine love above. In that same vein, Paul argues that many Gentiles have received “mercy because of [Israel’s] disobedience” (Rom 11:30) “that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy” (Rom 11:31). Thus, “God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all” (Rom 11:32; cf. 15:9). The deterministic view restricts the second “all” to mean all people in the sense of “both Jews and Gentiles.” Schreiner, Romans, 629. Others have interpreted this to point toward universalism. However, the parallel meaning of the two uses of “all” is preserved without the contradiction of universalism by understanding that such mercy is not unilaterally efficacious unto salvation. As such, all receive mercy but not all will respond to that mercy (cf. Rom 11:22–23).

464 For similar Pauline descriptions of God’s amazing, loving character, see 2 Cor 13:11; Rom 15:5, 13; 16:20; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16. The merciful and compassionate God is thus also the great comforter. God “comforts [παράκαλέω]” humans who can in turn comfort others as they “are comforted by God” (2 Cor 1:4). Humans may share in the “sufferings” of Christ but likewise the abundant “comfort” (παράκλησις) through Christ (2 Cor 1:5). God also “comforts” (παράκαλέω) the depressed (2 Cor 7:6). However, divine comfort does not take away suffering as such; the situation is much more complex than that. The emphasis on God as comforter corresponds to the OT depiction of the prophets, especially Isaiah. Cf. Isa 40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9; 61:2; 66:13. Cf. Luke 2:25.
anxiety on Him, because He cares [μέλω] for you” (1 Pet 5:7).\(^{465}\) Similarly, Jesus is able to
“sympathize [συμπαθέω] with our weaknesses” (Heb 4:15; cf. 2:18; 5:8).\(^{466}\)

Elsewhere, divine passion of God appears as a “consuming fire [καταναλίζω]” (Heb
12:29). His passionate love for his people is accordingly the basis of “a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury [ζηλος] of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb 10:27; cf. Isa 26:11).\(^{467}\) God’s wrath is provoked by Israel, for God was repeatedly “tried,” “tested” (δοκιμασία), and “grieved” by his people (Heb 3:8–10; cf. 3:15; Pss 94:4; 95:9–11). The relationship of concern and love to discipline appears when Jesus states, “Those whom I love [φιλέω], I reprove [ἐλέγχω] and discipline [παιδεύω]; therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev 3:19).\(^{468}\) Discipline itself is a manifestation of God’s love, which looks for the ultimate well-being of its objects.

In this corpus it is likewise clear that mercy, along with other elements, is a central characteristic of God’s love (cf. 2 John 3; Jude 2) and a basis of salvation. Thus, God’s “great mercy [ἐλεος] has caused us to be born again” (1 Pet 1:3; cf. 2:10). This central characteristic of mercy is also exemplified in Jesus who became a “merciful [ἐλεήμων] and faithful [πιστός] high priest” (Heb 2:17).\(^{469}\) Accordingly, Jesus can “sympathize [συμπαθέω] with our weaknesses [ἀθένεια],” having been tempted (Heb 4:15).

\(^{465}\) God is thus “concerned with the affairs of man.” Davids, *The First Epistle*, 188. “He has compassion on his children and will sustain them in every distress.” Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter Jude*, 241.

\(^{466}\) The word, from which the English “sympathy” is derived, literally means to feel something with someone. “In its fullest sense sympathy is a bond similar to a mother’s feeling for her children (4 Macc 13:13–14; 15:4, 7, 11) or one brother’s feeling for another (4 Macc 13:23).” Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 283. As in the rest of the NT, the sufferings of Jesus are frequently mentioned (Heb 2:9–10; 9:26; 13:12; 1 Pet 1:11; 2:21, 23; 4:1; 5:1).

\(^{467}\) In the LXX parallel of Isa 26:11 this divine passion is in favor of his people. It is his passionate love, which manifests itself in fury against those who hurt his children.


\(^{469}\) Notice the association of mercy with faithfulness, which may reflect the οἰκονομία πίστιν construction
Divine mercy, which itself motivates God’s salvific action, is available only through Jesus; because of him humans can draw close to the throne of grace and “receive mercy and find grace” (Heb 4:16). Accordingly, the “beloved” are to be careful and “keep” themselves “in the love [ἀγάπη] of God” in a state of “waiting anxiously for the mercy [ἔλεος]” of Jesus “to eternal life” (Jude 1:21; cf. Heb 4:6). In another instance, it is implied that endurance is rewarded out of God’s abundant compassion and mercy. God “is full of compassion [πολύσπλαγχνος] and is merciful [οἰκτίρμων]” and, therefore, those who endure can be sure of their reward (Jas 5:11; cf. Exod 34:6; Sir 2:11). Likewise, conditionality is apparent in the statement that “judgment will be merciless [ἀνέλεος] to one who has shown no mercy [ἔλεος]; mercy [ἔλεος] triumphs over judgment” (Jas 2:13). The condition, then, of receiving mercy is bestowing mercy. The key is one’s heart disposition. Conversely, “anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Heb 10:28).

Accordingly, divine mercy may be forfeited. Thus, while God “took them [Israel] by the hand to lead them . . . they did not continue in” his “covenant” and he “did not care [ἀμέλεω] for them” (Heb 8:9). However, later, in the new covenant, he “will be merciful [[ipéoς] to their iniquities” and “will remember [μιμνήσκομαι] their sins no more” (Heb 8:12). Importantly,
however, while there is continuity with regard to the corporate object (Israel) of the mercy that is bestowed in Heb 8:12, the individual agents are different. In other words, those who forfeited the mercy in the wilderness are not the beneficiaries of God’s extended mercy in the covenant he makes “with the house of Israel after those days” (Heb 8:10).

Kinship Metaphors

The relational responsiveness that provides the context for divine-human relationships including election, covenant, and blessing/discipline, as well as aspects of conditionality and unconditionality, is conveyed quite powerfully in kinship metaphors including those of parent-child and marriage. These stand at the junction of the emotional nature of divine love and the foreconditional and reciprocal aspects of God’s love, depicting the strong affection as well as the reciprocity expected of the divine-human relationship that God seeks with his creatures.

Kinship Metaphors in the Gospels-Acts

The marriage analogy frequently depicts the God-human love relationship in this corpus. Just as God is depicted as the husband of his people in the OT, Jesus takes on the role of the bridegroom who will metaphorically wed his bride, the church (Matt 9:15; 25:1, 5–6, 10; Mark 2:19–20; Luke 5:34–35; John 3:29). This marriage metaphor forms the background of Jesus’ identification of the “adulterous” (μοιχαλίς) generation, which heeds not his words (Matt 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38). The contingency of this special divine-human relationship is apparent when the conditionality of being part of the wedding party is depicted in the parable of the ten virgins (cf. Matt 25:10).

The parental analogy is likewise prominent in the Gospels. First and foremost it depicts the intra-trinitarian relationship of the Father and the Son. Thus, Christ is the true Son of God, often spoken of as his “beloved” son (cf. Matt 3:17).474 Christ is thus the fulfillment of the OT

474 Repeatedly, reference is made to Christ as the Son of the Father throughout the NT. Here and
sonship and, as such, the divine promises are appropriated to and through him (cf. Matt 2:15).

Moreover, God is the “Father” of Christ whom he loves (John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17) and of his human creatures whom he loves (John 14:21, 23; 16:27). Indeed, the Father loves his human children even as he has loved the Son (John 17:23). This Fatherhood of God depicts his personal and intimate relationship to his creatures, a relationship that is dynamic and full of affectionate concern and appropriate emotion. Moreover, the Son loves the father (John 14:31) and the human children love the Father (Matt 22:37; cf. John 5:42; 8:42; 1 John 5:1), the Son (John 14:21, 23), and are to love one another in the same way (John 13:34).

Accordingly, humans are repeatedly referred to as children (cf. Mark 10:24; John 13:33) even “children [τῆς κοινῆς] of God” (John 11:5). Yet, this relationship requires appropriate response. Thus, it is those who respond to God that may be “sons [υἱός] of God” (Matt 5:9, 45; Luke 6:35; 20:36). Although God is the “father of all” (cf. Eph 4:6) as their Creator, status as born-again children of God is neither natural nor automatic (cf. Matt 8:12). Those who become God’s children are adopted; “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). Accordingly, those “who were born, not of blood nor of the will elsewhere in this section only a few examples are given out of many.

475 God is also identified as “Father” to his human creatures in Matt 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8–9, 14–15, 18, 26, 32; 7:11; 10:20, 29; 13:43; 18:14; 23:9; Luke 6:36; 11:2, 13; 12:30, 32; John 20:17; cf. Luke 15:12, 17–18, 20–22, 27–29. Of course, the identification of God as “Father” in general or to Christ as Son is extremely frequent throughout the NT.

476 In continuity with the OT parental metaphor, Christ came to the “daughter of Zion” as her king (Matt 21:5; John 12:15). Moreover, this NT concept of Christians as children of God clearly picks up on the OT emphasis on Israel as God’s chosen/adopted son (cf. Exod 4:22–23; Hos 11:1; Deut 32:18; Jer 31:9).

477 John, however, reserves this term for Christ; humans may be children but not υἱός of God, though “sons of light” comes close (John 12:36). This is likely to distinguish the nature of his sonship from all others.

478 Even the “sons of the kingdom” may ultimately be lost for their rejection of Christ (Matt 8:12).

479 Similar response is apparent in that “unless one is born [γεννάω] of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). R. E. Brown sees a distinction between Paul’s language of adoption and John’s language of begetting. The Epistles of John, 389. Cf. R. Alan Culpepper, “The Pivot
of the flesh nor of the will [θέλημα] of man, but of God” (John 1:13). This adoption is thus predicated on the divine will, but is neither unilateral nor unconditional but requires appropriate response. Accordingly, Jesus described such status conditionally: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons [υἱός] of God” (Matt 5:9; cf. Matt 13:43). Similarly, Jesus exhorts humans to love their enemies “so that you may be sons [υἱός] of your Father [πατήρ] who is in heaven” (Matt 5:44–45; cf. Luke 6:35).

As such, humans become children of God through Christ, the true Son, as adoptees. The fullness of this transfer of status is apparent when Jesus states, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God” (John 20:17). As God’s adopted children, believers are brothers and sisters to Christ and to one another. But once again, this applies in a particular manner to those who respond appropriately to God as Jesus states, “Whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Matt 12:50; cf. Mark 3:35; Luke 8:21). of John’s Prologue,” NTS 27 (1980): 1–31. In contrast are those who are of their “father the devil” and the “sons of the devil” (John 8:44; Acts 13:10).


481 “All are his [the Father’s] sons in the sense that he made them and that he provides for them. But people are his sons in the full sense only as they respond to what he does for them in Christ.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 87. “The ‘children,’ then, are those who believe.” Ibid. So Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 141. Cf. Matt 5:9.

482 Christ refers to the followers as “brothers” to one another (Luke 22:32; cf. 15:27, 32) and they themselves refer to one another as “brethren” (John 21:23; Acts 6:3; 9:30). In many instances the term seems to refer to a Jew speaking to other Jews (cf. Rom 9:3; this is especially the case in many instances in Acts) but the language also refers to Christians, including Gentile Christians. Significantly, Jesus even refers to his “brothers” in a seemingly universal sense (Matt 25:40) but the term is also specifically applied to his followers (Matt 12:49–50; 28:10; Mark 3:34–35; Luke 8:21; John 20:17).

483 Thus, “the disciples of Jesus are his true family because they follow his teaching.” Hagner, Matthew 1–13, 360. Cf. similarly Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 519. “It is the performance of the will of God which is decisive in determining kinship with Jesus.” W. L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, 148.
Kinship Metaphors in the Pauline Writings

Similarly, in the Pauline writings, Christ is compared to the husband and the church to his bride whom he “loved” and for whom he “gave Himself up” (Eph 5:23–27) and to whom the church is “betrothed . . . as a pure virgin” (2 Cor 11:2).484 The parental analogy is also integral in the Pauline writings where Christ is the Father’s true Son, “His beloved [ἀγαπητός] Son” (Col 1:13). Likewise, God is the “Father” to his human children, “the beloved of God” (Rom 1:7).485 Accordingly, humans are repeatedly referred to as the “children of God” (Rom 8:16–17, 21; 9:7–8; Phil 2:15; cf. Gal 4:28; Eph 5:1, 8). Importantly, however, this relationship is conditional. Though the Israelites were God’s elect and, as such, his children, Paul proclaims they are not all “children because they are Abraham’s descendants” for “it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants” (Rom 9:7–8; cf. Rom 9:26–27; 1 Pet 3:6). Rather, “all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14).486 Moreover, Christians are to “prove” themselves “blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach” (Phil 2:15; cf. Eph 5:8). Thus, those who respond to the divine overture may be “sons [υἱός] of God” (Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; 4:6–7).

Therefore, although there is universality to divine love evident in the NT, the Father’s love is directed in a particular way toward those who have entered into a “kinship” relationship with him and are thus “beloved” (Rom 1:7).487 This status is only possible in and through Christ: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:26). In this same vein, the OT

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484 Interestingly, Paul is here “jealous with a godly jealousy” that they be pure to present to Christ. This relates to the significant meaning of divine passion in the OT, specifically God’s passion for exclusive relationship with his bride.

485 Elsewhere the fatherhood of God toward humans appears in Rom 8:15; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3–4; 4:6; Eph 1:2; 4:6; Phil 1:2; 4:20; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:3; 3:11, 13; 2 Thess 1:1; 2:16; Phlm 1:3.

486 In contrast are the “sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:2; 5:6; Col 3:6).

487 As has been seen, the “beloved” are specifically those who have responded to God’s loving overtures. Thus, God is the “the Father of those who believe,” Mounce, Romans, 64.
covenant language is explicitly appropriated in language kingship when Paul exHORTS them to separate from any hint of idolatry and quotes God’s proclamation: “I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me” (2 Cor 6:18). Such father-child relationality IS here specifically contingent upon the forsaking of idolatry and, accordingly, entering into an exclusive relationship.

Accordingly, this status as God’s children is neither natural nor automatic, for Christians were previously “children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). Yet, humans might receive “adoption as sons” only through Christ, that is, “in the Beloved” (Eph 1:5–6; similarly, Rom 8:23; Gal 4:5–6; cf. Rom 9:4). Christians, then, have “received a spirit of adoption as sons” by which they “cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” and are “fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:15, 17). Christians are therefore “brethren” of one another and of Christ, through Christ, and, as such, should love one another (cf. 1 Thess 4:9). Indeed, the plan of salvation was instituted so that Christ “would be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29; cf. 1 Cor 8:12).

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488 This terminology of “adoption as sons” is akin to that in Greco-Roman law of those who were not sons by birth. See Lincoln, Ephesians, 25. There is some continuity to this metaphor with respect to the OT covenants and Israel “to whom belongs the adoption as sons . . . and the covenants” (Rom 9:4). “It is only through the work of God’s Son, the Beloved, that believers can be adopted as sons (cf. Eph 4:13; Rom. 8:29; Gal. 3:26; 4:4, 5).” O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, 103. Cf. M. Barth, Ephesians 1–3, 83, 86; Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, 254; O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, 103; Lincoln, Ephesians, 27. Thus, “the term ‘Beloved’” of Christians shows that God’s election of believers to be his sons and daughters is intimately related to their being in Christ the Chosen One (cf. v. 5), and that the bounty which he lavishes on them “consists in their being caught up into the love which subsists between the Father and the Son” (cf. John 3:35; 5:20; 17:23, 26).” O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, 104–5. Similarly, Lincoln, Ephesians, 27.

489 Consider Francis Lyall’s contention that Paul uses the concept of adoption from Roman law intentionally to illustrate that the “believer” is adopted and “made part of God’s family forever, with reciprocal duties and rights.” “Roman Law in the Writings of Paul: Adoption,” JBL 88 (1969): 466. On the other hand, James M. Scott argues convincingly that the OT covenants form the background of this Pauline language. Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of Huiothesia in the Pauline Corpus (WUNT; Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1992).

490 Thus, Christians repeatedly refer to one another as “brethren” (John 21:23; Acts 6:3; 9:30; Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 1:8; Gal 1:2, 11; Eph 6:23; Phil 1:12; Col 1:2; 4:7; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 1:3; 1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 4:21; cf. 2 John 1:13). Note also the language used of individuals, for instance “our sister Phoebe” (Rom 16:1) or “Sosthenes our brother” (1 Cor 1:1). That the category of brethren is not automatic is implied when Paul refers to some who are immoral, etc., as a “so-called brother” (1 Cor 5:11). Likewise, a brother may need to be turned back lest he be lost (Jas 5:19–20). Further, NT authors frequently refer to
Kinship Metaphors in the General Epistles-Revelation

In this corpus the marriage and parental metaphors again appear with great significance. In Revelation, the church is depicted as Christ’s bride made ready for her wedding (Rev 19:7; cf. Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17). The marriage metaphor of the OT is also the background to the concept that friendship (φιλία) with the world is hostility to God in Jas 4:4. In other words, those who love the world are guilty of “spiritual adultery” and thus James begins the verse with the address: “You adulteresses” (μοιχαλίς).491 The parental metaphor also appears when Jesus is again identified as the true Son of the Father, his “beloved Son” (2 Pet 1:17). Through his sonship, others may be children of God. Thus, God is the “Father” of his human children upon whom he has bestowed great love “that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). Accordingly, reference is made to those who are “beloved in God the Father” (Jude 1).492 Moreover, as in the previous sections of the NT, human beings are even referred to as God’s sons (υἱός) (Heb 12:5–8; Rev 21:7) and “children [ζέκυνον] of God” (1 John 3:1–2, 10; 5:2; cf. 2 John 1:1, 4, 13). But not all humans are God’s children in this manner. Rather, those who become God’s children are adopted; according to the “great love” that the “Father has bestowed” Christians might be “called children of God” (1 John 3:1).493 In order to become such a child of God, appropriate response is required.

Christians as “beloved brethren” (1 Cor 15:58; Phil 4:1; Jas 1:16, 19; 2:5) or to individuals as “beloved brother” (Eph 6:21; 1 Cor 4:7, 9; Philm 1:16; 2 Pet 3:15; cf. 1 Tim 6:2; Philm 1:1; 3 John 5). See further the connection between being “beloved” and “brethren” further below.

491 So Moo, The Letter of James, 186; L. T. Johnson, James, 279; K. A. Richardson, James, 178.

492 Elsewhere, God is depicted as the “Father” of humans in Heb 12:7; Jas 1:27; 3:9.

493 “To them he gave authority to become God’s children; they were not so by nature (contrary to the Gnostics!), but became such by authorization of the Logos. This implies a concept of adoption, which in v 13 gives way to that of regeneration (the theme is developed in 3:1–21).” Beasley-Murray, John, 13. Moreover, “being a child of God is neither a quality possessed by all nor an exclusive prerogative for Israelites; it is an entitlement for those who believe in the Word. . . . This assumes that, in one sense, sinful people are not God’s children, even though they are created by God, unless and until they believe in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 3:1–2).” Köstenberger, John, 39. So, also R. E. Brown, The Gospel according to John I–XII, 3. Notice, the two verses immediately previous, therein John exhorts the “children” to “abide in Him” so as not to “shrink away from Him in shame at His coming” (1 John 2:28) and then it speaks of those who
Thus, “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son [υἱός]” (Rev 21:7). Further, the contingency of this status is evident in the exhortation “brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble” (2 Pet 1:10; cf. 1 Pet 3:6). Likewise, such familial status is not guaranteed for “Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end” (Heb 3:6). Because such status might be forfeited, the Father’s loving concern for such sons may be manifested in discipline when necessary without which they are “illegitimate children and not sons” (Heb 12:6–8; cf. Rev 3:19). Further, once again this section of the NT follows through with the analogy such that those who are children of God are the “brethren” of Christ and of one another. As brethren, the children of God are to love one another (cf. 1 Pet 1:22; 2:17).

The Foreconditional Aspect of Divine Love

This section focuses on data that lead to the conclusion that divine love is foreconditional, not altogether unconditional. First, divine love is prior to all other love and practice righteousness as having been “born [γεννάω] of him” (1 John 2:29). Accordingly, such status as children requires appropriate response and perseverance.

Importantly, this loving discipline is aimed at eliciting a zealous repentant response. Such love is explicitly a love of concern, which expects a response. The discipline, as in the OT, is for their good (cf. 1 Cor 11:32). Accordingly, “God’s stern hatred of evil is a necessary part of his love for people.” Mounce, The Book of Revelation, 112.

Thus, Christians refer to one another as “brethren” (Heb 3:1; Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 5:9; 2 Pet 1:10; 1 John 3:13; 3 John 1:3; Rev 19:10; cf. Rev 12:10) and are Christ’s “brethren” (Heb 2:17). Moreover, “both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11; cf. 2:12).

The one who does not love his brother is not a child of God but a child of the devil (cf. 1 John 2:9–11; 3:10, 14–17; 4:20–21; 5:1–2; cf. 3 John 1). Accordingly, the status as child of God is conditional upon, and manifest by, love. Cf. Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 150; Kruse, The Letters of John, 126.

By the term “foreconditional” I mean that God’s love is offered prior to any conditions but not exclusive to conditions. Accordingly, that God’s love is foreconditional affirms that: (1) divine love is prior to any human initiative or response—it holds sole primacy regarding the divine-human love relationship. (2) God chooses to bestow his love prior to and independent of human desert or merit. (3) God’s love expects and ultimately requires an appropriate human response, even if that response is merely the intention...
conditions though it is not thereby altogether unconditional. Second, divine love is unmerited but not altogether unconditional. Third, divine love, as evaluative, is also conditional and may be forfeited. Therefore, it is not strictly unmotivated, spontaneous, disinterested, indifferent, or unconditional. Fourth, divine love is unconditional with respect to God’s volition, but conditional with respect to divine evaluation. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Is divine love altogether unconditional, spontaneous, or ungrounded? Is divine love mere beneficence? Is divine love altogether unmerited? Can divine love be forfeited, lost, discontinued and, if so, how and why?

Before we survey the NT evidence regarding these questions, the major theme of whether God’s beneficent actions are altogether gratuitous, “disinterested generous love,” or can be conditional upon human response must be answered. Thus, this section will begin with an excursus regarding the (fore)conditional nature of divine blessing and thereafter attention will be turned to a survey of the NT evidence with regard to the questions that circle around the conditionality vs. the unconditionality of love.

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498 It is frequently asserted that divine love is altogether unconditional. Thus, Morris comments, “we must clearly recognize that God’s love is unconditional.” Morris, Testaments of Love, 31. Likewise, Stauffer contends that Paul refers to “God’s unconditional sovereignty in loving and hating, electing and rejecting (R. 9:13, 25).” TDNT 1:49. This claim is often (but not always) connected to the popular view that ἀγάπη signifies a uniquely divine and unilateral gift love. Importantly, as has been seen, the term ἀγάπη is “often used by biblical writers to mean something other than unmotivated or spontaneous love.” Oord, “Matching Theology,” 139. See the word study of the ἀγαπάω word group above.

499 For instance, consider Spicq’s claim that divine ἀγάπη is identical to “charity” (think caritas) such that God’s love is always giving love and amounts to “disinterested generous love.” TLNT 1:8, 13. This is in keeping with his view that ἀγάπη love takes place within a benefactor-benefactee relationship where the superior’s ἀγάπη is gift love and the inferior’s love is “first of all consent, welcome, acceptance” and “gratitude . . . the love inspired in turn by generous love.” Ibid., 13. Thus, he refers to it as “the voluntary, purely gratuitous love which is authentic charity.” Idem, Agape, 1:85. Nygren and others who follow his view agree with the first part, that divine love is always gratuitous and disinterested, but contend that real human love toward God is impossible. Love from humans to God is really God’s own love flowing through humans to himself. See the historical survey of divine love in chapter 2 on this view.
The Conditional Aspect of Divine Beneficence

Divine love is not to be conflated with beneficence, though the latter is an aspect and outgrowth of the former. For instance, love does not always refer to something akin to blessing. For example, Jesus tells the story of a moneylender who “graciously forgave” (χαρίζω) the debts of two individuals. Importantly, the one whose debt was greater “will love him more [πλησιόν ἀγαπήρι]” (Luke 7:42–43; cf. 47). Notably, love is here proportionate to the greatness of forgiveness. Moreover, such “love” of the forgiven toward their benefactor cannot itself refer to active blessing since they have nothing tangible to give him. It is in this case a feeling or disposition of love. Love and blessing are therefore not identical.

Without confusing the two concepts, however, their close association should be recognized. This close relationship between divine love and blessing is apparent in numerous instances such as the many references to God’s love as the basis of his salvific action and adoption of human beings (cf. among many others Titus 3:4–5; 1 John 3:1). According to such love, God always does what is in the best interest of those he loves, even if that is not immediate blessing but, instead, discipline. Thus, “whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb 12:6) just as fathers discipline their sons (Heb 12:5, 7). God always disciplines humans for their good (Heb 12:10). Likewise Jesus proclaims, “Those whom I love [φιλέω], I reprove and discipline, therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev 3:19). Love is thus not exclusive to judgment. On the other hand, God pours out his gifts and blessings abundantly upon human beings (cf. Eph 1:3; Heb 6:14; Jas 1:17). As such, divine blessing is often described in terms akin to grace, that is, as benefits to the undeserving. Thus, in accordance with his “kindness” (χρηστότης) and “love for mankind” (φιλαθρωπία) God has saved humans “not on the basis of [our righteous] deeds” but “according to His mercy [ἐλεος]” (Titus 3:4–5).

500 Moreover, his “grace . . . He freely bestowed” and his grace he has “lavished on us” and has made known his will “according to His good pleasure” (Eph 1:6–9).
Yet, while the divine decision is the necessary condition of blessing and grace, it is not always a sufficient condition. Indeed, the reception of divine grace is often contingent upon appropriate response. Thus, divine blessings, even eschatological rewards, are often conditioned upon appropriate human disposition and/or response to God, including love and/or associated loving action. Thus, “God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name” in ministering (Heb 6:10). Elsewhere, Paul interprets the fact that all nations will be blessed in Abraham to mean “those who of faith are blessed,” thus making the reception of blessing contingent on faith (Gal 3:8–9). Likewise, he states, “grace [χάρις] be with all those who love [ἀγαπάω] our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible [ἀφθαρσία] love” (Eph 6:24).

Elsewhere, the reception of blessing appears to be on the basis of obedience: We receive what we ask “because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing [ἀρεστός] in his sight” (1 John 3:22). Again, the one “abides by” the law and is an “effectual doer,” the same “will be blessed in what he does” (Jas 1:25; cf. Luke 11:28). Thus, humans

501 This is in close connection with the OT conception of conditional blessing, itself most prominently featured within the framework of covenant.

502 On this idea of blessings attached to love for God, see Deut 11:13–14, 22–23; 19:9.

503 “Toward his name” almost surely refers to love toward God himself. So Koester, Hebrews, 312. Notice here the evaluative judgment. In this way, God is a “rewarder [μισχηταιοδότης]” of “those who seek him” (Heb 11:6; cf. Jas 1.5–7). The phrase, “those who seek him” likely corresponds to “those who love him” elsewhere. Loving God and seeking God are frequently associated in the OT, especially in Deuteronomy. Importantly, here the reward is likewise predicated on faith, which is itself the only way one might please God. Similarly, Luke quotes from the OT that God’s “mercy [ἐλεος] is upon generation after generation toward those who fear [φοβερομαι] him” (Luke 1:50; cf. Acts 10:35).

504 “So then, it is those whose identity is derived from faith who are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Martyn, Galatians, 294.

505 The referent and meaning of “in incorruptible” here are the subject of much debate. See Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, 415–16. However, whatever the precise function of that construction, the emphasis of the verse is on the reward associated with human love toward God.

506 Likewise, the ground that produces useful vegetation “receives a blessing [εὐλογία] from God,” a metaphor for the blessings contingent upon covenant faithfulness (Heb 6:7).

507 Interestingly, Moo sees the blessing as most likely salvific. The Letter of James, 95. Cf. Davids, The Epistle of James, 100. “There is always a direct connection between receiving the gifts of God and
who “love” their “enemies” will receive a great reward (μισθός)\(^508\) and be “sons of the Most High” (Luke 6:35; cf. 27) but those who “love” the praise of men have received their reward already (Matt 6:5; cf. Luke 14:14).\(^509\)

Ultimately, things wonderful beyond imagining are “prepared for those who love” God (1 Cor 2:9; cf. Isa 64:4).\(^510\) There is a “crown of righteousness”\(^511\) laid up for “all who have loved [ἀγαπάω] His appearing” (2 Tim 4:8).\(^512\) Similarly, the contingency of eschatological reward is apparent when Paul speaks of women being “preserved . . . if they continue in faith and love [ἀγάπη] and sanctity with self-restraint” (1 Tim 2:15; cf. Rom 11:22–23).\(^513\) Once again, “Blessed doing the will of God according to his Word. Those who are blessed by God live in the union of truth and action, which is their joy.” K. A. Richardson, James, 98.

\(^508\) This term refers literally to dues paid for labor, that is, wages or the natural reward for work. Cf. Fitzmyer, Luke I–IX, 635.

\(^509\) Likewise, Jesus advocates that one should invite to one’s banquet those who cannot repay but promises that the one who does so “will be repaid [ἀνταποδώμησις] at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14). Of course, God himself is implied as the one who will repay them. This is a divine passive. Interestingly, this beneficence is not wholly disinterested since the one doing so will be rewarded. See the discussion of the appropriate reciprocal nature of love below and in the following chapter. Notice also the language of Luke 6:27 that merely loving those who love you is not a “credit” (καταργείς) to you, which itself implies the evaluation and reward of human love by use of the language of grace. Likewise in Luke 6:33.

\(^510\) This “evokes an image of end-time salvation, confirms that God is behind it, and affirms that it can be appropriated only by those who love God.” Garland, 1 Corinthians, 97.

\(^511\) The meaning of this phrase is much-debated. Does it refer to “righteousness” itself that will be received in full at the eschaton or does it refer to a crown that is the reward of holy living? For a representative of the former view see G. W. Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 461. For a representative of the latter view see Lea and Griffin Jr., 1, 2 Timothy; Titus, 249. Towner wisely contends that we need not “distinguish too rigidly between” these. The Letters, 615. Perhaps Paul is thinking of righteousness that is “yet to be fully received,” as well as “the need for the believer to ‘cooperate’ in this process by means of his/her faithful response to God in godly living” while at the same time including a “note of ‘vindication’” in accordance with God as “the righteous judge.” Ibid., 616.

\(^512\) The description of “those who have loved his appearing” thus “characterizes those believers who will, like Paul, qualify to receive the reward as people whose lives have been marked by a determined and expectant forward look to the parousia and the consummation of the victory of God (Titus 2:13; Rom 8:23–25; Phil 3:20).” Towner, The Letters, 616. Cf. 1 Cor 9:27.

\(^513\) The use of ἐὰν + the subjunctive (3rd class condition) suggests that this condition is “uncertain of fulfillment.” Wallace, Greek Grammar, 696. Some have attempted to remove the soteriological significance by claiming that this refers to some blessing(s) other than personal salvation, claiming that otherwise salvation would be “conditional on a work.” See for a discussion of this issue in G. W. Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 145. On the contrary, Paul’s use of σωτήριος does seem to be referring to the
is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (Jas 1:12; cf. 5:11) and God promised the kingdom to “those who love him” (Jas 2:5). In all this, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28). On the other hand, the ones “outside” the holy city in the end are “everyone who loves and practices lying” (Rev 22:15). Likewise, the ones who perish, perish “because they did not receive the love [ἀγάπη] of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Thess 2:10). Similarly, the one who “does not love [φιλέω] the Lord, he is to be accursed [ἀνάθεμα]” (1 Cor 16:22).

Thus, eschatological blessing, even salvation, is repeatedly tied to proper human love. Though such love does not thereby earn salvation it is the appropriate response to God’s call and love, a necessary corollary of faith, which is itself a conduit of salvation (cf. Gal 5:6).

perseverance necessary for personal salvation in this instance. So ibid., 147–48; Lea and Griffin Jr., 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, 102. See the discussion of a similar issue with regard to 2 Pet 3:9.

On the supposition that those who love God are thus merely those whom God has unilaterally predestined to salvation, see the discussion of election and love previously. There it is argued that “called” refers to an invitation that is still open or has already been accepted; i.e., an invitation open to rejection (either at present or in the past).

Spicq rejects the idea that this is a liturgical formula, arguing that it deals with a person who is excluded from the church as well as from eternal life because they have refused membership in Christ. “Comment Comprendre philein dans 1 Cor 16:22,” NT 1 (1956): 204. Cf. idem, Agape, 3:81–85.

Likewise, passing from death to life assumes that one loves other humans while failing to love one’s brother amounts to abiding (μένω) in death (1 John 3:14). John states that one knows they have passed from death to life “because we love the brethren [ὅτι ἡγαπώμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς]” but the one who does not “love [ἀγαπᾶω]” abides in death (1 John 3:14). Most commentators argue that love is the basis of one’s knowledge of having passed from death to life rather than a reason for passing from death to life. It is thus supposed that the “conjunction ‘because’ (ὅτι) modifies the verb ‘we know’ (οιδαμεν) rather than ‘we have passed’ (metabebekamen).” Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 157. So Marshall, The Epistles of John, 191. Similarly, Kruse, The Letters of John, 135–36. It is further supposed that to assert otherwise would be “tantamount to a doctrine of salvation by works.” Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 189. Yet, Smalley comments that “the evidence, as well as the test, of having crossed over from spiritual death into the dimension of eternal life is both practical and objective; it is fraternal love.” First, it is not true that if love is necessary for the reception of God’s gift of eternal life that such love is thereby meritorious. Second, it is grammatically possible that “because” does correspond to “we have passed.” Further, the statement that the one who does not “love abides in death” suggests that “love is more than a sign of life.” R. E. Brown, The Epistles of John, 446. In fact, love may be the basis of knowing that one has passed into eternal life and at the same time a condition of eternal life. Edward Malatesta contends one remains spiritually dead “until he has chosen to make love a conscious activity,” which itself includes breaking “away from the world.”
soteriological conditionality is not opposed to grace and salvation as a gift once one understands that the very possibility and ability to respond stems from God’s prevenient action (grace and love). In all, divine blessings are repeatedly predicated on appropriate human response, most often faith and/or love. Accordingly, divine love is not merely gratuitous benevolence or generosity, and divine blessing is itself conditional, though unmerited. Importantly, since God does reward appropriate response one should not equate worthiness or merit with “reward.” With such conditionality in mind we now turn to the conditionality of divine love specifically.

The Foreconditionality of Love in the Gospels-Acts

The ultimate priority of divine love is evident in the statement of God’s love for the world, which makes it possible for anyone who believes to be saved. Specifically, God loves the world so much that he gave his son for it (John 3:16). The clause “whoever believes,” if taken seriously, means that divine love is universal, not arbitrarily excluding anyone, but subject to conditionality (John 3:16, 18). As such, the foreconditionality of divine love is explicit in this context. Though conditional, divine love toward humans is also unmerited. That is, God loves undeserving humans not because humans are worthy but of his own volition. Thus, God “Himself is kind [χρηστός] to ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35). In the Matthean parallel he “causes

517 “The Greek construction behind so loved that he gave his one and only Son (houtōs plus hōste plus the indicative instead of the infinitive) emphasizes the intensity of the love.” Carson, The Gospel according to John, 204. Cf. Ceslas Spicq, “Notes d’exegese johannique: La charite est amour manifeste,” RB 65 (1958): 358. God’s love is thus intense, active, and costly.

518 “Undoubtedly God’s desire is that all might be saved (e.g., Acts 17:30–31; 22:15–16; 1 Tim 2:6), but because of human freedom or choice ("whosoever," 3:16), all of humanity does not respond in believing acceptance of the Son (e.g., John 1:11–13; Rom 1:5; 10:16; 1 Tim 4:10). As a result, the rejection of God’s love brings judgment or condemnation (John 3:17).” Borchert, John 1–11, 184. Morris similarly comments, the “love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 203.

519 The χρηστότης word group refers to goodness, kindness, often used in description of God’s beneficence and love. See E. Beyreuther, “χρηστός,” NIDNTT 2:105, Ceslas Spicq, “χρηστευομαι,
His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt 5:45). On this basis, such unmerited love is also to be shown by Christians: They are to be “merciful [οἰκτίρμων], just as [their] Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36; cf. Matt 5:48). Thus, Christ commands to “love” (ἀγαπάω) one’s enemies (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:35).

Some might interpret Jesus’ command as suggesting that love is to be strictly unconditional, altruistic, and disinterested. However, the notion that one might love another

\[\chiρησος, \chiρηστονος, \] TLNT 3:511; Konrad Weiss, “χρησος, χρηστοτης, χρησευομαι, χρησολογια,” TDNT 9:487–88. In classical Greek it refers to that which is “excellent,” “serviceable,” “useful,” “good” and broadened to include “moral excellence . . . linked with genuine goodness of heart,” rarely used of the gods. Beyreuther, NIDNTT 2:105. Cf. Spicq, TLNT 3:512; K. Weiss, TDNT 9:483–84. The noun χρηστότης appears 10 times in 8 verses, all in the Pauline writings. In the LXX, the noun translates σω in almost all instances (15 times). σω is often translated by ἀγάθος and καλός as well. In many instances it describes the disposition a Christian ought to have, that is, kindness, closely related to other virtues such as love, compassion, patience, etc. (2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22; Col 3:12; cf. Rom 3:12). However, the noun most often describes the kindness and goodness of God, in close association with other terms of divine love (Rom 2:4; Rom 11:22; Eph 2:7; Titus 3:4). The adjective χρηστός appears 7 times in 7 verses depicting that which is good or kind of humans (Luke 5:39; 1 Cor 15:33; cf. Eph 4:32) but also of God’s kindness (Luke 6:35; 1 Pet 2:3; cf. Matt 11:30). In the LXX it most often translates σω (22 times). It translates a few other terms twice or less. It is most often used in worship and praise toward God. Interestingly, God’s very name is χρηστός – Ps 51:11. The group is closely associated with the ἀγαπάω group of love (cf. Luke 35; 1 Cor 13:4; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22; Col 3:12; cf. Eph 4:32–5:1) and also once with φιλανθρωπία (Titus 3:4). In all, “kindness is an unmistakable and essential characteristic of love.” Beyreuther, NIDNTT 2:106. So Spicq, TLNT 3:515. Cf. 1 Cor 13:4.

520 Blomberg sees this as God’s “common grace for all humanity in his good provisions in nature” showing that “God loves them too.” Matthew, 115. Cf. Ps 145:9. For similar statements in antiquity see Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 265.

521 Such love is manifested in beneficent action, even toward “those who hate you” (Luke 6:27). They are not merely to love (ἀγαπάω) only those who love (ἀγαπάω) them (Matt 5:46; Luke 6:32). For examples of similar conceptions of enemy love in the ancient world see Fitzmyer, Luke I–IX, 637–38; Nolland, Luke 1:1–9:20, 294–95; John Piper, “Love Your Enemies”: Jesus’ Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Early Christian Paraenesis: A History of the Tradition and Interpretation of Its Uses (SNTSMS 38; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19–65. On the other hand, the fact that there were others who advocated this principle (or something quite similar) does not detract from the fact that it was by no means the normal human philosophy or conduct of the age. Rather, it flew “in the face of conventional wisdom.” J. B. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 272.

522 Bock states that the “love in view here is unconditional,” in contrast to any “utilitarian position that says, ‘Do this to them so they will do it to you.’” Luke 1:1–9:50, 596. It is “love for love’s sake.” Ibid., 598. Beyreuther comments that “because it [God’s kindness] is without limit, it calls for unconditional love for their enemies on the part of Jesus’ disciples.” NIDNTT 2:106. Cf. Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 134. Such statements confuse unconditional with unmerited. Further, Klassen thinks, “Lacking is any utilitarian motive. This ethical guidance is fully and exclusively rooted in the nature and behavior of God. The only reward which is in sight is a relationship with God.” Love in the NT, 387. Yet, if a relationship with God is the ultimate reward, how would this lack any self-interest?
without expecting benefit from the one loved does not mean that love ultimately nullifies conditions, just deserts, reciprocity, or proper self-regard.\(^{523}\) Indeed, Jesus repeatedly points to future reward (\(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\)) (cf. Matt 5:46; Luke 6:32–35).\(^{524}\) Ultimately, those who love their enemies “without expecting any return” will receive a “rich reward [\(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\)]” from God and thus become sons of God (Luke 6:35; cf. Matt 5:45).\(^{525}\) Thus, even in the call for Christians to bestow love on enemies,” Stein, *Luke*, 208. So, also Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 596. However, this cannot be extended to rule out the evaluative aspects of love altogether. Christ is asking for the Christian to suspend the consequences of such evaluation since he himself is the judge. Christians are to manifest love toward all in this time between the times but that does not mean that love, by definition, is non-evaluative and/or unconditional. See the further discussion of this below and in chapter 6. Notice also the prominent conception of “insider love,” which is discussed elsewhere in this chapter (cf. John 13:1).

\(^{523}\) It is true that human “love is not [to be] dependent on others’ behavior.” Stein, *Luke*, 208. So, also Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 596. However, this cannot be extended to rule out the evaluative aspects of love altogether. Christ is asking for the Christian to suspend the consequences of such evaluation since he himself is the judge. Christians are to manifest love toward all in this time between the times but that does not mean that love, by definition, is non-evaluative and/or unconditional. See the further discussion of this below and in chapter 6. Notice also the prominent conception of “insider love,” which is discussed elsewhere in this chapter (cf. John 13:1).

\(^{524}\) Thus, Jesus asks, “if you love those who love you, what reward [\(\mu\iota\sigma\theta\omicron\omicron\zeta\)] do you have?” (Matt 5:46). Luke phrases it just a bit differently but with a similar concept of reward: “If you love [\(\alpha\gamma\pi\alpha\omega\)] those who love [\(\alpha\gamma\pi\alpha\omega\)] you, what credit [\(\chi\alpha\rho\iota\zeta\)] is that to you? (Luke 6:32; cf. 33–34). Here, \(\chi\alpha\rho\iota\zeta\) “denotes an effort to pay off a debt by returning benefit for benefit.” J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 273. Cf. Ceslas Spicq, “\(\chi\alpha\rho\iota\zeta\),” *TLNT* 3:500–506. Bock refers to it as divine favor “in response to having done something more,” specifically, in response to human love that “goes beyond the sinner’s love.” *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 603. “There is no favor from God for such limited love.” Ibid., 600. Of course, this implies that loving like God loves may carry favor. It thus has “the overtone of ‘reward,’ as the use of misthos in v. 35b shows.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 640. See the similar usage of \(\gamma\) in the sense of evaluation of the person or relationship in the chapter 4. Divine reward is common elsewhere as well. See Matt 5:12; 6:1–16; 10:41–42.

\(^{525}\) In Matthew they are to love as such “so that” (\(\delta\pi\omega\zeta\)) they “may be sons of” their “Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:45). Thus, “there is a reward for a life lived by this higher standard of love. . . . The reward of the children of God is for those who live as the children of God.” France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 227. Likewise, Johnston points out, “Love is rewarded. This does not involve any diminution of the quality of love, for the supreme compensation is membership in the new family of the kingdom (Matt. 23:8–9; Mark 3:34–35; 10:30).” *JDB* 3:170. Some have suggested that such sonship is not here conditional but, rather, this love is merely the outworking, or necessary result, of already being God’s children. So Stein, *Luke*, 209. Cf. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 274; Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 603. However, the future middle indicative \(\varepsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\alpha\iota\) in the phrase “and you will be [\(\varepsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\alpha\iota\)] sons of the Most High” (Luke 6:35) suggests that being a child of God follows as a result of the loving behavior (though this need not entail that such behavior is the sole or ultimate ground). Contra Stein who contends that the verb “‘will be’ should not be understood as ‘will become’ but rather ‘will show yourselves to be.’” *Luke*, 209. Even Piper notes the reality that “Jesus’ love command” is “a condition for entrance into the Kingdom of God.” “Love your enemies,” 76–77. However, it must be understood that for Piper something can be conditional and at the same time rendered certain by God. In other words, in his view this “condition” is fulfilled solely in accordance with the efficacious divine will. Moreover, the “so that” (\(\delta\pi\omega\zeta\)) in Matt 5:45 depicts sonship as a consequence of love. Albright and Mann thus reads, “In this way you will become sons of your heavenly Father.” *Matthew*, 71. As Charette puts it, “Those who accept the offer of salvation experience the blessing which God designed for the nations when he first called Abraham. But those who decline the offer are the truly cursed who have defeated their proper destiny by cutting themselves off for ever from the inheritance first promised to Abraham.” “The Theme,” 159. Importantly, this need not mean that one was not a child of God already in some sense, or that such loving action may spring from the human agent alone and apart
the undeserving they themselves are evaluated and will be rewarded for such beneficence. The very ones who are to love their enemies, are themselves judged on the basis of their love, specifically its quality. In this way, the love may be unselfish but not altogether disinterested (cf. Luke 14:14).

That reciprocity and the principle of appropriate response are not nullified in this command is further evident since, in the Lucan account, Jesus declared the golden rule: “Treat others the same way you want them to treat you,” just four verses before the command to love one’s enemies (Luke 6:31). Importantly, this guideline does not assume self-abnegation but rather a form of sympathy (cf. ὀἰκτίρμων in Luke 6:36) and a kind of reciprocity, though not the kind of quid quo pro reciprocity of conventional wisdom. Specifically, the ideal of reciprocal from God’s prior initiative. It is possible that this condition refers to the continuation rather than the beginning of sonship but the condition is real nonetheless. In any case, the texts strongly imply that Jesus’ intention is to speak of a special status of sonship that is reserved for those who imitate God, specifically, his love. This view is supported by the fact that these passages are clearly exhortative, culminating in command. Cf. Sir 4:10.

On the other hand, negative reward awaits those who reject God, that is, those who remain ungrateful. Bock even refers to this as “meritorious love,” seeing such reward as “God’s acknowledgment that he has seen this meritorious love and the faithfulness it reflects. . . . It is not merit for salvation; but recognition of being a faithful son or daughter (Luke 6:23; Matt. 5:9).” Luke 1:1–9:50, 603. On the other hand, Stein comments, “There is no idea of merit in this statement, for even after perfect obedience and service to God, believers will only be able to say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty’ (Luke 17:10). It is pure grace that causes God to reward his servants; but reward there will be, and this is not an uncommon theme in the NT.” Luke, 203. Importantly, however, the idea that humans do not deserve such a gracious reward should not nullify the fact that such reward is itself conditional upon appropriate (albeit imperfect) human response. See chapter 6 on the important difference between merit and conditional reward.

Similarly, elsewhere beneficence is to be given not just to friends (φίλος), brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors but to those who cannot repay. However, the one who shows such beneficence to the one who cannot repay “will be repaid [ἀνταποδίδωμι] at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:14; cf. 14:10; 16:9).

Many similar commands are known in antiquity, especially prominent in the negative form in Jewish literature. For an impressive list of ancient parallels see Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 596.

Thus, J. B. Green states, “In the ethics of the larger Lukan world, a patron solidifies his or her position in the community by ‘giving,’ by placing others in his or her debt, and receiving from them obliged acts of service and reverence. In this new economy, however, the patron gives without strings attached, yet is still repaid, now by a third party, God, the great benefactor, the protector and the benefactor of those in need.” The Gospel of Luke, 274. Klassen also notes that this is “a guideline which is based on reciprocity” but mistakenly thinks that “it could be construed to contradict the non-reciprocal teaching on
love is not removed but God himself stands in as the one who reciprocates such love; he himself
will repay such love that is granted to the undeserving (cf. Matt 25:40).\footnote{530} The consequences of
evaluative judgment are suspended but not thereby nullified. As such, God’s “impartiality”
should not be seen to “obviate” divine evaluative judgment.\footnote{531} Indeed, Jesus affirms in the same
pericope that “by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (cf. Luke 6:37–
38).\footnote{532}

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loving the enemy (Dihle 1962).” \textit{Love in the NT}, 387. On the contrary, the statements of Luke 6:31 and

\footnote{530} He mediates for the unworthy recipient of love in the here and now. Thus, J. B. Green is correct
when he notes, “What motives does Jesus offer for these new practices? First, he vouches for the
continuance of the notion of reciprocity, albeit in a radicalized form. Those who act without expectation of
return, even on behalf of their enemies, will be rewarded. Now, however, their reward does not consist of
acts of gratitude from the recipients of their benefaction; rather, God rewards them (cf. 12:33; 14:14).” \textit{The
restored, with one telling exception. Jesus’ followers give freely, without dragging others and especially
those in need into the quagmire of never-ending cycles of repayment and liability. And God will lavishly
repay them.” Ibid., 275. Cf. Johnston, \textit{IDB} 3:170. Spicq, who elsewhere points to the purely gratuitous
nature of \textit{φιλανθρωπία}, here notes that “even the purest Christian love hopes for return and fruition . . . but never
from men. God alone rewards the love of charity, and superabundantly.” Further, “Christian beneficence
must be disinterested in its deepest inspiration, and yet God considers whatever is done for neighbor as
done for himself. He promises to repay those who love their enemies, if only their generosity is motivated
by love for him.” \textit{Agape}, 1:86.

\footnote{531} See France, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew}, 226. Thus, God is not removing the principles of law and
justice: “Such action would not in fact be an imitation of the character of God who upholds the moral law
the moral condition of others nor the blind renunciation of attempts at a true and serious appraisal of those
with whom we have to live. What is unconditionally demanded is that such evaluations should be subject to
the certainty that God’s judgment falls also on those who judge, so that superiority, hardness and blindness
to one’s own faults are excluded, and a readiness to forgive and to intercede is safeguarded.” Friedrich
Luke}, 266. In other words, it is not that such evaluation is removed but that such evaluation ultimately
belongs to and will be carried out by God himself.

\footnote{532} The idea that rewards are conditioned upon appropriate human response is supported in the
foreground where Jesus emphasizes reciprocality: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not
condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to
you. . . . For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Luke 6:37–38). Thus, “the
believer’s behavior toward others will determine God’s behavior toward him or her.” Stein, \textit{Luke}, 212. On
the other hand, “those who treat others harshly can expect their prayers to be hindered (1 Pet. 3:7–12). To
the generous, God is generous.” Bock, \textit{Luke} 1:1–9:50, 607. Bock, however, insists that such evaluative
judgment does not apply to one’s salvific reward. However, Matt 25:31–46 strongly suggests otherwise. Cf.
Thus, conditionality and divine appraisal are present and God himself operates with a principle of reciprocity, but the divine principle of reciprocity operates in a complex way that has room for grace and the temporary suspension of the consequences of judgment. In the future, the execution of divine judgment will finally separate between those who will receive their reward according to the merits of Christ through atonement and those who reject divine mediation and suffer destruction. Importantly, Jesus’ command of love toward our enemies here does not therefore conflict with his advocacy and practice of “insider love” elsewhere.

That God’s love is bestowed on the undeserving prior to conditions does not mean that divine love is in every respect groundless, spontaneous, or unconditional. First, divine love qua divine love is not always unmerited, though it is unmerited toward humans. Thus, God loves his unique (μονογενής) Son, the one who was and is truly worthy of love (John 3:16). Elsewhere, divine love for the Son is explicitly grounded in Jesus’ action(s) as evident in his proclamation “for this reason [Διὰ τοῦτο] the Father loves [ἀγαπάω] Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10:17). Here, divine love for the Son is grounded in the Son’s voluntary obedience and is itself associated with the love of God for human beings. As such, divine love is not, in and of itself,


534 He lays down his life of his own volition, and will yet take up life again in accordance with the commandment of the Father (John 10:17–18).

535 The action of Jesus “is given as the reason for the Father’s loving the Son.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 456. Cf. Klassen, Love in the NT, 389. Some, however, seek to avoid this notion by reversing the idea. Thus Borchert, considering it “highly unlikely that either Jesus or John would have based the love of the Father for Jesus on the Son’s causal willingness to die,” states, “I would reverse the idea and read the text of 10:17 as, ‘Because [dia touto] the Father loves me, that is the reason [hōtis, therefore] I lay down my life.’” John 1–11, 336. Cf. Köstenberger, John, 307–8. However, “the first part of this verse reads literally ‘because of this the Father loves me because I give up my life.’” B. M. Newman and Nida, A Handbook on the Gospel of John, 332. Thus, against such special pleading, the text does point to grounded divine love, not unlike that which is seen elsewhere in John (cf. John 16:27). Therefore Edwyn C. Hoskyns correctly states, “The love of the Father for the Son is set in the context neither of the original creation nor of a relationship which existed before the world was made” but the “love of the Father is directed towards the Son, because by him, by his voluntary death, the obedience upon which the salvation

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altogether unmotivated since the Son actually merits love. Thus, while love for humans is not meritorious, it is not because God is incapable of appreciating merit but because human beings are sinful and incapable of deserving God’s love. This requires, then, a both/and explanation of divine love. It is primarily grounded in divine agency but also, in some respects, may be evaluative and grounded in the disposition and/or action(s) of its object, to a greater or lesser degree.

The reality of grounded love is further evident in Jesus’ tale of the moneylender who “graciously forgave” (μαριζομαι) two debts of unequal size. Therein, Jesus asks which “will love him more? [πλείον ἄγαπησε]” with the answer, the “one whom he forgave more” (Luke 7:42–43). The grace of the moneylender is completely undeserved. However, those forgiven love the moneylender proportionately to the greatness of his forgiveness. This is love that is explicitly grounded in, and responsive to, prior beneficence. Notably, however, those who love the benefactor are in no position to benefit him: Their love therefore apparently describes an affectionate disposition that would (or ought to) be manifested in beneficence toward the moneylender if such occasion obtained (cf. Matt 18:33–35). This object lesson is itself used to illustrate the virtuous love shown for Jesus by the woman of ill repute who anointed Jesus with 536

of men depends has been accomplished. The Resurrection is the inevitable consequence of the obedience of Jesus.” The Fourth Gospel (London: Faber, 1947), 379.

536 Importantly, the text does not say that this is the only reason the Father loves him, but it does portray divine love as at least partially caused and clearly evaluative. Beasley-Murray comments, “The Father’s love for the Son is linked with the Son’s death for the world. This event is naturally not represented as the origin of that love but its supreme manifestation and enactment.” John, 171. Cf. Köstenberger, John, 307. However, while it is apparent that God loved the Son even before Jesus gave his life for sinful humans, one should not be too quick to rule out that some aspect of the Father’s love for the Son is prompted and/or heightened by the Son’s self-sacrifice. Carson puts it well when he states, Jesus “is now at pains to elucidate why the Father loves him. It is not that the Father withholds his love until Jesus agrees to give up his life on the cross and rise again. Rather, the love of the Father for the Son is eternally linked with the unqualified obedience of the Son to the Father, his utter dependence upon him, culminating in this greatest act of obedience now just before him.” The Gospel according to John, 388.

perfume (Luke 7:37). After telling the parable, and comparing her loving actions to the lack of action by his host, Jesus goes on to declare, “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for [οτί] she loved [αγαπάω] much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. Then He said to her, ‘Your sins have been forgiven’ (Luke 7:47–48). It is unclear whether she loves more because she is forgiven more, as the parable implies, or whether her love is a (not necessarily the) basis for the forgiveness as the statement of Jesus seems to imply. The former is favored by many commentators while some argue the latter. Both are possible readings based on the grammar. Perhaps Luke does not intend to separate the two but depicts here again the foreconditionality of love. She receives forgiveness and, appropriately, loves Christ and her forgiveness is ratified by her loving response (cf. 1 Pet 4:8). The lack of such response would


This tension has led some to conclude that the accounts do not belong together. For example, see Josef Ernst, Das Evangelium nach Lukas (RNT 3; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977), 258–59. However, such tension is not necessarily a contradiction in light of the wider foreconditionality of love evidenced in the NT.


For one example, among many others, Spicq comments that Jesus “responded” to “her love . . . by pardoning her. The lesson here is not only that love can obtain the remission of sins but also that great sinners are usually the most sincere in their contrition and charity.” Agape, 1:105. Cf. 106–7. Cf. Heinz Schürmann, Das Lukasevangelium, 436–38.

Interestingly, Jesus directly contrasts the loving actions of the woman to the lack thereof by Simon, suggesting an evaluative distinction between them, likely with the purpose of prompting Simon to notice the state of his own heart, which appears to be closed to the forgiveness that he himself needs. Thus, one implication of Jesus’ statement is that Simon ought to love Jesus more. This could not be the case, however, if love amounts to an automatic response to forgiveness. One ought to love in response to forgiveness, but such is not always the case (cf. Matt 18:23–35). The woman is thus indirectly praised for her love of Jesus. Cf. the praise of the Roman because “he loves [ἀγαπάω] our nation” (Luke 7:5). In this later case “Jesus’ reaction is emotional” and “one of commendation” for “he is amazed at the soldier.” Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 642.
result in forfeiture of the forgiveness as was the case for the unforgiving debtor (cf. Matt 18:33–35).\(^{542}\) Accordingly, her loving response is a necessary corollary, as well as evidence of her faith and, as such, truly conditional.\(^{543}\) In this way, the forgiveness is foreconditional but not unconditional.

Such groundedness and conditionality of divine love are also likely in view in the encouragement to “abide” in divine love. For example, the father “has loved [\(\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha\omega\)]” the Son and Jesus loves his followers in the same way. In turn, they are exhorted to “abide in My love” (John 15:9; cf. Jude 1:21). Notably, this command is imperative, manifesting the apparent conditionality of remaining in divine love (cf. John 15:4, 7). Abiding in his “love” (\(\gamma\alpha\pi\eta\)) is accomplished if one keeps Jesus’ commandments just as Christ has modeled in relation to the Father and, thus, “abide[s] [\(\mu\epsilon\nu\omega\)] in His love” (John 15:10). The implication is that one may not abide in God’s love but such privilege may be forfeited such that the one who does not “abide” through obedience and fidelity to Jesus might thereby remove themselves as objects of such love.\(^{544}\) Significantly, in v. 10 Jesus’ own abiding in the Father’s love is implied to fall under this

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\(^{542}\) This idea that the one who does not forgive will not be forgiven is explicitly emphasized in the NT not only in the story of the unforgiving debtor but elsewhere (cf. Matt 6:12, 14–15, Jas 2:13).

\(^{543}\) This would make sense of two of Jesus’ statements at the end of the narrative. First, after describing that she “loved much” he declares to the woman “your sins have been forgiven” (Luke 7:48). But, this might seem to be superfluous if she was already altogether forgiven. J. B. Green, however, suggests that the woman needed no such assurance of forgiveness but that Jesus made the statement to manifest it to the others present. The Gospel of Luke, 314. This is possible, but uncertain. Nolland suggests this “cannot be read as a fresh forgiveness of the woman, but it can and should be read as a confirmation of the woman’s forgiveness.” Luke 1:1–9:20, 359. Perhaps more striking, however, is Jesus’s further statement, “your faith has saved you,” which explicitly grounds her forgiveness in the necessary faith response that she has manifested in love (Luke 7:50). Cf. Fitzmyer, Luke I–IX, 692; Bock, Luke 1:1–9:50, 704. Such “saving” faith is also prominent in Luke, cf. 8:48; 17:19; 18:42. Thus, perhaps the woman acted out of love having received forgiveness and, at the same time, such acts of love are the necessary evidence and even the seal of her forgiveness. If this is correct one must nevertheless be careful to remember that this does not amount to earning or deserving forgiveness. As elsewhere, a gift may be unmerited without being unconditional.

\(^{544}\) Carson correctly states, “The injunction to remain in Jesus’ love . . . presupposes that, however much God’s love for us is gracious and undeserved, continued enjoyment of that love turns, at least in part, on our response to it.” The Gospel according to John, 520. He qualifies, “Such texts do not tell us how people become Christians; rather, assuming that followers of Jesus are in view, they tell us that Christians remain in the love of God and of Jesus by obedience, in precisely the same way that children remain in
same conditionality (cf. John 10:17).\textsuperscript{545} Similarly, the disciples are Jesus’ “friends” (φίλος) if they do his commands (John 15:14; cf. John 15:15).\textsuperscript{546} So the friendship relationship of love is conditional upon obedience, which earlier in the chapter is connected to reciprocal love.\textsuperscript{547}

More explicit examples of conditional and grounded divine love also appear in the Gospels. Thus, Jesus proclaims, “He who loves Me will be loved\textsuperscript{548} by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:21—all ἀγαπάω).\textsuperscript{549} Again, the one who “loves” (ἀγαπάω) Jesus will “keep” his word “and My Father will love [ἀγαπάω] him” and they will make their abode with him (John 14:23). The clear implication is that obedience and love toward Jesus evokes the love of the Father and that of the Son. Likewise, divine love toward humans is explicitly predicated on human love when Jesus later states, the “Father Himself loves [φιλέω] you, because [ὅτι] you have loved [φιλέω] Me and have believed [πιστεύω]” (John 16:27).\textsuperscript{550}


\textsuperscript{545} Thus, “not even Jesus is exempt from responding to the Father’s love for him in obedience.” Köstenberger, \textit{John}, 456. Similarly, Carson, \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 509. Here, then, “the relationship of the disciple to Jesus in terms of obedience and love is modeled on the relationship of the Son to the Father.” Borchert, \textit{John 12–21}, 146. So Carson, \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 520.

\textsuperscript{546} This notion of friendship with God is common elsewhere (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; John 11:11; Jas 2:23; cf. also Exod 33:11; John 3:29). See the discussion of friendship below in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{547} Here, while God initiates the relationship (cf. John 6:70; 15:16), “the ongoing relationship between Jesus and his disciples is characterized by obedience on their part, and thus is logically conditioned by it.” Carson, \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 503. Cf. Köstenberger, \textit{John}, 458; Morris, \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 599. Borchert points out that these “basic requirements” of “friendship . . . are exactly the same obedience requirements as those (15:10) for abiding in his love.” \textit{John 12–21}, 149. As such, abiding relates closely to friendship and both are conditional.

\textsuperscript{548} P75 reads, “kept safe.” However, the parallel in 16:27 suggests that “love” is the correct reading here.

\textsuperscript{549} B. M. Newman and Nida suggest that this clause, like the first clause of v. 21, may “also be treated as conditional; for example, ‘if anyone loves me, my Father will love him.’” \textit{A Handbook on the Gospel of John}, 471.

\textsuperscript{550} Note the close association between love and faith. Bultmann states, “‘Love is often used with ‘faith’ as if to denote the essence of Christianity.’” \textit{Theology}, 2:222. This further supports the necessity of a love response in accordance with true faith.

\textsuperscript{551} Importantly, “\textit{He loves you because} is literally “because.” . . . In 14.21, 23 the disciples are required to love Jesus and to obey his commands if they are to be loved by the Father. Here they are to love
Such examples depict reciprocal, conditional, motivated, and evaluative love such that divine love may be contingent upon and responsive to human action.\(^{552}\)

At the same time, three potential qualifications should be noted here. First, these texts do not state that human love is prior to divine love and therefore do not contradict the Johannine perspective elsewhere regarding the ultimate priority of God’s love (cf. 1 John 4:10, 19). Second, love that is conditioned upon appropriate human response is not thereby merited. Something may be conditional and still undeserved.\(^{553}\) Third, the texts do not mean that those who love Jesus move from a category of not being loved by the Father at all to a category of being loved by him. That would not accord with earlier statements in John as well as the wider canon (cf. John 3:16).

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\(^{552}\) This is in direct contrast to the deterministic conception of divine love. Thus, Calvin contends that this amounts merely to “a testimony of” God’s “love to them.” John (Calvin’s Commentaries; Albany, Oreg.: Ages Software, 1998); John 14:21. Similarly, Augustine posits this human love as the unilateral work of God himself such that “He Himself loved that which He had made.” Lectures on St. John 7.102.5 (NPNF 7:391). Similarly, Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), John 16:23–27. Cf. Stählin, TDNT 9:133. However, R. E. Brown correctly points out that “one must recognize that in Johannine dualism, since God’s spontaneous love is expressed in the gift of His Son, if one turns away from the Son, one forfeits God’s love.” The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI, 641. While R. E. Brown correctly points that divine love might be forfeited it should also be noted that a love that might be forfeited is not altogether spontaneous, though its origin may be spontaneous.

\(^{553}\) Thus, Morris is right to comment, “This does not mean that the Father’s love is merited by this obedience” but “he is saying that the Father is not indifferent to the attitude people take toward the Son.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 580. Similarly, see Borchert who points out this does not “imply that a believer ‘earns’ God’s love through obedience.” John 12–21, 128. However, Charles Simeon goes too far in suggesting that this merely refers to the “particular occasion in which” God’s “love may be manifested.” John XIII to Acts (Horae Homileticae 14; London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), 105. Although such human love does not create an obligation (morally or otherwise) regarding God’s loving response Jesus does posit it as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of the continuing divine-human love relationship.
However, such statements do require that the particular aspect of divine love referred to here is responsive to and conditioned upon human love. Accordingly, they likely refer to a special, intimate, relational love that moves beyond God’s universal, unilateral decision to bestow love on all to the intimate, relational love without which the first is not sustained indefinitely. That is, God loves those who respond to his son in love in a way that is not afforded to “the world.” In such instances, God’s love is both prior to human love and also, in another way, responsive to and conditioned upon human love, which is responsive to that prior love; this is the foreconditionality of divine love.

The Foreconditionality of Love in the Pauline Writings

The priority of God’s love is shown in many statements in the Pauline writings. God is characteristically loving, the “God of love and peace” (2 Cor 13:11; cf. 14). He is “rich in mercy” and acts “because of His great love [ἀγάπη] with which He loved [ἀγαπάω] us” (Eph 2:4). Thus, God’s love itself is the initiating force that makes human response to God, such as

\[554\] Carson goes on, “With the connection between obedience and love so explicit, it should be self-evident that the circle of love in view embraces all of Jesus’ true disciples, but not the ‘world’, which falls within a rather different and more extended circle of love (cf. notes on 13:1, 34–35).” The Gospel according to John, 503. Morris adds correctly, “It is true that from one point of view the Father loves all people. But it is also true that he has a special regard for those who believe.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 630. See the further discussion of “insider love” in the final section of this chapter and in chapter 6.

\[555\] Hendriksen rightly states, “Why cannot God’s love both precede and follow ours? That is exactly what it does, and that is the beauty of it: first, by preceding our love, it creates in us the eager desire to keep Christ’s precepts; then, by following our love, it rewards us for keeping them! Nothing could ever be more glorious than such an arrangement!” New Testament Commentary: The Gospel according to John, 2:281–82.

\[556\] Klassen thinks this is probably Paul’s “way of saying that God is love.” Love in the NT, 392. “God of love” never appears elsewhere, whether in NT or LXX.

\[557\] Similarly, Christ, the “Son of God,” is the one “who loved [ἀγαπάω] me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal 2:20; similarly, Eph 5:2, 25). That Christ actively “gave” himself implies volition. See George, Galatians, 201. Likewise, the Father “has loved [ἀγαπάω] us and given us eternal comfort [παράκλησις]” (2 Thess 2:16). The singular verb and dual antecedent here may mean that both the Father and the Son are intended as the subject of this love. So, among many others, Frame, 286. Even if that is not the precise intention of this verse, the love of the Father and the Son are clearly operative in such instances. “Their love is so intertwined that it cannot be separated (Rom 8:35, 37, 39).” Malherbe, The Letters, 442.
repentance, possible. 558 Therefore, Paul cautions his audience not to “think lightly of the riches of His [God’s] kindness [χρηστότης] and tolerance [ἀνοχή] and patience [μακροθυμία]” since it is the “kindness [χρηστός] of God” that leads to repentance (Rom 2:4). 559 Human response to divine love, then, is never primary but always secondary, impossible apart from God’s initiative. However, response is necessary. Divine forbearance and patience will not continue forever; it has a limit. 560

On the other hand, the endurance of such divine love is astounding. Paul states emphatically that nothing can “separate us from the love of Christ” (Rom 8:35; cf. 39). 561 But we are conquerors “through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). Does this mean divine love is unconditional? 562 Some have interpreted these verses to mean that even believers cannot remove themselves from God’s love. 563 Such an interpretation would contradict the assertion elsewhere

558 The priority and volitional nature of love is further emphasized when it is stated that “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will” (Eph 1:4–5). See the discussion of this verse above. Note also that it is disputed whether “in love” belongs with what precedes or what follows. Whether God “chose us . . . in love” or “in love He predestined us” it is clear that divine love includes a volitional and purposeful aspect that holds primacy as foundational to the divine-human relationship.

559 Some commentators see this as a response to a false security and complacency of some Jews regarding their status in the judgment as God’s elect. Cf. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 133; Dunn, Romans 1–8, 83.

560 ἀνοχή refers to God’s patient forbearance and appears only here and in 3:26. In the LXX it appears only in 1 Macc 12:25. In Greek usage it refers to the holding back of “final judgment,” which provides “the sinner an interval in which” to repent. But this is “temporary. It implies a limit. If the sinner does nothing but sin . . . then in due course he must face God with all his sin.” Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 112. Likewise, God’s longsuffering provides time to repent, but it does not amount to the nullification of judgment; human response is required.

561 This is clearly a subjective genitive, Christ’s love for us. So ibid., 338, Fitzmyer, Romans, 533; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 543; Schreiner, Romans, 463. Four verses later Paul reiterates that basically nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:39).

562 For example, “No created being or force can unsettle that foundation . . . Christ’s love and God’s election. These are unshakable.” Fitzmyer, Romans, 536. Stauffer speaks of the elect’s “indissoluble fellowship with God.” TDNT 1:49. Mounce contends, “We are forever united with the one who is perfect love.” Romans, 192.

563 So Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 546–47; Schreiner, Romans, 466; Gundry Volf, Paul and

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that the believer can remove oneself from being an object of divine love (cf. John 15:9–10; Jude 21). Therefore, in light of the wider information regarding the conditionality of divine love, Paul is likely referring to the fact that there is no external force or power that can impede God’s love for us, though humans retain the responsibility to abide in relationship with God.564

Such love toward human beings is undeserved and unmerited (but not altogether unconditional). Thus, God “demonstrates His own [ἀγάπη] toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).565 Likewise, the “kindness [χάρις] of God our Savior and His love for mankind [φιλανθρωπία] appeared” and God acted salvifically “not on the basis of [our righteous] deeds” but “according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5; cf. Eph 1:4; 1 Tim 1:13–14).566 Yet, while unmerited, it is evident that God’s kindness may be forfeited since the divine “severity” will be upon those who fell but the divine kindness (χάρις) “to you . . . if you continue in His kindness, otherwise you also will be cut off” (Rom 11:22; cf. 23). As such, God’s “kindness” is not the product of either unconditional election or essential relation. The general sense of grounded love is also apparent when Paul proclaims that God “loves” a cheerful giver (2

564 That is, nothing can separate us from God’s love “so long as we shall not refuse to abide” in it. Godet, Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 333. Similarly, Philipp Melanchthon, Commentary on Romans (trans. F. Kramer; St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 183–84. Cf. Sanday and Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 220–21.

565 Such love for the “helpless” is greater than the greatest human love (cf. Rom 5:6–8). Indeed, v. 6 describes the human as “helpless.” Cf. Lone Fatum, “Die menschliche Schwäche im Römerbrief,” ST 29 (1975): 31–52. Notice that God “demonstrates” his love; the action is not the love itself but demonstrates the underlying disposition. On the basis of this passage, some commentators assert that “divine love is spontaneously demonstrated toward sinners without a hint that it is repaying a love already shown.” Fitzmyer, Romans, 400. Cf. Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 224. However, while this is unmerited love and prior to conditions, that does not necessarily exclude conditionality and expected reciprocation.

566 Wuest interprets φιλανθρωπία here as “affection called out of God’s heart by something in fallen man that is like God.” “Four Greek Words,” 244. Such unmerited love was shown directly to Paul when the Lord’s abundant “grace” (χάρις) and “faith and love” (πίστις καὶ ἀγάπη) were manifested to him and he was shown mercy (ἐλεημοσύνη) “because” he “acted ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13–14). Importantly, here the divine mercy is undeserved and unmerited being grounded in Christ’s “faith and love.” Moreover, Paul ascribes some ground also to his ignorance with the implication that such mercy would not have been shown had he been fully cognizant of, and intentional about, his wrongdoing. See the discussion of this verse earlier in this chapter.
Cor 9:7). Though this does not mean that God doesn’t love others, it does correlate divine love to a positive human attribute. In this way, divine love cannot be wholly arbitrary or ungrounded.

Similarly, 1 Cor 8 may teach that being known by God is predicated on human love toward God. Thus, “if anyone loves God, he is known by Him” (1 Cor 8:3). According, love for God corresponds to being known by God. But what is the nature of the correspondence? Does one love God because one is known by him or is one known by God because one loves God? Many commentators favor the former, that God’s prior action of knowing the individual results in the human loving God, often in the sense of unilateral election. The perfect passive is often appealed to in support of this position that God’s knowledge is in the past. However, the perfect passive does not necessarily refer to something in the past. Indeed, it is used in other contexts where the referent is contingent and grounded (cf. Luke 5:20, 23). To be sure, God “knows” humans prior to any human love toward God (cf. Gal 4:9; 1 Cor 13:12; Phil 3:12). However, it is also possible that loving God is the condition of being known intimately by God. In other words, though God knows everyone in a general way, he knows those who love him in a special way, keeping in mind that humans can only love God because God has already loved them (1 John 4:19). This would be in accord with the Johannine emphasis on mutual and conditional love in all of its spheres.

567 On textual variants that omit τὸν θεὸν and ὅπερ αὐτῷ and would thus significantly alter the meaning of this verse, see Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 367. However, this “longer” reading is given an “A” grading in UBS. Consider also the arguments in favor of the inclusion of these clauses in Metzger, A Textual Commentary, 490–91.

568 For instance, 1 Corinthians, 370–71.

569 This may be a middle or a passive, but most take it as a passive. See Thiselton, The First Epistle, 625.

570 Cf. the relational connotations of ἀγάπη in the OT.

571 Bruce states, “Both the knowledge and the love are mutual, and in both it is God in Christ who takes the initiative.” The Epistles to the Colossians, 329. Cf. Frédéric Louis Godet, Commentary on First Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1957), 1:410.

572 Thus, from a systematic-canonical perspective it would appear that this latter meaning fits the
The Foreconditionality of Love in the General Epistles-Revelation

The priority of divine love is again evident in this corpus. Indeed, God has “bestowed” on humans such a great love to be called “children of God” (1 John 3:1).⁵⁷³ God’s love manifests itself consistently in beneficial action toward others, including the ultimate sacrifice of Christ.⁵⁷⁴ No human is worthy of such love but Christ showed “true love [ἀγαπή]” in dying for sinful humans (1 John 3:16). Further, 1 John states explicitly, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). This broad and highly significant statement raises a number of questions. First, is love the very essence of God? Many contend so, with varying implications.⁵⁷⁵ Others contend that the statement does not require the view that love is God’s essence any more than the statement “God is light” means that God’s essence is “light” (1 John 1:5; cf. John 4:24). In this way, the question of whether love is God’s essence cannot be settled by this singular statement in 1 John 4.⁵⁷⁶

The text is explicit, however, that God is the source of love, for “love is from God” (1 John 4:7).⁵⁷⁷ As such, God’s love is logically and ontologically prior to any other love, it holds

wider canonical theology best. However, one cannot be sure since there are numerous grammatical possibilities and the immediate context provides little help in making Paul’s meaning in this verse clear.

⁵⁷³ The clause “how great” (ποταπός) likely refers to the degree of God’s love and not that divine love is wholly other. So Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 140; Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 132–33. On the other hand, based on the original meaning of the term “of what country,” Stott comments, “The Father’s love is so unearthly, so foreign to this world, that [John] wonders from what country it may come.” The Letters of John, 122.

⁵⁷⁴ Thus, “we know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16  cf. John 15:13). Likewise, Jesus is he “who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev 1:5). Some variants have ἀγαπάω as an aorist participle, instead of the present participle. However, beneficent action and/or self-sacrifice should not be confused with the nature of love itself, contrary to Marshall’s supposition that “the two factors which determine the nature of love: on the one hand, self-sacrifice, and, on the other hand, action done for the benefit of others.” Marshall, The Epistles of John, 214. Cf. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 543; Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 158. As has been seen there are many other aspects of love including beneficent action and, when appropriate, self-sacrifice. Neither, however, suffices to describe the entire nature of divine love. See the discussion of altruism earlier.

⁵⁷⁵ Thus Akin, like many others, states, “His very nature is love.” 1, 2, 3, John, 178–79. Others contend that the statement is not “ontological” but in reference to “the loving nature of God.” Kruse, The Letters of John, 157. Similarly, Marshall, The Epistles of John, 212–13; Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 239.

⁵⁷⁶ The question of the relationship of love to God’s essence will be taken up in chapter 6.

⁵⁷⁷ Some, on this basis, point out that “one’s love ‘flows from . . . divine begetting.’” R. E. Brown,
sole primacy. Further, “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). On the other hand, “the one who does not love does not know God” (1 John 4:8). Indeed, the “command to love is directly linked to the demand for faith” (cf. Gal 5:6) and the one who loves has fulfilled the law (Rom 13:8–10; cf. Matt 22:37–40; John 14:15; 15:10). These divine expectations (human faith and love) are themselves grounded in God’s prior love (cf. 1 John 4:9). Humans are to believe and accept God’s love as well as respond in love toward him and others (cf. 1 John 4:15–21). Accordingly, this is “love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us” and sent Jesus to save us (1 John 4:10). Importantly, John does not mean that humans do not love God, lest he contradict himself elsewhere. Rather, he is emphasizing that God loved humans first and thereby stressing the ontological priority of divine love as the necessary condition and basis of human love. Yet, the text goes on to say that “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”

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578 Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 238. B. F. Westcott notes that the “clause appears at first sight to be inverted in form. . . . But as it is, the words bring out the blessing as well as the implied necessity of love.” The Epistles of St. John (London: Macmillan, 1902), 147–48. So Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 238. As such, love appears to be at once a real condition of relationship with God and at the same time only comes about as a consequence of being born of God. This is the cyclical nature of the foreconditional nature of God’s love, which seeks relationship.

579 Indeed, the amazing “love of God” toward humans was shown in the sending of Christ so we might live (1 John 4:9). Verse 10 makes it clear that the genitive in v. 9 is subjective, referring to God’s love. NASB translates ἡ ἐγκατάστασις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, “the love of God was manifested in us.” It could mean for/to us or, more literally, in us or in our midst. However, the wider theology seems to entail both: “The sense of ἐν ἡμῖν, in part, is thus that the love of God disclosed by Jesus indwells the Church, and creates the basis for a mutual and ongoing relationship of love between the Godhead and the Christian (cf. ζήσωμεν in v 9b; note also John 14:21, 23; 16:27).” Kruse, The Letters of John, 157.

580 Here and elsewhere some scholars point to the aorist “loved” and suggest it thereby refers specifically to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. So Marshall, The Epistles of John, 214. Others suggest it refers to “God’s eternal love.” Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 243. The former is more likely than the latter but considering the variable usage of Greek tenses one should probably not put too much weight on the aorist here or elsewhere.

581 In other words, without divine initiative humans would never love God. See R. E. Brown, The Epistles of John, 519; Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 243; Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 180.
(1 John 4:11). Notably, then, God’s love for humans places a moral obligation upon humans to love one another (cf. 1 John 3:16; John 15:12).\(^{582}\) Moreover, “if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).\(^{583}\) As such, divine love is prior to any conditions while expectant of appropriate response, that is, foreconditional.

Accordingly, that God is love entails that those who would be in relationship with God must abide in love.\(^{584}\) Thus, John adds that Christians “have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16; cf. 17–18).\(^{585}\) What, then, does it mean to abide in love and thus abide in God? Does it refer to continuing as recipients of God’s love, as agents of love to God, or

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\(^{582}\) In the OT section, I have called such obligations “soft obligations” where the agent is free to do otherwise ontologically, but morally obligated to respond. Marshall, on the other hand, is incorrect in asserting that the “recipients of such love have no choice as to their response. Their sins have been taken away by this gracious act of God. He has loved them in such a way as to arouse adoring wonder at the magnitude of his sacrificial giving. They cannot do anything else but show love to one another.” Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 215. This completely overlooks the exhortative function of “we also ought [οὐχεῖ] to love one another” in 1 John 4:11. This term never refers to an ontological obligation in the NT but always to that which one owes or ought to do. It refers to such moral “oughts” consistently in this letter (1 John 2:6; 3:16; cf. 3 John 8). Marshall himself later refers to this as a “command.” *The Epistles of John*, 215. The moral, rather than ontological, obligation is further evident in the explicit conditionality of such human response in this epistle and elsewhere, which is itself evident in the survey of evidence in this chapter.

\(^{583}\) The conditional clause suggests genuine uncertainty (ἐὰν + subjunctive). It is once again unclear whether the genitive is subjective, referring to God’s love in us; objective, referring to human love toward God; or qualitative, referring to a love that is qualitatively akin to God’s. Commentators are divided between these options. See the discussion in R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 521. Smalley contends that this “does not mean that God’s indwelling . . . depend[s] on the love of Christians. . . . We love because God dwells in us, and not the reverse.” *1, 2, 3 John*, 247–48. On the other hand, while it is true that divine love is always prior to human love, the Johannine writings also suggest that the human response of love conditions the ongoing divine-human relationship. Thus, here and elsewhere, God’s abiding is contingent upon a loving response (cf. John 15:10; 1 John 3:24). This interpretation is supported not only by the reality of the condition but by the Johannine usage of μαθεῖν, “abide” (cf. v. 13,15; John 15:9–10). Thus, just three verses later such conditionality is evident in the statement, “Whoever (again, an uncertain condition, ἐὰν + subjunctive) confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” On the reciprocal nature of divine-human fellowship, see Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, 174–75. Cf. Malatesta, *Interiority and Covenant*, 301.

\(^{584}\) “A person cannot come into a real relationship with a loving God without being transformed into a loving person.” Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 212. Cf. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, 178.

\(^{585}\) ἐν ἡμῖν translated “for us,” above, could again mean for us or in us. Further, while some have taken the latter part of v. 16 to start a new paragraph, Smalley rightly recognizes that the “ideas of God’s love for us (16a) and our love for God (16b) are complementary.” *1, 2, 3 John*, 255.
as agents of love to fellow humans? The text admits each of these options and the wider theology of the Johannine writings suggests that all three are intended here. First, the one who loves his fellow Christian, in so doing, loves God (cf. 1 John 4:20–21). Second, remaining in God’s love entails appropriate responsive love to God and others and, as such, abiding in God and his love is conditional (cf. John 15:9–10; 1 John 4:13, 15). This all amounts to “reciprocal indwelling” (i.e., abiding in God and vice versa), which is a prominent Johannine theme (cf. 1 John 4:13, 15; John 15:1–10). In all this, “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The pericope thus comes full circle to the priority of divine love (cf. 1 John 4:7, 10). To be sure, then, human love is impossible without God’s prior love, yet it does not bypass the human agency. God’s prevenient love is a necessary but not sufficient condition of human love for him and others (cf. 1 Pet 2:3).

In this way, God’s love is prior to all other love, and that which enables other beings to love, but it is not simply unilateral (see the reciprocal nature of divine love below).

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586 See Marshall, The Epistles of John, 222; Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 255.

587 Smalley sees the latter part of v. 16 with reference to human love for God, which complements God’s love for humans. 1, 2, 3 John, 255.

588 The implied object of this human love is God. So some manuscripts add αὐτόν or τὸν Θεὸν. Houlden argues that the “balance of the sentence suggests” this refers to love for God; “our love for God returns his for us.” A Commentary, 120. So also, on the basis of vv. 19–21. Kruse, The Letters of John, 169. Others think humans are the object, or both God and humans. See the discussion in Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 262. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 75. Whoever the object, the priority of divine love is evident. Further, the human love here is usually taken in the indicative, though it might also be subjunctive and imply exhortation. So Law, The Tests of Life, 402. Cf. 1 John 4:7. A great deal of commentators, however, favor the indicative. So Marshall, The Epistles of John, 225; Smalley, 1, 2, 3 John, 262; Kruse, The Letters of John, 169. Notice, however, that the command to love arises from this (cf. 1 John 4:21–5:4).

589 Accordingly, by the use of different terminology, Peter suggests that God’s love is the impetus for appropriate human action toward God. Thus, evil should be put aside “if you have tasted the kindness [χρηστότης] of the Lord” (1 Pet 2:3; cf. Ps 34:8). That is, having tasted God’s kindness humans will themselves act accordingly toward God, even perhaps being able to “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). Importantly, the statement is exhortative, not merely descriptive. It is not that Christians will automatically act appropriately, but that Christians should do so in response to God’s kindness, and, according to other NT statements, are able to do so for that reason. To this extent I agree with Marshall that “the source of all love is God” and “whether we love God or our neighbor, it is God’s love that is at work in us.” The Epistles of John, 222. However, this does not mean that humans are merely passive agents through whom divine love flows. The Johannine, and wider biblical, theology will not support such a reading.
That divine love is not altogether unconditional but is often contingent and grounded is further apparent when Jesus proclaims to the Philadelphian church, in direct contrast to those who belong to Satan: “I have loved you. Because you have kept the Word of My perseverance, I will also keep you from the hour of testing” (Rev 3:9–10; cf. 1 John 3:21–22). The objects of Christ’s love are therefore those who have responded appropriately to God. Accordingly, Jude exhorts the “beloved” to be careful to “keep” themselves “in the love of God” and to be “waiting anxiously for the mercy” of Jesus “to eternal life” (Jude 20–21). The implication is that remaining in God’s love is conditional and grounded in human response, which itself makes the difference between the “beloved” and the “ungodly” (cf. Jude 4 ff.). This is in accord with the significant exhortations that Christians should “abide” in divine love (cf. John 15:9; 1 John 2:10; 4:16). Thus, although God’s love is explicitly prior to human love (cf. 1 John 4:10, 16),

590 Further, in v. 8 Jesus has placed before them an open door that cannot be shut “because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Rev 3:8).

591 G. R. Osborne thus comments, “The Jews will finally be aware that God’s true love is for those who have believed in his Messiah (cf. John 13:1; Rom. 8:35–39).” Revelation, 191. “Christ will show his faithfulness to the Christians in Philadelphia . . . because they have been faithful witnesses to him in the past.” G. K. Beale, The Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 289.

592 While it is grammatically possible that the “love of God” is an objective genitive referring to human love for God it is most likely a subjective genitive corresponding to “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As such, it is thus exhorting Christians to keep themselves in God’s love, that is, to remain as recipients of divine love. The term might also have subjective and objective connotations as a comprehensive or plenary genitive. Cf. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, 483.

593 Notably, the same ones who are told to keep (imperative) themselves in the love of God here are those who are “the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1; cf. Jude 1:24). God’s prior and continuing action is thus presupposed here but does not nullify the potential failure to keep oneself in God’s love and thus not remain among the “beloved.” This possibility is exemplified in the ungodly, those of the Exodus “who did not believe,” those “angels who did not keep their own domain,” Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah (Jude 1:4–7, 11). Accordingly, Davids rightly notices “human responsibility” here and comments, “God is love and loves believers, but they also need to ‘remain’ in love. . . . They have experienced God’s love, but it is possible to depart from that love, as one sees in the case of the teachers he opposes.” Davids, The Letters, 96. Notice further the soteriological implications of “to eternal life” (Jude 1:21).

594 Carson recognizes that this is “clearly implying that it is possible for Christians not to keep themselves in the love of God.” New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 648. Notably, Schreiner adopts a determinist-compatibilist perspective he notes that “being preserved in God’s love will only be a reality if believers continue to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and if they regularly pray.” I, 2 Peter, Jude, 483. The horns of the compatibilist dilemma are apparent as he goes on to say that “those who
remaining as a recipient of divine love is exhorted. Since “God is love” then “the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16; cf. 1 John 2:15; 4:12). In all, God’s loving initiative is prior to human love and its necessary but not sufficient condition. Divine love is both prevenient and foreconditional, but not strictly unconditional and unilateral.

**The Relational and Multilateral Aspect of Divine Love**

This section focuses on data that ground the view that divine love is multilaterally relational. God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately. First, God seeks and enters into reciprocally responsive love relationships with his creatures, which amount to multilateral divine-human love relationships. Second, though God’s foreconditional love is universal, God does not love all equally and uniformly. God desires a reciprocal love relationship of give and take with all his creatures and initiates the possibility of such a relationship through his universal offer of foreconditional love, which enables and calls for a reciprocal response of love, but not all trust in Christ remain in the faith because of the preserving work of God the Father. Nevertheless, the promise that God will keep his own does not nullify the responsibility of believers to persevere in the faith. God keeps his own, and yet believers must keep themselves in God’s love. . . . On the one hand, believers only avoid apostasy because of the grace of God. On the other hand, the grace of God does not cancel out the need for believers to exert all their energy to remain in God’s love.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 483–84.

See the further discussion of this highly significant chapter further below with regard to reciprocal love.

As Davids puts it, in John 15 and Jude “we have a situation in which the believers are already loved but still need to remain in that love.” *The Letters*, 96. Bauckham likewise appeals to John 15:9–10 and contends that Jude in a similar fashion “probably means that God’s love for Christians requires an appropriate response. Without obedience to God’s will, fellowship with God can be forfeited, and this is the danger with which the antinomian doctrine of the false teachers threatens the church.” *2 Peter, Jude*, 113–14.

I use the term multilateral here and elsewhere because love not only is to flow reciprocally from God to humans and vice versa but also from humans to others, which is indirectly love toward God as well. Further, in the NT, intra-trinitarian love is also added to the mix. Thus, the relations of divine love are more than bilateral, they are multilateral.

By reciprocal here I do not mean that love is always returned for love, but that is the ideal of divine love. Moreover, my use of the term reciprocal does not entail equality of relationship or equal measure of love flowing in both directions.
respond positively. Accordingly, the reader is encouraged to keep the following questions in mind while reading this section. Is divine love unilateral? Is God the only proper agent of love or may there be a reciprocal divine-human love relationship? Is divine love universal or particular? Following on this, might some be loved more than others? What of the concept of eschatological reward and the “remnant”? This section of the study will proceed with a survey of reciprocal love in the NT canon.

Reciprocal Love in the Gospels–Acts

The multi-relationality of love is evident by way of many different texts in this corpus. First, it is important to clarify the nature and importance of “insider love.” Friendship is an example of such love that assumes a particular, as opposed to universal, relationship and is thus a form of preferential (but not necessarily arbitrary) love. The concept of friendship is especially

599 It has been suggested in some circles that divine love is the only true love. In this view, human love is either non-existent, of a lesser kind, or the result of a unilateral divine miracle.

600 Jesus highlights the quality of God’s friendship in the story of the man who goes to his “friend” (φίλος) at midnight requesting food for another “friend” (φίλος) who has come on a journey (Luke 11:5–6). Though the initial “friend” may not “get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs” (Luke 11:8). Thus, if even an unwilling friend will respond with assistance after persistent pleading how much more will God respond to the requests of his children? (cf. Luke 11:12–13). Similarly Bock, Luke 9:51–24:53, 1059–60. Cf. Ernst, Das Evangelium nach Lukas, 366–67. Interestingly, J. B. Green interprets this within the context of honor and shame. Just as the “friend” would be dishonored by rejecting the pleas of his friend, J. B. Green extrapolates from this that “God engages in eschatological redemption in order that he might restore honor to his name (see above on v 2).” The Gospel of Luke, 449. See J. B. Green on the “conventions of hospitality” that form the background here. Ibid., 447–48. Cf. Prov 3:27–28.

The category of friendship, then, appears to imply an expectation of response, which when unmet, is supplemented by pleading. Many have taken this to mean that one should pray toward God with persistence or boldness, though this is disputed. The meaning “persistence” is questioned because the word used (ἀναίδευτος) generally means “shamelessness” rather than persistence. For a discussion of the possible explanation of the meaning of this term here see Nolland, Luke 9:21–18:34, 625–26. For the argument against the meaning “persistence” see J. B. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 445. He contends that the emphasis is not on how to pray but on the graciousness of the Father who is willing to respond to prayer. Ibid., 446. Bock claims that “it refers to a combination of boldness and shamelessness.” Luke 9:51–24:53, 1059. Some have applied it to the householder meaning that he will respond rather than act shamelessly by refusing to help. So Nolland, Luke 9:21–18:34, 624, J. Duncan M. Derrett, “The Friend at Midnight: Asian Ideas in the Gospel of St Luke,” in Donum Gentilicium (ed. Ernst Bammel et al.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 77–87. If this interpretation is correct, the point would be that one may approach God with confidence. In either case, the abundantly good friendship of God is exemplified by contrast. God is the “best friend” who is willing and able to respond to the requests of his people. As Stählin puts it, “God is the best friend who

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significant as it relates to the friendship between Jesus and humans.\textsuperscript{601} Humans are often referred to as Jesus’ friends, including individuals such as John the Baptist (John 3:29), Lazarus (John 11:11), and more general statements referring to groups of humans (cf. Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34; 12:4; John 15:13).\textsuperscript{602} Other friendships, by different language, also appear. For example, Lazarus is the one whom Jesus loves (\(\phiile\)) (John 11:3) and Jesus loves Lazarus, Martha, and Mary (John 11:5).\textsuperscript{603} There are also frequent references to the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; cf. 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). All of these instances point to particular, rather than universal, relationships of friendship love. Such friendships between Jesus and humans are consistently bilateral yet unequal such as when John the Baptist describes himself as the “friend [\(\phiilo\)] of the bridegroom,” referring to the intimate friend who takes care of wedding arrangements (John 3:29).

Elsewhere, the beneficiaries of Christ’s sacrificial love are referred to as his friends:

“Greater love [\(\dot{\gamma}epi\eta\)] has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends [\(\phiilo\)]” (John 15:13). This relationship includes intimacy, which Jesus highlights in his proclamation that he no longer calls them “slaves” but has called them “friends” having revealed himself and God to them (John 15:15). Notably, however, such friendship is conditional upon appropriate human response.\textsuperscript{604} Therefore, the beneficiaries of this sacrificial love are those who obey him; they are grants the requests of His friend and who indeed wants to be asked. Hence we have the corresponding thought that the disciples are God’s friends.” Stählin, \textit{TDNT} 9:164.

\textsuperscript{601} Importantly, there is no dichotomy between friendship and that love signified by \(\dot{\gamma}epi\eta\). For example, Lazarus, whom Jesus loved (John 11:5), is referred to as a friend (\(\phiilo\)) of Jesus and his followers (John 11:11).

\textsuperscript{602} Interestingly, Jesus calls Judas “friend” when Judas comes to betray him but by use of the term \(\dot{\epsilon}pairo\) (Matt 26:50).

\textsuperscript{603} Carson sees this as a “hint” at deeper relationships implying that “some at least felt particularly loved by him.” \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 406. It is worthy of notice here that there is no discernible difference between \(\dot{\gamma}epi\eta\) and \(\phiile\) in John 11:3, 5. Contra Joseph N. Sanders, “‘Those Whom Jesus Loved’ (John 11:5),” \textit{NTS} 1 (1954): 33. See the discussion of this issue earlier in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{604} Thus, Jesus’ friends are not such by unilateral election. Though Christ himself “chose” them
his “friends” (φίλος) if they do his commands (John 15:14; cf. John 15:15). Here, again, there is reciprocal action; Jesus will give himself for them but they are expected to keep his commands. The friendship is a mutual (though unequal) one. Further, by different language a similar relationship is exemplified when Christ is said to have “loved [ἀγαπάω] His own [ἰδιος] who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1; cf. John 10:14). The use of ἰδιος, which implies belonging or membership in a close-knit group, makes clear that such love is particular rather than universal. Such love does not require merit but rather assumes a close relationship (cf. Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34) within which humans are to love one another just as God has loved them (cf. John 15:12).

The intimate love relations that make up such “insider love” constitute a multirelational circle of love: from Father to Son and vice versa, from Father and Son to humans and vice versa, and from believers to one another, which itself indirectly amounts to human love toward the Father and Son (cf. 1 John 5:1). This intimate circle of love begins with the reciprocal love between the Father and the Son, which itself models the ideal nature of all divine love relationships. The Father’s great love for the Son is exhibited in many forms. The Father loves the Son, rendered in different passages by ἀγαπάω and φιλέω (John 3:35; 5:20 respectively). The Son...

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605 He died for his “friends,” that is, those whom he loves. So Köstenberger, John, 458. Conversely, some have taken the proclamations of Peter and Thomas to lay down their lives as professions of their love for him as his friends. Stählin, TDNT 9:166.

606 “It is of the nature of this love for one’s own, for what belongs, to be reciprocal.” Stählin, TDNT 9:130. The “world,” on the other hand, hates (μισεω) them but “would love [φιλέω] its own” (John 15:19).

607 Such love for one another is akin to the command to love one’s neighbor (Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27).

608 See Carson who also refers to this as a “circle of love.” The Gospel according to John, 547. Cf. Beasley-Murray, John, 287. Others refer to a “chain of love.” Köstenberger, John, 457. Günther thinks that “the love of the Father for the Son is therefore the archetype of all love.” Günther and Link, NIDNTT 2:546.
is the Father’s “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) (cf. Matt 3:17 among many others). Such love pre-dates the creation itself for the Father loved (ἀγαπάω) the Son “before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). As such, divine love is not dependent upon creatures but was existent even before creation.

At the same time, the Father’s love for the Son is also evaluatively grounded: “For this reason [Διὰ τοῦτο] the Father loves [ἀγαπάω] Me,” that is, because he will die, of his own volition, in accordance with the commandment of the Father (John 10:17–18). Reciprocally, Christ loves (ἀγαπάω) the Father and does exactly what the Father commands (John 14:31).

In this way, Jesus models the appropriate human response to God, love manifest in obedience. Further, the Father’s love for the Son also manifests that love relationship that may obtain between God and humans. Thus, the Father’s love for the Son is the model of the Son’s love for his followers: “Just as [καθὼς] the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love” (John 15:9). Likewise, the Father himself “loved” (ἀγαπάω) Christ’s followers “even as” (καθὼς) the Father loved (ἀγαπάω) Christ (John 17:23).

The divine-human love relationship described in these passages is not universal but particular and intimate. The “insiders” who are privy to this special, intimate love relationship are those who have appropriately responded or will do so (John 17:20, 25). Accordingly, membership in this intimate divine-human love relationship is not automatic but contingent.

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609 Notably, this verse is the only instance in the NT that states Jesus’ love for the Father though it is “implied everywhere.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 586.

610 Apparently, the objects of such love are the original followers of Christ as well as “those also who believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20).

611 The intimacy of this love relationship is evident in the repeated phraseology of reciprocal knowledge and reciprocal indwelling, i.e., “I in them and you in Me” (John 17:23; cf. 17:26).

612 Carson states correctly, “With the connection between obedience and love so explicit, it should be self-evident that the circle of love in view embraces all of Jesus’ true disciples, but not the ‘world’, which falls within a rather different and more extended circle of love (cf. notes on 13:1, 34–35).” The Gospel according to John, 503.
Specifically, humans are expected to reciprocate God’s love (both Father and Son) and not merely by external action but wholeheartedly (cf. Matt 10:37–38; 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; John 14:15, 21, 23–24, 28). Thus, the objects of divine love are exhorted to “abide [μένω] in My love” (John 15:9). Abiding in his “love” (ἀγάπη) is conditional and is accomplished if you “keep My commandments” just as Jesus has modeled in relation to the Father and Jesus “abide[s] [μένω] in His love” (John 15:10). Significantly, then, humans may abide (μένω) in divine love in the same way that Christ abides (μένω) in the Father’s love: By the appropriate love response of obedience (John 15:10). As such, the exhortation to “abide” in God’s love is itself indicative of the divine desire and expectation that the objects of his love will love him reciprocally. This reciprocal love, which itself entails obedience, results in intimate friendship with Jesus (cf. John 15:14). The famous example of Jesus’s three-fold question to Peter, “Do you love me?” followed by Peter’s affirmation three times that he does love Jesus is instructive

### Footnotes


614 The conditionality of language of abiding (μένω) is prominent throughout its NT usage. The implication of such language is that the love relationship must be maintained by appropriate human response in order to continue intact. See John 14:23; 15:7, 9–10; 1 Tim 2:15; 1 John 2:5–6, 10, 17, 28; 3:1, 9–11, 14–15, 17; 23–24, 35–36; 4:12, 16.

615 Carson comments, “the love for which we were created” is “a mutual love that issues in obedience without reserve.” *The Gospel according to John*, 521. Thus, “Jesus remains in his Father’s love by being obedient to him (8:29; 15:10)” and “believers remain in Jesus’ love by being obedient to him (15:9–11).” Ibid., 547. This is also indicative of the conditionality of divine love. See the more extensive treatment of this concept further above. Further, such “intimate relationship . . . reflects the fellowship of love between the Father and the Son.” Beasley-Murray, *John*, 170.
regarding the nature of such love. In particular, it points to the reality of human love toward God that is not automatically determined by God nor merely divine love flowing through a passive human agent (otherwise the questions would be superfluous) but the result of a heartfelt response to God’s initiating love (John 21:15–17; cf. Luke 7:47).

Keeping God’s commandments is itself a manifestation of one’s love for him (John 14:15, 21; cf. 1 John 5:3) and divine love is also reciprocally responsive to such manifestations of human love. Thus, both God and Jesus respond with love toward those who love Jesus. “He who loves [ἀγαπάω] Me will be loved [ἀγαπάω] by My Father, and I will love [ἀγαπάω] him and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:21). Further, the one who “loves” (ἀγαπάω) Jesus will “keep” his word “and My Father will love [ἀγαπάω] him” and both Father and Son will make their abode (μονή) with that one (John 14:23). Likewise, the “Father Himself loves [φιλέω] you, because [ὅτι] you have loved [φιλέω] Me and have believed [πιστεύω]” (John 16:27). While God already loved these humans in the limited sense that he foreconditionally loves all humans universally, here intimate relational love is described, that aspect of reciprocal divine love that flows evaluatively and conditionally upon the appropriate human response of love (or equivalent). Significantly, such reciprocal and contingent love is described in the same terms as

616 There is no discernible theological significance to alternating use of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in these verses. For a discussion of this issue see the word studies of the ἀγαπάω and φιλέω word groups above.

617 Carson rightly notes that the “linkage” between love and obedience toward God “approaches the level of definition.” The Gospel according to John, 498. Cf. 1 John 5:3. However, Morris poses a false dichotomy when he states, “Love is not regarded in this Gospel as an abstract emotion but as something intensely practical. It involves obedience.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 581. On the contrary, the NT speaks of love as both intensely emotional and volitionally active without contradiction, as does the OT. Significantly, “If you love [ἀγαπάω] Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15) is a third class condition (ἐὰν + the subjunctive) which suggests that this condition is “uncertain of fulfillment.” Wallace, Greek Grammar, 696. In the manuscripts favored by most textual critics the verb is present active subjunctive, but both aorist imperative and aorist subjunctive forms are attested in some manuscripts.

618 “To this love of the disciples for Jesus corresponds the reciprocal love of God for the disciples . . . which is obviously different from His love for the world, cf. 3:16.” Stählin, TDNT 9:133. As such, “the ongoing relationship between Jesus and his disciples is characterized by obedience on their part, and thus is logically conditioned by it.” Carson, The Gospel according to John, 503.
that modeled by Jesus since his love for the Father is demonstrated by doing his commands and the Father, in response, loves him (John 10:17; 14:31; cf. 15:10). In this way, the love of Jesus is truly the model of human love toward God and of divine love toward humans.

This multirelational circle of love further includes love between believers, which is patterned after divine-human love and is accepted as indirect love toward God. Thus, Jesus commands, “love one another, even as [καθως] I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34; so, also John 15:12; cf. 15:17). This completes the multirelational circle of love described above. Here, attention should be drawn to the fact that the loves in the various relationships of this circle are depicted as alike in nature. Thus, both the Father and the Son love humans in the same way (καθως) that the Father has loved the Son (John 15:9; 17:23; cf. Eph 5:2, 25). In like manner, believers are to love one another “even as” (καθως) Christ has loved them (John 13:34; 15:12). In this way, believers are to obey Christ just as (καθως) he has obeyed the Father and thus abide (μενω) in his love even as Christ thereby abides (μενω) in the Father’s love (John 15:9–10). In all this, Christ’s revelation of the Father is itself directed toward the goal of divine-human love, that is, “so that the love [αγαπη] with which” the Father loved (αγαπηω) 619 Humans “love and obey Jesus, and he loves them, in exactly the same way that he loves and obeys his Father, and the Father loves him (cf. 3:35; 5:20; 8:29; 14:31).” Carson, The Gospel according to John, 503. That divine-human love is modeled after the love between the Father and Son points toward the ideal reciprocity that God desires for the God-human relationship.

620 This “one another” apparently refers to those who are fellow believers. Cf. Morris, The Gospel according to John, 562. Gerhard Lohfink, Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 109–14. Some, however, think that restriction is invalid. Cf. Borchert, John 12–21, 99. Carson contends, “It is not so much that Christians are to love the world less, as that they are to love one another more.” The Gospel according to John, 485. In other words, this love toward one another does not exclude the fact that they should love all humans in a universal sense (cf. Matt 5:43) but is specifically with regard to that kind of love that is intimate and takes place within a reciprocal love relationship. As such, love for the community does not exclude universal love, but is special, relational love of a different kind. God’s love is likewise differentiated as seen in John 14:21 and 16:27.

621 “Jesus’ point [in John 15:12] is not that love for fellow believers exempts one from the call to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, but that genuine love for God ensures genuine love for his Son, who is the focal point of divine revelation; that genuine love for the Son ensures obedience to him (14:15); that obedience to him is especially tested by obedience to the new commandment, the command to love (13:34–35; 15:12).” Carson, The Gospel according to John, 521.
Christ “may be in them, and [Christ] in them” (John 17:26). Indeed, the very love of God is to be “in them.” As such, in precisely the same way that the Father loves the Son and vice versa, humans are to love God and love one another (cf. John 14:31; 15:9–10, 12). In this way the textual evidence in no way supports the case that human love is an inferior kind of love.

In light of such particular and intimate love, the question may arise in one’s mind about those who might be excluded from such love. In one sense, Christ’s death was for the “world” (John 3:16; cf. Rom 5:8, 10) and love is not to be restricted only to one’s friends or those who can benefit oneself but also is to be extended to enemies (cf. Matt 5:44, 46; 6:27, 32, 35). At the same time only those who believe will be his “friends” or “his own,” that is, his beloved, and thus receive the full benefit of God’s love unto salvation (cf. John 14:21, 23; 15:9–10, 14; 16:7).

This is illustrated in microcosm in Christ’s encounter with the man who asked regarding entering into eternal life. Christ looked at him and “felt a love for him” and proceeded to call him to follow, but the man refused (Mark 10:21–22). Christ loved this man (an outsider at the time) foreconditionally and beckoned the man into intimate association with himself, but the man turned away. As such, the “insider love” referenced above is not exclusive but offered to “many” who refuse it (cf. Matt 22:14). The cultural boundaries of insider and outsider are not in play here.

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622 Morris takes “in them” to mean both “in them” and “among them.” Morris, The Gospel according to John, 653. So, also, Carson, The Gospel according to John, 570. This would point to the further relationality that is to obtain from Christians to other Christians.

623 Ultimately, the objects of God’s love “will be so transformed, as God is continually made known to them, that God’s own love for his Son will become their love. The love with which they learn to love is nothing less than the love amongst the persons of the Godhead (cf. notes on 15:12–17).” Carson, The Gospel according to John, 570.

624 Although later in John God’s love is directed toward a specific circle, his prior love for the world as in John 3:16 is foundational. “All believers have been chosen out of the world (15:19); they are not something other than ‘world’ when the gospel first comes to them. They would not have become true disciples apart from the love of God for the world.” For this reason, they are to continue to witness to that world. Ibid., 205. It should also be noted that “his own” (τὸν ιδιότατον) may be used in other contexts to refer to a different kind of insider relationship (cf. John 1:11).
but, rather, the true insider is the one who loves as God does (cf. Luke 10:36–37).\textsuperscript{625} Love is thus not restricted to an existing relationship, whether covenant or otherwise, but does pursue and expect a reciprocal relationship to ensue. In the absence of appropriate response, one will not be an insider and eventually will forfeit the benefits of God’s love.

In all this, there is an important differentiation between God’s universal love and that particular, special, intimate love that is between Christ and those who respond to him. This friendship relationship is predicated on obedience (John 15:14), which is itself connected to reciprocal love and the result of entering into a love relationship with God (John 14:15).\textsuperscript{626} This is a relational, contingent, and conditional friendship though the ultimate provisions and sacrifices have been made by God himself. In other words, though God requires a response, he is not demanding an equivalent response. Such “insider love” is by no means a contradiction with Christ’s command to love one’s enemies (cf. Matt 5:43–37). The fact that love for the undeserving is commanded does not mean that such love (in all of its aspects) will continue indefinitely. Specifically, God himself does not “love” his enemies forever but, eventually, those who persist as enemies will be destroyed. The interim is the opportunity for those who are enemies (cf. Rom 5:10) to be reconciled to him, but without such reconciliation the love relationship cannot and will not continue. God is not equivalently related to all nor does he unilaterally exclude some. He invites and enables all to intimate relationship by his prevenient and foreconditional love, but not all are willing to respond.

Reciprocal Love in the Pauline Writings

This multirelational circle of love is also evident in the Pauline writings, though not with the same frequency or detail as in the Gospels. Thus, Christ is again the object of God’s love,  

\textsuperscript{625} In this story of the good Samaritan, then, enemy and neighbor love meet.

\textsuperscript{626} God wants such reciprocal ἀγάπη, i.e., friendship, with all humans, but he does not actually have it with all humans.
referred to as “His beloved son,” literally the son of his love (ἀγαπητός) (Col 1:13) and as simply the “beloved” (ἀγαπάω - pass. part.) (Eph 1:6). Divine love for humans is seemingly ubiquitous in the Pauline corpus. Thus, God loves humans abundantly and has demonstrated his love toward humans in the plan of salvation (Eph 2:4; Rom 5:8; 8:39) and likewise Christ “loved” and gave himself for humans (cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 5:2). Further, divine love for humans is evident by the term ἀγαπητός (see, among many others, Rom 1:7). Conversely, humans are often said to manifest love toward God. Thus, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28). Moreover, the wonderful things of heaven, beyond human description, are “prepared for those who love” God (1 Cor 2:9). On the other hand, the one who “does not love [φιλέω] the Lord . . . is to be accursed [ἀνάθεμα]” (1 Cor 16:22). Likewise, God is the implied object of human love when it is proclaimed that a “crown of righteousness” is laid up for “all who have loved [ἀγαπάω] His appearing” (2 Tim 4:8; cf. 2 Thess 2:10). Likewise, human love toward Jesus is present. To take one example, Paul also proclaims, “Grace [χάρις] be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible [ἀφθαρσία] love” (Eph 6:24; cf. Phlm 1:5). Further, a reciprocal love relationship between God and humans is implied in the statement “if anyone loves God, he is known by Him” (1 Cor 8:3).

627 For Bruce, Col 1:13 “designation marks Christ out as the supreme object of the Father’s love” (cf. Col 1:13). The Epistles to the Colossians, 258. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians, 79–80.

628 Many other examples of divine love appear earlier in this chapter.

629 The referent of “Lord” may be Jesus or the Father. The term most often refers to Jesus in the NT.

630 Here the statement is a first-class condition, suggesting the veracity of the protasis and thus the reality of human love toward God. Cf. Wallace, Greek Grammar, 690–94. Of course, the forms of such conditional clauses do not always follow such rules. See the discussion of potential interpretations of this verse as to whether divine knowledge is predicated on love or vice versa further above.
A number of other verses potentially depict human love toward God but there is uncertainty regarding the agency of love due to the ambiguous use of the genitive.631 One of these, Rom 5:5, is used by Nygren to support the view that human love toward God is nothing more than God’s own love returning to him through a passive agent.632 It reads, “The love [ἀγάπη] of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5). Here it is not clear whether this is love for God or God’s love though the majority of commentators favor the latter.633 However, regardless of whether the genitive is subjective or objective the text does not assert that the human agent is a passive agent of such love. It does assert the ultimate priority of the divine initiative as the necessary (but not sufficient) condition of all creaturely love (cf. 1 John 4:7, 19). Elsewhere, Paul urges believers to strive in prayer “by [δυνάμει] our Lord Jesus Christ” and “by [δυνάμει] the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15:30). Here, “of the Spirit” appears to be subjective, referring to Christ as the agent of prayer and the Spirit as the agent of love.634 Finally, there is ambiguity even in the absence of a genitive construction when Paul praises the Colossians for having “love [ἀγάπη] in the Spirit” (Col 1:8). Paul probably intends the Colossians as the agents

631 Only a few significant examples will be mentioned here. See chapter 1 for a discussion of ambiguous genitives and how they would be utilized in this dissertation.

632 Thus, for Nygren the “Christian’s love for his neighbour is a manifestation of God’s Agape, which in this case uses the Christian, the ‘spiritual’ man, as its instrument.” Agape and Eros, 130. Thus, “the acting subject is not man himself; it is—as Paul expresses it—God” and thus “God’s Agape can be described by Paul quite realistically as a ‘pneumatic fluid’, which is ‘shed abroad in our hearts.’” Ibid., 129. Augustine writes, “‘The love of God’ is said to be shed abroad in our hearts, not because He loves us, but because He makes us lovers of Himself.” On the Spirit and the Letter 5.56 (NPNF 5:108). Cf. Martin Luther, Luther’s Works (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 25:44–45.

633 So Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 221; Mounce, Romans, 135; Fitzmyer, Romans, 393; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 304; Dunn, Romans 1–8, 252; Schreiner, Romans, 257. For the traditional dispute on the significance of the verse, see Ulrich Wilckens, Der Brief an die Römer (EKKNT Bd 6; Zürich Benziger, 1978), 1:300–305.

634 For Fitzmyer, the Spirit is here the “source and inspiration.” Romans, 725. Others similarly take it as a genitive of source in the sense of the love that the Spirit pours out (cf. Rom 5:5). See Morris, The Epistle to the Romans, 523; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 909; Dunn, Romans 9–16, 878. Of course it could also refer to human love for the Spirit, but this seems unlikely.
of love that is akin to that of the Spirit, but “in the Spirit may suggest that this love is itself rooted in God’s action.\textsuperscript{635}

Moreover, just as in the Gospels, humans are repeatedly exhorted to love one another (Rom 12:10; Eph 4:2; 1 Thess 4:9; 2 Thess 1:3), which is itself closely related to neighbor love (cf. Gal 5:13–14; Rom 13:8–9). At the same time, such insider love for one’s neighbor does not exclude universal love. Rather, Christians are exhorted to have “love for one another, and for all people” (1 Thess 3:12).

Further, the importance of insider (as opposed to outsider) love is also evident in the frequent reference to the special relational status before God of the chosen and called who, as argued earlier in this chapter, are those who love God (cf. Rom 8:28).\textsuperscript{636} Importantly, it is evident that people who were once outsiders may become insiders. Thus, God calls those “who were not [his] people, ‘My people’ and “her who was not beloved, ‘beloved’” \textquote[avgapa,w — pass. part.]{\(\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\pi\alpha\omega\)} (Rom 9:25; cf. 1 Thess 1:4). The very fact that some were not then called shows the dynamic nature of God’s call and election, which is not unilaterally efficacious but demands appropriate human response.\textsuperscript{637} Thus, some who were “elect” and thus insiders may become outsiders, and such status is contingent upon appropriate response to God (cf. Rom 11:22–23; 2 Thess 2:10–15).\textsuperscript{638} On the other hand, those who become insiders were loved foreconditionally, that is, even before their response, when they were yet sinners “dead in” their “transgressions” (Eph 2:4–5; Rom 5:8). Therefore, such intimate, particular, reciprocal love is not exclusive of some humans due to a unilateral divine will. It is universally available but not universally consummated.

\textsuperscript{635} Bruce takes this also as “God’s love,” which is poured out “in the Spirit” (cf. Rom 5:5). \textit{The Epistles to the Colossians}, 44. The object of this love is undetermined.

\textsuperscript{636} See the many verses depicting such categories further above.

\textsuperscript{637} See the discussion of this issue further above.

\textsuperscript{638} Indeed, being an “insider” by birth may profit nothing as in the case of Ishmael and Esau.
Reciprocal Love in the General Epistles-Revelation

The multirelational circle of love is likewise apparent in this corpus. The Father’s love for the Son is evident by his status as his “beloved [ἀγαπητός] Son” (2 Pet 1:17; cf. 1 Pet 2:4; 1 John 4:9). Likewise the Father and Son profoundly love their children (1 John 3:1; cf. 1 John 4:9; Rev 1:5; 3:9). Numerous other instances exemplify God’s love toward his people by use of ἀγαπητός (for example, see 1 John 3:2). Humans also love God and other humans and both kinds of love are preceded by divine love (1 John 4:7, 10, 19). Thus, God has the “crown of life” and “the kingdom,” “to those who love him” (Jas 1:12; 2:5; cf. Heb 6:10; Rev 2:4, 19). Peter refers to those who love Christ, “though you have not seen Him, you love [ἀγαπάω] Him” (1 Pet 1:8).

In another example, “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (cf. 1 John 5:1–3). Indeed, the one who keeps God’s word “in him the love of God has truly been perfected” but “if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:5, 15). Moreover, “love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7). On the other hand, “the one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8). As such, a relationship with God will manifest itself in love toward other humans. Specifically, “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). In other words, God loved us, therefore we should reciprocate by loving those whom he loves.

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639 Hence, this is “love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us” and sent Jesus (1 John 4:10). This does not mean that humans do not love God (lest it contradict the rest of the NT) but that God’s love is prior and holds primacy.

640 “Love for the Lord God is the identifying mark of his people whether in the OT or the NT (Deut 6:4–5; Mark 12:30), and thus virtually the equivalent of trust or faith.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 69. Cf. Stauffer, TDNT 1:52.

641 Technically, this might be interpreted as imperative or indicative. But, the indicative seems to be Paul’s clear intent since he “was not exhorting the churches but commending them here.” Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter Jude, 69. Here faith and love are once again connected as later in the verse it states, “though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him.”

642 By reference to the parallel concept in v. 15 it is evident that the genitive in v. 5 is objective referring to love for God.
Importantly, such love toward others is indirectly love toward God himself for “whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him” (1 John 5:1). Further, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments” (1 John 5:2). Likewise, “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3). Similarly, the one who loves God must also love his brother and if he does not, he cannot love God (1 John 4:20–21; cf. 2:5–11; 3:7). Vertical and horizontal love are thus inseparable and relate closely to the language of mutual abiding and mutual indwelling, which depict this circle of love. Moreover, if we do love one another, God abides (μένει) in us and “His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). Further, since “God is love” then “the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16; cf. 1 John 2:15). Indeed, one knows they have “passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren” but the one “who does not love abides in death” (1 John 3:14). Accordingly, frequent reference is made to the love of the brethren and/or love of one another (cf. 1 Pet 1:22 among others), which is itself associated with the love of one’s neighbor (Jas 2:8). As such, the circle of love described elsewhere is here again apparent: God loves us, we...
should love one another and, in doing so, we manifest love toward God and he abides in us and perfects his love in us.\(^{648}\)

The particularity of this divine love relationship is negatively shown by the fact that the “love \(\alpha \gamma \alpha \pi \eta\) of the Father is not in” those who “love the world \(\alpha \gamma \alpha \pi \tau \epsilon\)” (1 John 2:15).\(^{649}\) Similarly, “friendship \(\phi \iota \lambda \iota \alpha\) with the world is hostility toward God” thus “whoever wishes to be a friend \(\phi \iota \lambda \omega \zeta\) of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas 4:4).\(^{650}\) These verses indicate that friendship signifies a mutual relationship that is grounded in reciprocality and loyalty; it is not indifferent or strictly universal (though it is available universally). Abraham is also said to have been the “friend \(\phi \iota \lambda \omega \zeta\) of God” and this friendship is itself predicated on Abraham’s belief \((\pi \sigma \tau \epsilon \varphi \omega\) (Jas 2:23).\(^{651}\) Specifically, Abraham’s faith is reckoned as righteousness and thus the mutuality (but not equality) of this relationship is evident in that both human faith and divine grace are operative as bases of this divine-human friendship.\(^{652}\)

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\(^{648}\) As Schneider summarizes, in the letters of John “God’s love (1 John 3:1; 4:7–21; 2 John 3) and love for God (1 John 2:5, 15; 3:17; 4:10, 12, 20f.; 5:1–3) and for Jesus (5:1), as well as love for one another (3:11, 23; 4:7, 11f.; 2 John 5) and love for the brother (1 John 2:10; 3:10; 4:20f.; pl. 3:14; cf. 5:1f.) are placed in relationship to each other.” EDNT 1:12.

\(^{649}\) Here, “world” is used in a negative sense of evil whereas in John 3:16 it refers to the totality of human persons. Cf. Akin, 1, 2, 3, John, 108.

\(^{650}\) Adamson comments that this friendship with the world “is a result of deliberate choice” as the Greek \(\beta \sigma \omega \lambda \eta \theta \eta\) means “‘not mere will, but will with premeditation.’” The Epistle of James, 170. So, also, R. P. Martin, James, 148.

\(^{651}\) Rarely are individuals referred to as a friend of God. Twice in the OT Abraham is referred to as such (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8). Abraham’s friendship is clearly conditioned upon his appropriate response to God (cf. Gen 15:6; 22:9).

\(^{652}\) As Adamson puts it, in light of Gen 15:6, righteousness refers to a “right Covenant relationship,” which Abraham has “because his faith led him to cooperate with God.” The Epistle of James, 132. Similarly, Davids thinks it is “likely” that this friendship is “a reward for his previous righteous deeds of charity.” The Epistle of James, 130. Likewise, Stählin contends, “According to the context the works of faith done by Abraham are the reason why God conferred this title on him.” TDNT 9:169. Cf. Jas 2:21. Moo, on the other hand, takes it in a forensic sense, faith credited for righteousness. The Letter of James, 138–39. However, he also refers to this description as “an indication of the privileged status Abraham was given on account of his deep faith and practical obedience.” Moo, The Letter of James, 139. “Abraham, for James as for Paul, illustrates faith working in a life of love (Gal 5:6; 1 Cor 13:2, 7).” R. P. Martin, James, 94. Cf. K. A. Richardson, James, 141.
love relationship is also apparent in the numerous references to the special group of the “called” and/or “elect” who are those who love God (cf. Jas 2:5; Jude 1; Rev 17:14).

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been seen that divine love is volitional but not merely volitional. That is, divine love is not unilateral but multilateral, inclusive of giving and receiving within a reciprocal circle of relational love. Such love often exhibits intense divine emotions akin to the most profound compassion and corresponds to the most intimate kinds of affectionate relationship (parent-child, marriage). Further, divine love is not strictly spontaneous, ungrounded, or unmotivated but often portrays evaluation and appraisal. At the same time, divine love is not merited, nor is it initiated by its object(s) but God’s decision to bestow his love is the primary and necessary, but not sufficient, ground of the divine-human love relationship.

Since the divine-human love relationship is explicitly predicated on the priority of God’s decision to create and, in turn, bestow love on his creatures, divine love toward creatures is neither necessary nor essential to his being, though it is integral to his character. That is, while God’s love is integral to his character he did not need to even create humans, much less bestow his love on us. Not only is the divine volition significant in the divine-human relationship but human volition appears in the necessity of appropriate human response to God’s foreconditional love. In accordance with the evaluative nature of God’s love, it is bestowed foreconditionally. That is, God has decided to love prior to conditions but such prevenient love includes conditions for the maintenance of the divine-human relationship. Such conditions themselves may be fulfilled by humans only because of God’s prior love and the way made in and through Christ. Those who respond appropriately to God’s loving invitation are privy to an intimate and everlasting love relationship with him. These aspects of divine love among others will be further unpacked as they relate to a systematic model of divine love within the context of the God-human relationship in the following chapter.
Altogether, then, divine love in the NT is voluntary and unnecessary, yet evaluative and not wholly arbitrary, differential and preferential, yet not altogether exclusive, intensely emotional (compassionate, affected, caring, joyful, even jealous), yet also committal, foreconditional and unmerited, yet not unconditional, and expectant of the appropriate human response of reciprocal love, faithfully seeking reciprocal faithfulness but often not finding it.
CHAPTER 6

A CANONICAL AND SYSTEMATIC MODEL OF DIVINE LOVE IN RELATION TO THE WORLD

This chapter presents and explains a canonical and systematic model of divine love in the context of the God-world relationship. First, this chapter will proceed with a brief overview of the canonical model that has been inductively derived from Scripture, synthesizing the conclusions of chapters 4 and 5. Next, each of the primary aspects of the model of divine love in relation to the world that proceed from the biblical data is further explained. The chapter will then turn to a comparison of the canonical model with the primary features of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent experientialist models in order to address the conflict of interpretations introduced in chapter 3. Finally, implications of this model for a wider divine ontology are surveyed.

Overview of the Canonical Model of Divine Love in Relation to the World

Divine love in the context of the God-world relationship consists of many parts that interrelate with considerable complexity yet striking harmony.¹ When Scripture speaks of God’s love, it does so by means of various terms that point to its various features and components.

¹ For the sake of brevity, this overview of the canonical model will forego documentation of the canonical grounding of the various components of the model. Such documentation and pointers to chapters 4 and 5 will be interspersed throughout the further explanation of the model that follows the introductory overview. Therein texts will be referred to in order to provide the reader a canonical example of the point being made with regard to divine love. Yet, for the sake of brevity, clarity, and in order to avoid a tedious reading experience, no attempt is made to list the supporting data in any comprehensive fashion. The data are laid out in much more detail in chapters 4 and 5 to which the reader is referred for further examination of the canonical data that support the model of divine love briefly outlined and explained in this chapter.
Likewise, when the term “love” is used in the canonical model described here it must be kept in mind that the term is complex, including a great deal of polysemy.

At the risk of oversimplification, God’s love is virtuous, kind, generous, unmerited, voluntary, faithfully devoted, evaluative, profoundly affectionate and compassionate, intensely passionate, patient and longsuffering, merciful, gracious, just, steadfast, amazingly reliable and enduring but not unalterably constant, preferential but not arbitrarily exclusive, relationally responsive, desirous of reciprocation, and active. God loves qualities like goodness, justice, righteousness, and indeed his love is bound up with such qualities. His love is most often directed toward humans and his disposition of love continually manifests itself in actions, which ground the divine-human relationship itself. God’s love is the basis of, and manifest in, loving acts such as creation, calling and election, covenant, beneficence, deliverance, redemption, restoration, corrective discipline, wrath toward oppressors and evil of all kinds, and many others. Through such providential actions, God’s everlasting love persistently draws people to himself, calling humans to respond freely to God’s love and thus enter into a reciprocal love relationship in which he will delight. God takes pleasure in those who respond positively to him (his beloved) and enjoys the most profound, intimate, friendship with them. In all this, God’s love is intensely emotional, akin to, but exponentially greater than, the compassion of the mother for her infant and the passion of the husband for his wife. While God desires and expects appropriate human response and thus faithfully seeks reciprocal love, he is often the victim of unrequited love.

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2 Indeed, a case could be made that all God’s actions are loving but the presentation and defense of such a case would require consideration of all of the divine actions and that far exceeds the scope of this work. For this reason, I make no attempt below to explain in detail the specific actions of God that constitute the various types and aspects of love. Suffice it to say that, according to Scripture, God always does that which is best, righteous, and just, always and without fail (cf. Rev 15:3).

3 Here and elsewhere the term reciprocal refers to love that flows bilaterally. However, reciprocal should not be taken to mean symmetrical or equal. The love relationship between God and humans is ideally reciprocal but it is never symmetrical or equal.
The characteristics of divine love in the context of the God-world relationship briefly described here may be grouped according to five primary and coprimordial aspects: Divine love is (1) volitional, (2) evaluative, (3) emotional, (4) foreconditional, and (5) multilaterally relational. These five aspects are each basic to the biblical understanding of God’s love relationship with the world and they interrelate and support one another while each contributes to the wider view of divine love, which is complex and multi-faceted. To a description of each aspect and their interrelationship we now turn. Throughout the subsequent explanation of the five aspects of love, the different qualifiers of God’s love (i.e., universally relational vs. particularly relational) that are introduced must be remembered in order to clearly recognize and understand the distinctions between the use of the term “love,” which refers to various different aspects in different contexts.

All five aspects of divine love fit together within the context of reciprocal relationality. Scripture consistently depicts God as a personal and relational being who desires a reciprocal love relationship of give-and-take with his creatures. While the persons of the Trinity loved one another before the world was created, God’s love relationship with creatures had a beginning. Indeed, the God-human love relationship is contingent upon God’s free decision to create the world and is thus non-essential to his being. God’s decision to create the world, and thus voluntarily bestow his love on creatures, does not by itself effect the reciprocal love relationship that God desires. That is, God’s love relationship with the world is not unilaterally willed by God. Rather, God desires a reciprocal love relationship with human beings wherein humans freely love God in response to his prior love.

The fact that God voluntarily created the world and bestowed his love on humans, coupled with the fact that the reciprocal love relationship desired by God does not come to fruition without human response, amounts to the distinction between God’s universally relational love and his particularly relational love. God’s universally relational love is the undeserved and unprompted initiating love that God bestows on each human being prior to any human response.
God’s particularly relational love, on the other hand, refers to God’s special and intimate kind of love for those who respond to him and enter into a reciprocal relationship of love with him. God’s universally relational love, which flows unilaterally and prior to human response, initiates the possibility of a reciprocal love relationship between God and humans. That is, God draws humans into a reciprocal love relationship by unilaterally bestowing love on each one prior to any conditions with the goal of eliciting a human response of love. However, God will neither coerce nor unilaterally determine human beings to love him in return. With those who respond positively to God’s loving overtures, God enters into particular and intimate love relationship that amounts to a reciprocal love relationship.

In all this, God’s love in relation to the world is foreconditional. God’s love for everyone (his universally relational love) is bestowed on each human prior to their response and thus before any conditions have been met. However, God desires and expects that humans will respond to his love appropriately. In this way, God’s love in relation to the world is foreconditional. That is, it is bestowed on everyone prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. God’s universally bestowed, foreconditional love enables and calls for a response of love from humans. As such, God’s love is ontologically, logically, and chronologically prior to human love and itself the grounding of all love. Yet, the divine-human love relationship is contingent upon reciprocal human response. Importantly, though God’s love in relation to the world is conditional in many ways, it is never merited.

God’s love is foreconditional rather than altogether unconditional or conditional. The canon displays both conditional and unconditional aspects of God’s love in relation to the world. While Scripture frequently describes God’s love as everlasting, numerous other examples present God’s love as conditional and subject to forfeit. Thus, God’s love is unconditional in some

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4 In other words, the foreconditionality of divine love means that God’s love is the initiator, prior to any human action, love, merit, or worth while, at the same time, God implements conditions for the human reception and continuance of that love.
respects and conditional in others. The unconditionality of God’s love refers to his subjective, non-evaluative, and unilateral love for all of his creatures whereas the conditionality of God’s love amounts to his objective, evaluative, and emotionally responsive love for humans. That is, God’s subjective love is that which is grounded in himself as subject, independent from the response, or lack of response, from human beings. God’s objective love refers to that love which corresponds to, and is affected by, the disposition and/or actions of its object.

God’s subjective love thus refers to God’s unchanging disposition of unilateral and non-evaluative love that is grounded wholly in himself but aims outward toward the goal of reciprocal love relationship with all humans. This subjective disposition of love prompts God’s loving actions that are bestowed initially on all creatures (God’s universally relational love), which is aimed toward, but does not unilaterally effect, reciprocal love relationship (God’s particularly relational love). That is, God’s subjective love is not itself relational but it is the ground of God’s universally relational love that reaches out toward all humans foreconditionally. In this way, God’s subjective love is the ground of God’s universally relational love that reaches creatures. While God’s subjective love is itself everlasting and unconditional, it does not eternally benefit creatures since humans may finally reject God entirely, thus forfeiting the love relationship beyond repair. While God’s subjective love remains in God’s disposition even after such forfeiture it does not reach its objects (via his relational love) who have finally rejected loving relationship with God and, accordingly, no longer receive God’s love. God always loves everyone subjectively in the sense that he remains desirous of a love relationship with them. He never removes his love from anyone who wishes to receive his love. However, the object(s) of

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5 God’s subjective love is thus the basis of, but not identical with, God’s universally relational love, which is bestowed on all human beings foreconditionally.

6 That humans who have made such a final decision no longer receive God’s love does not mean that God’s subjective love has ceased. Rather, it means that God’s subjective love does not reach them (via his relational love) since they have removed themselves from the sphere of God’s loving actions.
God’s love may reject intimate relationship with God and, if persistent in such rejection, forfeit the reception of divine love altogether.

Both the reciprocally relational and foreconditional aspects of God’s love assume the volitional aspect of God’s love. That is, the reciprocal love relationship that God desires with all, and achieves with those who respond to him, assumes bilateral significant freedom. Bilateral significant freedom means that both God and humans possess the freedom to do otherwise than they do. For his part, God need not have created human beings at all and thus his love toward humans is voluntary, not necessary. Conversely, humans also possess significant freedom, bestowed by God their creator, which they might use to reciprocate or reject God’s love. Importantly, God’s love is not arbitrarily willed toward only some but God voluntarily loves all humans and bestows his universally relational love on them accordingly. Thus, according to the canon, the divine-human love relationship is neither unilaterally deterministic nor necessary to God’s nature but mutually (though not symmetrically) voluntary and contingent.

God’s love is not only volitional but also includes evaluative and emotional aspects. The evaluative aspect of God’s love refers to the appraisal, appreciation, and/or reception of value from external agents. God loves goodness and hates evil. He delights in, takes pleasure in, and enjoys his people who belong to him but is displeased, pained, and grieved by those who turn their backs on him. God’s joy is, accordingly, increased or decreased by the actual state of affairs in the world because God has bound his own interests to the best interests of all of his creatures. While sinful humans cannot by themselves bring value to God, they may bring value and joy to him because of God’s enabling and drawing action, especially the mediation of Christ through whom even meager human offerings elicit divine delight. As such, God’s love for individuals may, in fact, be increased and/or decreased according to their disposition and/or actions.

7 That is, God derives pleasure from the positive disposition and actions of humans, as well as their own joy and/or well-being, but is displeased at sin and evil of every kind.
Finally, God’s love is also profoundly emotional. God is consistently presented as affectionate, loving, and devotedly interested in and intimately concerned with human beings. God feels sorrow, passion, and intense anger at human evil but also compassion and the desire to bring wayward humans back into proper relationship with himself. Conversely, God delights in goodness and is joyous over every person who responds to his loving overtures. In all, God’s love for humans is ardent and passionate. The emotionality of God’s love does not exclude its volitional and evaluative aspects. All three of these aspects are mutually supportive and interrelated.  

Altogether, divine love is relational. God persistently seeks a reciprocal love relationship of give-and-take with his creatures. Further, his love is foreconditional and unmerited, voluntary and unnecessary, yet not arbitrary, differential and preferential, yet available to those who are willing to respond positively, intensely emotional, yet also committal, evaluative and expectant of appropriate human response.

The Canonical Model of Divine Love in Relation to the World Unpacked

We now turn to an explanation of each of the five aspects of divine love that have been featured in the overview above and the relationship between them, along with pointers to the biblical data from which these aspects are derived and, when necessary, cross references to the sections in chapters 4 and 5 that elaborate on the biblical basis of these aspects. For the purposes of clarity in unfolding these aspects I will begin by explaining the volitional, evaluative, and emotional aspects of God’s love. These three characteristics of love must be understood in order to build toward the larger picture of God’s foreconditional and multilaterally relational love. These characteristics, however, are coprimordial. That is, they are equally basic to God’s love for

8 The evaluative and emotional aspects of divine love are especially closely related since both of them assume divine passibility and point to the fact that God can enter into a mutually beneficial (though unequal) relationship of give-and-take with human beings.
the world. The order in which they are presented here corresponds to the canonical investigation, depicting a phenomenological description of God’s love in relation to the world. Therefore, the order of elements does not signify the order of importance or a progression from basis to consequence but, rather, is chosen for the purpose of explanation and in correspondence to chapters 4 and 5. The volitional, evaluative, and emotional aspects closely interrelate with one another and all contribute to the understanding of the foreconditionality of love while all of the four preceding aspects lead to the wider conception of God’s multilaterally relational love. While these five aspects may be distinguished, they are not altogether distinct since they overlap considerably as evidenced by both the semantic and thematic data of the canon.9

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love

God’s Love for Creatures Is Voluntary

In the beginning, since no other persons existed (cf. John 1:1–3), God’s love flowed only between the persons of the Trinity (cf. John 17:24). However, God decided to create and, accordingly, bestow his love on creatures.10 The divine-human love relationship that God desired

9 The overlaps between the five aspects are readily apparent by reference to the semantics alone. The primary words for love in the OT and NT collocate with and closely relate to terminology that points to the five aspects. For a demonstration of the semantic overlaps that also support the various aspects described in this chapter, see the word studies interspersed throughout chapters 4 and 5, especially the studies of ἀγαπάω, ἰματίζω, γινώσκω, ἁγαπεῖναι, and φιλέω. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that, among other things, divine love toward the world is volitional, as evidenced by both the semantics and divine actions. For instance, the language of election and divine will relate closely to the language of God’s love (see the various word studies in chapters 4 and 5 in this regard). This interrelationship points to the association between God’s will and his loving actions. Indeed, God’s will to create is the prerequisite for his relational love with the world. God’s decision to create, election, and commitment to the covenant relationship initiated, but not unilaterally maintained, by that election exemplify the volitional aspect of God’s love. Moreover, this volitional aspect complements both the emotional and evaluative aspects of divine love toward the world, which are also coprimordial. Indeed, evaluation, volition, and emotion are all bound up in the language of God’s election, good pleasure, delight, etc., by way of both OT and NT terminology, all of which closely corresponds to and collocates with the most important words descriptive of divine love. God’s evaluation is further seen in various languages and descriptions of his delight and joy over his people and, conversely, his displeasure and righteous indignation against evil, all of which are closely associated with the major terminology of love. Closely connected to God’s evaluative love is his emotional love evidenced in various depictions of his compassion and passion. These volitional, evaluative, and emotional aspects are assumed by, and necessary for, the foreconditional and multilaterally relational aspects of love.

10 This canonical model of love presumes that the “world” is not eternal but was, at some point in
(and continues to desire) could not take place without God’s logically, ontologically, and chronologically prior decision to create other beings. God is thus the relational starting point, causal origin, and prime agent of all relationship. God did not need to create and love the world but voluntarily opened himself up to relationship with creatures and, as such, God’s love relationship with creatures is also voluntary rather than necessary.

This volitional aspect of God’s love in the context of the God-world relationship extends beyond the act of creation. God’s amazing commitment to his creatures is demonstrated as he continues to voluntarily love creatures even after the fall. While human sin merits death, God has made a way to repair the ruptured relationship and continues to bestow his universally relational love even on sinful and undeserving human beings, though he is under no obligation to do so. ¹¹ In response to the Fall and subsequent disordering of the world, God chose a people through whom he would reach out to all peoples and committed himself to them in covenant relationship for the benefit of all (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18). The covenant relationship thus further highlights the volitional elements involved in the divine-human love relationship. God’s love for humans itself prompted the initiation of covenant relationship through election and God’s people were expected to reciprocate God’s love through commitment and obedience to him (cf. Deut 7:7–13).¹² Likewise, the oft-used kinship metaphors of marriage and parent-child point toward the bilateral, voluntary commitment expected within the divine-human love relationship.¹³

¹¹ Both the unmerited nature of divine love and the divine decision as an example of the partial and temporary suspension of the consequences of evaluative judgment will be discussed later in this chapter.

¹² Since the covenant relationship can be broken it cannot be descriptive of a necessary relationship. Rather, it clearly describes a voluntary relationship. On the real possibility that love relationship with God, including covenant, could be forfeited as well as its bilateral nature, see the discussions of the foreconditional and multilaterally relational aspects of love later in this chapter.

¹³ For example, the metaphor of marriage assumes voluntary union, especially the frequent divine
Though God’s people repeatedly rebelled against him and rejected his loving overtures, God persisted in his love for them far beyond any obligations and reasonable expectations. Over and over again, God renewed his commitment to continue bestowing his love on them actively with the intention of ultimately reclaiming them and restoring them to the harmonious, reciprocal divine-human love relationship that was his goal all along (cf. Exod 32–34; Neh 9; Ps 78). Though they did not deserve it and though God had every right to remove his love from reaching them, God voluntarily continued his love relationship with them. In this vein, the canon consistently speaks of divine love in relation to the world as both initiated and freely bestowed by God.

Numerous other examples of God’s volitional love appear throughout Scripture, perhaps the most explicit of which is found in his declaration: “I will love them freely” (Hos 14:4).\(^{14}\) On the basis of his love, God chose Israel above all peoples, though they did not merit such election (cf. Deut 7:6–7, 14; 10:15). Likewise, that God’s love for creatures is not necessary is evident in the strong language that presents God’s love as contingent upon his will in Exod 33:19.\(^{15}\) There, in the aftermath of Israel’s rebellion with the golden calf, God states, “I will be charge of infidelity by his “bride” (cf. Jer 3; Hosea). Moreover, the parental metaphor is depicted as one of “adoption,” which is also a relationship entered into by decision, at least on the part of the parent, but also at some point that of the child as well (cf. Deut 32:10; Ezek 16:1–6; Hos 11:1). A child might remove him/herself from such a relationship and have nothing to do with his/her parents (at least when adulthood is reached). The parent may continue to have loving feelings toward the absent child but, to the extent that the parent’s love is unrequited, the parent-child love relationship is non-existent. For a further discussion of kinship metaphors see chapter 4, pages 341–52, and chapter 5, pages 534–40.

\(^{14}\) The adjective translated freely (חכם) connotes the “determinative . . . element of freewill” referring to that which is offered “totally voluntarily.” J. Conrad, “חכם,” \(TLOT\) 9:200, 222. See also the fundamentally free and voluntary nature of divine חסד in the discussion of that term in the OT chapter, pages 354–75, where is it demonstrated that God need not manifest חסד, but חסד is predicated upon God’s voluntary association. Cf. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, \(The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry\) (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 45, 176, 234.

\(^{15}\) In other cases, the removal of God’s lovingkindness or compassion, in response to the people’s apostasy, suggests the volitional aspect of God’s love (Jer 16:5). Thus, God can clearly remove his love. However, the context shows that the people’s actions warranted the removal of lovingkindness and/or compassion long before God actually removed it. Therefore, it appears that such removal is not automatic but voluntary, while at the same time never arbitrary. The freedom of God is also evident in his “repenting,” meaning he has the freedom to change course (cf. Jonah 3:9; 4:2). Likewise, humans
gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show

God’s commitment to love humans reaches its
apex in Christ himself who manifested the depth and height of God’s love by willingly giving
himself up for humans (Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20; Eph 5:25).

Thus, God both voluntarily created and bestowed love on humans and continued to
bestow that love in the face of evil which, absent God’s mercy, would amount to the forfeiture of
the benefits of God’s love. As such, humans never merit or deserve God’s love. God’s love is
freely given without compulsion.

God’s Love for Creatures
Is Not Solely Voluntary

While God’s love includes a volitional aspect, it is not strictly volitional or unilaterally
willed. That is, God’s love is not identical to his will or merely a product of his will. God’s love
is also evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and relationally responsive. God voluntarily loves
all humans and bestows his universally relational love on them accordingly. This requires an
understanding of the relationship and distinction between God’s love and his will and election.

entreating God in prayer assume that he has the power to act or not act and will himself make a decision.

16 Here God bestows his compassion and grace without compulsion. The people have forfeited his
favor but he continues it toward them nevertheless. In this case, God is not stating that he will arbitrarily be
gracious and compassionate to some and not others. Rather, he is stating that though none deserve God’s
mercy or compassion and he is under no obligation to be merciful toward them, he has the right to bestow
it. That God is not merely selecting some to receive his grace and not others is apparent by the construction
of the phrase itself, which might be better translated “I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the
grace that I grant and the compassion that I show” (JPS). See the further discussion of this in chapter 4,
pages 251–2. See also the discussion of the relation of God’s will and love in Rom 9:15–18 in chapter 5,
pages 462–4.

17 However, while this volitionally free aspect of divine love is recognized, one should be careful
not to assume a false dichotomy between the divine will and essence. This issue will be revisited later in
this chapter.

18 These aspects will each be discussed in succession after this one.

19 God’s universal bestowal of love and the content of his universally relational love in particular
will be discussed later in this chapter.
God’s love is closely connected to his will and the divine action of election throughout the canon. However, Scripture clearly distinguishes between God’s love and God’s will and election. Specifically, divine love is itself the basis of election. That is, election is a manifestation of divine love. At this point, two kinds of election must also be distinguished from one another, though they may overlap: (1) vocational election within the plan of salvation and (2) salvific election. Both kinds of election are the result of a divine call to which humans freely respond. That is, both kinds of election are not unilaterally determined by God but require appropriate human response for their continuance. Further, both calls result from and are a manifestation of God’s love as will be explained further below.

Vocational election on the basis of divine love

Vocational election refers to God’s call to specific individuals and/or groups to a role in the plan of salvation, often of a revelatory nature. This kind of election does not refer to the salvation of the elect but to their special function in salvation history. For example, Israel was


21 For example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the people of Israel, Saul, David, the Twelve, Paul, etc., were vocationally elected to specific tasks and/or functions. On the revelatory purpose of “covenant” see further John H. Walton, Covenant: God’s Purpose, God’s Plan (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994).

22 Of course, there is some overlap between vocational and salvific election. One who is vocationally elected may also be elect unto salvation but the two are not the same. The latter is universally available but predicated on appropriate response. As such, the appropriate response, or lack thereof, to vocational election may itself have salvific ramifications.
chosen because of God’s love for the patriarchs (cf. Deut 4:37).\textsuperscript{23} Importantly, while their election was unmerited and prior to conditions (cf. Deut 7:7–8; 9:4–5), its attendant privileges were neither unconditional nor impervious to forfeiture. Likewise, in other instances, while God chooses particular individuals, such election is conditional upon human response and thus may be rejected initially and/or forfeited as it was by King Saul and Judas.\textsuperscript{24} Accordingly, humans must maintain their status as “elect” within the divine-human relationship through appropriate response to God (cf. Deut 7:7–13; 10:15–16; John 15:14, 16).\textsuperscript{25}

Significantly, God’s vocational election of Israel is not intended for the benefit of Israel alone. Rather, God intends, through Israel, to enter into a reciprocal love relationship with peoples of all nations and ethnicities (cf. Gen 12:3; Deut 10:18; Acts 10:34–35).\textsuperscript{26} His vocational election is thus a manifestation of his love not only toward Israel but toward all peoples whom he desires to draw into reciprocal love relationship with himself.\textsuperscript{27} The revelation of God’s love, compassion, mercy, and grace to Israel is, in microcosm, that which he will bestow upon all

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Scripture does not reveal “why” God loved the patriarchs in a special manner though it is apparent that God had a special relational love with Abraham (cf. Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7; Jas 2:23).
\item \textsuperscript{24} Cf. Heb 11:8 with reference to Abraham’s response to the divine call. Throughout Scripture, “election by Yahweh must find response in the proper behavior of the elect.” H. Wildberger, “"להב,"” \textit{TLOT} 1:214.
\item \textsuperscript{25} For example, though God chose his disciples they are his “friends” only if they obey him (John 15:14) and, as such, this is not an unconditional election. In this way, the ongoing status of an individual or nation as “chosen” is conditional; it is not presented as a unilateral, irresistible, permanent election. “Israel has been chosen by God and must therefore maintain its obligations toward the divine covenant that was the consequence of this choice.” Ronald E. Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in \textit{Numbers–Samuel} (vol. 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 350. Cf. Craigie, \textit{The Book of Deuteronomy}, 179; Jeffrey H. Tigay, \textit{Deuteronomy} (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), 87.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Thus, “God’s election does not mean groundless and unmerited favoritism. Were that the case, God would have been shown to flout the very righteousness the covenant declared and upheld.” Clements, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” in \textit{Numbers–Samuel}, 2:359. Rather, “God’s plan for the salvation of the nations was his motive for the election of Israel. This responsible role of the elect was a dominant theme in the preaching of the prophets.” Lamar Eugene Cooper Sr., \textit{Ezekiel} (NAC 17; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 105. Cf. Dyrness, \textit{Themes}, 59.
\item \textsuperscript{27} That is, God’s purpose in vocationally electing a particular nation stems from his love for all peoples and his desire to reveal that love to everyone such that all who are willing might enter into a reciprocal love relationship with him. This would explain God’s frequent concern for his “name.” See,
sinners who will respond to his action and come to him (John 3:16; Rom 10:13; 1 John 1:9).  

God vocationally elects humans because of his love and that love not only motivates God to enter into covenant relationship in the first place but also to remain in that relationship as long as possible in order to enact the plan of salvation, reveal himself, and provide every opportunity for as many as possible to respond to him and enter into his particularly relational love.  

Salvific election on the basis of divine love  

Salvific election describes those instances in Scripture where those who will ultimately receive salvation are referred to as the “elect” (cf. Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22). The language of divine calling and election often functions as technical language with reference to becoming, or being, part of the people of God, which itself requires entrance into, and the maintenance of, a loving relationship with God.  

Salvific election then, like vocational election, stems from God’s among many other instances, Exod 32:12–13; Pss 109:21; 143:11; Ezek 18:25; 20:9, 14, 22, 44.  

28 That is, through the vocational election of Israel and others, God aims at revealing his universal love and his desire for that love to be returned. For this reason God bears longer with Israel in order to manifest his character; that is, not because they are deserving of such longsuffering nor because God is partial (he is not, cf. Acts 10:34–35) but because they are the conduit of the revelation of God’s universal love, which is intended toward relational love with all peoples. One may surmise that if God had not made a particular choice of his people all the divine actions could have been viewed as merely natural, the normal course of events. In this case, there would be no way to highlight the way God deals with his people supernaturally and specially. In order for God to reveal his character, and the modus operandi of the divine-human relationship, he used a microcosm to set in contrast with the wider world structure which, temporarily, lies outside of God’s ideal will as a consequence of creaturely evil.  

29 Within this framework, consider the case of God’s love for “Jacob” rather than “Esau” in Mal 1 and Rom 9. Neither Israel nor Edom deserved divine love (cf. Mal 2:11; 3:6) but God bore long with Israel due to their vocational election in the plan of salvation (Deut 4:37; 7:7; Rom 11:28). Israel is privileged not merely for its own sake but God’s persevering love toward them is directed toward revealing his love to all. Despite their special election, however, judgment could and did fall upon them, even though God was abundantly longsuffering until there “was no remedy” (2 Chr 36:16). See the further discussion of these instances in chapters 4 and 5, especially on pages 271–80, 460–7, as well as the discussion of evaluative love in the following section in this chapter.  

30 A few examples and explanation of this will be given in the discussion that follows. However, for a further explanation of the meaning of God’s calling and election with regard to salvation, see the word studies of τικ, εκλεγοματ, and καλεω along with the discussion of these issues in chapters 4 and 5, pages 242–5, 447–56. See also, among others, Robert H. Stein, Luke (NAC 24; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 446; Gottlob Schrenk, “εκλεγοματ, εκλογη, εκλεκτος,” TDNT 4:187; Craig Blomberg, Matthew (NAC 22; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 329.
love. God calls everyone to salvation because he loves every human (his universally relational love) and desires that all will be party to his particularly relational love and thus be saved (cf. John 3:16).  

God’s call in such contexts is an invitation to a reciprocal love relationship, which may be accepted or rejected. Those who accept the invitation are the “elect” who will enjoy relationship with God forever (cf. Matt 22:14). This same group is also often referred to as God’s “beloved” (cf. Rom 1:7; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Thess 2:13). On the other hand, not all who are called, or “invited,” respond and become “elect” (cf. Matt 22:3–4, 8–9, 14; Luke 14:16–24). The divine-human love relationship enjoyed by the elect, then, is contingent upon appropriate response (cf. Rom 10:9, 12–13; 11:22–23). That is, the final status of “elect” requires the ongoing, free, positive response of human beings (cf. 2 Pet 1:10). In this way, God

31 See further the discussion of God’s universally relational love later in this chapter.

32 The terminology of the divine call is used in a complex fashion. At times, the called are those who have received an invitation to which they must respond (cf. Matt 22:14) while at other times the “called” are those who have responded to the invitation (or will respond). In either case, the invitation is one that must be voluntarily accepted (cf. Matt 22:2–6). For further evidence of this see the discussion of the καλέω word group in chapter 5, pages 452–6.

33 For example, Jesus stated, “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). Here, the “called” are those who may accept or reject God’s invitation while the “chosen” are those who do accept the invitation.

34 However, though they correspond to the same objects, the terminology of the elect and those who love God are not themselves equivalent in meaning. The elect are those who have been called and responded to that call (or will do so). The beloved are also elect but the term beloved also connotes that they are the recipients of God’s particularly relational love and thus the objects of God’s special affection. The latter is not connoted by the term elect itself, although it is true that the elect are also beloved. For a further demonstration of this view of the statuses of called, elect, and beloved see chapter 5, pages 447–71.

35 For example, “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13; cf. 10:9, 12). Likewise, Rom 11:22–23 shows that the “elect” are not unilaterally so. Rather, they may forfeit God’s kindness. Thus, Paul writes, “Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.” See the further discussion of Rom 9–11 with regard to these issues in chapter 5, pages 460–7.

36 This status is, accordingly, conditional and not unilaterally determined. Thus, Peter writes, “brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble” (2 Pet 1:10; cf. Deut 7:11–12; Eph 4:1; Col 3:12; 2 Thess
freely loves all human beings and makes the reception of his love available to every human but also imposes real conditions upon the potential ongoing recipients of his love.\footnote{37}

In all this, those who are salvifically “elect” are those who have responded (or will respond) to the divine invitation by loving God (albeit imperfectly) and are thus “beloved,” that is, party to God’s particularly relational love, forevermore. Therefore, the “elect” and “beloved” who receive the final reward are not merely those loved by God but “those who love” God in return (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; 1 Thess 1:4; cf. Eph 6:24; Jas 1:12; 2:5).\footnote{38} This exemplifies the crucial distinction between God’s universally relational love, which God voluntarily bestows on everyone, and his particularly relational love, which is received and enjoyed only by those who appropriately respond to God’s universally relational love.\footnote{39} God’s universally relational love is manifest, among other ways, in the universal call (invitation) to the divine-human love relationship (cf. John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9).\footnote{40} The nature of God’s vocational and salvific election as the result of God’s call to which humans freely respond points to the fact that God has granted human beings significant freedom, a point to which we now turn.

\footnote{37} This is descriptive of the foreconditionality of love, which will be discussed further below in this chapter. This expected human response is not meritorious. Rather, human response to God’s invitation is itself offered and made possible by his prior grace and love (John 6:44; 12:32). Election is thus conditional and yet unmerited. God’s calling is not according to works (2 Tim 1:9) and God will not revoke the call (Rom 11:29). The recipients of “His calling” are those “who believe” (Eph 1:18–19).

\footnote{38} To take but one of these examples, the one “who perseveres under trial” when “approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (Jas 1:12; similarly, see Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; Jas 2:5; cf. 1 Cor 8:3; Eph 6:24).

\footnote{39} God’s universally relational and particularly relational love will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

\footnote{40} The call is not itself God’s love but is one of the actions that is prompted by God’s love and that seeks human love in return.
God’s Love Relationship with Creatures Assumes Bilateral Significant Freedom

As has been briefly seen, the volitional aspect of God’s love includes God’s desire and will toward a reciprocal relationship with all humans, a relationship that is achieved with those who respond to him. That God desires a reciprocal relationship with all but only enjoys it with some, assumes the notion of bilateral significant freedom. Bilateral significant freedom means that both God and humans possess the freedom to do otherwise than they do. As mentioned earlier, for his part, God need not have created human beings at all. He did not need to create other beings. He could have enjoyed the Trinitarian love relationship for all eternity. God’s love toward humans is therefore voluntary, not necessary.¹¹

Conversely, God has bestowed significant freedom on humans, including the freedom to reciprocate, or not reciprocate, God’s love (cf. Deut 6:5).²² The volitional aspect of God’s love therefore has a counterpart in the divinely bestowed free will of humans. God never irresistibly determines human love. Indeed, the biblical data suggest that determined love is an oxymoron.²³ Love must be freely given as supported both by the numerous commands of humans to love (see

¹¹ God’s significant freedom has been demonstrated by many of the passages referenced already in this chapter regarding the volitional nature of divine love. For a further discussion of the biblical theology of this issue see chapters 4 and 5, pages 447–71. The significant freedom of God and other creatures is also briefly revisited below in the section on theo-ontological implications.

²² Thus, human beings are not unilaterally determined to act as they do. The significant freedom of human beings is apparent in numerous instances where what God wants to happen does not occur. For instance, “the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves” (Luke 7:30; cf. Mark 7:24). Elsewhere, God desired to save his people. He even “longs to be gracious” to them and “waits on high to have compassion,” but they were “unwilling” (Isa 30:15, 18). Likewise, God “called, but no one answers,” he “spoke, but they did not listen. And they did evil in [His] sight and chose that in which [He] did not delight” (Isa 66:4; cf. 65:12). In many other instances God’s will is not unilaterally effective since that which takes place is not always what God desires. See Lam 3:33; Ezek 33:11; cf. 18:23, 32; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34; 2 Pet 3:9; cf. 1 Tim 2:4. See also the discussion of these and other passages in chapters 4 and 5.

²³ Some evidence for this conclusion is presented in this section and much more may be found in chapters 4 and 5, pages 241–301 and 447–71. Moreover, the evidence for this conclusion becomes stronger and stronger as one considers the many other aspects of love and how they interrelate. As we turn to each of those aspects we will see that the voluntary nature of love, both human and divine, is not only implied in many passages but required to make sense of the broader conception of God’s love and the divine-human love relationship as depicted throughout Scripture.
further below) and implied by the fact that God’s love as well as the love of humans is consistently depicted as voluntary throughout Scripture (cf. Hos 14:4; Deut 30:15–16, 19–20). Indeed, there are no instances of forced love in the Scripture. Rather, throughout Scripture, love, whether human or divine, assumes freedom.  

This means that human response is required to establish and maintain the particular, divine-human love relationship. The requisite human response is apparent in the frequent divine command of humans to love God and others (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Matt 22:37–39), among many other places. Such commands make little sense if the human’s will is not involved. Rather, such commands suggest that humans might volitionally respond to God’s love with reciprocal love. Conversely, divine love may be forfeited by the lack of appropriate human response.  

If humans are free to respond or not respond to God’s love, as suggested in these texts, the God-human love relationship cannot be the result of God’s will alone. God’s will, therefore, is necessary to a divine-human love relationship but does not bring such relationship to fruition by itself.  

Though God will never arbitrarily remove his love, humans may reject his love and disown him (cf. Jer 31:3; Hos 9:15). The divine-human love relationship, then, is neither unilaterally deterministic nor essential or ontologically necessary but mutually (though not symmetrically) volitional and contingent.

In all this, God’s love in relation to the world is voluntary but not arbitrary. That is, God’s love for creatures is not the product of his will alone but also includes evaluative and


45 This will be explained and further elaborated upon in the section on the foreconditional nature of divine love below.

46 That is, God’s will to love is thus a necessary basis of the divine-human love relationship but does not, by itself, amount to a loving relationship between God and humans.
emotional aspects that complement its volitional aspect. Further, the love relationship that God desires with human beings is not unilaterally willed but requires the free response of human beings to God’s freely given love. Neither God nor humans love one another by necessity. God freely loves humans and beseeches humans to freely love him in return. God’s love for the world, then, takes place within the context of a free, volitional relationship.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love

Throughout Scripture, God’s Love Is Consistently Evaluative

God’s love is not only volitional but also includes evaluative and emotional aspects. The evaluative aspect of God’s love refers to the appraisal, appreciation, and/or reception of value from external agents. Throughout Scripture, God often delights in, takes pleasure in, and enjoys his creatures. Indeed, “the Lord takes pleasure in His people” (Ps 149:4) who are precious and valuable in his sight (Exod 19:5–6; Deut 26:18; Isa 43:4; Matt 10:31; 12:12; Luke 12:27, 24). On the other hand, God may also be displeased, vexed, and grieved by humans. God’s evaluative love is further evident in that he loves the righteous (Ps 146:8; cf. Prov 11:20; 12:2, 22) and the “cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7; cf. Heb 13:16) but hates those who do iniquity (Ps 5:5 [6]; cf. 11:5; Prov 11:20; Rev 2:6). Indeed, the “way of the wicked is an abomination to the

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47 Elsewhere it is abundantly clear that God’s people may be “delightful” and/or pleasing to him (2 Sam 22:21–28; 1 Kgs 10:9; Jer 31:20; Pss 147:10–11; 149:4; Prov 16:7; Dan 9:23; 2 Chr 9:8; Rom 14:18; Col 1:10; 3:20; 1 Thess 4:1; Heb 11:5; 1 John 3:22). Likewise, human beings are precious and valuable to God (cf. Isa 43:4; Matt 10:31; 12:12; Luke 12:6–7, 24) and his special treasure (Exod 19:5–6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; cf. Mal 3:17–18). God thus enjoys his creatures and this is an aspect of his love. Furthermore, God “will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy” (Zeph 3:17). One may “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects” (Col 1:10; cf. 1 Thess 4:1; Heb 11:5; 1 John 3:22) as children who are obedient to their parents are “well-pleasing to the Lord” (Col 3:20).

48 In many instances, the canon clearly asserts that humans may displease God. See, for example, Isa 9:17 [16]; 65:12; 66:4; Eccl 5:4 [3]; 1 Cor 10:5; 1 Thess 2:15.

49 Importantly, this contrast between divine love and hate (cf. Isa 61:8; Ps 45:7 [8]) is depicted as explicitly evaluative and often emotive. It is evident here and elsewhere that divine love and hatred should not be conflated with choosing and rejecting, respectively. They both may connote volition, evaluation, and emotional affection (cf. Jas 2:23). See the further discussion of this issue in chapters 4 and 5, pages 294–
Lord, but He loves one who pursues righteousness” (Prov 15:8–9). That God loves the righteous and the “cheerful giver” does not necessarily mean that God only loves them and not others. Rather, God loves everyone in some respects as evidenced elsewhere (cf. John 3:16). These passages, then, suggest that God loves the righteous and the cheerful giver in a special, evaluative sense. He delights in and approves of those who do good while being displeased by evil.\footnote{Significantly, even those among God’s “elect” may be the object of divine displeasure (Hos 8:13; Mal 1:10; 1 Cor 10:5) while the “outsider” may be accepted by God (Acts 10:35).}

Accordingly, divine pleasure or displeasure in human beings is (partially) predicated on human disposition and/or action and may be manifest along with intense and profound divine emotions.\footnote{As such, God’s love for individuals may, in fact, be increased and/or decreased according to their disposition and/or actions. Thus, the evaluative aspect of God’s love assumes divine responsiveness to human beings, including appraisal of their disposition and/or actions. As such, both God’s positive and negative responses to human beings are not arbitrary, but responsive to human actions.}

301 and 506–10.

\footnote{On God’s love for everyone, see the discussion of God’s universally relational love under the discussion of the relationally multilateral aspect of God’s love later in this chapter.}

\footnote{God hates evil because, among other reasons, it affects everyone negatively. In other words, his love for all must logically result in the response of hatred toward certain states of affairs and, even, specific persons who perpetrate evil. In this regard Leon Morris correctly points out that “we often confuse love with sentimentality. . . . There is a stern side to real love.” Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 25. Cf. Donald A. Carson, “Love,” New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 647.}

\footnote{For example, God delights in righteousness, goodness, obedience, and lovingkindness (Jer 9:24; Mic 7:18; Ps 11:7; cf. 1 Pet 1:7; 3:4) but takes no pleasure in wickedness (Ps 5:4 [5]; cf. Deut 12:31; 28:63; Luke 16:15) nor in merely external sacrifice (1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:11, 14; Hos 6:6; 9:4; Amos 5:21–22; Mic 6:7–8; Ps 40:6 [7]; Heb 10:8; cf. Prov 15:8). The emotional intensity of God’s evaluative displeasure is evident when God himself declares, “I hate [literally, My soul (בש) hates] your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me, I am weary of bearing them” (Isa 1:14; cf. Jer 12:8; Hos 9:15; Amos 6:8; Ps 106:40). Thus, divine hatred is depicted in strongly emotional terms that point toward the passionate nature of God as well as the passionate nature of love. See the further discussion of the emotional aspect of God’s love in the next section of this chapter.}
Indeed, God’s displeasure is never described as arbitrary in Scripture but is always prompted by evil (cf. Hos 9:15).\textsuperscript{53} God never hates that which is good but justly hates evil.\textsuperscript{54} Yet, even his righteous indignation is tempered, due to his amazing mercy and grace.\textsuperscript{55} In the meantime, God longs for the day when his people will be his delight (Isa 62:4 [5]; cf. Isa 65:19; Jer 32:41; Ezek 20:39–42; Mal 3:12). The pinnacle of God’s joy is reserved for the day of ultimate restoration when reality will be in perfect accord with the divine will and pleasure and he

\textsuperscript{53} “God’s wrath is [not] arbitrary or whimsical” but is the “righteous response of his holiness to sin.” Carson, New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 647.

\textsuperscript{54} Not only is this apparent by reference to the canonical instances of divine hatred but it also follows from other Scriptural data. For example, Scripture laments that Jesus was “hated . . . without cause” (John 15:25; cf. Pss 35:19; 69:4). It is here implicit that it is unjust to hate someone “without cause.” Would it not then be unjust of God to hate some humans without cause? The logical conclusion is that, as is evidenced in the canon, divine hatred is never groundless but always appropriate to the actual state of affairs. This corresponds to the frequent canonical conception of misdirected love, which assumes that love ought to be directed toward that which is good rather than that which is evil. Such a conception itself assumes the appropriateness of evaluative love. Thus, humans should love that which is good and hate that which is evil (cf. Amos 5:15; Titus 1:8). Misdirected love is frequently rebuked throughout the canon, among many others, Isa 1:23; 56:10; Hos 3:1; 9:10; 10:1; Amos 4:5; Prov 20:13; 2 Chr 19:2; Matt 6:5; 23:6; Luke 11:42–43; 16:14; 20:46; 1 Tim 3:3; 6:10; 2 Tim 3:2–4; 4:10; Heb 13:5; 2 Pet 2:15; 3 John 9; Rev 22:15). Importantly, misdirected love is evil not because it includes desire, attraction, and enjoyment but because it is directed at that which should not be loved. This is contra Anders Nygren’s condemnation of what he called acquisitive or appetitive love. Agape and Eros (trans. P. S. Watson; London: SPCK, 1953), 128, 210. Thus, Daniel L. Akin correctly states that it is “not the emotion that is felt by the individual” that is evil but “the question is whether that attraction is properly motivated, and directed to the right object.” 1, 2, 3, John (NAC 38; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 108.

\textsuperscript{55} Further, divine hatred does not necessarily refer to maximal negative emotion as the term “hate” in English generally connotes. The intensity of the divine feelings of hatred and/or displeasure depends on the context and can vary from the most intense loathing to mild aversion. Moreover, God may (temporarily) love and hate the same object(s) simultaneously. For example, God may come to hate his people evaluatively but still continue to long for a particular, love relationship with them and accordingly work to draw them to himself in the meantime. This corresponds to the subjective, universally relational, and foreconditional aspects of his love, which itself relates to the temporary and partial suspension of evaluative judgment. Eventually, however, without appropriate human response, such evaluative hatred will become permanent and God’s universally relational love will be forfeited. Nevertheless, in the meantime there is considerable complexity due to the sinfulness of the human objects of God’s love such that God might truly love and hate the same object, in different ways, at the same time. Tony Lane comments, “God loves sinners, not in the sense that he does not hate them along with their sin, but in the sense that he seeks their salvation in Christ.” “The Wrath of God as an Aspect of the Love of God,” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 155. He further suggests that it is possible to view God’s “wrath against a particular sinner [a]s demanded by his love for that particular sinner.” Ibid., 164.
will rejoice over his people even as the father rejoiced over his prodigal son who returned home (Luke 15:20–24; cf. Zeph 3:17).  

The Partial and Temporary Suspension of the Effects of Divine Evaluation

However, what about the apparent tension between the concept of evaluative love and the reality that the objects of divine love are not worthy of love? For example, what is to be made of God’s love for the “righteous” in light of the fact that elsewhere the canon states that in God’s sight no one is righteous (cf. Ps 143:2; Rom 3:10) and all human righteousness is like filthy rags (Isa 64:6)? God is able to take pleasure in unworthy human beings because, due to his loving mercy and grace, he has temporarily and partially suspended the consequences of evaluative judgment in response to the entrance of evil into the world through the Fall (cf. Acts 17:3). Without this there would not only be an absence of evaluative love toward creatures but humans themselves would be non-existent. Yet, while humans have ruptured the divine-human love relationship and deserve to die, God mercifully and graciously grants ongoing life and love (cf. Exod 33:18–34:10). That is, because of God’s voluntary and undeserved, steadfast love, manifested in the bestowal of mercy and grace, the eradication of evil, which would otherwise be immediate, is temporarily suspended so that all who will respond to God’s loving overtures might be reconciled to him (cf. 2 Pet 3:9; Ezek 18:32; 33:11). However, the temporary and partial

56 God delights when even one lost person is found. See Luke 15:7, 10, 24; Matt 18; Ezek 34:10–11, 13.

57 I qualify this suspension of the consequences of judgment as “partial” since God still does execute some judgment at all times but, presently, his positive judgments do not correspond to perfect judgment (other than the evaluation of Christ), since no creaturely objects are themselves worthy of positive appraisal, and his negative judgments are significantly tempered (but not nullified) by his longsuffering mercy and grace. Such “partial” judgment is especially prominent in the divine appraisal of his OT covenant people, who apparently function as a microcosm and type of the way the divine-human evaluation operates in accord with God’s mercy and grace.

58 Therefore, the word “righteous” is used in such instances in a qualified sense, a partial righteousness corresponding to the partial suspension of the effects of judgment. Of course, the very existence of divine mercy and grace assumes the (at least partial) suspension of the effects of evaluative
suspension of divine evaluation does not amount to its nullification. There will be future judgment, including the eradication of the impediment to the perfect divine-human love relationship, that is, evil (cf. Rev 20–21). In the meantime, God bestows his universally relational love on undeserving, sinful humans based on his own mediating work and, accordingly, actively draws humans to himself toward his ultimate goal of reciprocal divine-human love relationship.

That divine evaluation is partially suspended requires that God’s positive appraisal of creatures is now only partially evaluative. No creaturely objects are presently worthy of positive evaluation. Indeed, absent divine intervention human beings are incapable by themselves of bringing anything valuable to God and are therefore unworthy objects of divine love (cf. Isa 64:6).59 However, humans may bring value, such as pleasing “sacrifices,” to God only through: (1) the divine initiative of grace and love, which are bestowed prior to conditions (his foreconditional love), and (2) the mediation of Christ (and the Holy Spirit).

First, prior to any human action, God has loved humans and, accordingly, draws them to himself (Jer 31:3) such that human love is predicated on, and responsive to, prior divine love (1 John 4:19).60 This prior action dovetails with the volitional aspect of God’s love discussed earlier, since God not only decided to create beings whom he would love but also continued his universally relational love toward humans even after the Fall. Accordingly, God’s negative judgments are significantly tempered (but not nullified) by his longsuffering mercy and grace.

59 At the same time, it should not be forgotten that humans are all creatures of God and thus possess intrinsic value, not because they deserve it but because God has invested value in his humans whom he “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14) in his own image. As such, unworthy and sinful humans are not thereby valueless in the eyes of God. Humans thus always possess intrinsic value as divinely created but cannot generate value in and of themselves in their fallen state.

60 Thus, God declares, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness” (Jer 31:3). Moreover, “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This aspect of God’s love will be discussed in more detail under the discussion of the foreconditional aspect of God’s love later in this chapter.
Second, Christ’s mediation suffices for the deficiency of human righteousness for those who are “in Christ” by faith (which itself entails love as its indispensable corollary). That is, God values the human intention and motivation (itself impossible without God’s prior, loving action and continuing mediation) and adds to that intention and motivation the ongoing mediation of Christ that makes up for the human deficiencies (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). Thus, statements of God’s delight in the “righteous” do not mean that those humans merit or deserve God’s evaluative love. Rather, during this partial and temporary suspension of the effects of evaluative judgment Christ functions as mediator such that meager human offerings, themselves only possible because of God’s previous loving action toward humans, may be received as pleasing and acceptable to God.

Thus, God truly loves the “righteous,” those who conscientiously respond to God’s loving overtures in good faith, while there is no one who is, in fact, wholly righteous since all strictly human righteousness is soiled (cf. Isa 64:6). As such, it must never be forgotten that such “righteousness” is conditional but is not itself meritorious; it could not be evaluated as “lovely” without divine mercy and mediation. God’s love toward his creatures is always undeserved but that does not rule out divine evaluation or conditionality. Through Christ, God’s attention is

61 See the discussion of this in chapter 5, pages 492–506.

62 Whereas, in the OT human acceptability before God was mediated through the sanctuary system (typologically), the NT reveals Christ as the true mediator (antitype) through whom Christians might bring genuine value to God. “Through Christ,” humans may “offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (1 Pet 2:5) and be “pleasing in His sight” (Heb 13:21). Under this umbrella of divine mercy and mediation, God takes pleasure in even the smallest appropriate response to his love (cf. Mark 9:24; 2 Cor 8:12). That is, even though creatures are unworthy objects of divine delight, God takes pleasure in whatever “goodness” is exhibited in them. Accordingly, through Christ, God can look upon even meager offerings as valuable and pleasing to him. Christ’s mediation makes humble offerings acceptable by the superaddition of himself (cf. 1 Pet 2:5; Eph 5:2, 10). See also Ezek 20:39–42; Rom 12:1–2; Eph 5:1–2, 10; Phil 4:18; Heb 13:12, 15–16. See also the mediatorial work of the Holy Spirit in Rom 8:26.

63 Perhaps some have overlooked the evaluative elements of divine love due to the fear of approaching the idea of merits or the fallacy that one might earn salvation. The key to understanding the apparent tension between the idea that God evaluates, appreciates, and may be pleased with human beings, resulting in blessings, with the idea that human righteousness is mere filthy rags is understanding the reality and nature of Christ’s mediation.
directed not only at what humans are in the present but what they might become in Christ. In this way, the partial and temporary suspension of the effects of evaluation allows for the mercifully positive divine appraisal of undeserving humans.

Jesus Christ is the worthy and effective mediator since he himself is loved as the supremely worthy, excellent, valuable, precious, objectively and evaluatively choice and lovable Son of God. Thus, the Father declared, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matt 3:17). The Father’s love for the Son is itself evaluative, grounded in the reality of who Jesus is and what he does. Significantly, the Father’s evaluative love toward the Son depicts choice, evaluation, and emotion as complementary. Christ is thus the truly worthy object of God’s evaluative love while others may be the objects of God’s delight prior to the eschaton only to the extent that they are “in Christ,” receiving such privileges as God’s adopted children. In other words, Christ stands in as the proper object of divine love though whom humans may be beloved (cf. Eph 1:6; 5:2).

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64 As Edward Collins Vacek suggests, “Agape is directed to the good of the beloved, whether this good is actual or only potential.” *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 163.

65 That the Son is the worthy object of God’s love as “beloved” as well as the one who is truly pleasing to God, is abundantly attested in the canonical data. See Isa 42:1; Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 9:35; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; John 8:29; Heb 1:9; 10:38; 1 Pet 2:4, 6; 2 Pet 1:17; Rev 5:9, 12.

66 On the close association between divine choice, evaluation, and emotion consider the word studies in chapters 4 and 5 of ἀγαπητός, εὐδοκέω, θέλω, βούλομαι, ἐκλέγομαι, γὰρ, πᾶν, and πάντα on pages 242–5, 277–84, 441–56, and 476–83. The use of such terms shows considerable overlap between that which God wills and his evaluative desires, that which brings him satisfaction, pleasure and/or delight, and even that which he loves or has affection toward. As such, there is a strong association in the canon between divine volition, evaluation, and emotion such that the divine will is not to the exclusion of, but includes, evaluation and emotion. Consider also the brief word studies of the many other terms used of divine evaluation and/or delight such as the ἀγαπητός and δόκωμος word groups on pages 484–5. Further, see also the discussion of πάντα on pages 266–7.

67 Christ is himself the eminently “elect” and “beloved” one through whom humans who respond with love to God’s loving overtures might be “elect” and “beloved” (cf. Eph 1:4–6). Thus, “Christ is the primary and exemplary elect” through whom others may be elected. Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (AB 34; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 86. In this way, “the Elect (Christ) bears the elect.” Schrenk, *TDNT* 4:175. Cf. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 99, 104–5; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas: Word, 2002), 27.
However, the temporary and partial suspension of the consequences of evaluation does not amount to nullification. Evil will finally be punished. Though divine mercy and grace endure beyond reasonable expectations, they do not nullify divine justice, especially eschatological judgment. In the future, there will be evaluative judgment that corresponds to the actual state of affairs. Indeed, the canon consistently points toward the reality of evaluative scrutiny and testing in judgment (cf. 1 Chr 29:17; Jer 11:20; Ps 7:9; Prov 27:21; Rom 8:27; 2 Cor 10:18; 13:5–7; 1 Thess 2:4; 1 Pet 1:7; 4:12), especially eschatological judgment (1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 5:9–10). Therein, God freely wills to resurrect those who respond to God and are thus accounted worthy (through Christ’s mediation, see Luke 20:35; cf. 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Pet 1:10–11) and finally transformed into his likeness (cf. 1 Cor 15:51–56; 1 John 3:2). In all this, such positive divine appraisal is predicated on “faith” without which “it is impossible to please Him” (Heb 11:6). In this way, pleasing God is not something earned by the believer but it is nevertheless conditional upon true faith, which is finally rewarded. In the eschaton, the divine postponement of the consequences of evaluation will be over and the partial and mediated divine evaluation will turn to fully objective evaluation. Then, however, willing humans will have been transformed into perfectly loveable objects, having been changed by God. On the other hand, those who reject God’s love will also be judged accordingly. Thus, mediatorial justification prior

68 C. F. H. Henry is correct in stating, “It is the God who regards sin solemnly who is the God of holy love—and none other.” Notes on the Doctrine of God (Boston: Wilde, 1948), 110. Thus, divine “love does not intercept God’s final punishment of evil.” Idem, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:353. The alternative, “self-cancelling justice is not only unbiblical, it also implies amoral love.” Ibid., 6:354.

69 Evidently, being pleasing or acceptable to God entails eschatological consequences. “To be pleasing to God means that they will be vindicated and saved at the final judgment.” Thomas R. Schreiner, Romans (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 741.

70 As Douglas J. Moo puts it, “Some Christians have a difficulty with rewards, objecting that our obedience to Christ should be pure and disinterested, unmotivated by any such crass consideration as future reward. . . . But the contemplation of heaven’s rewards is found throughout the NT as a spur to our faithfulness in difficult circumstances here on earth.” The Letter of James (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 71.
to the final execution of judgment is not mere legal fiction but points to the fact that God will accomplish the perfection of those who love him (cf. Jas 1:12; 1 John 3:2).\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{God Has Bound His Own Interests to the Best Interests of His Creatures}

As has been seen, God’s evaluative love includes the fact that God derives pleasure from the positive disposition and actions of humans but is displeased at sin and evil of every kind. In this way, God himself is the model of both proper self-love and profound other-love. On the one hand, God rightly commands and receives worship and glory and enjoys and delights in relationship with his people. On the other hand, divine self-interest does not exclude other-interest. Rather, by God’s free decision to create, sustain, and invest his love in the world, God’s self-interest includes the best interests of all others. In this way, God’s own enjoyment is voluntarily tied to the joy of his creatures, akin to a loving mother’s joy in her child’s happiness.

For example, in Eph 5 the church is presented as analogous to Christ’s bride \textit{and} his own body when Paul states, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. . . . So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of his body” (Eph 5:25, 28–30).\textsuperscript{72} In these parallel metaphors of love, the giver (Christ) receives by giving. This is far from the selfishness that 1 Cor 13:5 excludes by stating that love “does not seek its own.” It is

\textsuperscript{71} They will manifest the ultimate result of gold refined in the fire (cf. 1 Pet 1:7; 4, 12). In other words, divine love, which is undeserved, will then be warranted as a result of the completed process of mediation, redemption, and reconciliation. Even then, however, divine love will not be merited since divine favor could never be deserved by creatures; existence itself is a gift.

\textsuperscript{72} While process thinkers might see in this passage an example of panentheism, the fact that the two metaphors of wife and body are mutually exclusive, if applied literally, rules this notion out. Such language should not be taken to refer to an essential relation between Jesus and human beings any more than a man and a woman form an essential relation when they are married and “become one” (Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 6:16). On the contrary, God identifies with the best interests of others voluntarily rather than essentially.
appropriate self-interest that includes other-interest. Here, the self-sacrificial love of Christ in
dying for the church that she might be redeemed as his bride is bound up with his self-love, that
is, his love for his metaphorical body, the church.

Thus, that God may be the beneficiary of creaturely action, enjoying, delighting, and
taking pleasure in human love toward him and others (which itself is indirectly love toward him)
in no way depreciates his love. God enjoys human beings, delights in them, and is joyous in their
joy. His creatures’ best interest is his interest and this is genuine, compassionate love.\footnote{While humans, being selfish, often place their own interests above those of others, God
experiences no such conflict of interests because his will is perfectly directed toward the best good of all
which, in its fullness, will bring him and them joy.}

This is also true of God’s zeal for his name (cf. Joel 2:18), which is not exclusive to other-interest since
the proper revelation of God’s love encourages human love response.\footnote{This interrelation of God’s self and other-interest is itself tied to God’s compassion and
sympathy as well as his zeal and passion. On these elements see the discussion of the emotive nature of
divine love in the next section.}

In all this, God’s love is consistently evaluative. While sinful humans cannot by
themselves bring value to God, they may bring value and joy to him because of God’s enabling
and drawing action, especially the mediation of Christ. Yet, while God has proper self-interest, he
is never selfish. God’s life is intimately affected by the lives of humans because he has made their
best interests his own; the joy of others is integral to God’s own joy.\footnote{Indeed, when one sinner is saved, heaven rejoices (Luke 15:7, 10). As such, God’s joy is
increased or decreased by the actual state of affairs in the world because God has bound his own interests to
the best interests of all of his creatures.} In this manner, God
models, affirms, and prescribes an unselfish self-interest, most clearly manifest in the
demonstration of God’s love at the cross (cf. Rom 5:8).
The Emotional Aspect of Divine Love

God’s Love Is Deeply Emotional and Affected

Scripture consistently displays God’s intensely passionate and profoundly emotional love for his people.76 God is deeply concerned about the goings on of history, makes commitments and keeps them, and is consistently concerned about and emotionally invested in the world, which spurs him to appropriate action (cf. Exod 2:23–25).77 God is thus presented as ever-involved and invested in the world that he created, being affectionate, loving, devotedly interested in and intimately concerned with human beings.78 Indeed, God delights in goodness, takes pleasure in righteousness, and is joyous over every person who responds to his loving overtures (cf. Zeph 3:17).79 God is, then, intensely interested in and affected by humans, and may be pleased and enjoy them. On the other hand, God feels sorrow, passion, and intense anger at human evil, while

76 Here, “emotion” refers to any feeling(s) that may be affected by external stimulation. Yet, emotions are not necessarily determined by external stimulus to the exclusion of other mental factors, including volition, evaluation, etc. With this in mind, the term emotion is used in this dissertation to refer to that which manifests a passible, affective response to the state of affairs. No attempt is made here to broach the ongoing conflict of interpretations in the field of psychology regarding the definition and nature of emotion. However, this model does appear to complement the aspects of some cognitive (but not exclusively cognitive) theories of emotions that give weight to an evaluative component wherein emotion is a response to an agent’s evaluation of the state of affairs. See the brief discussion in Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Suffering Love,” in Augustine’s Confessions: Critical Essays (ed. W. E. Mann; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 123.

77 This is evident in the intimacy of the creation and fall accounts, the divine initiative, watch care, and grief displayed in the flood, patriarchal, Exodus, conquest, kingdoms, exile and restoration narratives in the OT as well as by the intense divine concern and interest manifested through the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ and through apostolic times and even unto the forecasted parousia.

78 In this presentation, the manifestation of divine emotionality in the incarnation of Christ has not been separated from the other manifestations of divine emotion in Scripture but they are taken to represent truly divine emotions. Indeed, Christ came to reveal God and proclaimed in no uncertain terms “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). However, even if one were to exclude the emotions of Christ, the emotionality of divine love is readily apparent even without those instances. Moreover, the correspondence between the emotions of Christ and those of YHWH elsewhere themselves present a compelling argument that such emotions are divine rather than merely human. See the methodology section in chapter 1 for a further discussion of this issue and the potential theological ramifications of positing that Jesus’ emotions were merely human.

79 God “will exult” over his people “with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy” (Zeph 3:17).
also compassion and the desire to bring wayward humans back into proper relationship with himself (see below).

God’s love consistently manifests strong affection for, and interest in, his creatures (cf. Isa 49:15; 63:9; Jer 31:20; Hos 3:1; 9:15; 11:1, 8–9; Zeph 3:17; Mark 10:21; John 13:1). His people are “beloved” and “dear” to him. For example, God’s love is likened to the tender affection of a parent who adopts and cares for a child. Thus, God “loved” Israel as “a youth” and called his “son” out of Egypt (Hos 11:1). Even when they rebel against him, God’s “heart yearns” for his people whom he calls “My dear son” and “delightful child” (Jer 31:20). God’s compassion and sympathy for his children is even greater than the love of any mother for her newborn child. Indeed, God himself proclaims, “Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you” (Isa 49:15). This depth of God’s compassion is symbolized by the passionate and joyous love of the father for his prodigal son who returned (Luke 15:20). Jesus likewise manifests this profoundly

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80 See, for example, the word studies of qvx and avgaphto, among others, in the canonical chapters, pages 266–7 and 476–80. avgaphto, for example, generally refers to that which is loved, often in the sense of being dearly loved, prized, and/or valued, the object of one’s affection, and may be used of emotional attachment to a dear one, as ἡ γυνὴ and ἡ μητέρα.

81 God also taught “Ephraim to walk,” took him in his arms, cared for him (Hos 11:3–4), and “carried” his people “just as a man carries his son” (Deut 1:31). In “God’s love and His mercy He redeemed them” and “lifted them and carried them all the days of old” (Isa 63:9; cf. John 13:1).

82 Notice the intensely emotional phraseology of God’s heart yearning. See the discussion of this imagery in chapter 4 on pages 327–8. See also Exod 4:22; Deut 1:31; 8:5, 16; Isa 49:15; 66:13; Jer 31:20; Hos 11:1, 3–4; Ps 103:13; Prov 3:11–12; cf. Luke 15:20.

83 ἀγαπάω, the term used in Isa 49:15 to compare God’s love to that of a mother’s compassion, is probably denominative from φυτός, “womb,” and accordingly evokes the image of a “womb-like mother love.” See Phyllis Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality (OBT 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 31–59. See the word study of ἀγαπάω on pages 302–7. Consider also the physiological idiom associated with ἰδεόμαι and σπλαγχνίζομαι, which speaks to the depth of the divine emotions of compassion as if they are located in his churning “innards” (cf. Isa 63:15). See the discussion of this and other intensely emotional imagery of God’s love on pages 327–8. Elsewhere, God loves his people even as “one whom his mother comforts” (Isa 66:13) and has compassion on his beloved even as “a father has compassion on his children” (Ps 103:13).
emotional love. When he sees people in need he is moved with compassionate love for them (cf. Matt 9:36; 14:14; Mark 1:41; 6:34; 10:21; Luke 7:14).

God’s compassionate love frequently appears in the face of sin and evil, meeting human apostasy with forbearance and grace. For example, though God’s people deserve to be cut off after the rebellious worship of the golden calf, God freely bestows compassion and mercy upon those who choose to repent and follow him (Exod 32:26–30; 33:19). In doing so, he reveals his character, which he later proclaims to Moses: “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin” (Exod 34:6–7). Thus, God’s compassion, mercy, and lovingkindness are astounding in their greatness, depth, and longevity. God is exceedingly longsuffering and patient in his compassionate and merciful love, which endures beyond all reasonable expectations.84

In many other instances, God responds to supplication and/or entreaty because of his great love, being moved to compassion, and relents from the execution of judgment in reaction to human entreaty and/or appropriate response (cf. Judg 2:18; Jer 18:1–10; Joel 2:13–14; Jonah 3:9–10; 4:2; cf. Matt 18:27).85 Even though God’s people repeatedly betrayed and forsook him, God

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84 Likewise, see Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 86:15; Neh 9:17, 31, among others. Accordingly, the Bible frequently speaks of the greatness or abundance of God’s mercy or compassion (cf. Deut 4:31; 2 Sam 24:14; Isa 63:7; Ps 51:1; Neh 9:19, 31; Lam 3:22; Dan 9:18; 1 Chr 21:13; Luke 1:58; Eph 2:4; Jas 5:11). See the further evidence of profound divine compassion, heartfelt concern, sympathy, and mercy by way of the discussion of the ἀλληλούϊα, ἀλληλούῖα, ὀλίγτερον, σπλαγχνίζομαι, and ἔλεος word groups in the word studies in chapters 4 and 5, especially pages 302–7, 511–19. Likewise, God’s emotional commitment to his people is apparent in his ἔλεος, lovingkindness, which is often associated with his compassion in the OT and in some aspects closely related to the NT concept of mercy. See the word studies on pages 354–75 and 511–19. Norman H. Snaith suggests that in ἔλεος there is “inherent in the word” something of “eagerness, ardor” and “intense devotion” of the “love of God.” The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), 106. Such terms as used with divine agency demonstrate consistently that God is deeply affected by, and interested in, the lives of his creatures.

85 See also Gen 18:22–32; Exod 32:1–14; 33:12–34:10; Isa 30:19; Pss 69:16 [17]; 102:17; 119:132; Neh 9:27; Dan 9:18; 2 Chr 7:14. For even more evidence of divine responsiveness see Deut 32:10–11; Isa 31:5; 40:11; Hos 11:8; 13:5; Ps 23:4; 1 Chr 21:15; John 10:11, 13–14; Heb 2:6; 8:9; 1 Pet 5:7. Yet, God is never unduly swayed or unreliable as are humans (cf. 1 Sam 15:29; Jer 4:28; 15:6). Thus, God’s character is constant.
continued to patiently bestow compassion.\footnote{Thus, “God is a compassionate God” (Deut 4:31) whose “mercies are great” (2 Sam 24:14; 1 Chr 21:13) and whose “lovingkindnesses never cease” and “compassions never fail” (Lam 3:22). He is sympathetic (cf. Isa 63:9; Heb 4:15), deeply affected by the sorrows of his people (Judg 10:16; Luke 19:41), and willing to hear, answer, and comfort (Isa 49:10, 15; Matt 9:36; 14:14). He is a God of “tender mercy” (Luke 1:78), “rich in mercy” and “great love” (Eph 2:4), “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3). See also many other references to the greatness of God’s compassion, lovingkindness, and mercy in Isa 63:7; Ps 51:1; Neh 9:19, 31; Dan 9:18; Luke 1:58; Jas 5:11.} This compassion and mercy, which takes into account the distress and/or needs of humans, is itself a grounding of divine beneficence.\footnote{See Ps 51:1; Matt 15:32; Luke 1:54, 78; Eph 2:4; Titus 3:4–5; 1 Pet 1:3. It is a grounding but not the only grounding (cf. Eph 2:4).} Such repeated, undeserved kindness manifests the depth of God’s emotional attachment to human beings. Yet, God’s response to entreaty is not automatic. He may also not relent (1 Sam 15:29; Jer 4:28; 15:6).\footnote{For example, only wholehearted, heartfelt worship moves God, in conjunction with repentance and obedience/fidelity (cf. Mal 1:9–10). See the word study of אִזֶּה in the OT chapter. See also John C. Peckham, “The Possible Potter and the Contingent Clay: A Theological Study of Jeremiah 18:1–10,” \textit{Journal of the Adventist Theological Society} 18 (2007): 130–50.} Thus, while God experiences strong emotions, God is nevertheless volitionally free and evaluative (see the previous two sections).

Accordingly, even God’s compassion and mercy have a limit. Divine compassion is neither constant nor immutable, but conditional within real, historically significant interrelationship.\footnote{See the discussion of the foreconditionality of divine love in the following section of this chapter.} God’s people may so persistently reject him that he withdraws his “lovingkindness and compassion” from them (Jer 16:5; cf. Isa 9:17; 27:11; 63:15; Jer 11:15; 14:10; Ezek 5:11; Hos 9:15; Ps 89:49). God, however, never wished to do so. He did everything he could do to avoid this outcome (Isa 5:1–7).\footnote{Indeed, God “sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people” yet “they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy” (2 Chr 36:15–16; cf. Heb 8:9).} God thus expects appropriate response from his people (cf. Exod 20:6; Matt 5:7; 6:12, 14–15; Luke 6:36; 2 Chr 30:9). God’s lovingkindness, compassion, and mercy are not unconditional (cf. Luke 1:50; Gal 6:16; Heb 10:28; Jas 2:13; Jude 5:11).
21) and, thus, may be forfeited (cf. Deut 13:8; Isa 9:17; Jer 15:1; 16:5; Ezek 5:11; Hos 13:5–8; Matt 18:27, 33, 35; Rom 11:22; Heb 8:9). In this way, God’s mercy and compassion are not automatic. God is not compelled to be gracious but freely bestows compassion and mercy on his creatures (Exod 33:19; Rom 9:15–16).

At the same time, divine love includes justice. Though God is exceedingly compassionate and gracious he “will by no means leave the guilty unpunished” (Exod 34:6–7). God is thus willing to forgive but not to the exclusion of justice nor in the ultimate absence of the love relationship with his people that he so desires. He “longs to be gracious” to his people and “therefore waits on high to have compassion” (Isa 30:18–19; cf. 2 Chr 30:9; Hos 2:19 [21]; Joel 2:18–19; Heb 8:12). Though God consistently longs to bestow compassion on his people, his compassion is often interrupted by their rebellion (Isa 5; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). They repeatedly forsook God with other gods and thus forfeited his deliverance (Judg 10:13; 1 Sam 8:8; 1 Kgs 11:33; 2 Kgs 22:17; Jer 1:16 cf. Hos 13:5–6). Similarly, Christ lamented while pondering Jerusalem’s coming hardship, “How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matt 23:37). God

91 For example, God’s “mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear him” (Luke 1:50) and “blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt 5:7; cf. Exod 20:6; Ps 103:13; Gal 6:16; Jude 21) but “judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy” (Jas 2:13). Thus, though its lasting nature stands in stark contrast to the fleetingness of divine anger, even divine compassion has a limit. It is not inexhaustible (cf. 2 Chr 36:15–17). In this way the efficacy and manifestation of divine compassion fluctuates, not because God is capricious, but in direct relationship to the vacillation of his wayward people. Thus, the canon does not support the contention: “Because compassion is inherent to Yahweh’s nature, its disappearance is conceivable only if the order of human nature and the universe could be overthrown.” H. Simian-Yofre, “רחם,” TDOT 13:441. Interestingly, elsewhere Simian-Yofre refers to God’s “absolute freedom.” How can it be both?

92 See also Pss 78:38; 135:14 [136:14]; Neh 9:19, 31; Rom 9:15–16, 18; Heb 8:12. The divine initiative is free and primary and he may reject human repentance and/or refuse compassion though he does not do so without good reason such as when “the people have become so corrupt and disloyal at their core that no hope for true and sustained repentance seems possible” and they proffer only “shallow repentance,” which is not “heartfelt.” Cf. Hos 5:8–6:6. Dennis T. Olson, “The Book of Judges,” in Numbers–Samuel (vol 2 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1998), 826. Cf. Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:410.

93 God thus waits to respond to human entreaty and repentance (cf. Jer 18:1–10). Here again, it is seen that “God never imposes His love by overriding human will.” Blomberg, Matthew, 350.
still feels for and longs for his people in periods of their apostasy but his compassion does not reach them due to their rejection of God. Such removal of divine compassion is never arbitrary but always responsive to human infidelity and evil (cf. Hos 5:8–6:6).

**God’s Intense but Always Appropriate Passion**

God’s profound love and concern for the world is further evident in his passion. Indeed, God describes himself as a “jealous God,” that is, the passionate lover of his people (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9; cf. 34:14; 4:24; 6:15; Josh 24:19; Nah 1:2).\(^{94}\) God’s jealousy, however, lacks the negative connotations of human jealousy. God’s jealousy is a wholly appropriate and virtuous aspect of his love. It is never envious. God is never jealous of other gods or idols or any kind of being but his jealousy is always directed at that which rightfully belongs to him. God is thus passionate for his name and his people.\(^{95}\)

As such, God’s “jealousy,” or passionate love, is always directed toward that which rightfully belongs to him. Accordingly, God’s jealousy is primarily manifest as his appropriate desire for exclusive relationship with his people whom he passionately loves.\(^{96}\) That is, just as spouses ought to be dedicated to one another in exclusive relationship, God expects and desires a love relationship with his people that is undiluted.

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\(^{94}\) However, God’s love and passion never refers to sexual desires or activity.

\(^{95}\) God’s passion for his “name” relates not only to self-interest but also God’s concern for creatures since an accurate picture of his character is more likely to draw people to respond to his passionate love. See Ezek 39:25; John 2:17.

\(^{96}\) It is thus analogous to that which spouses ought to have in a marriage relationship, though it never amounts to petty or inappropriate jealousy as often manifested in human relationships. Accordingly, Paul R. House correctly explains that jealousy “troubles many readers of Scripture who consider jealousy a solely negative trait. Jealous protection of what is rightly one’s own, however, is justified. For example, most marriage partners do not want their spouses violated sexually. They are justifiably protective of an exclusive sexual relationship. . . . In these examples jealousy is a good and normal trait. God’s jealousy is equally positive.” Divine jealousy “is no character flaw. Instead it magnifies God’s righteousness, concern, and covenant loyalty.” *1, 2 Kings* (NAC 8; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 194.
However, God himself is often depicted as a scorned husband, the unrequited lover of an unfaithful wife (see Hos 1–3; Isa 62:4; Jer 2:2; 3:1–12; Ezek 16, 23; Zech 8:2; cf. 2 Cor 11:2). Because of God’s intense and wholly appropriate desire to receive the undiluted love and fidelity of his people, God becomes impassioned at their unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery. That is, the repeated adulterous liaisons between God’s people and false gods provoke his jealousy (Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 14:22; 1 Cor 10:22). On the other hand, God’s passion may also be directed against those who abuse and oppress his beloved people, in favor of and toward the restoration of his people (cf. Isa 26:11).

God’s Pain, Grief and Anger as Righteous and Loving Indignation and Wrath

Thus, God’s love manifests itself not only in positive emotions but also in negative emotions. God is often provoked by his people, displeased, grieved, vexed, anguished, and/or

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97 Elaine Adler points out that the language utilized in the marriage metaphor, including אשה, is affectionate and passionate. Cf. “The Background for the Metaphor of Covenant as Marriage” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1990), 70. “A wife of youth’ suggests all the passionate devotion of a young married couple with the bright hopes of their early married life.” J. A. Motyer, Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary (TOTC 18; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 447.


99 Thus, God’s passion is frequently manifested in anger and wrath at their infidelity. Such negative emotions, however, are not essential to divine passion itself but the appropriate response to the actual state of affairs. Absent sin and evil, manifested in infidelity, the negative aspect of passion (as well as other emotions) would not be. In response to infidelity, God disciplines his people but such discipline is itself grounded in his passionate love for them with the hope of ultimate reclamation (cf. Prov 3:12; Rev 3:19). Moreover, as seen further above, God responds repeatedly to heartfelt entreaty and is willing to relent of discipline and return in his compassion and graciousness, which far exceed his wrath.

100 Thus, “the Lord will be zealous for His land and will have pity on His people” (Joel 2:18; cf. Zech 1:14–17). Moreover, “out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the Lord will perform this” (2 Kgs 19:31; Isa 37:32; cf. Zech 8:2–3; Heb 10:27). See also Isa 26:11; 37:32; Zech 8:2–3; 35:6; Heb 10:27.
angered. Though God worked miracles and blessed Israel abundantly they forgot him and continually rebelled against him. “How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert! Again and again they tempted God, and pained the Holy One of Israel” (Ps 78:40–41; cf. Gen 6:5–6; Isa 63:10; 1 Cor 10:5). Thus, God’s emotional response to evil includes displeasure, wrath, jealousy, and when pressed, even hatred, abhorrence, and loathing. Indeed, “they provoked Him with their high places and aroused his jealousy with their graven images” so that God was “filled with wrath and greatly abhored Israel” (Ps 78:58–59; cf. Jer 12:8; Hos 9:15; Ps 95:10–11; Heb 3:8–10).

God’s wrath is never arbitrary but is always the appropriate response to sin and suffering, that is, it is the result of human provocation. As shall be seen further below, God’s love and mercy far surpass such negative emotions, postponing and mitigating, but not cancelling, the execution of divine judgment. Yet, God’s love does not nullify his justice or righteousness. True love requires justice and righteousness and thus God’s anger against evil also stems from his love for all and his desire for the ultimate good of the universe. If God did not finally execute judgment against evil, the world would be left in an indefinite state of degradation, much to the

101 See Exod 20:5–6; 34:6–7; Ps 78:10–72; 2 Chr 28:25; 33:6; 34:24–25; Heb 3:8–10, 15. The frequent recurrence of such provocation is highly significant. “God’s anger (cf. Num 14:11, 23, 43b) was not aroused by a single incident but by a persistent tendency to refuse his direction.” William L. Lane, Hebrews 1–8 (WBC 47A; Dallas: Word, 2002), 86. See also Gen 6:5–7; Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 14:22; Isa 63:10; 65:3; Jer 12:8–9; Hos 9:15; Pss 78:40–41, 58–60; 95:9–11; Mark 3:5; 1 Cor 10:5. Likewise, out of his profound love and passion for his people, God may be grieved, vexed, and angered at evil (cf. John 11:38).

102 See Deut 32:21; 1 Kgs 14:22; Isa 65:3; Pss 78:10–72; 95:9–11; 2 Chr 28:25; 33:6; 34:24–25 among many other examples. The atrocities that elicited divine anger included child sacrifice, all kinds of debauchery that was even mixed in with worship, defiling and perverting the very means of the people’s communion with God (cf. 2 Chr 33:6). In light of this, should not Yahweh be indignant at depraved wickedness? Is he not righteous to respond against evil? As such, negative divine emotions are thoroughly evaluative, not arbitrary. As D. D. Williams puts it, “what is clear is that his wrath and punishment are never unmotivated.” The Spirit, 22. So, also Patrick D. Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah” in Isaiah–Ezekiel (vol. 6 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2001), 814; K. D. Schunck, “חָם”, TDOT 13:464. Carson adds, “Where there is no sin, there is no wrath, but there will always be love in God.” The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000), 67.
detriment of all of God’s creatures. If God loves everyone (cf. John 3:16) his concern for all requires that he mete out justice and finally eradicate evil. God passionately hates evil, as he should, and he will bring it to an utter end. Thus, the benefits of God’s love have a limit. In the meantime, God’s discipline of his people while there is yet time to repent and turn to him is itself out of his love and desire that they might be saved (cf. 2 Pet 3:9). Thus, God disciplines his people “just as a man disciplines his son” (Deut 8:5) “to do good” for them “in the end” (Deut 8:16). “For whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights” (Prov 3:12; cf. Heb 12:6; Rev 3:19). In all this, it is because God is love that evil provokes him to intense, always appropriate anger.

**God’s Wrath-Surpassing Compassionate Love**

Nevertheless, God’s love and mercy far surpass his negative emotions. Indeed, God continually restrains his anger in longsuffering and patience, hoping to call humans back to him (cf. Ps 78:38) and thus, in his patience, repeatedly postpones and mitigates the execution of divine judgment. The striking tension between God’s profound love and justice is evident in the angst of God over his people who have rejected him: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled” (Hos 11:8; cf. Isa 30:15, 18–19; Jer 3:1, 4, 8, 12). Nevertheless, despite the intensity of evoked emotion, God retains

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104 Thus, the “Lord of Israel is not a Janus-faced God, a God of wrath and a God of love. The wrath of God is always subordinated to the love of God.” Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in *Isaiah–Ezekiel*, 6:814.

105 Thus, “there is a constant tension between justice and mercy. God is a righteous God and will not tolerate evil. Punishment is inevitable if sinful behavior persists. The world makes moral sense. God cannot abandon God’s own standards of justice. And yet, God is constantly pulled in the direction of forgiveness and mercy. God is also in pain when people disobey, and God can see the terrible consequences
self-control, restraining his anger, limiting his wrath, and forgiving according to his compassion. “But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them; and often He restrained His anger and did not arouse all His wrath” (Ps 78:38). Thus, God never overreacts like humans are prone to do.

God does not want to act in wrath. Even in times of judgment God “does not afflict willingly” but “if He causes grief, then He will have compassion” (Lam 3:32–33; cf. Judg 10:16). He does not want to destroy his people (cf. Isa 30:18; Luke 13:34, etc.). However, eventually, love requires action against evil, however unpalatable even to God himself. Yet, “God’s anger lasts but a moment in contrast to his favor, which lasts a lifetime (Ps 30:5). Thus, God’s positive emotions for his people far exceed the negative, both in intensity and duration. While the consequences of iniquity may reach to the fourth generation, God “keeps lovingkindness” unto the thousandth generation (Exod 34:7). In this way, God’s love exceeds all reasonable expectations and he is disposed toward positive emotions, which far exceed the negative ones in both intensity and duration (cf. Isa 54:7–10; Jer 33:26). The ultimate depth of divine love is manifested in God’s giving of his own son, his beloved, for undeserving human beings (John 3:16). Though the magnitude of the Father’s love for the Son is beyond description, the entire Godhead desires the reconciliation of creatures to themselves so much that they made the ultimate sacrifice. There is no greater love than this (John 15:13).


106 See also Isa 12:1; 54:7–8; Jer 31:3, 13, 20, 25–26; Hos 14:4.

107 “Surely, to see his son die in such a cruel fashion would break any father’s heart—much more so that of our heavenly Father.” Andreas J. Köstenberger, John (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2004), 129.
The Emotionality of Divine Love Completes Its Volitional and Evaluative Aspects

Though God’s love is deeply emotional it is not only emotional. The emotionality of God’s love complements its volitional and evaluative aspects, all three of which are mutually supportive and interrelated. The evaluative and emotional aspects of divine love are especially closely related since both of them assume divine passibility and point to the fact that God can enter into a mutually beneficial (though unequal) relationship of give-and-take with human beings. As seen in the previous section, and earlier in this one, there is some overlap between the evaluative aspects of God’s love and emotionality. For example, God’s delight in his people is both evaluative and emotive. Likewise, God’s displeasure is emotional but always evaluative.  

There are some, however, who have suggested that love must not be emotional if it is commanded since, it is supposed, one cannot command an emotion. In this view, love must be volitional rather than emotional. Some have thus supposed that the love commands of Scripture refer merely to the legal aspects of covenant relationship, that is, purely willed and external obedience, devoid of emotion. However, it is not true that love that can be commanded must be

108 Indeed, the contrast between divine love and hate, affection and animosity, throughout the canon strikingly portrays both the emotive and evaluative aspects of love. “Jesus himself had loved and hated keenly—hated because he loved, hated intensely whatever challenged, misrepresented, and thwarted the divine purpose on earth.” James Moffat, Love in the New Testament (New York: Harper, 1930), 54. Even C. F. H. Henry speaks of “God’s enmity toward sinners” as “not merely a passive attitude but one of active hostility.” God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:358. Here, C. F. H. Henry speaks as if divine wrath may be elicited but it is clear in his system that all actually stems from the omnicausal divine volition.


110 For example, based on ANE parallels, it has been suggested that the primary OT term of love, נָשָׁ, at least in Deuteronomy, belongs to technical treaty language as a “covenantal love,” which is to be
non-emotional. Such a view posits a false dichotomy as if love is merely emotion or volition to the exclusion of one another.

Certainly, love toward God is to be manifest in obedience and such love is not merely emotional. However, can true wholehearted loyalty not involve emotions (cf. Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13)? Is not loyalty and commitment much stronger if it is also grounded in devoted affection, even zealous passion? The thoroughgoing, loving obedience God desires cannot be merely external. Rather, genuine loyalty involves the entire person (cf. Deut 4:29; 10:20; Josh 23:8).111 Accordingly, love may be both passionate and volitional in response to command and/or entreaty. In fact, the divine love commands themselves require not merely external compliance, but internal, wholehearted response.112 The love that God desires from humans is to come from the whole person, including the emotions.113


112 Thus, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5; cf. 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:6; Josh 22:5; Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). For many more love commands see also Deut 11:1, 22; 19:9; 30:15, 16, 19–20; Josh 23:10–11; Lev 19:18; Mark 12:31; John 13:34; 15:12, 17; Rom 13:9; 1 John 3:23; 4:21; 2 John 1:5, 6; cf. Hos 3:1. Indeed, loving Jesus and/or the Father is itself related to obeying his commands (John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 1 John 5:2, 3) and Jesus’s love for the Father is likewise exemplified in obedience to commands (John 14:31; 15:10). Further, see especially Evan’s discussion of the fact that “some emotions are ones that we have some control over, at least over time.” C. Stephen Evans, “Can Love Be Commanded? Kierkegaard’s View of Neighbor Love,” in *Visions of Agapé: Problems and Possibilities in Human and Divine Love* (ed. C. A. Boyd; Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 76. He comes to the conclusion that “Christian love for the neighbor is a genuine emotion; it is not merely acting for the good of the other while inwardly lacking any concern for
As such, the love that God calls for is to be emotional but not merely emotional; such love is to include decision and commitment as well as emotion and evaluation. Mere emotion is not enough but neither can it be excluded from the appropriate love response that God seeks. Those who claim that love cannot be emotional if it is commanded or volitional subscribe to a false opposition of volition, evaluation, and emotion. Commitment is not antithetical to emotional and passionate love. Likewise, the volitional nature of God’s love does not thereby exclude its emotion or vice versa.

Ibid., 83. That emotional love can be commanded would seem to be required in the command, “fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Pet 1:22). Accordingly, as discussed in chapter 3, love cannot be restricted to something like purely external, “covenantal” love and, thus, it should not be conflated with the legalities of covenant. Rather, covenant itself, like election, is predicated on divine love and modeled after affectionate kinship (cf. Exod 4:31). See Scott Hahn, Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Contra Moran, “The Ancient.”

Accordingly, merely external obedience is consistently criticized while God repeatedly calls for wholehearted love, mercy, and justice (cf. Mic 6:8; Luke 11:42). God laments that “this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me” (Isa 29:13). God expects and desires full allegiance, devotion, and loyalty, including one’s emotions. Thus, he delights in “loyalty rather than sacrifice” (Hos 6:6) and receives the offerings of “a broken spirit” and “a broken and contrite heart” (Ps 51:17). External manifestation of loving obedience to God must correspond to an internal, emotive, even passionate, devotion. Alexander To Ha Luc thus comments, “genuine inner feeling must go hand in hand with outward observance, loyalty to God must involve both.” “The Meaning of ‘hb in the Hebrew Bible” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1982), 139. Cf. Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 203.

The biblical data simply do not present any dichotomy between volition and emotion but propose complementarity between divine volition, emotion, and evaluation. Cf. Matt 15:31; Mark 1:41. Thus, Tigay notes, “The idea of commanding a feeling is not foreign to the Torah, which assumes that people can cultivate proper attitudes.” Deuteronomy, 76. Cf. Marten H. Woudstra, The Book of Joshua (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 337. Lapsley adds, “The objection that feelings cannot be commanded relies on the modern notions not only that feelings exist within the private world of the individual, but also that they are uncontrollable. In order to talk about love in Deuteronomy, on the other hand, we must come up with a way to talk about emotion that does not perpetuate the modern propensity to privatize feelings and separate them from action.” “Feeling Our Way,” 365. For a further discussion of this issue see the demonstration of the complementarity of emotion and volition in love presented in chapters 4 and 5.

Notice, for example, that Christ in one instance is “moved with compassion,” then states, “I am willing; be cleansed” (Mark 1:41). Here, volition and emotion are complementary. The biblical data simply do not present any dichotomy between volition and emotion but propose complementarity between divine volition, emotion, and evaluation. “Love and behavior motivated by love are not to be separated from emotion, and yet they are not dependent on emotion, but require wise consideration.” Wallis, TDOT 1:110. D. T. Olson comments, “Obedience and passionate relationship characterize the full love of God.” Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 51.
In all, God’s love for humans is ardent, passionate, and profoundly emotional. God is thus intensely interested in and affected by human beings, and may be pleased or displeased by their response to him such that the quality of his life is directly affected by the state of affairs in the world. His compassion is passionate, profoundly deep and intense, the magnitude of which is astounding. Yet it is not to be taken for granted but requires appropriate response. Such divine compassion is assiduous but not constant, highly emotive but not beyond divine control. While God is passible, however, he is not passibly inactive. Overall, the canon demonstrates that God’s love is emotional but not merely emotional. Divine love includes deep affection and personal concern complementary to its volitional and evaluative aspects.

The Foreconditional Aspect of Divine Love

God’s Love Is Prior to Conditions

God’s love is foreconditional. This means God’s love for humans is prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. God’s love for everyone, his universally relational love, is bestowed on each human prior to their response and thus before any conditions have been met. As such, God’s love is prior to any human action, merit, worth, or love. God voluntarily bestows his universally relational love upon everyone with the goal of enjoying a particularly relational love relationship with each human who will respond positively and, ultimately, reciprocate God’s love. As such, God’s love is logically and ontologically prior to any other love and holds sole primacy (cf. John


116 The reciprocation of divine love itself within a multilateral relationship will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.
Indeed, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) and the “God of love” (2 Cor 13:11) who so loved the world that he gave his beloved Son (cf. John 3:16). On the other hand, “love is from God” (1 John 4:7) and “we love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19; cf. John 15:16; 1 John 3:1; 4:9–10). God thus draws humans toward himself in his love and kindness (cf. Jer 31:3; Rom 2:4). However, human response is not unilaterally effected by God’s initiative nor does it bypass human agency. That is, God’s love is prior to all other love, and itself enables other beings to freely love.\(^\text{118}\)

### God’s Love Imposes Conditions

While God’s love is foreconditional, God implements conditions for the reception and continuance of his love. Scripture repeatedly depicts God’s love as conditional upon human response yet not thereby deserved. For example, God promises lovingkindness to those who love him (Exod 20:6).\(^\text{119}\) Elsewhere, Deut 7:12–13 states, “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. He will love you and bless you and multiply you.”\(^\text{120}\) Perhaps most striking are the examples in John such as when Jesus states, “If anyone loves Me . . . My Father will love him” (John 14:23) and later proclaims, “the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me” (John 16:27). Here, the clear implication

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\(^\text{117}\) The issues regarding the relationship of love to God’s essence will be taken up in the final section of this chapter.

\(^\text{118}\) The issue of human responsive love will be taken up in the next section of this chapter where the relational and multilateral nature of divine love will be explained.

\(^\text{119}\) See also Deut 7:9; 1 Kgs 8:23; Ps 103:11, 17–18; Dan 9:4. Elsewhere, God’s lovingkindness demonstrates the relational responsibility, conditionality, and expectation of appropriate response such that the ongoing reception of lovingkindness is tied to fidelity to God. Though God’s lovingkindness is predicated on his free decision, the bestowal of divine lovingkindness is not strictly unilateral. God is willing to be the continual benefactor of lovingkindness but requires \textit{willing beneficiaries}. So Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, “Love in the OT,” \textit{ABD} 4:379. Cf. idem, \textit{The Meaning of Hesed}, 131; Nelson Glueck, \textit{Hesed in the Bible} (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), 89.

\(^\text{120}\) See also, among many others, Hos 14:1–4 [2–5]; Joel 2:12–14; Ps 146:8; Prov 15:9; John 14:21, 23; 15:14; Jude 21.
is that obedience and love toward Jesus evoke the love of the Father and that of the Son.121 Likewise, the friendship relationship of love with Christ is conditional upon obedience (John 15:14).122 Even the Father’s love for the Son is apparently grounded and conditional as Christ proclaims, “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again” (John 10:17).123 Such examples, among others, depict reciprocal, conditional, motivated, and evaluative love.

Indeed, the conditionality of divine love complements, and is supported by, the evaluative aspect of God’s love explained earlier in this chapter. For example, conditionality is related to evaluation since the “way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but He loves one who pursues righteousness” (Prov 15:9). That is, God appraises, delights in, and enjoys his creatures and, by its very nature, such evaluation is contingent and conditional upon the particular state of affairs. Further, as noted in the previous section, the reception of divine mercy is frequently conditional upon humans bestowing mercy to one another (Matt 5:7; 18:33, 35; cf. Jas 2:13) or otherwise contingent (Luke 1:50; 1 Tim 1:13; Gal 6:16; Jude 21). At the same time, such mercy is undeserved and unmerited (Titus 3:5).124

121 See the further discussion of the conditionality in these and other passages in conversation with biblical scholars in the sections on the foreconditional aspect of love in chapters 4 and 5.

122 This points toward the reciprocal love relationship, which will be discussed in the next section. See also Mark 10:21–22; Matt 18:27, 33. Further, the frequent language of “abiding” in the NT suggests that the divine-human love relationship must be maintained by appropriate human response in order to continue intact. For example, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word and My father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode [μονή] with him” (John 14:23). Cf. John 14:23; 15:7, 9–10; 1 Tim 2:15; Heb 8:9; 1 John 2:5–6, 10, 17; 28; 3:1, 9–11, 14–15, 17; 23–24, 35–36; 4:12, 16. Where “followers of Jesus are in view” such texts “tell us that Christians remain in the love of God and of Jesus by obedience.” Carson, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 648.

123 Thus, “not even Jesus is exempt from responding to the Father’s love for him in obedience.” Köstenberger, *John*, 456. This is especially striking as it manifests the risk undertaken by Christ with regard to the possibility of disrupting the eternal love relationship in order to include creatures in a love relationship for which they are undeserving.

124 The conditionality of divine love further complements the conditionality of divine blessings, which are clearly revealed in the covenant stipulations with corresponding blessings and curses. God’s blessings flow from God’s love and provide an explicit example of the actions that are grounded in divine love. Just as God’s universally relational love is bestowed foreconditionally, God’s blessings are also often
Texts such as John 14:21; 16:27 and others refer to a special, intimate, relational love that moves beyond God’s universally relational love that he freely bestows on all prior to response and the intimate, relational love without which God’s universally relational love is not sustained indefinitely. That is, God loves those who respond to his son in love in a way that is not afforded to “the world” who freely choose not to respond. As such, God’s love is both prior to human love and, yet, responsive to and conditioned upon human love that is responsive to God’s prior love. This is the foreconditionality of divine love.

Thus, it is apparent in such passages that love for God is itself a real condition of receiving or maintaining God’s universal, relational love (cf. John 14:21, 23; 16:27; 1 John 4:8) explicitly foreconditional; God grants blessings to his people prior to conditions but continued blessings are predicated on conditions that humans are expected to fulfill (cf. Deut 7; Lev 26; Pss 5:12; 111:4–5). On the other hand, divine love may be manifest not only by immediate blessing but also discipline, which God intends for the greater good of his creatures (cf. Deut 8:5; Prov 3:12; Heb 12:6, 10; Rev 3:19). Divine blessings are unmerited but not unconditional and may be forfeited since God expects appropriate response from the object(s) of his blessing(s). See the abundance of evidence of the conditionality, and potential forfeiture, of divine beneficence in the sections on the foreconditional aspect of love in chapters 4 and 5. Milgrom even contends that “all blessings and curses, even when nonexplicit are optatives.” Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 23–27 (vol. 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2286.

For example, compare God’s universal love in John 3:16 with his particular love for the righteous in Ps 146:8 and for the cheerful giver in 2 Cor 9:7. This distinction between God’s universally relational and particularly relational love will be further discussed in the next section.

God deeply desires to bless the people, but his doing so is contingent upon not only their external obedience, but also their internal disposition. Thus, God extends benevolence universally, that is, he wills everyone’s best good, yet his beneficence is limited by the actual state of affairs insofar as actual divine blessings are contingent and conditional. Consider God’s stirring declaration: “Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” (Deut 5:29; cf. 4:40; 6:24; 12:28). Such a love relationship is not unilaterally predicated on God’s will and thus cannot amount to unilateral and arbitrary divine beneficence. As such, the conditionality of blessing entails the reality of contingent reward. See Gen 22:16–18; 26:4–5; 32:25–28; Exod 19:5; 23:25; Lev 26:3–17; Deut 11:26–28; Luke 6:35; 11:28; 14:14; Gal 3:9; Eph 6:24; Jas 1:25; 1 John 3:21–22. Such rewards even include salvation as the result of the eschatological, evaluative judgment (cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; 5:11; cf. 2 Thess 2:10). Importantly, the temporary and partial suspension of the consequences of judgment, spoken of previously in this chapter, is also apparent in that humans often do not (immediately) receive their just deserts in this disordered world (cf. Job; Eccl 3:16–17; 8:12, 14; 9:2; Matt 5:45). That is, there is not always a one-to-one correlation between behavior and the reception of blessings or curses. Accordingly, one should not view the conditionality of divine beneficence as if it amounts to a thoroughgoing theology of (immediate) retribution. The conditionality of divine beneficence is much more complex. Often retribution, whether positive or negative, is deferred rather than immediate. Ultimately, full justice awaits the eschaton. See the sections on the foreconditional aspect of love in chapters 4 and 5 for a further description of the interplay between divine love, blessing, and conditionality.
and, thus, of salvation itself (cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12). Indeed, one cannot have true faith in Christ without love for God and his children (cf. 1 John 3:14; 5:1). Faith is thus the human response to God’s prior love and itself entails a reciprocal response of love on the basis of that faith in, and acceptance of, God’s prior love for us. As has been seen earlier, though the human love response is itself imperfect, God not only provides the initiating love that enables human response but also mediates this loving response such that it is acceptable to God (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). As such, love is a real condition of relationship with God and at the same time only comes about because of God’s prior, foreconditional gift of love that draws the Christian to freely respond to God’s love and therefore be party to God’s particular, relational love (cf. Jer 31:3; 1 John 4:7). God’s love is thus prior and posterior to human response, in different respects, but nevertheless conditional. This is the foreconditionality of divine love. Such love is not meritorious, it does not earn

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127 Faith and love go hand in hand in the NT and one cannot even love God without the prior initiating love of God. But one must respond to that initiating love in faith and love. Edward Malatesta comments that one remains in death “until he has chosen to make love a conscious activity.” Interiortiy and Covenant: A Study of [einai en] and [menein en] in the First Letter of Saint John (AnBib 69; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), 259–60. Stephen S. Smalley comments on 1 John 3:14, “The evidence, as well as the test, of having crossed over from spiritual death into the dimension of eternal life is both practical and objective; it is fraternal love.” 1, 2, 3 John (WBC 51; Dallas: Word, 2002), 189. Such love for the brethren is itself indirectly love for God (cf. 1 John 5:1).

128 Thus, anyone who loves is “born of God” (1 John 4:7) but they were not “born of God” by God’s unilateral and unconditional decree. They had to respond to God’s prior action (1 John 5:1; cf. John 3:16). In this way, one cannot love God without God’s prior action, while without response to God’s prior action there is no ongoing relationship of love. Accordingly, I believe that one who tries to remove the exhortative and paraenetic function of statements such as 1 John 3:14; 4:7; 1 Cor 8:3 overlooks their motivational intentionality. It seems, then, that God’s prevenient love prompts prevenient grace, which effects a partial regeneration that allows human response. I refer to such regeneration as partial because one does not stop sinning upon being born again. Thus, the one who is born again must “grow in respect to salvation” (cf. 1 Pet 2:2, 5) and the full results of generation are therefore neither instantaneous nor automatic. A full discussion of the complex relationship between being born again and loving God, however, is beyond the scope of this work. For the purposes of this work, Moffat puts it well: “The experience of God’s love is thus a growing experience, into which the Christian enters more and more as he is faithful.” Love, 265.

129 Hendriksen rightly states, “Why cannot God’s love both precede and follow ours? That is exactly what it does, and that is the beauty of it: first, by preceding our love, it creates in us the eager desire to keep Christ’s precepts; then, by following our love, it rewards us for keeping them! Nothing could ever be more glorious than such an arrangement!” New Testament Commentary: The Gospel according to John (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1953), 2:281–82.

130 Accordingly, it is not true that if love is necessary for the reception of God’s gift of eternal life
salvation, but it is the requisite, appropriate response to God’s love (cf. 2 Tim 4:8). God’s love is bestowed prior to conditions, it is undeserved, and, at the same time, there are conditions attached to it.

The Conditionality and Unconditionality of Divine Love

While divine love is never deserved or merited, it is in many ways conditional and thus humans may forfeit God’s love such that it does not reach them. God himself declares in response to the rebellion of his people: “All their evil is at Gilgal; Indeed, I came to hate them there! Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more” (Hos 9:15; cf. Jer 11:15; Jer 14:10). Elsewhere God states, “‘I have withdrawn My peace from this people,’ declares the Lord, ‘My lovingkindness and compassion’” (Jer 16:5; cf. Ps 89:49).

Likewise Romans speaks of “the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you will also be cut off” (Rom 11:22; cf. Matt 18:27–33). Elsewhere, Jude exhorts, “Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life” (Jude 21). The reality of the forfeiture of divine love is further implied in the many statements that God will again love his people (Hos 14:1–4) and restore them (Jer 30:18; Ezek 39:25; Joel 2:12–14; Heb 8:9, 12). Moreover, one need only look at the numerous instances of divine hatred and abhorrence that such love is thereby meritorious. Such love does not earn salvation but it is the requisite, appropriate response to God’s call and love, a necessary corollary of true faith, which is the conduit of salvation. Salvation is no less a gift because the condition is faith (with the necessary corollary of love).

Since divine love is a gift, creatures have no claim upon it. Indeed, humans need not even exist but for the will of God to create and sustain them. In this way, divine love is never deserved or merited (though it may be warranted).

(Pss 5:5; 11:5; Jer 12:8; Hos 9:15, etc.) to dismiss the sentimental notion that God’s love is monolithic, constant, and altogether unconditional.\(^{133}\)

Yet, though divine love may be forfeited, it is surpassingly enduring, steadfast, and reliable, but not thereby altogether constant or unconditional. Indeed, God’s love reaches beyond all responsibilities and expectations.\(^{134}\) The amazing longevity of God’s love (universal and particular) is especially evident in God’s enduring, but not unilaterally permanent, commitment to his vocationally elect people (cf. Rom 11:28).\(^{135}\)

Yet, some texts appear to depict God’s love as everlasting and thus unconditional. For example, God’s love is described as an “everlasting love” (Jer 31:3; cf. Rom 8:35, 39).\(^{136}\) Elsewhere, it is repeatedly asserted that God’s “lovingkindness is everlasting” (cf. Ps 136).\(^{137}\) Yet, as seen above, God’s love is conditional and may be forfeited. Indeed, God may even come to hate the objects of his love and proclaim that he “will love them no more” (Hos 9:15). There is thus some apparent tension between two streams of statements regarding divine love, those that

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\(^{133}\) Indeed, all the divine angst proclaimed by the prophets over God’s wayward people, the unrequited love, abandonment, separation, and the hope of reconciliation must be overlooked or treated as somehow “unreal” if Jer 31:3 or other texts are asserted as defining the divine-human love relationship as strictly unconditional and constant.

\(^{134}\) While love and lovingkindness often take place in the context of covenant, they far surpass covenant obligations and expectations. See the word studies in chapter 4, pages 223–40 and 354–75. God is willing to forgive all those who genuinely come to him and repent in response to his prevenient grace and foreconditional love (cf. Jer 3). However, the opportunity to repent and turn to God is not everlasting (Heb 3:15; 4:7; cf. Ps 95:7–8).

\(^{135}\) Throughout the canon, God continued to bear long with his elect because of his love for their forebears, which itself grounded their election in the first place. As such, in this instance, divine love for the Israelites defies the expectations of human evaluation in accordance with the salvation-historical divine decision. Snaithe speaks of this “determined persistence” of divine love as the “over-plus of God’s love.” Snaithe, *The Distinctive Ideas*, 141.

\(^{136}\) See the discussion of the meaning of the phraseology of Jer 31:3 in chapter 4, pages 387–8.

\(^{137}\) Beyond the repetition of this refrain in all 26 verses in Ps 136 it occurs in Jer 33:11; Pss 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1–4, 29; 1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3, 7; 20:21. Likewise, reference is made of God’s “everlasting lovingkindness” (Isa 54:8). See the repeated collocations of פֶּרַע and פֶּרָע in the word study of פֶּרַע in chapter 4, pages 354–75. Elsewhere, God proclaims that his פֶּרַע will not be removed, nor his covenant of peace shaken (Isa 54:10; cf. Lam 3:22; Pss 103:17; 117:2). Note, however, that פֶּרַע is also spoken of as conditional elsewhere. See chapter 4, pages 354–75.
speak of the everlasting nature of God’s love and those that depict it as conditional and subject to forfeiture. If both of these points are taken seriously, there is apparently both an unconditional and conditional aspect to divine love.138

**God’s Subjective and Objective Love**

This apparent tension does not amount to contradiction but may be understood by distinguishing between the subjective and objective aspects of divine love made apparent when one carefully considers the evidence of both streams. God’s subjective love is that which he wills independently of external factors, it is non-evaluative and grounded entirely in himself as subject. As such, it is unconditional and permanent. God’s objective love, on the other hand, evaluatively takes into account the disposition and actions of the other and is therefore conditional and requires reciprocal love for its permanent continuance.139 That is, God’s subjective love is that which is grounded in himself as subject independent from the response, or lack of response, from human beings. God’s objective love refers to that love which corresponds to, and is affected by, the disposition and/or actions of its object. God’s love is thus unconditional with respect to God’s will (subjective love) but conditional with respect to God’s evaluation (objective love).

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138 This illustrates the interpretive danger of absolutizing any one of the elements of divine love such that God’s love is wholly unconditional (and thus disinterested) or that God’s love is merely a direct response to human actions; neither can be supported by examination of all of the evidence.

139 Even Snaith, who asserts that God’s ἡγεμονία is utterly “unconditioned,” recognizes conditionality by asserting that ἡγεμονία is a “conditional” love, always within the context of covenant. *The Distinctive Ideas*, 95. However, as has been seen in this study, it is neither true that ἡγεμονία is unconditional nor that ἡγεμονία always operates within covenant. See chapter 4, pages 223–40 and 354–75. Similarly, Charles E. B. Cranfield, who contends that divine love is “spontaneous” and “not caused by any worth or attractiveness in its object, but rather creates worth in its object,” nevertheless recognizes that “while all the OT agrees that God’s love for Israel was spontaneous in origin, there is observable a tendency to understand its continuance as conditional on Israel’s behaviour (e.g. Deut 5:10; Exod 20:6; Deut 7:9–13), and the possibility of regarding it as a reward for human merit arises.” “Love,” *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (ed. Alan Richardson; New York: Macmillan, 1950), 132. Notice also Eugene H. Merrill’s reference to divine lovingkindness as “unconditional” as “the basis for covenant election” but within “relationship, however, bēseḏ is part of a reciprocal process, a disposition conditioned upon . . . love (āḥāḇā) and obedience.” *Deuteronomy* (NAC 4; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 148. Post writes, “Agape may appear unconditional and therefore universal in its initial outreach, but eventually it requires that the recipient undergo a change of heart—a conversion grounded in the narratives and community that themselves sustain agape in the history of salvation.” *A Theory of Agape*, 83.

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This dovetails in part with God’s universally relational love and his particularly relational love, which has been discussed earlier in this chapter and will be illuminated further in the following section. In many ways, God’s objective love corresponds to God’s particularly relational love, which includes God’s evaluative joy and delight over humans who love him and others and is conditional upon the free reciprocation of divine love by humans.\(^{140}\) On the other hand, God’s subjective love is the basis of, but not identical with, God’s universally relational love, which is bestowed on all human beings foreconditionally.\(^{141}\) God’s subjective love thus refers to God’s unchanging disposition of unilateral and non-evaluative love for everyone, that is, love that is independent of the disposition and/or actions of its object that God has toward all of his creation. This subjective disposition of love prompts God’s universally relational love, which bestows loving actions initially on all creatures and aims toward, but does not unilaterally effect, reciprocal love relationship (God’s particularly relational love).

God’s subjective love is, therefore, the prior, unchanging, and independent ground of God’s universally relational love, which, in turn, is manifested in loving actions that reach creatures. While God’s subjective love is itself everlasting and unconditional it does not eternally benefit creatures since humans may finally reject God entirely, thus forfeiting the love relationship beyond repair. While God’s subjective love remains in God’s disposition even after such forfeiture, it does not reach its objects who have finally rejected loving relationship with God and, accordingly, no longer receive God’s love (cf. Jer 31:3; Hos 9:15). That is, those who finally reject God forfeit his universally relational love (as well as the opportunity to enjoy particularly relational love). That humans who have made such a final decision no longer receive God’s relational love does not mean that God’s subjective love has ceased. Rather, it means that

\(^{140}\) Notice the correspondence to the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational aspects of divine love.

\(^{141}\) It is also the indirect basis of God’s particularly relational love since God’s universally relational love is the prior condition that makes particularly relational love possible.
God’s subjective love no longer reaches them (via his relational love) since they have removed themselves from the sphere of God’s loving actions. God always loves everyone subjectively in the sense that he remains desirous of a love relationship with them and himself remains loving. He never removes his love from anyone who wishes to receive his love. However, the object(s) of God’s love may reject intimate relationship with God and, if persistent in such rejection, forfeit the reception of divine love altogether.

Thus, while God’s universally relational love is foreconditional but not unconditional, God’s subjective love is unconditional; it endures even if it is finally unrequited. One may reject God’s desire for a love relationship, but that does not quench his desire but merely prevents God’s desire from coming to fruition and prevents those who reject it from receiving its benefits. When God’s universally relational love is persistently unrequited and thus forfeited, God’s subjective love remains as God’s longing, his unfulfilled wishes, aspects of his compassion and sympathy, and sorrow over his lost ones.

In all this, God’s love itself (that is, his subjective love) is, like him, everlasting (cf. Jer 31:3; Rom 8:35, 39). Thus, there is no danger that he will arbitrarily remove his love from any creature. Humans, however, may forfeit God’s relational love (universal and particular). Then, only his subjective love, that desire to be in relationship with his lost one, remains. However, the lost one comes to non-existence and in this way God’s purely subjective love is thus finally objectless. It is in the subjective respect(s) that divine love and lovingkindness are described as

142 The emotionality of love thus appears to overlap between the subjective and unconditional and objective and conditional aspects of divine love. In one sense, God longs for relationship with his unrequited lover, and this includes emotionality that continues even after the rupture of the particular, relational love (cf. Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). On the other hand, the fullness of divine emotions, which include delight, pleasure, and enjoyment of its object(s), does not obtain once the intended object of God’s love finally rejects the entrance into, or continuance, of the particular, love relationship. Further, as has been seen, the fullness of divine compassion and mercy may be forfeited by persistent rejection of God’s overtures. It is not clear to what extent this includes God’s feelings of compassion since it appears that some aspects of these may remain as purely subjective feelings while others are evaluative and responsive (objective).

143 Walther Eichrodt states, “The very greatness of the offer is what makes the situation so
eternal. That is, God does not will to remove love but remains benevolent toward all. In this regard, his love is unchanging and constant, but this is not descriptive of all aspects of divine love. Rather, the objective aspects of divine love, specifically predicated on human response, may amount to the disruption and even, eventually, total rupture of the relationship as it regards specific humans.\textsuperscript{144} There is apparent tension between God’s subjective and objective love only because of the existence of sin and evil followed by God’s decision to continue his love to beings who deserve destruction. However, God’s subjective and objective loves will, in the eschaton, be in perfect harmony.

While God’s subjective love is permanent, God’s relational love (both universal and particular) is contingent. That is, the universally relational love that God bestows foreconditionally as well as the particularly relational love (objective love), which is the product of God’s universally relational love and human reciprocation of that love, is conditional and subject to forfeiture. The removal of love, however, is always in response to human disposition or action (cf. Isa 5:2–7). Throughout Scripture, God’s people repeatedly decide to reject God and not the other way around (cf. Jer 15:6; Neh 9:19). When God finally cuts off such people it is only in response to their decision to shut him out.\textsuperscript{145} God, however, never unilaterally removes his love (cf. Heb 13:5). On the contrary, as has been seen above, God’s love itself is everlasting.

\begin{quote}
perilous; for love that seeks the ultimate response, the surrender of the personal will, cannot but destroy those who resist it. Condemnation is always close at hand.” \textit{Theology of the Old Testament} (trans. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 254. Further, Eichrodt comes close to something like this canonical model when he states that “though men may admittedly violate its terms and thus lose the right to participate in it. Such love shines forth unalterably like the sun in heaven and constitutes the inner strength of the eternal divine order.” Ibid., 256. However, while he recognizes both parts of the tension he overlooks the overall congruity between them, thinking it “impossible to rationalize” the tension between Hosea’s statements of the discontinuance (9:15) and continuance (14:4) of divine love. Ibid., 253.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{144} This give-and-take of divine love will be taken up in further detail in the next section of this dissertation, which deals with the multilaterally relational aspect of divine love.

\textsuperscript{145} Thus, “any breakdown in relationship between Yahweh and Israel is the responsibility of the latter, not the former. Yahweh is in the right, Israel is in the wrong.” John E. Goldingay, \textit{Daniel} (WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 242. Cf. Neh 9:33. In this way, “There is a point when God abandons sinners to their wicked desires (cf. Rom. 1:28).” Woudstra, \textit{The Book of Joshua}, 337–38.
Thus, love does not run out but humans may refuse to receive and reciprocate it. In this way, those who finally reject God’s loving overtures thereby forfeit the relationally responsive aspects of God’s love and exclude themselves from relationship with him.

In all this, God’s subjective love and objective love differentiate between that love which belongs to God’s character independent of any external objects (his subjective love) and that which corresponds to, and is affected by, creatures (objective love). Therefore, it should not be thought that some of the five aspects (volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational) of God’s love in relation to the world correspond to his subjective love and others correspond to his objective love. All five aspects correspond to God’s objective love since they all refer to God’s love in relation to the world while God’s subjective love is prior to, and the ground of, God’s relationship to the world and thus prompts his universally relational love that reaches out toward the ideal of particularly relational love.146

Corporate Unconditionality and Conditionality

Beyond the important distinction between God’s subjective and objective love, God’s love is also unconditional in a corporate sense. That God will love and save a people, the plan of salvation itself is unconditional. However, the identity of the specific recipients of that saving divine love is conditional. As such, humans can forfeit their place as beneficiaries in the relationship. This corporate unconditionality is apparent in the related themes of remnant and the so-called grant-type covenant. God’s promises will come to fruition for God’s people, that is, those who respond to God as part of a faithful remnant (cf. Isa 65:8–9; Rom 9:6; 11:7, 22–23). As such, the remnant theme itself implies unconditionality and conditionality.147 In the sense that it

146 As mentioned above, the five aspects of divine love correspond to God’s objective love in relation to the world. God’s subjective love on the other hand is grounded in himself and thus non-relational, non-evaluative, and unconditional. However, like his objective love it is voluntary and includes emotion.

147 On the remnant see the brief discussion in chapters 4 and 5, pages 260-1, 391, and 466–7.
affirms that God’s promises will come to fruition for God’s people it affirms corporate unconditionality yet it manifests conditionality on the individual level with respect to who will be included in that faithful remnant (cf. Isa 65:8–9; Rom 9:6; 11:7, 22–23). As such, the very concept of “remnant” presumes that God’s love does not endure forever unto all its intended objects.

Perhaps even more striking is the parallel with the so-called grant-type covenant evident in the OT, especially with regard to the Davidic covenant, wherein there is a promise of blessings granted to a faithful vassal and his progeny that will extend to future generations independent of lapses in, and therefore punishment of, a particular generation or individuals (cf. Ps 103:17–18). Further, in the NT there is a thematic overlap as well since it could be argued that Christ himself functions as the entirely faithful vassal who warrants (indeed merits) the bestowal of grant-type covenant promises such that all his offspring are privy to God’s kingdom, which will not be taken away from his offspring. However, particular intended recipients of the covenant promise(s) may forfeit their place and thus not actually receive the covenant blessings. In this way, Christ stands as the ultimate guarantor of God’s loving, covenant promises in this revelatory

148 The grant type of covenant basically consists of gifts from a sovereign to an individual and his descendants who had loyally served him, with the assurance that the gifts will not be taken away from him or his progeny. M. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” JAOS 90 (1970): 184–203. See the brief discussion of this in the OT chapter. As mentioned in that OT chapter the complexity of both ANE covenants and biblical covenants defies one-to-one correlation with the so-called covenant of grant. However, the parallel is striking and may shed light on the tension between conditionality and unconditionality with regard to the divine-human relationship. Merrill puts it this way, “(1) God’s promises to the fathers were, indeed, without condition and qualification (Gen 13:14–17; 15:18; 17:8; etc.), but (2) any individual or generation in succession to the patriarchs could appropriate their blessings only through faith and obedience (Gen 15:6; Exod 19:5; Deut 4:40; 5:16, 29, 33). To put it another way, the pledge of redemption and conquest by Israel was a settled and nonnegotiable matter (the unconditional side of the covenant), but their reality in the experience of individual Israelites or even a generation of them was contingent on covenant faithfulness (the conditional side). . . . (cf. Lev 26:27–45; Jer 31:31–37; 32:36–40; Ezek 36:22–31; 37:1–14).” Deuteronomy, 173. Similarly, John N. Oswalt comments, “On the one hand nothing could prevent God’s promises to Abraham, Moses, and David from being realized: the nation was elect and would be ruled over by a descendant of David. But those promises guarantee nothing to the individuals of any generation. If they sin, they will be punished; if they are righteous, they will be rewarded (Ezek. 18:1–24). Election promises made to the nation will not be participated in automatically by individuals.” The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 90–91.
microcosm of God’s loving relationship (intended or real) with the world. In this way, among others, he is the antitype of David to whom the grant-type promises were made at least partially because of his faithfulness (cf. 1 Kgs 15:4–5). With this in mind the concept of human beings being adopted in Christ becomes even more striking. When it is remembered that covenant itself is based on kinship (see OT metaphors), Christ stands as the progenitor (and at the same time “brother” and “husband” due to the canonical penchant for mixed metaphors) of the recipients of God’s promises: the “elect” and “beloved” in the objectively “Elect” and “Beloved” One.149

Overall, the foreconditionality of divine love means that God bestows love on humans before any conditions have been put in place and/or met but then expects humans to respond appropriately to his love. Accordingly, God’s particularly relational love is conditional upon appropriate responsiveness to God’s universally relational love. God never unilaterally determines to remove his love from any object and in this limited sense God’s love may be thought of as, subjectively, unconditional. However, the object of God’s love may reject intimate relationship with God and, if finally persistent in this regard, thus forfeit the reception of divine love altogether. In all this, God’s love is ontologically and logically prior to human love and itself the grounding of all love while the divine-human love relationship is itself contingent upon reciprocal human response.

The Multilaterally Relational Aspect of Divine Love

God’s Love Is Ideally Reciprocal

The multilaterally relational aspect of love means that God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into particular, intimate relationship only with those who

149 I am not here asserting univocity between the so-called grant-type covenant evident in the OT and these themes and concepts in the NT, but the overlap is indeed striking and may present a helpful, canonical model for understanding the foreconditionality of divine love, especially the complex aspects of subjectively unconditional and objectively conditional divine love. This requires further analysis that goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.
respond appropriately.\textsuperscript{150} All of the other aspects of divine love fit together within the context of this (ideally) reciprocal relationality of divine love. Scripture consistently depicts God as a personal and relational being who desires a reciprocal love relationship of give-and-take with his creatures. While the persons of the Trinity loved one another before the world was created (cf. John 17:24), God’s love relationship with creatures had a beginning. Likewise, the canonical depiction of election, covenant, and blessing, as well as aspects of conditionality and unconditionality, assumes relational responsiveness.

Thus, the covenant and kinship descriptors of the divine-human relationship depict God as a relational and responsive being who bestows love and longs for humans to love him in return.\textsuperscript{151} For example, the marriage metaphor explicitly models the give-and-take involved in the divine-human love relationship (cf. Hos 1:6; 2:4 [6]; 11:8; Jas 4:4). Likewise, the parent-child adoption metaphor points to God’s profound love for his people as well as the expectations that he has for his children in return.\textsuperscript{152} Both metaphors depict God’s profound and lasting affection for his people as well as his desire for reciprocal love from his people. As such, these metaphors

\textsuperscript{150} Here, two terms should be defined in order to avoid confusion. First, I use the term “multilateral” here because divine love is even more than bilateral not only in its Trinitarian nature but also in the tri-relationality between God as lover, a human as beloved, and that same human as one who should love God’s children, reciprocating God’s love back to him (cf. Matt 25:40; 1 John 4:21; 5:1). These relationships are further described below. Second, the term “reciprocal” is not used to refer to a disposition and/or action that expects or receives an equal or symmetrical reaction but to the expectance or reception of an appropriate reaction. In other words, “reciprocal” does not require a relationship of equals nor that the disposition and/or action flows equally.

\textsuperscript{151} Similarly, divine τὰς, which often, but not always, functions in the context of covenant, also manifests the reciprocal relationality of divine love. It is free and voluntary but not altogether spontaneous, often taking place within the commitment of the covenant relationship, but not restricted thereby. It is a basic grounding characteristic of God that makes the covenant meaningful and reliable. It is unmerited but not altogether unconditional and assumes a relation that will be reciprocated when/if occasion arises (even if τὰς itself is not, or cannot be). See the further discussion of τὰς in chapter 4, pages 354–75.

\textsuperscript{152} For example as God’s children, certain behavior is expected; they “are the sons of the LORD” (Deut 14:1), “a holy people” whom the LORD has “chosen” as “His own possession” (Deut 14:2). The reality of the requisite response for the maintenance of such relationship is evident in that Israel “acted corruptly toward” God and are “not His children, because of their defect” (Deut 32:5; cf. 32:18–21). As adoptees, believers will share in Christ’s victory and through him they may be transformed, and will finally be at glorification, into his image, being presented holy and blameless to him, and as such, perfectly loveable (cf. Eph 5:27).
depict the ideal of reciprocal and loyal love by both parties, which assumes bilateral freedom and volition.\textsuperscript{153} However, both metaphors depict Israel’s repeated and persistent unfaithfulness toward God wherein God is a devoted parent and faithfully loving husband, unjustly dishonored, scorned, wounded, and pained, whose overtures are rejected in a repetitive cycle of unrequited love.\textsuperscript{154} God, in his amazing longsuffering love, repeatedly works to draw his people back to him but will not irresistibly determine their return and, eventually, gives his people over to their choice.\textsuperscript{155}

In all this, the God-human love relationship depends upon God’s free decision to create and sustain the world and his ongoing willingness to entertain a love relationship with human beings even after the Fall. God’s relationship with the world is thus non-essential to his being. It is freely initiated by God but also contingent upon the free response of human beings. That is, God’s decision to create the world and thus voluntarily bestow his love on creatures does not by itself effect the reciprocal love relationship that God desires. As such, God’s love relationship with the world is not unilaterally willed by God. God desires a reciprocal love relationship with human beings wherein humans freely love God in response to his prior love.

\textsuperscript{153} This conception fits the basic definition of covenant according to Gary N. Knoppers as not merely a unilateral or one-sided oath but a “formal agreement involving two or more parties” and that consequently, “affects those parties.” Such agreements are “inevitably bilateral.” “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?” \textit{JAOS} 116 (1996): 696. Importantly, marriage and adoption are both voluntary, rather than merely natural, relationships. This implies that the divine-human relationship is voluntary rather than necessary. Yet, at the same time, deep and intense affection is evident both in such metaphors and elsewhere throughout the prophets, which suggests relationship that is not only volitional but also profoundly emotional. The divine-human relationship is thus depicted as both more than voluntary (i.e., pathos, compassion) but also not less than voluntary.

\textsuperscript{154} God is recurrently represented as a disrespected and unloved father or a scorned, cuckolded husband, the victim of unrequited love (cf. Isa 1:2, 4; 30:9; 56:7–8; Jer 2:24–25; 3:1, 4, 20; Ezek 16:15, 25–26; Hos 11:2; Mal 1:6; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). Such rebellion brings divine discipline (Isa 63:10; Ezek 16:42–43) and the rupture of the special relationship between God and his people. They have no rightful claim to the continuance of the special relationship as “wife” (Jer 3:1) or as God’s children (Hos 1:6, 9; 2:4; cf. Jer 4:22). Nevertheless, despite their unfaithfulness and apostasy, God maintains a heartfelt call for their repentance and return in his graciousness and love (Jer 3:12–14, 22) upon which the restoration depends (Jer 4:1; cf. 31:21–22; Hos 2:2 [4]; 10:12; 14:1–3 [2–4]). Cf. Hos 2:14; 3:1; Jer 3:19, 22. Those who return God “will love freely” (Hos 14:3–4 [4–5]) and with them he promises to make a new covenant (cf. Jer 31:31–36; Ezek 16:60–62; Hos 2:19–20 [21–22]; Heb 9:15).

\textsuperscript{155} See the discussion of significant bilateral freedom above in the section on the volitional aspect and below in this chapter in the discussion of the ontological implications of this model of divine love.
This is evident not only in kinship metaphors (see above) but also elsewhere throughout the canon. Scripture is consistent that God strongly desires that human beings reciprocate his love. As such, the love relationship intended by God is one of give-and-take, which presumes the volitional freedom of both God and creatures. As has been seen, God can and does take delight in his creatures and values human love. Accordingly, he is disappointed, displeased, and frequently pained when his love is unrequited (Hos 9:15; 11:8; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). Nevertheless, God goes out of his way to seek reciprocal love relationship with his creatures, overcoming all obstacles save one. He will not irresistibly determine the will of the one who rejects him. Thus, God’s actions of creation and providence aim at the goal of the reciprocation of divine love though appropriate response. That is, God desires and works toward mutually responsive, though not symmetrical, love relationship with human beings. Accordingly, God bestows love universally and foreconditionally and seeks reciprocal love. The ideal divine-human relationship is thus reciprocal but it is not thereby symmetrical. God and humans relate mutually, but not equally.

The Multilateral Circle of Love

The reciprocation of divine love amounts to a particular relationship of divine love. These relationships are universally available but not universal; they are particular and intimate. The various particular divine love relationships constitute a multirelational circle of love including: (1) love between the members of the Trinity, (2) love from God to humans, (3) love from humans to God, and (4) love from believers to one another, which itself amounts indirectly to human love toward God.

\[156\] Thus, W. Günther comments, “God’s activity is love, which looks for men’s reciprocal love (1 Jn. 4:8, 16).” W. Günther and H. G. Link, “αγαπαω,” NIDNTT 2:542.
Love between the members of the Trinity consists of a reciprocal love relationship that pre-dates creation itself and models the ideal nature of all love relationships (cf. John 17:24). The Father loves the Son (Matt 3:17; John 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9–10; 17:23–24, 26) and Christ loves the Father and does exactly what the Father commands (John 14:31). In this way, Jesus models the appropriate human response to God: love manifest in obedience.

The Father and Son not only love one another but also love human beings. Thus, the Son loves his followers intimately (John 13:1; cf. 11:5; 13:34; 14:21; 15:12; 21:7, 20). Indeed, the Father’s love for the Son is the model of the Son’s love for his followers: “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love” (John 15:9). Likewise, the Father intimately loves those who belong to Christ. He “loved” Christ’s followers “even as” he loved Christ (John 17:23; cf. 14:21, 23). Importantly, God’s love is itself reciprocally responsive to human love toward God and/or Christ (cf. Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4; John 14:21, 23; 16:27), which implies the validity and value of human love toward God.

157 Here and elsewhere one might wonder what the role of the Holy Spirit is in such love. Though theologians have made various suggestions, there is little information in this regard compared to that regarding the love of the Father and Son. One should remember that the canon reveals the Trinity progressively such that the Father-Son love relationship is itself not explicitly revealed until the NT and, even then, the most explicit statements about Father-Son love come in John, which is widely considered to be written later than many (if not all) other books of the NT. Since the Spirit is revealed most explicitly in the NT, specifically with regard to the Spirit’s role in the post-resurrection church, it should not be surprising that there is a lack of data regarding the Spirit’s role in the multilateral love relationship. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

The evidence that exists in this regard is somewhat vague. Paul speaks of the “love of the Spirit” (Rom 5:30), an ambiguous genitive, as well as the Colossians’ “love in the Spirit” (Col 1:8). The “love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom 5:5, KJV) and love is itself a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). The “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” is placed in parallel with “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” and “the love of God” in a Trinitarian formula (2 Cor 13:14; cf. Phil 2:1). It is further implied that the Spirit loves humans since the Spirit manifests love toward humans in action (not leastwise in Rom 8:26). Likewise, the Spirit comes as the “comforter,” thus replacing Christ on earth. As such, it is implied that the Spirit should likewise be seen as a partner in such love relationship, both intra-trinitarian and divine-human. In this way, the information about the love and activity of the Spirit strongly suggests that the Spirit loves humans even as the Father and the Son and also enters into the intra-trinitarian love relationship. However, there is little canonical information on either of these points.

158 Likewise, “with the kind” (πιστή) God shows himself “kind” (πιστό) (2 Sam 22:26 = Ps 18:25 [26]).
Conversely, humans love the Father and the Son reciprocally. First, consider the frequent exhortations for humans to love God and Christ, which manifest God’s desire to have an intimate relationship with his creatures. For example, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). The frequent exhortations to love God demonstrate the potential of real, human love toward God and that such love is neither necessary nor automatic. Indeed, such exhortations assume that humans are free to respond to or reject God’s love and that such responses are not unilaterally determined. The reality of human love toward God is also evident in many instances. Humans are repeatedly said to love Jesus (Luke 7:47; John 14:21, 23; 21:15–17; Eph 6:24; 1 Pet 1:8; cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Phlm 5; Jas 1:12). Likewise, humans are also frequently said to love God (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 1 Kgs 3:3; Ps 91:14; Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; Jas 2:5; 1 John 5:1–3; cf. Jer 2:2; Hos 6:6; Neh 13:14; Heb 6:10).

Finally, believers are to love one another. God’s love for humans places a moral obligation upon humans to love one another (cf. 1 John 3:16; John 15:12). As such, the recipients of divine love as “beloved” are to bestow it to others. This is the multilateral circle of

159 See also Deut 10:12; 11:1, 13; 13:3 [4]; 30:6; Josh 22:5; 23:11; Ps 31:23 [34]; Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; John 14:15, 28; cf. Jer 2:2; 1 Cor 16:22. Nothing short of wholehearted devotion is expected, which requires more than external action but also internal disposition (cf. Deut 6:5; Mark 12:30).

160 On the other hand, if such responses are unilaterally determined, the exhortations appear to be superfluous. In this regard, see the discussion of bilateral significant freedom earlier in this chapter.

161 Notice especially Peter’s three-fold affirmation of love for Jesus in John 21:15–17. If such love were automatic or merely divine love flowing through a passive human agent it is difficult to make sense of Jesus’ repeated question.

162 The expectation that believers love one another is well-represented (John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7–8, 11–12, 20–21; 5:2; 2 John 5). Such love for one another is akin to the command to love one’s neighbor (Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:8–9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). Likewise, one should love his brother (1 John 2:10; 3:10, 14).

163 In 1 John 4:11 the phrase “we also ought [ὁφειλοῦμεν] to love one another” presumes that such love is not merely the automatic outcome of love for God or election by God. Indeed, ὁφειλοῦμεν never refers to an ontological obligation in the NT but always to a moral obligation, that which one owes or ought to do. Cf. 1 John 2:6; 3:16; 3 John 8.
divine love. This love toward fellow humans indirectly amounts to love toward God (1 John 4:7–8, 11–12, 20–21; 5:1–2; cf. also Matt 25:40).\(^{164}\) When believers love God and one another, the circuit of love between God and his children is complete. In other words, love reaches “perfection” (cf. 1 John 4:17–18).\(^{165}\)

Notably, the canon depicts strong correspondence between divine and human love. The various love relationships above are depicted as alike in nature. For example, both the Father and the Son love humans in the same way (καθως) that the Father has loved the Son (John 15:9; 17:23; cf. Eph 5:2, 25). Just as (καθως) the Father loves humans because of their love for the Son, so the Father loves the Son because of his obedience (John 10:17; cf. 14:31; 15:10). Conversely, believers are to obey Christ just as (καθως) he has obeyed the Father and thus abide (μενω) in his love even as Christ thereby abides (μενω) in the Father’s love (John 15:9–10).\(^{166}\) Finally, just as (καθως) the Son loves his followers they are to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12).\(^{167}\) As such, in the same way that the Son loves the Father, humans are to love God and love one another.

**God’s Universally Relational Love**

God loves everyone with foreconditinal, universally relational love. God’s universally relational love is the undeserved and unprompted initiating love that God bestows on each human

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\(^{164}\) Hence the love that is ready to help even the least of brethren is equivalent to readiness to help the Son of Man, whereas lovelessness is the same as contempt for him. Both will be judged by the Son of Man in his day (Mt 10:40 ff.; 25:31 ff.).” Ethelbert Stauffer, “αγαπώ, αγαπη, αγαπηκτις,” *TDNT* 1:48. Interestingly, 1 John 3:23 connects loving one another with believing in Jesus. Cf. Moffat, *Love*, 298. Note also the vertical-horizontal connection of 1 John 4:10–12, 19; cf. Heb 6:10.

\(^{165}\) As such, the divine-human love relationship is to be reciprocal and is not complete, or perfect, until then. Cf. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 257; Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB 30; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), 527.

\(^{166}\) In this way, the love of Jesus is truly the model of human love toward God and of divine love toward humans (cf. John 17:26). Thus, “Jesus remains in his Father’s love by being obedient to him (8:29; 15:10)” and “believers remain in Jesus’ love by being obedient to him (15:9–11).” Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 547. This is also indicative of the conditionality of divine love. See the more extensive treatment of this concept further above.

\(^{167}\) Likewise, in Ephesians Christians are to “walk in love, just as Christ also loved” them (Eph 5:2). Further, husbands are to love their wives “just as Christ also loved the church” (Eph 5:25).
being prior to any human response. God’s universally relational love, which flows unilaterally and prior to human response, initiates the possibility of a reciprocal love relationship between God and humans. That is, God works toward drawing (but does not determine) humans into a reciprocal love relationship by unilaterally bestowing love on each one prior to any conditions, with the goal of eliciting a human response of love. This universal aspect of divine love is apparent in numerous ways throughout the canon. For example, God loved the world so much that he made the ultimate sacrifice (John 3:16; cf. Rom 5:8, 10). Accordingly, God desires the salvation of all and does not want anyone to perish (cf. Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:16; 12:32; Acts 17:30–31; 1 Tim 2:4–6; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet 3:9; cf. Acts 10:34–35; Rom 1:5; 1 Tim 4:10).

As mentioned earlier, God’s universally relational love is manifest in all of his actions that pertain to the initiation of relationship with people. That is, God’s universally relational love works through various divine actions (including creation, election, maintenance of the covenant, and other manifestations of divine providence) to draw all human beings into a particularly relational, intimate, reciprocal love relationship with God. As such, God’s universally relational love makes available to all human beings the opportunity to be friends of God unto redemption as

168 Further, he “shows love for the alien” and commands his people to do the same (Deut 10:18–19) and elsewhere Christians are exhorted to have “love for one another, and for all people” (1 Thess 3:12). Likewise, divine lovingkindness extends beyond the elect, covenant people in numerous examples (cf. Ruth 1:8; 2 Sam 15:20; Jonah 4:2). Indeed the entire “earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD” (Ps 33:5; cf. Ps 36:7 [8]; 117:1–2; 119:64; 145:8–9). Since is characteristically responsive to or initiative of a reciprocal relation such texts complement the concept of reciprocal love in this section. Similarly, the universality of divine love is implied in that God is “good to all, And His mercies are over all His works” (Ps 145:9; cf. 100:1, 5) and he satisfies “the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:16). Likewise, God is not “partial” (Deut 10:17–18; Acts 10:34–35; cf. Deut 1:17; Jonah 4:2, 11; Gal 2:6) and he bestows blessings on all his creatures, though not always equivalently (cf. Matt 5:44–45; Luke 6:35–36; Acts 14:17). John B. Polhill correctly comments, “Peter saw that God does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnic background, looking up to some and down on others. But God does discriminate between those whose behavior is acceptable and those whose attitude is not acceptable. Those who reverence God and practice what is right are acceptable to him (v. 35; cf. Luke 8:21).” Acts (NAC 26; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 260.

169 “Undoubtedly God’s desire is that all might be saved (e.g., Acts 17:30–31; 22:15–16; 1 Tim 2:6), but because of human freedom of choice (“whosoever,” 3:16), all of humanity does not respond in believing acceptance of the Son (e.g., John 1:11–13; Rom 1:5; 10:16; 1 Tim 4:10). As a result, the rejection of God’s love brings judgment or condemnation (John 3:17).” Borchert, John 1–11, 184.
part of the unfolding of God’s marvelous plan of salvation, that is, God invites and draws them
toward receiving and enjoying his particularly relational love, to which we now turn.

**God’s Particularly Relational Love**

for Those Who Respond

Beyond God’s foreconditional, universally relational love is his particularly relational or
“insider” love, which amounts to an intimate, reciprocal divine-human love relationship toward
which God’s universally relational love aims. While God’s universally relational love is the
undeserved and unprompted initiating love that God bestows on each human being prior to any
human response, God’s particularly relational love refers to God’s special and intimate kind of
love for those who respond to him and enter into a reciprocal relationship of love with him. God’s
particularly relational love is thus the result of God’s initiating and enabling love *as well as* the
appropriate human response. Thus, God’s particularly relational love does not apply to everyone
but to those with whom God is involved in special relationship, that is, those who reciprocate
God’s love (cf. 1 Cor 16:22).

Thus, in a sense divine fatherhood is also universal, he is the creator and father of all
(Mal 2:10; Eph 4:6; cf. Pss 68:5 [6]; 10:14). At the same time, the intimate fatherhood of God
(corresponding to his particularly, relational love) is reserved for those who respond to his
overtures (Matt 5:9; Luke 6:35–36; 20:6; John 1:12; Gal 3:26; Rev 21:7; cf. Ps 103:17; Matt
12:50; par Mark 3:35; Luke 8:21; Ro 9:7–8), that is, those who have been adopted (cf. Rom 8:14–
15, 23; Eph 1:5). As such, God’s adoption of his people is predicated on the divine will, but is
neither unilateral nor unconditional but requires appropriate response. God will neither coerce nor

170 Indeed, God’s reference to Israel as his “firstborn” implies that he has, or intends to have, other
Accordingly, from attention to the larger intention of the divine-human covenant relationship one may infer
that God’s intention was to adopt other peoples through Israel, his firstborn. Christ, the true “firstborn” and
antitype of Israel, takes over this function as the one through whom believers may be adopted into the
family of God. However, the kinship metaphor of parent-child as well as that of marriage is usually in
reference to a particular, intimate, and reciprocal love relationship.
unilaterally determine human beings to love him in return. With those who respond positively to God’s loving overture, God enters into particular and intimate love relationship, which amounts to a reciprocal love relationship.

Thus, in accord with the foreconditionality of love discussed earlier, the divine-human love relationship must be entered into and maintained by appropriate human response (cf. John 14:21, 23; 15:9–10; 16:27; 1 John 2:17; 3:24; 4:12, 16; Jude 21). Though this reciprocal love relationship is universally available, not all accept and respond to God’s foreconditional, universally relational love. As such, God’s love is universal in some respects, but also particular and appropriate to specific groups and persons who respond to his love. Those who enter into the particularly relational, reciprocal love relationship with God are privy to God’s intimate love, that is, “insider love.”

Such “insider love” relationships appear frequently in Scripture including repeated references to God’s preferential love, friendship love, love for his “elect” (salvific rather than vocational), love for his “beloved,” kinship love, etc. To take one example, in more than one instance humans are spoken of as friends of God and/or Christ (Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7; John 3:29; 11:11; John 15:13–14; Jas 2:23; cf. Exod 33:11; Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34; 12:4; Jas 4:4). Such

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171 This particularity and universality of divine love thus logically follows from what has already been seen with regard to the volitional, evaluative, emotional, and foreconditional natures of love.

172 While God already loved these humans in the limited sense that he foreconditionally loves all humans, those who respond enter into a more intimate love relationship.

173 Beyond friendship, which is discussed in the main text, the numerous examples of insider love include the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; cf. 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Such instances point to relationships of particular, intimate, relational love. Likewise, Christ’s “own” whom he loved to the end likely corresponds to this category as well (John 13:1), in distinction from the world who “would love its own” (John 15:19). See also the many descriptions of the special status of the “beloved” and “elect” throughout the NT and to a certain extent those chosen of God in the OT (see, among many others, Deut 7:7–8, 12–13; Jas 2:5; Jude 1; Rev 17:14). Moreover, the concept of a faithful remnant itself dovetails considerably with the canonical notion of “insider love.” Cf. Isa 65:8–12; Zeph 3:17. See the brief discussion in the previous section of this chapter. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah” (Revised version of the author's thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1970, which was presented under title The Origin and Early History of the Remnant Motif in Ancient Israel, Andrews University Press, 1972). Cf. Isa 10:20–22; 37:32; 65:9, 15; Hos 11:1; Rom 11:5; 9:6, 30–32.
friendship assumes a particular, as opposed to universal, relationship and is thus a form of preferential but not arbitrary love. Moreover, a friendship relationship with God is predicated on obedience, which is itself connected to reciprocal love (John 15:14). This is a relational, contingent, and conditional, though not symmetrical or equal, friendship; the greatest provisions and sacrifices have been made by God himself. Accordingly, membership in such a particularly relational, intimate, and reciprocal, divine-human love relationship is not automatic but contingent (cf. John 15:14; Jas 2:23). Specifically, humans are expected to reciprocate God’s love (both Father and Son) and not merely by external action but wholeheartedly (cf. Matt 10:37–38; 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; John 14:15, 21, 23–24, 28; 15:9–10; 16:27).

While God’s universally relational love works toward a reciprocal love relationship with everyone, it is not unilaterally efficacious but initiatory and foreconditional while his particularly relational love is the product of God’s free decision to love coupled with the human response to that love. In this way, the fullness of the divine-human love relationship is reserved for the reconciliation, which can only be effectuated in the eschaton. In the meantime, God’s universal

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174 Notice Jas 4:4: “Friendship [φιλία] with the world is hostility toward God” thus “whoever wishes to be a friend [φιλος] of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas 4:4). Here, friendship signifies a mutual relationship that is grounded in reciprocality and loyalty; it is not indifferent or strictly universal (though it is available universally). Notably, the “basic requirements” of “friendship . . . are exactly the same obedience requirements as those (15:10) for abiding in his love.” Gerald L. Borchert, John 12–21 (NAC 25B; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 149. Importantly, however, this is in no wise a merely utilitarian friendship (cf. John 15:15).

175 Carson is careful to make certain that it is understood that humans don’t deserve Jesus’ friendship saying, “This obedience is not what makes them friends; it is what characterizes his friends. Clearly, then, this ‘friendship’ is not strictly reciprocal: these friends of Jesus cannot turn around and say that Jesus will be their friend if he does what they say.” The Gospel according to John, 522. Carson’s point that friendship is unmerited is well-taken though it should be noted that in this dissertation the term “reciprocal” is not meant to imply an equal relationship.

176 To say that humans are “beloved” unilaterally because they are elect would require overlooking or sterilizing the force of the exhortations to the beloved and the warning of future evaluative judgment. To say that humans are “beloved” merely due to their response to God would miss the essential divine initiative that makes such response possible. Cf. Phil 2:12–13; Jude 1, 21. As Thomas J. Oord states, “Creaturely love is not the work of God alone.” “A Relational God and Unlimited Love,” in Visions of Agapé: Problems and Possibilities in Human and Divine Love (ed. C. A. Boyd; Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 140.
love is more than the sun shining its rays on all, it includes affectionate concern, which may turn to abhorrence and hatred, but compassion endures long. God is grieved by those who do not love him back. However, in the end the divine-human love relationship is reserved for those who respond to God’s universal invitation; a response that is itself enabled by God’s prior action and foreconditional love toward initiating a reciprocal love relationship. In all this, the reason why some do not enter into the multirelational circle of divine love is simply because they fail to respond positively to, and thus reject, God’s prevenient and foreconditional love, much to the chagrin of God.

Accordingly, Scripture clearly distinguishes between those whom God loves with universally relational love and those whom God will love forever. The former reaches every human being foreconditionally whereas the latter only reaches those who respond and thus participate in God’s particularly relational love. The difference, then, is that those privy to God’s particularly relational love allow God to love them forever while the others reject him and thus forfeit their status. They could have been “insiders” but they were not willing (cf. Matt 22:14; Luke 13:34). In this way, God’s particularly relational, intimate, preferential love is not arbitrary or groundless but conditional and evaluative. Consequently, some are loved by God more intimately than others. Yet, it must be emphasized that the exclusion of those who do not enjoy God’s particularly relational love is not due to any arbitrary decision by God but is based only upon the human decision to reject God’s foreconditional love.

Importantly, God’s particularly relational, intimate love is not restricted to an existing relationship, whether covenant or otherwise. The invitation is to all. God’s universal love beckons

177 “The Lord does not treat all people alike—to do so would demonstrate a moral indifference that is not found in the biblical view of God.” Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel* (NAC 7; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 458. Indeed, “with the connection between obedience and love so explicit, it should be self-evident that the circle of love in view embraces all of Jesus’ true disciples, but not the ‘world,’ which falls within a rather different and more extended circle of love (cf. notes on 13:1, 34–35),” Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 503. Cf. Shawn Floyd, “Preferential Divine Love: Or, Why God Loves Some People More Than Others,” *Philosophia Christi* 11 (2009): 359–76.
each one. Those who are outsiders may become part of God’s insider love. Likewise, some who were “elect” and thus insiders may become outsiders; such status is contingent upon appropriate response to God (cf. Rom 11:22–23; 2 Thess 2:10–15). In the absence of appropriate response, one will not be an “insider” and eventually will forfeit the benefits of God’s love altogether. That is, eventually the one who rejects God will neither enjoy God’s particularly relational nor his universally relational love.

**God Continues to Love Each One Temporarily**

Yet, God continues to love each human being with his universally relational love until they finally reject him. Thus, importantly, God’s love for “insiders” does not conflict with the commands to love one’s enemy. Rather, “enemy love,” as well as love for those who are unable to repay, is part of God’s universally relational love, which his children are also to model (cf. Matt 5:44–46; Luke 6:36). Thus, believers are not to restrict their love only to “those who love you” (Matt 5:46; cf. Luke 6:32). At the same time, this does not rule out particular, intimate, relational reward for such love (cf. Luke 6:37–38; 14:14). Significantly, the promise of future reward for love toward one’s enemy evidences the fact that evaluative love is merely suspended but not nullified (cf. Matt 5:45–6:6; Luke 6:31–37). Indeed, such human love toward the undeserving objects of God’s love is itself indirectly love toward God since he (Christ) stands in as the proper object of love (as mediator) as well as the guarantor of appropriate future reward (as judge) (cf. Matt 5:45–6:6; Luke 6:31–37). Thus, the idea of loving the undeserving does not remove the proper, biblical idea of justice and reciprocality, but it subverts any merely self-serving *quid pro quo* motivation without suspending the overall ideal that all loving actions should be, and in the eschaton will be, reciprocated. See the further discussion of this passage and issue in the NT chapter, pages 546–57.

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179 Indeed, the canon frequently refers to the actuality or possibility of “outsiders” becoming part of “insider” love (Mark 10:21–22; John 3:16; Rom 5:8–10; 9:25–26; 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 2:3–5; cf. Isa 66:18–22; Jer 12:15–17; Zech 2:11; Ruth; Acts 10:34–35; 17:30–31; Isa 56:4–7).

180 Notably, however, that this is in reference to the suspension rather than the nullification of evaluation is evident in that they themselves will receive eschatological reward for such love (cf. Luke 6:37–38; 14:14). Significantly, the promise of future reward for love toward one’s enemy evidences the fact that evaluative love is merely suspended but not nullified (cf. Matt 5:45–6:6; Luke 6:31–37). Indeed, such human love toward the underserving objects of God’s love is itself indirectly love toward God since he (Christ) stands in as the proper object of love (as mediator) as well as the guarantor of appropriate future reward (as judge) (cf. Matt 5:45–6:6; Luke 6:31–37). Thus, the idea of loving the undeserving does not remove the proper, biblical idea of justice and reciprocality, but it subverts any merely self-serving *quid pro quo* motivation without suspending the overall ideal that all loving actions should be, and in the eschaton will be, reciprocated. See the further discussion of this passage and issue in the NT chapter, pages 546–57.
evaluative, and preferential love relationship with God and one another (John 14:21, 23; 15:13–15; 16:27). The two are not mutually exclusive. In this way, God is “kind” even to “ungrateful and evil men” (Luke 6:35; cf. Matt 5:45) and exhorts his children to therefore love their enemies (cf. Matt 5:44–46; Luke 6:27, 32, 35–36; Rom 12:14, 17, 19–21). This is descriptive of his universally relational love but it is not God’s intention that they remain enemies since, if they remain so, they will ultimately face destruction. Rather, God desires that none would perish (2 Pet 3:9). Accordingly, so-called “enemy love” is aimed at overcoming relational obstacles such that the “enemy” will enter into a reciprocal love relationship with God and humans. As such, divine love not only looks at the present state of things but looks toward the future, what might be. In this way, such “enemy love” is not intended to nullify evaluation, nor does it rule out intimate, reciprocal friendship with those who are willing, but is part of the partial and temporary suspension of the consequences of evaluative judgment.

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181 See Post’s rejection of the assertion of love for all in contrast to particular, intimate relationships. While affirming a proper love for all he states that “nothing is more harmful to agape than a premature and superficial universalism that separates it from its communal grounding.” A Theory of Agape, 116. Cf. ibid., 97–105. Cf. the distinction between the “inclusive” and “special” covenant relationships in the Bible posited by Joseph Allen, Love & Conflict: A Covenantal Model of Christian Ethics (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995), 39–45.

182 Thus, the call for the “beloved” to bestow love on all others, including the “evil,” makes sense when it is recognized that all humans are indeed “evil” and undeserving objects of love (to varying degrees). Since the possibility remains open prior to the eschaton that the unrighteous will accept God and, finally, be transformed into a proper object of love, all such potential objects should be shown the kind of love that temporarily suspends judgment just as all humans have been the beneficiaries of this temporary suspension of the effects of judgment (cf. Deut 10:18–19; Matt 7:1–2; 18:26–33; Luke 6:37). Enemy love is thus impermanent, corresponding to the partial and temporary suspension of the effects of evaluative judgment, after which the redeemed will all be perfectly loveable. In the meantime, however, the Christian should not pre-judge who will ultimately “become” loveable (cf. 1 Cor 4:5).

183 Indeed, there is a place for preferential and intimate love of one’s circle of family or friends but not exclusively. The Christian intention should be to widen that circle of multilateral love such that all who will may be involved in the divine-human reciprocal and multilateral love relationship. Christians are to manifest love toward all in this time between the times but that does not mean that love, by definition, is non-evaluative and/or unconditional.
God’s impartiality does not obviate divine judgment. Therefore, God himself does not love his enemies unconditionally but, eventually, those who persist as enemies will be destroyed. The interim is the opportunity for those who are enemies (cf. Rom 5:10) to be reconciled to him, but without such reconciliation the love relationship cannot and will not continue. On the other hand, God enters into an intimate and reciprocal relationship with those who respond to his love (his particularly relational love), which brings him great joy (cf. Luke 15:7; Zeph 3:17). The intimate love relations that make up such “insider love” constitute the multirelational circle of love discussed above: between the members of the Trinity, from God to humans and vice versa, and from believers to one another, which is indirectly human love toward God.

Altogether, divine love is multilaterally relational. God persistently seeks a reciprocal love relationship of give-and-take with his creatures. He initiates the possibility of such a relationship with everyone through his foreconditional, universally relational love that enables and calls for a reciprocal response of love. With those who respond to this loving overture, God enters into particular and intimate love relationship that amounts to a multilateral divine-human love relationship from God to humans and vice versa and humans to one another, themselves modeled after the intra-trinitarian love relationship. Rightly understood, this requires that God’s love is foreconditional and unmerited, voluntary and unnecessary, yet not arbitrary; differential

184 God is not removing the principles of law and justice: “Such action would not in fact be an imitation of the character of God who upholds the moral law and judges transgressors.” I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 266. Thus, “what is unconditionally demanded is that such evaluations should be subject to the certainty that God’s judgment falls also on those who judge, so that superiority, hardness and blindness to one’s own faults are excluded, and a readiness to forgive and to intercede is safeguarded.” Büchsel, “κρίνω,” *TDNT* 5:939. In other words, it is not that such evaluation is removed but that such evaluation is partially and temporarily suspended and ultimately belongs to and will be carried out by God himself.

185 Many in the world love darkness and reject the will of God (cf. John 3:19; 14:24) and, as such, reject God’s love (cf. John 5:42; 8:42). Indeed, many hate God (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9; Ps 68:1; Rom 1:30) and make themselves his enemy (Jas 4:4) and eventually face destruction.

186 See the section on the evaluative nature of divine love earlier in this chapter for a rebuttal of the fallacy that love grounded in a mutually beneficial relationship is lesser than purely altruistic love and thus unfit for divinity. Further, see the discussion of divine delight and love in the same section earlier in this
and preferential, yet not altogether exclusive; intensely emotional, yet also committal, evaluative and expectant of appropriate human response rather than unilaterality. For the remainder of this chapter I will refer to this canonical model of divine love as the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love.

**A Critical Comparison of the Foreconditional-Reciprocal, Transcendent-Voluntarist, and Immanent-Experientialist Models**

This chapter now returns to the questions raised by the conflict of interpretations between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models, as well as the corresponding dissatisfaction in recent theology with regard to the meaning of divine love. This chapter will now address the implications of this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love with regard to such issues in dialogue with the perspectives on divine love that have been surveyed already. Attention will be drawn especially to where this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love complements and/or departs from the positions of the exemplars by specific discussion of the systematic issues raised in the analysis of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models (see chapter 3).

The systematic issues raised by the conflict of interpretations between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models with regard to the meaning of divine love in relation to the world revolve around the question of the nature of the divine-human relationship with regard to two primary themes of give-and-take, that is, God’s affecting and being affected. Foremost among these issues is whether God’s love is unilateral or whether God and humans may share a reciprocal (though unequal) relationship of love. The answer to this primary question is heavily influenced by the answers to a number of closely related ones. First, is God the sole giver but never the receiver? In other words, is divine love only arbitrarily willed, pure beneficence chapter as well as in the canonical chapters, pages 277–301 and 471–509.
(thematic *agape*) or may it include desire or enjoyment (thematic *eros*)? Second, does God only bestow and/or create value or might he also appraise, appreciate, and receive value? Third, does God’s love include affection and/or emotionality such that God is concerned for the world, sympathetically or otherwise? Fourth, does God choose to fully love only some, or does he choose to love all, or is he essentially related to all such that he necessarily loves all? Fifth, bound up with this is the question of whether divine love is unconditional or conditional, ungrounded or grounded, and so on. The volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational aspects of divine love for the world respond to these questions. We now turn to each of the aspects in comparison to the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models, as well as with reference to the dissatisfaction in recent theology.

The Volitional Aspect of God’s Love

The primary issue of the God-world relationship is whether it is unilateral or includes some level of reciprocity. This issue is bound up with answers to many ontological issues, including the sovereignty of the divine will, especially as it relates to the issue of determinism or indeterminism. It is no coincidence, then, that the conflict of interpretations regarding the meaning and nature of love hinges upon its relationship to the divine will.

The immanent-experientialist model proposes that love is not volitional but descriptive of an essential, and thus ontologically necessary, relation between God and creatures. God’s love, then, is not voluntary but essential to his very being.187 A divine will that chooses between objects of love is absent; there is no election love of any kind. As such, divine love is descriptive of God

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187 God does not need *this* world but he does need *some* world in Charles Hartshorne’s system. See *Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1964), 108. Most panentheists agree with this perspective. “Divine freedom is an oxymoron in almost all panentheism.” John W. Cooper, *Panentheism, the Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 326. However, Phillip Clayton is a notable exception in his assertion of God’s libertarian freedom. He states, “A free creation remains free; any effect the world subsequently has on God is a consequence of the initial free decision rather than a sign of eternal necessity.” *God and Contemporary Science* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 93.
as the feeler of all feelings, the self-surpassing surpasser of all. Whereas the immanent-experientialist model posits that God’s relationship to the world is essential to his being, according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, divine love for the world does not take place within an essential relation, but within the context of a free, volitional relationship. In other words, since divine love is predicated (partially) on the divine will, it is non-essential to God’s being. God possesses the freedom to bestow love or not bestow love on his creatures.

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188 This is, of course, in direct contrast to the claims of the immanent-experientialist model. Oord has also argued for a form of panentheism, which he calls “Essential Kenosis Theology,” such that divine love for creatures is necessary and essential to God; “God loves necessarily” and “cannot not love.” The Nature of Love: A Theology (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2010), 129. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 54–55. This also entails, among other things, that God necessarily relates with creatures and essentially lacks the power to unilaterally coerce creatures. Oord, The Nature, 124–26, 131, 133, 139, 147. At the same time, he claims that in a different way “God’s love is free,” by which he means God is free to choose among various loving actions. This is predicated on him lacking the foreknowledge to know which action would be the most loving, leaving him thus free to choose, but only between loving options. Ibid., 139–40. In his dissertation he describes this as essential free-will theism. Cf. idem, “Matching Theology and Piety: An Evangelical Process Theology of Love” (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University, 1999), 308, 320. Michael S. Horton on the other hand argues from the determinist perspective that “God is not free to decide whether he will be merciful and gracious, but he is free to decide whether he will have mercy on some rather than others.” The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011), 267. Thomas B. Talbott contends that if the statement “God is love . . . expresses a truth about the essence of God, then it is logically impossible that the person who is God should fail to love someone.” The Inescapable Love of God (Parkland, Fla.: Universal, 1999), 113. From this premise he argues for universalism.

189 Many scholars agree that divine love is volitional, only a few examples of which will be noted here. Trevor Hart refers to divine love as “something contingent upon God’s willing to enter into such a relationship in the first place, to place himself under certain relational constraints, to be limited in his freedom by the existence of a genuinely free other.” “How Do We Define the Nature of God’s Love?” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 109. Richard Rice “insists that love is a voluntary commitment.” “Process Theism and the Open View of God: The Crucial Difference,” in Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists (ed. David R. Griffin, John B. Cobb, and Clark H. Pinnock; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 185. So Cooper, Panentheism, 328; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 102, 151. Accordingly, “the world owes its existence to God’s free choice, not to metaphysical necessity.” “Process Theism,” in Searching for an Adequate God (ed. Griffin, Cobb, and Pinnock), 185. Spicq accordingly states, “Certainly God is free to grant or deny his favors.” “ἐλεεω, ἐλεος,” TLNT 1:478. Cf. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 109; Eichrodt, Theology, 252. Consider also the case K. Barth makes for God as the One who Loves in Freedom. He contends that “God’s loving is necessary” as “the essence and nature of God” yet “it is also free from every necessity in respect of its object.” That is, “He would still be One who loves without us and without the world” and thus “needs no other” to be “the One who loves.” Further, “It is not part of God’s being and action that as love it must have an object in another who is different from Him.” Thus, “In the fact that He determines to love such another, His love overflows.” Church Dogmatics (trans. G. T. Thomson; 5 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 2/1:280. In all this, “God does not owe us either our being, or in our
God’s love is contingent upon his volition (but not only his volition, cf. Exod 33:19; 34:6–7; Rom 9:15–18), God’s love for creatures cannot be necessary nor can it be the result of an internal relation as is suggested by the immanent-experientialist model. God is free to do otherwise than he does and has freely decided to enter into (and remain in) relationship with creatures while he is (and remains) ontically discrete—distinct from the world he has created. Thus, divine love in relation to the world is volitional. That is, God’s love for creatures includes a free, volitional aspect that is not necessary to his being.

On the other hand, the transcendent-voluntarist model overemphasizes the volitional aspect of God’s love. Specifically, the transcendent-voluntarist model proposes that God is the sole giver but never the receiver of love. Divine love is purely volitional and unilateral, arbitrarily willed, pure beneficence (thematic agape) to the utter exclusion of desire and/or enjoyment (thematic eros). The transcendent-voluntarist model thus complements the popular supposition of so-called “election love,” which conflates love and election into a single concept such that

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190 As seen above, the very language used with regard to the divine-human relationship as covenant, as well as the closely related kinship metaphors, presumes the lack of ontological, or essential, relation and points toward a voluntary and particular (though not necessarily exclusive) love relationship. Indeed, if the possibility of the forfeiture of the covenant relationship is taken seriously, covenant cannot be descriptive of a necessary, internal relation. Further, since divine love can be removed, as explained below when the foreconditional aspect of God’s love is discussed, such love cannot be necessary to God.

191 Cf. Hart, “How Do We Define,” 109. This is evident in the canonical narrative of creation (as well as the depiction of divine creation throughout the rest of the canon), which excludes the notion of panentheism. This is also apparent in the metaphor of the potter and the clay. See Peckham, “The Passible Potter.” Indeed, “No biblical text suggests or implies that the world is part of God, either of his eternal nature or of his actual existence.” Cooper, Panentheism, 323. Cooper argues further in favor of classic theism and against panentheism in saying that God’s “creation of the world” is “a genuinely free choice from a number of possibilities” including “creating the actual world and/or creating another possible world, or creating nothing at all.” Ibid., 325. If, on the other hand, one says God’s love toward creatures is ontologically necessary then the creation and/or existence of some world is also ontologically necessary, as the immanent-experientialist model proposes. Nevertheless, some classical theists consider creation inevitable though not essential to God’s being.

192 Thus, divine love is a sovereign, volitional love, not the result of any “inner divine necessity” or emanation, but rather purely based on the totally free divine volition. C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 5:116. See also ibid., 6:349. This conception of divine love follows from the aseity and impassibility of God according to which the sovereign will of God is the sole origin of God’s agape love
God’s love refers to his election and amounts to determinism. In this view, God’s love is purely the result of the immutable, timeless, divine decree and is irresistible to its object(s) while utterly unattainable for the divinely determined reprobate.

However, according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, divine love is volitional but not only volitional. The volitional aspect of divine love does not exclude passibility and is thereby not mutually exclusive to the affective-emotional and evaluative aspects of divine love. Further, divine love is closely associated with, but not identical to, God’s will and election. God’s foreconditional love is the basis of election. It is thus incorrect to conflate God’s love with for humankind. See the discussion of this model in chapter 2.


194 Nygren refers to this as “purely theocentric love, in which all choice on man’s part is excluded.” Agape and Eros, 213. Similarly, Morris comments, “Predestination and love go together.” Testaments of Love, 191. For K. Barth, “God’s love is not merely not conditioned by any reciprocity of love. It is also not conditioned by any worthiness to be loved on the part of the loved.” Church Dogmatics 2/1:278. Cf. John B. Webster’s contention that “God’s holy will is accomplished in love.” It is an act of God’s will “requiring no creaturely element as a cooperating cause.” As such, there is “no possibility that . . . opposition on the part of the creature will somehow constitute a genuine threat to the consecrating will of God.” “The Holiness and Love of God,” SJT 57 (2004): 264, 266.

195 Determinists suppose that the status of the “elect” is unilaterally decreed by God as an irresistible, effectual calling, which is “unstoppable” and “cannot be frustrated.” So Schreiner, Romans, 450–51. Similarly, Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 530; cf. ibid., 531. However, the canonical statements that refer to God’s elect as those who will ultimately be saved should be understood non-deterministically in light of the wider canonical evidence and may be understood, as such, in at least two ways. In either non-deterministic view of election, the statuses of “called” and/or “elect” do not mean that the individuals qua individuals could not be lost. Indeed, if the proper response of the elect were irresistibly determined by God the numerous exhortations to those elect would be superfluous (see Deut 7:11–13; 2 Pet 1:10; cf. 3:14, 17; Eph 4:1; Col 3:12; 2 Thess 1:11 and 2:13–15; Jude 1, 20–21). Rather, both approaches preserve the conditionality of the divine-human love relationship, which is apparent throughout Scripture without doing injury to the individual texts and contexts. For further evidence of such conditionality relative to election

First, corporate election suggests that Scripture is speaking of the groups as groups but not referring specifically to the individuals who (will) make up those groups since inclusion is contingent upon response to the divine invitation. In other words, the reference is simply to a corporate group without reference to which individuals will ultimately be included in that group. The common criticism of this position is that groups are always made up of individuals. Of course, this is true. However, one may refer to a group without thereby assuming which individuals are included in the group. For instance, one might speak of next year’s Indianapolis Colts or next term’s United States Congress. In both cases, some individuals who will make up those groups are not even known by the speaker; the terms refer to a corporate group without identifying the individuals and without implying that the individuals that make up the group necessarily make up that group. See ibid.

Second, many (if not all) of the statements that speak of the “called” and “elect” assume divine foreknowledge such that from the standpoint of inspiration those who will respond are foreknown by God while the place of those finally included remains open to the free decisions of the individuals to accept or reject God’s prevenient grace and foreconditional love. This view is supported by the priority of divine foreknowledge to divine “predestination” as described in Rom 8:28–30 and strongly implied elsewhere (cf. 1 Pet 1:1–2). See Fernando Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (ed. R. Dederen; Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), 113–15. Cf. MacDonald, “The Biblical Doctrine,” in The Grace of God (ed. Pinnock), 226. In this view, God knows they will be “elect” not because they are necessarily such and could not be or do otherwise but because he has infallible knowledge of their future free decisions. Of course, this assumes the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and libertarian free will. Cf. Richard Land’s suggestion of congruent election. “Congruent Election: Understanding Salvation from an ‘Eternal Now’ Perspective,” in Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism (ed. David L. Allen and S. Lemke; Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2010). Compatibilism (including the transcendent-voluntarist model), process theism (including the immanent-experientialist model), and open theism reject this view based on the belief that exhaustive foreknowledge and libertarian free will are incompatible. However, open theism and process theism resolve the supposed incompatibility by denying exhaustive foreknowledge whereas deterministic compatibilists remove “libertarian” free will in favor of “free will” in the sense that the “will” is not externally “compelled” but is nevertheless controlled by the unilaterally efficacious divine will. On the former see Hartshorne, Man’s Vision, 98; William Hasker, God, Time, and Knowledge (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). On the latter see C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 5:282; Millard J. Erickson, What Does God Know and When Does He Know It? (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

However, more than one model of how divine foreknowledge and libertarian freedom might be compatible has been proposed. To take just a couple of examples, Land has utilized Boethius’s view that God is eternally present and posits that election is timeless, taking into account God’s universal experience of all that “will” happen. This he calls “congruent election.” Land, “Congruent Election,” in Whosoever Will (ed. Allen and Lemke). However, this view may be criticized for qualifying (or even denying) the strong language that depicts God as experiencing history in a linear fashion (at least to some degree). See Fernando Canale, A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987). William L. Craig has made a strong case for a view that utilizes middle knowledge (Molinism) to show that divine foreknowledge and libertarian free will are compatible. Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Freedom (New York: Leiden, 1991). It is also possible that God’s knowledge of future free events transcends time in a way that we do not understand such that God’s knowledge is caused by the future free decisions themselves without positing God as a timeless being. This bumps up against the supposed impossibility of retroactive causation.

In either view, those who respond to the divine invitation and are thus “elect” do not thereby merit salvation. Election, like divine love, is conditional and yet unmerited. God’s calling is not according to works (2 Tim 1:9) and God will not revoke the call (Rom 11:29). The recipients of “His calling” are those “who believe” (Eph 1:18–19). See the further discussion of this issue in the section on the foreconditional nature of divine love earlier in this chapter.
election since love and election relate not as interchangeable terms/concepts but within a nexus of cause and effect.

Further, the divine-human love relationship is not purely the result of God’s will but human response is required to establish and maintain the particular, divine-human love relationship. According to Scripture, as seen earlier, human beings possess significant freedom, granted by God, to do otherwise than they do, including the freedom to reject God’s love and forfeit love relationship with him. Indeed, the canonical data suggest that irresistibly determined love is an oxymoron.\textsuperscript{196} While God’s love is bestowed on everyone manifested in (among other things) the universal invitation and drawing of human beings to respond to God’s love in kind (universally relational love), humans are free to refuse God’s love and thus not enjoy love relationship with God (particularly relational love).\textsuperscript{197}


\textsuperscript{197} This distinction between God’s universally relational and particularly relational love in the foreconditional-reciprocal model differs substantially from the determinist conception that God loves all with a “common love” but with regard to salvation loves only those whom he has chosen with “efficacious love.” The nature of this difference will be taken up and described later in this chapter in the section regarding ontological implications. For now, the difference boils down to the fact that “never is the implication given that God intends to accept some and to reject others. The New Testament affirms absolutely that it is God’s will that all men would come to know him.” B. M. Newman and Nida, \textit{A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans}, 166–67. Schrenk adds, “It is certainly not said that from all eternity the world has been divided into the predestined and the reprobate. What is said is that everything depends upon whether one is willing or not to believe in Christ and to obey Him.” \textit{TDNT} 4:191. Cf. Marshall, “Universal Grace,” 57.
Many scholars, from widely differing theological backgrounds, also reject the deterministic perspective on love. Thus, while there is a strong element of volition in the God-human relationship, which is also closely associated with divine love, God’s love is not to be identified with volition nor is divine love in all of its aspects merely a product of the divine will. This free, volitional element of the divine-human love relationship, applied bilaterally, amounts to a rejection of determinism, process theology, and universalism. In all this, according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, the divine-human love relationship is neither unilaterally deterministic nor essential or ontologically necessary but mutually (though not symmetrically) volitional and contingent.

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199 Thus, Carson correctly cautions that “Christian love cannot be reduced to willed altruism.” The Difficult Doctrine, 28. Thomas F. Torrance suggests that God has elected all in Christ but some say no to God. “Universalism or Election,” SJT 2 (1949): 316–18. In this way, God’s logically and ontologically primary decision to create other beings is the necessary (but not sufficient) condition of the divine-human love relationship.

200 That is, if this is taken seriously, both the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models as well as universalism are excluded since in these views the human agent cannot forfeit divine love since it is either the product of a unilateral divine decision or of an essential relation. Conversely, Fergusson suggests that if humans do not have significant freedom it seems there is “no way in which Christian theology can avoid either the Augustinian disjunction of divine love and justice on the one side, or the incipient universalism of K. Barth’s doctrine of universal predestination in Christ on the other. Only a theology that recognizes the freedom finally to rebel against God can avoid the determinism of either double predestination or universalism.” “Will the Love,” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better, 196.
The Evaluative Aspect of God’s Love

The evaluative aspect of divine love addresses the major question: Does God only bestow value or might he also appraise, appreciate, and receive value? The immanent-experientialist model, in direct opposition to the transcendent-voluntarist model and its supposition of divine impassibility, contends that God is the feeler of all feelings. As such, God’s joy and pleasure is bound up with the world due to the ontological relationship between them.\(^{201}\) That is, God always benefits or suffers along with all the joys and sorrows of the world.\(^{202}\) God’s pleasure or displeasure is, in fact, necessarily dependent upon the state of affairs in the world in a way that excludes discriminate evaluation.\(^{203}\)

The canonical model affirms the fact that God’s own life is affected by human beings. God’s joy on the one hand and displeasure on the other are impacted by human events. However, whereas in the immanent-experientialist model God is necessarily bound to creatures since God’s very being includes the world, the foreconditional-reciprocal model suggests (1) God identifies with the interests of others willingly rather than necessarily and (2) God’s pleasure and displeasure are evaluative such that he identifies with the best interests of his creatures.\(^{204}\) That is, as supremely relative, God experiences all value in the world in accordance with God’s perfect adequacy (internal relation) to the feelings of all as universally related. Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 91. Cf. idem, *Man’s Vision*, 23, 135, 164; Daniel Day Williams, “The New Theological Situation,” *ThTo* 24 (1968): 459; Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process: Studies in Metaphysics and Religion* (New York: Hafner, 1971), 156. Paul Fiddes adds, “To love is to be in a relationship where what the loved one does alters one’s own experience.” *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 50.


\(^{203}\) Hartshorne argues, “The idea that God equally and solely experiences bliss in all his relations [by which he means classic theism] is once for all a denial of the religiously essential doctrine that God is displeased by human sin and human misfortune.” *Man’s Vision*, 195. Cf. ibid., 16, 39, 117. In this view, “God needs . . . the intrinsic beauty” of creatures’ lives and “their own true happiness” not in the sense that he would cease to exist (though he does need some other lives) “but because the exact beauty of his own life varies with the amount of beauty in lives generally.” Ibid., 164.

\(^{204}\) The “best” interests of others is to be distinguished from what humans might consider their own interests. God does not identify with evil “interests.” Accordingly, this is to be distinguished in two
God is affected by creatures because he willingly created them; the relation is not therefore essential or necessary to God. Further, God does not merely feel the joy and suffering of others as his own. Rather, God’s pleasure or displeasure is evaluative. That is, God does not identify with the evil interests that humans may value and enjoy, in contrast to Hartshorne’s process panentheism. Thus, while a creature may take joy in evil, God does not take pleasure in their pleasure in evil. God takes pleasure in the good of the world but despises evil.

In this way, the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love suggests that humans may bring God pleasure or displeasure but God’s pleasure is not due to an ontological, essential relationship but takes place because God willingly created humans and has a vested (though non-necessary) interest in creaturely well-being. An increasing number of theologians have also suggested that divine love is possible in some respects, without adopting the process ontology regarding the God-world relationship. Accordingly, the concept that God’s love does include evaluation, and/or that God may delight in and even enjoy his creatures, is also favored by a number of recent theologians.

important ways from Hartshorne’s view that God is internally related to all others such that “promoting their welfare contributes to his own.” Hartshorne, Man’s Vision, 147. Cf. ibid., 151, 163.

See Hartshorne, Man’s Vision, 147. Cf. ibid., 151, 163.

Gary D. Badcock rightly states, “Were it true to say that God is simply indifferent to its goodness or its rebellion, or that his beneficence in relation to the world takes no account of the events that take place in it, then it would not be possible to say of him that he loves the world.” “The Concept of Love: Divine and Human,” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God (ed. K. J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 46. T. Lane adds in this regard that the cliché “God hates the sin but loves the sinner” is thus self-contradictory. “It is incoherent to say that God is displeased with child molestation but feels no displeasure toward child molesters.” “The Wrath of God,” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better, 155.

Many of these have been seen earlier in this dissertation and others will appear interspersed throughout this section.

Moltmann thus states: God is capable of receiving value, or “an increase of his riches and his bliss.” The Trinity, 121. Likewise, T. C. Oden states, “God loves all creatures in the twofold sense that God unapologetically enjoys them for their own sake and desires their answering, enjoying love in response to eternally patient, self-sacrificial love.” The Living God, 121. Importantly, both qualify that this is not out of divine “need,” “lack,” or “deficiency.” Cf. ibid., 121; Moltmann, The Trinity, 45, 168. Cf. Vacek, Love, Human and Divine, 163–71; Catherine Osborne, Eros Unveiled: Plato and the God of Love (Oxford:
The transcendent-voluntarist model, on the other hand, espouses the historically dominant view that God is only the benefactor but never the beneficiary in the divine-human relationship. Ontologically, God is self-sufficient in every respect and, ethically, God sacrifices his own interests (if he can be thought to actually have “interests”) for those of others. Therefore, God cannot actually enjoy, delight in, take pleasure in, or receive value from the disposition and/or action of creatures, including their responsive love. Accordingly, many have viewed God’s love as wholly gratuitous, arbitrary, and beneficent love of the unworthy. As such, this model views love as purely altruistic and outgoing gift love (thematic agape) such that God never


Love is beneficence, “bestowed not upon a worthy object and not for the personal advantage of the Lover but solely for the benefit of the undeserving recipient.” C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:343. Likewise, Spicq contends that love is nevertheless “purely gratuitous” as human neighbor love should be. Agape, 53. Cf. Nygren. Agape and Eros, 77–78, 157; Martin Cyril D’Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), 245; Alan J. Torrance, “Is Love the Essence of God?” in Nothing Greater, Nothing Better (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 130, 132. Similarly, Morris contends that “we do not bring anything valuable to God—in fact, we acquire value only because we are the recipients of his love.” Testaments of Love, 142. Accordingly, “God delights in this people simply because he chooses to do so” such that there is not “something in them that delights him.” Testaments of Love, 93. As such, “the love of God . . . is not a love of the worthy” but “a love for the completely undeserving” and “entirely unworthy.” Ibid., 128, 271, 382. Similarly, C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:342. Snaith speaks of divine love as “wholly disinterested.” The Distinctive Ideas, 137. Kyung Hee Park adds, “God’s love for his people is not based on any qualities of human behavior, but in the personal being of God himself (Deut 7:7).” “Divine Love in Hosea 11” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 36. Cf. W. E. Vine, “Love,” Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 382. Cranfield contends that divine love is “spontaneous” and “not caused by any worth or attractiveness in its object, but rather creates worth in its object. The cause of God’s love for Israel lies not in any qualities or potentialities of Israel but in the personal being of God himself.” Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 132. Even within the canon, the question is raised when Eliphaz, one of Job’s “friends,” contends that humans cannot be useful or valuable to God nor bring him any pleasure (Job 22:2–3).
receives love in any way that benefits him or adds value to his life. In other words, God cannot appreciate or enjoy love from his creatures.

Yet, according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, divine love is evaluative rather than indifferent or disinterested. God himself enjoys, delights in, takes pleasure in, and/or receives value from the disposition and/or action of other agents. On the other hand, God is displeased and may be grieved and vexed at sin and evil. Accordingly, the canonical data contradict the supposition of an ontological restriction on divine evaluation and enjoyment. Divine love is not altogether disinterested, indifferent, arbitrary, ungrounded and/or spontaneous. Thus, the traditional conception that God is ontologically incapable of being affected by externalities such that it is impossible for him to receive value or benefit, what we might call the theo-ontological objection, is overcome by the canonical data of the foreconditional-reciprocal model which present divine love as evaluative. Beyond the theo-ontological objection met above, two other (lesser) bases for the traditional denial that humans may bring value and/or joy to God often appear: the moral and hamartiological objections, respectively.

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211 Cf. C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:343; Norman L. Geisler, Systematic Theology: God, Creation (4 vols.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2002), 2:367. This is in contrast to the fact that the ἀγαπέω word group, like other terms of love in the OT and NT, frequently refers to evaluative love. Thus Warnach speaks of ἀγαπέω in the LXX as “love in the sense of placing a high value upon some person or thing, or of receiving them with favour.” EDNT 2:518. So Gerhard Schneider, “ἀγαπη,” EDNT 1:9. Cf. Robert Joly, Le vocabulaire chrétien de l'amour est-il original: Philein et agapan dans le grec antique (Brussels: Univ de Bruxelles, 1968). See the brief study of the ἀγαπέω word group in the NT chapter for evidence that it is not necessarily descriptive of strictly beneficent, disinterested, altruistic, non-evaluative love toward the unworthy.

212 “‘God is love’ is this: it belongs to the fullness of God’s nature that he cannot be served but must overflow in service to his creation. The very meaning of God is a being who cannot be enriched but always remains the enricher.” Piper, “How Does a Sovereign,” 11. As such, “[God’s] love for us and for his other creatures is completely disinterested.” Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 319. Cf. C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1988), 127; H. Ray Dunning, Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 195, 200–201; Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), 186. In this way: “God loves us on the basis of that likeness of himself that he has placed within us. He therefore in effect loves himself in us. This likeness to him, however, is not our own doing, but is present in us because of his unselfish, giving, nature.” Erickson, Christian Theology, 320.
The moral objection supposes that pure love is strictly self-sacrificial and self-abnegating. In this view, self-interest is viewed as immoral and, thus, love that receives joy from its object(s) is considered to be (implicitly or explicitly) selfish.\textsuperscript{213} However, the Bible recognizes proper self-love and self-interest in contrast to selfishness and self-centeredness. In other words, Scripture recognizes appropriate self-interest that is not to the exclusion of other-interest.\textsuperscript{214} For example, God commands humans to love their neighbor as themselves.\textsuperscript{215} Likewise, consider the golden rule, which is predicated on the assumption of appropriate self-regard though not to the exclusion of other-regard (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31; cf. Phil 2:3–4).\textsuperscript{216} As such, the supposition that purely altruistic love (thematic \textit{agape}) is the only true kind of “Christian” love, excluding other aspects such as attraction, enjoyment, pleasure, and responsive affection, is unwarranted.\textsuperscript{217}

God himself exhibits proper self-interest and self-regard, which is not to the exclusion of the interests of others but voluntarily includes the best interests of his creatures.\textsuperscript{218} That is, in the

\textsuperscript{213} See, for example, Nygren, \textit{Agape and Eros}, 210.

\textsuperscript{214} Here, I use “selfishness” to refer to improper self-interest over and against the proper regard for God and others. While God has proper self-interest he is never selfish. Human beings, on the other hand, are selfish by nature. See Post, \textit{A Theory of Agape}, 17–18.


\textsuperscript{216} Accordingly, at least some kind of self-love is appropriate, contra the notion of “pure love” as wholly altruistic and self-abnegating, exclusive of all self-interest and self-regard. While it may be true that self-love is not commanded as such, it is implicitly approved in its proper place. As Wallis states, “even if the OT does not explicitly demand self-denial and altruism, it advocates the kind of behavior which equates concern for the well-being of one’s neighbor with the assertion of one’s own will.” \textit{TDOT} 1:111.

\textsuperscript{217} Many scholars, both classical and contemporary, have recognized this. See, for example, Post, \textit{A Theory of Agape}, 17–20; C. Osborne, \textit{Eros Unveiled}, 72; Oord, \textit{The Nature}, 13; Augustine, \textit{The Trinity} 15.19.37 (NPNF 3; Albany, Oreg.: New City Press), 423–24; idem, \textit{On the Morals of the Catholic Church} 26.49 (NPNF 4; Albany, Oreg.: New City Press), 92; Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica} (Books for the Ages 3; Albany, Oreg.: Ages Software), 326.

\textsuperscript{218} In contrast to sinful human nature, there is no dichotomy between self-interest and other-interest in the divine disposition and/or actions because there is no conflict between them in the divine will. God’s self-interest and other-interest are in perfect harmony. The problem, in this disordered and evil world, is that human self-interest and other-interest often conflict because of sin and the scarcity of resources. Eventually, there will be no conflicts of interest. The selfishness of a zero-sum game with its attendant conflicts of interest is to be replaced by sympathy and solidarity in Christ and with fellow beings. By identifying so closely with the best interests of others they become one’s own.
foreconditional-reciprocal model, God’s life is intimately affected by the lives of his children because he has made their best interests his own; the joy of others is integral to God’s own joy.\(^{219}\) Importantly, while God has proper self-interest, he is never selfish. The transcendent-voluntarist, however, might argue that any self-interest detracts from the purity of God’s love for others.\(^{220}\) However, one could make the case that if God is impassible, as in the transcendent-voluntarist model, God does not seek his own interests merely because he has none. That is, if nothing can actually add or subtract from the divine happiness and/or the quality of the divine life, there is no real sacrifice to be made. However, the canon depicts God as willingly binding his happiness to that of others and risking the quality of the divine life (but not existence) in allowing other significantly free beings to exist and impact history.\(^{221}\) God himself, then, is the model of proper self-love. Self-sacrificial love is often demanded by the circumstances of this sinful and disordered world.\(^{222}\) However, total and utter

\(^{219}\) As such, God really does take delight in his creatures, not in the sense that he is “a self-gratifying being after all” but rather, “all that God does he does for his pleasure; but since God is wholly good, his doing what pleases him is not capricious, but what is wholly good for those he loves. God’s pleasure is pure love, so what he does ‘for the sake of his good pleasure’ is by that very fact also on behalf of those he loves. After all, it delights God to delight his people.” Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 239–40. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Genesis to Leviticus* (vol. 1 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1994), 947. Indeed, “The fact that the biblical writers speak of God as rejoicing and suffering over the state of creation is not a superficial eliminable feature of their speech. It expresses themes deeply embedded in the biblical vision. God’s love for his world is a rejoicing and suffering love. The picture of God as Stoic sage, ever blissful and nonsuffering, is in deep conflict with the biblical picture.” Wolterstorff, “Suffering Love,” in *Augustine’s Confessions* (ed. Mann), 136.

\(^{220}\) From a vastly different standpoint, the immanent-experientialist model also arrives at this conclusion that “God can make no sacrifices” due to God’s essential relation to all. Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision*, 161.


\(^{222}\) Indeed, it is evident that outgoing love and placing the needs of the other “above” one’s own is virtuous and praiseworthy (cf. 1 Cor 13:5; Phil 2:3–4). Christ’s self-giving and sacrificial love in the incarnation and crucifixion itself exemplified the greatest love (John 15:13). However, it is crucial to recognize that the occasion for this self-sacrifice (as well as all others) is itself predicated on evil and sin. In a perfect world, absent evil and conflict, there is no need for utter self-sacrifice. There will thus come a day when utter self-sacrifice is no longer necessary, when all creaturely interests will be in harmony with God’s will, which itself is directed toward the best interests of all without any conflicts of interest. Accordingly, self-sacrifice cannot be essential to divine love nor does it exhaust love’s meaning. Cf. Post, *A Theory of
self-abnegation is not ideal and is even “self-contradictory.” 223 For example, Christ, who modeled the ultimate self-sacrificial love in laying down his life, is to be exalted as is appropriate to him (cf. Phil 2:9–11). Hence, one who assigns pure altruism to God’s love overlooks an important aspect of God’s nature as the worthy recipient of praise, worship, exaltation, and creaturely love. 224 Moreover, self-sacrifice cannot be the ultimate end of divine interest because it can’t possibly serve as an ultimate end of other-interest. If God were to sacrifice his very existence then no others would exist since all existence is dependent upon God. Thus the suggestion that God is purely altruistic is ontologically self-defeating insofar as altruism suggests the ideal of self-sacrifice and absence of self-interest. Accordingly, God is not selfish or self-serving while, at the same time, God rightly desires and receives glory and exaltation. 225 In all this, divine love is evaluative but is neither selfish nor self-abnegating; though divine love is other-centered and

Agape, 10–12. He argues that “the western tendency to idealize selfless love devoid of even the slightest iota of self-concern is an aberration from the valid ideal of unselfishness in fellowship.” Ibid., 12. This is contrary to the common assertions such as “to say ‘God is love’ is exactly the same as to say, ‘God has in His Son made atonement for the sin of the world.’” James Denney, The Death of Christ (London: Tyndale Press, 1951), 152.

223 Thus Oord correctly notes, “Defining love exclusively in terms of self-sacrifice is not biblical. . . . Biblical authors affirm self-love.” The Nature, 27. Indeed, “as a universal principle, self-sacrifice is self-contradictory. That is, if two persons each acted always self-sacrificially toward one another, neither could act self-sacrificially. Each would insist on holding the door open for the other, and thus neither would enter.” Vacek, Love, Human and Divine, 184. Likewise, “self-less, purely one-way love may be an understandable exaggeration of unselfishness, but its impact is essentially negative in that it undermines the circular flow of giving and receiving in which agape is sustained and supported.” Post, A Theory of Agape, 12. Gene H. Outka agrees, saying, “The feature of self-sacrifice in itself would appear to provide no way of distinguishing between attention to another’s needs and submission to his exploitation and no warrant for resisting the latter.” Agape: An Ethical Analysis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 275.

224 Indeed, though God himself models the ultimate self-sacrificial love when appropriate, he does not view others as better than himself (cf. Phil 2:3). He could not do so and be accurate. Such a prescription for Christians to do so is directed at overcoming natural selfishness, which contributes to the usual conflicts of interest. Further, while God truly is better, all humans have fallen short of God’s glory (Rom 3:23). Significantly, Christ’s role as servant rather than the one being served, while denying immediate self-gratification due to the evil and disordered world, contributed to Christ’s ultimate delight, the salvation of his beloved and the enjoyment of a bilateral love relationship with them.

225 The divine self-interest toward the glory of God is a proper end in itself since God is the appropriate object of worship and exaltation yet also a means to an other-directed end, the revelation of his character as part of the plan of salvation.
often manifest in self-sacrifice, it is neither necessarily nor ideally self-sacrificial. In all this, the dichotomy between self-interest and other-interest is demonstrated to be false.\textsuperscript{226}

The hamartiological objection argues that humans are incapable of generating value or eliciting divine delight due to their inherent total sinfulness. This objection may be raised independently of whether God can receive value or not. It dovetails, however, with the common view that divine love is to be equated with love for the unworthy, that is, altogether gratuitous love.\textsuperscript{227} However, according to Scripture, God’s love is not necessarily love for the unworthy. The Father loves Christ, who is and was worthy of such love as the supremely excellent, valuable, precious, choice, and lovable Son of God.\textsuperscript{228} Thus, while it is true that God’s love for humans is unmerited, it is not true that divine love is, by nature, love for the unworthy.\textsuperscript{229} Further, God’s love for humans is mediated through the truly worthy Son. That is, humans may bring value to God through the prior and ongoing action of God, especially the mediation of Christ. Thus, the hamartiological objection is overcome by the mediation of Christ, which provides both the

\textsuperscript{226} Indeed, the false dichotomy between altruism and egoism is itself the outgrowth of the false thematic \textit{agape} view that is beholden to the false ontological assumption of divine impassibility. It is the further outgrowth of a false dichotomy between altruism and proper self-regard.

\textsuperscript{227} See the description of the transcendent-voluntarist model in this regard above.

\textsuperscript{228} Notably, even Nygren “finds in John the concept of a love that is motivated by the inherent worth of the Son. This at once denies his own definition of agape as a love freely outflowing and unmotivated.” G. Johnston, “Love in the NT,” \textit{IDB} 3:177. Nygren does not allow this to defeat his view by claiming that the Johannine conception of love is deficient. Cf. \textit{Agape and Eros}, 158. Even Morris, who consistently emphasizes the unilateral and unconditional nature of divine love, states that “the fact that it denotes a spontaneous, unmotivated love does not mean that it can be directed only toward the unworthy.” \textit{Testaments of Love}, 138. Cf. Spicq, \textit{Agape}, 53. But, then, what is the meaning of “denotes” and “spontaneous” and “unmotivated”? To be consistent, he must mean that God’s love is sometimes spontaneous and unmotivated. As such, it would be incorrect to assert that God’s love is, by nature, spontaneous and unmotivated, which is the impression that one gets from the broader thrust of his many statements in this regard.

\textsuperscript{229} This is contra the assertion that divine love is “the deep and constant ‘love’ and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects.” “Love,” 382. Vacek correctly points out that “agape is not oriented only to the neediness or incompleteness of others.” \textit{Love, Human and Divine}, 163.
imputed and imparted righteousness as the proper object of divine delight. In the “Beloved” (Christ) Christians are also “beloved,” in the “Elect” Christians are also “elect.”

In light of the evidence, then, none of the three objections to divine evaluative love stand. God can and does receive love and may enjoy, delight in, and garner pleasure from his creatures. His own delight, however, is in bringing genuine pleasure, joy, and delight to those very objects of his love. This evaluative aspect of divine love is supported by and complements the other aspects of divine love. If God’s love were altogether groundless, unconditional, unilateral, and equated with arbitrary election then it could not also be evaluative since God could not enjoy or appreciate the objects of his love nor their love for him in return. Conversely, that God’s love is foreconditional, multilateral, and not arbitrary complements the evaluative nature of God’s love. Moreover, the evaluative and emotional aspects of love dovetail regarding the issue of divine passibility. That is, both of them require that God is actually affected by the actions of the world. For evaluation, God must actually appraise objects. For the emotion described in Scripture, God must be affected by the actions of humans.

The Emotional Aspect of God’s Love

This brings us to the third of five major questions around which the conflict of theological interpretation about divine love in relation to the world revolves: Does God’s love include responsive, passible, affection and/or emotionality such that God is concerned for the

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230 Since nearly all of the canon deals with a post-fall world, nearly all of the canonical information about divine love relates to God’s love for the unworthy as the outworking of this decision to continue to love sinful human beings. However, since such love for the unworthy only takes place within a sinful, disordered world, love for the unworthy cannot itself be essential to divine love. Indeed, God’s love predates the existence of evil (John 17:24). Thus, the form love takes toward unworthy objects is but one exemplification of love but not part of its essence. Accordingly, the operation of this relationship within a post-fall world should not be confused with the ideal divine-human love relation.

231 Further, that God can enjoy human action makes truly meaningful reciprocal love between God and humans possible and complements the foreconditionality of divine love.
world, sympathetically or otherwise?\textsuperscript{232} The immanent-experientialist model views God as utterly passible and emotional as the ultimate subject and object of all the experiences of the world, the universal feeler of all other’s feelings.\textsuperscript{233} Love, then, is identical with sympathy that takes place by way of God’s essential and internal relation to the world.\textsuperscript{234} According to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, however, God’s love is intensely emotive and affective yet also voluntary and evaluative by way of his contingent and external relation to the world. That is, God is not ontologically bound to the world but has willingly entered into a relationship with the world wherein God is affected by the lives of human beings, having attached his own interests to the best interests of all others. God is thus passible, but not passive.\textsuperscript{235} Thus, divine love for his creatures is to be sharply distinguished from the kind of sympathy in process theism that amounts to ontological dependency.\textsuperscript{236}

On the other hand, the transcendent-voluntarist model presupposes the impassibility of God, that is, God cannot be affected by anything external to God; he has no passions.\textsuperscript{237}

\textsuperscript{232} As described earlier, emotion is used in this dissertation to refer to that which manifests a passible, affective response to the state of affairs.


\textsuperscript{234} Indeed, for Hartshorne, “love is joy in the joy (actual or expected) of another, and sorrow in the sorrow of another.” \textit{Man’s Vision}, 116. Cf. ibid., 266; idem, \textit{Reality as Social Process}, 160. Such “sympathy” as “love” is itself Hartshorne’s social conception of love, which is descriptive of reality. \textit{Omnipotence}, 37.

\textsuperscript{235} “God is no robot” but “a personal, living God” who “is incomparably affected by, even pained by, the sinner’s rebellion. Acknowledging the passibility (emotions) of God does not diminish the immutability of his promissory purposes.” K. A. Mathews, \textit{Genesis 1–11:26} (NAC 1A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 344. Cf. Peter H. Davids, \textit{The First Epistle of Peter} (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 188. “Something in the very heart of God is moved by suffering and hurt and pain.” Miller, “The Book of Jeremiah,” in \textit{Isaiah–Ezekiel}, 6:814.

\textsuperscript{236} As has been discussed already in this chapter, divine passibility does not amount to ontological necessity. God is ontically discrete, distinct from the world he has created. God chose to create other beings and consider their interests as his own. As such, there is no internal relation, no ontological necessity that God be committed to his people emotionally or otherwise.

\textsuperscript{237} In C. F. H. Henry’s view, God as omnicausal cannot be acted upon; there is no power that
Consequently, divine love is strictly volitional, to the exclusion of evaluative and passible, emotional aspects. This has been the dominant position in much of Christian theology. However, according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, while God is the omnipotent and self-existent Lord over all, he is nevertheless affected by the disposition, actions, and experiences of his creatures. As such, God is not impassible. Recently, a number of theologians, despite could impact divinity, God’s love is unaffected by spatio-temporal reality since it “presupposes the exclusive voluntary initiative of the sovereign divine being whom no external power can manipulate.” God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:349. Cf. Norman L. Geisler, H. Wayne House, and Max Herrera, The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2001), 171; Bruce A. Ware, “An Evangelical Reexamination of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984).

Cf. C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:341, 346, 349. Recent articulations regarding God’s impassibility have attempted to concurrently maintain divine impassibility and the ability of God to “feel,” often articulated in response to the increasing criticisms of relational theologies such as process and open theism. In such a view, evaluative and emotive aspects are excluded insofar as they assume passibility, that is, insofar as they are descriptive of a divine response to external stimulus. In this way, God may have fond feelings for his creatures but such emotions are themselves purely the result of the unaffected and impassible divine will. For example, Geisler contends that God may have emotional states but “His feelings are not the result of actions imposed upon Him by others.” At the same time he contends that “God cannot be acted upon by anything outside of Himself.” Geisler, House, and Herrera, The Battle for God, 170–71. Similarly, Cooper contends that “God’s pleasure and anger are not passions or emotions caused in him.” That is, “classical theism denies that God’s feelings are the effects of creaturely causes.” Panentheism, 332. In this way, it is specifically disputed by some classical theists that God’s impassibility means that God is uncaring or “utterly devoid of any feelings.” Millard J. Erickson, God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 161. Cf. Morris, Testaments of Love, 276. “If God loves, it is because he chooses to love; if he suffers, it is because he chooses to suffer. God is impassible in the sense that he sustains no ‘passion,’ no emotion, that makes Him vulnerable from the outside, over which he has no control, or which he has not foreseen.” Carson, The Difficult Doctrine, 60. Cf. idem, “How Can We Reconcile the Love and the Transcendent Sovereignty of God?” in God under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents God (ed. D. S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 308, 345; C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:349; Morris, Testaments of Love, 11; Hart, “How Do We Define,” 109; K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 2/1:370. Thus, God cannot be affected and any emotions he may have are not elicited but purely willed, unaffected emotions. In this way, all God’s “emotions” are caused purely by the eternal decree.

Thus, Morris contends that “God’s love is not an emotion conditioned by the kind of people we are.” Testaments of Love, 151. This simultaneously excludes emotionality and evaluation. As such, “passion” does not constitute “Christian love.” Ibid., 276. Such a view dovetails with the supposed supremacy of ἠγάπη (see the discussion in the previous chapter) in which it is supposed to refer “to the will rather than to the emotion.” Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 134. Cf. Stauffer, TDNT 1:38; Schneider, EDNT 1:9. Likewise, of OT love, William G. Cole asserts that “love in the Hebrew . . . was not ephemeral emotion but steadfast concern, involving the will rather than the feelings.” Sex and Love in the Bible (New York: Association Press, 1959), 67. See also Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World (Harper Torchbooks: New York, 1974).

Numerous biblical scholars agree. For instance, they also recognize that God is responsive and
significant variances in their wider theology, have also come to the conclusion that God’s love is emotional and, accordingly, the divine nature is possible. 242


242 As has been seen earlier, divine passion and compassion may be elicited and explicitly correspond to the state of affairs. As such, they not only evidence divine passibility and intense emotion but also evaluation. Contra the view of Philo and others who dismiss divine jealousy and passion as inappropriate to God due to the presupposition of divine impassibility. See Philo, Lectures on St. John 113.60–61 (Yonge 163). Cf. Stumpff, TDNT 2: 877–88.

Beyond the ontological presupposition of divine impassibility, a secondary rationale for
the exclusion of emotionality from not only divine love, but love in general, stems from the
frequent love commands in the Bible. Some argue that emotional love, by definition, could not be
commanded. As such, love must be volitional rather than emotional. Closely associated with
this is the assumption that love, especially in the OT but in some contexts in the NT as well,
might simply be a term that refers to the legal aspects of covenant relationship, a term of purely
volitional commitment manifested primarily in external, legal obedience.

However, the foreconditional-reciprocal model comes to the conclusion that love cannot
be restricted to something like purely legal or external, “covenantal” love. Covenant itself is


dearly the God portrayed in Hosea or in the NT image of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.” “Love in the NT
(1973); Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 32; George H. Tavard, A Way of Love (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), 133–34. Even Carson is adamant that an emotionless God is “profoundly unbiblical and should be
repudiated” though he later argues for a form of impassibility. The Difficult Doctrine, 48. On the other
hand, Carson also defends the modified view of passibility with the contention that “if the love of God is
exclusively portrayed as an inviting, yearning, sinner-seeking, rather lovesick passion, we may strengthen
the hands of Arminians, semi-Pelagians, Pelagians, and those more interested in God’s inner emotional life
than in his justice and glory, but the cost will be massive. . . . Made absolute . . . it steals God’s sovereignty
from him and our security from us.” Ibid., 22. Further, he declares, “A God who is terribly vulnerable to the
pain caused by our rebellion is scarcely a God who is in control or a God who so perfect he does not,
strictly speaking, need us.” Ibid., 60.

Stein thus states, “Emotions can be elicited but not commanded. Actions and the will can be
commanded.” Luke, 206–7. Morris likewise contends, “While it is nonsense to be commanded to generate a
passionate eros, it is not nonsense to be commanded to respond to God’s love.” Thus, for him, “we must
not confuse love with passion or sentimentality.” Morris, Testaments of Love, 187, 189. Similarly, W. D.
Davies and Allison, A Critical, 241; Bamberger, “Fear and Love”; J. W. McKay, “Man’s Love,” 426;

For example, based on ANE parallels, it has been suggested that מָאָס, at least in Deuteronomy,
belongs to technical treaty language as a “covenantal love” that is to be contrasted with affection. So
NIDOTTE 1:285–87; Lohfink, “Hate and Love in Osee 9, 15”; Walker, “‘Love,’” in Current Issues (ed.
Hawthorne), 283–84. In this vein, a distinction is often made between the emotional affection in intimate
personal relationships (family, friendship) as opposed to the merely political “love” of treaty contexts. Cf.
Ackerman, “The Personal,” 440; Thompson, “Israel’s ‘Lovers’”; idem, “Significance of the Verb Love in
the David-Jonathan Narratives in 1 Samuel.” See chapter 4, pages 233–8, for a more detailed discussion
and evaluation of this claim, including arguments as to why it should not be adopted.
predicated on divine love and modeled after affectionate kinship. Accordingly, emotional aspects of love are evident within the very covenantal contexts that some have asserted refer to merely legal, covenant love, devoid of affection. As such, the love that God bestows and calls for (within covenant or without) is emotional but not only emotional. That is, love within the divine-human relationship includes bilateral, voluntary commitment as well as emotion and evaluation.

God loves human beings with the utmost passion and affection. Conversely, love toward God is not to be external obedience without affection toward him but internal obedience grounded in deep-seated affection, devotion, commitment, loyalty, and even passion. Love, then, is not merely emotion but the love God bestows and the love response he seeks are alike emotional yet also volitional and evaluative. In all this, the foreconditional-reciprocal model strongly challenges the impassibility of God proposed by the transcendent-voluntarist model while also departing from the undifferentiated nature of sympathy required by the essential relationship posited by the immanent-experientialist model.

The Foreconditional Aspect of God’s Love

The volitional, evaluative, and emotional natures of divine love all contribute to the view that God’s love involves significant give-and-take. In the discussion of the final two aspects of love, this give-and-take relationality of love is taken up explicitly in response to some of the most pressing and oft-misunderstood issues about divine love. The most pressing issue relates to

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246 Many scholars recognize both emotion and volition in divine love. For example, Rice explains that “love involves profound sensitivity, but it insists that love is a voluntary commitment.” “Process Theism,” in Searching for an Adequate God (ed. Griffin, Cobb, and Pinnock), 185. Oord also argues that both choice and emotion are “always present in an expression of love.” The Nature, 30. Post contends that “an even balance or co-primacy between emotion and reason is the fitting alternative to those who would diminish the importance of either capacity.” Unlimited Love: Altruism, Compassion, and Service (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2003), 67.

247 “Love and behavior motivated by love are not to be separated from emotion, and yet they are not dependent on emotion, but require wise consideration.” Wallis, TDOT 1:110. D. T. Olson comments,
whether divine love is unilateral or bilateral. Bound up with this is the question of whether divine love is necessary or contingent, unconditional or conditional, unmotivated or motivated, ungrounded or grounded, etc.

For both the immanent-experientialist and transcendent-voluntarist models, divine love is unconditional and cannot be forfeited. In the immanent-experientialist model, God’s love is ontologically necessary. God is internally bound to the world and his love is descriptive of that necessary relation. In the transcendent-voluntarist model, on the other hand, God’s love is dependent only upon his unilateral and arbitrary will to love. In this way, it is frequently asserted, and popularly assumed, that divine love is unconditional. Accordingly, in this model divine love is thought to be spontaneous, unmotivated, and ungrounded.

For example, Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 137. Further imprecise usage of the term “unconditional” appears such as when it is stated that “God always takes the initiative in love and his people must respond to this unconditional love.” Park, “Divine Love in Hosea 11,” 38. Cf. Leonard J. Coppes, “רחם,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (ed. R. L. Harris et al.; Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 843. If humans “must respond” then love is not altogether “unconditional.”

Morris contends that God’s love is “spontaneous and unmotivated.” Testaments of Love, 264. Cf. C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:340; ibid., 5:116; Nygren, Agape and Eros, 210; Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 137. Cranfield similarly states, “The ground of God’s love for us is altogether in himself. He loves us, because he is love.” Therefore, divine love is “spontaneous.” “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 135, 132. Likewise, Johnston contends, “The divine love is sovereign, unmotivated save by the necessity to be itself, spontaneous, and redemptive.” IDB 3:169. Notably, Morris qualifies that God’s “spontaneous and unmotivated” love “does not mean that he may not also respond to the love men show to his Son.” Morris, Testaments of Love, 264. However, if taken seriously this would mean that divine love is not altogether “spontaneous” or “unmotivated” but evaluative and responsive. On the other hand, Post questions “the assumption that God’s love is ‘unmotivated, unconditional, uncaused, and uncalculating.’” A Theory of Agape, 24.
unilaterally constant; the object of God’s love can do nothing to inhibit, decrease, or forfeit such love since it is wholly independent of evaluation of its object(s). This conception dovetails with the assumptions that have already been challenged in this chapter, that divine love is purely volitional, non-evaluative, and unaffected by external agency.

However, the foreconditional-reciprocal model contends that God’s love is foreconditional rather than strictly unconditional. That is, God’s love is offered prior to any conditions but not exclusive to conditions. Thus, God’s foreconditional love affirms that:

1. Divine love is prior to any human initiative or response and holds sole primacy regarding the divine-human love relationship.

2. God voluntarily bestows his love prior to and independent of human desert or merit.


252 The purported unconditionality of love is conceptually bound up with the assertion that divine love is arbitrary, unilaterally willed, election love.

253 Oord states in this regard, “Creatures could not love if our relational God were not the Lover who initially empowers, inspires, and beckons them.” The Nature, 21. However, “God lovingly acts first in each moment to provide agency, freedom, values, and relationship.” Ibid., 129. However, it should be noted that his view differs from the one stated in this section since his “Essential Kenosis theology claims Prevenient grace is necessary grace” stemming from “God’s eternal nature” while the canonical evidence suggests that divine love is volitional, not necessary. See ibid., 129.

254 Some might use the term “prevenient” in association with God’s prior love and action. For example, T. C. Oden presents the typical Arminian view of prevenient grace, which refers to “the grace that begins to enable one to choose further to cooperate with saving grace. By offering the will the restored capacity to respond to grace, the person then may freely and increasingly become an active, willing participant in receiving the conditions for justification.” John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 243. Cf. Roger E. Olson, Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2006), 163–64.
3. God’s love expects and ultimately requires an appropriate human response, even if that response is itself imperfect.

Though God’s subjective love is unconditional, God’s objective love is conditional and may be forfeited.\textsuperscript{255} Thus, while God’s love for humans is surpassingly enduring, steadfast, and reliable, it is not thereby altogether constant or unconditional. Accordingly, divine love toward humans is contingent rather than necessary and God is not ontologically bound to his creatures in contrast to the immanent-experientialist model. Further, as conditional upon human response in many respects, God’s love is not strictly unmotivated, spontaneous, disinterested, indifferent, or unconditional. Accordingly, the conditionality of God’s love, especially its potential forfeiture, rejects both the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models as well as many other perspectives including that of universalism\textsuperscript{256} and others.\textsuperscript{257} On the other hand, in accord

\textsuperscript{255} See the discussion of the subjectivity and objectivity of God’s love earlier in this chapter.


\textsuperscript{257} Here, the horns of the compatibilist dilemma are apparent. For example, Schreiner, who takes a determinist position, nevertheless states, “Those who trust in Christ remain in the faith because of the preserving work of God the Father. Nevertheless, the promise that God will keep his own does not nullify the responsibility of believers to persevere in the faith. God keeps his own, and yet believers must keep themselves in God’s love. . . . On the one hand, believers only avoid apostasy because of the grace of God. On the other hand, the grace of God does not cancel out the need for believers to exert all their energy to remain in God’s love.” 1, 2 Peter, Jude (NAC 37; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 483–84. Yet, he contends that “those upon whom God set his covenantal love before creating the world are those he predestined to share the eschatological image of the Son” his “chosen . . . will surely persevere and attain to glorification.” Idem, \textit{Romans}, 466. However, if Schreiner is correct, why does God not effectively draw all to him? If God can determine human beings to freely do whatever he wills, why not will that all are actually saved? See Jerry L. Walls, “Why No Classical Theist, Let Alone Orthodox Christian, Should Ever Be a Compatibilist,” \textit{Philosophia Christi} 13 (2011): 75–104. See also the compelling arguments of Plantinga against compatibilism and in favor of significant freedom of creaturely agents. Cf. Plantinga, \textit{God, Freedom, and Evil}; idem, \textit{The Nature of Necessity} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). Similarly, Morris, who stresses the groundlessness, unconditionality, and unilateral constancy of divine love makes the statement that “the Lord’s beloved must live as the beloved of the Lord. If they do not, they cut
with the overwhelming canonical data, some scholars correctly acknowledge the conditionality of 
divine love.  

Furthermore, as conditional, divine love is not identical with unilateral, divine 
beneficence. Divine love is not to be conflated with beneficence though the latter is an aspect and 
outgrowth of the former. Divine blessings are predicated on love though not unilaterally 
since divine love is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of divine blessing.

themselves off from the blessing that God’s love is always offering.” Testaments of Love, 31. Cf. C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:308. However, this statement of Morris undercuts his emphatic position elsewhere that divine love is unconditional.

On the other hand, in criticizing all those who suggest that God’s love is voluntary rather than essential, Oord contends that God’s love is “unconditional” such that “God loves us no matter what we do” since “unconditional love refers to God’s eternal nature as necessarily including love for creatures. God essentially loves creation, because God’s essential nature includes love for the world. If God’s nature did not include love for creation, Christian appeals to God’s unconditional love would be baseless.” The Nature, 133. Cf. Paul R. Sponheim, Love’s Availing Power: Imaging God, Imagining the World (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011). He further contends that such a view, that God cannot not love us, provides assurance that is “unavailable to those who think God could stop loving us.” Oord, The Nature, 132. However, it is not true that God’s love must be either essential or “unconditional” to provide such assurance. All that is required is the recognition that God never arbitrarily decides to remove his love from anyone, as is affirmed in this foreconditional-reciprocal model. Accordingly, one need not worry that God will remove his love since the only way divine love will be removed is as a consequence of one’s final rejection of God. As such, divine love is conditional but not capricious.


259 This is contra the repeated assertion that divine love is mere beneficence, that is, it is altogether gratuitous, “disinterested generous love.” For instance, consider Spicq’s claim that divine ἀγάπη is identical to “charity” (think caritas) such that God’s love is always giving love and amounts to “disinterested generous love.” “ἀγάπη,” TLNT 1:8, 13. This is in keeping with his view that ἀγάπη love takes place within a benefactor-benefactee relationship where the superior’s ἀγάπη is gift love and the inferior’s love is “first of all consent, welcome, acceptance” and “gratitude . . . the love inspired in turn by generous love.” TLNT 1:13. Thus, he refers to it as “the voluntary, purely gratuitous love which is authentic charity.” Idem, Agape, 1:85. Nygren and others who follow his view agree with the first part, that divine love is always gratuitous and disinterested, but contend that real human love toward God is impossible. Love from humans to God is really God’s own love flowing through humans to himself. See the historical survey of divine love on this view.

260 Love is sometimes almost conflated with grace to the extent that it is seen as election love. Thus, according to Morris, the σπέρμα “words appear to signify love freely given, love given when there is no sense of obligation. When used to refer to God they imply his grace.” Testaments of Love, 12. Cf. Grogan, “A Biblical Theology,” in Nothing Greater (ed. Vanhoozer), 53. In fact C. F. H. Henry goes so far as to
Yet, though God’s love is conditional in many respects, it is not thereby merited. Some, however, have incorrectly conflated conditionality with merit. Yet, unmerited is not the same as unconditional or disinterested. Something may be conditional yet unmerited; contingent upon response but not thereby earned, or deserved, when it is received. Though divine love is say, “only where the love of God is discerned in terms of grace—in terms of a divinely provided redemption bestowed as unmerited divine favor—that the love of God is conceived aright; in every other religious or philosophical tradition, the divine love is misconstrued.” Notes on the Doctrine of God, 108. Cf. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine, 185; Donald G. Bloesch, God, the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 148.

261 Brueggemann comments, “Christianity has for so long represented itself as a religion of free grace, that we flinch from the thought that God’s gifts are conditional. Mosaic faith, however, is realistically grounded in a comprehensive ‘if’ (v. 22; cf. 19:5).” “The Book of Exodus,” in Genesis to Leviticus, 1:878. Merrill on the other hand presupposes a compatibilistic perspective and contends for “the absence of any conditionality” with regard to Israel’s repentance claiming that God will himself effect their repentance. See Deuteronomy, 128. But this begs the question, if God unilaterally effects repentance in his people, why does he not do so from the very beginning? The canon contends God is actually waiting on the people, and through trials wooing them back to the realization of their need for him (cf. Isa 30:15, 18; Matt 23:37).

262 For example, Snaith comments, “Jehovah’s love for Israel was unconditioned by anything in Israel that was good. It was wholly unmerited. It was not in the least degree because of anything in Israel that was good, or beautiful, or desirable. . . . Such is the story of God’s unconditioned love.” The Distinctive Ideas, 137. Cf. Morris, Testaments of Love, 148; Lincoln, Ephesians, 100.

263 Accordingly, the term ἀγάπη is “often used by biblical writers to mean something other than unmotivated or spontaneous love.” Oord, “Matching Theology,” 139. See the word study of the ἀγαπάω word group in the NT chapter.

264 For example, someone who wins a sweepstakes who must fulfill certain minor conditions to actually receive the prize did not thereby earn the prize. The lottery winner must show the ticket but they did not thereby earn the money, though they have a rightful claim to it. Similarly, the elect are those who have accepted God’s invitation, responded to his prevenient love with corresponding love (itself only possible through divine initiative and Christ’s mediation) and therefore have a rightful claim to eternal life, not one that is merited or deserved but one that is ultimately predicated on the free grace and love of God. Thus, it is apparent throughout Hosea that God’s love for his people is unmerited and surpassingly enduring. Yet, it is also evident that divine love is by no means indifferent (he is grieved and deeply concerned for his beloved) nor unconditional as he clearly expects, and ultimately requires appropriate response (cf. Hos 9:15). What some interpreters deem “unconditional” may thus more accurately be referred to as “unmerited” or “undeserved” (Deut 7:7; 9:4–5). Since divine love is a gift, creatures have no claim upon it. Indeed, humans need not even exist but for the will of God to create and sustain them. In this way, divine love is never deserved or merited (though it may be warranted). God loves undeserving humans not because humans are worthy but because of his own volition, mercy, and grace (see Deut 7:7–8; Hos 3:1; Luke 6:35; Rom 5:8; Titus 3:4–5; 1 John 3:16; cf. Deut 9:4–5). However, as has been seen, divine love qua divine love is not necessarily love for the unworthy. Moreover, in the eschaton, human beings who have responded to God’s love will become (by divine action) perfectly loveable. At that time, they will “warrant” divine love. That is, they will be proper objects of love as loveable. However, even then humans still will not merit or deserve, but simply warrant, God’s love.
unmerited, however, this does not rule out the fact that God can and does reward appropriate (albeit imperfect) human response toward him.\textsuperscript{265} Evaluation does not rule out divine grace or vice versa; God is gracious and, at the same time, not arbitrary. As such, the notion of unmerited love does not mean that love ultimately nullifies conditions, evaluative judgment, just deserts, or reciprocity.

In all this, divine love cannot be altogether unmotivated, ungrounded, spontaneous, disinterested, or unconditional. God’s love is initiatory, prior to any human action, love, merit, or worthwhile at the same time God implements conditions for the reception and continuance of that love. Such love is foreconditional, yet unmerited. Further, this foreconditional aspect of God’s love supports and is bound up with the aspects already discussed and points forward to the multilaterally relational aspect of love. The bilateral and volitional aspect of divine love is a necessary supposition of conditionality while the evaluative aspect by its very nature assumes that divine love is (at least in some ways) contingent and conditional upon actual states of affairs. In all this, God’s love must be responsive and thus assumes divine passibility. Since divine love is actually evaluative, passible, and conditional, corresponding to and being affected by its object(s) it must not be unilaterally constant but contingent upon its object(s). With this in mind we now turn to the final aspect of divine love, multilateral relationality.

The Multilaterally Relational Aspect of God’s Love

In this last rubric we return even more explicitly to the primary query: Is the God-world relationship unilateral or does it include some degree of reciprocality? In the immanent-experientialist model, love describes the essential relation between God and the world. All are

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{265} Bock sees divine reward as “God’s acknowledgment that he has seen this meritorious love and the faithfulness it reflects,” though he does not mean that it merits salvation. Darrell L. Bock, \textit{Luke 1:1–9:50} (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1994), 603. I am more comfortable in ascribing language of “warrant” rather than “merit” to such instances since even such reward is gracious since God is under no obligation, moral or otherwise, to reward human beings who, overall, have fallen far short of the divine ideal. As such, no one deserves this “reward.” Even if human action were somehow “meritorious” it would}
internally related to God and are part of God’s very nature. Therefore, divine love is universal; there is no object outside of God’s love. In fact, the divine-human love relationship is one part of the necessarily reciprocal relationality that makes up reality itself. In this way, since God is essentially related to all, divine love is universal and applicable to all in an undifferentiated manner within a sympathetic, indeterministic relationship. As such, the immanent-experientialist model indiscriminately universalizes divine love. The foreconditional-reciprocal model, however, contends that while it is universal in some ways, God’s love is multilaterally relational in a way that does differentiate between its objects. That is, God universally seeks, but does not need, a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately. God’s love, then, does not reach all of its objects equally but is evaluatively and conditionally responsive to the actual dispositions and/or actions of human beings. The foreconditional-reciprocal model, then, stands in direct contrast with the


266 Indeed, the whole being of God, the entire divine ontology, is summed up in the term “love,” which “defined as social awareness, taken literally, is God.” Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity, 36.

267 Hartshorne is adamant that God’s love is universal and rejects the exclusive nature of divine love professed in classic theism. “God is held to love all, not just a few; always; not just at times; in all their being, not with neglect of this or that aspect; and his influence in the universal society will be paramount and the basis of its integrity.” Reality as Social Process, 135. However, Hartshorne’s universal love appears to be to the detriment of love for the individual, not in the sense that love for each individual is excluded but such that the number of the objects of divine love means that a given object of divine love is not of much importance. Hartshorne writes, “Consider now the idea that a loving God would not establish natural laws that make eventually dying a certainty for animals such as we are. God loves us, this I believe. But as what does God love us? I answer, God loves us as what we are, a certain very distinctive species of mortal animal, finite spatially and in careers. We are each divinely loved as rendered individual and definite by this finitude.” Omnipotence, 36. Cf. idem, Man’s Vision, 192–93. In this way, the immanent-experientialist model indiscriminately universalizes the divine love in direct contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model, which limits divine love to those whom God sovereignly elects to bestow favor upon.

268 Despite the magnitude of his desire for loving relationship, God has no need of a human response toward his love. Intra-trinitarian love pre-exists, and would remain without divine-human love (cf. John 17:24). That God is love “is true quite independently of our being there to be loved. God is eternally love prior to, and independently of, his love for us.” Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 135.

269 The concept of insider and outsider love, divine-friendship, familial imagery, and the status as “elect” and “beloved” and to a certain extent “called” demonstrates unequivocally the fact that God’s love
undifferentiated universal love of the immanent-experientialist model by distinguishing between God’s universally relational and particularly relational love, neither of which is constant and/or unconditional.

The foreconditional-reciprocal model not only contrasts with the immanent-experientialist model but also stands in contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model’s conception of God’s love unto salvation as arbitrarily and unilaterally restricted to some. In the transcendent-voluntarist model, God’s love is universal only in the sense of “common love” but love unto salvation is reserved for those who are unilaterally elected by God; the rest are damned. While this correctly recognizes that God does not love all equally, in contrast to the immanent-experientialist model’s undifferentiated divine love, it incorrectly contends that God does not love all equally as the result of only his timeless and unilateral divine decree such that those whom God loves fully are chosen arbitrarily. As such, love unto salvation is granted only does not reach all objects equally. Thus, God clearly loves all with a kind of “common” or “universal” love. T. C. Oden thus correctly states, “All things are loved by God, but all things are not loved in the same way by God, since there are degrees of capacity, receptivity, and willingness among varied creatures to receive God’s love.” The Living God, 118. Likewise, Mounce adds, “God loves the entire human race (John 3:16), but those who respond to him in faith are loved in a special way.” Romans, 64. So, Leon Morris, The Gospel according to John (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 630. Cf. Oord, The Nature, 121.

For example, Packer believes that particular love reaches those whom God has sovereignly elected to love while universal love corresponds to God’s common grace. “The Love of God,” in Still Sovereign (ed. Schreiner and Ware), 283. Thus God “loves all in some ways” and he loves “some in all ways.” Ibid. Similarly, see C. F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, 6:310, 345: Piper, “How Does a Sovereign,” 10. Cf. the debate between Hunt and White on this issue in Dave Hunt and James R. White, Debating Calvinism (Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), 255–80. In this vein, Morris can adopt double predestination and at the same time state without contradiction: “God being the God that he is, his love is for all he has made.” Testaments of Love, 80. Compare Calvin’s view that “God loves men in a secret way, before they are called, if they are among the elect.” John Calvin, John (Albany, Oreg.: Ages Software, 1998), 16:27.

Determinists generally contend that God is just in doing so since all are sinners and rightly deserve punishment. That God is gracious to some who are undeserving should be praised rather than questioned. However, Davis objects by way of a striking analogy: “Suppose I discover that my two sons are both equally guilty of some wrong—say they both trampled some of my wife’s beloved roses in our backyard. And suppose I say to one of them: ‘You are guilty and your punishment is that you will be confined to your room.’ And suppose I say to the other one: ‘You are equally guilty, but as a gift of love, I’m going to let you go without punishment.’ Surely it is obvious on the face of it that I have been unfair.” Stephen T. Davis, “Universalism, Hell, and the Fate of the Ignorant,” Modern Theology 6 (1990): 190. Cf.
to those whom God unilaterally and irresistibly elects and all others are damned and could not be otherwise.\textsuperscript{272}

The foreconditional-reciprocal model, on the contrary, contends that God seeks, enters into, and maintains reciprocally responsive love relationships with human beings.\textsuperscript{273} In doing so, God’s universally relational love, which is bestowed on everyone foreconditionally, prompts God’s actions toward drawing humans into a voluntary and reciprocal relationship of love (God’s particularly relational love).\textsuperscript{274} Thus, God truly loves everyone and in such a way that he works toward saving all and enjoying an everlasting, reciprocal love relationship with each one of them.\textsuperscript{275} The reason why not all enjoy such a relationship is not due to any decision or lack of action on God’s part but the result of the human’s decision to reject God’s loving overtures.\textsuperscript{276}


\textsuperscript{272} There is nothing the reprobate could have decided or done that could have led to their inclusion as objects of God’s salvific love. J. L. Walls objects, “A being who determines (manipulates) another being to perform evil actions is himself evil. It is even more perverse if a being determines a being to perform evil actions and then holds him accountable, and punishes him for those actions.” “Why No Classical Theist,” 88. This echoes Flew’s contention: “Certainly it would be monstrous to suggest that anyone, however truly responsible in the eyes of men, could fairly be called to account and punished by the God who had rigged his every move.” Antony Flew, “Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom,” in New Essays in Philosophical Theology (ed. A. Flew and A. C. MacIntyre; New York: Macmillan, 1964), 163.


\textsuperscript{274} On the other hand, one is left to wonder why God “loves” the reprobate with a “common love” in the deterministic conception. As J. L. Walls puts it, “temporal blessings cannot begin to underwrite a sober claim of divine love for persons who are determined to damnation by God’s unconditional choice.” “Why No Classical Theist,” 98. He adds that to say that God loves the arbitrarily non-elect is to use “the concept of love in a deeply idiosyncratic sense.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{275} The universality of God’s love is recognized by many scholars, though the particular understanding of such love varies. For Dunning, divine love as a “manifestation” of the divine nature “is universal rather than selective,” God loves “all without discrimination. None is excluded.” Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 196–97. Cf. J. L. Walls and Dongell, Why I Am Not a Calvinist., 50–55; Oord, The Nature,
This difference bears out further with regard to the question of whether humans actually reciprocate God’s love. While in the foreconditional-reciprocal model the divine-human love relationship is contingent upon the voluntary human reciprocation of God’s love, the transcendent-voluntarist model sees divine love as unilateral such that God gives, but does not actually receive, love.\textsuperscript{277} In that view, human “love” toward God is nothing more than God’s own love flowing back to him as the result of divine determinism. This complements the suggestion of Luther that human love toward God is actually divine love that flows through the human “like a vessel or tube through which the stream of the divine blessings must flow without intermission to other people.”\textsuperscript{278} As such, human love toward God is solely the result of God’s unilaterally

\textsuperscript{276} J. L. Walls puts it well in stating, “Libertarians can affirm the love of God for all persons without being disingenuous, even if some persons are damned. For God extends his love to such persons in such a way that they are truly enabled to respond. Indeed, it is my view that God gives all persons ‘optimal grace,’ which means they have every opportunity to accept the gospel and be saved. Despite this, some may resist grace decisively and be lost.” “Why No Classical Theist,” 98. See also the fascinating essay by Floyd wherein he tries to make sense of Aquinas’s claim that God loves some more than others. He comes to the conclusion that “while God’s love is intensely felt for all, not everyone will reciprocate it and, as a result, preclude themselves from enjoying the goods that would otherwise be available to them . . . . Even amongst people I love, I cannot maintain fellowship with them if they are unwilling to return my affection or behave in ways that promote a common life.” “Preferential Divine Love,” 371.

\textsuperscript{277} In this view, love is superfluous to God. It is not only not needed but neither is it desired or valued. See C. F. H. Henry, \textit{God, Revelation, and Authority}, 6:62.

\textsuperscript{278} Martin Luther, WA 10.1.1, quoted in Nygren, \textit{Agape and Eros}, 735. Marshall slips toward this when he suggests that humans who have received divine love “have no choice as to their response” and “cannot do anything else but show love to one another.” \textit{The Epistles of John} (Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Accordingly, all true love originates unilaterally with God such that love toward God is, in actuality, God’s love for himself effected irresistibly through others. Therefore, human responsive love cannot be a condition with an uncertain outcome. Such a conception fits with the erroneous suppositions already discussed in this chapter including the view that divine love is unilaterally efficacious, unconditional, spontaneous, grounded, etc.

Accordingly, it is often supposed that humans cannot actually reciprocate God’s love. This may take the form of denying that human love can truly be so-called agape love. In other words, it is supposed, humans are incapable of “true” love. More basically, a deterministic metaphysics rules out reciprocal love toward God not by denying the reality of love toward God itself but by defining such love as merely the result of the unilateral, divine decree. The foreconditional-reciprocal model, however, recognizes that human love toward God is not depicted in Scripture as passive but as the appropriate response that God’s prior action elicits and enables, but does not determine. Indeed, Scripture consistently presents humans as voluntarily

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279 Thus, Nygren contends that a human loves God “because God’s unmotivated love has overwhelmed him and taken control of him, so that he cannot do other than love God. Therein profound significance of the idea of predestination: man has not selected God, but God has elected man.” Agape and Eros, 214. So, also, Morris, Testaments of Love, 191. Augustine posits human love as the unilateral work of God himself such that “He Himself loved that which He had made.” Lectures on St. John 7.102.5 (NPNF3 7; Albany, Oreg.: Ages Software), 391. Similarly, Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996); John 16:23–27. Cf. Els, NIDOTTE 1: 283; Cranfield, “Love,” A Theological Word Book (ed. A. Richardson), 133; K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 1/2: 410.

280 Although it is clear that human love toward God is present, especially in the Psalms, a number of scholars have marginalized human love toward God by sometimes suggesting that all or nearly all of the instances are merely the result of the influence of the so-called Deuteronomic tradition. Cf. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas, 133; Els, NIDOTTE 1:279, 283–84. Dovetailing with this is the all-too-common rejection of human love toward God, which does not hold up to scrutiny. Both of these appear to stem, at least for some scholars, from the theological supposition that humans cannot benefit God. See, for example, Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “חסד,” TDOT (ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringren; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 63. See chapter 4, pages 354–75, for a further discussion of these issues. Even Hartshorne, from a vastly different ontology, suggests that humans “do not ‘love’ literally, but with qualifications, and metaphorically.” The Divine Relativity, 36.

281 Johnston thus states correctly that if Nygren is right that human love is merely “through the invasion of the Holy Spirit, God’s free, dynamic love flows from the believer toward the neighbor. It is not
reciprocating God’s love. Hence, God is not the only agent of true or proper love, and it is manifestly false that human beings cannot reciprocate divine love. A number of theologians really the believer’s at all! This is to evacuate Christian love of any value, and it is to be rejected for the same reasons that one must reject the notion that faith is a moment of passivity.” IDB 3:173.

282 See, for instance, Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; cf. Eph 6:24; Jas 1:12; 2:5. These passages are each discussed in chapter 5.

283 Indeed, contra Nygren and others, “agape can ascend from man to God.” Spicq, Agape, 105. So Warnach, EDNT 2:529. Nevertheless, the determinist contends that love for God is the efficacious consequence of God’s unilateral election. For the idea that God is solely responsible for his elect’s love toward him see Schreiner, Romans, 450–51; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 530; cf. ibid., 531; Judith M. Gundry Volf, Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling Away (WUNT 37; Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1990), 59–60. Cf. Peter von der Osten-Sacken, Römer 8 als Beispiel paulinischer Soteriologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1975), 280. Contra Herman N. Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 350. However, the canonical evidence suggests otherwise. First, the frequent exhortations of humans to love strongly suggest that humans are free to do otherwise. Second, the reward(s) attached to love for God strongly implies the real contingency and freedom of human love toward God. Third, the canonical evidence does not accord with a thorough-going determinism. On the contrary, a determinist metaphysic has been consistently excluded by what has been seen with regard to divine love not only in this section but also throughout this and the previous two chapters. In all this, human love toward God as described in Scripture cannot be merely the result of God’s will. Indeed, the many exhortations of humans to love God alone, if taken seriously, assume that humans are free to respond to or reject God’s love and that such responses are not unilaterally determined by God. See the section on the volitional nature of divine love earlier in this chapter as well as the two canonical chapters for arguments and evidence in this regard.

Further, as seen earlier in this chapter, Scripture does not present human love toward God as an inferior kind of love over and against divine love but as the love that corresponds to, and reciprocates, God’s love. Indeed, the canon depicts strong correspondence between divine and human love (see the earlier discussion of the multilaterally relational aspect of divine love). The canonical evidence, then, in no way supports an absolute dichotomy between human and divine love. Thus, Phipps correctly comments that “the Greek Bible does not support the common assumption that agape should be defined in a way that stands in contrast to ordinary human love.” “The Sensuousness of Agape,” 371. Likewise, Carson adds a very important qualifier saying that “doubtless God’s love is immeasurably richer than ours, in ways still to be explored, but they belong to the same genus, or the parallelisms could not be drawn.” The Difficult Doctrine, 48. To be sure, a difference in quality is implied simply by nature of the subjects of such love but the difference is not with regard to the terminology or description of the love itself. That is, God’s love is perfect just as he is perfect while human love is imperfect as humans are imperfect. However, this is no way removes the reality of human love. As seen earlier, while it is true that fallen, human beings are incapable of bringing any value to God by themselves, such as truly loving him, God’s prior, loving action enables a love response that grows progressively greater as one draws closer in intimate relationship with God. In the meantime, divine mediation makes up for the deficiency of human love but accepts human intentionality as pleasing through Christ. Mediation is thus a necessary condition of the divine-human love relationship. All humans who enter into this relationship do so through Christ (John 14:6). Accordingly, human love toward God is not meritorious but is contingent and conditional upon appropriate human response to God’s prevenient grace and foreconditional love (cf. Jer 31:3; John 12:32; 1 Tim 2:4–6; Titus 2:11; 1 John 4:19). In this way, through God’s prior action and mediation, humans can and do truly reciprocate divine love. The burden of proof, then, is on those who say human love is an inferior kind of love that is not fit to be called Christian love at all.

In all this, to say that humans can love does not therefore imply that they can do so without Christ, or in their own power. The mechanism of human love toward God is beyond the scope of this study. For
likewise recognize that free, responsive, human love toward God is necessary to the maintenance
of the divine-human love relationship. Thus, while it is undoubtedly true that God’s love is the
prior and necessary condition of human love in return, it is not itself the sufficient condition of
human love toward God. Humans must choose to respond (cf. Matt 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke
10:27). Those who do not love God remain “outsiders,” not privy to the intimate, particular
divine-human love relationship that God intends for them (John 3:19; 8:42).

In all this, God desires a reciprocal love relationship of give-and-take with his creatures.
He initiates the possibility of such a relationship through his universal offer of foreconditional
love, which enables and calls for a reciprocal response of love. With those who respond to this
loving overture, God enters into particular and intimate love relationship, which amounts to a
multilateral divine-human love relationship from God to humans and vice versa and humans to
one another, themselves modeled after the intra-trinitarian love relationship. This multilaterally
relational aspect of divine love assumes each of the four aspects that have been discussed
previously.

our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize that God’s prevenient action and mediation are necessary but not
sufficient for human love toward God. “Human love of God is, then, the result of his initiative, his
prevenient call to such love.” Further, “Behind the love that justified human beings have for God is God’s
loving call and prior choice of them, which far surpasses human love in significance.” Fitzmyer, Romans,
524.

284 T. C. Oden thus comments, “God’s love for humanity, like all love, is reciprocal. God prizes
the world, and values especially human creatures, who have the freedom and imagination to respond to
God and to share with God consciousness and compassion.” The Living God, 121. Though he points out
that love might not be reciprocated. Ibid., 120. Likewise, Brümmer contends that “love must by its very
nature be a relationship of free mutual give-and-take, otherwise it cannot be love at all.” The Model of
Love, 161. In his view, love always “entails a desire for reciprocation” though it may be “unrequited.” Ibid.,
155. Post also critiques such a view stating that one-directional love is “essentially negative in that it
undermines the circular flow of giving and receiving in which agape is sustained and supported.” A Theory
Burnaby, Amor Dei, a Study of the Religion of St. Augustine: The Hulsean Lectures for 1938 (London:

285 As T. C. Oden puts it, “God loves all creatures in the twofold sense that God unapologetically
enjoys them for their own sake and desires their answering, enjoying love in response to eternally patient,
self-sacrificial love.” The Living God, 121.
Conclusion

This foreconditional-reciprocal model agrees with the transcendent-voluntarist model that divine love includes a crucial volitional element such that God voluntarily bestows his love on creatures and, in contrast to the immanent-experientialist model, God is not engaged in a relationship with creatures that is essential to his being. On the other hand, the foreconditional-reciprocal model agrees with the immanent-experientialist model, in contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model, that divine love in relation to the world assumes divine experience of the world that profoundly affects God (passibility) as God enjoys a reciprocal love relationship with creatures.

However, whereas divine volition excludes passibility in the transcendent-voluntarist model and divine sympathetic passibility excludes divine volition from love in the immanent-experientialist model, the foreconditional-reciprocal model posits that the volitional and emotional aspects of God’s love complement, rather than exclude, one another. God desires and voluntarily works toward a reciprocal relationship with all humans. This is in contrast to both the transcendent voluntarist model, wherein God irresistibly elects only some humans as the recipients of his salvific love, and the immanent experientialist model, where God’s love relationship to the world is indiscriminately universal and necessary to his being. God’s love is also affected by the choices and experiences of human beings, in keeping with the immanent-experientialist model but in contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model. However, in contrast to both models, God’s experience of the world is evaluative such that God delights in those who respond positively to his love while those who reject God’s love finally forfeit their relationship with God.

In this way, the evaluative aspect of divine love complements and bridges the volitional and emotional aspects of divine love while pointing toward a further aspect that is overlooked by both models, the foreconditionality of divine love. Whereas both models assume that divine love is unconditional, the transcendent-voluntarist model due to the priority of the divine will and the
immanent-experientialist model due to the necessary and essential relationship between God and the world, the foreconditional-reciprocal model recognizes that God bestows love prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. Those who respond positively to God’s love enjoy an everlasting reciprocal love relationship with him, grounded in bilateral significant freedom, within the multilateral circle of divine love.

**Potential Implications for a Canonical Theo-Ontology**

The issues addressed by this canonically derived foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love are themselves bound up with answers to ontological issues relating to: (1) the sovereignty of divine will, especially as it relates to the issue of determinism or indeterminism, (2) the extent of the use of divine power (coercion/persuasion/other), (3) the acceptance, rejection, or qualification of immutability and impassibility, and (4) the nature of divine perfection and/or self-sufficiency (that is, dependence, independence, or other).286

As has been seen, the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models take widely different views of these issues and, accordingly, come to widely divergent and mutually exclusive views of divine love. The canonical investigation of divine love pursued in this dissertation has come to conclusions regarding the nature of divine love that differ from both models in many crucial respects. Such conclusions also point toward significant tension and/or contradiction with the underlying ontologies supposed by the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models. This section will introduce some tentative facets of a canonical ontology that are suggested by the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love, which is itself based on canonical data presented in the previous two chapters.

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286 The positions regarding these ontological issues further limit the available options regarding whether God is affected by the world (and if so, whether according to his eternal decree, his ontological sympathetic dependency, or free relationship with others) and whether he cares about it or only cares for it, all of which establish whether God can enter into a mutually beneficial (though unequal) relationship.
It must be emphasized that these facets are tentative for at least four reasons. First, the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love presented in this work is itself tentative and open to revision based on further canonical investigation. Second, it could be misleading to attempt to derive a divine ontology from one divine characteristic, even one as major as divine love. Third, addressing the full scope of divine ontology is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Fourth, other outlines of divine ontology may also be able to harmonize with this model of divine love and should continue to be sought. These ontological suggestions are thus to some extent speculative, relying on extrapolations from the canonical data regarding divine love. Therefore, this brief outline of ontological issues relative to this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love in no way attempts to provide a comprehensive or dogmatic answer to the issues of divine ontology. However, it is supposed that insofar as this model of divine love actually accords with the canonical data, a canonical ontology of God must account for the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and reciprocal facets of divine love.

**Significant Freedom of God and Creatures**

First, with regard to the sovereignty of the divine will especially as it relates to the issue of determinism or indeterminism: This foreconditional-reciprocal model of love suggests the ontological independence and significant freedom of God as well as the significant, albeit limited, freedom of human beings. 287 In other words, this model of love suggests that God does not unilaterally determine the course of events but that agents, like God himself, possess significant freedom. As explained earlier in this chapter, by significant freedom I mean that agents have freedom to do otherwise than they do. This is assumed for God in that he is continually spoken of in language that suggests his freedom as it relates to love (among other things). Likewise, humans are depicted not only as rejecting God’s will but also as having the capacity (through prevenient

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divine action) to accept or reject God’s love and to love him in return or reject his loving overtures.

With regard to the specific facets of divine love: The volitional nature of divine love emphasizes the freedom of God. He is not bound to love creatures but willingly created creatures as objects of his love. Further, he is consistently depicted as having the ability to do otherwise than what he does. The evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and reciprocal aspects of love also each point toward creaturely freedom. The evaluative and emotional aspects of love suggest that agents may act in ways that actually impact God, suggesting that he himself is not the only true agent. The foreconditional and reciprocal aspects each assume that humans can (due to God’s prevenient action) respond or refuse to respond to God’s loving overtures. The ability of humans to reject and/or forfeit divine love requires that the divine will is not unilaterally efficacious but that significantly free beings actually affect the course of history in ways that are not in accordance with God’s desires. That is, insofar as God’s love is conditional and contingent upon human response, human response must itself be contingent. Likewise, the notion of mutual, reciprocal, loving relationship also implies the reality of the limited freedom of human agency. God’s love may be unrequited and, accordingly, humans can choose to sever their relationship with God.

This significant freedom of creatures is further apparent in that God’s ideal will is not always done. God’s ideal will refers to that which God ideally desires to take place; in other words, that which would take place if all agents acted in perfect accordance with God’s desires. This is to be distinguished from God’s effective will, which refers to God’s will that has already taken into account all factors including the wills of significantly free creatures. As such, it

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288 This will be discussed further under the question of divine immutability and impassibility.

289 In other words, it is that which God wills in accordance with the wider matrix of creaturely freedom. This distinction is similar to the Arminian distinction between antecedent and consequent wills. I have elected not to use these terms in order to avoid any unintended connotations of ontology, especially
includes not only the active divine will but also what might be called his permissive will, that
which he allows. In this way, God’s effective will is evaluative.

The distinction between God’s ideal and effective will might be clarified by way of an
example. God did not desire that Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit. However, while God’s
ideal desire was that Adam and Eve not disobey him and eat the forbidden fruit, God also desired
the kind of reciprocal divine-human love relationship that is predicated on the significant freedom
of both parties. God could not unilaterally effect both desires and therefore permitted Adam and
Eve to depart from his ideal will in favor of allowing significant freedom.

To take one other example, God did not sadistically delight in, or ideally desire, the
crucifixion of his Son (cf. Lam 3:32–33). Rather, it was his “pleasure” in the wider context of the
plan of salvation. That is, because of his love for his creatures and because the death of his Son
was the means of their redemption, God was “pleased to crush Him” (cf. Isa 53:10). Ideally,
however, there would have never been sin and thus no occasion for such suffering and
sacrifice. As such, when God is said to pleasure in things that are otherwise distasteful, it is
likely that God’s pleasure is in the wider result rather than the things themselves (cf. Isa 53:10;
Matt 11:25–26; Luke 10:21). In this manner, such passages do not contradict the clear meaning
of passages that state that God has no pleasure in the death of anyone (cf. Ezek. 18:23, 32;

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with regard to the operation of the divine will as it relates to providence (specifically the theoretical order
of the divine decrees). For a discussion of Arminius’s view of the antecedent and consequent wills of God
and their implications for divine sovereignty see R. E. Olson, Arminian Theology, 123. Cf. Guy, “The
Universality,” in The Grace of God (ed. Pinnock), 35. Consider also Plantinga’s distinction between weak
and strong actualization in favor of the significant freedom of creatures and divine omnipotence and

290 As Post states, divine love “takes on the form of self-sacrifice out of necessity rather than
preference due to the tolerance of human freedom.” A Theory of Agape, 33.

291 Importantly, this view does not require meticulous providence. God’s permissive will may
function in accordance with wide principles of the extent of freedom afforded to creaturely agents.
However, it is well beyond the scope of this work to delve more deeply into this issue of divine providence.
Consider, for a brief overview of these issues of divine providence, Canale, “Doctrine of God,” in
Critique,” in The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism (ed. C. H. Pinnock; Minneapolis,
The contrast between God’s ideal and effective wills is not the result of divine volition but the result of a sinful, disordered world, which is itself the result of creaturely rebellion against God’s ideal will. In the eschaton, God’s ideal will shall perfectly correspond to God’s effective will as shall all the other wills of significantly free creatures whose wills are freely put in subjection to, and thus harmony with, God’s perfect, omniscient, and omnibenevolent will.

This brings us to perhaps the most crucial point regarding the validity of divine determinism. Specifically, that God’s ideal will is not always fulfilled is apparent in that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (cf. Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11) and desires that none would perish (2 Pet 3:9; cf. 1 Tim 2:4–6). However, not all will be saved since God eventually gives people over to their desires (cf. John 3:18; Rom 1:24, 26, 28; 2:4–12; 1 John 2:17).

Some determinists deal with the issue of such passages by contending that “God genuinely desires in one sense that all will be saved” but at the same time claiming that “he has not ultimately decreed that all will be saved.” This is the distinction between God’s “desired will” and “decretive will” respectively. In this view, God in some sense desires that all be saved but nevertheless decrees

Minn.: Bethany House, 1995).

In this way, strong statements of divine sovereignty may be reconciled with statements that assert that God’s will is unfulfilled. For example, God does “whatever he pleases” does not mean that everything that happens pleases God or is unilaterally determined by the divine will (Pss 115:3; 135:6; cf. Job 23:13). Rather, what occurs is what God allows and/or wills in the greater interest of the kind of real, relational love that requires creaturely freedom.

Here it should be noted that the claim of universalism, whether of the determinist variety or otherwise, is excluded by this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love due to the recognition of the conditionality, and potential forfeiture, of divine love. See the discussion of this earlier in this chapter and in the two canonical chapters. Further, there is abundant canonical data that are not specifically related to divine love that also rule out the idea that everyone will finally be saved. See Marshall, “Does the New Testament.”

Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, 381–82. For other ways in which other determinists avoid the conclusion that God’s will is not carried out with regard to these texts see brief discussion in the NT chapter.

Ibid. This is akin to Martin Luther’s view of God’s “hidden” will, which created a dilemma he could not resolve: “If I could by any means understand how this same God, who makes such a show of wrath and unrighteousness, can yet be merciful and just, there would be no need for faith.” The Bondage of the Will (trans. O. R. Johnston; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 204. For a further defense of this
solely on the basis of his unilaterally efficacious will that some will be damned. However, this raises an insoluble difficulty. If God’s will is unilaterally efficacious and God wants to save everyone, why does He not do so? 296

The distinction between God’s ideal and effective will of this foreconditional-reciprocal model, on the other hand, requires no position that God’s revealed will is different from his “hidden” will while also recognizing that the divine will is neither simple nor monolithic. In this way, the canonical analysis presented in the previous two chapters comes to the conclusion shared by many scholars that the “fact that all are not saved can be attributed to the stubbornness of the human will rather than to the weakness of the divine intent.” 297 God, in accordance with his universal love, wanted to save those who are lost but they were not willing (Isa 66:4; Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). It appears that God does not override their wills though he is ontologically capable of doing so because to do so would undercut another element of his ideal will, that there exists a divine-human love relationship, which itself requires the responsive, rather than determined, love view of double predestination see Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds., Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2000). See especially John Piper, “Are There Two Wills in God?” in Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace (ed. T. R. Schreiner and B. A. Ware; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2000). Cf. Harold H. Rowley, The Biblical Doctrine of Election (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950). However, in my view, this is a dogmatic assumption that goes against the preponderance of canonical evidence but does so because it is beholden to a prior commitment to the idea that salvation must be the result of unconditional election. See John C. Peckham, “An Investigation of Luther’s View of the Bondage of the Will with Implications for Soteriology and Theodicy,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 18 (2007): 274–304.

296 “To put the point most bluntly, if compatibilism is true, it is all but impossible, in the actual world, to maintain the perfect goodness of God, and altogether impossible to do so if orthodox Christianity is true.” J. L. Walls, “Why No Classical Theist,” 80. In his view, “if freedom and determinism are compatible, God could have created a world in which all persons freely did only the good at all times.” Ibid., 82. Moreover, J. L. Walls argues persuasively that since the compatibilist view presumes that God can effect his will unilaterally then God could determine “all to freely accept his love and be saved.” Ibid., 96.

of significantly free creaturely agents. God thus allows wills other than his own so that in the future his ideal will shall obtain and effect the most profound joy for all creatures in the universe, including himself. Accordingly, God does not irresistibly determine humans to love him. Thus, insofar as humans possess the ability to reject God’s ideal will God may have unfulfilled desires. However, God’s unfulfilled desires do not amount to ontological need, lack, or deficiency. Yet, while God is himself free and sovereign, God’s will is not omnicausal. On the contrary, the divine will itself takes into account the wider state of affairs, including the wills of other agents, and it thus includes evaluation. In this way, the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love suggested here is mutually exclusive to determinism.

That God has bestowed significant freedom on his creatures need not require the rejection of divine foreknowledge. Although the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love is not itself dependent on divine foreknowledge (as explained in chapter 5), I believe exhaustive divine foreknowledge best accounts for the data regarding divine love and election, especially in light of Rom 8:28–30. This model of love suggests that divine omniscience, however it functions (the precise nature of which is beyond the scope of this work), is not identical with or the unilateral


299 See the discussion of divine self-interest and other-interest in the following section of this chapter.

300 “God never imposes His love by overriding human will.” Blomberg, Matthew, 350. Indeed, “coerced love is not love.” Dunn, Romans 1–8, 481.

301 Cf. Lev 26:21; Isa 30:9, 15, 18–19; 42:24; Ezek 3:7; Matt 23:37; Luke 7:30. See the canonical chapters for further evidence that God’s ideal will is not always carried out and may be rejected.

302 God never desires anything that would make himself ontologically greater since he has no ontological lack or need. Likewise, divine existence is in no way dependent upon creaturely wills. As such, desire does not require an ontological lack or deficiency in God but does require that God interacts with creatures in a give-and-take relationship. See the brief discussion of divine passibility below.

303 See the significant evidence regarding the overlap between the divine will and evaluation in the canonical chapters, especially the word studies of τρέτων and θέλω, and γινώσκω and εὐδοκέω. Further, the very concept of supplication, common throughout the OT and NT, implies the potential of free creatures to affect the effective divine will (cf. Matt 6:10).
result of the divine will. At the same time, the divine will is still logically and ontologically prior to all other wills. Indeed, God’s will is itself the necessary condition of all other agencies. This is explicit in the notion of foreconditional love, especially the aspect of God’s prior loving action(s) that enable humans to freely respond (or not) to God’s call. Moreover, as shall be discussed further below with regard to divine self-sufficiency, the significant freedom of God entails that God is not required to love or enter into any kind of relationship with this or any world. He does so freely, not necessarily or essentially. Therefore, this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love rejects both the views of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models with regard to the nature and action of the divine will.

Divine Omnipotence and Self-Limitation

Second, with regard to the extent of the use of divine power (coercion/persuasion/other): This foreconditional-reciprocal model suggests that God is omnipotent but does not exercise all of his power; that is, he does not utilize his power to effect his will omnicausally. This conclusion is itself a corollary of the previous view regarding the significant freedom of God and human beings. For the same reasons that this model of divine love rejects determinism it likewise rejects omnicausality. This in no way detracts from divine omnipotence. Here, omnipotence is defined as possessing the power to do anything (excluding, of course, logical or semantic absurdity). The


possession of all power does not require the exercise of all power. God, being omnipotent, freely grants power to other agents whose choices he does not unilaterally determine. In this way, God has used his power to create other agents who also possess power, which he chooses not to overrule.306

In doing so, God has voluntarily limited himself by bestowing significant freedom on other beings. To take but one example of this: unless God were to break a promise, the very fact that he engages with the world in a way that includes promise-making limits himself. God’s oath or promise is binding upon himself, not because there is anything external to him that can bind him, but because in the very making of a promise he self-limits.307 This limitation is not ontological. It is a limitation that God voluntarily adopts and maintains.308 Such divine self-limitation in no way limits his power but merely limits the avenues, applications, and uses of his power insofar as he voluntarily keeps his word. In this way, divine omnipotence does not amount to divine omnicausality. Accordingly, God may enter in truly mutual and reciprocal relationships University Press, 1982).

306 The explanation of God’s choice to grant free will is beyond the scope of this work but it would seem that God’s love is itself a basis in accordance with the nature of divine love and God’s desire for a reciprocal love relationship.

307 Thus, Fretheim is correct in stating, “For God to promise never to do something again, and to be faithful to that promise, entails self-limitation regarding the exercise of divine freedom and power.” “The Book of Genesis,” in Genesis to Leviticus (vol. 1 of NIB; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994), 396. Importantly, however, God need not have done so but this is “contingent upon God’s willing to enter into such a relation in the first place, to place himself under certain relational constraints, to be limited in his freedom by the existence of a genuinely free other.” Hart, “How Do We Define,” 109. On divine self-limitation see further R. E. Olson, Arminian Theology, 123–24; Jack. W. Cottrell, “The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty,” in The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism (ed. C. H. Pinnock; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1995), 107–10.

308 This is what I have earlier (see chapter 4, pages 363-4) called a soft obligation, which refers to those where the agent is free to do otherwise ontologically, but morally obligated to respond, whereas a hard obligation would refer to some kind of compulsion (internal or external). As Sakenfeld puts it with regard to הֶסֶד, “because the person is acting faithfully within a relationship initiated by God there is a clear sense that God should exercise responsible care for that person. God is free not to act on the person's behalf; he alone is powerful, so there is no recourse if he does not act.” The Meaning of Hesed, 107. See the further discussion of this issue as well as of soft and hard obligations earlier in this dissertation, especially in the OT chapter.
with other beings, which entail mutual expectations and moral obligations. Moreover, the divine self-limitation assumed by a genuine, reciprocal, give-and-take, divine-human relationship adds complexity such that the world as a whole does not operate in a way in which blessing/curses correspond universally to human disposition and/or behavior. This is a tension in Scripture not due to divine subjectivity, but due to the thwarting of God’s ideal will in the entrance of evil. As such, this foreconditional-reciprocal model of love contradicts the transcendent-voluntarist model in proposing that God’s power is not omnicausal and at the same time rejects the immanent-experientialist model’s view that God lacks the power to coerce.

Divine Possibility

Third, with regard to the issue of the immutability and impassibility of God: This foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love suggests that God is affected by the dispositions and/or actions of his creatures and therefore not impassible nor, in this regard, immutable. The first premise of this section, that God does not unilaterally determine the course of history, itself entails the possibility of God. Further, the evaluative and emotional aspects of divine love assume that God is impacted by the actual disposition and/or action of his creatures. That is, evaluation consists of appraisal of the actual state of its object(s) and the emotions depicted in the canon are consistently depicted as prompted by the disposition and/or action of creatures. Accordingly, in keeping with the evidence with regard to the evaluative and emotional natures of divine love, a biblical ontology must recognize that God is capable of emotional affection, enjoyment, and the

309 Contra C. F. H. Henry’s view that God’s will foreordains everything. History is determined by the will of God, he “plans and decrees the world and man . . . he ordains the future.” God, Revelation, and Authority, 5:13. Cf. ibid., 6:48–49. For an argument in favor of freedom and against divine omnicausality, see T. C. Oden, The Living God, 283–85.

310 This follows from Hartshorne’s view of “pan-indeterminism” wherein God has all the power that is compossible with the pan-indeterminism and pan-relativity of the world and in this sense he is “the greatest possible power.” Man’s Vision, 30. Cf. idem, The Divine Relativity, 138; idem, Omnipotence, 18.
recognition and appreciation of value in the world. This assumes that God is ontologically capable of being affected and, therefore, possible.311

For example, this complements the frequent depiction of God’s compassion as feeling prompted at the sight or awareness of someone else’s malady and/or misfortune, an explicitly affected state. One cannot have such “compassion” without being affected and thus possible. This canonical depiction of divine compassion alone, if taken seriously and not dismissed as mere anthropopathism, rules out the conception of divine impassibility. A similar case can be made with regard to divine passion/jealousy and many other divine emotions depicted in the canon. The interpretive maneuver of dismissing the strongly emotive language with divine agency as merely anthropopathic does not hold up to close scrutiny. Rather, it seems to be special pleading for a dogmatic presupposition and lacks a consistent and compelling rationale for determining which

canonical data accurately depict God’s nature and which canonical data are to be dismissed as merely accommodative language.\textsuperscript{312}

Along with this recognition of God’s possible emotion, however, one should not assume that divine emotion is to the exclusion of volition. Both are depicted in Scripture as complementary, not contradictory, aspects of divine love.\textsuperscript{313} Likewise, the foreconditional and reciprocal aspects of love assume that God may be affected. Thus, entering into an intimate, particular love relationship with creatures is contingent upon human response, to which God is sensitive and responsive.

In contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model, this rejection of impassibility suggests that God may be affected by the actual state of the affairs of the world. In other words, God is not immune to spatio-temporal activity. On the contrary, the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love, extracted from the canonical data, suggests that God is capable and willing of opening himself up to the joys and sufferings of the world while at the same time maintaining ontological independence. If God has bestowed significant freedom on his creatures such that they really affect the world, including real contributions to joy and value on the one hand or sorrow and degradation on the other, then it is not accurate to suggest that all value is unilaterally caused by God. God sometimes creates value unilaterally (such as the origin of the world itself) but other times value is the product of God’s creation and sustenance of significantly free beings along with their value-creating actions.

However, humans could bring no value to God (or anyone else) absent God’s voluntary initiative since the very origin and substance of human beings is entirely dependent upon divine beneficence and grace (cf. 1 Cor 4:7). As such, creaturely contribution to the “value” and/or “joy”

\textsuperscript{312} For a further discussion of this issue see the discussion of this issue in the methodology section.

\textsuperscript{313} The precise relationship between divine volition and emotion, however, is not clear from this investigation of divine love.
of the world is not meritorious but may be divinely enjoyed nonetheless. This view not only differs from the transcendent-voluntarist model by asserting divine passibility and the enjoyment of value that God does not himself unilaterally effect, but also differs sharply from the conception of the immanent-experientialist model, which posits that God is ontologically bound to the joy and sufferings of others.\textsuperscript{314} With regard to the latter, this foreconditional-reciprocal model suggests that God is not ontologically bound to the joy and sufferings of others and will, finally, cut off those who persist in contributing suffering and evil to the world. In other words, the transcendent-voluntarist model posits that God cannot be affected by others, while the immanent-experientialist model asserts that God cannot \textit{not} be affected by others, while the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love suggests that God is affected by others, but not necessarily so.

As such, contrary to the immanent-experientialist model, God identifies with the best interests of others voluntarily rather than necessarily. Accordingly, the conditionality of the divine-human relationship extends to God’s identification with the best interests of others. Moreover, contrary to the immanent-experientialist model, God does not identify with the interests of all others in an undifferentiated manner. Rather, God will continue to identify with the interests of those who do not finally reject his interests. One example of the undifferentiated nature of divine sympathy in the immanent-experientialist model may be instructive and highlight the importance of this distinction. For Hartshorne, “love is taking the standpoint of the other.”\textsuperscript{315} However, if this is true in an undifferentiated manner, as Hartshorne’s view implies, it would require that God enjoy evil to the extent that a particular creature takes pleasure therein.\textsuperscript{316} In this


\textsuperscript{315} Hartshorne, \textit{Man’s Vision}, 127.

\textsuperscript{316} Accordingly, David Platt comments, “While God may derive value from the pleasure of the sadist, God also experiences the pain of the sadist’s victim and in [this] view, God would derive greater enjoyment if the sadist \textit{and} the victim both had their own value experiences enhanced rather than that the sadist achieve his pleasure at the expense of the victim.” “Does Whitehead’s God Possess a Moral Will?” \textit{Process Studies} 5 (1975): 117.
way, Hartshorne’s view posits that God enjoys all value and feels all suffering but presents an impoverished view of divine evaluation, that is, the accurate appraisal of that which is delightful or abhorrent, good or evil. Thus, it appears that Hartshorne’s view focuses on awareness and immediate feeling to the detriment of the kind of divine evaluation that prompts pleasure and/or displeasure as well as acceptance and/or rejection in the canon.\textsuperscript{317} In this foreconditional-reciprocal model, on the other hand, God does not view all creaturely “pleasure” equally nor does he delight in all that delights sinful human beings. On the contrary, God delights in righteousness and abhors evil and will finally eradicate evil, sin, and suffering.\textsuperscript{318}

Importantly, this conception of the passibility of God does not suggest that God is passive. On the contrary, divine volition is also operative, though the precise interrelationship of divine volition and emotion is not entirely clear. God possesses the power to overrule all other wills but has chosen not to do so. In this way, he need not be affected by creatures. Indeed, this view suggests that he need not have even created creatures.\textsuperscript{319} Such divine passibility does not necessarily deny divine immutability but does conflict with any conception of immutability that rules out the ability of God to engage the world in real give-and-take relationship (that is, one with bilateral, significant freedom).\textsuperscript{320} At the same time, divine immutability may be affirmed if by that one means that ontologically God is not becoming greater or lesser.\textsuperscript{321} Further, the divine  

\textsuperscript{317} Cf. Hartshorne, \textit{Man’s Vision}, 165.

\textsuperscript{318} Without attempting to address Euthyphro’s metaethical question regarding why good is good in this limited space, the evaluative nature of divine love assumes an absolute standard of good and evil to which divine evaluation corresponds.

\textsuperscript{319} See the discussion below.


\textsuperscript{321} However, as shall be further discussed below, God may become more pleased or less pleased, more joyful or less joyful, etc. In this way, God could be more or less happy depending upon the actions of the agents he has chosen to love, and as such, has chosen to bind his happiness to, without danger of non-existence or lack of power, but yes, the risk of quality of the divine life. This begs the question, why would
character is constant. He does not break his promises, he always acts in the most loving way possible and possesses the omniscience to know precisely what the most loving disposition and/or action is.\textsuperscript{322} When human beings finally reject God, the most loving option available to him is to give them over to their own desires.\textsuperscript{323}

**Divine Perfection, Self-Sufficiency, and Sympathy**

Fourth, with regard to the nature of divine perfection and/or self-sufficiency (that is, dependence, independence, or other), this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love suggests that God is ontologically independent from the world as its Creator and self-sufficient with respect to existence. At the same time, God has voluntarily bound his own interests (including his joy and/or sorrow) with the interests of his creatures in a personal manner. As such, God is not an incomplete being without the world but is perfect in this respect. Further, he is wholly good and without moral fault and, as mentioned above, is not becoming greater or lesser ontologically. Nevertheless, God includes the best interests of others in his own interests. In this way, the quality of the divine life, as it were, is voluntarily bound by God with the course of creaturely history. Yet, God is by no means passive in this regard since he exerts enormous power in providentially guiding and affecting, but not unilaterally determining, this history toward his ultimate end.

At the same time, God’s love according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model suggests that God is relational, interested in his creatures, can be affected by and even the beneficiary of God risk it? This foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love implies that God may have done so out of his loving desire to bestow quality of life and in doing so his own quality of life is benefitted because the perfect universe does not require the mutual exclusivity of love for other and love for self. But ultimate love benefits recipient and giver, the loved and the lover. This portrays an ideal that is not yet achieved but will be achieved in the eschaton.

\textsuperscript{322} Contra Oord who contends that God lacks “exhaustive foreknowledge” and thus does not “know with certainty which single option is the most loving.” In this way, Oord posits that God is necessarily loving but free with regard to how he acts out his love. *The Nature*, 139–40.

\textsuperscript{323} As seen in the canonical data, loving action may include discipline.
human disposition and/or action. This assumes a theo-ontology that allows for reciprocity (though not symmetrically or equally) between God and creatures. Further, the volitional aspect of divine love posits that God is not necessarily or essentially involved in a love relationship (or any other relationship) with creatures. Likewise, the foreconditional and reciprocal aspects of divine love argue that God’s love for his creatures is not the product of a necessary or essential relation. That is, if divine love is conditional upon human response, and may be forfeited, it cannot be necessary or essential to God. On the contrary, God freely enters into reciprocal relationship with those who willingly respond to his loving overtures, remembering that such willing response is itself made possible by God’s prevenient and sustaining action. Therefore, God is not ontologically and/or necessarily bound to the world in love.  

This brings us to the difficult issue of the relationship between God’s essence and love. First, the essence of God includes a great deal of mystery and, as such, one should be careful with regard to dogmatic assertions on this topic. Many have posited and continue to posit that God’s essence is love. Theologians may mean many different things when they identify God’s essence with “love.” Of course, since the definition of “love” itself differs widely, this should

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324 This is in direct contrast to the immanent-experientialist model.

325 This is the view of the immanent-experientialist model. C. F. H. Henry comes close to positing love as God’s essence but denies equating love with God’s essence in order to avoid obscuring the other divine characteristics that he considers equally essential to the purely simple divine essence. God, Revelation, and Authority, 5:81–82, 135, 6:341, 348. Many classic theists and others, however, assert that God’s essence is love, without denying other divine characteristics. For example, Luther states, “God is nothing else than love.” Luther’s Works (ed. J. Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 30:300. So, also Augustine, The Trinity 15.19.37 (NPNF 3; Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press), 3:235; Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (Books for the Ages; Albany, Oreg.: Ages Software), 3:260. Cf. K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, 2/1:279; Morris, Testaments of Love, 136; Akin, John, 178–79; M. Barth, Ephesians 1–3, 219; Snailth, The Distinctive Ideas, 137; Carson, The Difficult Doctrine, 39; Günter and Link, NIDNTT 2:546; Oord, The Nature, 139; Horton, 265; A. J. Torrance, “Is Love the Essence?,” 137; Morris, The Gospel according to John, 203; Newlands, 97, 195. From a universalist perspective, Thomas Talbott also asserts that God is essentially love and argues that proponents of limited election who also assert that God’s essence is love are contradicting themselves. “The Love of God and the Heresy of Exclusivism,” CSR 27 (1997): 101.

326 For example, compare the widely divergent views of Morris, Oord, and Talbott with one another.
be no surprise. To the extent that theologians mean that all that God is and does is congruent with divine love there is no disagreement with this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love. However, to the extent that such identification amounts to ontological restriction of God’s freedom with regard to his love relationship with creatures, the canonical data raise significant issues.

Before addressing such issues it is important to first recognize that, in my view, the canonical data simply do not provide revelation with which to assert the precise nature of the divine essence.327 As such, the data are insufficient to comment dogmatically on assertions regarding the nature of the divine essence and existence. Moreover, I question whether it is possible to make any certain pronouncement(s) that correspond to the divine essence as a whole as this would seem to require an understanding of God’s essence as a whole, which appears to be beyond not only divine revelation but also human cognizance.328 Therefore, I am not prepared to make a dogmatic assertion with regard to whether God’s essence and love may be equated.

Nevertheless, a few things may be said here without making claim to certitude with regard to the relationship between divine love and divine essence. While the canonical data argue against an essential divine-human love relationship, that does not necessarily require that love is not a part (or the whole) of God’s essence. For example, intra-trinitarian love appears to be essential to God, a product of God’s trinitarian, essentially-related nature.329

327 “God is love” is not necessarily intended to describe the divine essence as a whole (1 John 4:8, 16). Elsewhere, it is said that “God is light” (1 John 1:5) and “God is Spirit” (John 4:24). Many biblical scholars contend that the statement “God is love” is not necessarily “ontological” but descriptive of the divine character. Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 157. Similarly, Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, 212–13. Further, the character of God is depicted throughout the canon as multi-faceted. While all is congruent with love, it is not clear that love should be thought of as so elastic as to actually describe God’s entire essence. Cf. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 239; Grogan, “A Biblical Theology,” in *Nothing Greater* (ed. Vanhoozer), 66.

328 Further, such an assertion goes far beyond that which should be extrapolated from a study that is directed toward one divine characteristic.

329 Indeed, the intra-trinitarian love relationship is prior to the foundation of the world (cf. John 17:24) though the details regarding the nature of this pre-creation love relationship are not revealed.
canonical data have demonstrated the crucial volitional aspect of divine love and points toward the significant freedom of God to do otherwise than he does. In this regard, the interrelationship between God’s will and essence as it relates to intra-trinitarian divine love is not revealed and, in my view, may not be deduced with certainty independent of divine revelation. Here, whatever else is said about the correspondence between God’s essence and love, one should not imply that love rules out the other divine characteristics that are prominent in the canon or vice versa, including the divine will. Concurrently, it is important to avoid asserting a false dichotomy between the divine will and essence. Here there is mystery upon which the canonical data investigated in this dissertation shed little light.\textsuperscript{330}

Importantly, however, the canonical data suggest that the essential intra-trinitarian love relation does not extend to creatures, who were and are not part of God’s essence. God’s essence and existence are independent of creatures.\textsuperscript{331} God is other than the world he has created and not ontologically bound to his creation. As such, it may be God’s essence to love (at least within the trinity) or be loving, but the specific objects of God’s love are not determined by his essence. In other words, while intra-trinitarian love may be essential to God’s nature, God does not need to love creatures (indeed, he does not “need” to create at all).\textsuperscript{332} Accordingly, the canonical data consistently depict God as free to do otherwise than what he does, including with regard to divine

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{330} It may be that God’s essence does not by itself determine the content of his existence (that is, his life). In other words, who God is does not by itself necessarily determine what he does. If this is the case there is an element of divine volition that contributes to the outworking of the divine life that is not determined by his essence. On the other hand, one might assert the identity of the will and essence, such as Aquinas did. However, this would determine God’s actions and thus remove his significant freedom to do otherwise than he does. Perhaps there is a coherience of God’s essence and his existence, including volition, in some matrix that we do not comprehend, and have not been given revelation to dogmatize about. The possibilities abound and demand further, careful canonical investigation.

\textsuperscript{331} This model does not accord with the assertion of identity between the divine essence and existence insofar as it denies God’s significant freedom to do otherwise than he does.

\textsuperscript{332} See, for instance, Hart, “How Do We Define,” 109.
\end{quote}
love toward creatures. In this way, while God may be essentially and/or characteristically loving, that should not be taken to require that God is bound to act as he does. 333

Conclusion

This chapter has contended that God’s love is volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and ideally reciprocal. First, divine love is volitional but not merely volitional. It includes a free, volitional aspect that is neither essential nor necessary to God’s being yet also not arbitrary. While divine love is closely associated with the divine will and election, such concepts should not be conflated. The divine-human love relationship is neither unilaterally deterministic nor essential or ontologically necessary to God but bilaterally (though not symmetrically) volitional and contingent. Second, divine love is not indifferent or disinterested but evaluative. This means that God is capable of being affected by, and even benefitting from, the disposition and/or actions of his creatures. Further, despite human sinfulness, humans may bring value to God through the prevenient and ongoing action of God, especially the mediation of Christ. Moreover, God has a proper self-regard that is inclusive, rather than exclusive, to the best interests of his creatures.

333 For instance, it appears that God could have destroyed Sinai in Exod 32–34, though he may not have wanted to do so, and did not do so for a number of reasons. Elsewhere, the canonical data frequently suggest that God maintains his love, compassion, and mercy for creatures far beyond what is required or even reasonable and may also remove the same. While God never removes his love and compassion arbitrarily (that is, independent of appropriate evaluation), it can be removed. Indeed, some creatures become the objects of divine hatred, though not as a result of the divine will itself but as a result of their own rejection of the divine will (cf. Hos 9:15). Further, such removal of divine love and compassion is not automatic since God, by grace, maintains it long after it is deserved. The implication is that God’s longsuffering and patience toward his creatures is neither morally nor ontologically obligatory. This dovetails with the nearly ubiquitous praise of God for his goodness and love throughout the canon. Since many moralists generally contend that one may not be rightly praised or blamed for an action if one could not do otherwise, would not the axiological force of such praise be compromised if God could not do otherwise than he does? Cf. J. L. Walls, “Why No Classical Theist,” 84, 87–88; Swinburne, The Coherence of Theism, 147; Bruce R. Reichenbach, “Freedom, Justice, and Moral Responsibility,” in The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism (ed. C. H. Pinnock; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1995), 296–97. Cooper contends that “an important implication of God’s ontological independence is that his act of creating is truly agapic—entirely loving and gracious in giving creatures existence.” Panentheism, 325.
Third, God’s love is profoundly emotional and affective though not to the exclusion of volitional and evaluative aspects. There is no dichotomy between volition and emotion and, as such, love may be both emotional and responsive to command. Fourth, divine love is foreconditional, not altogether unconditional. That is, divine love is prior to all other love and conditions but not exclusive to conditions. Further, divine love for the world is unmerited but not unconditional as the receipt of something may be contingent upon particular conditions without thereby being deserved. The conditionality of divine love includes evaluation and the possibility of forfeiture. As such, it is not strictly unmotivated, spontaneous, disinterested, indifferent, or unconditional. Moreover, there is a conditionality and unconditionality with respect to divine love. Divine love in relation to the world is unconditional with respect to God’s volition, but conditional with respect to divine evaluation.

Finally, divine love is multilaterally relational. God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately. God earnestly seeks and enters into reciprocally responsive love relationships with his creatures, which amount to multilateral divine-human love relationships. However, although God’s foreconditional love is universal, God does not love all equally and uniformly.

God’s love according to this foreconditional-reciprocal model points to the potential ontological suggestions that God desires reciprocal relationship with human beings and, as such, decided to grant significant freedom to his creatures while also himself possessing the freedom to do otherwise than he does. This entails that God does not exercise all his power omnicausally but bestows and allows creatures to affect history. Moreover, as relationally responsive, God is passible (though not passive) and may be affected by the disposition and/or actions of his creatures. Finally, as passible, God has bound his own interests, including his joy on the one hand and suffering on the other, to the best interests of the world. Such a relation is not ontological, but volitional. In this way, God so loved the world that he gave himself.
CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The love of God is central to God’s relationship to the world. Accordingly, this study addressed the conflict of interpretations regarding divine love in the context of the God-world relationship and, in so doing, shed light on the wider question of God’s relation to the world. Chapter 1 introduced the background, purpose, problem, scope, and plan of study as well as the final-form canonical theological method employed in the investigation. Chapter 2 briefly surveyed the historical theology of love, tracing the central conceptions of divine love and the God-world relationship by selected, highly influential thinkers. Chapter 3 presented and analyzed the exemplars of the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models, considering their views of divine love in relation to the world as well as the ontologies that ground their conceptions. Subsequently, a sample of recent reactions to both models demonstrated the current dissatisfaction regarding the conflict of interpretations indicating the potential for paradigm change in the theological model of interpreting God’s love to the world.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 shifted to the investigation of a canonical and systematic model that addresses the issues raised by the conflict of interpretations. Chapters 4 and 5 presented the data from a canonical investigation of the data regarding divine love in the OT and NT. The material from the biblical investigation of divine love was then utilized in the construction of the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love that addresses the conflict of interpretations seen in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 finally revealed and summarized the broad outline of the canonically derived, foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love in relation to the world, with implications for divine ontology and the nature of God’s relationship to the world. This chapter
concludes the dissertation by summarizing the findings and conclusions of the study and making some recommendations for further study.

**Introduction and Methodology of the Study**

Chapter 1 introduced the issue that mutually exclusive conceptions of love, and their undergirding divine ontologies, call for careful study due to the prominence of divine love in the God-world relationship. After an explanation of the background, the problem and purpose, the scope and delimitations, and the plan of study, I explained the theological method that was utilized in order to address the conflict of interpretations. Instead of extrapolating the meaning of divine love from a presupposed ontology, this study applied a final-form canonical approach to systematic theology that affords epistemological primacy to the biblical canon as a unified, but not monolithic, whole.

This approach employs phenomenological exegesis, which uses the data derived from the typical method of hermeneutical exegesis, to uncover the first principles of reality apparent in the inner logic of the text as canon (the canonical horizon), which themselves return to inform one’s hermeneutical exegesis as well as the interpreter’s horizon such that both forms of exegesis continually inform one another while seeking to bracket out extra-canonical suppositions and interpretive errors toward the isolation of exegetical interpretations that cohere with the full canonical context. In this way, the interpreter seeks the particular characteristics of God revealed in the canon by analyzing the data in their immediate and wider canonical context by way of hermeneutical and phenomenological exegesis, reciprocally informing one another toward a canonical and systematic model of divine love that rigorously corresponds to all the data of Scripture, to the exclusion of extra-canonical suppositions, and is internally coherent. This method was applied toward a potential resolution to the conflict of interpretations over the issue of the meaning of divine love in the God-world relationship by focusing on the biblical revelation of God’s love specifically, while bracketing out extra-biblical presuppositions related to divine
love, toward exposing a model of divine love, which itself provides implications toward a biblical ontology.

Finally, the first chapter addressed a few methodological issues of the canonical investigation, including the interpretation of figurative language relative to God, the potential application of incarnational data to one’s conception of God, and the prevalence of ambiguity regarding genitive constructions and the agency of love in the NT. Overall, the approach argued that unless there are some canonical data to the contrary, the literary thrust of canonical revelation should not be cast aside as merely human accommodation since all human language about God is, to some extent, accommodative. The canonical approach maintains that canonical language, including language that is demonstrably figurative, conveys meaningful and accurate (albeit analogical) data about God as he is in himself. Therefore, non-literal and figurative language, such as metaphorical and idiomatic phraseology, must not be dismissed but should be treated carefully in accordance with the intention in the text by way of the textual and contextual clues regarding the intended correspondence to its referent(s), being careful not to dismiss evidence based on presuppositions of what God is actually like prior to and/or independent of the canonical data. Likewise, this chapter suggested that, as a working approach, the data relative to Christ as incarnate should be taken to apply to the divine nature by way of a modified view of communicatio idiomatum such that, absent compelling canonical reasons otherwise, the data regarding the incarnate Christ correspond not only to humanity but also divinity in the sense that the divine nature of Christ is capable of experiencing that which the incarnate Christ experienced since Jesus was truly God who became truly human without divesting himself of divinity. In all this, the degree of the correspondence between the understanding of such revelation and God as he actually is cannot be determined prior to the eschaton due to the epistemic distance between God and humans and other human limitations.
Survey of the Historical Theology of Love

Chapter 2 briefly surveyed the historical theology of divine love by way of a few, highly influential exemplars. First, the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of divine love were introduced. Plato’s writings depict love (eros) as desirous and thus originating from deficiency or need. The highest love is the rational, rather than emotional, desire for the Good (proton phylon) but God can have no such desire because, for Plato, that would signify lack of perfection. While Aristotle departs from Plato in many ways, his view likewise rules out the possibility of God’s love toward creatures. For Aristotle, love (philia) must be toward that which is useful, beautiful, and/or good, while love for the good (of a rational and purposeful, rather than passionate, nature) is the highest, true love. Since all three types of love are directed toward something valuable to the lover and, for Aristotle, God is the impassible, unmoved mover who can receive no value and lacks nothing, God cannot love others. For both Plato and Aristotle, then, God is never the lover but only the loved.

Augustine, being indirectly influenced by Plato’s conception through neoplatonism, also denies the reality of a dynamic love relationship between God and creatures while breaking significantly with Plato’s conception of love by affirming that God does indeed love human beings but in a different manner than humans love God. Humans may love God as the only object of enjoyment (frui) but God’s love for humans is different, he cannot enjoy (frui) them. In this way, Augustine assumes the classical ontology that God is perfect, self-sufficient, immutable, and impassible and thus can neither desire nor receive any value or enjoyment. God’s love is thus defined in accordance with impassibility such that he does not love in the sense of Plato’s eros or Aristotle’s philia but his love is unilateral beneficence (corresponding conceptually to agape), which brings no benefit or enjoyment (frui) to God. Augustine’s has been the predominant view in Christianity through the ages.

Aquinas continues the basic Augustinian premise regarding divine love and the God-world relationship while adapting Aristotelian metaphysics and ethics to medieval Christianity.
For Aquinas, as Augustine, God is self-sufficient and utterly immutable. God is the first, unmoved, and passionless mover who possesses all perfections of being and cannot be affected or desire anything. While his divine ontology rules out a mutually impactful relationship between God and the world, Aquinas nevertheless posits friendship love (amicitia) between God and humans, but of such a kind that God is the unilateral initiator of friendship as the benefactor and never beneficiary. Human friendship love is always directed towards some good (amor concupiscentiae, desirous love) that is willed toward someone (amor amicitiae, friendship love).

Humans love (caritas) God in the sense of enjoying him for his own sake while God loves (caritas) in the sense of beneficence. For both Augustine and Aquinas, the very essence of God is a love that is a unilaterally willed, unaffected beneficence such that God loves all in some manner but only some are loved unto eternal life.

Martin Luther’s view of divine love remained along the lines of that of Augustine and Aquinas. However, Luther vehemently rejects the view of human love from Augustine throughout medieval theology, viewing it as a synthesis that posits a place for egocentric human love toward God (thematic eros), while Luther recognizes only divine love (thematic agape) as authentic, altruistic love. Humans cannot truly love God or any others except as passive agents of divine love flowing through them since God is the cause of all authentic love. God’s love, on the other hand, is unilateral, non-evaluative, unmotivated, and wholly gratuitous beneficence, akin to grace. This view of divine love, congruent with that of Augustine and Aquinas, is required by the conception of God as immutable and impassible. For Luther, God’s unilaterally determinative, irresistible, and wholly efficacious will is primary.

All of this provides the context for Anders Nygren’s highly influential Agape and Eros in which he fleshes out Luther’s concept of gratuitous love (agape) directed against eros. He posits an absolute dichotomy between eros, which is desirous and acquisitive love (whether vulgar or heavenly) that is inappropriate to God’s perfect and self-sufficient nature and unfit for Christianity, and agape, which is the highest kind of love as purely unilaterally willed and
altruistic beneficence. For Nygren, God’s love (thematic *agape*) is spontaneous, unmotivated, indifferent to value, non-desirous and non-emotive, beneficent, condescending, gratuitous, and sovereign in relation to its object. In his view, the theme of *agape* love was specifically chosen by the NT writers to convey this indifferent, *sola gratia* type of love to the exclusion of all other types of love (*eros, philia*, etc.), even those in the OT. The only true agent of *agape* love is God. Humans of themselves are incapable of *agape* love such that love toward God (and others) is caused only by God’s arbitrary predestination of those upon whom he bestows unconditional love. While Nygren’s view has come under a great deal of criticism, it still remains very influential.

Overall, there is considerable continuity between these prominent historical conceptions of divine love, especially the classic conception of God as simple, timeless, perfect, self-sufficient, immutable, and impassible, which leads to the conception of divine love as unilateral, unmotivated, unaffected, gratuitous beneficence that entails no passion but is rationally purposive. Contemporary treatments of divine love continue to be significantly influenced by this history, whether by accepting the conceptions of *eros* or *agape*, vehemently rejecting them, or even knowingly or unknowingly assimilating and mixing them.

**Conflicting Interpretations of Divine Love**

Chapter 3 presented and analyzed the exemplars of the transcendent-voluntarist (Carl F. H. Henry) and immanent-experientialist models (Charles Hartshorne), which present two of the most prominent recent perspectives on divine love. This included an analytical description of each model’s methodological and ontological frameworks, their conception of God’s relationship to the world, and their specific view of divine love in order to clearly identify the conflict of interpretation, which illuminated the central areas of disagreement over the nature of divine love in relation to the world as well as the ontologies that ground their conceptions.
The transcendent-voluntarist model of divine love is bound up with its divine ontology of a transcendent, perfect, simple, immutable, impassible, and totally self-sufficient God, which places precise limits upon the nature of divine love. For such a God, love cannot be immanent, love cannot change God, and God can have no need or desire such that love can add no value or enrichment to the divine life. God as sovereign, rational will entails a sovereign, rational, and willed love of unilateral beneficence; hence unconditional election love, independent of its object, which corresponds to thematic agape to the exclusion of thematic eros. God is not at all affected by external reality or the decisions of creatures but orders all history and bestows love sovereignly and independently of external causes. Since God as omnicausal cannot be acted upon, there is no power that could impact divinity, God’s love is wholly unmotivated and unconditional, being unaffected by spatio-temporal reality. In keeping with the sovereignty of God’s will and impassibility, all divine love is predicated solely upon the eternal predestinating divine decree, independent of human action and/or response. Although the transcendent-voluntarist model insists that God has emotions, such emotions are not the result of God being affected but the result of his own unilateral and sovereign will. Accordingly, God’s relationship to the world is an external one (the relativity required by an internal relation is impossible for a timeless, immutable God) and there is an absolute ontological distinction between God (the supernatural) and the world (natural) such that God is the altogether independent and voluntary creator of the world ex nihilo. God’s loving action, which is manifested in time and space, thus stems only from the timeless providence of God according to the eternal decree (predestination). God is internally related only to himself as triune, and any potential need for love is fulfilled by intra-trinitarian love.

Consequently, divine love for other than God is superfluous to God, not only as needed but even as desired or valued. Once again, this fits with the absolute perfection of God, which entails that God is already utterly complete, thus there could be no new experience for God; all is eternally bound in the divine nature according to the eternal sovereign will of God. Moreover,
since God is absolutely simple, divine love is but one aspect of the utterly unitary essence of God. Love is thus qualified by all other perfections of God, which, together, are actually merely the simplicity of the sovereign will of God. Divine love complements divine holiness, wrath, justice, and eschatological judgment/damnation—all of which take place in strict accordance with the sovereign and efficacious will of God, which determines all history. God is thus only the loving father of whom he chooses (election love). As such, there can be no reciprocal divine-human love relationship of give-and-take.

The immanent-experientialist model, on the other hand, categorically rejects classic theism and posits divine love as divine sympathy, the feeling of all others’ feelings. In this model, God is the supreme, all-inclusive mind and compound individual of the world, not identical or equivalent to the world, but more than the world (panentheism). God is essentially related to the world such that God needs some world (though not this particular world) to exist. However, God’s existence is itself necessary while his actuality is contingent and, hence, the existence of some world is necessary. The divine-world relationship is understood within the context of the indeterministic, relativistic, spatio-temporalistic panpsychism such that all reality is an interdependent creative synthesis of partially determined and self-determined minds interacting as both subjects and objects in process. Minds are related both internally and externally where the subject of an internal relation includes and is thus affected by its relata and the object of an external relation remains unaffected. God is the supreme subject, internally related to all and thus supremely relative and all-inclusive, as well as the supreme object, an object (but not the sole object) for every subject. The supreme mind as universal subject and object corresponds to the dual transcendence (dipolarity) of the divine nature wherein God eminently exemplifies the admirable characteristics of metaphysical contraries. These poles are ontologically distinguishable yet ontically inseparable such that God is the absolute-relative, abstract-concrete, potential-actual, necessary-contingent, universal-particular, supreme compound individual. Just as the subject includes its object, God as the universal subject (concrete and relative) includes the
universal object (abstract and absolute). He is the self-surpassing surpasser of all, the transcendental relativity (surrelativism). Although God is relationally all-inclusive, he cannot be wholly identified with (pantheism), nor wholly differentiated from (classic theism) the world. He includes the world yet is more than the world (panentheism).

Since God is internally related to all minds and thus all-inclusive he has immediate (non-mediated, direct) relations, meaning that he directly feels all the feelings of the world and changes accordingly. This essential relation of God to the world is God’s universal sympathy, which is identical to his love. As ethically immutable God always loves all others with perfect adequacy, yet also grows (aesthetic perfectibility) and enjoys the ever-increasing value of the world that he includes as the supremely relative all-inclusive compound individual of the world. God’s love for the world as universal subject eminently affects him, partly determining his life in joy and suffering. The world’s love for God as the universal object deeply affects the world and partly determines the course of reality as God aims at the harmonious happiness of all. While God is universally affected as universal subject (and thus partially determined) he may also act by persuasion (but never coercion) upon all others as universal object such that when God moves himself he thereby creates the necessary condition (but not the sufficient condition) for the effect of the world as the interdependent, creative synthesis of social process. God is thus the most moved but also possesses the greatest compossible power.

As such, divine love, which itself constitutes the God-world relation, is dynamically relational, emotional, and supremely passible, in stark contrast to the conception of the transcendent-voluntarist model. Accordingly, for this model, love itself describes the panentheistic ontology of the creative synthesis of social reality. God as the supreme, all-inclusive mind and thus the supreme lover, the compound individual of the world who is the eminently relative all-sympathizer, not identical or equivalent to the world, but more than the world, is love—the self-loving lover of all who is loved by all.
The transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models of love and divine ontology are thus mutually exclusive of one another. There could be no resolution of the conflict of interpretations regarding divine love without drastic revision of one or both ontologies since there is an irreconcilable difference between the transcendent, sovereignly willed, unaffected and unenriched election love of the transcendent-voluntarist model and the all-sympathetic, immanent, affected and enriched, direct and adequate, desire-filled feeling love of the immanent-experientialist model.

Chapter 3 concluded by presenting numerous examples of other, recent reactions to both models, which demonstrated the current dissatisfaction in light of the conflict of interpretations with regard to the definition of divine love itself as well as underlying ontology. At the juncture of the ongoing conflict of interpretations is whether God and humans can enter into a reciprocal love relationship, whether divine love is purely giving or might also receive and/or enjoy value, whether divine love can rightly be thought of as arbitrary election love or whether it is undifferentiated universal love or something else, and whether God’s love is purely willed or may also be passive and experiential. The extent of the conflict between the models of divine love and the current dissatisfaction with both models served to indicate the potential for paradigm change, warranting investigation of the biblical data to ascertain whether progress in overcoming the perceived shortcomings of the models is attainable through a canonical methodology.

The Canonical Investigation of Divine Love in Relation to the World

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 shifted to the investigation of a canonical and systematic model in order to address the conflict of interpretations. Chapters 4 and 5 presented the canonical data of the OT and NT that were inductively collected from a broad reading of the entire canon that analyzed any texts and/or passages that might provide potential answers to the systematic questions raised in chapter 3, which revolve around whether God’s love is unilateral or reciprocal, giving and/or receiving, unilaterally willed beneficence or inclusive of desire, enjoyment, and the
reception of value, impassible or passionate, partial and/or universal, necessary or unnecessary, and conditional and/or unconditional. In both chapters most of the data were grouped under five rubrics that were extracted from the canonical text: the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and relational natures of divine love.

Chapter 4 first introduced and surveyed the most prominent word group of divine love in the OT, הָעָבָדָן, which may be used to refer to everything from the most virtuous love of affection and generosity, to a “love” that is more akin to lust and fades quickly after its rapacious selfishness is satisfied. Positively, הָעָבָדָן may connote intense affection and emotion, including delight, rejoicing, favor, et al., whether of human or divine agency. Divine הָעָבָדָן has an apparently volitional aspect, often related to, but not identical with, divine choice (election) but also evaluative and/or emotive, conditional though unmerited, and directed toward the ideal of mutual love (הָעָבָדָן) as evidenced in the abundance of commands for human love toward God as well as examples of actual love (הָעָבָדָן) toward God. Further, contrary to the influential view that הָעָבָדָן is often merely technical treaty language bereft of affection, divine הָעָבָדָן is not purely “covenantal,” descriptive of a merely legal, lord-vassal treaty relationship, but depicts the type of emotional and affectionate הָעָבָדָן manifested in kinship relationships.

Similarly, chapter 5 introduced and surveyed the two most prominent word groups of divine love in the NT, αγάπη and φιλία. The αγάπη word group, similar to the הָעָבָדָן word group, which it very frequently translates in the LXX, displays a broad range of meaning including love that is affectionate, warm, concerned with, and interested in its object(s), love in the sense of high regard, value, and appreciation for its object(s), love that includes enjoyment, pleasure, and fondness, preferential love (whether proper or improper), and love demonstrated in action, often of a beneficent nature. However, αγάπη is not exclusively unilateral, indifferent, beneficent, giving love toward the unworthy and thus non-evaluative, purely altruistic generosity, unconditional, utterly spontaneous, and impassible. Further, contrary to the view of some, αγάπη
is not uniquely descriptive of the highest divine love distinct from and exclusive of other, supposedly lesser, terms of love (i.e., *eros, φιλέω*) but may itself describe negative love. The significant increase in usage of the *ἀγαπάω* word group in the LXX and NT does not posit *ἀγαπάω* as a qualitatively greater kind of love but is likely explained by a linguistic shift around the time of the LXX. While *eros* is absent altogether in the NT and appears very rarely in the OT LXX, the *φιλέω* word group may also describe the highest of love, divine love itself, and overlaps significantly (even interchangeably in many contexts) with the range of meaning of the *ἀγαπάω* word group. The *φιλέω* word group may connote affectionate love, fondness, attraction, concern, special interest, and/or enjoyment/pleasure in or valuing of someone or something, often appearing in the context of close association with the potential connotation of belonging, at times in the sense of friendship or family but extending to virtually any kind of association.

The Volitional Aspect of Divine Love in the OT and NT

With the background of the most prominent OT and NT word groups in place, both chapters proceeded to discuss the volitional aspect of divine love toward creatures, which is neither necessary nor strictly arbitrary, closely associated with the divine will and election, but not exclusive of evaluation and emotion. Chapters 4 and 5 first introduced the prominent terminology relative to the volitional aspect of divine love. Chapter 4 surveyed the *ἐλέη* and *ἐλέη* word groups, while chapter 5 surveyed the semantics of election in the NT including the *θέλω*, *βούλομαι*, *ἐκλέγομαι*, and *καλέω* word groups.

The *πρό* word group is most often translated as favor or grace, and may refer to a positive, favorable disposition and/or action from one to another and may refer to God’s favor or grace toward someone whether arbitrarily bestowed or based on positive evaluation and/or conditionality of appropriate response. *πρό* is the primary term of divine election or choice in the OT and thus depicts strong volition, though it often also connotes evaluation and examination as part of such decision or in reference to a desire or that which is desirable. It is often associated
with divine love but should not be conflated with it and sometimes refers to unfulfilled divine desires and overlaps with God’s desire and delight.

The terms of God’s will and election in the NT similarly relate closely with divine love but are not identical thereto and evidence not only divine volition but also divine desire, delight, and evaluation as well as the fact that God’s will is not always carried out. The sense of God’s will, desire, or that which God takes pleasure in may be depicted by both the ἐλέω and βοῦλομαι but both also refer, at times, to God’s unfulfilled desires. NT terms of election, the ἐκλέγομαι and καλέω word groups, refer with divine agency to God’s election and calling respectively, often with the connotation of evaluation. Both may connote the sense of an invitation that may be (or may have already been) accepted or rejected. Thus, the “called” and “elect” as they relate to the objects of divine love and/or salvation are not thus by God’s unilateral decision. God’s decision to love at all is a necessary but not sufficient condition for “the called” and the “elect.”

In both the OT and NT, election is often for a vocational purpose and never amounts to arbitrary election of an individual or group to salvation. While election may be undeserved and foreconditional, its attendant privileges are not unconditional, wholly arbitrary, or unending. God’s people are not automatically privy to God’s covenantal promises, which contain elements of conditionality and unconditionality. This relational responsiveness is often depicted by kinship metaphors such as the parent-child and marriage metaphors, both of which connote the voluntary and affectionate nature of the divine-human love relationship. Further, God has the right to bestow mercy and compassion even on those who are egregiously undeserving but does not arbitrarily elect those who will receive mercy in exclusion to others. Divine election imposes conditions and responds to human responsibility, and the divine will is not depicted in the OT or NT as unilaterally efficacious. Indeed, the divine will may be unfulfilled and shows evidence of being affected and evaluative, relative to that which God desires, wants, and delights in.
Although unilateral election is not taught in the OT or NT, the priority and importance of
divine volition to the divine-human love relationship is readily apparent in the correspondence
(but not identity) between love and election. According to the canonical data of both testaments,
divine love is volitionally free, not the product of necessity, and itself the basis of the divine-
human relationship including election, covenant, and blessing. Further, the relationship of love
and election overlaps with evaluation, even delight. In this way, the volitional aspect of divine
love is complementary to evaluation and emotion and is not arbitrarily differential. As such,
though the status of God’s elect is unmerited, it is nevertheless conditional and must be
maintained by appropriate human response to God. The elect are not only those loved by God but
those who love God (and others) in return.

The Evaluative Aspect of Divine Love in the OT and NT

Chapters 4 and 5 moved to the evaluative aspect of divine love in the OT and NT,
focusing on the data that support the thesis: Divine love is not indifferent or disinterested, but
evaluative. First, the significant terms γῆρ and πράψιμον were surveyed in chapter 4, both of which
associate closely with δίκαιον at times and are often used with divine agency to portray God’s often
emotive and evaluative desire, delight, and/or evaluative will or wish. Chapter 5 surveyed two
terms that overlap between the conceptual spheres of election and evaluative love, ἀγαπητός and
εὐδοκέω, as well as the even more explicitly evaluative term of pleasure, the ἀφιλοκόμω word group
among others. The εὐδοκέω word group corresponds to the πράψιμον and γῆρ word groups, often
translating them in the LXX, and generally denotes desire, pleasure, delight, satisfaction,
approval, preference, and/or enjoyment of an object or course of action. Often, the preference,
desire, or delight is evaluative, directed at that which brings pleasure and/or is worthy of
selection. Neither the OT nor NT terms refer to a unilaterally effective divine will but may refer
even to God’s unfulfilled desire.


ἀγαπητός, like the passive participle of ἀγαπάω, generally denotes an object of special relationship to the subject, thus beloved, one who is dearly loved, prized, and/or valued. Accordingly, the term may entail divine evaluation and affection, delight, and/or pleasure in someone who is party to a special relationship and thus relates conceptually to other such descriptors of special relationship to God such as the elect, called, and/or brethren. The ἄρεσκω word group refers to that which is pleasing, acceptable, often used with both human and divine agency, consistently in reference to grounded, evaluative pleasure.

After such word studies, chapter 5 presented two brief topical summaries that demonstrated the existence and virtue of evaluative love. First, the numerous instances of misdirected love were surveyed, showing that the NT assumes that appropriate love includes proper evaluation. Second, the objection that true love is altruistic was briefly examined according to the NT data that support the concept of proper self-regard. Self-sacrificial love is sometimes demanded by the context but is not itself ideal love. Divine love thus includes appropriate self-interest that is not exclusive to other-interest.

Both chapters proceeded after such preliminaries to survey the evidence for evaluative love, providing clear canonical evidence that God has profound desires and is affected by the disposition of humans toward him such that God’s delight and enjoyment are evaluative. God can and does receive love and enjoy, delight in, and garner pleasure from his creatures. For example, divine appraisal is evident in the repeated statements of God’s delight in, or desire for, heartfelt, sincere devotion to him, which is contrasted with merely external sacrifices. Thus, the distinction between those who are pleasing or approved by God and those who are displeasing to him as well as the status of elect is not the result of arbitrary election but is grounded in the actual state of affairs. God may be displeased with his people and even come to hate them, but such displeasure is never arbitrary but always evaluative.

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Humans, though sinful, may bring value to God through the prevenient action of God, signified by the typical sacrificial system in the OT, which pointed toward the antitype, Christ, who mediates human offerings so that they may be acceptable to God and truly bring him pleasure. In all this, God’s love is such that he often manifests emotions of delight and/or joy over his people. In the NT, Christ himself is the object of the Father’s evaluative love. In both testaments, God’s people are his delight, even the apple of his eye; he often rejoices over them and accepts their offerings and in the future will rejoice over them with joy.

The Emotional Aspect of Divine Love in the OT and NT

Chapters 4 and 5 proceeded to present the canonical data regarding the emotional aspect of God’s love, which leads to the conclusion that God’s love is profoundly emotional though not to the exclusion of volitional and evaluative aspects. First, the semantics of compassion and passion in the OT were surveyed. Both the OT and NT utilize significant terminology to depict God’s profoundly emotional mother-love or compassion, which is signified by the word group of ἐλεέω in the OT and the ὀικτίρω, ὀικτίρμω, and σπλαγχνίζομαι word groups in the NT. ἐλεέω includes mercy but is more than mercy; it is an emotional love, a compassionate affection that often is manifested in merciful, non-obligatory action that goes beyond reasonable expectations. Likewise, the ὀικτίρω and σπλαγχνίζομαι word groups refer to God’s intensely emotional compassion and correspond to the OT terminology in this regard. The basic meaning of the ἐλεέω word group, which corresponds in many respects to ἔμαθε and ἐμοθίνει in the OT, may include mercy, lovingkindness, heartfelt concern, compassion and/or sympathy of a strongly emotive character that is often explicitly manifested in action.

Throughout the OT and NT, God’s compassionate and gracious nature is manifest in intense affection and compassion for the plight of human beings, which results in corresponding action and extends far beyond any responsibility and reasonable expectations, including that of the covenant. God’s compassion is greater than that of the gentle, caring shepherd; it is even more
passionate and heartfelt than that of the mother for her suckling child. The emotional love of God for his people is often depicted by way of kinship metaphors in both testaments, especially the parental and marriage metaphors. The central themes of both kinship metaphors are God’s enduring and faithful affection and their continual infidelity such that God’s love is often left unrequited. In the NT, Christ is often moved to compassion by the plight of people in much the same way that YHWH’s compassionate love is manifest in the OT.

Repeatedly throughout the canon, God’s freely-given, amazing compassion is recounted as the unfailing basis of his merciful, redemptive action, often responsive to human entreaty. However, God’s compassion is not unilaterally constant but conditional; it is sometimes bestowed prior to any conditions but ultimately its continuance requires true repentance as is poignantly displayed in the husband-bride metaphor throughout Hosea. Although compassion cannot be earned, it must be received; God’s call seeks to evoke response.

Throughout the canon, divine compassion is complemented by divine passion; God is both אֱלֹהִים (Deut 4:24) and זָהָב (Deut 4:31). That is, God is the compassionate and passionate lover. In the OT, the word group אֱלֹהִים denotes the very strong emotions of ardor and intense passion, related to a basic sense of zeal, passion, or jealousy, for that which belongs to one, or envy for that which belongs to someone else. With divine agency it never refers to envy or any other negative connotation of jealousy but always to God’s appropriate passion and ardent love for that which rightfully belongs to him. Chapter 5 introduced the צְלִיפּוּה word group, which in the NT corresponds in meaning to the אֱלֹהִים word group.

God is intensely concerned for his people, yet human beings often provoke God to anger. God’s displeasure is never arbitrary but always a result of human action, which provokes God to anger and even hatred and animosity. Because of God’s passionate love, he is grieved and vexed and provoked to jealousy when his people are unfaithful to him—the rightful passion that God has for the exclusive relationship with his people. God’s profound love itself prompts God to care
enough about his people to discipline them. Though God is often pained by the infidelity of his creatures, he is likewise greatly affected by their suffering. Indeed, the longsuffering of God’s love stands in stark contrast to the fleeting nature of his anger. Thus, God’s passion is balanced by his compassion, both of which described his wider love. Throughout Israel’s history, there is a recurring pattern of apostasy/loss of blessing/return/restoration of blessing/apostasy, and yet, divine compassion. God repeatedly wills, and longs for, a harmonious reconciliation with his wayward people, and his compassion and grace make such reconciliation possible, but he does not unilaterally effectuate relationship.

The Foreconditional Aspect of Divine Love in the OT and NT

This section of chapters 4 and 5 focused on data that support the thesis that God’s love is foreconditional and thus not altogether unconditional; bestowed prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. Before the evidence of the foreconditionality of love itself was surveyed, chapter 4 presented the meaning of הַסְדִּיק (“steadfast love, lovingkindness”), which overlaps not only with the foreconditionality of love but also with many other aspects of divine love. הַסְדִּיק, one of the most significant descriptors of God’s character in the entire Scriptures, is relational conduct and/or attitude in accord with the highest virtues (love, loyalty, goodness, kindness) and beneficial to another, which meets and exceeds all expectations (often manifested in mercy and forgiveness), in which the agent is ontologically free to act otherwise, and is responsive to and/or creates or maintains the expectation (but not hard obligation) of appropriate response from the recipient. It is often translated as lovingkindness, steadfast love, loyalty, goodness, faithfulness, mercy, etc., and may connote love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, yet also faithfulness, loyalty, and strength.

Following the survey of הַסְדִּיק, chapter 4 explained the conditionality of divine beneficence, which overlaps in many regards with the foreconditionality of love. Though God’s commitment to covenant is exceedingly enduring, the covenant relationship cannot continue forever without
positive human response in accord with the expectations of God. Likewise, chapter 5 began with an excursus on the foreconditional nature of divine blessing. In many ways, the contingency of divine blessing parallels that of divine love. Love is not identical to beneficence but the latter is an outgrowth of the former, while both are foreconditional. That is, God’s love, as well as the frequent beneficent actions that flow from it, is unmerited, but not altogether unconditional.

Throughout the canon, the ontological, logical, and chronological priority of divine love is emphasized. From the unmerited election of Israel to those who love God because he loved us first in the NT, God is the sole initiator of the divine-human love relationship. His love is amazingly enduring and he freely grants mercy and compassion to undeserving people who have forfeited the privileges of their special relationship with God. God’s foreconditional love for the world itself makes it possible for anyone who believes to be saved.

God’s love endures beyond all reasonable expectations and is everlasting in some respects. Yet, the endurance of the relationship in particular is contingent upon appropriate human response, itself enabled by God’s own prevenient action. On the other hand, there are numerous instances throughout the OT that display the conditionality of love, including its potential forfeiture, which may even elicit divine hatred. Likewise, the NT states that obedience and love toward Jesus evokes the love of the Father and that of the Son. Such examples depict reciprocal, conditional, motivated, and evaluative love such that divine love may be contingent upon and responsive to human action. If both the statements that suggest God’s love is everlasting as well as those that refer to the forfeiture of divine love are taken seriously, it appears that divine love is everlasting in some respect(s), yet may nevertheless be discontinued. Thus, although the origination of divine love is foreconditional and unmerited, the continuance of his love and the attendant, promised, covenant blessings are contingent and conditional upon the human response.

As such, despite the enduring quality of divine love, it is not unilaterally permanent. God’s love, lovingkindness, and compassion may be withdrawn, contingent upon the actions of the people. Human response to divine love is never primary but always secondary, impossible
apart from God’s initiative. However, response is necessary, divine forbearance and patience will not continue forever; it has a limit. That is, God bestows love freely to his creatures foreconditionally, but the continued reception of that love, and attendant personal love relationship with God, is conditional upon appropriate human response to God’s initiating love. Such a view is bolstered by, though not necessarily dependent on, interesting parallels between the biblical covenants and the grant type of covenant in the ANE. As such, God’s love is, in and of itself, everlasting and granted prior to conditions but its continued reception is conditional upon appropriate human response. This is the foreconditionality of divine love.

The Relational and Multilateral Aspect of Divine Love in the OT and NT

The final sections of chapters 4 and 5 present the canonical evidence regarding the multilaterally relational aspect of divine love. God’s desire for reciprocal relationship is evident in the many commands for humans to love God. Moreover, beyond the many commands of love toward God there are numerous instances that manifest actual human love toward God in both the OT and the NT. Importantly, God not only desires love toward himself but also expects his people to love their fellow human beings: neighbors and aliens, which, indirectly, amounts to love toward God. God’s passion for this relationship may result in temporary chastening when appropriate, but ultimately divine blessings will overflow upon those who respond to God in love, in accordance with God’s character of steadfast love. Keeping God’s commandments is itself a manifestation of one’s love for him, and divine love is also reciprocally responsive to such manifestations of human love throughout the canon.

In all this, God’s love is ideally set within the context of a reciprocal relationship predicated partially on human love for God. Accordingly, God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love but enters into and/or maintains particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately. Yet, since not all respond positively to God’s loving overtures, God does not love everyone equally, though he offers the opportunity for such love to all. Therefore,
there is both a particularity and universality to God’s love. God wants to include all humans in an intimate love relationship with himself but this requires that humans reciprocate God’s love and God does not irresistibly determine that humans love him.

That there is special divine love reserved for some seems apparent from the numerous instances that persons or groups are specified by terms of divine endearment including “beloved,” “elect,” “called,” etc., as well as the broad context of covenant relationality. Those who have entered into such a relationship will be “insiders” while those who reject God’s overtures will remain outsiders and, eventually, forfeit God’s universal, foreconditional love. In microcosm, the covenant people are treated as objects of God’s insider love, though the individuals within the covenant themselves may forfeit God’s love by scorning his overtures, as repeatedly took place in the history of Israel and Judah. Likewise, friendship is an example of such love that assumes a particular, as opposed to universal, relationship and is thus a form of preferential (but not arbitrary) love. Friendship with God, as all forms of “insider” love, is conditional upon appropriate human response.

However, despite the revelatory emphasis on the particular covenant relationship of God with Israel, God’s love and care extends beyond the bounds of covenant unto all peoples, though not in an undifferentiated manner. Likewise, in the NT, insider status is universally offered. God consistently seeks a reciprocal love relationship with all people. Those who are privy to an ongoing, particular, and intimate love relationship with God (thus “insiders) are those who respond appropriately to God in love. As such, all humans may reciprocate God’s love and thus enter into and/or maintain an intimate and particular love relationship with him. This particular, intimate, reciprocal love that God desires with human beings is not unilaterally effected by him. God initiates and makes all provisions for such a relationship but it is nevertheless conditional upon human response (i.e., foreconditional).
A Canonical and Systematic Model of Divine Love in Relation to the World

Chapter 6 revealed and summarized the broad outline of a canonical and systematic model of divine love in relation to the world, with implications for divine ontology and the nature of God’s relationship to the world. The five major theses, inductively derived from the canonical text, describe divine love as volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and ideally reciprocal, and were described and explained systematically.

First, divine love is volitional but not merely volitional. This contrasts with the transcendent-voluntarist model and immanent-experientialist models of divine love. The former proposes that God is the sole giver but never the receiver of love such that divine love is purely volitional and unilateral, arbitrarily willed, pure beneficence (thematic agape) to the utter exclusion of desire and/or enjoyment (thematic eros). The latter contends that love is not volitional but descriptive of an essential, and thus ontologically necessary, relation between God and creatures.

That God’s love is volitional but not merely volitional means that it includes a free, volitional aspect that is not essential, necessary, or altogether arbitrary and is complementary to, not exclusive of, the other aspects of his love including evaluation and emotion. God is free to do otherwise than he does but has freely decided to love human beings; he is not compelled to love, essentially or otherwise. However, although God is ontologically free to disown his people, he will never arbitrarily remove his love. Yet, human beings may reject his love and disown him. Divine love is closely associated with God’s will and election, but the divine-human relationship is not unilaterally deterministic and God’s love is prior to, and the causal basis of, election. This volitional element of the divine-human love relationship, applied bilaterally, amounts to a rejection of determinism, process theology, and universalism.

Second, divine love is not indifferent or disinterested but evaluative. The immanent-experientialist model contends that as the feeler of all feelings God’s joy and pleasure are bound
up with the world due to the ontological relationship between them such that God benefits or
suffers along with all the joys or sorrows of the world. The transcendent-voluntarist model, on the
other hand, believes God is only the benefactor but never the beneficiary in the divine-human
relationship. God as self-sufficient cannot actually enjoy, delight in, take pleasure in, or receive
value from the disposition and/or action of creatures, including their responsive love.

However, that divine love is not indifferent or disinterested but evaluative is evident in
that God repeatedly enjoys, delights in, takes pleasure in, and/or receives value from the
disposition and/or actions of creatures. On the other hand, God is displeased by evil, though his
animosity is never arbitrary. Though some suggest that God should not enjoy or receive value
from creatures but should be purely altruistic, God’s love includes a proper self-interest that, due
to his free decision, includes the best interests of all others. Far from being selfish, such divine
love is truly sympathetic, manifested in Christ’s self-sacrifice in response to evil. Further, while
humans can bring no value to God and are unworthy of love in and of themselves, God has
partially and temporarily suspended judgment. In the meantime, Christ functions as mediator such
that meager human offerings, themselves only possible because of God’s prevenient grace, may
be received as pleasing and acceptable to God. However, there will be final judgment, including
the eradication of all evil, but until then God bestows undeserved love universally on sinful
humans toward his ultimate end of divine-human love relationship.

Third, God’s love is profoundly emotional and affective though not to the exclusion of
volitional and evaluative aspects. The immanent-experientialist model views God as utterly
passible, the universal feeler of all others’ feelings, such that love is identical with God’s
universal sympathy, and thus indiscriminate rather than evaluative. On the other hand, the
transcendent-voluntarist model presupposes the impassibility of God, that is, God cannot be
affected by anything external to God; he has no passions.

However, the canonical data demonstrate that God’s love is emotional, including deep
affection and concern for creatures. However, his love is not merely emotional but also volitional
and evaluative. Volition, evaluation, and emotion do not exclude one another, but God’s love manifests all three and expects reciprocal response of not merely external obedience without affection but internal obedience grounded in deep-seated affection, devotion, commitment, loyalty, and even passion. God is affectionate, loving, devotedly interested and intimately concerned, feeling sorrow, passion, and intense anger at evil, but also compassion and the desire to restore creatures to relationship with himself. God’s love is thus profoundly emotional but does not amount to undifferentiated sympathy.

Fourth, divine love is foreconditional, not altogether unconditional. For both the immanent-experientialist and transcendent-voluntarist models, divine love is unconditional and cannot be forfeited. In the immanent-experientialist model, God’s love is ontologically necessary because God is internally bound to the world. In the transcendent-voluntarist model God’s love is dependent only upon his unilateral and arbitrary will to love and thus unconditional, spontaneous, unmotivated, and ungrounded, and cannot be forfeited.

On the other hand, the foreconditionality of divine love means that God’s love is initiatory, prior to any human action, love, merit, or worth while at the same time God implements conditions for the reception and continuance of that love. Thus, divine love is not strictly unmotivated, spontaneous, or unconditional. God has freely decided to love human beings while expecting human response, which itself is only possible because of God’s prevenient love. In this way, divine love is foreconditional but never merited. While divine love is surpassingly enduring, steadfast, and reliable, it is not altogether constant or unconditional. Humans may reject God’s loving overtures and, eventually, forfeit his objective love. God’s purely subjective love, that is, his will to love his creatures, is unconditional while his objective love, including the benefits of divine love, is conditional and contingent upon human response. Further, the plan of salvation itself, that God will love a people, save them, etc., is unconditional. However, the specific recipients of that saving divine love are conditional. As such, humans can forfeit their place as beneficiaries in the relationship.
Finally, divine love is multilaterally relational. God universally seeks a relationship of reciprocal love with others but enters into particular, intimate relationship only with those who respond appropriately. In the immanent-experientialist model, love describes the essential relation between God and the world. Since all are internally related to God, divine love is universal; there is no object outside of God’s love. In the transcendent-voluntarist model, God’s love is universal only in the sense of “common love” but love unto salvation is reserved for those who are unilaterally elected by God; the rest are damned. God gives but never receives love; all love is solely the result of God’s unilaterally efficacious will.

However, according to this canonically derived, foreconditional-reciprocal model, God has chosen to bestow universal love with the intention of entering into a particular, love relationship that includes the reciprocation of divine love by its object(s). God strongly desires that human beings reciprocate his love and love those whom he himself loves in a multilateral love relationship even as the Father loves the Son and vice versa. However, although God’s foreconditional love is universal, God does not love all equally and uniformly. While God loves all with a universal and prevenient love aimed at drawing humans into relationship with him, God’s particular, relational love is conditional upon appropriate response, which he himself enables. Those who respond to God’s love become insiders as God’s beloved, elect, friends, etc. While God never unilaterally determines to remove his love from any object, any object of God’s love may reject intimate relationship with God and, if finally persistent in this regard, forfeit the reception of divine love altogether. On the other hand, all those who reciprocate God’s love will enjoy an unending love relationship with him in eternal bliss.

This canonically derived, foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love points to a number of potential ontological implications. First, God desires reciprocal relationship with human beings but does not effect his will unilaterally. Rather, he decided to grant significant freedom to his creatures while also himself possessing the freedom to do otherwise than he does. Accordingly, while God is omnipotent, God does not exercise all his power omnicausally but
bestows and allows creatures to affect history. In doing so, God has voluntarily limited the exercise of his power. Further, God is passible (though not passive) and may be affected by the disposition and/or actions of his creatures including enjoying and appreciating value in the world. Though God is passible, he is ontologically independent from the world as its creator, and self-sufficient with respect to existence. Yet, God has voluntarily bound his own interests (including his joy and/or sorrow) to the interests of his creatures while maintaining ontological independence from the world.

Importantly, God is by no means passive in this regard since he exerts enormous power in providentially guiding and affecting, but not unilaterally determining, this history toward his ultimate end. In all this, God’s essence and existence are independent of creatures. God is other than the world he has created and not ontologically bound to his creation. As such, it may be God’s essence to love (at least within the trinity) or be loving, but the specific objects of God’s love are not determined by his essence. God does not need to love creatures (indeed, he does not “need” to create at all) but has voluntarily chosen to love creatures toward a reciprocal love relationship.

Conclusions

This dissertation has addressed the irreconcilable conflict of interpretations between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models of divine love in relation to the world. By using a final-form canonical approach to systematic theology, a canonical and systematic model of divine love has been outlined that responds to the issues at the heart of the conflict of interpretations over the nature of divine love in relation to the world. This canonically derived, foreconditional-reciprocal model agrees with the transcendent-voluntarist model that divine love includes a crucial volitional element such that God voluntarily bestows his love on creatures and, in contrast to the immanent-experientialist model, God is not engaged in a relationship with creatures that is essential to his being. On the other hand, the foreconditional-
reciprocal model agrees with the immanent-experientialist model, in contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model, that divine love in relation to the world assumes divine experience of the world, which profoundly affects God (passibility) as God enjoys a reciprocal love relationship with creatures.

However, whereas divine volition excludes passibility in the transcendent-voluntarist model and divine sympathetic passibility excludes divine volition from love in the immanent-experientialist model, the foreconditional-reciprocal model posits that the volitional and emotional aspects of God’s love complement, rather than exclude, one another. God desires and voluntarily works toward a reciprocal relationship with all humans. This is in contrast to both the transcendent-voluntarist model, wherein God irresistibly elects only some humans as the recipients of his salvific love, and the immanent-experientialist model, where God’s love relationship to the world is indiscriminately universal and necessary to his being. God’s love is also affected by the choices and experiences of human beings, in keeping with the immanent-experientialist model but in contrast to the transcendent-voluntarist model. However, in contrast to both models, God’s experience of the world is evaluative such that God delights in those who respond positively to his love while those who reject God’s love finally forfeit their relationship with God.

In this way, the evaluative aspect of divine love complements and bridges the volitional and emotional aspects of divine love while pointing toward a further aspect that is overlooked by both models, the foreconditionality of divine love. Whereas both models assume that divine love is unconditional, the transcendent-voluntarist model due to the priority of the divine will and the immanent-experientialist model due to the necessary and essential relationship between God and the world, the foreconditional-reciprocal model recognizes that God bestows love prior to, but not exclusive of, conditions. Those who respond positively to God’s love enjoy an everlasting reciprocal love relationship with him, grounded in bilateral significant freedom, within the multilateral circle of divine love.
In all this, according to the foreconditional-reciprocal model, divine love in relation to the world is volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational and points toward a biblical-historical ontology. This research thus provides a path forward that is grounded in the canonical method, producing a model of divine love that addresses the issues raised by other models of divine love, is internally coherent, and rigorously corresponds to the canon of Scripture, while recognizing that this model is itself subject to revision and clarification in accordance with further canonical investigation.

**Suggestions for Further Study**

Further research may illuminate a number of areas related to the meaning of divine love in the context of the God-world relationship. There are abundant avenues for further research, including the implications this conception of divine love might hold for moral theology and other broad areas. However, only a few, more specific, lines of research will be suggested below.

First, there is room for further investigation into the canonical data regarding divine love, which might confirm or correct the foreconditional-reciprocal model outlined here. Second, since this dissertation focused on the revelation regarding one overarching divine characteristic and, upon that limited basis, suggested some potential implications for divine ontology, there is a great deal of work to be done toward investigating and articulating other aspects of divine ontology on the basis of a final-form canonical approach to systematic theology. Third, the conception of love derived from this investigation may have implications for the nature of intratrinitarian relations, regarding which further canonical investigation is needed.

Fourth, much work remains to be done regarding the nature of human and divine freedom in light of my suggestion of bilateral significant freedom derived from this foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love. While the debate over the nature of creaturely freedom in the history of theology is well-known, further attention should be given to the nature of divine freedom, specifically regarding the implications of God’s significant freedom to do otherwise.
than he does. This issue relates to the nature and extent of God’s freedom to love or not love.

Fifth, systematic exploration of the connection between the divine-human love relationship and God’s law, which itself corresponds to God’s love, would shed further light on God’s character of love and justice, the appropriate human response of love, and divine judgment (itself closely related to the evaluative aspect of divine love).

Sixth, the nature of God’s freedom is bound to the issue of the nature of God’s essence and existence and the manner of relationship between the two. Is God’s existence (life) determined by his essence (nature) or vice versa? Are they to be identified with one another or conceived in some other way? If God has significant freedom, as suggested in this work, it seems that God’s existence cannot be determined by his essence, but to what extent (if any) is God’s freedom limited by his nature? This relates to the question regarding the relationship of God’s love to his essence and his existence, regarding which the data of this study were not sufficient to provide a sufficient answer.

Seventh, considerable work is needed with regard to the nature of divine personality and relationality. This dissertation contends that God’s love is passible and thus God is indeed affected by the world. How does this relate to God’s nature, immutability, personhood, etc.? The particularity of divine love depicted in this study requires relationally responsive personhood. What is the nature of divine personality and how does it relate to the age-old questions of ontology and metaphysics?

Finally, this dissertation has come to the conclusion that love is manifest in action though not identical with action. Since one could make the case that all God’s actions are loving, this dissertation focused on divine actions only as they related to the specific questions of this study. However, further research into the loving nature of God’s actions, overlapping with theodicy, would further illuminate the full extent of God’s love and goodness. Such investigation might also shed further light on the issues of God’s action in relation to the final destiny of God’s creatures, further addressing such issues as universalism, hell, and the divine plan of salvation.
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