

TRINITARIAN AGAPE

I Jn 4:21-5:12

I. ROOTED IN TRINITARIAN DOGMA (both Eternal/Internal/Essential and Economic/Relational)

- A. Biblical Data: Gn 1:26; Is 6:8; Ps 2:7; Mt 28:19; Jn 14-17)
- B. Dogma's Development: Irenaeus; Tertullian; Hilary of Poitiers; Augustine; The Cappadocians (Basil; Gregory of Nyssa; Gregory Nazianzus);
- C. Creeds Define (Apostles; Nicene; Athanasian; Westminster) confirm, transmit

II. REFLECTING INSIGHTS INTO DIVINE PERSONS

- A. Father, as *Agape*: Generative/Procreative—**Life-Giving; Resourceful**
 - 1. “Let there be” light; firmament; lights; creatures; man (Gn 1)—thus *agape* creative, caring for creation
 - 2. Eternally begetting His Son (Jn 3:16) Who Is “the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation” (Col 1:15)—thus *agape* procreative, pro-life
 - 3. Eternally energizing/inspiring) “Comforter/Helper,” the “Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father” (Jn 15:26)—thus *agape* energizes, strengthens
- B. Son, as *Agape*: *Logos*/Truth-full Savior—**Logos-Ordering; Reasonable**
 - 1. “In the beginning was the *Logos*/Word” Who “was God” (Jn 1:1)—thus *agape* as *logos* indicates a *reasonableness* attuned to the nature of things
 - 2. Son's Sacrifice shows *agape*-in-action, laying down his life—thus *agape* self-sacrificial, giving of oneself, obeying Father
 - 3. Salvation comes by believing in Son (Jn 3:16) as Savior—thus *agape* assents to Truth revealed in Son as Word & further assents to, lives by Truth evident in “all things [that were] created by Him” (Col 1:16)
- C. Spirit, as *Agape*: *Paraclete*/Comforter—**Love-Empowering, Relational**
 - 1. Comforter/Helper/Strengthener (Jn 14:16)—thus *agape* empowers, extends helping hand, provides inner strength, encourages
 - 2. Teacher/Enlightener/Inspirer (Jn 14:26)—thus *agape* illuminates Truth, inspires understanding, clarifies language, orchestrates logical thought
 - 3. Witness (Jn 15:26; Rom 8:16) to Christ—thus *agape* stands up for Christ, giving witness to His nature and work
 - 4. Intercessor (Rom 8: 26-27) for us and others—thus *agape* prays & works for good here & hereafter

III. TRIUNE GOD: THREE PERSONS, OF ONE SUBSTANCE, ENJOYING Communion/Society/Fellowship—loving relations, retaining distinctives & sharing being, life together

IV. THEREFORE: Loving Neighbors (in accord with divine *AGAPE*) includes:

- A. Being Procreative—**Life-Giving, Resourceful**
- B. Being Mindful—**Logos-Ordering, Reasonable**
- C. Being Active (*Paraclete*-inspired)—**Love-Empowering, Relational**

Athanasian Creed (500 A.D.)

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternals, but one Eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three gods, but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet not three lords, but one Lord.

For as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge each Person by Himself to be both God and Lord, so we are also forbidden by the catholic religion to say that there are three gods or three lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three fathers; one Son, not three sons; one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

And in the Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another, but all three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved must think thus of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect man, of a rational soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching His godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His manhood; who, although He is God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one, not by conversion of the godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God; one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into heaven, He sits at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the quick and the dead. At His coming all men will rise again with their bodies and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

GOD IS LOVE

--in Thomas Oden, *The Living God*

“Nowhere is God defined more concisely than in the First Epistle of John: ‘God is love’ (I John 4:16; cf. Hilary, *Trin.* IX.61). That God is love implies that benevolent affection, good will, and empathetic understanding are the characteristic qualities in God through which God relates compassionately to creatures. If God is love, then in order to grasp what love is we can do no better than to look at the outpouring of God’s energies at work in the redemption of sin: ‘This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins’ (I John 4:10)” (p. 118).

“Love is God’s desire to communicate the depth of divine goodness to each and every creature and to impart appropriate goods to all creatures proportional to their capacity to receive the good (Tho. Aq., SCG, I.91, pp. 277-82)” (p. 118).

“We are not without some knowledge of love as human beings, for no person can grow to maturity without it. Love is a confluence of two seemingly paradoxical impulses: the hunger for the desired object and the desire to do good for the beloved. One impulse takes and the other gives. In Greek, the passion to possess another is called *eros*, whereas self-giving love is called *agape*. They are in tension in all human love” (p. 119).

“Self-love means that the self is both the lover and the one loved. Ironically it is self-love that best proves that love requires two, a lover and beloved, even if the self is counted twice. It is not a heresy in Christian teaching to say that God loves himself, for what more worthy and beautiful object of love could be conceived? We are called to love God ‘as ourselves’ (Luke 10:27), thus assuming that we will be loving ourselves, prizing ourselves, acknowledging our own worth, and putting a high value upon our own lives” (pp. 120-121).

“God *is* love in these two senses—enjoyment of the beloved, and self-giving for the beloved’s good—in perfect fullness, balance, harmony, and completeness. God *feels the worth of creatures* and *longs to do them good*. Because God loves in both of these ways in full and fitting balance, we say that God is love. God loves creatures in the first form (*eros*) of desiring and loving to hold them, in possessing and enjoying them, as parents enjoy children. In perfect desire God desires creatures to be what they can be. But this perfect enjoyment melds with the second dimensions of love, *agape*, the will to be radically for creatures even when creatures are stubbornly against themselves” (pp. 121-122).

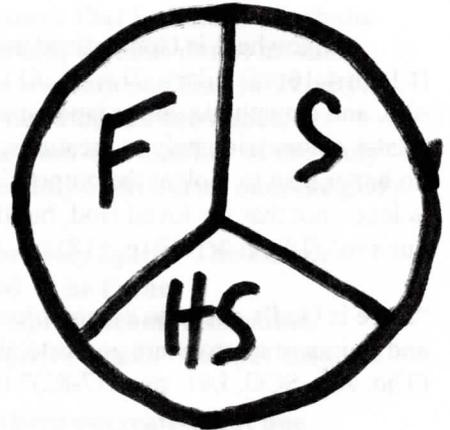
“God is holy love. Holiness and love point directly to the center of the character of God. In God’s holiness all of God’s moral excellences are summed up and united. In God’s love, God’s holiness is manifested in relation to creatures. God loves by desiring to impart holiness to creatures” (p. 123).

NON-TRINITARIAN VIEWS

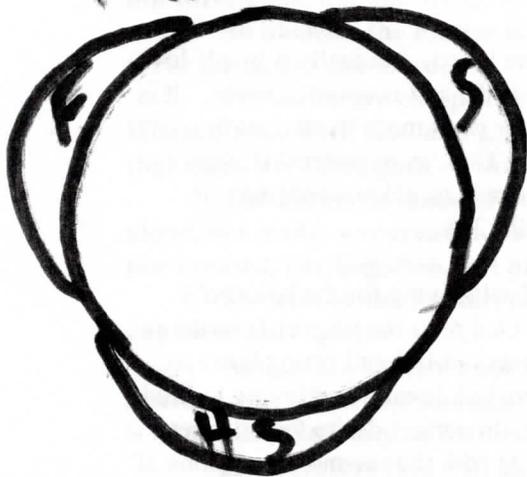
SABELLIANISM



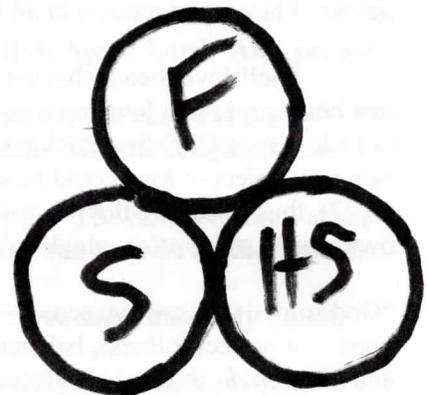
INTERNAL COMPARTMENTS



PERSONS APPENDED



TRITHEISM



TRINITARIAN ORTHODOXY



PERICHORESIS