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The Problem of Total Devotion

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THE PROBLEM

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:4). This text, which holds a place of honor both in Judaism and in Christianity, expresses a demand for devotion—for total devotion—which is central to theistic religion quite generally. The problem that I mean to discuss can be seen as arising when this demand is paired, as it is by Jesus, with another familiar commandment of religious ethics: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39). If love to God is to occupy all our heart and soul and strength, what will be left to love or care about our neighbor? This problem has troubled many religious thinkers, notably including St. Augustine, who states it by saying that when God commanded us to love him "with the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole mind, he left

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no part of our life that should be free and (as it were) leave room to want to enjoy something else."[1]

There may be something misleading about this formulation of the problem, although Augustine is not the only thinker to have posed it in these terms.[2] The heart, after all, is not like a dwindling reserve of petroleum, and love cannot be conserved by hoarding it. We might be tempted to think the whole problem merely verbal, a sophistical trick, because in some contexts 'with all your heart' can be a synonym of 'wholeheartedly', signifying only an unconflicted enthusiasm, which does not imply that one has no emotional force left to sustain any distinct and independent motive.

Nevertheless, I believe there is a real problem here. Religious devotion is more than wholeheartedness or unconflicted enthusiasm. It is supposed to occupy a person's life so fully that nothing is left outside the realm in which it reigns. The history of spirituality affords many testimonies to the sweeping character of the claims of devotion to God—not least in the frequency with which independent interests in finite things have been seen as rivals and threats to religious devotion and, figuratively speaking, as a form of "idolatry," offering to the creature what properly belongs to God alone. The problem, then, is not essentially one of the distribution of scarce emotional resources. The problem is rather how a genuine and serious interest in something finite (such as love for one's neighbor) can be a part of one's life that at the same time expresses love for God—as it must, if one's whole life is to be devoted to God.

When I say that the problem of total devotion is a real problem, I do not mean that it is an open question whether devotion to God is compatible with love for one's neighbor. Many (perhaps all) theistic traditions can point to saints who have manifested both qualities in exemplary fashion. St. Francis and Gandhi and Mother Teresa come quickly to mind. Typically the saints themselves would deny that they have arrived at the point of loving God with absolutely all their heart and soul and strength or at the point of loving their neighbor perfectly as themselves. But it would be quite implausible to suppose that their love of neighbor only slips through the gaps left by the imperfection of their love for God. On the contrary, their love of neighbor seems to be

1. Aurelius Augustinus, *De doctrina Christiana* I, xxii, 21. I translate from the text in *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum,* vol. 80, ed. William M. Green (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963). A widely available English translation is by D. W. Robertson, Jr., *On Christian Doctrine* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958).

2. Cf. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics* (Lasalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1962), p. 40.

highly integrated with, and supported by, their love of God and not in conflict with it. Our problem, then, is not one of establishing the possibility of the union of these loves but of understanding how it is possible.

Maybe the best way of reaching this understanding would be to study the lives of the saints, but I shall follow a more abstract approach here. First I will present and criticize an influential solution offered by St. Augustine. Then other possible contributions to a solution will be considered, culminating in those that seem to me most satisfying.

AUGUSTINE'S TELEOLOGICAL SOLUTION

"Whoever rightly loves a neighbor," according to St. Augustine, ". . . loving him as himself, pours back all the love of himself and of the neighbor into that love of God which suffers no stream to be led away from it by whose diversion it might be diminished."[3] The problem, of course, is how this is to be done. Augustine's clearest answer is in terms of the subordination of means to end. He distinguishes between *enjoying* something and *using* it. "For to enjoy is to cling with love to some thing for its own sake [*propter se ipsam*]; whereas to use is to apply what is used to the obtaining of that which you love (provided it ought to be loved)."[4] What is used, in other words, is treated as a means to the end of enjoyment. Augustine introduces this distinction in order to make the point that God is to be enjoyed but other things, his finite creatures, ought only to be used. He likens us, in a memorable image, to exiles returning to their native land, in which alone they can find happiness. In such a case we would have to use various means of transport and other provisions in order to complete our trip. But "the pleasures of the journey" present a temptation: if we were "converted to enjoying those things that we ought to use," we would wish to prolong our travels instead of hastening home. In this way we would be alienated from our true country. "Thus, away from the Lord as wanderers in this mortal life, if we want to return to our own country where we can be blessed, we ought to use this world and not enjoy it."[5] St. Augustine explicitly applies this schema to the love of one's neighbor: "For it is commanded us to love each other; but it is a question whether man is to be loved by man for his own sake or for the sake of something else. For if for his own sake, we enjoy him; if for the sake of something else, we

3. *De doctrina Christiana* I, xxii, 21.
4. Ibid., I, iv, 4.
5. Ibid., I, iv, 4.

use him. But it seems to me that he is to be loved for the sake of something else. For as for what should be loved for its own sake, the blessed life consists in that. . . . But cursed is he who puts his hope in man."[6]

What does it mean, in this context, to speak of "using" one's neighbor and loving him "for the sake of" God? The most natural interpretation is in terms of a desire-plus-belief pattern of teleological reasons for desires. You desire a state of affairs *S* for the sake of an end *E* if you desire *S* because you desire *E* and believe that *S* would be conducive to *E*. If you desire *S* for its own sake, on the other hand, your motivation is not entirely of this sort; you desire *S* at least partly as an end in itself and not only because you desire *E* and believe that *S* would be conducive to *E*. Augustine clearly conceives of love as at least largely a matter of desire. If we love our neighbor, we will desire his well-being and will desire some relationship with him. If we love our neighbor for his own sake, we will desire these states of affairs for their own sake; whereas we will desire them only because we desire some divine end to which we believe them conducive if we love our neighbor only for God's sake, as St. Augustine thinks we ought. Thus we are to use our neighbor, desiring nothing regarding him except as a means or way of realizing the divine end. What is the divine end? Most of what Augustine says suggests that it is one's own enjoyment of God, and I shall assume that here. Other possibilities will be canvassed later.

This solution to the problem of total devotion, with St. Augustine's sponsorship, has had a powerful—and I think a baneful—influence on Western religious thought and practice. It has molded a great deal of asceticism, both Catholic and Protestant. A brief—and vivid—example is Jonathan Edwards's youthful resolution "that no other end but religion shall have any influence at all on any of my actions."[7] It would be unfair to suppose that these views are fully representative of Augustine. Much that he says about love, for instance, in his beautiful homilies on 1 John, seems to proceed from a more attractive conception of the relation between neighbor love and devotion to God. Nonetheless, he does endorse the doctrine that God is to be enjoyed and all other beings are to be used only as means to the enjoyment of God; to the best of my knowledge, he gives us no other solution to the problem of total devotion that is so clearly articulated as this one. I shall refer to it as "Augustine's teleological solution."

6. Ibid., I, xxii, 20.

7. *The Works of President Edwards: With a Memoir of His Life,* vol. 1, ed. Sereno Dwight (New York: S. Converse, 1829), p. 71.

Its clarity is doubtless one reason for the influence it has enjoyed, as is the centrality of means-end relationships to so much thinking about motivation. But there is also a profounder reason. Augustine's teleological solution of the problem of total devotion is rooted in his vision of human life as a quest for infinite satisfaction, fueled by a torrent of desire that cannot rest in anything less. This vision, which animates Augustine's famous narrative of his own life, is the very center of his apologetics, his case for theistic religion. Countless readers have found in it a persuasive picture of their own need and aspiration. And the great danger that attends the quest for infinite satisfaction, as Augustine sees it, is idolatry; it is the danger that we shall seek our infinite satisfaction, not in our invisible Creator, but in his visible creatures, who are by no means equipped to provide it. Experience testifies of this danger. How often do we seek from career or marriage, parents or children, a satisfaction that, if not infinite, is at least far more than they could ever give. We demand of them what only God could give and the results are unhappy. Augustine links this with the problem of total devotion in his statement that "as for what should be loved for its own sake, the blessed life consists in that." The implication is that, if we loved another human being for his or her own sake and not merely as a means to the enjoyment of God, we would be seeking our infinite satisfaction (idolatrously) in that fellow human. I do not think that is true, but if it were, Augustine's teleological solution of the problem of total devotion would be virtually forced on the theist.

The solution has unacceptable consequences, however. In the first place, if taken seriously, it imposes absurd restrictions on the enjoyment of the simple pleasures of life. Suppose I am offered the choice of eating either strawberries or apples, at equal cost and with a trusted physician's assurance of equal benefit to my health. Could Augustine approve of my choosing the strawberries just because I like their flavor better? Not in accordance with his theory of enjoying and using. For if I do choose the strawberries just because I prefer their flavor, I will be enjoying them, adhering to them for their own sake (or to their flavor for its own sake) and not just using them as means to the enjoyment of God.

Far more important for Christian ethics than sensory pleasures is the love of one's neighbor. The gravest disadvantage of Augustine's teleological solution of the problem of total devotion is that it does not allow for anything that really deserves the name of *love* of one's neighbor. For it implies that the neighbor is not to be loved for his own sake. His well-being and our fellowship with him are to be desired only as a means to our enjoyment of God. But what is really loved must be loved

for its own sake. Where something is regarded only as a means or instrument, we can say that we "value" it but not that we "love" it. I do not *love* my car, for example, unless it means something to me that transcends its resale value and its usefulness for transportation. Similarly, if I do not desire the neighbor's well-being, or any relationship with him, except because I believe it will help me to enjoy God as I desire, I do not love my neighbor. This is reason enough to reject Augustine's teleological solution to the problem of total devotion.

It is also reason to reject other solutions that differ from it only in the specification of the religious end to which all other ends are to be subordinate as mere instruments or means. Whether the end that dominates in this way be the vision of God or Christian perfection or the coming of God's Kingdom, there will in any case be no room for the neighbor really to be loved. If I desire your well-being or my relationship with you only because I believe it will be conducive to one of these divine ends, then I do not really love you. That is at least partly due to the fact that these ends do not essentially involve you. I could in principle see God or attain Christian perfection without you, and the Kingdom of God could come without you. If I am seeking nothing, at bottom, except in order to realize one of these ends, then it does not matter, except incidentally, that *you* are involved.

Love's religious desires

What about divine ends that do essentially involve particular neighbors? Might they afford a more satisfactory solution to the problem of total devotion? Two such ends come to mind. The first, a version of the neighbor's well-being, is that the neighbor enjoy God. The second, a relationship that I might desire with the neighbor, is that we enjoy God together. The second of these, at least, is a divine end for the sake of which St. Augustine seems in some passages to think the neighbor might be loved.[8] Desiring these ends for their own sake, we could love God *in* loving the neighbor. On the one hand, the neighbor could truly be loved in this way, because he is not incidental to these ends but essentially involved in them. We would be desiring his well-being and a good relationship with him for their own sake. On the other hand, God also would be loved in these desires; for a desire that those I love should enjoy God and that it should be God that we enjoy together expresses love for God no less than would a desire that I myself should enjoy God. Moreover, these are desires that we would in any event

8. *De doctrina Christiana* I, xxix, 30.

expect to find in one who loves both God and her neighbor, and they do commonly characterize the love that serious theists have for other people. Love for God will naturally give a certain shape to what we envisage and desire as good for people that we love and for our relationship with them.

The desire that the neighbor enjoy God with us illustrates a point about the sharing of love that deserves comment here. When we think of love's desire for relationships, we often think only of two-membered, one-to-one relationships. This is romantically appealing but unrealistic. To love another person is not necessarily to want to be alone in the universe with her. The relationships that we desire and prize with other people are not only two-person relationships but also three-person, four-person, and in general many-person relationships. We may arrange a dinner party because we want to relate to all of a specific group of people at the same time and to participate in their relation to each other. And when a person leaves a family or working unit or circle of friends, by divorce or taking a different job or going away to college, one feels sad, not just for the loss of a two-membered relationship, but for the loss of a many-membered relationship involving that person. Even where the one-to-one relationship can be maintained outside the group and the *n*-membered relationship in the group can be restructured as an *n*-minus-one-membered relationship, one is still apt to miss the specific *n*-membered relationship of which that person was an essential member. In such a case one does prize the individual person for her own sake, but the relationship one desires, while involving some one-to-one interaction, is a relationship of which other people are members, too.

To be unable to prize many-person relationships in this way, to insist exclusively on one-to-one relationships, would typically be evidence of possessiveness or jealousy. The possessive lover wants to limit the life of the beloved to their two-membered relationship with each other. A nonpossessive lover wants the beloved to live a larger life and wants to share it with him. Hence the nonpossessive lover will want to be part of many-membered relationships with the beloved and will prize them when they arise. As possessiveness is no virtue in love, there is no reason to suppose that either God or the neighbor is less perfectly loved if we desire to enjoy God with the neighbor than if we desired to enjoy either to the exclusion of the other.

This approach to the problem of total devotion, in terms of desires for religious ends that essentially involve the particular neighbor, differs in its structure, and not only in the religious ends proposed, from Augustine's teleological solution. For it does not subordinate the neigh-

bor or the neighbor's good or our relationship with the neighbor as a means to a higher end. It does not provide a desire-plus-belief reason for loving the neighbor or desiring the neighbor's good, and it makes no use of the contrast between enjoying and using.

I think this approach to the problem is correct, as far as it goes, and provides the main point at which an understanding of love for God in terms of *desire* for a divine *end* can enter into an acceptable solution. But I hesitate for two reasons to call it a complete solution of the problem of total devotion. (1) This approach does not explain how I could be loving God in desiring for myself or my neighbor anything other than an explicitly divine end, such as the enjoyment of God, and therefore it does not show how total devotion could be compatible with prizing more mundane enjoyments (such as the taste of strawberries) for their own sake, either for oneself or for one's neighbor. (2) It provides no way of tracing love for the neighbor to a root in love for God. It does show how love for God and love for the neighbor can unite in desire for the same state of affairs. Given that one loves God and the neighbor, one will naturally want the neighbor to enjoy God. But why love the neighbor at all? No answer to that question is provided here, although the ideal of total devotion suggests that love for the neighbor should spring from love for God. The desire that the neighbor enjoy God (and enjoy God with us) can be part of love for the neighbor, but it is not a reason for loving the neighbor.

Religious Reasons for Love

There certainly can be religious reasons, rooted in devotion to God, for loving the neighbor, but I think they are not to be understood in terms of desire for a divine end. One can love someone for her devotion to God or as a child of God or for the sake of the image of God in her, just as one can love a person for her beauty or her courage or her human vulnerability. These reasons indicate characteristics that one finds attractive in the person. To say that you love a person for such a characteristic is not to say that you have a general desire or liking for it that you think she is a way of satisfying. You need not like or desire vulnerability to find it appealing, and your interest in the beauty or the religious devotion of a person you love is quite different from your interest in the beauty or religious devotion of a stranger. Loving someone for the sake of the image of God in her does not imply a desire for one more image of God than you would have without her. Perhaps you know enough images of God not to care about one more or less as such, but you prize her for the sake of the image of God in her. To love a

person for reasons like these is not to regard her as a means or way to the satisfaction of an ulterior end. Yet such reasons for loving someone can be an expression of love for God.

To show that loving someone for religious reasons is not necessarily regarding her as a means or way to an ulterior end is to show that having religious reasons is compatible with loving someone as an end in herself and to that extent for her own sake. When we say that we want to be loved for our own sake, however, we may have something more in mind. The objection to being loved for one's money rather than for one's own sake is indeed very apt to be an objection to being regarded as a mere means to the enjoyment of one's possessions. But being loved for one's own sake (or "for oneself," as we might rather say in this context) can also be contrasted with being loved for one's looks or one's cheerfulness, without any implication that the latter entails being regarded as a means to an ulterior end. The complaint is rather that what is valued in one is too small or peripheral or accidental a part of oneself. It is not obvious what reasons for love would be exempt from this complaint. Even moral character is sufficiently accidental and changeable that being loved only for one's moral virtues might be contrasted with being loved for oneself. By the same token, loving someone solely for her religious devotion might not amount to loving her for herself, in one sense that concerns us. Loving someone for the sake of the image of God in her is an interesting case. It may seem comparatively safe from this criticism, in view of the central, important, and essential place that the image of God is thought to occupy in the constitution of human selfhood. On the other hand, it could seem too much like "loving" someone for her similarity to her mother, which hardly counts as loving her for herself. Probably you are loved for yourself if you are loved for the intrinsic glories of the image of God in you and not just for the relation of similarity to God—but how much does loving you for the first of this pair of reasons express a love for God?[9]

For these and other reasons it is not clear how much religious reasons for love can help with the problem of total devotion. Perhaps a complete solution based on such reasons would require us to take it as an ideal to have religious reasons for *all* our loves. That is not obviously unacceptable. But would we have to go further and take it as an ideal to have *only* religious reasons for our loves? And would that be accept-

9. I have had to deal very briefly here with issues about the meaning of 'for the sake of', 'for one's own sake', and 'for oneself', and about what it is to have a reason for loving someone. I hope to publish a fuller discussion of these issues elsewhere.

able? Surely it would be "too pious" to make it an ideal never to have it as a reason for loving someone that he is cute or that he is your son. In at least some cases one might have religious versions of such reasons. Instead of loving your son simply because he is your son, for instance, you might love him because God has given him to you as a son. Maybe a sense of having received a gift and a trust (and from whom, if not from God?) is in fact often implicit in loving a child because it is one's own. Probably, however, it would be objectionably artificial to divinize *all* reasons for love in this way.

I conclude that religious reasons for love are likely to provide at best a partial solution to our problem. Fortunately, other approaches remain to be explored. In this exploration the next two sections will be devoted to making sure that we do not overlook the obvious.

PUTTING GOD FIRST

One thing certainly demanded in devotion to God is that one put God first in one's life. This is often characterized as loving God more than anything else. As a popular hymn puts it,

> Jesus calls us from the worship
> Of the vain world's golden store,
> From each idol that would keep us,
> Saying, "Christian, love me more."[10]

Putting God first can also be understood more narrowly, and perhaps more clearly, as the most stringent of loyalties—a loyalty that one will not go against for the sake of any desire or other loyalty. If one is prepared to abandon, disobey, or slight God in order to please or obey or pamper a parent, spouse, child, teacher, boss, or friend, then one has made an idol of that person. Whenever any other interest conflicts with loyalty to God, one must decide for God.

Of course, other interests do not always conflict with loyalty to God. They may incline us to the same action that is demanded by loyalty to God or at least to actions not forbidden by God. This suggests a simple solution to the problem of total devotion. Why not say that love for one's neighbor and for other creatures is compatible with perfect devotion to God, provided that one loves God more and thus is fully prepared and disposed to set aside any desire arising from one's love of creatures if it should conflict with loyalty to God?

10. "Jesus Calls Us," by Cecil Frances Alexander (1852), quoted from *The Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1939), no. 223.

There is something right about this suggestion. Putting God first, in this sense, is a part—the most obvious and maybe the most important part—of the ideal of total devotion. But it is not the whole of it, and therefore this solution to the problem is not completely satisfying. Devotion to God is not conceived of simply as the absolutely first among a number of independent interests. It is supposed to be more encompassing, so that other good motives must find their place within it and all of life can be a worship of God. The idea that one should be loving God in loving the neighbor is very deeply rooted.

How this idea can be understood, I will continue to explore in the remaining sections of this paper. In the present section I will dwell on a more specific difficulty with the suggested simple solution to the problem of total devotion. The difficulty is that putting God first does not suffice to exclude idolatry. 'Idolatry' signifies here not just worshiping an image of a deity but, more broadly, giving to a creature what belongs only to God.

What belongs only to God? Not love, desire, or enjoyment as such. I am arguing that it is compatible with theistic devotion to have these affections for creatures. Theists likewise generally suppose that it is right to admire, trust, and even obey creatures in various ways on various occasions. What belongs only to God is indeed a sort of love, praise, trust, and obedience; but it is a very special sort. It is called "worship"; but that may not clarify very much, because what is meant is not a particular sort of easily recognized religious behavior, such as attending church or synagogue, but something more comprehensive and life encompassing.

One thing that clearly is meant is indeed the most stringent of loyalties. But what belongs to God alone is more than just a kind of loyalty. It is more broadly a type of importance in the believer's life. One is to "center one's life in God," to find one's principal identity in being a child of God and one's principal security in being loved by God. This is quite different from any desirable sort of love for one's neighbor. By contrast with this, idolatry would be found, not in loving another human being very much, but in feeling that life would be meaningless without him; not in the most intense enjoyment of philosophy, but in feeling that one would not be oneself if one could not do philosophy; not in liking other people and wanting to be their friend, but in feeling that one would be worthless if rejected by them.

In these examples we can see two reasons why putting God first does not suffice to exclude idolatry. First, loving God more is not enough, because the love that belongs to God differs more than quantitatively from the love that may properly be directed toward creatures. It oc-

cupies a different place in the organization of life. One does not arrive at idolatry simply by intensifying a proper love for creatures but by depending on them as one should depend on God. Because idolatry is not a merely quantitative matter, it can subsist even where one loves God still more than the idol. Indeed, one does not necessarily love the idol at all. The danger of idolatry lurks at least as much in authority and envy as in beauty and desire. To organize one's life around pleasing a boss or winning the respect of a professional rival is idolatrous, even if one neither likes nor loves that person.

Second, the most stringent loyalty to God is not enough, for one could still organize the meaning of one's life idolatrously around a finite object even if one were fully resolved and disposed to sacrifice it if loyalty to God should require—indeed, even if one actually had sacrificed it. It can be argued, for example, that that is exactly what the "knight of infinite resignation" is doing in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. He has "concentrate[d] the whole substance of his life and the meaning of actuality into one single desire,"[11] for a particular beloved person, and then has renounced her for the sake of God. But he keeps the concentrated passion for the human beloved ever "young"[12] in his heart, for that is what makes his resignation "infinite" and thus constitutes it a relation to God. This outward renunciation of the beloved does not abolish but shelters the "knight's" idolatry of her—shelters it from the vicissitudes and banalities of marriage, for instance—so that he can still define in relation to her the meaning of his life and even of his devotion to God. His passion for her still crowds out interests in other finite things and defines the possibility (or rather, impossibility) of happiness for him.[13] This is an idolatry that can remain in the organization of the heart even when God is voluntarily preferred to the idol.

OBEDIENCE

Another solution to the problem of total devotion is suggested by the following argument:

> God commands love for the neighbor.
> Obedience to God's commands is an expression of love for God.
> Therefore love for the neighbor is an expression of love for God.

11. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 43.
12. Ibid., p. 44.
13. Ibid., p. 50.

There is something right about this, as we shall see, but there are also serious objections to it.

The argument presupposes that, since God commands love for the neighbor, love for the neighbor can be a form of obedience to God. But that seems wrong. In loving our neighbor we are to desire her well-being. To say that this desire is a form of obedience to God is to say that it is motivated by a certain reason of a desire-plus-belief or resolution-plus-belief pattern. It is to say that we desire our neighbor's well-being because we want (or are resolved) to do what God commands and we believe that he commands us to desire her well-being. But this is not a reason for the desire for the neighbor's well-being: it is only a reason for wanting or trying to have this desire. For this reason commends, not the neighbor's well-being, but the desire for it; whereas a reason for a desire must commend the object of the desire, rather than the desire itself. In a desire-plus-belief reason for desiring *S*, it is *S* that must be believed conducive to *E*, or a way of realizing *E*. But what is here believed to be a way of doing what God commands is not the neighbor's well-being but the desire for it. Commending a desire could provide a reason for the desire only if the desire had itself as part of its aim or object. But the desire in this case is no part of its own aim or object; its whole object is the neighbor's well-being. Therefore this desire cannot be a form of obedience.[14]

Still, it might be replied, the desire for the neighbor's well-being could be motivated in another way by reverence for the will of God. For God wills the neighbor's well-being as well as our desire for it. This suggests another reason that could be a reason for the desire, because it commends the object of the desire. We could desire the neighbor's well-being because we desire that God's will be done and believe that

14. If the desire for our neighbor's well-being cannot be a form of obedience, it might be thought to follow that it cannot be commanded; but I do not mean to draw that conclusion. The fact that it cannot be fulfilled with the motivational pattern characteristic of obedience certainly implies that the command to love one's neighbor as oneself is not a *typical* command and cannot function exactly as commands typically do. Nevertheless it is demanded of us by society—and, most theists would say, by God—that we desire our neighbor's well-being for its own sake. This demand is backed by the informal authority of society—and by the divine authority, as theists believe. And if it becomes clear that we have no desire for our neighbor's well-being for its own sake, persons concerned may rightly react with disapproval, reproach, and a sense of grievance. (In "Involuntary Sins," *Philosophical Review* 94 [1985], pp. 3–31, I have discussed much more fully our liability to blame for states, such as desire, that are not directly voluntary.) For that reason, I think it makes sense to regard ourselves as *commanded* to desire our neighbor's well-being for its own sake. In the same way I think we are rightly said to *promise* to love our spouses, even though one cannot exactly love *out of* a desire to keep one's promise.

God wills the neighbor's well-being. Similarly, we could desire a good relationship with the neighbor because we believe that God wills that, and we desire that God's will be done. But this suggestion falls prey to substantially the same difficulty as Augustine's teleological solution of the problem of total devotion. If we desired the neighbor's well-being and a good relationship with her *only* out of a desire that God's will be done, we would not desire them for their own sake. It would not matter to us whether God's will be fulfilled by those states of affairs rather than by any others that he might have willed instead. And in this case we would not love the neighbor. Of course we may desire these states of affairs *partly* out of a desire that God's will be done and partly for their own sake, out of love for the neighbor. But then the love for the neighbor is not a form or expression of reverence for God's will but a separate motive for desiring some of the same states of affairs.

There are certain desires from which, of their very nature, there is no direct path to their fulfillment. Consider the desire to be unconcerned about one's motivational state. The keener it is, the farther it is from fulfillment. Likewise, if I want, for all the self-interested reasons in the world, to love another person unselfishly, a great gulf may still separate me from the love that I desire, for it is not the sort of thing that I can do for any of those reasons. The desire to live according to God's will is at least partly of this nature too, if God wills that we should love our neighbor. Its fulfillment involves caring, for their own sake, about things (such as the neighbor's well-being) that are quite distinct from one's own living according to whatever God's will may be. If one's desire to live according to God's will is so all-consuming as to prevent one from caring about anything else for its own sake, it will get in the way of its own fulfillment. The ideal of total devotion ought not to be an all-consuming desire of this sort. It should be something less self-concerned, and, as I shall explain below, I think it should not be entirely a matter of desire.

Nonetheless, realism will assign to self-conscious ethical choice an important role in the love of our neighbor. Without spontaneous desires and affections that are not forms of obedience, as I have argued, there is no love of the neighbor. But in practice we are not likely to love very well if we rely only on such spontaneity. We need to make voluntary efforts to pay attention to other people, to be helpful to them even when we do not feel like it, to study our own motives and actions self-critically, and so forth. These voluntary efforts can be obedience to God. They cultivate the soil in which less voluntary aspects of love can flourish. Thus love for the neighbor can be seen as growing out of devoted obedience to God—though that is still not quite the same as an explanation of how loving the neighbor can be a way of loving God.

TRUST

My understanding of the problem of total devotion seems to resist any tidy reduction to one answer, but if I have a single chief constructive proposal to make, it is the following. Both the quest for God and enjoyment of God play a prominent part in St. Augustine's account of love for God, and rightly so. One loves God both in seeking fellowship with him and in actually having and enjoying fellowship with him. Of these two phases of love for God, Augustine's teleological solution to the problem of total devotion locates love for the neighbor and any other legitimate interest in creatures within the quest for God. This leads to the objectionable consequences of that solution. A more acceptable solution would find a rightful place for love of the neighbor and for other interests in creatures primarily in the other phase of love for God—in the realization and enjoyment of fellowship with him, rather than in the quest for it. That is my proposal, and the remainder of this paper will be devoted to it. In the present section I will discuss a relatively indirect way in which a trusting love for God, secure in the actuality of fellowship with him, can be reflected in love for creatures. Then, in the two following sections, I will go on to more direct connections between love for creatures and two aspects of the fulfillment of love for God—namely, the enjoyment of God and the inspiration that consummates the surrender of the heart to God.

A mundane model may help us to see how love for creatures can be a reflection of trusting love for God. We find that, among small children of the same age and in the same circumstances, some are much more inclined than others to cling closely to their mothers, to keep them always in sight, and to pester them for attention. The knowledgeable observer will not conclude that the more "clinging" children love their mothers more than the more independent ones. On the contrary, the more dependent children probably have a relationship with their mothers that, if not less loving, is at any rate weaker in certain respects. The more independent children are apt to be those that feel more secure in their mother's love and care, and they are therefore able to turn their attention with less anxiety to other things. This sense of security is, in part, a manifestation of their love for their mothers.

More precisely, the sense of security is a function of love for their mothers (and/or other persons on whom the child depends) plus trust or confidence that they are available when and if the child desires to turn to them. We might be tempted to say that the sense of security is a function not of the love but only of the trust. But that would be a mistake, for belief in the availability and beneficence of someone to whom the child was not attached would not have the same effect.

In this example the most important point for our present purpose is that the strength of a loving personal relationship can be reflected in attention to things other than the loved person. Paradoxical as this may sound in the abstract, it is plausible enough when we say that a child's sense of security in its mother's love frees it to pay attention to things other than the mother, whereas without this assurance its energies would be absorbed in seeking and clinging to maternal care or in coping with the lack of it. In empirical corroboration of this point, it has been observed that children of from one to three years of age are more apt to be absorbed in playing with toys and exploring their environment in their mother's presence than in her absence[15]—a finding that would not be expected on the assumption that interest in mother and independent interests in other objects simply compete for the child's attention and are not otherwise related.

The same point can be illustrated from adult life. Most of us would be able to concentrate more fully on the task of writing a paper on some impersonal subject, such as formal logic, if we felt secure in one or more love relationships than we would if we were experiencing disruption in a love relationship or felt that no one loved us. Of course this is not the only possible pattern of relationship between these types of interest. For both adults and children, it is possible to steel oneself to invest one's interest in other things, in the conviction that love is impossible. The point I want to make is just that there is a pattern—and obviously the happiest pattern—in which a lively and independent interest in other things reflects one's love for, and trust in, some person.

This point can be applied to the relation between love for God and love for creatures. If one both loves God and trusts in God's love, this will issue in an inner peace or sense of security. And this, as many religious thinkers have argued, will free one to take a lively interest in God's creatures for their own sake—to enjoy his gifts with un-self-conscious gratitude and to love one's neighbor. Here a love for God, combined with faith in him, provides an atmosphere of gladness and security in which a love for the creature can be encompassed.

ENJOYMENT

We have just explored a way in which trust in the fulfillment of one's love for God may permeate one's other interests, but rather indi-

15. See John Bowlby, *Separation,* vol. 2 of *Attachment and Loss* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), ch. 3. Much in Bowlby's three-volume work is relevant to my argument in this section.

rectly—not as coinciding with them or providing a positive impulse toward them but as a source of freedom to have them or pursue them and as a frame of mind, a confidence, in which they can be pursued. I want now to focus on an idea that establishes a more direct connection between the two loves, by arguing that God can be enjoyed, with love, in enjoying creatures.

I mean to use the word 'enjoy' in its ordinary sense and not necessarily according to Augustine's definition. It is important to the argument, and I think also obviously true, that enjoying the beloved is one of the forms that love characteristically takes. This is not to say that love is always pleasant. Enjoyment is present in widely varying degrees in different loves and at different times. Nevertheless, enjoyment is an important aspect of love. And it is a familiar phenomenon that we can enjoy a person we love in enjoying something else.

We seek shared pleasures for the enhancement of our loves—a delicious meal, a great concert, a beautiful day at the beach or in the woods; or more personally, the joys of conversation or the physical pleasures of sex. Why are these seen as enhancing love? Perhaps at least partly because there is not a sharp line between enjoying something *with* another person and enjoying the other person. How do we enjoy other people? Most broadly, I suppose, by enjoying our experience of them. In particular, that includes enjoying our relationships with them, which includes enjoying what we do together.

Besides enjoying what we do together, we enjoy other people in our experience of their personal characteristics and what they do individually. We enjoy the sound of their voices, the look or the touch of their bodies. We enjoy their ideas and their feelings, whether explicitly expressed or read by us between the lines. We enjoy the grace of their gestures or the cuteness of their expressions, the wit and style or the candor and intensity of their conversation and letters. In all of this we enjoy the other people themselves: this is the sort of thing we mean when we speak of enjoying another person.

In many of these cases, however, we do not enjoy *only* the other person. This is most obviously true of the shared pleasures. We enjoy the caviar and the music for their own sake, too, and would very likely still enjoy them if eaten or heard alone. But even the other person's ideas and performances are apt to be enjoyed for themselves at the same time that we enjoy the person in enjoying them. The joke I heard her tell would still amuse me if it came to me impersonally in the pages of a magazine.

The usual word for the relationship between these enjoyments is that we enjoy the other person "in" enjoying something else—for instance, "in" enjoying the music. Several characteristics of this relationship may

be noted: (1) If we enjoy another person in enjoying the music, we enjoy both the person and the music. If I say, "I enjoyed listening to the music with him," it makes sense to ask me, "What did you like about the experience?" For normally, if we enjoy an experience, we can give reasons for that by picking out features of the experience that we like. If I enjoyed the music, I can answer truly, "I liked the music." If I enjoyed the other person, I can answer truly, "I liked sharing it with him." If I enjoyed the other person in enjoying the music, I must have liked both of these distinguishable features of the experience. (2) Although the enjoyment of the music and of the other person are distinguishable in this way, they are so fused into a single experience that in some sense they are not separate. And (3) each enjoyment enhances the other. We would normally say, not that we like the music better, but that we enjoy it more, because we enjoy sharing the experience with someone else; and we would say that we enjoy the other person more because we enjoy the music that we hear together. (4) If we enjoy the other person in enjoying the music, we like the music and the sharing with the other person, each for its own sake, or at any rate not merely as a way or means to the other. The claim that I liked the music merely as a way or means to the sharing could be understood according to a liking-plus-belief pattern of reasons for liking (analogous to the desire-plus-belief pattern of reasons for desire discussed above) as meaning that I liked the music only because I liked sharing an experience with the other person and regarded listening to the music as a way of doing that (much as one might enjoy selling something only because one liked making money and saw the transaction as a way of making money). If I liked the music only for this reason, it would be misleading to list the music in addition to the sharing as something that I liked about the experience or to say that I enjoyed the other person "in enjoying the music."

Are there cases in which one enjoys another person alone and not in enjoying something else? I suppose so. One might enjoy an experience about which one did not particularly like anything except that it was an experience of seeing *her*. But such experiences can claim no preeminence. The enjoyment of conversation and of sexual intercourse, for instance, is not in general of this type, in view of the intellectual and sensory pleasures typically involved in them. It would be bizarre to take it as an ideal of love to enjoy the other person only alone and never in enjoying something else.

Similar things can be said about *enjoying God*. When people speak of it, they normally have in mind cases in which an experience of God is enjoyed. This should not be understood too subjectivistically, as if it were not God himself that is enjoyed but only a state of one's own

mind. (A similar antisubjectivistic caution applies to what I said about enjoying other people in general by enjoying our experience of them.) But if someone said, "I have never experienced God, but I have often enjoyed him," one would wonder what was meant.

How does one experience God? Believers often say they experience the Creator in his works. Suppose one enjoys the sunlight on the autumn leaves and is the more excited because one catches there (as one believes) a glimpse of the beauty of the Creator at work. If this is indeed an experience of God, it seems right to say that it is one in which one enjoys God, enjoys what he does, *in* enjoying the light and the leaves. Likewise, if one experiences and enjoys God through a piece of religious literature or a religious liturgy, one would (at least in typical cases) be enjoying God *in* enjoying the literature or the liturgy. And most important here, if I experience the love of my friends as a manifestation of the love of God, that would normally be a case in which I am enjoying both God and my friends in enjoying this social experience and am enjoying God *in* enjoying my friends. The creature is enjoyed, in these cases, as something more than a means to the enjoyment of God. It is because one enjoys the light, the leaves, the friend, and the friend's love for their own sake that one sees and appreciates in them the glory of God, so as to praise him for them and enjoy him in enjoying them.

It has been pointed out to me that in some cases it would be odd to say that we enjoy a creator himself in enjoying his works. Do we enjoy Rembrandt himself in enjoying his paintings? Perhaps not. Rembrandt is gone and has left his works behind for us to enjoy. But God is not like that. On theistic as opposed to deistic conceptions of creation, he has not gone away and left his works behind; he remains unceasingly active in them. To the example of the painter may be contrasted that of a dancer, who cannot go away and leave his performance behind. (Or if he leaves a motion picture of his work, there is nothing odd about saying we enjoy him in enjoying the film.) Now, in a theistic as opposed to a pantheistic view, God's creatures are more distinct from him than the dance is from the dancer. But they are not as separable from him as paintings are from the painter. God is neither as wholly immanent in his works as the dancer in the dance nor as purely transcendent over them as the painter in relation to his paintings. These reflections suggest that the immanent aspect of God's relation to his creation is important to the possibility of loving God in loving his creatures.[16]

16. To this extent I agree with Hartshorne's treatment of the problem of total devotion in *The Logic of Perfection,* pp. 40–41. But I am not prepared to carry the affirmation of divine immanence as far as he does or to rely on it so completely for the solution of the problem.

It is not only in enjoying his creatures that God is enjoyed. There are experiences in which God alone is enjoyed. I take that to be true of some experiences of communion with God or of the presence of God, where the experience is of nothing else. This is certainly an important and valuable form of experience of God and enjoyment of God. But I think it would be a mistake to take it as an ideal to enjoy God only in this way, to the exclusion of enjoying him in enjoying his creatures. With some trepidation, I am inclined to say that that would be to make a sort of idol out of this type of experience, substituting too private a deity for the Lord of all who shows his glory in many works and gifts. Another way in which one may enjoy God alone is in his presence in suffering, in which he is enjoyed but the suffering is not. But clearly it would be perverse to seek to enjoy God only in that way.

To the extent, therefore, that enjoyment can be a form of love, love for God and love for creatures can coincide in enjoying God in enjoying his creatures.[17] Perhaps one should aspire to such a religious consciousness that God would be enjoyed in *all* one's enjoyment of creatures. Before this suggestion can be accepted, however, we must confront a possible protest against such an all-encompassing ideal of religious devotion. It would be objectionably possessive, as was noted above in the section "Love's Religious Desires," to want your beloved's life to be limited to a two-person relationship with you. You should be able to enjoy many-person relationships with each other. But you might think it perfectly appropriate to want your beloved *also* to concentrate, some of the time, on *you alone,* and not to enjoy you *only in* enjoying your children or your friends. "Two's company, but three's a crowd," we say, meaning that we want time to be alone in twosomes. A religious ideal that would have us always conscious of God's involvement in every situation—or even a belief in God's omnipresence and omniscience—might therefore seem to threaten a desirable intimacy with the intrusion of a third party.

It must be acknowledged, I think, that there is a sense of being absolutely alone with another human being (or indeed of being absolutely alone with oneself) that may, not unreasonably, be welcomed by nontheists but that is hardly compatible with theistic faith. But theists need not regret the loss of this particular solitude. We do not (or should not) want to take our parents along on our honeymoon—but God is different. Theists must say that we should want to "take him along" even (or perhaps especially) on our honeymoon. God's imma-

17. And perhaps in enjoying the creatures *in* enjoying God, as Philip Quinn has suggested that I should say.

nence helps in understanding the relevant difference here between him and our human parents. A continuing relation to him is built into the structure of our selfhood and of any relationship between human persons. I do not have to look away from my human partner to see God, and you do not grasp my true selfhood better by abstracting from my relation to God. For this reason I am inclined to say that God could appropriately be enjoyed in all legitimate enjoyment of creatures.

INSPIRATION

It is a truism that shared interests make a frienship more perfect. When we speak of sharing interests, we mean being interested in the same things for their own sake; we do not mean just being interested in the friend's interests for the sake of the friendship. Thus, if my wife loves tennis and I have never cared about it, I might play tennis with her and even "cultivate an interest" in tennis, for the sake of our relationship; but as long as that is my sole motive in the matter, we do not yet share an interest in tennis. That occurs only when I too am interested in tennis for its own sake.

Similarly, it is plausible to suppose that fellowship with God would be perfected by sharing God's interests, loving and hating what he loves and hates. One will be more fully in tune with God if one loves fidelity and hates lying as he does and if one loves one's neighbor as he does. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16).

God loves the neighbor for the neighbor's own sake. So if my only interest in the neighbor is that I would like to have a better relationship with God and think that loving the neighbor would contribute to that, I do not yet share God's interest in the matter, as I do not yet love the neighbor. That occurs only if I love the neighbor for his own sake.

If this line of thought is right, then those who desire fellowship with God have reason to want to love their neighbor for their neighbor's own sake. But this is one of those desires that I discussed above, whose nature permits no direct path from the desire to its fulfillment because the fulfillment involves having a motivation that is not based on the desire. Such desires have in some measure to let go if they are to enjoy full satisfaction. That is generally true of the desire for friendship, and much in the history of humankind's wrestling with grace suggests that it is also true of the desire for friendship with God.

If sharing God's love for the neighbor enhances fellowship with God, that constitutes an important connection between love for God and love for the neighbor. Can we go further and say that, if in fellowship

with God one shares God's love for the neighbor, the love for the neighbor is a form or part or expression of one's love for God? We do seem to think that shared love for a third object can be manifestation of love for a friend. Perhaps "Love me, love my dog" is rarely meant as a serious statement about love, but it is surely no accident that people do not say only "Love me, put up with my dog." We test people's love for us by their appreciation and concern, not only for us, but also for what they see us love and care about. A lack of love for the children of one's marriage not only is a sin against them but also is rightly apt to be seen as a deficiency in one's love for one's spouse. Conversely, we think that the shared love of parents for their children ought to be in some way an expression of their love for each other. (Of course, one might have strong and good reasons for not sharing some interests of the beloved. Perhaps he has some interests that are bad, base, or even wicked. I do not say it would be a test of love to share such interests.)

Why do we take the actual sharing of acceptable interests as a test of love? Why is it not enough that the lover *wants* to share the beloved's interests? The main reason, I suspect, is that the failure to enter into the desires and affections of the other person suggests that one's heart is closed against her in a way that seems to us unloving. I will develop this point in connection with a solution to the problem of total devotion gleaned from Anders Nygren's great book *Agape and Eros.*

Rejecting Augustine's teleological solution, Nygren holds that the relation between love for God and love for the neighbor should be conceived nonteleologically. "God is not the end, the ultimate object, but the starting-point and permanent basis of neighborly love. He is not its *causa finalis* but its *causa efficiens.* . . . It is not as being loved, but as loving, that God sets love in motion."[18]

This fits nicely with Nygren's conception of love for God as surrender rather than quest. I think Nygren goes, indeed, to an indefensible extreme in excluding the theme of quest from the Christian type of love for God, but my interest here is in what he does include in that love. "Man's love for God signifies that man, moved by [the] Divine love, gratefully wills to belong wholly to God."[19] According to Nygren's interpretation of Jesus, "To have love for God means . . . exactly the same as to be possessed by God, to belong absolutely to Him. . . . Love towards God . . . is the *free*—and in that sense spontaneous—surrender of the heart to God."[20]

18. Andres Nygren, *Agape and Eros,* trans. Philip S. Watson (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 216.

19. Ibid., p. 213.

20. Ibid., p. 94.

To be possessed by God is to have God acting in us and through us. If we are possessed by God, then "our" love for the neighbor can be God's love for the neighbor, for the neighbor's own sake, at work in us. And that is how Nygren thinks it is with Christian neighbor-love: "In the life that is governed by Agape, the acting subject is not man himself; it is—as Paul expresses it—God, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Agape of Christ. . . . The Christian has nothing of his own to give; the love which he shows to his neighbor is the love which God has infused into him."[21] Nygren could have added (though I have not found that he did) that this love for the neighbor is a part of one's love for God. For letting God do this in one is part of one's willingly being possessed by God, which Nygren identifies with love for God.

Nygren's position bristles with problems, but I will try to show that the approach it exemplifies is plausible. One problem is that, like many other theologians, Nygren often seems to have a straightforwardly causal understanding of what it is to be possessed by God. On this understanding, God inspires us or infuses his love for our neighbor into us simply by causing us to love the neighbor. But it is hard to see how God's causing that neighbor-love in me could constitute a part or form or expression of my loving God—any more than it would constitute my loving a brain surgeon if the surgeon caused me to share her feelings for a third person by stimulating my brain with an electrode.

There is another way of thinking about being inspired or possessed by God, however, which makes it easier to see that state as a form of love for God. Although divine inspiration undoubtedly has unique characteristics, we can find a model for this way of thinking in very mundane cases in which we say that one person's feeling, desire, or other state of mind is "inspired" by another person's. In such inspiration there is certainly an influencing that is broadly speaking causal. But if an emotion is inspired in me in this way, I am engaged in the process in a way in which I would not be if the other person were simply operating on me. I know, or at some level sense, his emotion and respond to it, and it is in my apprehending and responding that he influences me. In this my heart is not closed against him but open to him; and because we expect this of love, sharing the beloved's interests can be a test of love—though I am not denying that inspiration can also take place without love.

Because the one who is inspired participates in the process in this way, there is a place in this model for Nygren's description of love toward God as free and spontaneous surrender of the heart to God and

21. Ibid., p. 129.

as *willing* to belong to God—though 'willing' is not quite the right word for it, because this is not a straightforwardly voluntary process. Desires and emotions inspired in us by those of another person are not in general voluntarily adopted. Opening one's heart to a friend in the sense that now concerns us is not a voluntary action; it is not something one does by consicously trying. It does not even come about primarily as a result of wanting to do it. The heart may remain closed, though one wants very much to open it, if one is too distrustful. This opening of the heart is therefore an aspect of love that does not fit very well in a conception of love that focuses too exclusively on the passionate quest. It is a matter of letting the other person in, so to speak, rather than going out and grabbing him. It is a trusting rather than a controlling aspect of love—but it is nonetheless love. If our love for the neighbor is inspired by God's in this way—that we believe in God's love for the neighbor, or sense it, and respond to it by loving the neighbor ourselves, for the neighbor's own sake—then our love for the neighbor is a response to God as well as to the neighbor, and it can be an expression of love for God.

This position invites an objection that will be worth thinking about. Let us imagine a friendship between Tom and Joe such that Tom's likes, dislikes, desires, affections, and so on vary with Joe's and are "carbon copies" of Joe's. In that case we want to say that Tom's affections are not *genuine;* Tom does not genuinely love what Joe loves. Why should we not conclude that our love for our neighbor is not genuine if it is inspired by God's love for the neighbor—and more generally, that desires, emotions, and attitudes inspired by someone else's are not genuine?

The key to a response to this objection is the difference between *imitation* and *inspiration.* The way Tom's affections are described in the proposed counterexample, we take them to be imitative, and imitative feelings are not genuine. But affections and desires do not have to be original or unconventional in order not to be imitative. People can be at once very conventional and very genuine in their love for their family, for example. There are also many cases in which genuine feelings and interests that are not particularly conventional are inspired by those of other people. One can quite genuinely "imbibe a deep love of Mozart" from one's father or "catch" one's roommate's "infectious" enthusiasm for political action.

What makes the difference, then, between imitative phoniness and inspired genuineness? The most crucial difference is that in imitation one is responding only to what one imitates and not (except very superficially) to the ostensible object of the supposed affection or feeling;

whereas in inspiration there is a much deeper interplay of response to the object and to the other person by whom one is inspired. In imitation, in other words, one copies the other person; whereas in inspiration one enters into the other person's response to the object.

A connected point is that inspired affections and interests are not as dependent as imitative ones on a continued sense of the affections and interests of the person from whom we got them. They are not fickle, as imitative responses are. Inspiration, in the present sense, changes the person who receives it. If my "love" for Mozart disappeared as soon as I thought my father's did, that would be a strong reason for saying that it was imitative and not a genuine love. If I had really imbibed a love of Mozart, I would now be responding to the music for its own sake and not solely to my father, and my love for it would not be so dependent on my perception of my father.

This point might be thought to conflict with claims that we ought to be so possessed by God as to be instantly responsive to his inspiration and totally plastic under the impressions of his Spirit. But I believe this objection involves a theological misconception. In the ideal of surrendering the heart to God there is a place for a response to God that is immediate and variable, but also a place for permanent transformation (which often takes a long time). God is not fickle in his loves and has no desire for a devotion that readies itself to join him in fickleness. The love for one's neighbor that is a fruit of God's Spirit is precisely one that will retain much of its vigor when one is gripped by doubts about God or angry at him or feeling religiously dry.

I do not want to leave the impression that I think the inspiration of human love by divine love is as ordinary and unmysterious as the mundane models I have been using might suggest. In this connection I will make the following observations. We do not love our neighbor as ourselves. Reflecting on the pervasiveness of self-centered motivation, perhaps all of us have sometimes wondered whether we really loved anyone at all. I know how needy and how grasping, when it comes to love, I and others close to me are. And yet it is my experience that from time to time (fairly often, thank God!) we give each other a love that is purer and better than anything we have to give.[22] I cannot prove that this is not an illusion, but I am sure it is not. I take it to be an experience of God—of God loving us, in us and through us—and that is not the least of the reasons for prizing the experience.

In this context I can begin to give an acceptable sense to Nygren's

22. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I/2, trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), pp. 450–54.

claim that "in the life that is governed by Agape, the acting subject is not man himself" but "the Spirit of God." Yet this is only half the truth. God's love would not be experienced as it is in such a case if the human subject were not loving too—much less perfectly, but nonetheless really. Here the human love participates in the divine, not just causally as its product, but sacramentally as its vehicle.