

Reflections

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Herein Is Love

I

n his book *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis explores the four kinds of human love: affection, friendship, eros, and charity. In the final chapter of the book, he includes a specific focus on that Love which is God. An excerpt follows.

And this brings me to the foot of the last steep ascent this book must try to make. We must try to relate the human activities called ‘loves’ to that Love which is God a little more precisely than we have yet done. The precision can, of course, be only that of a model or a symbol, certain to fail us in the long run and, even while we use it, requiring correction from other models. The humblest of us, in a state of Grace, can have some ‘knowledge-by-acquaintance’ (*connaître*), some ‘tasting’, of Love Himself; but man even at his highest sanctity and intelligence has no direct ‘knowledge about’ (*savoir*) the ultimate Being—only analogies...

God is love. Again, ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us’ (I John 4:10). We must not begin with mysticism, with the creature’s love for God, or with the wonderful forestates



of the fruition of God vouchsafed to some in their earthly life. We begin at the real beginning, with love as the Divine energy. This primal love is Gift-love. In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation. It is essential. Without it we can hardly avoid the conception of what I can only call a ‘managerial’ God; a Being whose function or nature is to ‘run’ the universe, who stands to it as a headmaster to a school or a hotelier to a hotel. But to be sovereign of the universe is no great matter to God. In Himself, at home in ‘the land of the Trinity’, he is Sovereign of a far greater realm. We must keep always before our eyes that vision of Lady Julian’s in which God carried in His hand a little object like a nut, and that nut was ‘all that is made’. God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. He

creates the universe, already foreseeing—or should we say ‘seeing’? there are no tenses in God—the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven through the mesial nerves, the repeated incipient suffocation as the body droops, the repeated torture of back and arms as it is time after time, for breath’s sake, hitched up. If I may dare the biological image, God is a ‘host’ who deliberately creates His own parasites; causes us to be that we may exploit and ‘take advantage of’ Him. Herein is love. This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.¹

As we meditate on the events of Holy Week and celebrate Easter, let us ponder the nature and depth of God’s love for us, as we bring forth our thanks and praise.



“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

1 JOHN 4:9-10 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2017), pp. 161-162.

