

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE ECONOMY OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN

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The love of God is one of the most popular and enduring subjects for Christian meditation and theology. Through the centuries believers have celebrated God's love as a key theme of the Bible and a defining trait of God. Every week believers across the earth sing of God's saving love freely bestowed upon undeserving sinners, and preachers attempt to portray His ineffable love, exhorting congregations to cultivate a reverential love toward God and a compassionate love toward their fellow man. Many Christians appreciate the description of love in the New Testament as the motive for God's redemption, the quintessential characteristic of Christ's earthly living, the mark of true discipleship, the fulfillment of the law, and the greatest of Christian virtues (John 3:16; Eph. 5:2; John 13:34-35; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14; 1 Cor. 13:13). Yet few realize that in the New Testament revelation the love of God is intrinsically related to the economy of God, His plan and arrangement to impart His life and nature into human vessels for their corporate participation in and expression of Him.

Love is the motivating factor in the execution of the divine economy, and God carries out His economy of salvation in love. All that the Triune God does in this economy emanates from and shows forth His love. Regrettably, much of the teaching that permeates today's Christianity concerning the love of God misses the broad scope of the divine love as manifested in the operation of His economy. Apart from seeing the love of God in view of God's economy in His choosing the believers, creating man, redeeming fallen man, and building up His corporate expression, our appreciation and enjoyment of God's love will be limited to an abstruse theological notion or a heart-warming sentiment. Today the believers should advance in their understanding and experience of God's love by viewing this love in light of the divine economy.

The Manifestation of the Love of God

Seeing the manifestation of the love of God in the economy of God must be predicated on the understanding that the Triune God's operation in the progression of His economy is a reflection of His being, what He is in His inner existence. In *Apostolic Letters of Faith, Hope, and Love: Galatians, 1 Peter, and 1 John* Bruce M. Metzger says, "All of God's activities are activities done in accordance with his nature, which is love" (70). According to the revelation in the New Testament, the love of God should not be understood merely as His benevolent action, gracious attitude, profound affection, or one of His excelling attributes; it should first be seen as God's inward essence, His inner substance. Thus, John succinctly declares in 1 John 4, "God is love" (vv. 8, 16). In *The New Testament for English Readers* Henry Alford concurs, writing that in this verse love is "the very essence" of God and that "it is co-essential with Him" (4: 1739). Andrew Murray similarly notes in *Abide in Christ: Thoughts on the Blessed Life of Fellowship with the Son of God* that love is God's "very being" and "the very essence of His nature, the centre around which all His glorious attributes gather" (124).

Because love is a relational virtue, it requires both a lover and a beloved. Murray explains, “Love needs an object to whom it can give itself away, in whom it can lose itself, with whom it can make itself one” (124). In His eternal existence the Triune God is a Being of love (Psa. 90:2; Jer. 31:3). He exists as love in His transcendent Godhead. That is, from eternity to eternity, the three of the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—exist in a relationship of profound, perpetual, and perfect love. The Father loves the Son and finds His unique delight in the Son of His love (John 5:20; 15:9; Matt. 17:5; Col. 1:13); the Son, the Beloved, loves the Father in return, abides in the Father’s love, and seeks to express His love for the Father to all the world (Eph. 1:6; John 15:10; 14:31); and the Spirit is understood to be the love between the Father and the Son (cf. Rom. 15:30; Gal. 5:22). It is by the Spirit as the divine essence that the Father loves the Son and that the Son loves the Father. In the Divine Trinity, the Father is the source of divine love, the Son is the object of divine love, and the Spirit is the essence of divine love (Robichaux, “Incorporation” 57-58).

The apostle John reveals that the divine love is intimately associated with the divine life. The association between these two divine realities that exist in the Godhead is implied by the Son’s words in John 5, where shortly after He declared that “the Father loves the Son” (v. 20), the Lord Jesus proclaimed that “just as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son to also have life in Himself” (v. 26). The Father loves the Son and gave the Son the divine life so that the Son may embody this life and express the Father (1:4, 14). The Father’s love for the Son is a matter not merely of conveying deep affection toward the Son but of imparting the Father’s eternal life into the Son to make Him His organic expression. The fact that the Father loves the Son implies that the Father as the source of the divine life ever dispenses the Spirit as the essence of the divine life into the Son, thus begetting Him eternally; and that the Son as the expression of the divine life ever receives and expresses this dispensing and is thus eternally begotten of the Father (Robichaux, “Axioms” 11). In the Trinity the Father is the source of love, the Son is the object of the Father’s love, and the Spirit is the hypostatic love. Likewise, the Father is the Begetter, the Son is the Begotten, and the Spirit is the hypostatic life.

Entering into the Fellowship with the Triune God

The Son’s prayer in John 17 confirms the connection between the divine life and the divine love that flow among the three of the Godhead and further shows the intention of the Triune God to impart His divine life and nature into the believers so that they may express the Triune God. In verse 24 the Son said that the Father has given Him His glory because the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world; in verse 22 the Son stated that He has given the believers the very glory which the Father has given Him; and in the subsequent verse the Son stated that the Father has loved the believers even as the Father has loved Him. Witness Lee provides insight into the link between the divine glory and the divine love that flow within the Trinity:

The Father loved the Son by giving the Son His life, His nature, His fullness, and His glory that the Son might express Him. In the same way, the Father loved the Son’s believers by giving them His life, His nature, His fullness, and His glory that they might express Him in the Son. This is a story of love as well as glory. (Recovery Version, v. 23, note 1)

First John 1 reveals both the fellowship within the Trinity and the believers’ participation in this fellowship. In verse 2 John says that the eternal life “was with the Father and was manifested to us.” The Greek word translated “with” (πρός) implies “living and acting in union and communion with” (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 2, note 4). Here the eternal life refers to the Son (John 14:6). Hence, in eternity past the Son as the eternal life was living and acting in union and communion with the Father. From eternity to eternity the Son enjoys the fellowship of life and love within the Godhead by virtue of His eternal coexistence and coinherence with the Father and the Spirit (10:38; 14:9-10; 17:21). The

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manifestation of the Son as the eternal life to us includes “the revelation of and impartation of life to men,” with a view to bringing us into the Son’s “union and communion with the Father” (Lee, Recovery Version, 1 John 1:2, note 6). This notion is supported by verse 3, which says, that the apostles reported, that is, ministered, the eternal life to the believers so that the believers may have fellowship with the apostles, whose fellowship “is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Hence, by receiving the Son as the eternal life, the believers enter into the fellowship with the Triune God without jeopardizing the uniqueness of the Godhead. In his study of 1 John, Robert Govett offers helpful comments concerning the believers’ enjoyment of the fellowship with the Triune God:

We have fellowship with the Father, through the Son...The close union and intercourse of love between the Father and the Son were from all eternity. We, united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, are brought into this fellowship. We are taken out of Adam, out of our natural goodness and badness alike, into communion with God. This fellowship results from our being begotten again by the Spirit of God, “made partakers of the divine nature.” (14)

Being Chosen in Christ to Be Holy in Love

God’s eternal intention is to bring the believers into fellowship with the Triune God through the impartation of His life and nature. This is unveiled in Ephesians 1:4-5, which speaks of the Father’s selection and predestination of the believers in an atmosphere of love and according to the delight of His heart. The Father chose us in Christ to be holy in love. This implies God’s intention to dispense His holy, divine nature into us in order to make us partakers of the divine nature (v. 4; cf. Jude 1; Deut. 7:7; 2 Pet. 1:4). It was according to the good pleasure of His will that the Father predestinated us unto sonship through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:5), predetermining our destiny to be conformed to the image of Christ so that “He might be the Firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29). Before the foundation of the world, before sin entered into the world and separated man from God, God’s good pleasure in Christ was focused on us. In this sense, both the formation and the operation of the divine economy were motivated by God’s heart of love for the believers in the Son. According to Ephesians 1:6, in eternity past God graced us in the Beloved, in His beloved Son in whom He delights (Matt. 3:17). This corresponds with Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 1:9 that “before the times of the ages” grace was given “to us in Christ Jesus.” God’s love is focused on His Son, and His affection is directed toward His Son. So deep was God’s delight in His Son that He desired to duplicate His Son in men by imparting His life and nature into them, making Him the firstborn Son and them His many sons, who also become “beloved of God” by being His delight in the Beloved (Rom. 1:7; 1 Thes. 1:4). By virtue of being in the Son, we are loved, graced, and favored by God so that we may be His beloved children (Eph. 5:1). In eternity past, before the creation of the universe, God chose us in Christ to be holy, predestinated us unto sonship according to His good pleasure, and graced us in the Beloved so that we may be His many sons who possess His life and partake of His nature in order to become His expanded expression in the Son for the fulfillment of the desire of His heart.

Being Created in God’s Image to Express God as Love

In order to be manifested as love, God created man in His image (Gen. 1:26), in the expression of the inward essence of His own attributes, among which love, light, holiness, and righteousness are most prominent (1 John 4:8; 1:5; Rev. 4:8; Jer. 23:6). Thus, man was created with human virtues that match God’s attributes so that his human virtues could contain and express God’s attributes. In other words, man was created with the human virtue of love in order to be filled with and enriched by the reality of God’s divine attribute of love. At the time of creation, man did not have the life of God within him. For this reason, God placed man in front of the tree of life, which signifies God embodied in Christ, who is the tree of life and is the embodiment of life, and therefore

life itself, for man to partake of (John 15:1; 1:4; 11:25; 6:57; 1 John 5:11-12). God intended for man to receive the life of God, allowing this divine life to become his content so that His divine attributes could be expressed through his human virtues.

However, man failed to partake of the tree of life. Instead, man partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which signifies Satan as the source of death to man, thereby taking Satan's sinful life into him. Consequently, man fell under God's condemnation, became alienated from the life of God, and was contaminated with the evil nature of Satan (Rom. 5:12, 16; Eph. 4:18). Through the fall, man was constituted a sinner and became a son of the evil one, an enemy of God, a slave of sin, and a victim of death (Rom. 5:19; Matt. 13:38; 1 John 3:10; Rom. 5:10; John 8:44, 34; Rom. 5:12, 14; 1 Cor. 15:22). As a consequence of the fall, the image of God in man was marred; man's God-created virtues were damaged such that man expressed Satan as hatred and darkness, instead of God as love and light.

The fall of man frustrated the fulfillment of God's original intention for man. Yet man's fallen condition and degraded state did not stymie God's love for man or diminish His desire for a corporate expression through man. In fact, the fall provided God an opportunity to prove His eternal, unfailing, and unchanging love for man. Instead of abandoning the corrupted human race, God was compelled by His love to carry out His economy of full salvation, in which God in Christ became flesh, lived a God-expressing human life, died for man's redemption, and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit so that He might deliver man from God's righteous judgment, dispense Himself as the divine life into man, and make man His expanded expression in the Son, thus saving man not only from eternal perdition but also into the enjoyment and expression of His eternal life (John 1:1, 14; 1 Cor. 15:3, 45; Rom. 5:10). John's writings reveal that in the economy of His salvation, God's love is manifested primarily in three aspects: the accomplishment of His redemption, the impartation of His divine life into us, and the producing of His organic corporate expression.

The Manifestation of the Love of God in the Accomplishment of Redemption

God's love was manifested by the Son being sent as a propitiation for our sins and for those of the whole world and through the Son's death as the bronze serpent and the Lamb of God, and His love was further manifested by the delivering up of His Son for our justification. Such a love constrains us to live to Him.

Being Manifested in His Sending the Son as a Propitiation for Sins

First John reveals that God manifested His love by accomplishing judicial redemption through the vicarious death of Christ. Verse 10 of chapter 4 highlights the love of God expressed through Christ's redemptive death: "Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins." The Greek word translated "propitiation" (ἰλασμός) refers to a sacrifice for propitiation, that is, an offering to appease an offended party. Thus, *propitiation* in 4:10 refers to appeasing God and to reconciling us to Him by satisfying His demands so that we may be one with Him. In Isaiah 59:2 God identifies our sins as a factor that disrupts our fellowship with Him: "Your iniquities have become a separation / Between you and your God, / And your sins have hidden His face / From you so that He does not hear." Our sins offend the righteous God, hide us from His presence, and keep Him from being peacefully gracious to us (cf. 1 John 1:5-10). Hence, as sinners, we need propitiation to satisfy God's righteous demands and to appease God on our behalf. When Christ offered Himself on the cross to God as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, He died for our sins and took them away, thus satisfying the requirements of God's righteousness and restoring peace between us and God (3:5; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:28). Because Christ's vicarious death satisfied and appeased God, we are propitiated to God in Christ as our Substitute. Therefore, God was constrained by His

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great love to send Christ to die as the sacrifice for our propitiation before God, enabling us to have peace toward God and enjoy fellowship with Him (Rom. 5:1).

According to 1 John 2:2, Christ “Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world.” This verse reveals that God’s love encompasses the entire world, all fallen human beings; it is reminiscent of Paul’s words in 1 Timothy referring to God as “the Savior of all men” and One who “desires all men to be saved” (4:10; 2:4). In order to fulfill His desire, Christ Jesus became “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42), dying for all and giving Himself as a ransom for all to accomplish redemption (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:6). Similarly, Isaiah prophesied that when Christ was dying vicariously in the place of sinners (53:4-5), God caused “the iniquity of us all” to fall on Him (v. 6). These verses show us that Christ’s redemption is available to all people across all time so that all may have the opportunity to be saved. In order to experience the availability of Christ’s redemption, we must receive Him by believing into Him. Faith is the bridge between Christ’s accomplished redemption and our experience of its effectiveness. Although the entire world lies within the scope of Christ’s redemption, one must have “the obedience of faith” to enjoy the benefits of His redemptive death (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). At the tremendous cost of His death on the cross, Christ accomplished an eternal redemption and has made it available to everyone, displaying God’s all-encompassing love. We need to allow the desire of God’s heart for the salvation of all to be reproduced in us so that our heart may be broadened to the extent that we love everyone. As God’s heart is reproduced in us, we will appreciate the broad reach of His love, pray for the fulfillment of His heart’s desire, and preach the gospel to all people, irrespective of color, class, or culture. The apostle Paul exhorted that “petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men” concerning their salvation, because such a heart was duplicated in him (1 Tim. 2:1-4). He confessed that the good pleasure of his heart and his petition to God for the Jews was for their salvation (Rom. 10:1). Similarly, he testified that the Lord had empowered him so that through him “the proclamation of the gospel might be fully accomplished and all the Gentiles might hear” (2 Tim. 4:17).

Being Manifested in the Death of Christ as the Bronze Serpent

Perhaps no other portion of John’s writings so clearly reveals God’s universal love for all of fallen humanity as does John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life.” God is love; as such, He loves sinful persons, and He demonstrated His love by sending His Son to die for our sins in order to redeem us. God sent His Son not to condemn the world but to save it (v. 17). It is noteworthy that the word chosen to identify the object of God’s love verse 16 is *world*, not *mankind*. The world refers to the entirety of sinful, fallen people, corrupted and usurped by Satan to be the components of Satan’s cosmos, his evil, anti-God system. In other words, the object of God’s great love is not created man in his sinless, pristine state but fallen man, who is not only sinful but also serpentine (1 John 3:10; Rev. 12:9; John 8:44). The Greek word translated “for” (γάρ) in 3:16 may indicate either the reason or the cause of a foregoing statement (Thayer 1063). This means that God’s love for man with his serpentine nature was a motivating factor for the Son of Man to be “lifted up” on the cross as the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent in verse 14.

The lifting up of the bronze serpent in verse 14 refers to the Old Testament account of an event recorded in Numbers 21. As judgment for sinning against Jehovah, many of the children of Israel were bitten by serpents and died. When Israel repented, God provided a means for salvation from the serpents’ poison: by looking upon a bronze serpent made by Moses, which he set on a pole, the bitten ones would live (vv. 4-9). This is because the bronze serpent that was lifted up on the pole bore God’s judgment as the representative of the poisoned Israelites. Today as descendants of Adam, we have all been poisoned by the ancient serpent and corrupted with his serpentine nature. Fallen persons

are serpents, “offspring of vipers,” and children of the devil, the ancient serpent (Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; 1 John 3:10; Rev. 12:9; John 8:44). As such, we deserve to be judged by God. Yet because of His love for us, God sent His only begotten Son as our Replacement to bear the punishment for what we are. Just as the bronze serpent in the wilderness had the form of the serpent but did not have the serpent’s poison, so also Christ, when He became flesh, was “in the likeness of the flesh of sin” but did not participate in any way in the sin of the flesh (Rom. 8:3; cf. Heb. 5:7; John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:15-16). Sin is not in Him (1 John 3:5); hence, He neither committed nor knew any sin (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15). When Christ was crucified as our Substitute in the form of a serpent, we, the serpents, passed through God’s judgment in Christ and were redeemed by God. Further, through His crucifixion as the reality of the bronze serpent, Christ bruised the old serpent’s head (Gen. 3:15), destroying the devil, who has the might of death (Heb. 2:14). Christ’s death in the form of the serpent also dealt with our sinful, serpentine nature (Rom. 7:20), for when He died as a man in the flesh, God condemned sin in the flesh (8:3). The vicarious, Satan-destroying, and sin-condemning death of Christ as the bronze serpent on the cross prepared the way for us to look at Him, that is, believe into Him, so that we might have eternal life. God so loved the serpentine world that He sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin to die on the cross in the form of the serpent. On the cross the sinless One was made sin on our behalf and judged in our place (2 Cor. 5:21). God condemned Satan’s sinful nature in our flesh so that we could be saved from His judgment and enlivened with His divine life.

Being Manifested in the Death of Christ as the Lamb of God

God’s saving love for perishing man is revealed in His sending the Son not only as the bronze serpent but also as the Lamb of God. The Gospel of John records John the Baptist’s declaration concerning Christ: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29). For Christ to take away the sin of the world is for Him to remove the totality of sin from the fallen human race through His redemptive death by dealing with both the sin that works within our fallen nature and the sins that we commit in our daily life. Through Adam’s fall Satan injected his sinful nature into humanity. This sinful nature causes fallen people to commit sinful deeds (Rom. 7:17). As a result, all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (3:23). God’s righteous judgment upon humanity’s sinful nature and sinful deeds is death, for “the wages of sin is death” (6:23; Ezek. 18:4).

Although God’s righteousness compels Him to judge the sinful human race for their sins, God’s love constrained Him to send His Son as a substitutionary sacrifice to die for both their sin and their sins. Christ as the Word became flesh through incarnation, lived a perfect, sinless human life, and was led willingly to slaughter (John 1:14; Heb. 4:15; Isa. 53:7). Thus, He was qualified to die as the spotless Lamb of God to take away both sin (our nature of sin) and sins (our acts of sin). On the one hand, Christ put away sin by being made sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (Heb. 9:26; 2 Cor. 5:21). On the other hand, Christ bore up our sins in His body on the cross so that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24). In taking away our sin, Christ did not simply command the sin to go away; rather, He paid the penalty of sin and removed sin in order to satisfy God’s righteous requirements.

The cross of Christ is where God’s love and God’s righteousness converge (Rom. 3:25). First John 1:9 states that, God is righteous, and 4:8 states that He is also love. If God exercised His love to receive sinners without requiring the proper payment for their sins, His righteousness would be violated. Likewise, if He executed His righteousness to judge sinners without showing mercy, His eternal love would not be demonstrated. In the death of Christ these two apparently incompatible attributes of God, righteousness and love, are wondrously harmonized (cf. Psa. 145:17). The God who righteously demanded death as the punishment for our sins was motivated by His love to give His beloved Son to suffer the punishment that we deserved. Both

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God's inviolable righteousness and His unchanging love are exhibited in the costly and vicarious death of His Son as the Lamb of God (John 10:17-18).

In His death as the Lamb without blemish and spot, Christ shed His precious blood for the accomplishment of our redemption and the forgiveness of our sins (1 Pet. 1:19; Heb. 9:12-14, 22). The writings of John are particularly rich in unveiling the significance of the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 1:5 links Christ's love for us with His redeeming blood, saying that Christ "loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood." In the past Satan used our sins to hold us, but the blood of Christ has released us from the grasp of these sins. His redeeming blood defeats sins by washing them away. According to 1 John 1:7, the blood of Christ is the blood of Jesus, God's Son, which "cleanses us from every sin." This blood is the blood of a God-man who has both divinity and humanity. As a genuine man, Jesus was qualified to shed His blood for our redemption; and as God's Son, His divinity ensures the eternal efficacy of the redeeming blood. Only the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, can redeem us from our sins, cleansing us from all unrighteousness (v. 9), for this blood satisfies God's righteous requirements (Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:22). Since Christ's blood has released us from our sins, it has also released us from judgment, condemnation, wrath, and death, all of which are related to sins. If we realize that we have been forgiven of our sins and released from them by the blood of the Lord Jesus, we will hate and forsake our sins as well as fear and love the Lord (Psa. 130:4; Luke 7:47).

The blood of Jesus not only releases us from Satan's usurpation but also makes us God's possession, for by the blood of the slain Lamb we were purchased to be made a kingdom and priests to our God (Rev. 5:9-10; cf. Acts 20:28). Further, it is because of the blood of the Lamb that we may overcome the devil, our accuser, for the Lord's redeeming blood answers all his accusations against us and gives us the victory over our accuser (Rev. 12:10-11). And it is in the blood of the Lamb that we may wash our robes and make them white so that we may have right to the tree of life in order to participate in the life of God (7:14; 22:14). Christ as the Lamb of God reveals God's love for us in the accomplishment of redemption by the shedding of His blood, which cleanses us from every sin, releases us from the hold of our sins, makes us God's possession, enables us to overcome the devil, and grants us access to God's eternal life.

Being Manifested in Delivering Up His Son for Our Justification

Romans 5:6-10 reveals God's love for sinful man in the redemptive death of Christ:

While we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will anyone die, though perhaps for the good man someone would even dare to die. But God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified in His blood, we will be saved through Him from the wrath. For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.

These verses portray the degraded condition of fallen humans, who as weak and ungodly sinners, are enemies of God. Nevertheless, the unlovable state of sinful humanity did not deter God from dispensing Himself into redeemed human vessels so that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy (9:23). Hence, God proved His love by sending His Son to die for us so that we may be justified in His redemptive blood, saved from the wrath of God, and reconciled to God through His propitiating death.

This One through whom God proved His love is referred to by the apostle Paul as "the Beloved" and "the Son of His love" (Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:13), indicating that no one and nothing is dearer to God's heart than His Son. Yet Romans 8:32-34 speaks of God's willingness to give up His only begotten Son for our justification because of His love for us: "Indeed, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall

He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died."

In the same Epistle Paul states that Christ "was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification" (4:25). The apostle Peter testified in Acts 2:23 that Christ was "delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God," given into the hands of "lawless men," and "nailed to a cross and killed." So immense was God's love for us that He did not withhold His own Son but delivered Him up to die on the cross for the sake of our offenses. Knowing this deep and sacrificial love of God, Paul was persuaded that no person—angels, principalities, powers, or any other creature—no suffering—tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword—and no matter—death, life, things present, or things to come—can separate us from "the love of Christ," that is, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-39). Although our love for God may fluctuate, Paul was convinced that nothing can cause God in Christ to cease from loving us. On the contrary, through God's eternal, unchanging love in Christ, we more than conquer all afflictions and every negative thing that seeks to separate us from Him.

Being Revealed in Christ's Vicarious Death That Constrains Us to Live to Him

Perhaps nowhere in Paul's Epistles is the love of Christ—the love of God in Christ—and its captivating influence on our daily life more compactly presented in relation to His redemptive death than in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "The love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised." According to Alford, the love of Christ refers not primarily to our love toward Christ but to "*Christ's love to men*" as shown by "*His death*, which is the greatest proof of love" (3: 1115). Because we sinned against God, we came under God's ultimate punishment—the sentence of death. However, because of His love for us, Christ died in our stead, bearing the punishment that we deserved. Because Christ is a God-man, His divinity lends an eternal value and universal significance to His death. Hence, when He died, "all who had ever lived, all who will yet live until time ends, died in Christ's death, died in Christ, their Substitute" (Lenski 1030). Christ's vicarious death saves us from death so that we do not need to die and face the judgment that otherwise has been reserved for sinners (Heb. 9:27). His loving death compels us, through His resurrection, to live no longer to ourselves but to live to Him (Rom. 14:7-9). "To live to ourselves means that we are under our own control, direction, and governing and that we care for our own aims and goals," whereas "to live to the Lord means that we are under the Lord's direction and control and that we desire to fulfill His requirements, satisfy His desires, and complete what He intends" (Lee, *Conclusion* 3216). To live to Christ is not merely to live for Him; it is to live in oneness with Him, acknowledging Him as our Owner, taking Him as the goal of our living, and seeking to please Him in every aspect of our daily life (1 Cor. 6:17, 19-20; 2 Cor. 5:9; Phil. 3:12, 14). The love that caused Christ to die for us constrains us to live to Him, not to ourselves (Rom. 14:7-9). This was Paul's personal experience, to which he testifies in Galatians 2:20, saying, "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Paul realized that the Son of God loved him and gave Himself up for him; thus, he no longer let the self live but instead allowed Christ to live and be expressed through him (John 6:57; Phil. 1:20-21).

The Manifestation of the Love of God in the Impartation of His Divine Life

God's love is manifested in the impartation, the dispensing, of His divine life. This can be seen in the believers' having life and living through the Son and in God's begetting us as His children and maturing us in His life. And His love can also be experienced in our mutual abiding with Him by the Spirit.

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AND SEEKING TO PLEASE
HIM IN EVERY ASPECT
OF OUR DAILY LIFE.

Being Manifested in Our Having Life and Living through the Son

God displayed His boundless love toward fallen humanity by paying a great price to accomplish redemption through Christ's vicarious death on the cross. We can never fully grasp the value of Christ's redemption or fathom the tremendous cost required of Him to satisfy God's righteous demand. Nevertheless, while redemption is a necessary component of God's economy, it is not God's goal. Judicial redemption, in which we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, is a foundation for God's organic salvation, which is the principal component of the divine economy (Rom. 5:10). Organic salvation entails God in Christ as the Spirit saving us much more in His eternal life by dispensing Himself as life into us to make us His organic expression. Redemption paved the way for all the believers in Christ to be propitiated toward God, justified by God, and reconciled to God. Thus, the believers are qualified to receive God's life and nature in order to be His manifestation. In His redeeming death Christ gave Himself up for us; in His life-imparting resurrection Christ gave Himself to us. In carrying out His full salvation, the Triune God exhibits not only His self-sacrificing love in His judicial redemption but also His self-imparting love in His organic salvation.

TO HAVE LIFE
AND LIVE THROUGH
THE SON IMPLIES
A MYSTICAL UNION
WITH THE SON
IN THE DIVINE LIFE,
A UNION OF LIFE
IN WHICH THE SON
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BELIEVERS TO BE
MAGNIFIED
THROUGH THEM.

First John 4:9 ties the manifestation of God's love to the believers' possession of the eternal life: "In this the love of God was manifested among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might have life and live through Him." In the next chapter John associates the Son with life: "God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (5:11-12). The Son is both the embodiment of the eternal life and the means through which God gives us His eternal life (John 1:4; 3:16; 10:10; 14:6). To have life and live through the Son implies a mystical union with the Son in the divine life, a union of life in which the Son lives in the believers to be magnified through them (Phil. 1:20-21; John 14:19). Witness Lee offers commentary on 1 John 4:9:

We, the fallen people, are not only sinful in nature and conduct (Rom. 7:17-18; 1:28-32) but also dead in our spirit (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13). God sent His Son into the world not only to be a propitiation for our sins that we might be forgiven (v. 10) but also to be life to us that we might have life and live through Him. In the love of God, the Son of God saves us not only from our sins by His blood (Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5) but also from our death by His life (3:14-15; John 5:24). He is not only the Lamb of God who takes away our sin (John 1:29); He is also the Son of God who gives us eternal life (John 3:36). He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3) that we might have eternal life in Him (John 3:14-16) and live through Him (John 6:57; 14:19). In this the love of God, which is God's essence, has been manifested. (Recovery Version, 1 John 4:9, note 3)

The thought that the love of God is exhibited in His dispensing eternal life into the believers is reflected in John 3:16. Contrary to the notion that John 3:16 refers mainly to judicial redemption through Christ's substitutionary death on the cross, the focal point of this verse is not only the believers' deliverance from eternal punishment but also their receiving of eternal life. This understanding corresponds to the thrust of the Gospel of John, which repeatedly underscores God's intention to impart Himself in Christ as life and life supply to the believers. The Son is life, the embodiment of life, and the Giver of life (11:25; 1:4; 5:21; 6:33). According to the Son's own declaration, the chief purpose of His incarnation was that the believers may have life and have it abundantly (10:10), and the principal purpose of His death was to release the divine life from within Himself so that this life would become available to all His believers (12:24). He desires us to behold Him, come to Him, and believe into Him so that we may have life (6:40; 3:15; 5:40). According to the context of the entire Gospel of John, for God to give us His Son in love is for God not only to send the Son as a Redeemer to die for us and release us from our sins but, more importantly, to dispense the Son as the divine life into us (Col. 3:4).

Being Manifested in Begetting Us and Maturing Us in His Life

The impartation of the divine life into us as the believers issues in our regeneration through which we become the children of God. First John 3:1-2 speaks of the believers' being God's children as evidence of God's love, saying, "Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. Because of this the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God." In his commentary on 1 John, Brooke Foss Westcott observes that God's love "is not simply exhibited towards believers, but imparted to them" and that "the divine love is, as it were, infused into them, so that it is their own, and becomes in them the source of a divine life" (95). According to W. E. Vine, the Greek word translated "what manner of love" (ποσπός) indicates admiration and astonishment, and the Greek expression rendered "and we are" is used to confirm our relationship with God as His children, "as if to arrest the thought of the reader with the marvel of the way in which Divine love has been exercised" (49-50). It is indeed an astounding miracle that by believing into the Son and receiving His divine life, we, who were once children of the devil, may become children of God and members of His household (Eph. 2:19).

Contrary to the notion that the believers become children of God mainly through a forensic procedure of adoption, John in his first Epistle emphatically reveals that the believers become God's children through an organic process of birth, in which God begets them by imparting His life into them. Westcott comments that John specifically uses the word τέκνον because he "regards their position not as the result of an 'adoption' (υιοθεσία) but as the result of a new life which advances from the vital germ to full maturity" (124). For this reason, immediately before asserting that the believers are children of God, the apostle John refers to the believers as those who have been begotten of God (2:29). Several verses later he proclaims that everyone who has been begotten of God has the seed of God abiding in him (3:9). The seed of God denotes God's life, that which the believers received when they were begotten of Him. Through regeneration God's eternal life as the divine seed was sown into their spirit; that is, His life was imparted into them to make them His children. Moreover, John links the believers' status as children of God with a divine birth: "As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). These verses confirm that the believers are children of God who are begotten, or born, of Him because they have received Christ, who is the divine life (14:6). Within the divine life is the divine nature. As God's children, genuinely begotten by Him, we possess not only His life but also His nature (2 Pet. 1:4). This shows that the love of God is not only a redeeming love but also a begetting love, a love that begets us as God's children by dispensing His life and nature into us.

Love is the expression of life (1 John 3:14; cf. 1 Cor. 13). This is indicated by 1 John 4:7, which says, "Everyone who loves has been begotten of God." Only those who possess the life of God by being born of God can practice the divine love, and when we live by the divine life, we express the divine love. Since love is the issue of life, the experience of the divine life results in an increase of the divine love within us. When we do not participate in the divine life, we are alienated from this life in our experience and abide in death (3:14-15). When we participate in the fellowship of the divine life, we partake of love as one of the aspects of the divine nature. The more we grow in the divine life and enjoy the divine nature, the more we are filled with love toward God and others. Second Peter 1:4-7 confirms that by partaking of the divine nature, we advance in the growth of life and develop in our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly love, and, ultimately, love. The divine love is the consummation of the progressive experience of enjoying the divine nature; it is the apex of our growth in the divine life unto maturity.

The love of God, which is mainly a love in life, not only begets us to be His children but

JOHN IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE EMPHATICALLY REVEALS THAT THE BELIEVERS BECOME GOD'S CHILDREN THROUGH AN ORGANIC PROCESS OF BIRTH, IN WHICH GOD BEGETS THEM BY IMPARTING HIS LIFE INTO THEM.

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OF LOVE.

also matures us in the divine life. Immediately after speaking concerning the love of God expressed in making us His children in 1 John 3:1, John proclaims that “now we are children of God” and that if He is manifested, “we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is” (v. 2). The manner of love that the Father has given to us includes not only what we are—children of God begotten of Him—but also what we will be when we see Him as He is—sons of God manifested in glory (Rom. 8:18-19; Col. 3:4). *We are* emphasizes the initial stage of God’s salvation in life; *we will be* emphasizes the consummate stage of His salvation in life. This implies that God’s love is the basis for all that we undergo, beginning with our being children of God possessing His life and nature and consummating in our becoming mature sons of God possessing His likeness and glory. God’s organic salvation, which begins with our regeneration, continues with our transformation, and consummates with our glorification, is a matter of His love in life. The first Epistle of John highlights the divine birth through which we have received the eternal life, the seed of God, to be the children of God. This Epistle also underlines the need for the believers to grow in the divine life, progressing from little children, to young men, and eventually to fathers (2:1, 12-14). The life of God that was sown into us as His seed at our regeneration needs to grow in us unto maturity so that we may express His love in full.

As children of God born of Him, we are God’s kind. By partaking of blood and flesh through incarnation, God in Christ entered into the human race and became a man in life and in nature without abandoning His Godhead or participating in sin (Heb. 2:14; John 1:14). By being born of the life-giving Spirit in our spirit through regeneration, we, the believers in Christ, receive the divine life and divine nature and thereby become God in life and nature without possessing the Godhead or sharing His incommunicable attributes (3:6; Col. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:4). Because we live by the divine life and enjoy the divine nature, we are God in kind. Further, since God is love, we who are becoming the same as He is in life and nature should not only love others but also become love itself in Christ. Since love is the nature of God’s essence, for the believers to practice the divine love is for them to partake of one of the constituents of the divine nature. Concerning this notion, Martyn Lloyd-Jones states in *The Love of God* that “the only people who can love as God loves are those who have received the nature of God” (44-45). When love as the nature of God’s essence is imparted into us to become the essence of our being, we become love by being constituted with God, who is love itself.

Being Experienced by Our Mutually Abiding with Him by the Spirit

John’s first Epistle reveals that the believers’ enjoyment of the love of God is dependent upon mutually abiding with Him. First John 4:16 says, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him,” indicating that in order to live a life of love, we, as believers, need to live a life of coinherence with the Triune God, a life in which we dwell in Him and He dwells in us. Through our mutual abiding with God, He as love is imparted into us to become our constitution so that God’s divine attribute of love may permeate, uplift, and strengthen our human virtue of love. Indeed, the love with which the Father has loved the Son is in us (John 17:26). Hence, we should love God and others not with our natural human love, which is devoid of God, but with the divine love, which is God Himself as love wrought into us through our mutual indwelling with Him. Our natural human love is fickle, transient, limited, hypocritical, and fleeting, but God’s love is unchanging, eternal, boundless, truthful, and imperishable (Jer. 31:3; Eph. 3:18-19; Rom. 12:9; 2 John 1; 1 Cor. 13:4-8). Regarding this divine love expressed among the believers, F. F. Bruce says in his study of the Epistles of John, “The love which dwells in the community of God’s children and which they show one to another is His love imparted to them. More than that: the God of love imparts Himself to His people, so dwelling within them that they, in their turn, dwell in His love and dwell in Him” (112).

First John 3:23-24 says that the believers who keep the commandment of love know their mutual abiding with the Triune God by the Spirit. This indicates that one of the basic

factors that enables the believers to mutually abide with the Triune God for the practice of the divine love is the Spirit, who is the realization of the Triune God. Bruce asserts that “the mutual coinherence of God and His children is the Spirit’s work” (112). Further, according to 2:27, the anointing—the operation of the Spirit dwelling in the believers—abides in us and teaches us to abide in the Triune God (v. 24; cf. John 14:17, 26). “The abiding Spirit, that is, the indwelling Spirit, is the element and sphere of the mutual abiding, the mutual indwelling, of us and God” (Lee, Recovery Version, 1 John 4:13, note 1). Our mutual abiding with God is evidenced in our living daily a life of love with the love of God. By walking according to the Spirit and obeying the teaching of the anointing, we mutually abide with the Triune God and abide in the divine love (2:27; Gal. 5:16).

The Manifestation of the Love of God in Building Up His Corporate Expression

The manifestation of God’s love can also be seen in its impact on maintaining the church life through brotherly love, which manifests God’s perfect love and enables the believers, as brothers, to minister life to one another for the building up of the Body.

Being Manifested and Maintained by Brotherly Love in the Church Life

The impartation of the life of God into the believers is for the building up of God’s enlarged expression in the Son, the organic Body of Christ (cf. 1 John 3:10; Eph. 4:15-16). The believers’ experience of God’s love should be deeply personal as well as profoundly corporate, for their enjoyment of God’s love is not ultimately for the cultivation of individualistic mysticism but for the building up of the church as the Body. Although the manifestation of the love of God reaches its zenith in the Body of Christ as God’s corporate expression, John’s first Epistle does not directly refer to this corporate entity by using expressions such as *the church*, *the house of God*, and *the Body of Christ*. However, the revelation concerning the Body is presented in this Epistle when John speaks concerning the fellowship of the eternal life—“the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, who have received and possess the divine life” (Lee, Recovery Version, 1 John 1:3, note 3). In 1 John 1:2 the apostle John says, “The life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.” Christ as the eternal life, which was with Father, was manifested to the apostles. Thus, the eternal life flowed from the Father to the apostles. For this reason John says in verse 3 that “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” According to verse 2, the apostles reported, that is, transmitted, the eternal life to the believers, implying the flow of the eternal life from the apostles to the believers. In verse 3, when John speaks concerning the outcome of the flow of the eternal life from the apostles to the believers, he does not say that the believers receive the eternal life; instead, he says that the believers have fellowship with the apostles (v. 3), indicating that this divine fellowship is the circulation of the divine life among the believers, through the apostles, and from the Father. In other words, the fellowship of the divine life is the believers’ corporate participation in Christ as the divine life. It is also the reality of the Body of Christ, the actuality of the church (1 Cor. 10:16). The fellowship of the eternal life is not merely for the believers’ personal supply, nourishment, or edification; it is for the church life. In brief, the goal of the divine fellowship in which we enjoy the riches of the eternal life is the church life.

According to 1 John, the fellowship of the eternal life has two aspects: the believers’ fellowship with the Triune God—“our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”—and their fellowship with one another—“you also may have fellowship with us” (1:3). Verse 6 says that we have fellowship with God, indicating our vertical fellowship with the Triune God, and verse 7 says that we have fellowship with one another, indicating our horizontal fellowship with the members of the Body of Christ. Just as our fellowship with the Triune God is maintained by our loving Him with the divine love (John 14:21, 23), so also our fellowship with one another is maintained by our loving one another with God as love. Hence, in order to maintain the fellowship of

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the Body of Christ, we need to love the brothers. The church life is a life of brotherly love, and brotherly love is the church life.

Love is required to sustain harmony in every kind of human situation. Just as a proper family life is sustained by the love that circulates among the members of that family, so also the church life is sustained by the divine love that circulates among the members of the Body of Christ. Given the crucial role of brotherly love in maintaining the fellowship of the Body of Christ, the apostle John in his first Epistle repeatedly highlights the believers' need to love the brothers (3:10-11, 14, 16, 23; 4:7, 20-21; 5:1-2). In so doing, John reveals that the love of God is fully expressed within the believers through their loving one another.

Being Manifested Perfectly through Our Brotherly Love

The manifestation of the love of God through the believers' brotherly love is most clearly unveiled in 1 John 4:12: "No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us." According to Lloyd-Jones, this verse means that "the ultimate objective of God in sending His Son into the world...was that God might make of us such people that we should love the brethren and love one another even as He has loved us" (87). For the love of God to be perfected in us is for His love to reach "its full maturity" within us (Alford 4: 1742). Here love as God's "essential nature" is "not merely manifested towards us, we ourselves are the sphere in which it is exhibited" (Vine 80).

In God Himself the love of God itself is perfect and complete. However, in us it needs to be perfected and completed in its manifestation. It was manifested to us in God's sending of His Son to be both a propitiatory sacrifice and life to us (vv. 9-10). Yet if we do not love one another with this love as it was manifested to us, that is, if we do not express it by loving one another with the love with which God loved us, it is not manifested perfectly and completely. This love is perfected and completed in its manifestation when we express it in our living by habitually loving one another with it. Our living in which we love one another in the love of God is the perfection and completion of this love in its manifestation in us. Thus, in our living in God's love, others can behold God manifested in His essence, which is love. (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 12, note 4)

Although no one has ever seen God, if we love the brothers with His love, we will manifest the divine love as the inward essence of the God who abides in us. In order for His love to be manifested perfectly, we need to love the brothers by allowing God as love to saturate our being, operate within us, and be expressed through us in our love toward them. When God is manifested in our love for one another, others will be able to see in our brotherly love what God is in the nature of His essence—love. The most complete manifestation of God's love is the believers' expression of what He is as love within their love for one another.

In John's view the believers' love for one another is based on their divine birth, their membership in God's household. Our regeneration is made evident through our love toward the brothers. This notion is indicated by 1 John 3:14, which says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers." In 1 John 5:1 John says, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, and everyone who loves Him who has begotten loves him also who has been begotten of Him." This verse reveals that our brotherly love is the issue of belonging to God's family. Family members who share the same parents spontaneously display a powerful impulse to love one another. Since the human life is but a shadow of the divine life, members of the divine family, who are begotten of the same Father and share His eternal life and His divine nature, should love one another much more than the members of a human family love one another. Because we are organically related to every child of God by virtue of our joint possession of the divine life, there is in us a love for all

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believers. The mutual love among the believers is for the corporate life of the church as God's household.

Being Manifested in the Laying Down of Our Soul-life for the Brothers

Brotherly love is for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ. First John 3:16 says, "In this we know love, that He laid down His life on our behalf, and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers." The Lord Jesus as the good Shepherd, in loving the believers to the uttermost, laid down His human life, His soul-life, for them as His sheep so that they may have the divine life and have it abundantly (John 10:10-11; 13:1). The Lord as a grain of wheat fell into the ground and lost His soul-life through death in order to release His eternal life from within the confines of the shell of His humanity (12:24). In resurrection He dispenses this life into the believers. As the many grains of wheat, we need to follow Him into the ground, laying down our soul-life through our experience of the cross in order to impart the divine life into fellow members of the Body of Christ (vv. 25-26; Matt. 16:25). If we truly love the brothers and care for God's intention to gain the Body as His corporate expression, we will be willing to lose our soul-life through the cross in order to supply one another with the divine life for the building up of the Body.

Being Manifested in Our Loving of One Another for the Body Life

The Body life as the goal of brotherly love is revealed in detail in John 15, where the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as the true vine and the believers as the branches of the vine (vv. 1, 5). In this chapter the Lord exhorted the believers to love one another (vv. 12, 17). In order to perceive the intrinsic relationship between brotherly love and the Body life, we need to realize that the vine is the Body of Christ and that the branches in the vine are the members of the Body. Just as we who are many members are parts of the one Body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17), so also the many branches in John 15 are parts of the one vine. As branches in the vine, we are joined in the divine life not only to Christ as the vine, the Head of the Body, but also to the believers as the branches, the fellow members of the Body. We should maintain the vertical fellowship with Christ as the vine by our mutual abiding with Him and our abiding in His love (vv. 4-5, 9-10). We should also maintain the horizontal fellowship with the believers as the branches by loving one another. In this sense, loving one another equals the church life, the Body life, which is a life of love and a life in love. Therefore, we need to love one another in the divine life and in the divine love in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with the members of the Body for the proper practice of the Body life.

Ultimately, the brotherly love in which the love of God is perfectly manifested marks the fulfillment of the Son's prayer in John 17: "That they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me...I have made Your name known to them, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them" (vv. 23, 26). For the believers to be perfected into one is for them to be perfected unto the work of the ministry to build up the unique Body of Christ in the sphere and element of the divine love by which they love one another (Eph. 4:12-13). When the world sees the oneness of the Body being demonstrated by a mutual love among its members, it will know that the Father has sent the Son not only as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world but also as life to beget the believers as His children, to mature them into His sons, and to build them up into His corporate expression. The world will also know that just as the Father gave His life and glory to the Son in love so that the Son could express Him, He has also given His life and glory to the believers in love so that His many sons can express Him corporately. At such a time the world will know that the divine life and love that exist eternally within the Trinity have been dispensed into the believers and now flow within the Body of Christ. As an organism of the Triune God, the Body will manifest to the world what God is in the essence of His being from eternity to eternity, that is, love (4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13).

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THE NEW TESTAMENT
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THE LOVE OF GOD AND
THE ECONOMY OF GOD,
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TRINITY AS LIFE INTO
HIS CHOSEN AND
REDEEMED PEOPLE
FOR THE PRODUCING
OF HIS ENLARGED
EXPRESSION IN CHRIST.

Conclusion

The New Testament reveals an intrinsic relationship between the love of God and the economy of God, His plan to dispense Himself in His Trinity as life into His chosen and redeemed people for the producing of His enlarged expression in Christ. God is love, and the three of the Trinity exist in an intimate, deep, and unfathomable relationship of love from eternity to eternity. Because God desires to manifest what He is through man, in eternity past He chose us in His love to be conformed to the image of His Son. Then God created humankind in His image with the intention of imparting His life into us so that we might express Him. Although the fall delayed the fulfillment of this intention, it provided God an opportunity to display His unfailing love for sinful humanity by carrying out so great a salvation for them. The love of God is expressed in three stages of the execution of His economy: the accomplishment of His judicial redemption, the impartation of His divine life, and the building up of His expanded expression in Christ. The love of God was abundantly manifested through the redemptive death of Christ as a propitiation for the sins of the entire world so that those who believe into Him may be released from their sins, delivered from God's condemnation, justified by Him, and reconciled to Him. The love of God was wonderfully manifested through the dispensing of His life and nature into the believers so that they may be born as His children, participate in His life, and partake of His nature for their growth in life unto maturity until God's attribute of love is fully expressed in their human virtue of love. The love of God is consummately manifested through brotherly love in which the believers as the fellow members of God's household love one another with the divine love, lay down their soul-life to minister life to one another, and remain in the fellowship with the Father and the Son and with one another. The believers' loving one another with the love of God is the crowning manifestation of God's love, for it testifies to the triumph of the divine economy. **AC**

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