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Significance of the Statement "God is Love" to Christian Revelation

If asked for a single sentence that summarizes all Christian belief, one may accurately cite 1 Jn 4:8, 16: "God is Love." One may object to this statement as being an over-simplification of God, out of fear of reducing the nature, power, or freedom of God. However, we will see that the idea of God's being love does not weaken God or subject God to human manipulation. In fact this mystery maintains and strengthens God's transcendence through his the very immanence he presents as he makes his revelation known. While this statement seems in itself to be very simple, it contains an infinite capacity of richness and a depth. As it reveals the mystery of God, it confronts one even more with the mystery.

The statement does not read "God is loving" but rather "God is *love*." It tells us more than that God loved the world by being involved in history, or by giving his only begotten Son for it (Pannenberg 424). This statement points to the very nature of God himself, in inner Trinitarian life, as it is revealed through salvation history. This revelation is made as an invitation for those to whom the revelation is made to take their place within the Trinitarian community of love.

The fact that everything in Christian revelation points towards this one final statement, "God is Love", is of overwhelming significance. One sees that God's revelation is more than just a lesson or set of lessons about appropriate living, the meaning of life, or even the relationship between creation and God (in themselves, although it does contain these lessons). Christian revelation goes deeper in that it can be described as a total "self-communication" of God to his creation (Rahner 116). God's freedom and transcendence are maintained, because that revelation is that *God is love*, and as such remains infinitely open for new discovery.

How We Know that God is Love

The God of Christianity is not a Gnostic God, completely disconnected from human events and creation's history, nor is he a pantheistic God, so inseparably connected with creation that he can not exist apart from it. Rather the Christian God is a God who is love, and who thus freely chooses to create and to maintain his creation through historical involvement. But how do we know this? How has the nature of the immanent Trinity been revealed?

For most theologians, the answer lies within the economy of salvation. What we know about God is only that which has been revealed by Jesus Christ, and the Christ event.

Just as philosophy cannot reflect about God if it does not take God's creatures as its point of departure and continuously concern itself with these creatures, in which the mystery of God is recognised [sic], so too can theology say nothing about the God of salvation unless it proceeds from

and stays close to the history of salvation, in which God affirms himself as God. (Schillebeeckx 139)

It is along these lines that the Church understands Christ as the total revelation of God to humanity. In fact, we may say that "the whole of Jesus' human life was revelation" (ibid. 10). It is Christ that reveals to us that God is love, in what he says, what he does, and who he is.

With Jesus we are presented with one who has a close and intimate relationship with the Father. Jesus refers to the Father as *Abba*, a term indicating an unprecedented closeness to God. This closeness with God, and Jesus' message of the fatherly love of God for all humanity, is identified with his proclamation of the arrival of the Kingdom of God (Pannenberg 259-60). The Kingdom Jesus presents is inhabited entirely of children of the Father. We see that Jesus defined himself through his relationship with the Father, and at the same time as he revealed it to others, inviting them to enter into the relationship themselves:

On the lips of Jesus, "Father" became a proper name for God. It thus ceased to be simply one designation among others. It embraces every feature in the understanding of God which comes to light in the message of Jesus. It names the divine Other in terms of whom Jesus saw himself and to whom he referred his disciples and hearers. Jesus brought the creative activity of God, especially in his providential care for his creatures (Mt 6:26; 5:45), into the picture of God's goodness. (ibid. 262)

On the cross we see the inevitable playing out of this revelation of love. Jesus own words and deeds were in fact validated through his passion (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 69). The cross reveals the extent to which the Father will go to restore humanity to himself, and the extent to which the Son will go in obedience to the Father. It is God's love, completely poured out for humanity (Phil 2: 7), from which the Spirit of Love can proceed. As Kasper puts it, all interpretations of Christ's death on the cross

must be interpreted as ways of describing the sovereign freedom of God in this self-giving love, which took particular form in the self-sacrificing freedom of Jesus. (129)

The cross reveals a level of free other-directed love and giving that could only exist within God himself.

It should be noted here that the above interpretation of the cross only makes sense in light of the resurrection, which reveals that the cross is by no means a breaking apart of the love that holds God together, but is rather a fulfillment of it. The same divine love that would lead to the cross would also raise Jesus from the dead, and reunite the Father and the Son in their self-distinction from each other. However the resurrection reveals an extension outward; because it *is* revealed, this love is expressed for creation, particularly humanity, which is invited to enter into it.

So the passion events, in complete consistency with Jesus' ministry and mission, reveal the unity in opposition that exists within God. In revealing it, humanity is permitted to exist in union with and distinction from God, as part of the body of Christ. As Balthasar puts it, we come to see that

...Jesus could become the brother of all the very least and of the lost, revealed first by deed more than by word; that God, as all-powerful, is love, and, as love, is all-powerful; that he is this intrinsically, in the mystery of the Trinity, which alone can explain the total opposition - between being with God and being abandoned by God - within God himself. (*The von Balthasar Reader* 171,2)

The only way to reconcile the distance Jesus experiences from God (as it is realized on the cross) and his resurrection and reunion with God is to conclude that *God is love*. The scandal and contradiction of the cross is only resolved with the knowledge that *God is love*. Only love raised to a perfect

and divine level could permit the infinite freedom that is expressed in the paschal mystery.

Shortly after Jesus' resurrection, he was thus confessed as the Son of God. In fact, Paul's theology quickly moves from resurrection to sonship to preexistence (Pannenberg 265). He viewed the resurrection as Jesus' institution into divine sonship (Rom 1:3-4), but at the same time maintained his sonship in eternity. The resurrection and Jesus' institution as Son of God can then be interpreted as a temporal revelation to humanity of what takes place in God throughout eternity. It is through this development that Jesus comes to be known as "*Lord*" (Phil 2:11), ie. *Yahweh*.

The role of the Holy Spirit quickly becomes necessary. The distinction between Father and Son is maintained within a God who is one, only with the presence of a third that is equal to the two and holds the two together. We can then understand the Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son. Pannenberg writes:

According to 1 Jn 4:8,16, love as the power that manifests itself in the mutual relationship of the Trinitarian persons is identical with the divine essence. It is the materially concrete form of "Spirit" as the characteristic of God's essence. The two statements "God is Spirit" [Jn 3:8] and "God is love" denote the same unity of essence by which the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in the fellowship of the one God. (427)

Love is identified as an essential characteristic of God. This love is what allows the Father to be the Father of the Son and the Son to be the Son of the Father. The Spirit allows infinite freedom to exist within God; it allows the Father and Son to define themselves through their self-distinction from each other, and in doing so to give themselves completely to the other, and be unified. Pannenberg writes:

Thus their existence as persons is coincident with the divine love, which is simply the concrete life of the divine Spirit, just as conversely the one

reality of God as Spirit exists only in the mutual relations of the Trinitarian persons and precisely for that reason is defined as love. (431)

The Spirit allows for unity and distinction, and therefore allows God to be a Trinity.

It is this same love/spirit extended outwards, that allows for creation, and God's activity in human history. In Jesus' return to the Father the Spirit is poured out on humanity, and this Spirit becomes the witness to the relationship between the Father and the Son. If we understand the Spirit as the Love, we can then identify these three realities: the pouring out of the Spirit, the fullness of revelation and self-disclosure of God, and the outward expression of love for humanity. The Spirit facilitates growth in love for God and others, and draws people closer towards God (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 72). God reveals himself as love by loving to the end, and thus by allowing humanity to be caught up in the love that exists between the Father and the Son.

With all this in mind, we may then say that through the Christ event, God reveals his very self as love. In this sense Christ is God's entire revelation, his one Word uttered to humanity about himself.

If, therefore, the reality of Jesus, in whom as offer and as acceptance God's absolute self-communication to the whole human race "is present" for us, is really to be the unsurpassable and definitive offer and acceptance, then we have to say: it is not only established by God, but it is God himself. (Rahner 202)

Jesus reveals the Trinitarian relationship of self-communication and response, and as such, the "hypostatic union" of God (ibid.). Rahner here points out that Christ, while representing God's complete self communication to humanity, at the same time also reveals the perfect response to that revelation. Christ thus presents himself as the transparent

image of the Father, but also as the loving and obedient Son, who is sent from eternity.

According to Pannenberg, the revelation that *God is Love*, and therefore Trinity, cannot be derived from philosophical principles or abstract concepts of love. It is only through historical revelation, particularly that of Jesus, that we can come to this conclusion (432). He continues:

But on this basis they [the distinctions between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] and their unity in the divine essence make sense as the concrete reality of the divine love which pulses through all things and which consummates the monarchy of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. (ibid.)

So we can understand God's total revelation as Christ himself, and the incarnation as the expression of that revelation to humanity and creation, and as its inclusion, through Christ, in the inner life of the Trinity.

Symbolic Nature of Love

It may seem to some that the historical realization of the revelation that *God is love* removes God's autonomy from humanity. In completely "pouring himself out", has he made himself so completely vulnerable that his role as "Lord of Creation" is given up? This is the same as asking whether in revealing himself as completely immanent, has he sacrificed his transcendence? Has God's freedom been lost to humanity in his revelation? Closely related to these questions about God's freedom, are questions about humanity's. Has God revealed himself so completely and convincingly, that humanity has no choice but to respond with full submission? What role is left for "faith response", a free assent to return God's love?

Of course right from the start we can immediately recognize a contradiction between expressing infinite love for humanity and robbing it of its freedom, the same freedom that came from God in the first place. This contradiction will lead us to the answers to all the above questions. The fact that *God is love* will allow God's transcendence and immanence to live in harmony with each other, and will at the same time maintain humanity's freedom. Although God reveals himself overwhelmingly, what is revealed shows the infinite and incomprehensible mystery of God, and humanity is thus always afforded the option to accept or reject the love that is offered. This permits humanity to respond freely, and thus truly in love.

The symbol will provide us with some help in resolving our problem. In a symbol, a certain reality is expressed and in this sense the reality is truly present in the symbol. This is different from a sign, which always points to a greater reality extrinsic to itself. In quoting Rahner, Dulles writes:

The symbol is the reality, constituted by the thing symbolized as an inner moment of itself, which reveals and proclaims the thing symbolized, and is itself full of the thing symbolized, being its concrete form of existence.
(157)

The symbol provides a look at a reality that is not otherwise knowable (ibid. 159). It reveals in a very real way something that is beyond comprehension. At the same time as it is a complete representation of the reality being presented, it hides that reality by presenting it in a way that reveals how completely beyond its symbolic presentation it is.

Symbols frequently make known a meaning too deep for comprehensive or clear articulation; they arouse tacit awareness of things too vast, subtle, or complex to be grasped in an explicit way; they bridge contrasts that defy conceptual integration. (ibid. 257)

One must assent however to seeing the visible as a symbol of that which it represents. One must be open to the possibility that there is a greater reality represented by the symbol.

Dulles speaks about revelations through symbols and how the individual undergoes self-transcendent experiences through which their nature is revealed. He maintains that revelation is not manifest through a series of philosophical arguments logically connected to reach a desired result. God reveals clues of himself, and then through revelation allows these clues to be connected in a manner that gives way to their underlying meaning:

Revelatory knowledge rests on the tacit integration of clues which to conventional thought might appear disconnected and incoherent. By arousing the imagination, the affections, and the heuristic impulses, symbols initiate and direct a process whereby the mind, relying partly on unspecified clues, perceives radically new patterns and meanings in particular constellations of data. If tacit inference is ranged under the heading of reason ... we may properly claim that the transmission of revelation through symbol involves the use of reason. Even so, the moment of illumination is an unexpected gift that comes when it will.

Theologically speaking, the discernment of revelation is a grace. (258)

Simply put, revelation allows the subject to make connections with the symbols they have that they were incapable of making previously through logic. Once the revelation takes place however, a new logic can occur, that can assist the subject in naming that which the symbols now point to. These are moments of inspiration. It should be noted that Dulles insists that assurance of authenticity of such revelations needs corroboration by the "total community of faith." (259)

In the case of God's revelation in creation, history, etc. we come to understand God as active therein through these realities as they act as

symbols, and we name them as being of God. This is where the rational aspect of humanity kicks in, our ability to recognize the symbols as relating to greater realities beyond them. Although persuasive, these symbols are always open to be rejected as pointing to no reality other than themselves.

It is with this in mind that theologians can speak of Christ as *the* symbol of God. Christ is the immanence of God, and as symbol indicates and maintains God's transcendence. Christ effectively communicates everything that God has to say to humanity, as the Word of God, through his life, death and resurrection. Through grace, one can be opened to see the symbolic nature of Christ as revelatory of the very essence of God. He presents himself as the transparent image of the Father in receiving everything from the Father and then giving it back. However, the Father's transcendence is maintained because Christ reveals that *God is love*. The Christ event shows the extent to which God will love humanity, to the point of complete self-emptying for the mere creature. In this way the paschal mystery shows that the love of God is so completely beyond human comprehension, so surprising in nature, and so infinite in capacity, scope and depth, that rather than limiting God, God is seen to be truly transcendent. We see that *God is love*. Rather than coming to full understanding of God by reducing God's love to human love, one comes to appreciate the magnitude of God's love as it is revealed in Christ as completely beyond, and the only response is to adore in awe (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 47). For this reason we could say that as revelation to humanity, Christ is the symbol of *God is love*.

This symbolic nature is the very nature of a loving relationship. As one grows to love another, he is drawn to the other. He is fascinated by the beauty that he beholds. As he learns more about the other, and comes to

know the other, he realizes what he does not know, and how much more there is to know. As a result his pull towards the other increases, and he consents to enter more fully into the mystery of the other. As he loses himself in the other, he also finds himself, and defines himself in relation to the other. The option of turning away is always present, and as he enters more deeply into relationship with the other, he is called to new levels of freedom. In true love, the other cannot be dominated and controlled, nor can it be reduced merely to an expression of love for one's own image of the other, and thus a figment of that one's own imagination (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 45).

This can be seen as an analogy to the relationship with God through Christ, precisely because *God is love*. Christ is the symbol of the other, i.e.. God. Initially one is attracted by the revelation and its implications, and is thus invited into relationship with Christ. As this relationship grows deeper, one finds that the more they come to see the rationality of Christ's revelation, the more it opens itself up to mystery. The infinite surplus of love is revealed as that which will continue to reveal itself anew *ad infinitum*. The fact that *God is love* permits the person to trust God, and thus further surrender oneself to the mystery. One can choose to deny the resurrection, no matter how increasingly convincing it may become, and in doing so deny the evidence that *God is love*. In fact one finds this freedom revealing itself in new ways as the relationship with God deepens. This gives the person the opportunity to continually reassert their faith, and in doing so, freely choose to love God.

It must be emphasized here however that God loves first. The capacity for love and the ability to love must always be taught somehow; it must originate in God. God must make humanity capable of loving, and in

doing so capable of receiving and perceiving revelation. God does so by loving humanity. Balthasar uses the image of a mother smiling at her child repeatedly until the child learns to smile back, and in doing so to realize that it is smiled at (ibid. 61). In the same way, humanity learns to love as a response to the love poured out for them. They can only come to know God through God's initiative. If humanity takes it upon themselves to try to pin down God outside of God's initial activity, humanity inevitably limits God to their finite understanding, and thus reduces God to an idol (Kasper 64).

It must therefore be God's task to make it possible for us to know him. It is also God's task to give man [sic] the conditions governing man's knowledge of him. It is only in this way that God can continue to be Lord of his Word and that his divinity can become the ground of our certainty of faith. (ibid.)

God must prepare the individual to receive his love, and make him/her capable of recognizing it. What is required on the part of the human is openness, passivity, a *fiat* like that of Mary, which allows God's love to prepare the individual to recognize that *God is love*. Balthasar uses the doctrine of the immaculate conception to illustrate this.

If the love which God poured into 'a darkness where there was no love' had not in the very act of its outpouring prepared the womb for its own coming - for Mary was redeemed in advance by the grace of the Cross, she is the first-fruit of that outpouring of grace - then love could not have entered the darkness. (*Love Alone* 63).

God's role in the drama of self-disclosure is paramount. Because God's love is so vast, infinite and unintelligible for finite beings, these finite beings can only comprehend and respond to it from within this infinite love. (ibid. 67) The inclusion of humanity within this love is made possible through the Christ event itself.

So God takes the initiative in revealing that *God is love* through Christ, who acts as Word and symbol of this love. Because of the redeeming activity of Christ, humanity is made capable of perceiving *God is love* as finite human beings. At the same time, Christ reveals the inconceivable capacity of God's unlimited love, and invites humanity into the Trinitarian exchange of divine love by freely returning their love back to God, and in doing so becoming one with Christ.

What Love Reveals about Creaturely Existence

Creation and Salvation History

If we understand that *God is love*, we can understand how God can involve himself in creating the universe and in human history (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 117). Only if infinite being were infinite love, would infinite being involve itself in the matters of the finite. Infinite love by its very nature creates, as an expression of love, but it always freely chooses to do so. (If love is not expressed freely, it is not love.) Creation can be understood as the Father's gift to the Son, created in the image of the Son. Having received the Father's gift, the Son returns it to the Father. Likewise, salvation history can be understood as an expression of the Father's love for humanity through the Son. The Father loves creation by loving the Son.

We can then say that because *God is love*, existence itself can make sense. "Only a philosophy of freedom and love can ever justify our existence..." (ibid. 115). With a God of love, we can explain how God can be totally other, totally infinite, and yet at the same time intimately involved in the existence and life of his creatures.

Sin, Suffering, and Death

The cross reveals that God was always love (Balthasar, *The von Balthasar Reader* 172). And yet the cross is an image of horror and destruction. The horror of the cross reveals not only God's love, but also the nature of sin. The Trinitarian exchange of love takes on the form of suffering and sacrifice as it enters into a sinful world. Sin itself, as it is focused by the act of killing the Son of God, is thus revealed as rejection of God.

...the spirit of love cannot teach man the meaning of the Cross, without laying bare the guilt of the world, for the guilt of the world is revealed on the Cross and without the cross is meaningless. (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 76)

In this way, the destructive nature of sin is revealed and judged in the loving act of the passion. Love displays sin for what it is: the lack of love.

God has laid the ground work for the reception of divine love, however the magnitude of radicality, and even scandal, of the love shown on the cross reveals humanities lack of love (ibid. 60). Therefore we can say that God judges sin by illuminating it with love, and judges us by revealing our sinful action for what they are. Our poor response to God's love is contrasted to Christ's full response. It shows people's need for radical conversion, conversion so radical that it is entirely dependent on God's grace.

The shocking nature of the cross shows us that which we are saved from: the loss of God. We see hell as it truly is, and as it could be experienced by no one else, for no one else was as close to the Father. The magnitude of the love expressed on the cross shows in itself what the result

of rejecting that love is, and as such reveals love and judgment simultaneously (ibid. 76,7)

Suffering can come to be understood as an expression of love. This is not a characteristic of suffering *per se*, but God reveals that through the love of the cross, suffering can be transformed into a form of love. The transforming power of God's love can apply to suffering because God is love (ibid., *The von Balthasar Reader* 172). Through love, the meaningless of being can obtain new meaning, the void can be seen as a preparation for infinite fullness. Balthasar writes:

...the being of the world can be interpreted in the light of the Cross; the inchoate forms and ways of love, which otherwise threaten to lead nowhere, can be elucidated in their proper, transcendental setting. (ibid. *Love Alone* 114)

The seeming meaninglessness of existence, in the light of love, is provided with new meaning, a meaning that transcends its meaning in itself. Love even extends over death, which rather than being regarded as the pathetic end to meaningless existence, is elevated to a rebirth into the fullness of life with God in eternity. This is only because *God is love*, and as a result, love is greater than the negating forces within creation. Herein lies the source of Christian hope.

The cross reveals that death must be passed through in order that life may be attained. It shows definitively that eternal life with God is only obtained through complete surrender to God, and the complete self-distinction of ourselves from God, expressed most fully in our mortality. For those who shun and fear their mortality, the cross is a scandal, but for those who accept their creatureliness and let God be God, the cross shows God's pure love, which is "stronger in death than death itself - a love that 'overcomes' what the world struggles against in vain" (ibid. 113).

Fear and Freedom

In allowing humanity to respond to God's infinite love freely, humanity is welcomed into that freedom. By loving God, and surrendering oneself to God fully, one obtains true freedom. This may seem contradictory, but we can see that it is not. For in grasping on to one's freedom, one displays a belief that they must control their reality. They are motivated by fear and anxiety, and as a result are enslaved. This can even be described as an addiction to oneself, and as such an occasion for sin (Kasper 127).

Love does not dominate. Removal of freedom is never an expression of love. Rather, love is only expressed through allowing the other to be free, and thus made capable to loving back. Because *God is love*, there is no conflict between believing in God and being free (ibid. 126). Freedom is not just a license to do whatever one wants, but is an ability to trust (trust which has been earned through love) and to respond by loving back. This freedom is only possible through Jesus Christ, as revealer and source of God's love, who alone is truly free. In communion with Jesus, the human comes to freely return God's love by 'yielding up' his/herself, and thus become fully what s/he is (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 116).

Love Authenticates Itself

"Only love can be believed" (ibid. 68). As we have noted earlier, God must love first, and in doing so lay the foundation for the reception of love and its potential return. This return is only possible because God loved first, but at the same time is fully justified because God loved first. God demonstrates that he is worthy of our faith, through the love he manifests in Christ.

The credibility of faith has, in other words, to be demonstrated in love, which is the practice of faith. Love is the sign and the miracle *par excellence* which makes faith credible in the concrete. (Kasper 62)

Christ is the ultimate statement that God loved us first. Christ proved the authenticity of his teaching by taking them to their logical conclusion in his own life, particularly in his death. His words and his deeds are as such inseparably fused together, to the point that he can be described as the one *Logos/Word* of God, a Word which is an expression of divine love.

The majesty of God's love expressed in this Word then becomes the source of authority of all mediations of God's love, particularly sacramental forms (Balthasar, *Love Alone* 47). One can yield to these mediations because in God, authority and love are identical. Love is the power with which Christ conquered death on the cross and established his kingdom. The power of God does not withhold itself, but allows itself to be poured out as love. God's kingship is manifested in this handing over precisely because *God is love* (ibid. 70).

With this in mind, all claims of ecclesial authority are legitimized through love. Authority is to be exercised as divine love which is purely mediated *through* those who have authority. It is only credible when the authority figures are constantly present and obedient to the source of their

authority, and manifest this submission through love in their own lives. The same can be said of communities who profess their faith to the world.

The only really credible signs of faith are individual Christians and communities of Christians, who bear witness to the existence of faith by their lives. (Kasper 63)

The authority figure must become transparent; a open conduit for the love of God being expressed through them. This is only achieved through obedience and love to God, the source, and love and benevolence for those being ministered to.

Summary

The statement of 1 Jn 4:8,16, i.e. *God is love*, is the hinge upon which our understanding of revelation is dependent. Only this statement holds together God's transcendence and immanence, his freedom and his total self-communication. Only this statement shows why it is logical and even compelling to respond in the affirmative to revelation, but at the same time necessary to respond in faith, a willingness to behold the infinite mystery. Only this statement can maintain that God's revelation is total gift, while at the same time requires total free consent, openness and receptivity on the part of the believer.

It is my contention that within the Christian context, the nature and means of revelation cannot be separated from the content of revelation. To speak of revelation as self-communication, as Rahner does, is accurate, in that God reveals his nature entirely through Christ as symbol. However, I believe we have to take this one step further, by making reference to what is revealed. What God reveals about himself is that *God is love*, and God does

so by being love. The fact that *God is love* is necessary to explain why God would bother to reveal himself to finite beings in the first place. This statement however does not remove God's freedom from the equation, because love, by its very nature is free, otherwise it is not love.

Being a God who is love, it is only natural that God would reveal that he is love, and would do so in the way he does, through his single Word, which is Christ. And while it is *only natural* that God reveals in this way, God is still not compelled to do so, but reveals freely, because the revelation is his own divine love.

God has earned our obedience, our free consent to respond to revelation, because *God is love*, a love that is demonstrated in word and deed. Through the resurrection, God reveals not only the love that the Father has for the Son, but also proclaims the death of the Son of God as the ultimate expression of God's love, poured out for humanity as the procession of the Holy Spirit. This same love, through which sin is revealed and conquered, is the power of God, and the exercise of God's authority in the world. God remains God in all power, because *God is love*.

It is through Christ that we come to know that *God is love*, and as such, a divine love that is so completely beyond the human capacity for love, that God's level of transcendence is magnified by the extent to which he shows his immanence. The only possible response to the outpouring of this divine love is to stand in awe, and in some way return that love that has been revealed.

By revealing that *God is love*, God shows that he is a community of love, a Trinity. The very act of revealing this Trinity holds the inclusion within the Trinity of those to whom the revelation is made. This inclusion is not automatic, it is desirable, but it is free, a freedom made possible through

the free response of the Son of God. If it were not free, it would not be love, and therefore not of God. Humanity is thus invited into the Trinity as part of the Body of Jesus Christ, through revelation, the sending forth of the Holy Spirit, the witness to the fact that *God is love*, as that very divine love itself.

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