CONTEMPLATING
TRIUNE ESSENCE

Essays on Love and Loving
by
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Edited by Chris Kang
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Contemplating Triune Essence: 
*Essays on Love and Loving*

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SON'S TREASURE

We do not like to serve. We prefer to be served. In like fashion, our preference is not to be the lowest person on the employment ladder. We aspire to rise and be leaders, supervisors, CEOs, with people and subordinates working under and serving us. We aspire to be great and receive the accolades of others. Our notion of greatness and success is determined by how high we are in the hierarchy of our industry, profession, social, economic or political status. Notwithstanding that countless others have supported and contributed to our achievements and success, we revel in the acclamations given to us, acquiescing that it is primarily through our efforts and by being who we are that we are deserving of these accolades and recognition.

We see this in sports; the gold medal winners, the top teams, the top managers; in religion: the heads of the various faiths and traditions; in politics: prime ministers and presidents; in industry: Chief executive officers and entrepreneurs; the lists goes on. This has always been the way of our world.

In our history, one person held a completely different view. He was a different take of this, the man Christ Jesus: God becoming flesh, as a human being.

When his disciples were vying as to who would be the greatest among them, to sit at his right and left hand in his glory,[1] Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

Then, “Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant [2], and whoever wants to be first must be slave[3] of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served[4], but to serve[5], and to give his life as a ransom for many.”[6]

The Apostle Paul understood this mind of Christ with the following description: “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery[7] to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation[8], taking the form of a bondservant[9], and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”,[10] when he exhorted “ Let this
mind[11] be in you as was also in Christ Jesus.

To have this mind[12] in us as was also in Christ Jesus means to seek our affection on and to interest ourselves with similar attitude in focus, desire and passions, to what he did. However, to begin to grow into having this mind, we must first choose and will to make it our treasure: “for where your treasure is, there your heart [your wishes, your desires; that on which your life centers] will be also.”[13]

If we are honest with ourselves we will recognise that we live this truth each moment of our lives. For whatever we have chosen to be our treasure has been or is now the focus and centre of our attention, desires, passions, urges, efforts and energy. It applies without exception, whether person, ambition, pursuit or thing. We will inevitably see our lives gravitate towards our treasure. A way to recognise our treasure is identifying ‘the what’: person, desire or thing that is consuming and occupying our minds and thoughts.

What was Son’s treasure causing Son to have this mind, focus, intense passionate interest?

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NOTES


[2] Greek διάκονος diákonos probably from an obsolete διάκω diákō (to run on errands; compare G1377); an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties. Strong’s NT 1249

[3] Greek δοῦλος doûlos; a slave, devoted to another with disregard to one's own interest. Strong’s NT 1401

[4] See 2 above, to be an attendant, to wait on another like a waiter.

[5] See 2 above, to be an attendant, to wait on another like a waiter


[7] Philippians 2:6 Literally may be translated as “not thinking that being equal with God is robbing or plundering something from God. The phrase is usually translated to convey the following meaning: did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or asserted [as if He did not already possess it, or was afraid of losing it] Amplified Bible.

[8] Philippians 2:7 emptied Himself of His privileges Literally “emptied Himself” ἐκένωσεν to empty, make empty. Strong’s 2758

[9] Greek δοῦλος doûlos; a slave, devoted to another with disregard to one's own interest. Strong’s NT 1401
Philippians 2:5-8 NKJV

Philippians 2:6 φρονείσθω singular in Textus Receptus or φρονείτε plural in Morphological GNT from Greek φρονέω phronéō: meaning to direct one's mind to a thing, to seek, to strive for, to have understanding, be wise, intensively, to interest oneself in. Different from mind in 1 Corinthians 2:16 νοοῦς nous, the mind, comprising alike the faculties of perceiving and understanding and those of feeling, judging, determining. Strong's NT 5426 and 3563 compare

See 11 above

Matthew 6:21 Amplified Bible
EMPTYING AND LOVING: SON-SLAVE-SPOUSE (2)

SELF-EMPTYING LOVE

So much so, that, according to Paul, though Son was equal to God (Father and Spirit), Son was willing to empty himself, by putting aside this equality and assume and subordinate himself to Father, similar to a slave-master relationship. With this in mind, we are given a little bit more insight into Son’s seemingly contradictory statements: “I and the Father are one”,[1] in contrast to “the Father is greater than I”[2].

In embracing this slave-master relationship to Father, Son could say: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”[3] “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”[4]

Emptying himself, through laying aside equality with God, and embracing this slave-master relationship, Son became a human being. Notwithstanding that he was fully divine[5] even as he was fully human, he humbled himself by being obedient to Father even to the point of death, even death on a cross[6] He learned obedience through suffering.[7]

For me and to me, this was Son’s personal cross to bear even as we have ours. Son’s cross began in his emptying and laying aside His equality with and in God, and assuming the posture of a slave in relation to Father. Son continued to bear this cross by becoming a human being, then humbling himself by accepting, embracing the rejection of his own creation, humanity, and allowing humanity to engineer his death by crucifixion.

Becoming obedient to Father, as a slave would be to his master, was also part of this cross. He learned to obey even if obeying would expose him to suffering. More than that, he learned obedience through suffering. What this means is that in the midst of suffering he continued in his obedience. Finally, this cross, his cross, led him to allow himself[8] to be crucified, suffer and die on the wooden cross on Calvary.

We are his treasure.[9] We are his pearl of great price[10]. He did all this for us, you and me personally.

Son’s cross has two fundamental purposes.

Firstly, Son’s cross was to reveal Who he is and that I Am That I Am, I Will Be Who I will
Be is Triune, Father, Son and Spirit. In conjunction with this, to reveal to us Triune God’s purpose, desire, intent and will towards and for us.

Secondly, to present Himself,[11] as a worthy spouse, for our consideration, even as he, through Holy Spirit, woos each and all of us, jointly and severally as a whole, to be His bride[12] and spouse.[13] His mind, intent, desire, and will has been, is and will ever be, that we, each and every, may partake of the Divine nature[14], be one with and in him and Father, through Spirit, in union and communion in love[15], be in oneness with us.

This was the profound mystery that can be found embedded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Paul recognised this when he wrote: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”[16]

This is what love is even as God is love. “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.”[17] “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation[18] for our sins.”[19] “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us”[20]

Where the Law and the Prophets hang[21] under the first and second great commandments of: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”[22] and “you shall love your neighbour as yourself”[23]. Jesus gave only one new commandment: “that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”[24]

There is, however, an anomaly in this new commandment. We are to love as he has loved us.

Jesus said: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”[25] Father also loves us as He loved the Son: “that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”[26] Even as Father and Son has ever loved and continues to love us freely, willingly, out of choice and not under any law or command, we are to love one another, freely, willingly, out of choice and not out of or under a command.

As such, we are exhorted, as husbands, to love our wives.[27] In this fashion, as disciples, we are to love one another.[28] This is how as humans we are to relate in love one to another.[29] For, “love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”[30] “God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”[31]

Because God first loved us, and showed us what love is, through the Way, the Truth and
Life of His Son, in the man Christ Jesus, now, we know what it means and takes to love each other.

This, for me, is what being a Christian is all about: to experience being truly loved and growing in loving truly.

Being born from above[32], becoming a new creation,[33] having the Son of God became flesh and residing in me,[34] to become a child of God,[35] not arising from any ancestral genealogical right or out of any effort or accomplishment on my part, but solely through an act, choice, will and grace of God,[36] is all about growing in love and loving as Jesus has loved me.

I do not and cannot claim that I have already succeeded or have already been perfected in this loving. On the contrary, I continue to pursue to know the extent and depth of Jesus’ love. At the same time, I hope somehow to love, just as Jesus, and in and through him, Father and Spirit, has loved me. In all moments, I accept and embrace the reality that only to the extent that I have experienced Jesus’ love for me am I able to exhibit my love, in like manner to another.

_We love because he first loved us_[37]. _As he is, so too are we to be in this world._[38] As such my status and privilege as child and a son of the Most High God is not something to be grasped tightly and be assertive about. Rather, like the Son, I have been given the privilege to empty myself, lay my status and privilege aside.

In Christ, I am given the choice to decide to willingly and lovingly take the form of a slave, even embrace a slave-master relationship with Father God. In humility I am to regard my fellow humans as my treasure, to love and cherish, for better and worse, in sickness or in health, in wealth or poverty, in like manner as myself, as Christ Jesus has loved me.

More than just offering sympathy or empathising with others, I am to jointly identify myself with others so as to recognise that their weakness is my weakness, their pain my pain, their well-being my well-being. All these, I am to do, live, love, in the dynamic process of growth, moment by moment, one step at a time.

This is far from easy and can be likened to “becoming obedient to the point of death”[39], “a living sacrifice”[40], “even death on a cross”[41]. For this is akin to the cross and the life, truth and way of love of the Son of God,

In love, Son became human and did all this for us, that each and all of us may experience and enjoy oneness with him and in him with each other, in partaking of the Divine
nature, in union and communion, akin to a loving spousal relationship where the two become one flesh.

To be embraced, loved and empowered by Spirit to grow in love in this manner, as Son and Father has loved and loves us, is to grow in partaking of and in the Divine nature.

Emptying and Loving: Son-Slave-Spouse

Consider

Ponder

Decide

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NOTES

[1] Jn 10:30. ESV See also Jn17:11
[5] Jn 5:18; 10:30, 36 See also Colossians 2:9
[7] Hebrews 5:8
[14] 2Peter 1:4
appeasement—make peace with Strong’s NT 2434. The Son being the person-event-action, becoming the peace (in full satisfaction) and reconciliation of not only between God and humanity but also between us, one with another. In so being and doing, the parties are also enabled and empowered by Spirit to, hopefully, continue and grow in peace, in love one with another. The person is the Son. The event is word becoming flesh, Son becoming human. The action is the whole process of what he did to become a man, how he lived as a man and what he continues to live and do as a man, within the Triune Being, Nature and Life of God.

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[35] Jn 1:12
[36] Jn 1:13
[37] 1Jn 4:19
[38] 1Jn 4:17
[39] Philippians 2:8 ESV
[40] Romans 12:1
[41] Philippians 2:8 ESV
[42] Jn 17:22-23
[43] Ephesians 5:31-32
THE FIRST, SECOND AND THE NEW (1)

A NEW COMMANDMENT?

“Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees[1], the Pharisees[2] got together. One of them, an expert of the Law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”[3]

Presumably, countless debates, questions and ponderings, through the centuries, by teachers of the Law and their acolytes, had yielded no one settled answer. The purpose (test) of the question, intentionally posed to Jesus, was to reignite this debate and show Jesus up.

Immediately and unequivocally, Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.’[4] This is the first and great commandment.”[5]

Jesus’ answer was to focus his hearers back to their covenantal relationship that their ancestors had made with God at Sinai, by referencing words in the first part of the Shema[6].

Having addressed the great commandment as the first, Jesus went beyond the question of the great commandment, and followed through with an insight that he hoped his hearers would consider, grasp and embrace.

“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”[7]

And in case some would think that after the second would come the third and so forth, Jesus ended his discourse with this summation: “‘On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Note the recorded verb ‘hang’ (κρέμανται – kremantai), with its meaning of ‘be suspended from’[8]. The picture in my mind is one of two beams of wood joined together (the two commandments) with two pots (the law pot and the prophets pot) being suspended from them.

The beams are above the pots. The purpose of the two commandments was to direct the people into the path of love and loving God and each other, such being above all the Law and the Prophets (prophetic utterances).
These two great commandments were but preparatory tools introducing, guiding, teaching and constraining Israel to learn to love God and each other within the law, to love under the law. Lest we forget, when these commandments and the Law were given, Israel had just come out of Egypt, having been a nation of slaves for more than a couple of centuries.[9] Yet, slavery into freedom into a covenantal relationship took only a few months[10].

As such, Israel needed to be guided, like a child, through this paradigm shift towards being a special treasure to God above all peoples, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation[11]. Hence the Law and the Prophets were given to Israel.

Nevertheless, being commandments, love and loving were obligations that had to be fulfilled. Nothing could change the fact and reality that, in the first, Israel had to love, rather than having chosen freely and willingly to love. Even if at a later stage, Israel chose to love, willingly and freely, from the first, having been commanded to love, Israel cannot but love. Israel under the two commandments had a duty to love and loving. Does it mean that not loving, even for the briefest moment, Israel sins?

In respect of the second command, the perimeters of love and loving were relative and easily defined; how you would respond and treat yourself in love in any given moment.

Expressing love and loving in the first and great commandment is the enigma.

Is love and loving expressed and found in the strict observance of every letter of the Law, including keeping exacting standards of measurement, weight, colour, material, placement and burnt offerings and sacrifices?

What does loving with all or the whole of your heart mean?

What does loving with all or the whole of your soul mean?

What does loving with all or the whole of your mind mean?

What does loving with all or the whole of your might mean?

Only by loving, in the moment, with all and the whole of heart, soul, mind and might would one fulfil the great commandment. Does it mean then, that not being able to love with the whole of any one of them, in any moment, would already mean failure to fulfil the great commandment, in that moment? Does failure then mean sinning?
Could this have been in the mind of Paul the Apostle, a former Pharisee when he wrote: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.[12]

Is there a way out of this most onerous commandment?

I believe so.

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NOTES

[1] **Sadducee**, Hebrew Tzedaq, plural Tzedoqim, member of a Jewish priestly sect that flourished for about two centuries before the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in AD 70. Not much is known with certainty of the Sadducees’ origin and early history, but their name may be derived from that of Zadok, who was high priest in the time of kings David and Solomon. Ezekiel later selected this family as worthy of being entrusted with control of the Temple, and Zadokites formed the Temple hierarchy down to the 2nd century BC.

The Sadducees were the party of high priests, aristocratic families, and merchants—the wealthier elements of the population. They came under the influence of Hellenism, tended to have good relations with the Roman rulers of Palestine, and generally represented the conservative view within Judaism. While their rivals, the Pharisees, claimed the authority of piety and learning, the Sadducees claimed that of birth and social and economic position. During the long period of the two parties’ struggle—which lasted until the Romans’ destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD—the Sadducees dominated the Temple and its priesthood.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were in constant conflict with each other, not only over numerous details of ritual and the Law but most importantly over the content and extent of God’s revelation to the Jewish people. The Sadducees refused to go beyond the written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and thus, unlike the Pharisees, denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, and the existence of angelic spirits. For the Sadducees, the Oral Law—i.e., the vast body of post-biblical Jewish legal traditions—meant next to nothing. By contrast, the Pharisees revered the Torah but further claimed that oral tradition was part and parcel of Mosaic Law. Because of their strict adherence to the Written Law, the Sadducees acted severely in cases involving the death penalty, and they interpreted literally the Mosaic principle of lex talionis (“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”).

Though the Sadducees were conservative in religious matters, their wealth, their haughty bearing, and their willingness to compromise with the Roman rulers aroused the hatred of the common people. As defenders of the status quo, the Sadducees viewed the ministry of Jesus with considerable alarm and apparently played some role in his trial and death. Their lives and political authority were so intimately bound up with Temple worship that after Roman legions destroyed the Temple, the Sadducees ceased to exist as a group, and mention of them quickly disappeared from history. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sadducee

The Sadducees, ….. refused to accept any precept as binding unless it was based directly on the Torah—i.e., the Written Law. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pharisee

[2] **Pharisee**, member of a Jewish religious party that flourished in Palestine during the latter part of the Second Temple period (515 BCE–70 CE). Their insistence on the binding force of oral tradition (“the unwritten Torah”) still remains a basic tenet of Jewish theological thought. When the Mishna (the first constituent part of the Talmud) was compiled about 200 CE, it incorporated the teachings of the Pharisees on Jewish law…The Pharisees (Hebrew: Perushim) emerged as a distinct group shortly after the Maccabean revolt, about 165–160 BCE; they were, it is generally believed, spiritual descendants of the Hasideans. The Pharisees emerged as a party of laymen and scribes in contradistinction to the Sadducees—i.e., the party of
the high priesthood that had traditionally provided the sole leadership of the Jewish people. The basic
difference that led to the split between the Pharisees and the Sadducees lay in their respective attitudes
toward the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and the problem of finding in it answers to questions
and bases for decisions about contemporary legal and religious matters arising under circumstances far
different from those of the time of Moses.

The Pharisees… believed that the Law that God gave to Moses was twofold, consisting of the Written Law
and the Oral Law—i.e., the teachings of the prophets and the oral traditions of the Jewish people. Whereas
the priestly Sadducees taught that the written Torah was the only source of revelation, the Pharisees
admitted the principle of evolution in the Law: men must use their reason in interpreting the Torah and
applying it to contemporary problems.

Rather than blindly follow the letter of the Law even if it conflicted with reason or conscience, the Pharisees
harmonized the teachings of the Torah with their own ideas or found their own ideas suggested or implied
in it. They interpreted the Law according to its spirit. When in the course of time a law had been outgrown
or superseded by changing conditions, they gave it a new and more-acceptable meaning, seeking scriptural
support for their actions through a ramified system of hermeneutics. It was due to this progressive tendency
of the Pharisees that their interpretation of the Torah continued to develop and has remained a living force
in Judaism.

https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pharisee


[4] Compare Deuteronomy 6:5 “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your might.”
1. The Hebrew (Masoretic Text) version of Deuteronomy 6:5 states: “Love the Lord your God with all your
heart and with all your soul and with all your might (מְאֹד - might, force, muchness and abundance [See Strong’s H3966]).”
2. The Greek Septuagint (by Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton based on the Vaticanus) records
Deuteronomy 6:5 as: “Love the Lord your God with all your mind(ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου) and with all
your soul and with all your strength(δυνάμεως).” Elpenor’s and other versions have
the words with all your
heart(ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας), with all your soul and with all your might(δυνάμεως).”
3. No recorded version in and of the Old Testament has verbatim the words: “all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your mind.
4. In Mark’s gospel (Mk 12:30), it was recorded that the question asked by the teacher of the law was: “
Which commandment is the first of all?”
Jesus’ reply “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all
heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength(ισχύος)”, has echoes and
elements of Deuteronomy 6:5 but still not in verbatim.
5. In both the recorded replies of Jesus to which is the first and greatest commandment, it seems Jesus took
partial elements from both the Hebrew and Brenton’s Greek versions of Deuteronomy 6:5. Or, is there
another Text of the Old Testament that was in existence as Jesus would have probably answered in Hebrew – cf Luke10:25-28 (Even the lawyer’s question and answer (probably in Hebrew) Luke 10:25-28, affirmed by Jesus, has no verbatim equivalent in the Old Testament, and contains elements from both the Hebrew and
Brenton’s Greek versions of Deuteronomy 6:5. Is this pointing again to another Hebrew Text that was being
used?)


[6] The Shema is one of only two prayers that are specifically commanded in Torah (the other is Birkat Ha-
Mazon -- grace after meals). It is the oldest fixed daily prayer in Judaism, recited morning and night since
ancient times. It consists of three biblical passages, two of which specifically say to speak of these things "when you lie down and when you rise up." www.jewfaq.org/shemaref.html.
In its entirety, the Shema consists of three paragraphs: Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Deuteronomy 11:13–21 and Numbers 15:37–41.


[10] Exodus 12:6, Exodus 19:1,2


THE FIRST, SECOND AND THE NEW (2)

AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

I believe that the answer and the way out of this conundrum was provided by Jesus in the new commandment that he gave to his disciples as he celebrated his last Passover with them: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”[1]

What is new about love and loving in this new commandment are the words: “even as I have loved you”. As a human being and a Jew, Jesus had to fulfil the commandment of” Love your neighbour as yourself”. If all that meant that he had loved them as he loved himself, then there is nothing new about this commandment, for it would only be fulfilling the second great commandment.

But if, what he meant was that as the WORD became flesh, the Incarnate Word, in Whom the fullness of Deity dwells, he loves them, for them to love one another, then this new commandment becomes a paradigm shift of understanding and experiencing love and loving.

In essence, what he is saying to them is, as you have experienced God’s love, as God has loved you, love one another accordingly.

I believe that John the Apostle grasped this in the words attributed to him in 1John, in particular 1John 4:11: “7 Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.”[4]

The Author of 1 John continues:

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because he first loved us.”
I believe that the new commandment is to love as God has loved us, to love as much as we have experienced God’s love for ourselves, within ourselves. As God has loved us, we are then to love one another.

But is God under any Command or Law to love us? I believe not. I believe there is no Command or Law above God. I believe that within the Triune Being and Nature of God, in the Triune relationship, there is always love one for the others, as it is written: “God is love”.[5]

The new commandment is therefore an anomaly. It is a command to love freely and willingly without a command, as God loves. More than that it also provides us with an experiential reference to what love and loving is, unique to and for each person. Only as we have freely received love and loving from God, then and only then can and are we able to freely give love to another and to God. Only as we have received and experienced love from God in our heart, soul, mind and strength, are we able to begin to express love in same fashion in heart, soul, mind and strength to ourselves, each other, and to God.

It bears reiteration what the anomaly in this new commandment is: We are not to be and are not under any command to love and loving, even as Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit isn’t.

The preposition “as”, in the phrase “as I have loved you”, not only references the action and expression of love and loving but also addresses the source-origin and basis of and for love and loving. Here, the source-origin is not a command under the Law, but the Triune Divine, in and through the Incarnate Son, Who is not under any law or command to love.

The Son has come, through His Incarnation as a human being, to set us free, primarily to love and loving. And whom the Son sets free, that person is free indeed.[6]

The apostle Paul seems to have caught a glimpse of this when he wrote concerning the fruit (καρπὸς-singular) of the Spirit of which love was one of the elements: “against such (τοιούτων- such things: plural), there is no law.

As there is no Law, in this new relational matrix of love and loving, sin as a consequence of commands and laws cannot exist. Was Jesus also alluding to this in John 8:34-36: “‘Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”[7]
With this in mind, I believe that all are called into this freedom of love and loving, not out of duty, but, at the first, out of choice and a willing heart, soul and mind, with all of our abilities, muchness and abundance. As much as we freely experience God's love for ourselves, from God and each other, we can freely love God and each other in return. By and through this love and loving, we are enabled to experientially partake of the Divine nature of and in love and loving, in the Spirit, through the Son, with the Father. And in this partaking, be joined, in union oneness, with the Triune Divine. Freely as we have received, freely we are to give.

Jesus' hope and prayer in the record of John 17:20-26 alludes to this:

“20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”[8]

Are we game enough to rise to the challenge and embrace the grace of this new way of love and loving God, each other and ourselves?

With and in Jesus, I hope and pray so.

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[2] 'be made known' See Strong's G 5319

[3] Greek ἐν – literally meaning ‘in” see Strong’s G1722


WHAT IS LOVE?

What is the quintessential nature and essence of love? To the apostle John, God is Love.[1] But, what does this mean?

For me, this means that in the Being of God, there is a dynamic eternal relationship of love and loving among Father, Son and Spirit. This eternal exchange of giving, receiving and responding in love to One Another is within the true Nature and Essence of Who God is, TRIUNE. God’s ThreeOne-ness, ever in loving relationship, One with Another, is the complete and perfect expression of the nature and essence of love. For me, I believe, this is why God is love.

As God, Triune, is love, love also Is, arising from the Triune relationship of God. This means that love exists, because, out of and from the ThreeOne relationship of Father, Son and Spirit. Love is, only because the Triune relationship is genuinely real. Relationships are real and not illusory imaginings, for, relationships have eternally existed in the eternal Triune Being of God.

If God is not Triune but only One, then, only self-loving, loving of One’s Self is eternally with and in God. There is no eternal, real and true love for, with, and in Another. However, if God is more than One and yet also One, TRIUNE, as revealed in, through and by the Incarnate Son and Spirit, then, true, real and eternal loving relationships, not only for one’s self but also another is revealed to be inseparable from, and essentially in, the Nature, Essence, and Being of God. For me, this eternal relational happening of union and communion within the Triune, is, presently, the best matrix by which I comprehend and relate to God’s ThreeOne-ness, in loving nature and being.

In union, the Three, Father, Son and Spirit are One. In communion, the ONE GOD, is also Three: Father, Son and Spirit.[2] Drawing from this, we can perceive that the completeness and perfection of love not only requires love to and for one’s self, but also love towards all others. This arises from the Triune loving relationship, in union and communion, jointly and severally, loving One’s self, loving all the Others as much as loving One’s self and loving and receiving love, simultaneously, in similar manner, from all the Others.[3]

This Triune completeness and perfection of love and loving is the glory of Triune God in eternity: “Father, those whom you have given to me—I want that those also may be with
me where I am, in order that they may see my glory that you have given me because (in that)[4] you loved me before the foundation of the world(i.e. the universe)[5].”[6]

Son’s glory was that of loving union and communion with Father in eternity. Son’s desire was to share this glory with us: “And I do not ask on behalf of these only, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, that they all may be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, that they also may be in us, in order that the world may believe that you sent me. And the glory that you have given to me, I have given to them, in order that they may be one, just as we are one— I in them, and you in me, in order that they may be completed in one, so that the world may know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me”[7].

Son, even in Incarnation, remains ever One with and in Father.[8] To see Incarnate Son is to also see Eternal or Everlasting Father.[9] As Isaiah had prophesied:

“For a child has been born for us;  
a son has been given to us.
And the dominion will be on his shoulder,  
and his name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”[10]

Spirit is also, in union and communion, jointly and severally, present with Father and Son, in all. For it is in and through Spirit, in union and communion, with Father and Son, in love, that all, including love and loving, happens.[11] Spirit is the Happening of Triune God, through Whom, Triune God, “I Am that I Am”, lovingly happens.[12]

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NOTES
[2] Please refer to my earlier posts on relationships.
[3] Loving your neighbor as yourself, an expression of love, seen in this light, reveals and points us to the completeness of love within the Triune relationship.
[4] For me, should be more accurately translated as "(in) that" - See Strong’s G3754 ὁτί hóti, hot’-ee; neuter of G3748 as conjunction; demonstrative, that (sometimes redundant); causative, because:—as concerning that, as though, because (that), for (that), how (that), (in) that.
[5] Strong’s G2889 – kosmos : 3. the world, i. e. the universe


[10] Isaiah 9:6 LEB


[12] Read Luke 1:34-35 in conjunction with John 1:14 and we see Spirit's role and involvement in making the Incarnation, the Word becoming a human being, a true and genuine reality, lovingly happen.
MUSINGS ON LOVE AND LOVING (2)

NATURE, ESSENCE, AND BEING OF GOD

God is Creator. We are but creatures of creation. There is an infinite and inescapable difference and distinction of nature and essence of being that separates us from God. Even though it is written that God made humankind in his image, God remains and is God. We are and remain creatures of creation made in the image of God.

As long as this inherent and essential difference, distinction and state of being, between God and us exists, each party CANNOT, in truth and reality, know the other within the context of, and participate in each other’s nature, essence and being. Therefore, humanity, as such, could never have known that God is love, eternally, in nature, essence and being.

However, according to John, this state of affairs changed, when, the Word, the Son of God, Who was and is God, became flesh and dwelt in us. He declares: “God is love. By this the love of God is revealed in us: that God sent his one and only Son into the world in order that we may live through him.”

To John, the Word, the Son of God, becoming flesh and dwelling in us, was so that God is love, be revealed through the love of God (Incarnate Son) being revealed (through Spirit’s Presence and Happening) in us, “that we might live through him.” This is the eternal passionate desire, pleasure, purpose and choice of Triune God, for creation and for us, NOW, In Christ, both God and humanity can, in truth and reality, genuinely know the other and participate in each other’s nature, essence and being.

As the Son is God, and in Him all fullness of Deity dwells, in becoming flesh, He is now abiding, resting, in us. Jesus affirmed this when he said: “Abide in me, as I abide in you.” We are called to rest in Him even as he has, in becoming a human, already rested and is resting in our humanity, in us. Even as the Son is in us, in the man Christ Jesus, we are also in him, in and through his humanity. As in him all fullness of Deity dwells bodily, in and through him, his humanity, we can now really partake and truly participate, in living and abiding, in genuine eternal love in the Eternal. For “in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.”

This genuine living in the Eternal is, I believe, what John 17:3 refers to: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”
living in the Eternal is living eternally, growing eternally in loving relationships: Not only getting to know and be in a love relationship with God (Father, Son and Spirit), but also with one another, in and through the man Jesus Christ.

Only at that first Christmas, in and through the man Christ Jesus, we were given by grace, the revelation of the truth and reality of love being the Nature, Essence and Being of God, Father, Son and Spirit, Triune.[14]

Humanity, in the man Christ Jesus, humanity now resides within the Triune Being of God. In and through this man, Triune God has given humanity the privilege to be the Bride of Christ. As such, we, individually and jointly (as Bride of Christ) have become the focus and centre of Father, Son and Spirit’s Triune eternal embrace of love and loving. Humanity, in and though Incarnate Son, is now joined to, joint and severally living in, the Nature, Essence, and Being of Triune God.

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[5] John 1:14 Greek ἐν See Strong’s G1722: In the Incarnation, isn’t he in His person not only residing among us but also residing in our humanity? Or else, how could all that is His, including his death and resurrection be ours also, except in our joint(union) and severalness(communion) to each other?


[8] Greek ἐν See Strong’s G1722

[9] 1 John 4:8b, 9 Lexham English Bible. My reading on 1 John 4:8b, 9 above is that: “God is love. In this (God being love, or in God and love) the (Triune) love of God is revealed in us (when the Word became flesh(a human being) and dwelt(resided, rested, lived ) in us(in and as our humanity), that we(our humanity) might live through him.


EXPERIENCE TRIUNE LOVE AND LOVING

As such, to separate humanity, us, from the love of Triune God in Christ Jesus, is now tantamount to severing the Oneness of the Triune God - an impossibility.

But, lest we forget, this love and loving had an immeasurable, unfathomable sacrificial cost to and for Triune God.

Triune God had to change in order to accommodate humanity, jointly and severally into Triune Nature, Essence, and Being. Father, through Spirit’s happening[1], had to send Son[2] to become human through the happening of Spirit.

Son, God, equal with God,[3] “did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.”[4]

Triune love and loving did not abandon Son to be alone as a man. Through Spirit, Father was always with him[5], always one with him,[6] though it was only Son who became human. Even when Son felt abandoned and forsaken at the Calvary’s cross, God, Father and Spirit, love, did not abandon or forsake him. Triune Oneness was jointly with Son at the cross, even though it was only Incarnate Son hanging and dying at the cross.

This is not even the whole of love for us, but such is love, that we may know the love of God in and for us and that God is love.

No wonder, Paul could write: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or hunger or lack of sufficient clothing or danger or the sword? Just as it is written: “On account of you we are being put to death the whole day long; we are considered as sheep for slaughter.” No, but in all these things we prevail completely through the one who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” [7]

Such being the case, “What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will
he not also, together with him, freely give us all things? Who will bring charges against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ is the one who died, and more than that, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”[8]

This is the reason why we can be assured that to those who love God: “all things work together into[9] good,”[10] “to those who are called according to His purpose,”[11] and in all things, “we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”[12]

Following Paul: “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”[13]

In Christ in God, this is where we are, in the Here, Now, Today, ever being embraced, by and within the love and loving Being of Triune union and communion.

Experience Triune God.

Enjoy love and loving.

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NOTES
[8] Romans 8:31-34 LEB

[10] Romans 8:28 WYC


[12] Romans 8:37 RSV

POSTSCRIPT: TRIUNE ESSENCE IN EMPTINESS

A RESPONSE TO TRIUNE LOVE AND LOVING

In a spirit of spontaneity and joy, this contemplative piece seeks to respond to preceding essays from the perspective of free and easy wandering in the sky of emptiness.

Triune that can be triuned
is not the eternal Triune.
Relations that can be relationed,
are not unchanging relations.
- 《果亭山人》江登峰 (2020).

Nothing that is experienced can be unequivocally said to exist inherently or truly from its own side, apart from the experience of it. Everything, including the Triune and even this very sentence you are reading, is thus. Just this. None else. Not this. Not not this.

Does the Triune — Father, Son, Spirit — exist inherently, from their own side, independent of our conception and language, both jointly and severally? Do jointness and severalness exist inherently, from their own side, independent of our conception and language?

To speak of the Triune in any way is already to commit to conception and language. All our verbal and written words already commit us (ingrained as we are in our conditioned instinctual grasping at inherency) to the fallacy of inherent existence of things — we mistake what we say or write to exist inherently when they do not. Why? Because what we think and say is what we perceive. And what we perceive is not outside of and apart from what we think and say. We have no proof that the referent of what we think and say exists in its own right outside our narrative and perception. The goose is out of the bottle!

The Triune that can be spoken of and narrated is not eternal or inherent. Relationships that can be spoken of between designated entities, whether God or humanity, are not inherent either. They are not inherent because the very act of speaking about and perceiving them relies on conception and language. How can we then say they are not imaginary? Bear in mind that imaginary does not mean lacking in causal efficacy altogether. An imaginary drug that is in fact a placebo sugar pill can have therapeutic effects mirroring that of the real drug.

Metaphysical proofs of empirical events like relationships do not work. Really. For to ascertain the reality of empirical events requires empirical inquiry and observation. Doing
so with a well-honed meditative awareness reveals the sheer constructed nature of all experience including much of religious and mystical experiences; even human beings and human relationships are seen to be constructed, imputed, merely and nominally real, not inherent. The proof is in the aware-ing, not the theologising.

In the final analysis, even absence of inherency — given this phrase is now being spoken and conceived and written on this page — cannot exist inherently!

What can you, I, or we say?

道可道，非常道
名可名，非常名

gate gate paragate parasangate bodhi svaha

Perhaps we can speak non-speaking and write non-writing qua Eihei Dogen (1200-1253), knowing that empty essences are not devoid of causal efficacy. Speech and words are creatively eloquent in the making of the Real. And the Real eloquently speaks. Amen.

Postscript by:
Chris Kang 江登峰
1 January 2020
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WILFRED YEO was born and raised in Singapore. He was called to the Singapore Bar in 1981 and practised as a lawyer for over 40 years. He completed a year of theological studies at the University of Aberdeen in 1982-1983 where Professor James Torrance made a deep and lasting impact on his relationship with Christ Jesus. Wilfred was also privileged to be a participant in the famed Anglo Chinese School Clock Tower incident in the 1970s that sparked Spirit-led renewals throughout the Singapore Church. An accident on 14 August 1983 outside the Wesley Methodist Church Singapore was a watershed in his life whereby he had to learn to relate to Christ Jesus anew, like a little child, with a beginner’s mind. His sharings in Contemplating Triune Essence are but snippets and facets of this new relationship he now finds in Christ Jesus. He is a loving and beloved husband, father, and grandfather who inimitably shares Christ with those whom God sends his way. Living in Australia, he blogs intermittently on the gospel of Jesus Christ at The Leaven Table.

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