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The Spirit and the Forms of Love

by Daniel Day Williams

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Published in 1968 by Harper & Row. This book was prepared for Religion-Online by Harry W. and Grace C. Adams.

SUMMARY

(ENTIRE BOOK) A systematic study of the doctrine of love in the form of a dialectic. The author, a process theologian, makes a significant contribution to classical Christian understanding.

Chapters

- Preface

The purpose of this book is to interpret love from the perspective of process theology, that claims God is involved in the world's becoming and his love takes

new forms throughout history.

- **Chapter 1: Love in Our History**

The ground to be covered in this volume includes discussions of the biblical, historical and patristic understandings of the love of God and human love as they encounter both ancient and contemporary theology and philosophy.

- **Chapter 2: Love in the Biblical Tradition: The Hebrew Faith**

In order to get a clearer perspective on the development of the doctrine of love we must examine the main themes of love in the Old Testament, including the covenant with the Hebrews as God's act of love, the human love required in faithfulness to the covenant, and the suffering of God as a result of human sin in failing to keep the covenant.

- **Chapter 3: Love in the New Testament**

The centrality of love as agape in the New Testament brought a new understanding of God's relation to mankind and our relation to God and to each other, characterized by the suffering of God in the Messiah as the disclosure of the way love redeems.

- **Chapter 4: Three Forms of Love**

The three major forms of the interpretation of love in the Christian tradition are: the Augustinian with its neo-platonic roots and existential developments; the Franciscan with its radical nonconformity and nonintellectual approach; and the Lutheran with its insistence that love of God can only be known by grace through faith.

- **Chapter 5: A Critique of St. Augustine's Doctrine of Love**

The rationale for process theology evolved from philosophical critiques of Augustine's attempt to combine the living God of the Bible with the changeless being of neo-platonic metaphysics and reframed the doctrine of God in relation to a contemporary view of nature and the new historical consciousness.

- **Chapter 6: Love and Being**

Process theology undertakes a search for an alternative to the Augustinian understanding of love and being in which the freedom and creativity of human loves have their place, and in which the love of God is understood in his

involvement with a real history. Day lists 5 categories necessary for love.

- **Chapter 7: God and Man**

Following a dialectic with Augustine, Aquinas, the Reformers, Barth and others about man as created in the image of God, the author offers process theology's response.

- **Chapter 8: The Incarnation**

A viable interpretation of the meaning of the Incarnation requires a focus on love as the center of the gospel, and involves a reinterpretation of traditional doctrines of Christology, election, prevenient grace, Jesus' suffering and resurrection, and the image of God.

- **Chapter 9: The Atonement**

In reviewing different metaphors and images of the atonement in the New Testament and the works of Brunner, Aulen, Luther and others, the author posits that the best approach is through an understanding of God's reconciling love as seen in Christ and as experienced in disclosure, suffering, communication and community.

- **Chapter 10: Love and Self-Sacrifice**

The paradox of agape expressed in Jesus' words that "He who saves his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake and the gospels will find it" is explored both in the critics of Christian self-sacrifice, including Fromm, Camus and others, and in the more traditional understandings of agape including the monastics, Luther, Kierkegaard and others.

- **Chapter 11: Love and Sexuality**

Though sex is not love and love is not always sexual they are linked, and Christian doctrine affirms that agape fulfills human loves including the sexual when sex transcends itself in self-giving to the beloved. The author explores this thesis in the light of Christian tradition, new understandings of sexuality, and the meaning of faithfulness, and suggests a sexual ethic that expresses justice, especially for women.

- **Chapter 12: Love and Social Justice**

Assuming that agape requires justice in human affairs, the author explores the implication of biblical love for social justice in its historical foundations, in the terms of justice, group loyalty, humanitarianism, protest, nonviolence and nurturance.

- **Chapter 13: Love and the Intellect**

The relation of love to the intellect proceeds from three assumption: first, that faith transcends rational categories through God's self-revelation in Christ; second, that intellectual understanding is necessary for the guidance of human life; and third, that both seek the same object in God's being and His revealed truth – namely, that it is through agape with its consequent repentance, humility, and understanding of human limits that the intellect can appropriately function.

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