

*Fides Caritate Formata: Faith Formed By Love*¹

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AMONG the texts studied at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, when I was a student there in the 1950s, was Schroeder's edition of the English and Latin versions of *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*.² I still own that book, and when I began to prepare this talk I took it off the shelf to read the article on justification in the Sixth Session of the Council. To my surprise I discovered that in the margin of Chapter VII, *Quid Sit Justificatio impii*, "In what does the justification of the sinner consist," I had written: "Justification is not complete with the gift of grace, but must be completed by charity."

Over the years I have occasionally remarked to close friends that when first I studied the article on justification at Trent I thought it made more sense than what I read in Martin Luther or in the Lutheran Confessions. I suppose that would suggest I was a crypto-Catholic even when I was a Lutheran seminarian.

I doubt that was the case.

At Concordia we took theology seriously and my marginal comment was no doubt an interpretation of the Catholic critique of Luther's doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Yet it was revealing to me that the one marginal comment I made had to do with love in relation to justification.

What is more important, of course, is not what I thought fifty years ago but what the Council said. In reading the article on justification in

¹ Lecture delivered at the inaugural Wilken Colloquium, Baylor University Honors College, March 17, 2011.

² *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation*, trans. Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O.P. (St. Louis: Herder Books, 1941).

the decrees of the Council afresh, I was struck that my marginal comment is found precisely at the place where the council fathers had cited St. Paul's words from Romans 5, the passage that begins: "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" and ends with these words: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." In the language of Trent: "*The love of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who are justified and inheres in them. . .*"

It is unlikely that when I read the decrees of the Council of Trent as a young theological student I was attentive to its interpretation of Romans 5:5. In our exegetical courses I am sure we learned the conventional modern interpretation of that verse, that the "love of God" refers to God's love for us. In grammatical terms, the phrase is a subjective genitive.³ It was not until much later in life that I learned, reading Augustine, that the passage could be taken differently. For Augustine the phrase "love of God" in Romans 5:5 was *always* taken as an objective genitive, that is our love for God.

The council fathers also cite Galatians 5:6, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love." The juxtaposition of the two texts goes back at least to Augustine,⁴ but to grasp the significance of the medieval phrase *fides caritate formata* it is to Romans 5:5 that we must turn.

For Augustine, Romans 5 was a pivotal text in his understanding of the Scriptures as a whole and of justification in particular. It is cited again and again throughout his writings: thirteen times in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, four times in the brief *Homilies on 1 John*, to mention only two of his works. I begin with its use in Augustine's mature response to Pelagius, his well-known treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*.

As you will recall, this treatise was written in response to questions that Count Marcellinus raised about certain statements Augustine had made in his work *On the Desserts and Remission of Sins*, written in response to the teaching of Pelagius. Marcellinus thought that it was illogical to say that "sinlessness" was possible, but deny that anyone had reached that state. And it is that dilemma that Augustine examines in the treatise.

For an understanding of the phrase *fides caritate formata*, the key passage comes at the very beginning of the treatise. Augustine first disposes of the presumed logical problem by reminding Marcellinus that the Scriptures teach that with God it is possible for a camel to pass through the eye of

³ See Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 398.

⁴ Augustine, *On the Trinity* 15.16.31–17.32.

a needle, but that has never happened. And twelve thousand legions of angels could have come to Christ's aid to prevent his suffering, but that too did not happen. When Augustine makes these kinds of argument, I have the sense his tongue is in his check.

But he has a serious point to make. It is only by the work of God that such things could have been done. And so it is with human righteousness or justice—the other English term to translate the Greek *dikaiosisune*. Righteousness or justice cannot be brought about by relying on one's will; a work of such magnitude can only be a gift from God. For in Philippians we read: "It is God, after all, who produces in you, says the apostle, both the willing and the action in accord with good will" (Phil 2:13).⁵

After this introduction Augustine turns to a summary of Pelagius's views as he understood them.⁶ We must, writes Augustine, strongly oppose those who think the human will can attain righteousness or make progress toward it without the help of God. Pelagius believed that God's grace is made present in our lives through the commandments and the gift of free will, the ability to choose good or evil. Through these gifts we are able to live a righteous life. Augustine, however, does not see things that way.

Here is how he responds.

We, on the other hand, say that the human will is helped to achieve righteousness in this way. Besides being created with the free choice of the will and besides the teaching by which human beings are instructed how they ought to live, one must receive the Holy Spirit whereby there arises in the soul the delight in and the love (*delectatio dilectioque*) of God, the supreme and changeless good, even now when one walks by faith not yet by sight. By this love then given as an *earnest* (1 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14) of God's gratuitous gift, one is set afire with the desire to *cleave* (Ps 73:28) to one's creator (*inardescat inhaerere Creatori*), kindled in mind to come within the shining of the true light (*atque inflammetur accedere ad participationem illius veri luminis*) and so receive from the source of one's being the only true well-being. Free choice alone, if the way of truth is hidden, avails for nothing but sin; and when the right action and the true aim has begun to appear clearly, there is still no doing, no devotion, no good life, unless it be also delighted in and loved. And that it may be loved *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts* not by the free choice whose spring is in ourselves, but *through the Holy Spirit which is given to us* (Rom 5:5).⁷

⁵ Augustine, *On the Spirit and the Letter* 2.2.

⁶ For a balanced presentation of Pelagius's understanding of grace, see Robert F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968).

⁷ Augustine, *Spirit and Letter* 3.5.

Several distinctly Augustinian accents are present in this passage. The most noteworthy is that Augustine makes the transformation brought by grace to turn on the love for God, citing Romans 5:5. To make us righteous, the Holy Spirit inspires us to love God. In depicting the end toward which the love of God leads, Augustine uses the verb “cleave,” in Latin *inhaerere*. For those who know the Latin Bible, *inhaerere* will remind you of another of Augustine’s favorite passages in the Psalms: *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est*. “For me to cleave to God is good” (72 [73:28]). Justification is an affair of being drawn into intimate fellowship with God, a sharing (*participatio*) in God’s life that is only possible through love. Love, more than faith or hope, brings us close to God. “When we ask whether someone is good, we do not ask what he believes or what he hopes for, but what he loves,” Augustine writes in the *Enchiridion*.⁸

Of course, that love is greater than faith and hope is not original with Augustine. It comes from St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:13, and other early writers drew out the implications of the passage. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, focused his exposition on another verse in the chapter: “Prophecies will pass away, and knowledge will pass away, but love never ends.” Hope, writes Gregory, works so long as that for which one hopes is not present, and faith is the “assurance of things hoped for” (Heb 11:1). But love is an “interior disposition” by which the soul is attached to God, and this will never be taken away. When the soul comes into the presence of God “the operation of love remains,” for “if love is taken away, what will hold us to God?”⁹

Note too in the passage from *Spirit and Letter* that Augustine uses ardent, charged language to speak of love, words such as on fire, inflamed, kindled, and ablaze. This is not the vocabulary one uses in depicting agape, love of neighbor. No doubt, hearing the passage from the *Spirit and Letter* you recalled the words in book 13 of the *Confessions*: “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift”—note the allusion to Romans 5 and the Holy Spirit—“we are set on fire and carried upwards; we grow red hot and ascend.”¹⁰ Two centuries later Maximus the Confessor will speak of the “passion of holy love” that binds the soul to God.¹¹

For Augustine, then, love is the affection that draws us to God and holds us to God. Which means that he is interpreting Scripture with Scripture, St. Paul with the help of St. John. Here, for example, is a passage

⁸ *Enchiridion* 31.117 where he cites Romans 5:5.

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione dialogus*, 46:93b–97a; 65a.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* 13.9.10.

¹¹ Maximus, *Four Hundred Chapters on Love* 3. 67.

from his commentary on John 6 at the words “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. . . .” Augustine cites Romans 5:5 to explain what is meant by the term “draw.” To some, he says, the term “draw” suggests coercion, for if we are “drawn” (the Latin *traho* means to drag or pull violently) we come unwillingly. But there is another kind of being drawn and that is being “drawn by love.” Just as a person can be drawn by the will, one can also be drawn by “delight,” *voluptas*, pleasure or enjoyment. The psalmist sings: “Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desire of your heart” (Ps 37:4). The heart savors the “bread of heaven” about which John 6 speaks. And for good measure, Augustine quotes Vergil. *Trahit sua quemque voluptas* (“His delight draws him”).¹² Finally, he takes a shot at Pelagius. It is “delight, not obligation” that leads us to God, as we see in the Song of Songs, which speaks of being drawn “by the odor of your fragrances.”¹³

Four points then: love as love toward God, love as delight that draws us to God, love as the bond that holds us fast to God, and love as the gift that is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Although the love that is poured into our hearts is a gift of God, Augustine makes clear that it is we who do the loving. This is a point of capital importance. For Augustine, justification is not something external to ourselves, grace acting upon us from without, imputed, to use the language of the Reformation; rather, it is something we possess, that inheres in us and changes us. In the *City of God*—commenting on Philippians 2, “it is God who produces in you both the willing and the doing . . .”—he writes: “[T]he righteousness (*justitia*) of God means not only the quality whereby God himself is righteous, but also the quality that God produces in a man who is justified by him.” Augustine had in mind actual righteousness. When we say that this is the “will which God is said to produce in men,” we mean that God wills what he does not himself will, but makes his followers into willers (*volentes*).¹⁴

By the gift of the Spirit, then, we are made into “lovers” of God. Again from the *Spirit and Letter*. “There could be no spark of love in us, however small, were it not shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which is given to us. For this love through the Holy Spirit which is shed abroad in our hearts is not his own love for us but that by which he

¹² *Eclagues* 2.65; C. Day Lewis, *The Eclagues and Georgics of Virgil* (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1964), 17.

¹³ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 26.1–5. Song of Song passage is at *Song* 1:3. The Vulgate reads: “Trahe me, post te curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.”

¹⁴ Augustine, *City of God* 22.2; see also *On the Trinity* 14.5.

makes us *lovers*; like the righteousness of God by which we are made righteous through his gift.”¹⁵

Now the phrase itself, *fides caritate formata*, does not occur in Augustine, though the theological conception underlying it is present and rests on the interpretation of Romans 5:5 as the love by which we love God. It was not until the Middle Ages that the phrase itself came into general usage, and its meaning was grounded in Romans 5:5. So, for example, in article 24 of the *Secunda secundae* Thomas Aquinas asks “whether love is caused in us by infusion?” After setting forth reasons why love is not caused by infusion, Thomas introduces his argument in the *sed contra* by citing Romans 5:5, “the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.” Love, says Thomas, is “friendship of man with God founded on the fellowship of everlasting happiness” This fellowship is a gift of grace, for Paul writes that “the grace of God is life eternal” (Rom 6:23).¹⁶ Hence the love of God cannot be acquired by our natural powers, but only by the infusion of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

It is clear that Thomas understands the “love of God” in Romans 5:5, as our love toward God. This is not without significance, because in his *Commentary on Romans* he observes that the phrase “love of God” can be taken either as God’s love for us or as our love for God, citing appropriate biblical passages to support each understanding. For the first, God’s love for us, he cites Jeremiah, “He loved you with an everlasting love” (31:3), and for the second, our love for God, Romans 8: “I am sure that nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God” (8:39).¹⁸ It is telling that he cites this passage from Romans—a verse that modern interpreters also take as referring to God’s love for us.¹⁹

Though Thomas presented both interpretations in his commentary, he inclined to the Augustinian view. “For the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and of the Son, is given to us that we might participate in the Love who is the Holy Spirit, and by this sharing we are made lovers of God. That we love him is a sign that he loves us.”²⁰ In support he cites

¹⁵ Augustine, *Spirit and Letter* 32.56. Here too Augustine cites Romans 5:5

¹⁶ *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 24, a. 2. On Thomas, see Miriam Rose, *Fides Caritate Formata. Das Verhältnis von Glaube und Liebe in der Summa Theologiae des Thomas von Aquin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2007). Peter Lombard also takes Romans 5:5 to mean our love for God. See Sentences, Book I: XVII.4.2 (63); 6.2 (65). *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae* (“Spicilegium Bonaventurianum”; Rome: 1971), 145, 149.

¹⁷ *ST* II–II, q. 23, a. 2.

¹⁸ *Lectura in epistolam ad Romanos* (Rome: Marietti, 1953), nos. 392–93.

¹⁹ See Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 536

²⁰ *Lectura in epistolam ad Romanos*, no. 392.

Proverbs: "I love those who love me" (Pr 8:17). And that of course is the position he takes in the *Summa*. "Love is the form of faith because it quickens the act of faith."²¹

Finally, before returning to Trent, let me bring forward one other witness, a late medieval commentator on Romans. In this commentary the author gave what by then was the traditional reading of the text. He writes that here St. Paul is speaking about the "unreserved devotion to God that creates men of a right heart; it alone extinguishes the satisfaction of one's own righteousness." The love spoken of here is the "love we have for God alone." It is not the kind of love directed at a creature; it means "loving God dearly," that is, to "esteem God above everything else."²² This commentary was a series of lectures given in Wittenberg in 1515 by the Augustinian friar Martin Luther.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, then, the interpretation of Romans 5:5 as our love for God was the prevailing view, and, as Thomas makes clear, it was this understanding of Romans 5:5 that lay behind the phrase *fides caritate formata*. Now with Augustine filtered through Thomas Aquinas and a late medieval Augustinian friar, let me turn to article 7 on justification in the sixth session of the Council of Trent.

In the previous chapter the council fathers had discussed the "manner of preparation" for justification. There the accent was on faith. Human beings, they say, "are disposed to justice [righteousness], when, aroused and aided by divine grace, receiving faith by hearing, they are moved freely toward God. . . ." In article 7, "What does justification consist of?" they say this: "This disposition or preparation is followed by justification itself; which is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man become just and from being an enemy becomes a friend, that he may be an heir according to hope of life everlasting (Ti 3:7). . . ."

Then follows a scholastic dissection of the teaching before the article returns to the central theme, the renewal of the inner man by the gift of the Spirit. The "justification of the sinner" takes place when the "love of God is poured forth by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who are

²¹ ST II-II, q. 4, a. 3. See also I-II, q. 113, a. 4. Thomas finds support for his understanding of grace in another term in Romans 5, "stand" in 5:2. "Through him we have obtained access to his grace in which we *stand* and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of Christ." Paul, says Thomas, is speaking about the "state of grace," i.e., grace as a condition in which one lives, a disposition that allows the soul to rest its affections in God, *Lectura in epistolam ad Romanos*, no. 383.

²² *Lectures on Romans* at 5:5. D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, (hereafter WA) (Weimar: 1938), 306-7.

justified and inheres in them; and so it is that man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and love. For faith, unless hope and love be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of his body.”

The first thing to note is that Trent follows the traditional interpretation of Romans 5:5, namely that it refers to our love for God. More specifically, the council fathers understand love as the affection that binds us to God and transforms us. That, of course, is what Augustine had in mind when he used the word “cleave” to expound the text. Trent’s word is “unites,” and to fill out what is meant it introduces several other terms, “inheres,” ingrafted,” and “infused.” In Trent’s view, justification takes place through an interior renewal by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is received in the soul of the believer.

Second, the passage from Romans 5 is interpreted with the help of other New Testament texts, among them Ephesians 1:12: when you believed in him “you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee (*arrabon*) of our inheritance.” This is significant because the term “guarantee” (*arrabon*, here rendered as *pignus*) appeared in the passage from Augustine’s *Spirit and Letter* and highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in justification, Trent also quotes 1 Corinthians 13 with its the triad of faith, hope, and love and Galatians 5:6, “faith working through love.”

As you are well aware the Protestant reformers, in particular Luther and Melancthon, mounted a vigorous critique of the phrase *fides caritate formata* because of its presumed theological deficiencies. Luther’s *Lectures on Galatians* from 1531 are particularly biting. At Galatians 3:11, “the just shall live by faith,” he writes that Paul did not say *iustus ex fide formata vivit*, but *simpliciter iustus ex fide vivit*. Only faith grasps hold of Christ, says Luther, but “they” (the papists) prefer “love to faith and attribute righteousness not to faith but to love. . . . But if they do not attribute righteousness to faith except when accompanied by love, they attribute to faith nothing at all.”²³ A few pages later he says that the papists keep repeating the phrase *fides formata*, but, says Luther, this is to trample Christ underfoot and to establish righteousness on the basis of works. They charge us, he continues, with teaching that “true faith is faith alone without works,” but “if justification is based on loving the neighbor we have

²³ WA 40.1: 421–23. On Luther’s critique of *fides caritate formata* see George Bavaud, “‘Fides Caritate Formata’. La critique par Luther de cette formule dans son Commentaire de l’Épître aux Galates (1531),” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 24 (1977): 235–50. See also Otto Herman Pesch, *Hinführung zu Luther* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1982), 155–70.

no need of Christ.”²⁴ Philipp Melancthon calls *fides caritate formata* a bit of “sophistry” to evade the clear teaching of the Scriptures. Love has no place in the act of being justified. As he puts it in the Apology to the Augsburg Confession: “Only faith lays hold of Christ.”²⁵

In response Trent appealed to the triad of “faith, hope, and love.” “Faith, unless hope and charity are added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of his body.” Trent appealed also to a string of biblical texts among which Romans 5:5 is prominent. And in the thirty-three canons, that is, anathemas, that are included in the Sixth Session, the only biblical text that is cited verbatim is Romans 5:5. Here is canon 11: “If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the righteousness of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the ‘love which is poured forth into their hearts by the Holy Spirit’ and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.”

Romans 5:5 has a central role in Trent’s exposition of the doctrine of justification, and there the text is interpreted in light of the long tradition of exegesis that goes back at least to Augustine.

So here is my question: Can Trent’s or Thomas’s or Augustine’s exegesis of Romans 5:5 stand up under close exegetical scrutiny. As many of you know modern biblical scholars reject their interpretation out of hand. In his magisterial commentary on Romans, Joseph Fitzmyer dismisses the Augustinian view in a sentence. The phrase, he says, refers to “God’s love for us,” a subjective genitive, and in support gives a list of contemporary commentators: Cornely, Dunn, Kaesemann, Kuss, Lagrange, Nygren, Prat, Schlier, Sickenberger, Zeller.²⁶

In his *Systematic Theology* Wolfhart Pannenberg weighs in against the exegesis as well as the theology of the article on justification at Trent. “There is no exegetical support,” he writes, “for the view of faith in what the council says about the righteousness of faith and the justification of

²⁴ WA 40.1: 606.

²⁵ Melancthon, *Apology to the Augsburg Confession* 4.107–9; 139.

²⁶ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 398. Even J. Burnaby, one of Augustine’s most astute and sympathetic interpreters, faults Augustine for his interpretation of Romans 5. See his *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 99. For a critique of Burnaby, see Oliver O’Donovan, *The Problem of Self Love in St. Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 130. John Calvin was also critical of Augustine’s reading of Romans 5:5. In his *Commentary on Romans* Calvin said that Augustine’s “mind was wandering” when he took this verse as referring to our love for God. His “pious opinion” is contrary to what “Paul intended.” *Johannis Calvini Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 106.

believers when it links faith only to the beginning of justification and then ascribes its completion to the infusing of love into the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit, which Paul mentions in another context (Rom 5:5), not in relation to justification. . . . The council's defective exegetical judgment may well be understandable because it was seeing Paul's statements through the spectacles of the Scholastic doctrine of grace, but its judgment was defective nonetheless."²⁷

But is that really so? Is Trent's use of Romans 5 a matter of proof-texting in support of the "scholastic doctrine of grace," or is it an exercise in biblical theology, a recapitulation of the exegesis that underlies the doctrine of grace? Though there is a direct line of interpretation of Romans 5:5 from Augustine up through the Middle Ages and into the sixteenth century, we have to dig deeper. For it was not only Augustine and the Latin scholastics who took Romans 5:5 to be speaking of our love for God. The Church's first and greatest biblical scholar, Origen of Alexandria, a native Greek speaker, also read the text in that way.²⁸

Origen provides a clue to why the exegetical tradition took the course it did. If you look again at Romans 5, you will note three words, faith, hope, and love. Origen saw that the triad was present in the passage, and in his *Commentary on Romans* 5 he cites 1 Corinthians 13 twice to explain to his readers the structure of the passage. "The love of God which is greater than everything (1 Cor 13:13) follows faith and hope, and not only fills our minds but also abounds and is shed abroad into our hearts because it is not acquired by human skill, but is poured out by the grace of the Holy Spirit." This explanation, that there is a parallel between 1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 5, follows the "sequence" of the passage, says Origen.

Once Origen introduces the triad of faith, hope, and love, the entire passage takes on a new light. For faith and hope are dispositions, things we attribute to a human subject, not to God; hence the love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13 is not the love of God for us, but our love for God. If Paul is interpreted by Paul, there is a sound textual basis to conclude

²⁷ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 222–23. For a modern discussion of the issues raised by Trent in relation to the *Joint Declaration*, see Christopher J. Malloy, *Engrafted into Christ: A Critique of the Joint Declaration* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

²⁸ Augustine was familiar with Origen's writings and had access to his biblical commentaries through the translations of Jerome and Rufinus. See Caroline P. Hammond Bammel, "Origen, Augustine and the Exegesis of Paul," in *Tradition and Exegesis in Early Christian Writers*, no. 17 (Aldershot, England: Variorum Press, 1995). There is no way to know whether Augustine was familiar with Origen's exegesis of Romans 5:5. Bammel does not discuss that text. It is possible that Augustine came to his interpretation independently of Origen.

that when love is used with faith and hope in Romans 5:1–5, the love being spoken of is our love for God.²⁹ Already at the end of chapter 4, Origen had cited 1 Corinthians 13 to fill out the discussion of Abraham's faith and hope. "I think that faith is the first beginning of salvation and its true foundation, hope is the advance and growth of the building, and love is the completion and culmination of the whole work. For that reason love is said to be greater than everything else."³⁰

Still, Origen is an astute student of biblical language, and when he comes to 5:5, he steps back before going ahead with his exposition. "It seems to me," he writes, "that we should consider whether in this passage 'the love that is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit' is the love by which we love God or whether it is the love by which we are loved by God." Either interpretation was possible on philological grounds. But then he says: "If indeed *love* is to be understood as that love by which we love God, no argument is needed. If, however, it is to be understood as that love by which we are loved by God, because he says, 'love of God is poured into our hearts,' Paul holds that love is the supreme and greatest gift of the Holy Spirit. For as this gift was first received from God, we are able to love God himself because we are loved by God."

For Origen the two possible interpretations of the passage merge into one. Even if the second meaning is adopted, that the love is God's love for us, the purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is that we might love God. Then he supports his interpretation by reference to passages where the Spirit is identified with love (2 Tim 1:7), God the Father is called "love" (1 Jn 4:8), and Christ is called the "Son of love" (Col 1:13). This phrase is usually translated "the kingdom of his beloved Son," but in Greek it reads "the kingdom of his son of love." The Vulgate has *regnum filii dilectionis*.

Because Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are identified with "love" in the Scriptures, says Origen,

[I]t is certain that the Son and the Spirit are to be understood to be from the one fount of paternal godhead. From the fullness of the Spirit the fullness of love is infused into the hearts of the saints so that they might share in the divine nature, as the apostle Peter taught (2 Pet 1:4). And so it is that in the gift of the Holy Spirit that word is fulfilled, "As you Father are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us." (Jn 17:21) This means that they become sharers in the divine nature through the fullness of love that the Holy Spirit brings about.³¹

²⁹ Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 4.10.11 in *Origenes: Commentarii in Epistulam ad Romanos* II, ed. Theresia Heither, O.S.B. (Freiburg: Herder, 1992–1999), 280.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.6.3 (Heither ed., 226–28).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.10.

In addition to the two customary passages to support theosis, Origen adds Romans 5:1–5.

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Early in the Church's history Romans 5:5 acquired a distinctive interpretation. What Augustine developed in writing after writing, what Origen adumbrated and later thinkers investigated and analyzed, is this: love is a mutual relation, grounded in the Holy Trinity, in which the Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts that we might share in God's life and light and love. At the very heart of redemption is our love for God. It is this tradition, forged in the exegesis of Sacred Scripture, that underlies the article on justification at the Council of Trent.³²

Augustine's homilies on 1 John are among his most profound spiritual writings. In homily 8, commenting on 1 John 4:13, "by this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit," he asks how we know that God dwells in us? Because "he has given us of his Spirit." And how do we know that his Spirit dwells in us? "Because if your heart is filled with love it is filled with the Spirit." And how do we know this, asks Augustine. "Ask the apostle," who says: "Because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."³³

In the same homilies, commenting on the text "Anyone who loves the one who has begotten [Jesus Christ] loves him who has been begotten by him" (5:1), Augustine comments: "He has joined love directly to faith; because faith is empty without love." In other words: *fides caritate formata*.³⁴

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³² Von Balthasar defended the traditional interpretation of Roman 5:5. "We need not hesitate to describe the result of God's (eternal) act of generation as a constant abiding (and hence a habitus) in grace. Even the term infusion can be substantiated biblically. In fact it arose solely from Romans 5:5 and 1 Cor. 12:13. Protestant polemics against these terms are only justified where the latter are misused (suggesting that grace can become a possession of man's nature). To reject them would be like rejecting a genuine inner sanctification of the justified person—something for which Karl Barth fought very early on. After all we have said, therefore, there can be no question of an ontic 'increase' of grace in a man without a corresponding increase of faith-knowledge-love. 'Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love' [1 Jn 4:7ff.]" (*Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 2. *The Dramatis Personae: Man in God* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990], 315–16).

³³ Augustine, *Homilies on 1 John* 8.12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.2. See also *On the Trinity* 15.32. "And this gift [the Holy Spirit] surely is distinctively to be understood as the love which brings us through to God, without which no other gift of God at call can bring us through to God."