Love in Religion: An Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

This bibliography is organized by decade, and alphabetically by author surname within decades. Items that have already been read and annotated appear in bold and the annotations appear in square brackets below the bibliography entry.

In 2003, an extensively annotated bibliography by Thomas Jay Oord of works pertaining to the interface between love and science appeared in a volume edited by Stephen G. Post, Bryon Johnson, Michael E. McCullough, and Jeffrey P. Schloss. In order to avoid duplication, where works listed in our bibliography are also presented in Oord’s survey, this has been noted and reference given of where a précis of the work in question can be found.

2000–2009


[Binyamin Abrahamov’s Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism investigates the nature of divine and human love (mahabba/’ishq). The author argues that Sufi theories of divine love found in both Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and the Tunisian traditionist and jurist Ibn al-Dabbagh (d. 1296) can be traced back to Greek Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian theories of love. The book contends that conceptions of divine love in al-Ghazali’s Kitab

Mahabba and Ibn al-Dabbagh’s Mashariq al anwar do not correspond to later Sufi conceptions of divine and human love as they were mostly developed in Persian by Ahmad al-Ghazali (d. 1126), Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), Fakhr al-Din ‘Iraqi (d. 1289) and Hafiz al-Shirazi (d. 1390). Nonetheless, al-Ghazali and ibn al-Dabbagh produced significant theories of divine love which comprised definitions, kinds, causes and signs of love as well as the ways to love God and God’s love for humans.


[Humans emerge from a ‘causal nexus’ formed of both good and evil factors. Therefore, people we love would not have existed in a world devoid of evil. Adams suggests that we should respond to this situation with ambivalence, contextualising the evils (which we regret) in the ‘framework of what we welcome in human life’ (243). Adams concludes with the idea that in a religious context, ‘the totality of our history with God will provide a framework of gladness in which all our just regrets can be contextualized’ (251).


[Anderson presents divine love as a ‘practical ideal’ (162), which we can follow while recognising the impossibility of loving as God loves. We direct our intention and attention towards ‘pure impossible goodness’ (163; here Anderson follows Weil). Anderson highlights human finitude as opposed to divine infinitude, as well as problems of incompatibility of rationality and morality, moral motivation and of human imperfection, as well as discussing the gendered nature of love.]


[Ayres presents an introduction to Augustine’s theology of love through a close reading of Augustine’s homilies on 1 John, in particular the first homily of the series. He also shows how Augustine’s theology of love is located within Trinitarian theology and his theology of the incarnation. For Augustine, humans learn what it means for God to be love through paying attention to the structures of love present in the Trinity. Humans can learn to live within
these structures of love by reflecting on the incarnation, which shapes and directs human lives. Ayres highlights the importance for Augustine that God’s love for humans is always prior to human love for God.


[Badcock examines Plato’s concept of need-love (eros) and Nygren’s concept of gift-love (agape), arguing that Plato’s concept of need-love is unfairly characterised as selfish, when in fact it can be understood as being turned towards the other. Badcock argues that in acts of gift-love, the agent considers the person for whom they are acting as having intrinsic value. This does not fit with Nygren’s assertion that divine love is disinterested and that God loves humans regardless of their intrinsic value. Critiquing Nygren’s position on this and other counts, Badcock concludes that God is affected by the existence of the world. The world matters to God; God loves it. Divine love includes an element of ‘need’ (Badcock notes that the term ‘need’ is inappropriate but the only term available); he suggests that God ‘needs’ the world in the sense God needs a human response to God’s outreach in order for God’s purposes for humanity to be achieved.]


[Defines love as ‘a positive orientation on the other’ (1).]


[Based on a close reading of NT texts, Chilton argues that love is presented differently in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as ‘the integral principle of the Torah’, ‘a principle beyond cultic Judaism’, and ‘the single term of reference that determines the purity of one person for another’ respectively (60). He also posits that the distinctiveness of Jesus’ teachings lies in the target of the love he teaches: our enemies. Jesus’ ‘spirituality of the “other”’, writes Chilton, ‘invested one’s neighbour with the attribute of God’s presence in the world, so that loving that person is tantamount to worship of God.’ (65).]


[Clapper draws on recent research in emotion and affect (including work by Thomas Dixon, Martha Nussbaum, and Robert C. Roberts), which has revived a more holistic understanding of human affections. Understanding affect and Wesley’s notion of ‘heart’ as the core of the human being, Clapper argues, allows contemporary readers to appreciate the expressions of love made by theologians such as Wesley (who talked about ‘heart religion’ and championed love as Christianity’s central category) in ways that today’s uncritical paradigm of ‘emotions’ may obscure.]


[Clements’ concern is the apparently increasing superficiality of the understanding of love in the contemporary Western world, in both secular and religious contexts, and what he sees as the concomitant decline in the belief of the God of the Bible. To counter these ills he proposes that the Church’s portrayal of God should be balanced between portraying God in overly human and overly transcendent terms. Following Hosea 11:1-9 he highlights God’s wounded love (1-4), God’s angry love (5-7), and God’s passionate love (8-9), positing that only God is able to find a way out of the impasse of being caught between wounded love and angry love; for humans this is not possible. Clements maps the narrative of divine love in Hosea 11 onto the cross, depicting it as the place in which God’s wounded, angry, and passionate love can be seen. Clements concludes that the Church must preach a suffering God, for that is what makes Christianity distinctive. He makes a distinction between *agape*, calling it a love which suffers, and *eros*, a desiring love which ignores the suffering to which love makes us vulnerable.]


[From a therapeutic/pastoral perspective. Uses a ‘Scriptural’ definition of love to encourage healthy self-love without narcissism, avoiding the twin temptations of excessive self-neglect or self-love.]


Through the examples of four seminal Sufi masters, Derin investigates the significance of divine love in the Islamic mystical tradition. The opening chapters of the book provide 1) definitions of the nature of love from various perspectives, (i.e. psychology, philosophy and theology), and 2) various paradigms of love found in the Bible and the Quran. Once the stage is set, Derin examines the seminal contribution of Rabi’a, al-Hallaj, al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. The book presents luminary Sufi masters and provides readers with an analysis of each particular paradigm.


Dunnington argues that the doctrine of impassibility is integral to any adequate account of Trinitarian love. He says that a possible God would not be able to create the world, move the stars, and redeem humanity from its suffering, and therefore a possible God cannot rightly be regarded as a God who is Love. The basis of his argument is the ‘existential’ critique of passibility (rather than the ‘biblical’ or ‘metaphysical’ articulations). “[O]nly if God is unceasing love rather than transitory pathos can we be sure that God will overcome evil with a love that does not merely compensate for evil but indeed obliterates evil because God’s love is the reality whereas our sin and suffering is the fraud’ (74).”


Since Mu’in ad–Din Chishti settled in the town of Ajmer in northwestern India at the end of the 12th century, Chishtiyya has become the most widespread and influential Sufi order in the region and the one deeply associated with South Asia. In *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence bring to life ignored and slighted primary texts produced by the Chishtis and their supporters. Also, in contradistinction with the dominant tripartite periodization of Sufism, (i.e. Golden Age, decline and revival), the two authors propose a new historical periodization of five cycles in the development of Chishtiyya. At the outset, the book provides a helpful introduction to the Sufi dialectics of love and knowledge, and the quest within Sufi Order of annihilation (fana) or subsistence in God (baqa). Finally, *Sufi Martyrs of Love* offers a phenomenological description of devotional and mystical practices as well as the Chisht Order’s lineage of masters and a wellspring of hagiographical material from the Indian sub-continent and beyond.


Fergusson discusses the significance of God’s love for human life in terms of eschatology. He posits three ways in which divine love, considered eschatologically, could be said to triumph. 1) If the scope of God’s love is limited, divine love can triumph within this limit. Fergusson discusses double predestination in relation to this. 2) If the scope of God’s love is universalised, divine love triumphs. Fergusson discusses Barth in relation to this. He rejects these two options, principally because of the lack of human freedom and responsibility that they imply, and embraces the third: that God offers grace to all in Christ, but that God’s justice requires punishment for those who reject this love. For Fergusson, this view implies that rejection is a function of God’s love, because otherwise God’s love and justice fall apart.


[This elegantly written book is fluid and unencumbered, and also conceptually precise. It starts out by setting the parameters for its discussion as ‘practical reasoning’, and argues that the oft-invoked motivational categories in such discussions (e.g. ‘to want’, ‘to desire’) lack explanatory power. What is needed, on Frankfurt’s view, is a more robust category: love. Love is a mode of caring which delimits the scope of our will and gives our lives meaning. As he says in chapter 2, ‘it is love that accounts for the value to us of life itself’ (40). Frankfurt’s model love is parental love, which he thinks is less fickle and ambiguous than sexual or romantic love. His use of religious concepts of love is fascinating (if brief and in passing); he describes divine love as ‘promiscuous’ and although he draws on the Christian tradition in his discussion of self-love (in chapter 3, drawing on Augustine and Kierkegaard), ultimately he says self-love has no necessary connection with love as a morally guiding (or morally guided) notion: one can love oneself on his definition without any concern for the moral implications of one’s loves. Theological thinkers engaged: Kant (on self-love), Augustine, Kierkegaard.]


[Green’s essay discusses the problem of evil, noting that the experience of God as loving is usually seen to be at stake in the philosophical Problem of Evil, but is not widely regarded to be a contributor to that debate’s resolution. Arguing against Swinburne’s view that a theist can only be justified in his belief in God if he possesses an adequate theodicy, Green argues that theists who experience God’s love can defuse Swinburne’s argument that such a theodicy is necessary.]


[After outlining some methodological points concerning biblical theology, Grogan divides the remainder of the chapter into four parts: 1. God’s love for his people; 2. God’s love for the world; 3. God’s love for Christ; 4. Love in relation to the nature of God. In part one Grogan posits that Christian love is a responsive love, and is created by God. The love that Christians express is therefore different to divine love, but caused by it. In part four he looks at 1 John and highlights the link between the statements ‘God is love’ and ‘God is light’. Dismissing the idea that, according to 1 John, love exhaustively defines God, Grogan suggests instead that the letter teaches that love is a quality in God’s nature, alongside other qualities, or attributes, such as light, truth, life, and righteousness. These attributes are unified in God’s character, and must also be in ours if we are to be shown to be ‘members of God’s family’(66). The way we define love in this context is based on the way in which it relates to God’s other attributes. For Grogan, the most important of these is light, which he links to holiness (66).]


[Hart discusses the methodological difficulties encountered when trying to define the nature of God’s love, arguing that choosing any given approach in this context has implications for the theological content reached. He argues that because of God’s immersion in human history in the incarnation, theology of God’s love must take into account human experiences of love. The theology of God’s love must not, however, stay within the parameters or human experience only, but must allow for the rupture and transformation of human experience, as we look from our humanity to Christ’s sinless humanity, and thence to God. Hart discusses the metaphor of God as lover, referencing McFague and noting that seeing God as lover gives value to humanity, and that the human return of love to God is something that God can be said to need. He then contrasts McFague’s methodology with Barth’s, comparing the theologians’ contrasting starting points (human experience and divine revelation) for talking about God’s love.]


[In this clearly argued chapter Helm tries to delineate the character of divine love, given what we know about human existence. He shows that it is possible to draw conclusions about the intensity and distribution of God’s love for humans. After outlining several assumptions (including that divine love means God’s benevolence towards humans and that divine benevolence can be measured in some way), Helm asks ‘Can God be benevolently loving to all human beings?’ and ‘Can God be equally benevolent to all human beings?’ He answers ‘perhaps’ and ‘no’ respectively, after asking whether conscious, sentient human life is an expression of divine benevolence, and discussing various observable inequalities between humans. Helm proposes four replies to his arguments: the dualist, creationist, and eschatological options, and the objection from divine suffering. He nevertheless concludes, among other things, that it is impossible to attribute substantive differences between people to moral evil only; natural evil must be recognised in these differences (e.g. inequalities arising from different temporal locations). Helm ends by stating that if God’s love cannot be equally distributed, then neither can the saving love of God in Christ.]


[Focuses on the history and relationship science of romantic love.]


[Through a discussion of the altruism in the Qur’an and the Sufi tradition, and almsgiving (both within and outside the faith community), Homerin posits that altruism defined as intentional action reaping no reward is difficult to locate within in Islam because the Qur’an teaches that God will reward every good deed done by anyone (84). He suggests that the closest thing to altruism within Islam is the *îthâr* (‘preferring others to oneself’, 81) found in Muslim chivalry and mysticism.]


[Explores compassion in Tibetan Buddhism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, both of which depict compassion as a bridge between the stages of renunciation and realization of the self. He argues that the concepts of *karuna* and *agape*, respectively, are phenomenologically similar.]


[Irigaray sees the masculine and feminine subjects as essentially different: the masculine is concerned with speech and a certain kind of meaning which is closed and directed at their own self; the feminine is interested in the relation and communication between people. Through dialogue, to which each individual brings their own meaning, relation in difference can be upheld without falling into submission or subjection to a single subject. In contrast to language, defined as ‘the tool, the techné, which the speaking subject uses in order to exist in a world, to dwell in it and to continue to construct it as human’ (38), the way of love involves a practice of negativity through which the world may be rebuilt. This practice prevents the subject from appropriating the site of difference, recognising that the other is wholly other. There is a ‘nothing’ that separates individuals (168), and the safeguarding of this allows for a relationship with the other.]


[Woon Ko analyses the love of God in Whitehead and Jung, with particular attention to the way both develop their arguments by correlating opposites (subject/object, conscious/unconscious, God/world, good/evil). Both thinkers view these opposites not as antagonistic but as relational, and therefore as potential sites for transformation. Woon Ko argues that God’s love is creative activity which transforms the limited character of ego-consciousness by harmonizing opposites, making whole the diversity of creation.]


[Lane argues that taking into account God’s wrath is necessary to understanding God’s love as portrayed in the Bible. In the first part of this chapter Lane outlines four ways in which the wrath of God is muted in contemporary Christian discourse: 1) simple denial of God’s wrath, both implicit and explicit; 2) crypto-Marcionism; 3) portraying God’s wrath as an impersonal process, an effect of sin instead of an affect (Lane dedicates the most space to this third problem, and uses C. H. Dodd as his principal interlocutor.); 4) ignoring the question. In part two he discusses how the wrath of God relates to other doctrines, arguing that Christianity must also retain the doctrines of God’s judgement, the fear of God, hell, and the cross as the work of Christ dealing with God’s wrath. In part three Lane shows how God’s wrath expresses God’s love and also stands in contrast to it. He upholds the polar opposites of love and indifference, arguing that wrath can be part of love and highlighting God’s holiness. He adds that wrath and mercy originate in God’s holy love. Lane states that divine love and wrath are related by analogy to human love and wrath, but are not identical to them.]

[An overview, covering language; biblical views; the Greco-Roman world; early Christianity; Augustine; Abelard and Bernard; mystics and troubadours; scholastics; the Reformation; Pietism and Diaconal movements; and the ‘modern world’.]


[Lippitt addresses the question of self-love’s legitimacy in Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*, which is dedicated to expositing the Christian commandment: ‘You shall love the other as yourself’. Kierkegaard scholars argue that he does not rule out erotic or friendship love, but he warns against turning the other into ‘another me’. Lippitt argues that friendship love may help to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate self-love: rather than turning the other into ‘another me’, friendship love acknowledges and responds to differences. Lippitt draws on classical philosophers’ treatment of friendship (e.g. Cicero and Aristotle) as well as modern scholarly writing on friendship (e.g. Cocking and Kennett).]


[Mahmutcehajic’s poetic prose is a reflection on what makes our lives human. His writing style captures well the poetics of mystical love in Islamic tradition, but his style might levy a toll on modern readers’ patience. This unusual and significant book dabbles in philosophy and comparative religion (mainly Christianity and Islam). Drawing largely from the mystical dimensions of Islam (Sufism), the author offers a luminous mediation on the relationship between love (heart) and knowledge (intellect), multiplicity and unity, and concludes with the example of the Prophet Muhammad as the universal/complete person. The author contends that central realities like love must be revealed to us because they go beyond human reason and understanding.]


[Manchester argues that dominant political philosophies (Aristotelian communitarianism, classical democratic liberalism, and socialism) all fail to establish brotherly love. Moreover, none of these philosophies produce love between humanity and God. Drawing on John Welsey’s theology of politics, Manchester suggests that the sacramental life of the Church overcomes the shortcomings found in political theories because *philia*, *agape*, and *eros* are integrated between human persons, and between humans and God.]


[The Erotic Phenomenon is divided into 42 sections; the first 15 treat the Cartesian paradigm and its problems; from 16 onwards he gives a phenomenology of love. Marion’s central argument is that philosophy has forgotten its erotic origin: it began as the love of wisdom but renounced that name for metaphysics in the Middle Ages. This shift from love of wisdom to metaphysics made philosophy a domain in which beings were studied as universal objects of knowledge, opening the way for science and ‘censuring’ ‘the erotic origin of philosophy’ (3). Every concept of love is ‘weakened’ as soon as one acknowledges competing or irreconcilable meanings – e.g. *eros* and *agape* (see 5). He criticizes the Cartesian *ego cogito*]
and instead proposes that the ego should be redefined as the lover (ego amans). The final section includes reflections on God’s love, which Marion says is like ours but infinitely different in that he loves ‘infinitely better’ than we do (222). ‘God’s highest transcendence, the only one that does not dishonour him, belongs not to power, nor to wisdom, nor even to infinity, but to love. For love alone is enough to put all infinity, all wisdom, and all power to work’ (222).


[Argues that methodological naturalism is incompatible with an attitude of appreciative love for the created order; recommends practices from Lewis’ The Four Loves and Henri Nouwen’s Life of the Beloved in order to cultivate the methodological love that naturalism lacks.]


[Montgomery puts forward an argument against the human ability to love. If loving another is (at least) to understand and empathize with that other’s feelings, the Problem of Other Minds poses a challenge to love: if we do not have access to others’ mental states then we cannot understand and empathize with others’ feelings. Therefore, we are unable to love. But this conclusion is counterintuitive, leading Montgomery to question: which of the premises is misguided? He argues that we should question the sceptical position of the Problem of Other Minds – i.e. that we don’t have access to others’ mental states. He argues that recent results in MRI and other methods of brain scanning give at least some access to the mental states of others, and on that basis we are justified in the claim that we can love others. He argues that we need not settle for an analogical understanding of what it is like to have another’s experience because we can see exemplifications of mental experiences.]


[Contains nine essays on altruism in various philosophical and religious traditions. Relevant essays are included as separate listings in this bibliography.]


[Despite narratives in which people behave in seemingly altruistic ways, there is no doctrine of altruism in Classical Judaism, because in its framework God is just and in control, and therefore all bad acts are punished and all good acts rewarded. Therefore there can be no selfless actions which go unrewarded, hence no altruism (defined as ‘unselfish, unrewarded behaviour that benefits others at a cost to oneself’ (31)). Human goodness requires no explanation in this context.]


[This is the most useful section of Research on Altruism & Love, providing an account of the love-and-science dialogue from a religious perspective and an extensively annotated bibliography of this field.]


[Sets out scope of the book and its intent to ‘rectify the neglect of a philosophical analysis of love’, bringing together explorations ‘of love’s most important assets. Most of the essays have theistic or religious concerns in mind’ (ix).]


[Oord argues that process philosophy illuminates ten questions about facets of love. Using his definition of love (‘acting intentionally, in sympathetic response to others (including God), to promote overall well-being’) he argues that the process vision will be more influential in providing answers to what he calls the love-and-science symbiosis than it has been to the science-and-religion dialogue (in the wake of Barbour’s Issues in Science and Religion [1966]) (see 20-21). The ten questions are: 1) Can humans ever truly love? 2) Is love a matter of the emotions or of the will? 3) Is love essentially altruism? 4) Is the highest or best love agape, eros, or philia? 5) How should we talk about the relations that love requires? 6) How should we interpret the phrase “God is love,” if God is an ultimate mystery and altogether different from us? 7) How can we account for genuine evil while also claiming that God exists and inspires love in creatures? 8) Is the capacity to love an emergent phenomenon? 9) Why regard love supreme if we have no reason to believe that some actions are better than others? 10) Can love make an ultimate difference?]

[In this chapter Oord offers a solution to the problem of evil. God, Oord claims, is a relational being who necessarily relates to the world. As such, God cannot withdraw or override the freedom he lovingly gives to his creatures. Rejecting the claims of what he calls the ‘gnostic-derived’ creatio ex nihilo, Oord argues that relational respect of freedom absolves God of culpability for failing to prevent evils.]


[Contains 15 essays on love from perspectives in psychology, philosophy, and theology. Each essay is included as a separate listing in this bibliography.]


[In relation to the two commandments in Leviticus to love the neighbour and the stranger, Oppenheim outlines the importance of the relation to, and love for, the other for an authentic relation to the self in the thought of Rosenzweig, Buber, and Levinas. He sets these thinkers’ views in contrast to those of rabbis who thought that it was impossible for humans to love others as much as the self, and that self-love is the basis for love of others. In the following section Oppenheim shows how this disagreement is mirrored within psychoanalysis, with Freud sharing the rabbis’ view, while W. R. D. Fairbairn and Stephen Mitchell agree with the modern Jewish philosophers. He concludes that these contrasting views on the love commandments and narcissism are valuable because they allow us to question our presuppositions regarding human nature and society.]


[Pope argues for an ordering of love which would allow for the development of morally acceptable forms love for both the self and others. He calls for a reconciliation between the following three pairs of terms, instead of seeing them as dichotomies: egoism and altruism, unilateralism and mutualism, and particularism and universalism. He discusses Michael Ruse’s distinction between strong and weak interpretations of agape, defends a sacramental rather than a dialectical theology (which views love solely as self-sacrifice, in contrast to egoism), and critiques the way that scientific data is used to show that humans are ‘wired’ to follow a rigid pattern of conduct.]

—–(2000) _More lasting unions: Christianity, the family, and society_. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.


[A useful reference work listing and commenting on experiments on various forms of altruism carried out in psychology, sociology, and evolutionary biology (e.g. whether religious belief is a motivating factor for becoming an organ donor). Includes a narrative section on examples of lives lived for others. Contains Thomas Jay’s Oord’s useful annotated bibliography ‘Religious Love at the Interface with Science’.


[Advances an analytic love-as-emotion view.]


[Khaled Roumo is a French poet and writer of Syrian origin. He takes on the noble task of combing through the Quran with the eyes of a lover. He invites readers to take a journey with a poet and an erudite hermeneutist into the heart of the Muslim sacred book. Like the great mystic and theosophist Ibn ‘Arabi, Roumo delights us with exquisite philology and shows brilliantly how the roots of different key words unveil the layers of meaning of the corpus.]


[Snow addresses the definition of empathy, how it is generated, and outlines one view of its moral significance. She highlights the difference between belief and perception, and rejects the separation of empathetic feeling from the facts about the person with whom one empathises (65). She also distinguished between sympathy (the focus of my emotion is the person with whom I’m sympathising) and empathy (the focus of my emotion is the same as that of the person with whom I’m empathising). Snow rejects Schopenhauer’s view that empathy for human others stems from our ontological oneness, stating that persons are ‘ontologically separate and distinct units’ (67). She proposes a view of empathy that includes feeling a similar emotion to the one the other is feeling because the other is feeling it. Snow shows that empathy is not necessary for morality, giving the example of high-functioning autistic people who can follow moral laws without empathising, but suggests that where possible honing our empathetic skills is a moral duty.]


[Argues that deontological political theories are utopian; that despite their optimism their goal is appropriate respect among peers; but that these theories typically have little to say about community-building, care, trust, or love (construed here as ‘the welcome of strangers’). Although political theories tend not to include welcome of strangers as a
requirement, he argues that ‘love is relevant to political morality, even as justice is’ (114) and welcome of this kind is on par with a commitment to fairness as ‘an initial condition’ for social life.]


[In the first part of the chapter Torrance discusses the use of language and the possibility of affirming that God is love, focusing on Cajetan’s classification of Aquinas’ theory of analogy. Torrance compares this with Athanasius’ concept of theologein (speaking truthfully about God, made possible by a reconciliation of our alienated thinking). Both Aquinas and Athanasius affirm the priority and initiative of God, and an ontological relationship between the divine being and the human community of the Church. This ontological relationship is grounded in the Logos. In the second part, Torrance argues that the incarnation is an historical event of the Self-giving of God, in which we can see agape as being proper both to divinity and humanity. Thus, while not denying that eros is also proper to humans, he asserts that agape can also be attributed to humans; the main distinction between these for Torrance is that agape is indifferent to merit in the beloved, while eros is not. For Torrance, agape cannot be affirmed univocally of both God and humanity, but can be affirmed analogically. Torrance concludes that to talk about God as love, one must begin from God’s agape that gives value to our alienated concepts and language.]


[In this wide-ranging introduction, Vanhoozer presents a paradigm revolution taking place within Christian theology in the twentieth century. The new paradigm is that God’s love is understood in terms of personal relations instead of being seen in terms of substantival attributes (which is the classical view). He discusses Plato and Aquinas in order to illustrate the classical view of an immutable God and place the new paradigm against its historical background. He then turns to an overview of process philosophy and theological and socio-political developments that have influenced the new paradigm. Vanhoozer also outlines the major themes within the discussion of divine love as relation or as attribute (e.g. divine passibility), mentioning key figures within these debates. This introduction also gives a brief summary of each essay in this volume.]


[Analyzes Diotima of Manitea (from Plato’s Symposium), who uses the language of divine immutability, recollection, and the forms. Diotima implies that a merely possessive love is self-defeating: mortals want to possess their beloveds forever, but this desire cannot be
fulfilled. Instead, the desire for immortality is satisfied by bringing beauty into the world in such a way that we are remembered by others after our death. Viney argues that she comes very close to the idea that perfect love involves both activity and passivity. (In the process Viney brings in several scholarly views on the Symposium, so it is a good way into the differing concepts of love one can derive from reading that text.]


[In this essay Vincelette explores different theories of love’s motivation. The egoistic suggests that we love others for our own personal gain; the disinterested views love as self-sacrificial (i.e., with no self-interest); and Vinecette’s harmonistic view regards love as incorporating both self-interest and other-directedness. On Vincelette’s view, one loves God and human others for their own sakes – but also gains from loving them. The essay includes an exploration of important historical contributions to love scholarship, and this as well as its own argument makes it useful for clarifying the history of and motivational aspect of theories of love.]


[Addresses the question of how we encounter ‘the ultimate reality we call God’, arguing that we do not do so merely through conceptual knowledge or linguistic expression, but through experience of being restored to human beings’ ‘existential end’ in personal love.]