

## On the concept of divine love

Charity is universal benevolence, and benevolence is the habit of loving. Moreover, to love is to take delight in the happiness of another, or, what amounts to the same thing, it is to regard another's happiness as one's own. Whence the difficult knot, which is also of great moment in theology, is untied, how there can be a disinterested love which is free from hope and from fear, and from regard of personal advantage; it is evident that the joy of those whose joy enters into our own delights us, for those things which delight are sought for their own sake. And just as the contemplation of beautiful objects is itself agreeable, and a painting by Raphael affects him who understands it, even if it brings no riches, in such a way that it

is kept before his eyes and regarded with delight, as a symbol of love; so when the beautiful object is at the same time also capable of happiness, his affection passes over into true love. But the divine love surpasses other loves because God can be loved with the greatest results, since nothing is at once happier than God, and nothing more beautiful or more worthy of happiness can be known than he. And since he also possesses the highest power and wisdom, his happiness does not only enter into ours (if we are wise, that is love him), but it also constitutes it. Since, moreover, wisdom ought to direct charity, there will be need of defining it also. I think, however, that the notions of man are best satisfied if we say that wisdom is nothing else than the very science of happiness.—by Gottfried Leibniz (source: Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus, 1693).



National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Raphael's painting of the Madonna and Child with the Infant Baptist, ca. 1510 ("Alba Madonna").

*scientifically*, that Christian civilization affords society the *highest rates of growth* of potential population density, *the highest rate of development of the human mind*, and *the most concentrated and effective kind of development of that mind*.

The crucial feature of Christianity, in this account, is something which is summed up by an emphasis applied to the Christian Credo, by St. Augustine: what is called in Latin the *Filioque*, that Christ is both the Son of God, and God, such that the Holy Spirit flows from Him, as from the Godhead.

What this signifies, without going through the whole is-

sue, is that through this view of Christ, and through this intermediating role of Christ, the individual human being is able to recognize, efficiently, his or her identity as *imago viva Dei*: as a living being in the image of a living God—not some king, not some arbitrary monarch, but the Creator as the Creator, not some petty tyrant like Zeus, spitting from some mountaintop, playing tricks upon men, but a true loving Creator, in whose image we are.

In what sense are we in God's image?

We are in God's image, by virtue of creative reason, and nothing but creative reason. We are in God's image in terms