
**THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE GOD-WORLD
RELATIONSHIP**

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The love of God is central to God's relationship to the world. This dissertation addresses the conflict of interpretation between the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models regarding divine love in the context of the God-world relationship by applying a canonical methodology. Chapter 1 introduces the background, purpose, problem, scope, and plan of study, as well as the final-form canonical theological method employed in the investigation. Chapter 2 briefly surveys the historical theology of love, tracing the central conceptions of divine love and the God-world relationship by selected, highly influential thinkers. Chapter 3 presents and analyzes the irreconcilable interpretations of divine love in relation to the world, and the ontologies that ground them, in the transcendent-voluntarist and immanent-experientialist models. In the former model, divine love is a unilateral, unmotivated, willed benevolence, while in the latter model divine love is essentially relational, emotional, and primarily passive. Subsequently, a sample of recent reactions to both models demonstrates the current dissatisfaction regarding the conflict of interpretations, indicating the potential for paradigm change in the theological model of interpreting God's love to the world.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 shift to the investigation of a canonical and systematic model which addresses the issues raised by the conflict of interpretations through the identification and explanation of five primary aspects of God's love in relation to the world derived from inductive examination of the canon: the volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional, and multilaterally relational aspects. Chapters 4 and 5 present the data from a canonical investigation of the data regarding divine love in the OT and NT, respectively. The material from the biblical investigation of divine love is utilized to construct a model of divine love that addresses the conflict of interpretations seen in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 summarizes and explains the broad outline of a canonical and systematic model of divine love in relation to the world, with implications for divine ontology and the nature of God's relationship to the world. The dissertation concludes by summarizing the findings and conclusions of the study and making some recommendations for further study.