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Salesian Images of Love in Creation:
Divine Kenosis in the Spirituality of Francis de Sales
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Abstract

The Doctor of Love, Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622), has much to contribute to any discussion about love. Author of the *Treatise on the Love of God*, the gentleman saint considers love to be the central quest of human life. The collaborative and creative relationship of love between God and humanity is a cyclic interplay of benevolence and complacency (joyful satisfaction), the two movements of love at the heart of Salesian spirituality. Created in the image of God, humanity has been given love, which is highly creative in its own right. Love, as creative, has been associated with kenosis, which in turn raises new questions with regard to the classical notions of divine immutability, divine knowledge, and divine power. In concert with some kenotic theological views, many of de Sales' images for this relational dynamic of love are considered. In particular, the images of parental, altruistic love demonstrate the relevance that the bishop-saint's spiritual writings have within contemporary discussions. His wealth of imagery provides a unique lens through which to examine love in creation. A humanist aware of the realities of ordinary living, de Sales' spirit is practical and continues to offer insight as human knowledge about the cosmos expands.

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Kenosis, from the Greek for “emptying,” has primarily referred to the “self-abasement that the second person of the Trinity underwent in the incarnation” (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 131). The key scriptural reference for such self-limitation is the hymn from Paul’s letter to the Philippians whereby the Son of God “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.” Thus, God has set aside his omnipotence in order to be human; and, as human, has “humbled himself” and become “obedient to the point of death” (Phil. 2:7-8, New Revised Standard Version). In his death on the cross, the incarnate Son died appallingly, thus expressing solidarity with humanity in their pain and suffering (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 253). This notion of self-humiliation, “the becoming-human of Christ” (Moltmann, 2001, p. 138), has had an influence on various theologians who wrestle with the classical notions of divine immutability, divine knowledge, and divine power.

Examination of these divine attributes in the past century has led kenotic thought to re-examine aspects of God’s relationship to creation. Among those who have done so is W. H. Vanstone, whose work *Love’s Endeavor, Love’s Expense* is the springboard from which *The Work of Love*, a recent collection of essays on kenosis in creation, has been published. Vanstone’s thesis (1977) is that since authentic love is limitless, precarious, and vulnerable, then creation, a labor of love, reflects these divine aspects, which are only known via the activity of God (pp. 53, 58-68). In addition, when reciprocated or dismissed, authentic love can respectively result in triumph or tragedy. From such a premise as Vanstone’s, however, the classical notions that God is immutable, omniscient, and omnipotent have been placed under scrutiny.

Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622), Bishop of Geneva, considers love to be the central quest of the human life: “in the Salesian way everything is out of love, in love and for love” (Lajeunie, 1964/1986-1987, Vol. 2, p. 571). Because the saint’s preaching, pastoral ministry, and spiritual writings are considered true expressions of Catholic Church doctrine, Pope Pius IX (1877/2002) named the bishop a Doctor of the Church in 1877. Moreover, because of the priority de Sales places on love in his teachings, he is given the title “Doctor of Love”; for, Pope John Paul II (2002) has recently written:

Doctor of Divine Love, Francis de Sales...developed a demanding yet serene spirituality founded on love, for to love God “is the supreme happiness of the soul in this life and in eternity” (Letter to Mother Marie-Jacqueline Favre, 10 March 1612, *Oeuvres complètes*, XV, p. 180). (No. 3)

Hence, consideration of the bishop-saint’s understanding of love, as expressed through his spirituality, is appropriate within any discussion about love.

Created in the image of God, humanity has been given love, which can be fully realized when we love as God loves (Fiorelli, 1984, p. 496). As lover, God engraves in the human being the evangelical law to love God and neighbor by the very fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God (Pocetto, 1969, p. 47). The human person continues the creative act by loving others: we recognize in them the image and likeness of God and aid the one loved to become more and more in the image of God. This anthropology is found in Francis de Sales’ sermon on October 4, 1614:

“Man has been created to the resemblance of God; therefore, love of the neighbor leads us to love in him the resemblance and image of God, that is to say (that we are to help) to render this resemblance more and more perfect.” (as cited in Fiorelli, 1984, pp. 501-502)

Given in the act of creation, love in its own right is highly creative.

The divine-human relationship, therefore, possesses a collaborative creativity in its love: “by Charity [love]...we become deiform, participating in a certain way in the divine nature” (Paul VI, 1967, p. 8). With this as a starting point, the goal of this paper is to investigate whether or not the dynamic view Francis de Sales has about love between God and humanity is in any way compatible with some views offered in kenotic theology, specifically the kenosis of divine omnipotence. While considerations of divine immutability and omniscience have been considered, the aim of this discussion is to consider aspects of the Doctor of Love’s vision that broaden and develop responses that contemporary theologians have explored with regard to divine omnipotence. The bishop-saint’s wealth of imagery provides a unique lens through which to examine love in creation.

Salesian Movements of Love

According to de Sales, the object of love is to unite the lover with the loved. Love of God, which craves a spiritual union with the divine, is the center of human life (Cherukat, 1993, p. xii). This relationship of love between the human and the divine is given considerable discussion and detail in the saint’s *Treatise on the Love of God*. Considered to be perfect love, “the union of hearts” is symbolized by the kiss dramatized in the Song of Songs. This union between God and humanity occurs through a reciprocal process of love. Book Five of the *Treatise* describes the two kinds of love exercised in this mutual love relationship between God and the human person: love of complacency and love of benevolence.

De Sales (1616/1963) describes love as “the heart’s movement and outward flow when turned towards the good” (Vol. 1, p. 233). The love of complacency, or joyful satisfaction,¹ is an act by which we recognize God’s goodness and find joy in it: “we spiritually eat and drink the

perfection of the divinity, for we make them our own and draw them into our hearts” (Vol. 1, p. 234). This complacency allows us to possess the divine and at the same time be possessed by God: “we draw his good into our hearts, and... we are drawn to him” (Power, 1966, p. 31).

Through this union achieved by complacency, there is a real sharing in the goodness of God. Although we share and take joy in this goodness, it is still *God’s* goodness. Francis continues his discussion by using the analogy of indulging in a feast: “We fill ourselves, but we always wish to eat still more; yet even as we eat, we feel ourselves satisfied” (Vol. 1, pp. 240-241). Thus, we desire and are fulfilled; we are fulfilled but still desire. There is no end to our complacent love.

Whereas the love of complacency is more passively receptive, the love of benevolence is actively giving (Power, 1966, 31). When discussing different loves at the beginning of the *Treatise*, de Sales (1616/1963) gives the following explanation:

If the one for whom we wish the good already has and possesses it, then we wish it to him by the pleasure and contentment we have in seeing him possessed of it. From this springs the love of complacency. This is simply an act of the will by which it is joined and united to another’s pleasure, contentment, and good. In case the one for whom we wish the good has not yet obtained it, we wish it for him. Hence such love is termed love of desire. (Vol. 1, p. 88)

Hence, there is a shift from love of complacency to the love of benevolence, which is the “love of desire” in the above passage. By benevolent love, we desire to give something new to God, whether by making “our complacency in his goodness more and more and always more great,” or by simply offering God praise and honor (Vol. 1, pp. 250, 253).

The loves of complacency and benevolence are acts of love that can be understood by considering their direction or tendency. Moreover, there is a cyclic continuity or flow between

the two loves. Our love of benevolence returns to the love of complacency; and, our complacency leads to the active praise of God. Likewise, the love God has for humanity follows a similar process and flow.

In the love God shows us he always begins with benevolence, since he wills and makes whatever good there is in us and then takes complacency in that good. ... He first created the universe for man and man in the universe, and gave to each thing such measure of goodness as was suitable to it. All this was done out of pure benevolence. Then he approved of "all that he had made," for he found that "all was good, and he rested," by complacency "in his work" [Gen 1:31; 2:2]. (de Sales, 1616/1963, Vol. 1, pp. 248-249)

Whereas we begin with complacency in supreme goodness and continue to benevolence, God's creative activity is an act of benevolence that moves to a complacency in the created universe. So, not only are these loves reciprocal but also complementary between the partners in love. De Sales' recognition of creation as a benevolent act of God appears to be in concert with Vanstone's understanding of creation being an act of love.

The reciprocity evident in this cyclic love is illustrated by various allegories in de Sales' *Treatise* (1616/1963), including the singing of nightingales, St. Francis of Assisi's singing of the "Canticle of the Sun" and the spouse's praising in the Song of Songs (Vol. 1, pp. 254-255, 257). More naturalistically, the saint alludes to the bodily functions of breathing and of the heart beating when demonstrating this reciprocal connection between complacency and benevolence.

Complacency draws God's delights into her heart, and her heart so ardently fills itself with them that it is completely overcome. But the love of benevolence causes our heart to go out of itself and to breathe itself forth in perfumed vapors of delight, that is, in every kind of holy praise. (Vol. 1, p. 257)

Man's heart is never so unquiet as when the movement whereby it constantly opens and closes is interfered with; it is never so tranquil as when its movements are left free. Its tranquility is in its movement. It is the same with the love of... all... men. Such love has its repose in the continual movement of complacency by which it draws God into itself, as if by shutting itself up, and of benevolence whereby it opens out and casts itself wholly upon God. (Vol. 1, p. 266)

In both of these passages, we concretely see the opposite directions these two loves move. Love of complacency breathes in, draws in, contracts; love of benevolence breathes out, casts out, expands (Power, 1966, pp. 30-33, 38).

Complacency and Benevolence vs. Agape and Eros

In his essay "Creation Out of Love," Paul S. Fiddes (2001) provides a bold interpretation of the kenotic love of God. In so doing, the theologian considers two types of love: *agape* and *eros*, or "gift-love" and "need-love" respectively. Recognizing both in the loving act of creation, he defines these terms for his discussion.

Eros is self-affirming and self-realizing love, in which an object of love brings satisfaction to a person's own being; by contrast, *agape* is defined as a totally self-spending love, in which someone sacrifices herself for another without any benefit to herself. (p. 171)

He recognizes clearly that the reason for creation is love; however, he also suggests "a God who creates 'out of love' has needs," particularly a "response from some kind of created world" (pp. 168-169).

Fiddes outlines need-love within love relationship. He states that "the creator desires mutual relations" with created beings because "God desires what is their greatest good, which is

for them to love and enjoy God.” Once the mutuality of this relationship is established, the theologian maintains, “mutuality includes allowing others to satisfy our needs” (p. 175). With regard to freedom, proposing that the God of love needs a response from created, free beings admittedly presents a problem. One solution Fiddes (1988) offers is taken from the perspective of the divine will: “God is free to be what he chooses to be” (p. 67). God freely chooses to be in need; and, in particular, God needs the world. The humility of God is shown through the divine choice of us as partners in love (Fiddes, 2001, p. 182). For this reason, creation out of love, particularly need-love, is an act of kenosis.

Is there any relation between the Salesian loves of benevolence and complacency and Fiddes’ gift-love and need-love, respectively? If *agape* is self-giving love, then certainly de Sales (1616/1963) agrees with the outpouring of God’s love to the universe in creation: “It is true, we have received all things from God, and especially the supernatural blessings of holy love” (Vol. 1, p. 215). As seen in our discussion above, the goodness received by creation is an act of benevolence, only after which God takes complacency in that good (Vol. 1, pp. 248-249). So, can we confidently establish a correspondence between Fiddes’ gift-love and de Sales’ benevolent love? It appears so. The self-giving character of *agape* is supported elsewhere in the *Treatise*: “Since he is the supreme good, he takes pleasure in communicating himself by his love, although from it no benefit whatsoever can accrue from it” (Vol. 2, p. 175).

Once the goodness has been shared through benevolence, God loves through complacency, as if stepping back and admiring the goodness found in the created universe. Recall that while God is complacent, we love benevolently; therefore, in his complacency, God awaits a response, which Fiddes would consider a need. A desire for response is clear in the bishop’s writing. He describes how God “is right to have a most perfect desire for our whole

heart” (de Sales, 1616/1963, Vol. 2, p. 175) thereby being jealous of our love for the divine.

Considering that de Sales equates desire with love of benevolence, God’s complacency is brief.

Prior to this discussion of God’s jealousy in Book Ten, the saint describes in Book Eight how God desires us to conform to his signified will.

Because [the] signified will of God proceeds by way of desire and not by way of absolute will, we can either follow it by obedience or resist it by disobedience. In this regard God makes three acts of will: he wills that we should be able to resist; he desires that we should not resist; and yet he allows us to resist if we so will. (Vol. 2, p. 62)

These “three acts of the will” are benevolent actions: creating free will in humanity, desiring that we obey, and providing freedom inherent in human nature.

A noticeable shift from love of benevolence to love of complacency and vice versa is illustrated when de Sales describes the difference between desire and permission. This is evident if we identify permission and desire with God’s complacent love and benevolent love, respectively.

Permission is an act of will that is of itself barren, sterile, and without fruit. It is as it were a passive action that does nothing but merely permits a thing to be done. On the contrary, desire is an active, fruitful, fertile action that excites, invites, and urges.

Therefore, in his desire that we should follow his signified will, God solicits, exhorts, incites, assists, and rescues us, whereas in permitting us to resist he simply lets us do what we wish to do according to our free choice but contrary to his desire and intention.

(Vol. 2, p. 62)

God does not remain in complacency very long. This is due to the fact that, for de Sales, the movement of love is cyclic. Lovingly, God permits the human person to make a decision to

respond, to be obedient or not. However, God is so in love with us that he returns to acts of benevolence, evident through inspirations and persuasive urgings. God is assiduously trying to get us to obey. In line with Fiddes' notion that God needs a response, de Sales seems to agree; however, self-giving love, nevertheless, overflows as illustrated by God's active pursuit of our response, of our love of conformity.

Fiddes' use of need-love in the act of creation is his primary means of showing the kenosis present in loving creation. A love-filled kenosis is illustrated in de Sales' work (1616/1963) in the following passage.

Grace has the power not to overpower but to entice the heart. It has a *holy violence* [italics added], not to violate our liberty but to make it full of love. It acts strongly, yet so sweetly that our will is not crushed beneath so powerful an action. It presses us but it does not oppress our freedom. The result is that under the very action of its power we can consent to its movements or resist them as we please. (Vol. 1, p. 133)

This "holy violence" sounds paradoxical, yet upon further reflection, the kenosis through love is evident. Despite the magnitude of power available, God acts gently and ultimately leaves to humanity the decision to respond. Movement from benevolence to complacency, back to benevolence is a rapid cycle for God in the pursuit of humanity's love. If we accept Fiddes' suggestions about *agape* and *eros*, then Salesian love's cycle of movement supports it.

Kenosis of Omnipotence

The selflessness of love reflects vulnerability, a giving of power to the beloved. In Vanstone's words (1977): "Where love is authentic, the lover gives to the object of his love a certain power over himself – a power which would not otherwise be there" (p. 51). The beloved is free to frustrate or complete the love received, thus making the lover angry or loved in

returned, respectively. Hence, the tragedy or triumph of love is expressed. Likewise, in creation, God awaits a response from his creation: “upon the response of the creation the love of God depends for its triumph or its tragedy” (p. 67). Hence, a result of the total self-emptying of God in creation by authentic love is a surrender of fullness: kenosis creates in God the emptiness of need. God, “totally expended, without residue and without reserve,” depends upon the response that his love receives. Although this response in no way destroys or diminishes God, it does mark the love as triumphant or tragic (pp. 69-70).

There is a risk involved if God enters such an authentic love relationship, one that requires patience while waiting for a response from the beloved. According to Fiddes (2001), this love is risky because it “is offered without any calculation as to gains that might be achieved, and with the humility of knowing that... [it] might be rejected”; such divine love risks everything because a total loss is one possible outcome (pp. 176, 187). God is vulnerable to pain, particularly to “the drifting of creation away from the divine purpose, a resisting of the divine persuasion” (p. 189). Representing a real risk, such pain and suffering “befall” God. Fiddes chooses the word “befall” to clearly signify “that God experiences suffering in relation to the world in a way that is not entirely under divine control”; hence a real kenosis of omnipotence is experienced (p. 187).

Of the divine characteristics that kenotic theology has challenged, omnipotence (and its kenotic alternative) offers a good resonance with Salesian spirituality. For the saint, humanity is directed toward union with God’s will through love. However, “love is the crook by which God draws us... God allures, attracts and seduces; he will not force” (Fiorelli, 1984, p. 501). The Salesian image of God is ultimately not one of coercion, but of persuasion.

Beyond doubt, ...we are drawn to God not by iron chains, like bulls and buffalos, but by means of allurements, sweet attractions, and holy inspirations. In short, these are the cords of Adam and of humanity, that is, bands that are proportionate and fitted to the human heart to which liberty is natural. The band proper to the human will is sensuality and pleasure. ...even as he teaches us he gives us delight and does not impose a band of necessity upon us. He injects spiritual delights and pleasures into our hearts. (de Sales, 1616/1963, Vol. 1, pp. 132-133)

Interestingly, we see in this passage from the *Treatise* that necessity is not an absolute in God's interaction with the human person. Although de Sales is strictly speaking in terms of the divine-human relationship, we may draw support for the reality of contingency in the natural world.

In his discussion of divine providence, Francis de Sales (1616/1963) asserts, "God does not need to perform many acts" (Vol. 1, p. 107). Hence, the saint offers his unique term "universe," by which is described the diversity united in the single act of creation (Vol. 1, pp. 104-106). Based on our limited, human ability to understand God, he continues, "God has had eternal and most perfect knowledge of the art of making the world for his own glory" (Vol. 1, p. 108). This is his understanding of God's providence, which "reaches all things, reigns over all things, and reduces all things to his glory" (Vol. 1, p. 109). Natural providence works through inspirations,

those interior attractions, motions, acts of self-reproach and remorse, lights and conceptions that God works in us...in order to awaken, stimulate, urge, and attract us to holy virtues, heavenly love, and good resolutions... (de Sales, 1609/1966, p. 109)

Through his allegory of the apode birds, de Sales (1616/1963) illustrates how divine inspirations assist one to unite with God in love.

There are certain birds, ...which Aristotle has called apodes, for the reason that they have extremely short legs and feet lacking strength... By themselves they can never take flight again, since lacking use of their legs and feet they have no way to propel and launch themselves back into the air. Hence they remain there motionless and perish unless a wind favorable to their weakness sends its gusts over the surface of the ground, catches hold of them, and lifts them up just as it does with many things. Then, if they put their wings in time with this thrust... which the wind gives them, that same wind likewise continues to help them along and lifts them gradually into flight. (Vol. 1, p. 124)

The saint continues later in the *Treatise*:

We cannot prevent his inspiration from impelling us and consequently from setting us in motion. However, if in the same measure as it pushes us forward we push against it so as not to let ourselves go with its movements, then we resist. So also when the wind has seized our apode birds and raised them aloft, it will not carry them very far unless they spread their wings and co-operate... On the contrary, if they are allured by some green growth they see beneath them... and instead of responding to the wind keep their wings folded... then they actually received the motion of the wind but to no purpose since they did not avail themselves of it. (Vol. 1, pp. 134-135)

These inspirations are a means persuasively offered by God. Yet, it is up to God's creatures to act: "Without any action of ours, they cause us to feel them; without our co-operation, they do not make us give consent to them" (Vol. 1, p. 135). Perhaps these inspirations are the "strange attractor" of the divine-human love story (Polkinghorne, 2001, p. 99; for complete discussion of strange attractor, see Gleick, 1987, pp. 133-153, and Wildman & Russell, 1997, pp. 49-90).

The fact that divine inspirations are given without our asking and may be ignored or rejected is portrayed in a similar way when de Sales (1616/1963) describes the process of being awakened each morning:

He awakens us when we are asleep, and as a result we find that we are awake before we have thought of it. Still, it is in our power either to rise or not to rise, and although we have been awakened without our own help, he will not raise us up without our co-operation. Not to get up but to go to sleep again is to resist this call, since we are called solely that we may get up. We cannot prevent his inspiration from impelling us and consequently from setting us in motion. However, if in the same measure as it pushes us forward we push against it so as not to let ourselves go with its movement, then we resist. (Vol. 1, p. 134)

Therefore, the Savoyard concurs with Vanstone: the dichotomy of triumph and tragedy is expressed in the relationship of love.

Like the bishop-saint, Fiddes (2001) suggests a dynamic model that “combines the attractiveness of love with the movement of persuasion; the triune God moves all things precisely by being in movement, and attracting them into the movement of the divine dance” (p. 186). Within this dance between the Creator and the created, the influence of God cannot be distilled from this dynamism; it is “a constant and hidden pattern-inducing influence” (p. 187; for discussion about top-down causality, see Peacocke, 1997, pp. 263-287; Polkinghorne, 1998, pp. 62-64; and Edwards, 1997, pp. 167-175).

De Sales’ imagery also corresponds with that of Vanstone. The love a parent has for a child is an image Vanstone (1977) offers to demonstrate his understanding of authentic love. In

particular, since the triumph or tragedy of love rests upon the action of the child (who responds or refuses), this kenosis of omnipotence is evident in parental love.

In the care of children a parent is peculiarly aware that each step of love is a step of risk; and that each step taken generates the need for another and equally precarious step. ... A risk is taken when a child is allowed to ride his bicycle on the road: when he returns in pride and confidence, the gain has justified the risk. ... A happy family life is neither a static situation nor a smooth and direct progression: it is an angular progress, the endless improvisation of love to correct that which it has itself created. (pp. 46-47)

Here, the lack of a predictable plan in the parent-child relationship shows how vulnerable and precarious it is. So, too, is the love God has for his creation, as supported by similar imagery discussed by Sally McFague (1997). For her, the image of God as parent, particularly as mother who loves agapically, fits naturally into the discussion of kenosis in creation. “Parental love is the most powerful and intimate experience we have of giving love whose return is not calculated (though a return is appreciated): it is the gift of *life as such* to others” (p. 255).

Francis de Sales’ own imagery for God is profoundly maternal in the *Treatise* (Buckley, 1989, p. 39). Drawing upon the imagery in Isaiah, the saint writes in his letters of spiritual direction:

Keep your courage high, lifted up in that eternal Providence who has called you by your name, and carries you imprinted on his fatherly breast in such a motherly way. (de Sales & de Chantal, trans. 1988, p. 172)

In describing the human person’s difficulty when living between the two wills of God (the signified will of God and the will of God’s good pleasure), de Sales (1616/1963) uses the image of the child Jesus walking with Mary.

Although she sometimes permitted him to walk with her on his own feet while she held him by the hand, this was not because she did not prefer to have him cling to her neck and on her breast, but to teach him how to place his steps and to walk alone. We, ...as little children of our heavenly Father, can walk with him in two ways. In the first way, we walk with the steps of our own will, ...holding always with the hand of our obedience the hand of his divine intention and following wherever it leads us. ... But we can also walk with our Lord without having any will of our own. We simply let ourselves be carried by his divine good pleasure, just as a little child is carried in its mother's arms...

(Vol. 2, pp. 131-132)

As with Vanstone, there is a risk involved when humans are free to walk on their own. Yet, for de Sales (1609/1966), God is always close, holding our hand, as illustrated in the following passage.

Imitate little children who with one hand hold fast to their father while with the other they gather strawberries or blackberries from the hedges. So too if you gather and handle the goods of this world with one hand, you must always hold fast with the other to your heavenly Father's hand... (pp. 152-153)

De Sales (1616/1963) also dwells upon the image of an infant nursing at its mother's breast to show God's benevolent, self-giving love. At the same time, however, this image portrays well our complacent love: in the arms of the maternal God, we rest drinking in divine goodness. In the *Treatise*, Jesus is incorporated into this metaphor.

Thus within Christ's maternal breast his divine heart foresaw, disposed, merited, and obtained all our benefits, not only in general for all men but for each one in particular. His breasts of sweetness prepared for us that milk which is his movements, his

attractions, his inspirations, and the dear delights by which he draws, leads, and nourishes our hearts into eternal life. (Vol. 2, p. 280)

Although we may certainly refuse the inspirations given by God's benevolent love, they are constantly present to prod us on as God awaits our response. We may let go, resulting in tragedy; or, we may conform to his will to unite with us in love. Thus, we see some congruence between de Sales' imagery for the love relationship between God and humanity and that in Vanstone's investigation of authentic love, God's kenosis in creation.

Conclusion

The author of an entire tome about the love of God, Francis de Sales provides a practical spirituality that broadens the study of kenotic love. The words of Pope Paul VI (1967) testify to how valuable a resource the saint is:

We have no doubt that the truth which he teaches when studied as it ought to be will conquer all. ... He renders his contribution by the example of his life, by the wealth of his true and sound doctrine, by the fact that he has opened and strengthened the spiritual ways of Christian perfection for all states and conditions in life. We propose that these three things be imitated, embraced, and followed. (pp. 5-6)

The Doctor of Love understands the relationship of love between God and humanity as a dynamic and never-ending process – a cyclic interplay of benevolence and complacence. A Christian humanist, the Bishop of Geneva was aware of the realities of ordinary, daily life. Therefore, his insights about personal union with God through love are valuable contributions to the dialogue about the created universe and kenosis. His exposition, with its fruitful imagery and terminology, resonates much with contemporary kenotic theologies of love.

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Footnote

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