



Love in Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

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According to Catherine of Siena, the love between God and the human soul progresses through three stages of maturation. The first and least perfect level of love is the love of the servant. In this stage, the human soul loves and serves God because of the benefits the soul receives from this love and service: "Their love is imperfect, because they serve me [God] for their own profit or for the delight and the pleasure they find in me" (*Dialogue* 60). When God withholds certain graces or gifts, those who practice servant love quickly abandon their affection since their love demands tangible compensation. The second type of love is the love of friendship. The person in this stage of love recognizes a certain reciprocity between God and the soul in a commitment of mutual love. The third stage of love is that of filial love. Theocentric, this love focuses solely on affection for the divine giver of gifts and no longer focuses on the gifts themselves. "Her love is no longer mercenary (...). So the soul, when she has reached the third stage of perfect love, when she receives my gifts and graces does not look only at the gift but with her mind's eye looks at the affectionate charity of me [God], the Giver" (*Dialogue* 72). This disinterested love of God leads the human soul to a mature disciple's life of praise and service.

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