

Michelangelo, The Creation of Adam, Sistine Chapel ceiling, Rome, ca. 1510

“In our image, after our likeness”

Perichoretic Reciprocity in Christian Communities

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Perichoretic Reciprocity

- The New Testament “one anothers”
 - 100-** NT uses of the pronoun ἀλλήλων (allelon)
 - 59-** commands which use the pronoun
 - 40-** different Christian duties!
- *Seems like a lot of work, eh?*
 - *Sanctification by checklist*
 - *Rote obedience: the danger of drudgery*
 - *Is that all there is to it?*



Perichoretic Reciprocity

- How is *Christian* reciprocity different from common *human* reciprocity?
 - *Clubs* with a common hobby
 - *Fans* with a common sports team or pop star
 - *Politics* with a common socio-economic agenda
 - *Cultures* with common customs and *mores*
- ***Are we just another club, or are we different?***



Perichoretic Reciprocity

*Come on people now,
Smile on your brother,
Everybody get together
And try to **love one another,**
Right now!*

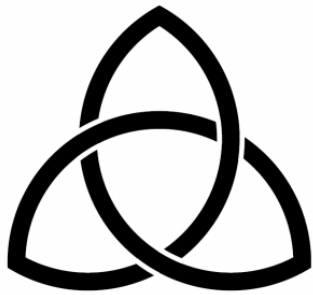
-Dino Valenti (Chester Powers), 1967





Perichoretic Reciprocity

- The distinct roots of *Christian* reciprocity
 - *Creation* in the image of God
 - *Redemption* in Christ as image renewal
 - *Incarnation* as model or example of godliness
 - *Infusion* of the Holy Spirit
 - *Participation* in the means of grace
 - word and sacrament sustain us in mission



Perichoretic Reciprocity

- **Orthodox trinitarian reciprocity**
 - **Nicea: 3 persons sharing attributes of deity (325 CE)**
 - *Ontological* trinity
 - **Father, Son, and Spirit *exist* as distinct persons who share the same essence or nature**
 - **John of Damascus: 3 persons in reciprocal relationship (ca 750 CE)**
 - *Social* trinity
 - **Father, Son, and Spirit *function* as one God in creation and redemption.**



Perichoretic Reciprocity

- A theology of *Christian* reciprocity
 - Reciprocity is a **communicable attribute** of God.
 - The social trinity perfectly models the reciprocal relationships that Christians are to maintain with one another, albeit in an imperfect, finite, limited manner.
 - As imagers of God, redeemed in Christ and endowed with the Spirit, our reciprocity is a finite transcription of trinitarian reciprocity. It's part of being a **godly** person
 - It's not just that we are to relate to one another as Jesus related to us, it's that **we are to relate to one another the way the Father, Son, and Spirit relate to one another.**
 - For example . . .



Johannine Perichoretic Reciprocity

- **John 10:14-15—*Epistemological perichoresis***
*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—**just as the Father knows me and I know the Father**—and I lay down my life for the sheep.*
- *Knowing Jesus the way Jesus knows the Father and the Father knows Jesus involves **sacrificial action** for one another (John 21).*



Johannine Perichoretic Reciprocity

- John 15:9-10, 12—*Ethical perichoresis*

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

*Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, **just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. . . My command is this: love one another as I have loved you.***

- *Jesus loved us as the Father loved him. As Jesus lovingly obeyed the Father, so we lovingly obey him by loving one another.*



Johannine Perichoretic Reciprocity

- **John 17:20-23—*Missional Perichoresis***
 - *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me that they may be one as we are one. . . I in them and you in me**—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and **have loved them even as you have loved me.***
- **Christian unity that mimics trinitarian unity demonstrates the love command and is the *ultimate apologetic.***



Johannine Perichoretic Reciprocity

- **1 John 1:5-7—*Sanctifying Perichoresis***
 - *God is light; in him is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if **we** walk in the light as **he** is in the light, **we have fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus his Son, purifies us from all sin.*
- **Reciprocal union with God is the dynamic of *personal* holiness, leading to holiness in Christian *interpersonal* relationships.**



Perichoretic Reciprocity

- We're not here today because of *shared human interests* as a religious club with by-laws enjoining mutual interests and obligations.
- We're here today because of a *shared divine investment* in us as a community whose mutual interests and obligations mirror those of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- As *objects* of God's grace, we are empowered to become *instruments* of God's grace in perichoretic reciprocity.