

The circle of love

Patristic reading

If we love God, the more we approach Him through love for Him, the more we are united to our neighbour through love

Suppose that there is a circle on the earth, as if drawn by a compass. The centre is exactly the middle of the circle. Take care to understand what I mean. Let us suppose that this circle is the world and God is the centre. The straight lines drawn from the circumference to the centre are the lives of men. As far as the saints, desiring to approach God, move inward, they become near God and near each other and as far as they approach God, they approach each other. As far as they approach each other, they approach God. You should understand separation in the same way. When they move away from God and follow external things, it is evident that as far as they move away and become distant from God, they distance themselves from each other and as they distance themselves from each other, they distance themselves from God.

This is the very nature of love. In as far as we are outside and do not love God, each one of us is also distanced from his neighbour, but if we love God, the more we approach Him through love for Him, the more we are united to our neighbour through love, and as much as we are united to our neighbour, we are united to God.

Dorotheos of Gaza, *Practical Teaching on the Christian Life* VI,78