

You Cannot Love God And Hate Your Neighbour: The Virtue of Charity, A Reflection of God's Love.



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Abstract

Love is a gift from God. It is not exactly that we love God; on the contrary, it is God who loves us. God loves us that He sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Since God loves us so much; we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is perfected in us. Fraternal love is the participation in God's love for us in Christ. We express this love in our relationship with others. Those who are blessed with the living presence of the father and the son through the Holy Spirit love others with the same divine love. This paper will look into the definition of Virtue, the meaning of Charity and identify who is your Neighbour. It will also deal on the notion of Charity, the love of oneself, as a unity between the love of God and Neighbour. The paper recommends that we should love our neighbours and avoid hate, since hate has the capacity to ruin our relationship with God.

Keywords: Love, Hate, Neighbour, Virtue, Charity

Introduction

It is a very well-known fact that God is Love and through an act of love He created man, we are meant to reciprocate the love to our neighbor. St. John expresses this very clearly in his first letter, when he writes, anyone who says I love God and hates his brother is a liar. Since whoever does not love his Brother whom he can see cannot love God whom he has not seen (1Jn4:20). Commenting on the above statement, Arndt Johann (1979) says:

The love of God cannot dwell with the Hatred of man or in a hateful heart. Again, if you do not practice mercy with your brother whom you see and who needs your mercy, how are you to love God who does not need it?

Here we have one of the most central and most elementary facts of the Christian claim to faith namely that one cannot claim to love God and hate those around him; whoever loves God must love his brother.

The ten commandments have been summarized in love of God and neighbor. So a love of God that is not reflected in the love of neighbor has no foundation. According to Peschke, K.H (1999): "Love of God necessarily includes love of neighbor and of God's creation and hence must prove itself in charitable action".

So, it is not enough to say, 'I love God' it has to be proved by the love of those around. To love one's neighbor means to love God. Just as the Gospel put it: "in truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me. (Mtt. 25:40). The love of God and the love of neighbor are one thing and must not be divided. The true divine love cannot be better noted or proven than in love of neighbor". We can only demonstrate our love of God in our fellow being.

Charity portrays God's love in its concreteness. It springs from love of God and His kindness. It is certain that charity is love and also clear that not all love is charity. This calls to mind the proverbial saying, "you can give without loving but cannot love without giving". In the words of St. Paul's teaching what counts for those who live in Christ Jesus is faith working through love, this faith and love must be seen in action (Gal5:6)

Definition of Virtue

According to St. Thomas Aquinas (1947): "Man attains his ultimate end through good Actions, that is those actions that are in conformity with law and his conscience. These good actions can be helped by good habits called virtues."

Virtue means moral excellence, uprightness, goodness strength, vigour courage, worth.

The Catechism of Catholic Church defines virtue as: "A habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself"

It is whatever that is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and gracious. It is "a habit that is good and productive of good."

Further virtue can be seen as "a habitual, well established readiness or disposition of man's power directing them to some specific goodness of act." For Pazhayampalil (1997); it is "a habitual readiness to do good." while for Karl H. Peschke (1999), it is "a habit that gives both the inclination and power to do readily, what is morally good."

The idea of virtue comes from an understanding of human being as having a tremendous capacity both for good and for evil. It is through virtues that one grows in the promise of life, and through the vices that one self-destructs.

In a Christian Scheme of the moral and spiritual life, virtues make one godly, and vices their opposite, make one wicked. In a further clarification, Wadell, P. J (1995) defines virtue as: "A characteristic way of behavior which makes both actions and persons good and which also enables one to fulfill the purpose of life."

It is a quality that accrues to a person through repeated activity. Virtues are possessed not externally but internally, for they "represent how a person has been characterized by his or her most consistent behavior." They are qualities that change a person. Thomas Aquinas an outstanding proponent of the ethics of virtue in the catholic moral tradition, speaks of virtue as bringing about a "modification of a subject"

The Meaning of Charity

According to St. Thomas Aquinas (1947), Charity could be defined as: "A supernatural virtue infused with sanctifying grace, by which we love God and above all as greatest good and for His own sake, and our self and our neighbor for the love of God."

The word Charity comes from the Greek word 'Charis' which means 'grace' (favour) or from the Latin word "Carum which means 'dear' (of great value) Both mean the same thing. Grace/ favour is dear, that is, of great value. When considered from this angle, charity is described by Broderick, R. C (1975) as: "The foremost of all Christian virtue, Including the theological virtues, to which it belongs Because charity is the primary, essential effect of sanctifying grace, the terms grace and charity are used interchangeably."

Charity means participation in the divine nature. It is the love that the father has given us that we should be called children of God and that is what we are (1Jn 3:1) In the words of Enda McDonagh (1966), charity is the “presence of God in Love to the human person, asking for love in response”

In the sacred scripture, words from the Hebrew root verb *ahéb* are rendered to mean first, God's love for men; second, men's love for God; and third the love between men.

Such love involving a special voice as in the Latin ‘*dilecto*’ is called ‘*agape*’, a word adopted by New Testament and later church writers to signify the love of God for Christ (Jn. 2:5) and for one another (Jn. 12:35).

According to Enda, M. (1966), Charity may be generally described as: “A profound personal recognition towards another person seeking unity with him. This movement arises from the dept. of one’s personality where mind and will and feeling merge.”

Enda, M. (1966) went further to define explained as the love of neighbor out of love of God. it does not mean primarily dispensing alms or providing social services. It is first of all "recognizing, respecting and committing oneself to a person”

Who is your Neighbour?

Etymologically, the term Neighbour is define by the Dictionary of Biblical Theology edited by Xavier Leon (1978), as: "the idea of being associated with someone, or entering into his company." It means the person to be loved as oneself in fulfillment of all the demands of the second part of the Ten Commandments.

In the Old Testament perspective, neighbor usually connotes "someone associated with a person by tribal or national bonds i.e. Ones compatriots.”

In the New Testament, Our Lord Jesus broadened the concept of neighbor to include enemies, and persecutors who were the beneficiaries of God's creative care along with the rest of mankind (Mt 5:43-48) in the Christian understanding of one’s neighbors as described by Broderick, R. C (1975): “Not only the person living nearby but are considered in the total complex of the social and religious community.”

The concept of neighbor includes the sharing activities, the Friendship, regard for human dignity and service through love So, “the one who in any instance here and now is in need of my love and help is my neighbor”

Henceforth, a neighbor, for a Christian “is not only one who belonged to the same clan, or religious community but Simply one’s fellow man, even if he were a sinner”

The parable of the good Samaritan illustrates this point very well (Lk.10 25-37). Commenting on this parable, Fulton J Sheen writes; “The Samaritan did not know the wounded man at all; it was his genuine compassion and affection that made the Samaritan his brother and a friend.”

He went further to answer the question posited by the lawyer; "Who is my neighbor?" Every man in distress is your neighbor. Sometimes that neighbor is the one who is least Capable of making known his condition St Paul's letter to the Romans 12:14-21 and 13:8-10 interpreted in conjunction with 1st Corinthians 13:4-7 and Gal 3:28, 5:14, show the conception of Christian’s neighbour extended to every member of human, family, which was made one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28).

The Notion of Charity

According to Thomas Pazhayampallil (1997), describes charity in his book, "Pastoral Guide" “as a habit, a theological virtue infused by God, by which one loves God above all things for His own sake and ones neighbour as oneself for God's sake.”

On the part of man, charity is an act of loving God for own sake and above all things and that love of God shown to ones neighbour for the sake of God as one would Love himself.

The Latin and the Greek Language are rich in word, love. The Latin has 'amor', dilectio, 'caritas'. The Greek eros, 'philia' ‘agape’. The above words have different meaning ‘eros’ is love of desire; it is selfish love. In ‘philia’ the partners seek mutual solace. in New Testament we find the word ‘agape’ which may be defined as “a deliberate desire for the highest good of the one love which shows itself in sacrificial action for that person's good”. That is exactly what God did for us (cf. Jn3:16) And also that is what He wants us to do (1Jn 3:16). It is the same thing that God is prepared

to achieve in us (Rom. 5:5) Moreover, “the spirit of God who is love is freely given to us in order to reproduce in us that same quality”

The English understanding of the word ‘love’ admits of different interpretations and confuses the minds of many people.

It is used in connection with deeds of heroism and deeds of shame; it is a synonym for the passion to get. In English language, we normally say, "I love my friend" I love Music" I love God." Charity is love, but not all love is charity. In some cases, there are reasons for loving something. One may love something because that thing is good for him. Thus one loves money or liquor, a dog loves bones or a wolf loves lambs. These are love of desire and radically fall short of the notion of agape which is “Love for the utterly unworthy, a love which proceeds from God who is love. It is a love lavished upon others without a thought of whether they are worthy to receive it or not It proceeds rather from the nature of the lover, than from the merit of the loved.”

To buttress this point further, Leon Morris (1978) said:

that a Christian who has experienced Gods love to him while he was yet a sinner has been transformed by this experience. Now he Sees men in a measure as God sees them. He sees them as persons he loved, as those for whom Christ died. In accordance to Christi's love of self-giving agape. He came to practice the love which seeks nothing for itself, but only the good of the loved one.”

God first loved us; and what he naturally would expect of us is that we should love him above all and love one another out of love for Him. The love Christ seeks first from us is the kind described magnificently by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians; "Though I command languages both of human and angelic- if speak without love, I am no more than a gong Booming” (1Cor 13:1-13). Love is the greatest virtue for God is love. There is true love and false love; without "true love all gifts are worthless, indeed harmful."

The love that sets free is the love that the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts (Rom 5:5). We can love freely with this divine Love, not of our own power, but because of God who seeks our love, gives us the power to love. When grace is first offered us the Theological virtue of Charity is given to us. Falanga, A. J (1948) quoted Clement of Rome who said that, "charity unites to God.... in Charity all the elect of God is perfected; without charity nothing is accepted by God”

For those who did not accept the statement made by Clement of Rome, Ambroseiaster warns: “As long as they do not pursue charity, which is the mother of all good, they do not know as is fitting”

In this Statement, Ambroseiaster teaches that in some way charity is the mother of all good. To throw more light on this, Falanga, A. J (1948) quoting St Augustine said:

Charity is the proper and unique source of good, whoever loves rightly, surely rightly believes and hopes; but he who does not love, vainly believes even though the things he hopes or are taught to pertain to true happiness, unless he both believes and hopes or this, that in answer to his petition, it may be given him to love

Persons to be Loved

This has to do with the object of charity. One must love God Above all, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with your entire mind, and your neighbor as yourself"(LK 10:27). And that is not the end, one has to love other beings like, "Angels, saints and holy souls in purgatory" As buttressed by Pietro Palazzini (1998) the person loved constitutes The object of supernatural charity is the object of charity in twofold: ‘The primary object is God Himself: the secondary object is man destined to become a child of God through grace or participation in divine life’

Through charity we love all men, we love all men precisely because they are children of God. This statement is asserted by Pazhayampalil (1997) when he said:

The raison d'etre of our Charity towards our neighbour. Is the inalienable dignity which we acknowledge in every human being created in the image and likeness of God, loved by God, saved by God, adopted by God, as a son, and identified with Christ himself.

For better understanding of the twofold objects of charity, Pietro Palazzini (1998) went forward to say: “Though charity has a twofold object t, it is essentially one; we either possess charity in its entirety or we lack it completely”

For this reasons St John teaches that: "If a man says he loves God and hates his brother he is a liar'. In the same reason Christ states that love of neighbour is the sign by which we shall be recognized

as His disciples (John 13:35) Pope John Paul II admonishes that our charity should go beyond the emotional pity which is undeniably a natural door for charity. It goes beyond horizontal solidarities. It is based on that transcendence which we recognize in each one of our Brothers and sisters. The formal object of charity, divine goodness, is the same for the love of one's neighbor. It is the call to participate in the beatific love of God.

Love of God and Love of Neighbour as two Commandments and One Virtue

According to Pazhayampallil (1997), reflecting St. Thomas emphasized the unity of the love of God and love of neighbor as one virtue:

Just as God is the object of faith, so is he the object of Charity. New faith one virtue by reason of the unity of the divine truth according to Ephesians 4:5: "One faith" Therefore charity also is one Virtue by reason of the unity of the divine goodness

In raising an objection St Thomas writes that it would seem that charity is not one virtue. This for him is due to the fact that habits are distinct according to their objects. Now there are two object of charity- God and our neighbor which are infinitely distant from one another. However, St. Thomas responded to objection by saying that if God and our neighbor were equal objects of charity, the argument will hold. But this is not true:

God is the Principal object of charity, while our neighbour is love out of charity, for God's sake. Again, St Thomas writes that the reason why we love neighbor is God, since that which we love in our neighbor wherefore the charity with which through charity is God alone. We love God is the same as that with which we love our Neighbor. Today modern theologians question the above traditional doctrine of the Church. They say that the virtue of love of neighbor is different from the virtue of love of God.

Today people have developed a greater social sense and they have come to the help of the needy because they have been brought together by the great means of communication, through the radio, TV, internet, etc. This love of one's neighbor, they say: "Has a value of its own. It does not form part of the love of God Otherwise we sacrifice too much The love of neighbor and do not admit the doctrine of secularization"

We must however say that there cannot be a true love of neighbor without the love of God. When we speak of love of neighbor we do not mean a sentimental or self interest

By love of love or a love according to one's inclination, loving neighbour means that love which is the decision of the will. A love that does not insist its own way (Cor. 13:5). The decision of the will is not possible without the grace of God, that is without God's love. Christ is the model and motive of our love of neighbor. "God is love" (1Jn 4:18). It is not possible that man can have love. Either of God or of neighbor without it being a participant in God's love. In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28) "once God is forgotten, that creation is lost sight of as well" 21 It is like the love Children of the same family have for one another just because they come from the same parents. So we too love our neighbor because we all come from the same father, God. It is who God It is God who can tell us how we should love others. According to St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he says that if one should give out all that he possesses and hands himself over to be persecuted yet without love, one gains nothing (Cor. 13:3), So, it has been clear to us that we should not turn the pre-eminent action of charity, which is giving and sharing, into a merely external gesture, while inside us despite our gesture, there is not the least bit of charity.

Our first and foremost thought must be to find a way for love to dwell inside us, so that it will be prime motivation of anything we give. Pope John Paul II, (1980) said that: "the commandment of love has its Internal structure, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. You are to love your neighbor as yourself. (mt22:37). This structure of the commandment Corresponds to the truth of love. If God is loved above all things, then also man loves and is loved with the fullness of love accessible to him. Therefore, he went further to say that "If one destroys this inseparable structure, spoken of in Christ 's commandment, then man's love will detach itself from the deepest root, lose the root of fullness and of truth which are essential to him"

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, (1980) went furthermore to say that it is only a love that encounters God can avoid the risk of losing itself along the way... it is only through God's face that it is possible to rediscover the real features of the face of the loved one.

Love above all is a gift from God. It is not exactly that we love God, on the contrary, it is God who loves us. In this love is not as if we love God but that God loved us and sent His son to be atoning

sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God love us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God if we love one another God lives in us and His love is perfected in us. (1Jn4:10-12)

It is our obligation to respond to God's love. And also when we love our neighbour, it is God's love that we manifest according to Pazhayampalil T (1997), who said that "The lofty mystery of the eternal Communion between the father, the son and the Holy Spirit then becomes the exemplary model and as were, the source that nourishes the communion that must be established among men." Just as father is in the son and the son in the father, and both are united in the holy spirit, therefore, it is necessary for everyone to commit himself, in the first place, to the pursuit of an ever deeper union with God by means of faith, the dialogue of prayer and purification of the heart, if we want to contribute effectively to the believer. The vertical dimension of openness to God and the relationship with him is the other that Conditions all premise commitments in the horizontal dimension of the relationship with brothers.

However, this does not mean, as is obvious that the effects aimed at establishing relationship with brothers, is important. The quality of these relationship is, indeed according to the teaching of the scripture, a criterion for assessing the authenticity of the relationship which one claims to have with God (cf. John 4:20).

In his work "Christian Living" Lobo, G. V. (1995), quoted Karl Rahner, who says: "Since we cannot reach God in gnostic mystic interiority alone, we can attain the God in us in mutual brotherly love."

Fraternal love is the participation in God's love for us in Christ. We express this love in our relationship with others. Those who are blessed with the living presence of the father and the son through the Holy Spirit love others with the same divine love. As such the explicit love of God is existing by that opening in trusting love to the whole of reality which takes place in the love of neighbor

St. Paul teaches us that what counts for those who live in Christ Jesus 'faith' Working through love' (Gal 5:6). This faith and love of neighbor then are one Virtue. One and the same love embraces both God and one's neighbor. The love of God is above everything because he has no equal, that of neighbour is with the measures of man, and so as oneself. These "Two loves are

closely connected with the other. One cannot exist without the other. The power of man's love for his neighbour has its most solid and operative foundation in the love of God

Charity towards Oneself

In his work, "Happiness is an inside job", John Powell wrote: "We cannot talk of loving others without first mentioning that love begins at home". The injunction, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:39), implies that one ought to love oneself. The above Biblical injunction could be better understood if we can answer the questions: What exactly does it mean to love oneself and one's neighbour as oneself? Does one both love and renounce oneself?

In an attempt to answer the questions, Wolskiconn, J. (1993) Said: "Loving ourselves-as-objects is the path to selfishness, we can and must love ourselves-as-subjects, however, and we do this only by loving others."

So we Love others when we act for their true good, but this loving action is also acting for our own true good the realization of our capacity for self- transcendence. Wolskiconn, J. (1993) went further to say that the self we are called to renounce is not the true self-as- subject but the false self-as-object: the egocentric self-interests that are obstacles to the self-transcending love of others and ourselves to which the Gospels call us.

There is a difference between insisting that we regard ourselves as important, which is self-love and insisting that we always feel good about ourselves, which is synonymous with constantly preserving our self-esteem.

To make a clear understanding of self-love. Scott, P. M. (1993), said that: "The care, respect, and responsibility for and the knowledge of the self, without loving one's self, one cannot love others."

Let us not confuse self-love with self-centeredness. People of self-centeredness have their self-esteem as the most important thing in their lives. They will do anything to preserve and maintain their self-esteem at all times and at all cost.

Love of Oneself as the Unity between Love of God and Love of Neighbour

All the commandments are summed up in the one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Rom.13:9). The Second Vatican Council expressed the same truth that: “Everyone must consider his every neighbour, without exception, as another self.”

As love of neighbour and love of self are inseparable, so are the love of God and love of self. The more our love of self is rooted in God's love for us. The healthier and stronger it will be, and the more it will be united with the love of Neighbour.

So the motive of charity towards ourselves is God. Lobo, G. V. (1995) expressed this idea very clearly in his work, when he said: “Human relations provide man with the direction which presents the desired vista of an inter subjectivity with God, since man gains mature possession of himself in giving himself to others.”

Brotherly love, therefore, cannot be considered merely as a preparation for the love of God, nor its consequence, nor even its touchstone, instead, it is love of God itself manifested in action. As a matter of fact, if God is seen in all his creation, he is seen most clearly and strikingly in the experience of brotherly love. We ought to love ourselves because God wills it and moreover, we are made after God's image, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and called to eternal felicity in heaven. Throwing more light in this rule of love, Haring, B. wrote: “Among these other things which he loves out of charity because they pertain to God, he loves also himself out of charity”

This makes clear the fact that the right for one to love himself is of fundamental principle. The catechism of the catholic church buttressed this point by saying that, “Love toward oneself remains fundamental principle of morality”

Well Ordered Love of Self

It is a popular wise saying that "Qui sibi nequam, Cui bonus" if a man is mean to himself, to whom will he be good? (sir 14:5). In other words, if a man does not know how to love himself right. he will also be unable to love others well. Highlighting on this point Peschke, K. (1999) opined “First learn to love yourself... for if you do not know how to love yourself, how will you be able to love your neighbour truly”.

Moreover, the love of oneself serves as the paradigm of the wishes of others in the golden rule. One ought to do to others what he would like done to him.

The statement above is also applicable when a person is considered of greater importance for common good than we, ourselves. He ought to prefer his or her life to ours. Therefore, it does not seldom happen that in times of war simple soldiers sacrifice their general or other leaders on the other hand, a person important to the common good may for the same reason, have the obligation not to expose his life to dangers which he must nevertheless request others to undergo. According to Peschke, K. H. (1999): "One cannot claim for works of the same quality greater reward for oneself than one would concede to others and one ought to allow greater recompense for a neighbour's service of better quality than one's own."

Sometimes, the reverse is the case of the above statement. The love of oneself requires that one should prepare and also be able to serve God and his Kingdom efficiently, and that one should work for his salvation. This responsibility for one's self in many ways take precedence over responsibility for one's neighbour. It is also taken for granted as noted by Peschke, K. H. (1999) that: "The same responsibility that obliges us to be concerned with our sanctification and salvation will at a certain stage include increasing duties in the service of others."

The reason behind this is that we cannot attain to full maturity without placing ourselves at the service of others, and the way to salvation will lead the adult Christian to growing solicitude for his neighbour's salvation too.

There is no doubt that love of self seems to be a natural inclination which should not create difficulties. It is not a rare phenomenon to find people who cannot truly love themselves. This is as a result of so many of us today get caught up in drugs or alcohol or in some form of business simply because we cannot bear to turn inward and quietly look at all of ourselves.

Peschke, K. H. (1999), went further to demonstrate that: "There is a part within every person which behaves selfish, just seems foolish, is bent on violence and hatred."

This selfish tendency in man often turns love of self into a painful obligation, which a person however, for his own good and that of others, cannot eschew. At the same time, there is also a genuine caring side in every man and woman which wishes to give warmth and love.

To be known and accept oneself, a person will need times of silence and solitude. It may require the fellowship of caring people to relate with. And then there is need for a relationship with the divine love himself, who assures everyone of acceptance, concern and love.

Recommendation

The injunction "to love one another has been commanded by God. If the love of God were not also commanded, not loving God and neighbour would not constitute a sin. In loving God can our love be measured? Our love of God cannot be measured rather we should love God with all our heart, and with all our souls, and with all our minds Loving God in the above manner means keeping the greatest and the first commandment of God. Our foundation of love is God who first loved us. So a true love of God must reflect in the love of our neighbour. Can there be true love of neighbour without the love of God? If such love exists, it has no foundation since God is love If we talk of a true love of God without love of neighbour, it is baseless. How can you hate your brother whom you can see and love God whom you cannot see? The gospel made it clear that whatever you give to the least of your brothers, you did it to God. Love becomes a virtue when it manifests itself in the act of charity. The reason why we perform charity to others is the inalienable dignity which we acknowledge in every human being created in the image and likeness of God, loved by God, saved by God, adopted by God as a son or daughter and identified with Christ himself. Do we measure our love of neighbour by the way we love ourselves? We have to bear in mind that the love of oneself is a natural instinct, so we cannot overemphasis the love oneself as measure for the love of neighbour.

Conclusion

Charity is a theological virtue in which we manifest our love of God in our neighbour. The question of who is my neighbour? is no other person than the one who is in dare need of your help in this Case even our enemy who is in need of our help is our neighbour. It is important to note that charity is the highest of all the virtues because its objective is God Himself. Human love is a true participation in the very life giving love of God our charity should go beyond the emotional pity which is undeniably a natural door for charity. It is based on that transcendence which we recognize in each one of our brothers and sisters.

Our love of God must be sovereign. We must love God above all Things and more than any creature, and with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. We should also love our neighbour as ourselves

The love of God is the unity of the love of neighbour and oneself. The necessity of performing works of charity is the demand of our Christian vocation.

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