

## THE UNITY OF THE TWO CHARITIES IN GREEK PATRISTIC EXEGESIS

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THE virtue of charity poses a difficult problem for the theologian. It is the problem of this virtue's unity. Is there only one charity, or are there two?<sup>1</sup> Are the love of God and the love of neighbor acts of one same supernatural virtue? Have they both one specifically same object? Is that divine good which is loved in God to be found and loved in our neighbor too, even if he is a sinner or an infidel?

Several pages of the New Testament discuss the two precepts of charity. Many imply or state the intimate and even necessary bond between them. But none seems to give an explicit clarification of the nature of this bond. Such passages, however, offered the Fathers an excellent opportunity to examine this relation explicitly and to do so in the light of the Bible's inspired teaching on this greatest of the virtues. This article purposes to single out and analyze those remarks in the commentaries of the Greek Fathers which contribute towards a solution of this problem of the unity of the virtue of charity.

Of course, it is hardly more than a very modest start towards a thorough exploration of the Fathers' doctrine on this question and can make no pretension at completeness even as regards the Greek Fathers' exegesis. True, the texts considered are all those of note that an examination of all the strictly exegetical works of the Greek Fathers has brought to light. But since the inspired word of God was the core of so much of the Fathers' teaching and the point of departure for their theological speculation, their preaching, etc., explanations of texts occur in many of their non-exegetical works, and the lack of thorough indices makes it all but impossible to locate such passages. Besides, since many of the commentaries they left have not come down to us at all or have survived only in translation or fragments, what we have today is only a fraction of their original exegetical works. Still, this fraction is enough to show that for the Greek Fathers there is only

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. Lennerz, *De virtutibus theologis* (5th. ed.; Rome: Gregorian University, 1947), pp. 314-326 (esp. p. 324), for a summary of the various ways in which theologians attempt to explain unity of the virtue.

one charity and that they all seek to explain the unity along more or less the same lines—lines whose direction had already been traced by the inspired word of God.

Of the commentaries that we have those that make some contribution to our question easily lend themselves to a twofold grouping: there are those of the school of Alexandria and those of St. John Chrysostom with his followers. Other exegetical works hardly do more than repeat the ideas or even the very words of these masters. The various explanations of the bond between the two charities are just as easy to classify; they are explanations extrinsic to the act of love of neighbor as such,<sup>2</sup> or explanations that examine the intrinsic nature of charity. These latter either seek to determine just what it is that charity loves in the neighbor (the object), or search out the origin or principle from which love of neighbor flows.

In order to facilitate understanding and comparison of doctrine, we shall consider first the extrinsic explanations, next the explanations based on charity's object, and lastly those based on its origin in each of the Alexandrians. Nor shall we find it difficult to follow a somewhat similar order for Chrysostom. Since the Alexandrians and St. John Chrysostom formed the exegesis that followed, at least as regards our question, understanding their doctrine means understanding the doctrine of their followers. Hence we need not list the disciples when they merely repeat, rephrase, or summarize the masters. No need either to study those passages where the Fathers merely state as an undeniable fact the bond between charity's two precepts or merely rephrase the words of the New Testament on this relation. Such texts, almost too numerous to list, contribute little more to solving the problem than the inspired lines they quote. The few explanations that escape our classification can easily be considered at the end.

Before considering the texts themselves, we may well note three ideas that constantly recur in contexts where the Greek Fathers mention love of neighbor. Some of them do not bear directly on the nature of the bond between the two precepts of charity but help all the same to set the discussions of the bond in a clearer light.

<sup>2</sup> I.e., which attempt to explain how love of neighbor is reduced to love of God by appealing to something extrinsic to or different from the nature of the act of love of neighbor.

Not infrequently the Fathers explain how charity and charity alone fulfill all the commandments; for it is in this sense that the whole law, i.e., its fulfillment, depends on love of God and neighbor (Mt 5:14). He who loves God and neighbor does nothing to offend either but everything that can please both and so fulfill all God's commandments. What is noteworthy is that often they discuss only the love of neighbor, noting how it avoids violating any of the precepts of the law's second table, and then conclude as does St. Paul in Rom 13:8 ff. that charity (i.e., love of neighbor?) fulfills the whole law. Does this mean the law's first table too? Or in such contexts are the Fathers merely not thinking of the requirements of charity's first precept? Is it perhaps that they suppose such perfect love of neighbor, which keeps all the precepts of the second table, impossible unless perfect love of God is already possessed, and therefore the law's first table already observed? Only pseudo-Oecumenius (Photius?)<sup>3</sup> seems to be aware of the omission. He explicitly notes: "How will such a man as this [who loves his neighbor so perfectly] not sincerely love and glorify the Divinity with his whole heart and his whole strength?"<sup>4</sup>

Since charity is the fulfillment of all God's commandments, it is obviously the source of all good. The Fathers are eloquent on this point. They devote whole pages to showing how all goods of the orders of both grace and nature flow from the practice of charity. And here again we note that, though they often mention both charity's precepts, just as often they speak only of love of neighbor.<sup>5</sup>

A third idea which the Greek Fathers often bring to the fore in their discussions of charity is that its twofold precept is already an obligation of the natural law; they remark this especially when they comment on the golden rule (Mt 7:12). Nature moves us to love one another as we love ourselves. The Old Law merely incorporated into itself a natural-law precept. What is Christian about fraternal charity is Christ's modification of the "as thyself" to "more than thyself": "Love

<sup>3</sup> See K. Staab, *Die Pauluskatenen* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1926), p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> *PG*, 118, 581D.

<sup>5</sup> It is the frequency with which they trace all goods to the possession and practice of charity that is noteworthy. Here and there an isolated instance occurs where they call some other virtue the source of all good; cf. Chrysostom, v.g., on humility towards the end of his third homily on Matthew (*PG*, 57, 38) and in his commentary on the first beatitude (*ibid.*, 225). But on charity they are in unanimous accord.

one another as I have loved you." Hence the Fathers can look for a bond between charity's two precepts in man's nature.<sup>6</sup>

The very nature, then, given us by God moves us to love our neighbor as ourselves; this fraternal charity fulfills God's whole law and brings us all goods of both the natural and the supernatural orders.

#### ORIGEN

All those texts of Origen's commentaries which here interest us have survived only in Latin translation. The version of Rufinus, though he admits having abridged and modified while translating,<sup>7</sup> seems sufficiently exact for our purposes.

#### *Extrinsic Explanations*

1) Rom: 13:8-10 (*PG*, 14, 1232, 9)<sup>8</sup> "He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." In his long commentary on these verses Origen explains among other things how charity fulfills the whole law: he who loves his neighbor will not wrong him, will not violate the commands of the law's second table. But St. Paul was not thinking merely of this.

Here, I think, the Apostle wanted us to learn something more profound. If you search out with care just who our neighbor is, you will learn in the Gospel that he is our neighbor who came and, finding us wounded by robbers and stripped by the devils, set us upon the beast of his body, brought us to the inn of the Church, and gave the innkeeper (either Paul or whoever governs the Church) the two silver pieces of the Old and New Testaments as expenses for the careful attention to be given us.

Love of this neighbor who is Christ leads us to avoid what displeases Him—in other words, to fulfill His whole law—just as love of our merely human neighbor leads us to avoid what displeases him.

If we love this neighbor, we shall fulfill the whole law and all its precepts in his love. For 'the end of the law is Christ unto justice for everyone who believes'; nor is it at all possible that he who loves Christ with his whole heart and his whole being should do anything that does not please Christ.

<sup>6</sup> Obviously in such contexts their concept of nature must be kept in mind as well as their idea of man as God's image in his very creation.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the *praefatio* to his version of Origen's commentary on Romans (*PG*, 14, 831) as well as the *peroratio* (*ibid.*, 1291 ff.).

<sup>8</sup> All references are given to *PG* (the last numeral refers to the line) and to some more modern critical edition when possible.

Thus he who loves his neighbor Christ will not sin by adultery, theft, or perjury, because Christ condemned these things and taught their opposites (v.g., in the Sermon on the Mount) or suffered from them.

He who loves in that way [with his whole heart] not only does not kill—which the law forbids—but he does not even grow angry at his brother. He who takes such great delight in him whom he loves not only does not commit adultery, but he does not even look at a woman with longing. Instead he says to him, 'My soul longs and yearns after the living God.' How can he who loves Christ think of stealing when he leaves all that he has to follow Christ? When can he who loves Christ bear false witness, knowing as he does that he whom he loves was delivered up through false witness?

Further, such a lover of Christ will love his neighbor because Christ has laid down love of neighbor as the distinguishing mark of His disciples.

And of necessity he who loves Christ loves his neighbor too. For this sign alone sets him off as a disciple of Christ: if he have charity for his neighbors. To be sure, it is certain that he who does not love his neighbor, does not know Christ (I Jn 4:8).

In short, Origen's thought comes to this: if we love Christ, we will love our neighbor because love of neighbor pleases Him, because He desires, wills it.

2) Mt 22:34-40 (CGS, Orig., 11, 5, 25; PG, 13, 1603, 13): "On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets." The Saviour's words in Mt 22:40 seem to contradict St. Paul's statement in Rom 13:9 that love of neighbor, the second precept of charity, fulfills the whole law. Origen explicitly notes the difficulty.

Someone else will want to know how it could be said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not steal; and if there is any other commandment in the law, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' He will say then: even the precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind,' is summed up in the precept, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' For how is what he said true ('and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying'), unless the precept on the love of God too be summed up in that other which is the 'second and like unto the first'? And if the first precept is summed up in the second, the second must be greater than the first.

If all the commandments are summed up in charity's second precept, as Paul says, then so is the love of God, charity's first precept. Thus

by loving the neighbor we must also fulfill the command to love God; the love of God is somehow included in our love of neighbor.

Every precept, then, even the first and greatest, is summed up in this second, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' because when we do anything through love for one another (*diligentes nosmetipsos si quid fecerimus*), we show love for God himself as well (*et ipsum diligimus Deum*), who has been the author of that love of ours which we show to and receive from one another.

Just how our love of neighbor is also, at least implicitly, an act of love for God must now be explained. Origen does not seek a solution in the peculiar nature of the act of love for neighbor.

For giving thanks that we are rational beings and are called to the knowledge of God and receive his blessings and grace, we sum up the love of God in the second precept which is like the first. . . .

God has given us the rational nature with which we love others. He is the author of our supernatural vocation which obliges us to love them and the author of the abundant graces which help us to love. We make good use of the nature and graces that God has given us by loving the neighbor. Thus we show our gratitude for these benefits of His; thus we show our grateful love for Him.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Object*

3) Mt 22:39 (CGS, Orig., 11, 7, 7; PG, 13, 1604, 10): "And the second is like it . . ." In his long discussion of the two commandments of charity Origen has only a single sentence on how the second is like the first, a short explanation which he inserts abruptly without introduction and without connection with what follows: "The second precept is like the first because it is the love of man, who is made to the image of God and perhaps also to his likeness." What we love in neighbor is God's image. Or rather it is because he is God's image and likeness that we love him. It is God, then, whom we ultimately love.

4) Mt 25:42 ff. (CGS, Orig., 11, 172, 17; PG, 13, 1717, 4): "I was hungry and you did not give me to eat." The Last Judgment offers Origen matter for long pages of commentary. The reasons for the

<sup>9</sup> The statement that God is "author of our love" admits of a more profound explanation in itself, such, v.g., as Didymus gives on I Jn 4:7. But such possibility seems excluded by the fact that Origen explains his meaning immediately: "For giving thanks. . . ."

Judge's sentences of reward or condemnation—viz., the practice of, or failure to practice, love of neighbor—interest us. Origen explains why charity shown or not shown to neighbor is charity shown or not to Christ, why love of neighbor is love of Christ.

It was written to the faithful: 'You are the body of Christ and members, each with his own proper gift' (I Cor. 12:27). Just as the soul dwelling in the body, though it does not hunger as regards its spiritual substance, nevertheless hungers for each of its body's foods because it is joined to that body, so too the Saviour suffers what his body the Church suffers, though he himself is impassible as regards his divinity. When the saints need food, he too feels hunger; when others of his members have need of medicine, he too, so to speak, as a sick man, has need; in the same way when others have need of shelter, he too, as a wanderer, seeks in them "somewhere to lay his head"; so too in the naked he suffers cold, and in the clothed he is clothed.

Our neighbor is in some way identified with Christ—at least if he is a Christian. He is a member of the Mystical Body; Christ is united to him as the soul is to the body.<sup>10</sup> Just as we cannot act upon the body without reaching the soul through it, so we cannot do good or evil to our neighbor without thereby doing it to Christ.

Origen goes on to explain what it is that unites Christ so intimately with His faithful as in a sense to identify them with Him; it is His great love for them and their love for Him. Love unites and in a sense even identifies men with one another, as it made Paul suffer what his converts suffered. Christ's love unites Him so intimately with His faithful that He experiences what they experience.

If out of love Paul says, 'Who is weak and I am not weak?', and this redounds to the praise of the Apostle, who thus shows the greatness of his charity for the faithful, how cannot the Son of that charity which is God (*filius caritatis Dei*) the Saviour, say much more correctly than Paul or anyone else who loves, 'Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I am not inflamed?' This is why he says, 'I was sick and in prison, and you did not visit me.' When a member of Christ is in prison, he has lost freedom who says of the just man, 'I am with him in tribulation' (Ps. 90:15), i.e., I suffer tribulation with him (*contributor ei*). 'For just as he who is mine is in tribulation with me, so I too am in tribulation with him. . . .'

Origen recalls no other bond, such as baptism, the Eucharist, etc., which unites Christ with His members. Perhaps his reason is that

<sup>10</sup> Origen's Platonic ideas on the union of soul and body hardly affect the comparison he uses here.

charity is the essential cause of this identification since charity is the very nature of God ("filius caritatis Dei"), while baptism, etc., are only so many means to achieve it.

Love of neighbor, then, is love of God or rather love of Christ, since our neighbors are His members. The more intimately they are united to Him or the more completely they are identified with Him, i.e., the more perfect they are, the more truly is the good or evil done them done to Him: "They are truly his brothers who are perfect and are imitators of Him. . . . More pleasing to God is a good work done to those who are holier than to those who are less holy, and it is a lighter fault to neglect the less holy than the more so. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

### *Origin*

5) Mt 22:34 ff. (CGS, Orig., 11, 7, 9; PG, 13,1604,-8): "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . , and thy neighbor as thyself." The last of Origen's many remarks on the connection between charity's two precepts notes how the second is impossible without the first. Fulfillment of the first is at least a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the second. Love of one's neighbor as oneself presupposes love of self, and love of self presupposes love of God. He who does not love God does not will his own real good, does not love himself. Hence he cannot love his neighbor as he loves himself.

In explaining the precept of love of neighbor, we must not omit the following remark. According to Psalm 10, 'He who loves iniquity hates his own soul,' and according to Proverbs 15:32, 'He who refuses instruction hates himself.' From this it is evident that no one who loves iniquity loves his neighbor as himself, since he does not even love himself, and no one who refuses instruction loves his neighbor as himself, since he does not even love himself. Thus it is that he who loves iniquity [and so does not love God] and hates his own soul cannot observe the second precept either. So too he who refuses instruction loves a sin, and therefore he too who refuses a word of God's instruction hates his own soul.

Just why love of God (willing God's good) is necessary for any true love of self (and hence of neighbor), i.e., for any real willing of one's own good, Origen does not explain. Perhaps it is because our own, and neighbor's, good is identified with God's. This would mean that the object willed in the love of neighbor and in the love of God would be the same. Such implications, however, are not clear.

<sup>11</sup> CGS, Orig., 11, 174, 8; PG, 13, 1718, 21.

The general conclusion is that for Origen love of neighbor is love of God or Christ in the neighbor, since our neighbor is the image of God and a member of Christ. Love of God is at least a necessary condition for any true love of self or neighbor.

#### DIDYMUS THE BLIND

Didymus' *Enarrationes* on the Johannine epistles, which contain all the texts that concern us here, have come down to us only in a Latin translation and some Greek fragments. A comparison of fragments and versions shows that the translator did not hesitate to fill out a thought expressed much more concisely in the Greek, or even to correct or modify his original.<sup>12</sup> Most of our passages, however, are at least partially extant in Greek. A comparison of these fragments with their Latin rendering shows this latter to be exact enough for our purposes; it can be trusted as a faithful expression of Didymus' thought where the original Greek is lacking.

#### *Object*

6) I Jn 4:7 (Zoepfl, 67, 30;<sup>13</sup> PG, 39, 1797, 16): "Beloved let us love one another, for charity is from God." The apostle exhorts his dearly beloved disciples to practice fraternal charity since "charity is from God." Didymus explains with profundity just how charity is from God. The very object that we love in neighbor is God, i.e., God's image and likeness traced by Him in our neighbor's person.

Just as he who does not choose what should be chosen and does not love what should be loved merits censure and blame, so the [Apostle] praises them that love those who are worthy of love as themselves deserving of love. But when could this be better realized than when the Saviour took away the sin of the world that man might appear such as he was made by God, proved to be to the likeness and image of his Maker? When man appeared in this light, since he was [evidently] an object of [divine] love, he thereupon became worthy of love. Sent into the world through the Father's love for his creatures, the Saviour came to reveal the beauty of those who had been made to the image of God. They who have won this gift [the revelation of their true beauty] are objects of love [or: worthy of love] and therefore they love one another. For each one becomes an

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Zoepfl's appreciation (in *Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen*, Band IV, Heft 1, *Didymi Alexandrini in epistolas canonicas brevis enarratio* [Munster i. Westf.: Aschendorff, 1914], pp. 1\* and 18\* ff.; on the Greek fragments see p. 80\* f.); cf. also Lücke's opinion of the Latin translation (PG, 39, 1746 ff.).

<sup>13</sup> A critical edition of the Greek and Latin texts is to be found in Zoepfl, *op. cit.*

object of love and capable of loving when he receives the command to love his neighbor.

It is the image of God restored by the Saviour which we love in our neighbor. Or rather it is the fact that he is the (restored) image of God that makes him (supernaturally) lovable.

7) II Jn 9 (Zoepfl, 86, 14; *PG*, 39, 1810, 6): "He who abides in the doctrine [of Christ] has both the Father and the Son." Accepting and rejecting the apostles are equivalent to accepting and rejecting God. This is true in one of two senses. First, a passage which suggests itself to Didymus (Mt 10:40: "He who receives you receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me"; cf. Lk 10:16) makes him think of the apostles as apostles, preachers and teachers sent by God. "This is said in regard to doctrine. He who receives the apostles by assenting to their teaching receives through them the Son and the Father who give that teaching." But there is also another interpretation possible—one which interests us: "There is another sense too in which this is true. He who perseveres in this teaching has the Father and the Son. The apostles persevered in that teaching so as even to preach it. He who receives them, since they are the temple of God, by the very fact that he receives them has the Son and the Father who are in them." God living in those who "abide in His teaching" is the object of our respect and attention.

#### *Origin*

8) I Jn 4:7 f. (Zoepfl, 68, 27; *PG*, 39, 1798, 1): "Charity is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God; he who does not love does not know God, for God is charity." In his commentary on the opening words of v. 7 quoted above, Didymus notes that charity comes from God in that the object which we love in our neighbor comes from Him. In the lines which immediately follow that passage he explains another sense in which it can be said that charity is from God.

What does it mean to be begotten of God? In general everyone who loves in the way described will merit being called a son of God.<sup>14</sup> Nor does he have it in his power to sin since he has within him the seed of the Father who begot him. And besides, he who is born of God knows that his Father, God, is charity. The reason, he says, why charity is from God and the man who has it is born of God and knows him is that he who has begotten and is known is charity. For just as

<sup>14</sup> I.e., selflessly and loving the neighbor insofar as he is God's image.

the cause of our being wise and just and holy is Christ, our God-given wisdom, justice, and holiness, so the cause of fraternal charity is that God is charity. By participating in him insofar as (*secundum quod*) He is charity, we have charity from him and love one another.

The doctrine is evident. God is charity. This divine charity, which God is, is in all those who are born of Him; He has passed on to them in begetting them to supernatural life a share of His own divine nature, which is charity. Because of this share in God's nature, they know Him and do not sin. With that divine charity which is God and which they have, the possession of which makes them children of God, the children of God love one another. Obviously for Didymus there is only one charity—the charity that is God. It is with this same charity that we love God in Himself as well as in our neighbor.

9) I Jn 5:1 (Zoepfl, 74, 16; *PG*, 39, 1802, 12): "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves him who begot, loves also the one begotten of him." In a passage which briefly indicates both the explanations of charity's unity given above, Didymus explains why everyone who loves God, who begets, also loves those begotten of Him: "If a man is born of God by practicing the virtues just mentioned,<sup>15</sup> since he has won acceptance, he should be loved, and more than he, the one who begot him." What merits love in the child of God is what he has from his Father. From the remarks on I Jn 4:7 quoted above, this is God's image. But coming to the child of God by way of generation, it is by no means a mere material, dead semblance; it is dynamic, appearing in his actions, in his very life: "born of God by putting into practice the virtues." Since this object of love exists much more properly and fully in the Father, God, He is much more deserving of love. In fact, since it is God whom we love in His children, it is evident that, if we love them, we will love Him: "The Apostle. . . aptly points out the greatness of charity and the beauty of those who must be loved when he says that it is a characteristic mark (*proprium*) of him who loves God that he love also the one who is born of him." The greatness of charity lies in its being of its very nature a share in God's life: we have love for our neighbor from God by way of supernatural generation. The beauty of those who are loved lies in the divine image which they have by way of supernatural generation.

<sup>15</sup> Viz., faith, love of enemies, works of mercy.

The conclusion is that for Didymus charity for the neighbor is love of God's image in the neighbor, or love of the neighbor who is God's image; and the charity with which we love God in the neighbor is God Himself, or rather a participation in His divine nature, which is charity.

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Those passages of St. Cyril's exegetical works which here call for our attention have been preserved in the original Greek and with no variant readings of note. The style of these texts is somewhat involved, the sentences intricate, and the connective particles that express every shade of meaning abundant. Hence their translation into so uninflected a language as English is difficult.

*Extrinsic Explanations*

10) Jn 21:15 ff. (Pusey, III, 165, 19;<sup>16</sup> PG, 74, 749, 14): "Simon, son of John, dost thou love me? . . . Feed my sheep." From Peter's triple profession of love and the Lord's repeated reply, Cyril draws a number of lessons. One of them is for the pastors of the Church.

A consideration of the present passage apprises men in authority that they will please the chief shepherd Christ only if they are solicitous for the constant well-being of their rational sheep. A man who showed such solicitude was the admirable Paul, who was weak with the weak and who called the boast of his apostolate and his joy and crown those who had come to believe through him and through their own glorious deeds had won [God's] approval. He knew that this solicitude was the tangible fruit of perfect love for Christ, which anyone will see who reasons rightly. If he died for us, surely he must have held the salvation and life of everyone of us worthy of every care. And if they who 'sin against their brothers and strike their weak conscience a blow' really sin against Christ (I Cor. 8:12), how true it must be that they are really devout towards the Lord who guide the minds both of those that have already come to believe and of those that await the call to do so, and who make every effort to strengthen them in the faith. . . .

This text needs little commentary. Love of souls is the tangible fruit of love of Christ. There is no love of Christ without such love of neighbor, no true love of Christ without this its tangible expression. The reason is that Christ has so great a love of souls. If He died on our

<sup>16</sup> Ph. Ed. Pusey, *Cyrilli . . . in D. Joannis Evangelium*, 3 vol. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1872).

behalf, Cyril argues, the salvation of everyone of us is of great value in His eyes. We cannot love Him if we do not love those whom He loves. Not loving them displeases Him. His love makes Him regard what is done for them as done in some way for Himself.

11) Jn 13:34 (Pusey, II, 385, 12 and 387, 6; *PG*, 74, 161, 14 and 164, 22): "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you." Cyril explains how the Lord's commandment of fraternal charity is new. Before His departure from the world the Saviour lays down the law of Christian charity as the basis and foundation of all good: "About to ascend into heaven, he first lays down as a sort of foundation and groundwork of all good things the law of charity, not that charity which is according to the Law but that which is above the Law. Therefore he says, 'A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another.' "

But where is the newness, since even Moses commanded love of neighbor? The newness is in this: we Christians must love one another as Christ has loved us. The Law commands love of neighbor "as thyself"; Christ loved us "more than Himself." This is the way in which the Saviour's disciples did in fact love the neighbor. This is the way in which all those who followed their example loved. They were ready to undergo anything, even death, in order to assure their neighbor's salvation. Then he concludes: "The Saviour therefore commanded us to strive after the root of most perfect piety towards God, that love which is above the Law. This he did because he knew that in no other way would we win God's highest approval and that in seeking to practice the fair love which he established among us we would enjoy great and perfect goods." The Saviour prescribes love of neighbor more than self because there is no other way of winning God's highest approval. God's highest approval goes to those who show such love of neighbor, since fraternal charity is the root of most perfect piety towards God. It is not the source or cause of love of God (rather it follows from charity for God),<sup>17</sup> but the source of piety towards God. Piety (*eusebeia*) is the practical expression of love of God—a God-fearing life.<sup>18</sup> Love of neighbor is the root and source of such a life.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. his explanation of Lk 10:25 ff., *infra*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Zorell's *Lexicon*, *sub voce*: "cultus Dei per vitam religiosam ac piam virtutumque exercitium exhibitus, vita erga Deum pia ac religiosa."

Precisely why or how the service of the neighbor is the most perfect expression of love of God Cyril does not explain in the immediate context. Is it because God has so great a love of our neighbor, of souls?<sup>19</sup> Is it because service of the neighbor makes us so like His Son, whom He loves above all?<sup>20</sup>

12) Jn 15:12 f. (Pusey, II, 577, 19; PG, 74, 384, 20): "This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you." Cyril first explains the Lord's command to love as He loved, even to laying down one's life, as having been given especially to the Apostles: they would have to preach the gospel to all men, even ingrates and persecutors; hence they would have need of a great love even for such men as these, a love like the Saviour's, which would carry them through to the very completion of their task. Then he extends the application of these two verses to all Christians.

If the saying, 'This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you,' be extended in its application to everyone, all will draw great profit from their efforts to practice it. If fraternal charity observes and brings about the fulfilling of everyone of our Saviour's precepts, does he not merit the greatest admiration who strives to practice it perfectly, blamelessly and faultlessly? For the sum, in a word, of all the virtues is contained within it. Second to charity for God is charity for one another, and the whole force of piety towards God is expressed, as it were, in this one saying: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'

Love of the neighbor leads to the practice of all the virtues; the practice of all the virtues, the keeping of all the Saviour's precepts, is "contained within" love of the neighbor. Does this mean the keeping of all the commands of the Law's second table? The whole strength or force of our piety towards God is, as it were, contained in the observance of charity's second precept.<sup>21</sup> The observance of that precept is the principal or even the only concrete way of manifesting our love for God. But here again we find no precise explanation of the reason why or how this is so.

<sup>19</sup> Christ's command, he has said (Pusey, *op. cit.*, II, 386, 29; PG, 74, 164, 12), is to love the neighbor "more than self," i.e., to be ready to undergo anything in order to assure our neighbor's salvation. Compare this with the text cited on Jn 21:15.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. text cited on Jn 13:35.

<sup>21</sup> See note 18.

*Object*

13) Mt 5:44 (*PG*, 72, 381, 28): "Love your enemies." Cyril explains how we can love our enemies, though they be sinners: "Let us love our enemies not inasmuch as they are adulterers or murderers but inasmuch as they are men. For the commission of sin is an action and not part of their nature; hence their sin is not a work of God." What we love is not their sinfulness but what there is of God's in them. Not what there is of God; he does not say that God is within them in any way, but that something of God's, His handiwork, is there which can be loved. What there is of God's is the human nature He has made.

14) Lk 10:25 ff. (*PG*, 72, 680, 24): "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . , and thy neighbor as thyself . . . . And who is my neighbor?" Cyril explicitly notes the necessary bond between the two charities; love of neighbor necessarily flows from love of God. On these two precepts, by their very nature inseparable from one another, depended the Law and the prophets under the old dispensation; in the keeping of these two consists our whole Christian life under the new dispensation. But under the latter some changes, or rather extensions, have perfected the double commandment of the Old Law. Love of God such as the New Testament commands it, with the whole heart, soul, and strength, "makes, in a word, a Christian of a Jew. And charity towards the neighbor rightly understood—as often as it is had not only towards members of the same nation but towards every member of the same race—follows closely on charity for God."

Love of the neighbor of necessity follows closely upon true love of God, but it must be love of neighbor rightly understood, i.e., a universal love. Obviously it is something in the neighbor insofar as he is man, insofar as he is of the same race (*genos*) as we are, something in his nature, which is the object of this love. Obviously too it is something in that nature which, and insofar as it, comes from God; for love for every member of the same human race necessarily follows on love of God. Cyril does not say more. In the light of his commentary on Mt 5:44 cited above, we can safely conclude that at the very least it is man inasmuch as he is God's work, something of God's, which calls forth the love of those who love God.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A difficulty arises from the fact that Cyril insists on the extension of the twofold precept of charity in the New Testament. Man was God's handiwork already under the Old

15) Jn 13:34 (Pusey, II, 385, 21; *PG*, 74, 161, 23): "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you." The present passage occurs within the long commentary on Jn 13:34 already discussed. The few words that interest us here do not seem to form part of that explanation of how love of neighbor is bound up with love of God which Cyril gives in his conclusion quoted above. This for two reasons: first, because they are so far removed from the conclusion, occurring near the beginning; and secondly, because even in their immediate context they seem to be a mere passing remark not closely bound up with what precedes or follows.

He asks just how the Lord's command of love of neighbor can be new, since such a precept already existed in the Old Law. Before answering that the newness is in the words, "as I have loved you," he examines the Old Law's double commandment of charity, which he cites according to Mt 22:37. Commenting on the citation, he says:

He set love of God in the first place before all other precepts, as was only right. And in the next he put the love which we have for one another and joined it so intimately with love for God as to make one feel that not even charity for God would be well-ordered unless that which we owed our neighbor followed upon it. For we are all one another's brothers. The very wise John, knowing this so well and teaching it to others, said, 'He who loves his brother loves God' (I Jn 4:21).

The reason why we cannot love God rightly unless we love our neighbor is that we are all brothers; this evidently means that we have something in common. If we interpret this in the light of Cyril's remarks on Lk 10:25 ff. cited above, we (all men) are brothers in that we have the same nature. In fact, "brother" frequently recurs as a mere synonym for neighbor or fellow man in the rest of Cyril's commentary on v. 34 as well as throughout his long explanation of v. 35. On the other hand, a more profound explanation is possible. "Brothers"

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Law. Those who then loved God should have also loved His handiwork, the whole human race, and not merely those of their own nation. Charity's second precept, then, is not really extended under this aspect in the New Testament. This difficulty, however, does not concern us. We are interested in what Cyril says of the nature of Christian charity and not its relation with the obligation to love God and neighbor as that obligation existed in the Old Testament. In fact, the same problem presents itself for what he says of charity's first precept under the Old Law and is even more difficult to solve: the Law explicitly commands love of God with the whole heart, soul, and strength (Dt 6:5). How is this command extended in the New Law?

can mean "fellow Christians," referring to the same divine life shared in by all those who love one another (note his citation of I Jn 4:21). Still, the term *adelphos* in this particular sense, as opposed to non-Christians, does not seem to occur in any context in the whole of Cyril's exegetical works where he discusses fraternal charity, not even in the profound investigation of the nature of charity in his explanation of the following verse (13:35).

### *Origin*

16) Jn 13:35 (Pusey, II, 387, 15; *PG*, 74, 164C): "By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." This lengthy passage, Cyril's entire commentary on this verse, deserves a complete reading and a thorough study. Since it is too long to quote in full here, we shall have to content ourselves with citing the most pertinent passages and summarizing the rest.

You set upon your heads, he says, a sure and unmistakable sign that you are my disciples, if you follow in the path of my way of life (*politeias*) as far as your nature and the limitations of your being men permit. This means that you will preserve inviolate the bond of charity towards one another and be intimately united among yourselves in accord with the law of mutual charity and the incomparable boast of mutual love. It is this that accurately imprints on us the Master's glory.

Fraternal charity marks the disciple with the distinguishing note of the Master. Cyril goes on to investigate why charity should be that distinguishing mark: "Someone, I suppose, will rejoin with the question, why is charity the sign of discipleship of Christ, and why should the beauty of all the virtues shine out in it, not as a favor freely granted it, nor as the fruit of its labor and effort as they exist in man, but as something implanted in its very nature?" The true follower of Christ must obviously have and practice all the virtues. But charity by its very nature includes or contains all the virtues. He who has the virtue of charity has by that very fact all the others. Cyril's explanation is that, just as all perfections inhere in God, so all the other virtues do in charity, or at least they are all ordained to charity. He who has charity practices all the virtues.

A craftsman betrays the identity of his master in the very way he executes his work. Something of the master has passed over to the

disciple in the learning, not only the knowledge of how to use the tools correctly but even, we might say, the very mannerisms of the master in the way he uses them. So too the disciple of Christ betrays the identity and shows the characteristics of his Master, who has and is supreme charity, in his life of charity.

If anyone among us plies the coppersmith's or weaver's art, do not men note very clearly that he has been the disciple of a particular coppersmith or weaver? And what of the craftsman practiced in the builder's art? Does he not make it known that he can rightly perform what pertains to his art because he has had as master a plier of that trade? In the same way, it seems to me, those who possess within themselves the full strength of charity for God proclaim without difficulty that they are charity's disciples,—disciples, that is, of him who has supreme charity, Christ.

It may seem odd that, after insisting on fraternal charity as the mark of a true disciple, Cyril should say that those who "possess the full strength of charity towards God" show themselves true disciples. But we must recall that in his explanation of the preceding verse (13:34) he had just called fraternal charity the "root of perfect piety towards God." While commenting on 15:12 f. he will say that love for the neighbor expresses the "whole strength of piety towards God." In the present text those who "possess the full strength of charity for God" are simply those who express their love for God in a very practical fraternal charity. Love for God that does not so express itself is by no means at its "full strength."

Charity, Cyril explains, is what is proper to God, even what is most proper. God has not acquired it but is it, just as or even more than He is His other perfections. Christ too, the Son of God, is charity.

God is charity, as John says (I Jn 4:8). Since he was charity's Son, that is, the Son of him who is by nature the one true God, he too revealed himself as charity, not possessed of a dignity whose boast was mere grace of expression or the mere outward sparkle of eloquence, but proving himself by his very works and deeds the fruit of his Father's substance.

Now this supreme substance we hold to be incapable of receiving any good, and we refuse to admit that it has acquired that totality of goods which it possesses, as, for example, we acquire them. Nor will we say that these goods exist in it as one thing exists in another, as one might say that the knowledge of some particular thing exists in a man; for man is not of himself knowledge, but rather he is capable of possessing it. On the other hand, whatever kind of good is be-

lieved to exist, this we hold that divine and ineffable nature to be in the most strict and proper sense, a fountainhead, as it were, which contains within itself and pours forth from itself all the beauty of the virtues.

The logical conclusion follows: he who has charity has what is most proper to God and thereby shows himself intimately united to Christ, even in a sense a sharer of His very nature.

Strictly and properly, then, he will be charity's fruit and charity itself like the Father whose Son he is. By charity more than aught else will he be stamped upon our souls. And above all else it will be their tenacious fidelity to the practice of fraternal love that will engrave upon the good the signs of their intimacy with him.

An application of this doctrine brings it out more clearly. Christ is our peace, i.e., our mutual union in love, our mutual charity, according to St. Paul in Eph. 2:14 ff.; if we have the peace He has brought us and is, we have Him. Finally, a practical conclusion follows: our primary concern should therefore be not mortification or any other ascetical practice, but charity. And then these closing words which sum up his whole long commentary: "That it is the figure and image within us of Christ the Saviour—this is charity's boast."

Our love of neighbor is therefore a participation of God. We love the neighbor with the divine charity which God is and which we share in. Cyril does not explicitly discuss the love of God, the first precept of charity, in this passage. Nevertheless, it is more than obvious both from the verse that he is explaining ("By this will all men know, etc.," which is equivalent to, "Your love of neighbor will be proof of your love for me") and from the explanation that he gives (we love our neighbor with, or by means of, God) that the same love with which we love our neighbor, which is God, is the love with which we love Him.

17) Jn 17:11 (Pusey, II, 697, 20; *PG*, 74, 516, 14): "... that they may be one even as we are." Commenting on this petition for unity in the Lord's priestly prayer to the Father, Cyril notes just what the desired oneness consists in. It consists, of course, in charity.

He wants his disciples to persevere in harmony of mind and will as men who have striven to fasten themselves to one another in soul and spirit and by the law of peace and mutual love so as to realize an inviolate bond of charity. This is that supremely desirable union which is troubled and hindered by nothing. It does not degenerate into disagreement under the pressure of any of the cares or

concupiscences found in the world. Rather it preserves untroubled the vigor of charity in the unity of piety and holiness.

Fraternal charity makes Christians one. This union is an image of the unity in the Trinity. It is an image of God effected in us by Himself.<sup>28</sup> Going on to discuss how God realized this union in the early Church, how He brings it about even now, Cyril notes that the Eucharist makes us one body (*concorporales*) in and with Christ and that the presence of the Spirit of Christ gives us unity of spirit:

This union was in fact realized. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, 'The multitude of the believers were of one heart and soul,' in the union, that is, of the Spirit. This is what Paul too says (I Cor. 10:17): One body and one spirit: we, though many, are one body in Christ, since all of us share one bread and have been anointed in one Spirit, who is Christ's.

Baptism, the Eucharist, and the possession by all of one same Holy Spirit are the means God uses to make Christians one. The logical consequence (or the natural *effect*?) of the use of these means is mutual charity: "Therefore as men who are to be members of one body and sharers together of one same Spirit, he wants his disciples to persevere in untroubled oneness of spirit and undisturbed harmony."

On closer examination of the union of mutual charity, Cyril notes more exactly how it images the Trinity; it gives all true Christians a single will, which of course is God's will, as there is only one will for the three divine Persons:

Now if someone should say that the disciples are also united just as the Father and the Son are one not merely according to substance but also according to will (for there is only one willing in that holy nature and a single will for all three Persons), let him go on thinking so. He will not err from the truth. Among true Christians one can also discern identity of will, though we do not enjoy that consubstantiality which is found in the Father and him who is from him and in him, God the Word.

18) Jn 17:20 f. (Pusey, II, 729 ff; PG, 74, 552 ff.): "I pray for those also who . . . are to believe in me, that all may be one." Cyril's long explanation of these verses is merely a more detailed development of

<sup>28</sup> He says explicitly that God alone can and must preserve this union, this image of Himself (Pusey, *op. cit.*, II, 696, 15ff; PG, 74, 516, 6ff.): "He wants his disciples preserved by the might and power of that ineffable [divine] nature, rightly attributing to him who is truly and by nature God the ability to preserve without difficulty whomever he chooses."

the ideas expressed in the passage just quoted. Since he adds nothing new for our purposes, we need not cite and comment. These pages, however, deserve an attentive reading.

The general conclusion is that Cyril, in many respects even more clearly than his predecessors, sees love of neighbor as the love of something of God's or of God in neighbor; he sees it too as a participation in the very nature of God, who is charity.

#### ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

In his sermons St. John Chrysostom comes back again and again to urging his flock to practice fraternal charity. This is only to be expected; the Lord called this His commandment above all the others. Besides, the concrete circumstances in which, good shepherd that he was, Chrysostom found himself both in Antioch and in Constantinople offered him countless occasions to preach a very practical fraternal charity. As a result, passages of interest to us are so numerous that it is impossible to study them all. A few well chosen, however, suffice to give a clear idea of Chrysostom's thought. The Greek text on which the following translations are based is that of Migne.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Extrinsic explanations*

Chrysostom exhorts his hearers to love their neighbor, appealing to their love of God as motive. His argument is this: God wants us to love our neighbor; therefore if we love Him, we will do what He wants, we will also love our neighbor.

19) Jn 15:9 ff. (PG, 59, 415, 3): "Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love . . . . This is my commandment, that you love one another . . . ." Commenting on these verses, Chrysostom notes how intimately bound up the two charities are: "Do you see how the love of God is intertwined with our love of one another and connected with it like the links of a chain? That is why he sometimes says there are two commandments, sometimes only one. It is not possible that the man who has laid hold on the first should not possess the second too." The reason for this necessary connection is simply God's will: "If abiding [in God] comes from love, and love from the

<sup>24</sup> The Oxford *Library of the Fathers* (1839-1852) is very faithful to the Greek and has been used as the basis for most of my translations.

keeping of the commandments, and the commandment is that we love one another, then abiding in God comes from love for one another. . . .”

20) Mt 24:48 ff. (*PG*, 58, 709, 18): “But if that wicked servant. . . begins to beat his fellow servants. . . .” Insisting on the importance of fraternal charity, Chrysostom does not even hesitate to say that our neighbor’s good is to be preferred to apparently more heroic or spectacular acts of love of God, such as martyrdom. To prove this he cites St. Paul’s example in Phil 1:23 f.: “To depart and to be with Christ is better, yet to stay on in the flesh is more necessary for you.” He adds: “In preference even to going to Christ he chose his neighbor’s edification. For we are most truly with Christ when we are doing his will, and nothing is so much his will as that which is for our neighbor’s good.” We love Christ by loving our neighbor, i.e., we are united with Him by union of wills, because love of neighbor is His will; it is what pleases Him.

21) Mt 5:23 f. (*PG*, 57, 251, 20): “. . . leave thy gift before the altar and go first and be reconciled with thy brother.” At times Chrysostom emphasizes the greatness of God’s desire to bring us to love one another. He proves how great that desire is from the fact that all the wonders of God’s mercy, especially the economy of our redemption, are motivated by it. Unless we are ready to fulfill such a desire, we cannot by any other means, not even by sacrifice, please Him: “If it is even a prayer which you are offering in such a state of mind, it is better to leave your prayer and be reconciled with your brother and then offer your prayer. For this is the end for which all has been done; this the very end for which God became man and wrought all his great deeds, that he might set us at one.”

22) Mt 6:14 (*PG*, 57, 282, 6): “If you forgive men, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Our mutual union is not only God’s desire, but it is His supreme desire: “In order to show that what he abhors and hates most of all is remembrance of the wrongs we have suffered and that what wins greatest acceptance with him is the opposite virtue, he mentions this virtue once again. . . .”

23) Mt 18:10 ff. (*PG*, 58, 580, 28): “See that you do not despise one of these little ones . . . .” In some passages Chrysostom explains why God has so great a desire that we love others; it is His own great love for them. Thus against those who give scandal:

Do you see what a wall he has set up around them and what earnest care he takes of those that are contemptible and perishing? He threatens irremediable ills for those who make them fall. He promises great blessings for those who show them care and attention. He recalls once more his own example and that of the Father. Let us also imitate him, refusing none of the tasks that seem lowly and troublesome for our brothers' sake. Though we have to serve him, though he be lowly, though he be mean upon whom we must wait, though the work be laborious, though we must cross mountains and precipices, let all be held enduring for the salvation of our brother. For a soul is an object of such earnest care to God that he 'spared not his own Son.'

24) Rom. 13:8 ff. (*PG*, 60, 619, 26): "Owe no man anything except to love one another." In short, God has so great a love for our neighbor that He lays down our love for those whom He loves as a condition for His love of us.

Let us love one another, since in this way we shall also love God, who loves us. In the case of men, if you love a man who is loved, he who loves him is quarrelsome about it. But in this case he deigns to share his love with you and even hates you if you do not share it. Man's love is full of envy and grudging, but God is free from all passion. Hence he seeks others to share his love. He says, 'Love with me, and then you yourself will I love the more.' See the words of an ardent lover! 'If you love him whom I love, then I too will count myself greatly loved by you.' For he ardently desires our salvation.

### *Object*

The passages, then, are many where Chrysostom invites his audience to practice fraternal charity for motives that we might call extrinsic. Most of these passages, at least if considered in themselves and in their immediate context, do not require or justify a more profound interpretation. Many, if not all, of them are capable of and perhaps deserve such an interpretation in the light of Chrysostom's teaching as a whole. It is the rest of that teaching, his appeal to intrinsic motives, that we must now examine. Not infrequently he points out what we find in our neighbor to love.

25) Mt 10:1 ff. (*PG*, 57, 386, 7): "Having summoned his twelve disciples, he gave them power . . . to cure every kind of disease and infirmity." Often he notes as motive of mutual charity community of goods. We and our neighbor have so many things in common in the orders of both nature and grace. In fact, we have everything in common: "Many are the things that bind us together. One table is set be-

fore all; one Father begot us; we were all born of the same pangs; the same drink has been given to all, or rather not only the same drink, but even to drink out of the same cup.<sup>26</sup> It is God's desire to bind us all together by mutual love which has provided that we have all these goods in common: "The Father, desirous of bringing us to a tender mutual affection, has devised even that we should drink out of one cup—a mark of intense love." This external or material community of natural and supernatural goods, which in a sense identifies us with our neighbor, calls for the corresponding interior, or formal, bond or union, which is charity:

We have shared a spiritual table; let us also share a spiritual love. For if brigands, on sharing food, forget their characteristic trait [of violence], what excuse have we, who repeatedly partake together of the Lord's Body and do not imitate even their mildness? For many not even a common table but merely being of the same city was sufficient reason for friendship. And we, when we have the same city and house and table and way and door and root and life and head and shepherd and king and teacher and judge and maker and Father and all things in common, what indulgence can we deserve if we be divided from one another?

26) Mt 6:9 (*PG*, 57, 278, 4): "In this manner therefore shall you pray: Our Father. . . ." Our common prayers, offered for the good of the whole Mystical Body, destroy division and strengthen charity by reminding us that ". . . our greatest goods and needs we all have in common."

27) Mt 8:1 ff. (*PG*, 57, 331, 13): "I will: be thou made clean." Since we have all in common, we should regard our neighbor's good fortune as our own: "We have been taught so to love our fellow servants that we regard as our own the good fortune they enjoy."

28) Mt 24:48 ff. (*PG*, 58, 708, 13): "But if that wicked servant . . . begins to beat his fellow servants . . ." If the neighbor whom we must love is in some way identified with ourselves, he is also somehow identified with God. Commenting on the lot of the unfaithful servant who during his master's absence maltreated his fellow servants, Chrysostom notes: "Nothing provokes God so much as disdain for what concerns our neighbor. Therefore, to show his anger, he orders him to be cut asunder. Therefore too he affirmed love to be the distinguishing mark of his disciples. For it is altogether necessary that he who loves

<sup>26</sup> A reference to Communion received under the species of wine.

should be solicitous about the things of his beloved." By loving our neighbor we show love for God because our neighbor belongs to Him. It is He whom we love in our neighbor since we love our neighbor precisely inasmuch as he belongs to God.

29) Mt 25:31 ff. (*PG*, 58, 718, 27): "As long as you did it not for one of these least ones. . . ." Going a step further in his commentary on the Last Judgment, Chrysostom explains that in showing charity to others, at least to needy Christians, we do good to God Himself. This is why the damned merit not only punishment but eternal punishment; they have denied Him what they denied their fellow men.

Everyone of these things deserved punishment: the simplicity of the request, for it was bread; the pitiful state of him that asked, for he was poor; the compassion stirred up by the fact that he had the same nature, for he was a man; the desirability of the promise, for he promised a kingdom; the fearfulness of the punishment, for he threatened hell; the dignity of the one receiving, for it was God who was receiving through the poor; the surpassing nature of the honor that he deigned to lower himself so far; his just claim for what they should have bestowed, for he was receiving of what was his own.

The needy through whom God receives are Christ's brothers not only because they are lowly and poor as He was, but especially because of baptism and the Eucharist.

'As long as you did it not to one of these the least of my brothers, you did it not to me.' What art thou saying? They are thy brothers; how canst thou call them 'least'? For this very reason they are thy brothers, because they are lowly, because they are poor, because they are outcast. These are the ones he invites most of all to be his brothers: the unknown, the despised; and this does not mean only the monks and those who dwell on the mountainsides,<sup>26</sup> but every believer. Though he be a man living in the world, yet if he be hungry and starving and naked and a stranger, his will is that he should have the benefit of all this care. For by baptism a man becomes a brother and by participation in the divine Mysteries.

30) Mt 27:61 (*PG*, 58, 778B): "But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulcher." The same idea receives a more ample development in an exhortation to almsgiving

<sup>26</sup> In Chrysostom's time the hills around Antioch served as dwelling place for large numbers of monks; he himself had been one of them; cf. introduction to his homilies on Mt in *PG*, 57.

occasioned by a consideration of the charity which the holy women showed the dead Saviour at the sepulcher. Chrysostom reminds his hearers that they can show Him a like charity. It is Christ Himself who begs and receives our alms under the outward appearance of a needy Christian. The whole text merits quoting:

Do you see the women's courage? Do you see their affection? Do you see the generosity shown in the expenses they undertake, a generosity which goes so far as even to risk death?

Let us, who are men, imitate these women; let us not forsake Jesus in trial. They spent so much and exposed their lives for his dead body, while we—again I say it—neither feed him when hungry nor clothe him when naked. When we see him begging, we pass him by. If we really did see him, everyone of us would readily strip himself of all his goods. Yet now too it is he. He himself has said, 'It is I.' Why then do you not readily strip yourself of everything? For now too you hear him say, 'Thou dost it unto me.' It makes no difference whether you give to this man or to him; you have done nothing less than the women who then fed him, but even much more. Do not be startled! To have fed him when he appeared in his own person is not such a great thing; seeing him would be enough to move a heart of stone. It is not nearly so much as on his word alone to care for the poor, the maimed, the crippled. In the former instance the appearance and dignity of him who is seen diminishes the value of what is done, but in your case the reward of your kindness is left entire. There is greater proof of reverence towards him when at his mere word you care for your fellow servant and refresh him in every possible way. Refresh him and believe him who receives it and says, 'Thou givest unto me.' For unless you had given to him, he would not have counted you worthy of a kingdom. If you had not turned away from him, he would not have sent you to hell; if you had overlooked a mere chance person. Because it is he himself who is despised, therefore great is the blame. So too Paul persecuted him, in persecuting them that are his. That was why he said, 'Why art thou persecuting me?'

Let us feel, then, that we bestow on Christ himself when we give. Certainly his words are more trustworthy than our sight. When you see a poor man, then, remember the words by which he declared that it is he himself that is fed. For though that which is seen be not Christ, yet under this man's appearance Christ himself receives and begs.

Are you ashamed to hear that Christ begs? Rather be ashamed that you do not give when he begs of you. This is the shameful thing; this is a thing to be avenged and punished. For him to beg is an act of his goodness, and therefore we ought even to glory in it. For you not to give is the doing of your own cruelty. But if you do not believe now that in passing by a poor man who is a believer, you pass him by, you will believe it then when he will bring you into the midst and say, 'As long as you did it not to these, you did it not to me.'

31) I Cor 8:12 (*PG*, 61, 167, 14): "When you sin thus against the brethren . . . you sin against Christ." Explaining how wounding a brother's weak conscience is really sinning against Christ, Chrysostom lists the senses in which good or evil done to others reaches Christ—how, in other words, Christ is identified with our brothers: "How do they sin against Christ? First, because he considers the affairs of his familiars his own; again, because those who are wounded belong to his body and are his members; and finally, because what he built up by his sacrifice of himself, they tear down for the sake of their own ambition."

### *Origin*

It is not only by noting to whom we are showing love when we do good to our neighbor, the object of our love, that Chrysostom urges his hearers to practice fraternal charity. Another consideration which he sets before them over and over again is that charity makes us like God, imitators of God and Christ. But since he is so often bent on listing as many motives as he can find for love of neighbor, he quickly passes from one explanation to another—object, origin, extrinsic motives—and mixes them without much order. A passage which illustrates this rather well is the following.

32) Mt. 18:19 f. (*PG*, 58, 587 f.): "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst." Chrysostom comments at length:

What he says is equivalent to this: 'If anyone makes me the principal ground of his love for his neighbor, I will be with him'. . . . But now we see the majority of men with other motives of love. One loves because he is loved; another because he has been honored; a third because someone has been useful to him in some temporal matter; a fourth for some similar cause; but for Christ's sake it is a difficult thing to find anyone loving his neighbor sincerely and as he ought to love him. The greater number of men are bound to one another by their temporal affairs. Paul loved not in that way but for Christ's sake. Thus even when not loved in the way that he loved, he did not leave off loving because he had planted a strong root for his affection.

The ground and root of fraternal charity is Christ. Hence charity never fails (I Cor. 13:8) since its source and root is unfailing, whereas other friendships disappear when their perishable motivating cause fails:

He who loves because he is loved, should he meet with any displeasure, puts an end to his love; but he who is held by this motive will never desist. This is why Paul said, 'Charity never fails.'

What can you say? That when honored he insults you? That while receiving benefits he was minded to slay you? This itself is all the more reason to love, if you love for Christ's sake. For the things that in other cases undermine love here become apt to produce it.

The explanation of how this is possible makes appeal first to apparently extrinsic motives: "How? First, because such a man is for you a cause of rewards; secondly, because he who has such dispositions stands in need of much more help and care." However, hardly having noted these extrinsic considerations, he returns to the love of Christ as motivating force: "Therefore I say, he who loves for Christ's sake makes no inquiry about race or country or wealth or how much he himself is loved or any other such matter. Though he be hated, though he be insulted, though he be put to death, he continues to love, having as sufficient ground for his love Christ. This is why he stands resolute, firm, not to be overthrown, with eyes fixed on him. Why will he who loves Christ love others in this way? Because this is how Christ loved."

Christ himself loved his enemies in this way—the obstinate, the insulting, the blasphemers, those that hated him, those that would not so much as look upon him, those that preferred wood and stones to him; and this with the greatest possible love, greater than which one cannot find another. 'Greater love than this no man has,' he says, 'that a man should lay down his life for his friends.' See how he continues to treat with kindness the very men who crucified him and on so many occasions heaped abuse upon him. He even pleads with his Father for them, saying, 'Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And after they had done all that to him, he sent his disciples to them.

If we love Christ, we will love others as He did and thus—or in order to—become like Him: "This love let us also imitate; upon it let us fix our gaze, that being followers of Christ, we may attain both to the good things here and to those that are to come."

33) Mt 6:15 (*PG*, 57, 283, 5): "If you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you." At times Chrysostom insists on this motive. Charity, especially towards those who do us wrong, makes us like God our Father:

Once again he has mentioned heaven and the Father in order to put his hearer to shame, that he of all people, being the child of such a Father, should become a wild beast and, summoned as he is to heaven, should cling to an earthly and worldly sort of mind. Not by grace only ought we to be his children, but also in our works. And nothing makes us so like God as readiness to pardon the wicked and wrongdoers. This indeed he had already taught when he spoke of his making 'the sun shine on the evil and on the good' (Mt 5:45).

God wants us to love our neighbor precisely for this reason, that we may really be His children, that we may become like Him. This explains so many of His precepts: "For this same reason too he commands us to make our prayers common in every one of their petitions, saying, 'Our Father . . .,' everywhere commanding us to use this plural word that we may not retain so much as a vestige of anger against our neighbor." In fact, all that God does is aimed at uniting us: "He does and contrives everything to hinder our being at variance with one another."

Here Chrysostom passes on to charity as the "root of all goods" and the "short and easy way" of freeing ourselves from sin. After a detailed comparison between the way God acts in our regard—we who offend Him so often—and the uncharitable or even criminal way so many act towards their neighbor, he urges: "Let us, then, desist from this disease and this madness. The kindness which he enjoined let us show to those that have vexed us that we may become like 'our Father who is in heaven.'"

34) Mt 15:29 f. (PG, 58, 523, 14 and 524, 30): "Great crowds came to him. . . and he cured them." Exhorting his hearers to mercy and almsgiving, as he often does, Chrysostom lists the prerogatives of the latter. Of them all, the greatest is that almsgiving, which is an act of charity, makes us like God: "Almsgiving teaches you how you may become like God, which is the sum of absolutely all good things." Not only the thought of its numerous effects—expiation of sin, etc.—moves us to give alms but also our very nature. Because God so desired that we love one another, He implanted that tendency within us:

We have even a natural tendency to mercy. That is why we feel indignation in behalf of those who are wronged; and when we see men slain we are overcome, and looking upon them as they mourn, we weep. Since God wills that mercy should be perfectly practiced, he commanded nature to make a great contribution to that end. Thus he showed that it is an object of his very special care.

In fact, it is not only a tendency but rather man's very nature to love others just as it is God's:

With these things in mind, let us lead ourselves, our children, and the members of our household to the school of mercy. This above all let a man learn, since this is precisely what man is. For 'a great and precious thing is a merciful man' (Prov 20:6). Unless a man has this, he has ceased to be a man. . . . And why marvel that this is what man is? This is what God is. For he says: 'Be merciful like your Father' (Lk 6:36).

35) Mt 5:45 (*PG*, 57, 269, 19): "Love your enemies . . . so that you may be children of your Father in heaven." Since love is, so to speak, God's property, since it is His very nature, nothing renders us so like Him as charity towards others. To practice it is therefore the "peak of wisdom." And since it is not practiced without labor and effort, the Lord refers not to its lesser prerogatives but precisely to this greatest boast of fraternal charity when He preaches love of enemies: ". . . what was most marvelous of all, that we become like God in the way that it is possible for men to do so. For he says, 'that you may become like your Father in heaven.'"

36) Mt 7:6 f. (*PG*, 57, 311, 3): "Do not cast your pearls before swine. Ask and it will be given you." Not only does love for neighbor make Christians like God, but it makes them like ". . . the Lord of all as much as they can be like Him."

37) I Cor. 12 f. (*PG*, 61, 249 to 296). Almost every one of the ideas of the passages here cited recurs in Chrysostom's homilies on I Corinthians, especially homilies 30 to 34. Homilies 30 and 31 treat of the Mystical Body, our union or identification with Christ and fellow Christians; 32 to 34 discuss the necessity and prerogatives of fraternal charity.

It is more than evident from the few passages which we have studied and the almost innumerable texts which could have been cited along with them that Chrysostom like the Alexandrians preaches love of neighbor as the love of God in neighbor, love of neighbor inasmuch as he is God's, inasmuch as he is Christ, and insists that love of others is the very nature of man as it is the nature of Him of whom man is the image, God.

## OTHER COMMENTATORS

There are few texts which cannot be grouped with either the Alexandrian school or that of Chrysostom. Those few make no really new contribution. The following, however, may be noted.

38) St. Arsenius on Lk 10:25 ff. (*PG*, 66, 1623 ff.): "Thou shalt love . . . thy neighbor as thyself. . . . And who is my neighbor?" St. Arsenius, Egyptian ascetic of the early fifth century, addresses an apostrophe to the lawyer who put Christ to the test by asking which was the greatest commandment. In it he proposes as motive of love for the neighbor the common nature which all men possess and which Christ Himself came down to share. Nature makes us brothers and neighbors; charity proves us such. He stresses the etymology of "neighbor" as meaning "near," "close" (cf. the English "nigh"):

When he sees how unreasonable the lawyer is, unwilling to recognize anyone as his equal or neighbor, the Saviour reminds him of some who by nature, others who by free choice are his neighbors. . . . He points Adam out as the common first parent of all. Because of their union in him all men must be called brothers and neighbors. Then he calls brothers and neighbors those who of their own free will do good to one another. They are neighbors in an even truer sense since not only nature but free will as well binds them to one another.

By the parable of the Good Samaritan the Saviour convinces the lawyer that all men are neighbors, that all men's common nature makes them such. In accord with the command to "love thy neighbor as thyself" he must love all men:

Thus he corrects the lawyer, who according to the precept, 'Love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy,' had split nature in two, considering every foreigner an enemy. In fact there was a law that ordered a hostile attitude towards foreigners; still, it was not so much out of hatred—for all have a common nature—but rather because those who associated with them not infrequently fell into their idolatry . . . . Christ, come to heal this man's malady and the sorry state of others so afflicted, says in general, 'a certain man.' Thus he teaches that not merely this man or that is to be called our neighbor but everyone who has human nature. . . . The precept which prescribed, 'Love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy,' he passes by as imperfect, substituting for it his own law, which he also lays down in the place where he says, 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you.'

39) Hesychius on Lev. 19:18 (*PG*, 93, 1029, 26): "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord."

In his commentary on Leviticus, Hesychius, a priest of Jerusalem in the first decades of the fifth century (?),<sup>77</sup> explains the verse which becomes charity's second precept in the New Testament. We have only a Latin translation of the Greek original. "'And thou shalt love thy friend,' or according to the Septuagint, 'thy neighbor as thyself.' You have here in brief the whole law; by keeping this one precept, you can easily observe all the others. 'Charity,' says Paul (Rom 13:10), 'does neighbor no evil. Charity is therefore the fulfillment of the law.'" Not only does fraternal charity fulfill the law; it also fills our life with all sorts of goods, the goods of our neighbor. By love we become one with him and so, in a sense, enjoy what he possesses.

It also fills our whole life with good things. If I love my neighbor as myself and perhaps have no children, riches, beauty, worldly glory, or power, but see my neighbor with these things, I rejoice and am happy as though I had them myself; for in him I too do have them. This holds true for spiritual gifts as well. In these above all we must observe love for neighbor and not envy others.

We should be even more willing to see our neighbor in immediate possession of those goods than ourselves. Thus we imitate Christ and God:

Rather we must imitate Christ who so loved us that he let the apostles work greater signs than he did. In our passage too when he said: 'Thou shalt love thy friend or thy neighbor as thyself,' he added: 'I am the Lord; keep my laws.' And how much God loved us, you may learn from his own words. He observes, 'Greater love than this no one has, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.' This is why he said that his chief law [*or*: the law which was peculiarly his: *legem suam praecipuam*] is the precept of love—a remark which he makes on this precept and which you will find added to no other.

Charity, then, identifies us with our neighbor and makes us like Christ and God.

#### CONCLUSIONS

By way of conclusion we may attempt a synthesis and comparison of the doctrine of the Fathers studied. This is not a very difficult task. Both schools, the Alexandrians and Chrysostom, seek to identify the

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *PG*, 93, 785–86, II.

neighbor with God. The Alexandrians insist more on man as God's image and likeness. They refer frequently to Genesis' account of man's creation. St. John Chrysostom seeks to explain the neighbor's oneness with God by appealing more often to the New Testament doctrine of the Mystical Body (Mt 25; I Cor 12). For both, however, the object of our love of neighbor is God Himself in our neighbor; or rather our neighbor is God. We must and do love him if we love God; we do not love God if we do not love him.

With this in mind we need not wonder that the Fathers could speak of love of neighbor as the fulfillment of the whole law. Obviously whoever loves the neighbor loves God too, i.e., he also fulfills charity's first precept. The object of his love of neighbor is God.

On the other hand, we too are identified with our neighbor. In loving him we love ourselves. The very fact that we share the same nature already identifies us with him in some way; hence the Fathers could find charity's roots in all men's common nature. They did not conceive of human nature as we usually do, as a collection of individuals, each of which has the specifically same nature. Rather for them human nature was an organic whole, an organism with Adam, from whom all men descend, as head. When the Son of God raised human nature to union with Himself, our mutual bonds became stronger still and supernatural. We need not note here how much the Greek Fathers insist in their studies of the Incarnation that the Word assumed the whole of human nature; we usually incline to say that He assumed one of many individual human natures. All men are members of Christ. If an individual is not actually united with Christ by grace and charity, if he is a sinner or an infidel, he is like a branch cut off from its tree, but from its own tree. He is not in a merely negative way as yet not united to Christ; he is like an amputated member that must be grafted back to the body from which it has been cut off. This thought, expressed clearly and often by the Fathers, seems to be what underlies their failure to distinguish between love of Christian neighbors, who are actually members of Christ and children of God possessing His life, and the love of non-Christians, who are not in the same case. They note that the mysteries of Christian initiation, baptism and the Eucharist, identify men with Christ and God; but again they insist that no man must be excluded from our love of neighbor, which is love of Christ or God.

This oneness of object for the two charities is not the only way the Greek Fathers reduce love of neighbor to love of God, the second precept to the first. Both schools hold that our charity for the neighbor is an image of God's charity, or even more than this, a sharing in God's charity. The Alexandrians speak explicitly of the divine life which we image or share. This divine life consists essentially in charity. God has passed His divine life on to us by begetting us to the supernatural order. This divine life which we have received from Him is the charity which we have and show for our neighbor. Chrysostom, less inclined to speculate on the nature of charity than the Alexandrians, has the same doctrine, though perhaps a bit less explicitly. He insists quite frequently, for example, that charity makes us like our Father, who is charity. In fact, in one passage he notes that nothing makes us so like God as charity, since this is what He is.

Finally, these two aspects of fraternal charity are ample reason for the Fathers' insistence on the greatness of God's desire to see this virtue practiced. Conceiving of love of neighbor in such a way as this, they grasped very clearly why the Saviour called this His commandment and never tired of inculcating it.

The texts considered leave little room for doubt. In their exegetical works the Alexandrians and St. John Chrysostom have a common teaching on the relations of the love of God and neighbor. The fact that later commentators do hardly more than repeat the ideas of these masters makes this teaching the common doctrine of the whole of the Greek Fathers' exegesis. Details of explanations or modes of expression may differ. Ideas may be less explicit in the earlier commentators. But gradually unfolding and gathering import with almost each successive exegete, the universal teaching finally asserts itself fully and emphatically. Love of neighbor is love of God. It is love of God, first of all, because it is love of neighbor—be he saint or sinner—who is, and to the degree that he is, identified with God. But it is also love of God—and this is the reason to which the Fathers attach greater import—because charity, love of God in neighbor, is God; it is a sharing by us in what is exclusively proper to God, His divine nature. There are not two charities; there is only one, which is God. For the Greek Fathers, as for the Apostle John, God is charity; and, we may add, charity is God.