

THE NOTION OF CHARITY IN VATICAN II Real Consideration, Complicated Integration

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Introduction

Charity is one of the themes of moral theology to have benefited from a renewal in the twentieth century thanks to research by moralists convinced of the need to return to biblical and patristic sources of morality. Over the centuries, the charity has seen many hazards including, for example, Jansenism, the quarrel about the pure love, formalism... On the eve of Vatican II, moralists operated a homecoming of morality to regain the prominent place of charity as a virtue which places the human being in connection with the Trinitarian life. This theological renewal, marked by theologians such as Fritz Tillmann, Gustave Thils, Yves de Montcheuil, Jacques Leclercq, Odon Lottin, Philippe Delhay and Bernhard Häring, take some distance with the moral of manuals "centred on venial or mortal sins to confess, and written for confessors who were asked to situate themselves as judges."¹ In this context of a strict moral

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¹B. Häring, *La théologie morale. Idées maîtresses*, Recherches Morales, Paris: Cerf, 1992, 58; cf. J. Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology : A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987; J. F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century, From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*, London/New-York: Continuum, 2010, 29.

obligation, many came to believe more in sin than salvation.² The renewal around charity will find a favourable echo during the Second Vatican Council. The international consultation of bishops and universities clearly indicated a desire to give a theological dimension to the moral life that can not only be a set of legal requirements. But the great difficulty was to integrate the hope of renewal in the *De ordine morali*, due to the complexity of the issue of charity and of possible deviations about it. Nevertheless, the theologians of the renewal - which account for some as experts at the council - and of the Council Fathers gradually came to define the contours of a Christian life structured on and guided by charity to achieve in Chapter 5 of *Lumen Gentium* (LG), failing to offer a specific text of fundamental moral theology centred on charity: the universal call to holiness is the result of integration of the slow and difficult moral renewal around charity in the conciliar texts: charity understood as an expression of Trinitarian love which man is asked to comply (LG 39-42).³

Whether in church or in humanity, a questioning about charity has many difficulties to structure the moral life in a responsorial manner. Human being is pressed by charity to fulfil his/her vocation to holiness and to join the Creator in all acts of his/her life. This response is considered in the performance of the double commandment of love which places man in relation to God and to accept the grace of God.⁴

1. The Emergence of the Issue of Charity during the Antepreparatory Period

The international consultation of the bishops and different academic institutions gave importance to charity in the proposals sent back.

²Cf. J.F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., 5: "From the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries the morally upright stance was fairly minimal: avoid sin."

³Cf. P. d'Ornellas, *Liberté, Que dis-tu de toi-même ? Une lecture des travaux du Concile Vatican II, 25 janvier 1959 – 8 décembre 1965*, Saint-Maur: Parole et Silence, 1999.

⁴Cf. F. Gil Hellin, *Lumen Gentium. Constitutio dogmatica de Ecclesia Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon patrum orationes atque animadversiones*, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995. There are three categories in the official texts of the council. The first covers the ante-preparatory period (AAP: *Acta and Documenta Concilio Vaticano II Oecumenico apparando, Series I: Antepreparatoria*), the second concerns the preparatory period (AP: *Acta and Documenta Concilio Vaticano II Oecumenico apparando, Series II: Praeparatoria*) and the last contains the conciliar proceeding itself (AS: *Acta synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vatican II*).

These proposals can be classified into three categories: a first category of claims underlines the importance of rediscovering the role of virtues in general (moral and theological virtues): "In the books of morality to be published, and also in preaching, we especially should expose theological and cardinal virtues, and the first three commandments of the Decalogue, life in God's grace and the sacraments⁵"; a second category of those proposals shows the importance of charity within Christian morality⁶ (*ad intra*) and in its specific connection with welfare⁷ (*ad extra*); a last category includes proposals of the Holy Office, which has a moral obligation (*De ordine morali*) and sees a danger if the theme of charity is developed in defiance of laws and other virtues.⁸ All responses to the consultation launched for the organization of the council could provide a broad picture of the charity. There was an interest in the treatment of charity in the moral discourse of the Church, not only so that it could be heard by human society, but also as a way of rebalancing the teaching of morality within the Church.

2. The Difficult Integration of Charity

During the preparatory period, charity was considered in an unsatisfactory manner in the *De ordine morali*. That text was also rejected by the Council Fathers. The question was twofold: is charity one means among others allowing man to obey God's law, or has charity a special status in the structuring of the moral life.⁹ An initial work plan says charity is only one criterion of morality among others: "love as a criterion of morality: correctness and danger of this principle."¹⁰

This initial work plan takes account of the ante-preparatory consultation, but it forms charity as a part of the objective moral order. In response to this plan, Philippe Delhaye emphasizes virtues, especially charity as essential moral themes for the conciliar thinking:

⁵AAP II/III, 274 ; cf. AAP II/II, 43 ; AAP II/III, 238.

⁶Cf. AAP II/V, 27 ; AAP II/II, 120, 516 ; AAP IV/II, 802 ; AAP IV/I-1, 437-439 ; AAP II/III, 355, 395 ; AAP II/VI, 281 ; AAP II/I, 293.

⁷Cf. AAP II/III, 485 ; AAP II/I, 66, 170, 484 ; AAP II/II, 742.

⁸Cf. AAP III, 16.

⁹G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, t. I : *Le catholicisme vers une nouvelle époque. L'annonce et la préparation (janvier 1959-octobre 1962)*, E. Fouilloux, ed. fra., J. Mignon, V. Liard-Brandver, B. Lauret, transl., Paris/Louvain: Cerf/Peeters, 1997, 274-280 ; P. d'Ornellas, *Liberté, op. cit.*, 101-193.

¹⁰Cf. G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, 107-151.

“primacy of the theological virtue of charity, mother and form of the virtues and its influence on the human act God, thus rendering meritorious. It is hoped that the religious value of the theological virtues of good behaviour in the Christian life is to be proclaimed anew.¹¹” The author stresses the need to integrate external and internal acting: external acts are driven by internal intentions of which charity is the mother and form. Because of his status as son of God, man remembers that his whole being and his actions are expected to move towards God, precisely in the implementation of the virtue of charity as the rule and measure.

Despite these remarks, there is only the third chapter of the draft of *De ordine morali* which deals with love and charity:¹² “Subjectivism and Ethical Relativism, and Love as a Criterion of Morality.”¹³ Paragraph 15, *De amore criterio moralitatis* of this chapter reminds the double commandment of love from Scripture (1 Cor 13: 13; 16: 14) with a particular emphasis on the distortions of meaning for charity. The reference to the Constitution *Unigenitus* of Clement XI remembers that God rewards the actions of glory and grace but not without charity. Conversely, the reference to the Augustinian expression *Ama et fac quod vis* raises the difficulty of those who neglect the commandments in favour of love.

There are those who make love the sole criterion of morality and its only standard. The true divine charity, which is to love God above all things and our neighbour for God’s sake, is ‘greater’ than faith, hope and all the other virtues (1 Cor 13: 13). Love does not destroy the theological virtues or the other virtues but love promotes them so that we could enter ‘in the prime of life to the fullness of Christ’ (Eph 4: 13). The Sacred Council exhorts the faithful, so that all their actions will be done ‘into love’ (1 Cor 16: 14) [...] Beware that this saying: ‘Love and do what you want’ is misunderstood, so that the Christian life would be reduced to one point which is: ‘Love’. For, to those who, in their lives, reduce love to a condition to disregard the observance of all the commandments, there is the requirement of the Lord: ‘If you will enter into life, keep the commandments (Mt 19: 17).¹⁴

The text does not present love in a positive way and the Bible is not taken into account to establish the role of charity. Thus, the proposed

¹¹Archives of Funds Delhayé, n°88.

¹²Cf. Archives of Funds Delhayé, n°13, 11-12.

¹³Archives of Funds Delhayé, 11.

¹⁴Archives of Funds Delhayé, n°1, 14-15.

amendments would be based on many biblical references, while stressing the weak role given to charity.¹⁵ For example, Philippe de la Trinité wanted one evoke the “primacy of charity” rather than refute the errors about it.¹⁶ René Laurentin said he would introduce the notion of true love which would not destroy or abolish the law but integrate and support it referring to Mt 5:17.¹⁷ And Georges Jouassard said about the difficulties with the question of charity:

Only love enables us to produce the first precept of Christian morality: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5: 48). This is the doctrine of the Church Fathers, including St Augustine, found in the *Tractatus in Ioannis Evangelium* and *Tractatus in Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos*. We read (PL 35, 2033), ‘Love and what you want, do it’, and not the adage misunderstood as expressly stated in this chapter 3: ‘Love and do what you want’, as demonstrated recently by J. Gallay, in *RSR* 43 (1955), p. 545-555 and P. Agaësse, in *Saint Augustin, Commentaire de la Première Épître de S. Jean*, SC 75, Paris, 1961, p. 80-81 and p. 328-329, cf. p. 31-102. It would be of great interest not only not to exclude love as the ‘sole criterion of morality and its single standard’, but to expose the importance and the truth of this theological notion of charity that was the root of all virtues in Christ and who will be in us by Christ.¹⁸

Among these amendments, we note the *votum* proposed by Philippe Delhaye offering a chapter *3bis*, entitled *From the preeminence of charity in the Christian moral order* in 4 sections: 1. Errors on charity; 2. The first commandment of the new law, 3. The reality of the other commands under the influence of charity 4. The intention of charity in Christian life.¹⁹ In the introduction, he wishes that changes be made in No. 15 of Chapter 3 of the *De ordine morali*. He states, however, that his proposal is not a schema text, but a matter of discussion for the preparing. There are two main reasons for making changes to the draft concerning the virtue of charity: formal reasons,

¹⁵The document has 52 pages of amendments; cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°53, *Animadversiones membrorum et consultorum, in constit. de Ordine morali* (C.T.8/61 : 28), C.T.8/61 : 30, S/C De Ord. Mor. *Animadversiones*, 12 sept. 1961 ; G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, op. cit., t. I, 277-280.

¹⁶Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n° 53, *Animadversiones membrorum et consultorum, in constit. de Ordine morali*, op. cit., 7.

¹⁷Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n° 53, 13-14.

¹⁸Archives of Funds Delhaye, n° 53, 16 ; cf. Saint Augustin, *Commentaire de la Première épître de S. Jean*, op. cit., 80 ; J. Gallay, “*Dilige et quod vis fac*. Notes d’exégèse augustiniennne,” in *RSR* 43 (1955), 545.

¹⁹Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71 ; cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°53, 17-21.

and theological reasons. Firstly, the formal reasons want to give charity more place into the plan: "Charity is the principal virtue of Christian moral order. That is why in an overall perspective, it is necessary that this virtue is treated not only 16 lines but at least as far as consciousness (64 lines) or sin (83 lines).²⁰" Secondly, the theological reasons, however, are the most significant of the necessary rebalancing: "On the other hand, one wishes that the doctrine of charity is not only intended to condemn the errors of the Jansenists who give up too much space to this virtue to the point of ignoring other Christian virtues, but also to meet the errors of laxism that played down the rule of charity."²¹ So that the charity is not confined to its minimum expression, Philippe Delhaye does not hesitate to multiply quotations from Scripture, Thomas Aquinas and magisterial texts. He considers the same way two erroneous tendencies about the charity that are maximalism and minimalism. He said it is possible to treat fairly charity without falling into these two errors. Philipp Delhaye describes the errors that circulate about the charity for those "who make love the sole criterion of morality and its single standard."²² Mt 23: 3 and 7: 21 illuminate his thought. It details in particular misinterpretation of the Augustinian expression "Love and do what you want": "We must also beware that simple, misunderstanding the adage 'Love and what you want, do it', would not be believed wrongly that it is only one commandment to remember in the Christian life, namely 'Love', and forget not the Lord's words: 'If you love me, keep my commandments.'"²³ Between these two extreme positions, Philippe Delhaye determines what should be the position of the Council: "From there, the Council teaches that charity is the first commandment of the Lord and the primordial root of all others, while the other commandments and the other virtues are required under the inspiration of charity."²⁴

For Philippe Delhaye, maximalism and minimalism are two categories of errors which cannot give a good definition about charity. He develops his argument presenting charity as a mother and form of the virtues. His presentation is largely based on the scriptures. Charity can be called mother of all virtues because the

²⁰Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 1.

²¹Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 1.

²²Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 4.

²³Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71,, 4; cf. P. d'Ornellas, *Liberté*, 150-151.

²⁴Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 4.

new law which governs Christian life is an act of charity. Charity can also be called a form of virtue because of its influence on other virtues and other commandments.²⁵ The abundance of biblical quotations to support his theological reasoning should be noted. About charity, Philippe Delhaye refers to many biblical passages. His method is a concrete illustration of biblical renewal in theology. It summarizes the scriptural passages referring to charity (Mt 22: 35-40, Lk 10: 25-28, Jn 14: 15.21.23.24), especially 1 Cor 13: 8-10. He resumed the position of Clement XI, against the position of the Jansenists and Baius: "If only the charity was the Christian duty to do the good, the Lord could not say, 'if you will enter into life, keep the commandments'" (Mt 19: 17).²⁶ For Philippe Delhaye, charity does not exclude the commandments, nor the other virtues and duties of the moral order. These must be observed from (*ex*) the love of God and neighbour or because of (*ob*) him. He interprets the Pauline teaching of the commandments summarized in charity and Jesus' teaching that they depend on charity.²⁷ Thus, "made with charity as a principle and purpose underlying the commandments of charity, they are set by her and they met at her as the head, or relate to her as a support."²⁸

This does not mean that charity is just an absolute requirement or precept (Mt 10: 39; 19: 29; 10: 42; 18: 5; Col 3: 17-25; 1 Cor 10: 31; 16: 14).²⁹

Following the discussion on requests for amendments by the Preparatory Theological Commission of the *De ordine morali*, the fourth sub-committee reworked the draft before submitting it for approval by the Central Commission. But the changes are not significant.³⁰

After the preparatory period, the reactions of the Council Fathers and experts deal with problems regarding the charity. They began to wonder if the discussion with the Central Commission has been in

²⁵Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 4-6.

²⁶Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 6.

²⁷Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 6 ; P. d'Ornellas, *Liberté*, 147-148.

²⁸Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 6.

²⁹Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°71, 7.

³⁰Cf. Archives of Funds Delhaye, n°54-55, n°139 ; P. d'Ornellas, *Liberté*, 154-159 ; Ph. Delhaye, "Les points forts de la théologie morale à Vatican II," in *StMor* 24 (1986) 11-12 ; *AP II/II*, 62-63 ; *AP II/II*, 70.

vain.³¹ More broadly, it is “throughout this chapter [which] seems to be defective, both in form and content in the text.”³² The Bishop of Versailles summarizes the situation thus: “The chapter on Christian morality is not sufficient in the full Light of Faith, in the originality of the message of the Lord.”³³

3. The Consideration of Charity as Holiness

The difficulties to consider charity resurfaced in the conciliar Period. In the first session, the schema *De ordine morali* is dismissed in its entirety; the schema *De Ecclesia* did not mention a universal call to holiness and Christian perfection was exclusively reserved to the religious life.

During the first intersession, the Coordination Commission worked to offer more consistent patterns. On the list of twenty patterns established, Cardinal L.-J. Suenens was responsible for overseeing the work on *the De Ecclesia* and the *De ordine morali*.³⁴ It was based on a hard finding to justify the redesigning of these two patterns: He pointed out the chaotic and inadequate schema of *De Ecclesia* that looked more like a theological treaty than a doctrinal conciliar Constitution. The ecumenical intent does not appear and the pattern does not reflect the entirely Catholic Doctrine.³⁵

Similarly, he believes that the *De ordine morali* is insufficiently dogmatic, too controversial, too subject to the psychological elements which science is recent: there is a danger in this area to engage permanently, particularly in regard to sin³⁶. In the opening chapter that lays the foundation of the moral order, he regrets the extrinsic theological statements and the too static presentation of natural law. In addition, the chapter excludes many moral relativism and subjectivism: “The situation of each being basically the same for all, the same basic moral standards and objective and absolute worth for all. This section excludes subjectivism or relativism in ethics.”³⁷ He finally recalls that, in the human condition which is basically the

³¹Cf. AS, *Appendix*, 69 ; G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, t. I, 464-474.

³²AS, *Appendix*, 115.

³³AS, *Appendix*, 289.

³⁴Cf. AS V/1, 40-42.

³⁵Cf. AS V/1, 91-92.

³⁶Cf. AS V/1, 144.

³⁷AS V/1, 146.

same for all, everyone is in a unique and personal situation. In the supernatural order, God communicates his various gifts to build one body of Christ, that is to say, the Church in the diversity of its members. From this foundation and this singularity, which is profoundly human, man can achieve moral perfection with the help of reason and of the Holy Spirit.³⁸

The question of religious commitment and religious life is important, but even before addressing the role of the evangelical counsels, it was for the authors of the schema to redefine the baptismal foundation of all Christian life. This could not be sufficiently achieved by a formal amendment of the text. The latter should be rethought from “new prospects by making to the foreground the universal call to holiness which flow from particular forms of spirituality equally valid for all.”³⁹ Gerard Philips, Assistant Secretary of the Theological Commission, confirms this shift when he wrote in his conciliar Notebooks dated May 21, 1963: “Nothing is decided for Chapter 4 *De consiliis Evangelicis*. The sub-committee concerned, chaired by Archbishop Šeper, has no direction. As the Coordinating Commission wants to extend the project to the ways of holiness in general, this chapter is fully questioned.”⁴⁰

The ideas of vocation in the Church and vocation to holiness were gradually becoming themes assumed by the council assembly and developed in the *De Ecclesia*.⁴¹ Of course, objections were made against a broad conception of holiness, by theologians such as S. Tromp.⁴² Notwithstanding these criticisms, the emergence of the theme of holiness became a reality shared by a growing number of Council Fathers since a special sub-committee was mandated to

³⁸Cf. AS V/1, 146.

³⁹G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, t. II : *La formation de la conscience conciliaire. La première session et la première intersession (octobre 1962-septembre 1963)*, E. Fouilloux, ed. fra., J. Mignon, V. Liard-Brandver, B. Lauret, transl., Paris/Louvain: Cerf/Peeters, 1998, 484.

⁴⁰K. Schelkens, ed., *Carnets conciliaires de Mgr Gérard Philips, secrétaire adjoint de la Commission doctrinale*, Texte néerlandais avec traduction française et commentaires, L. Declerck (intr.), IT XXIX, Leuven, Maurits Sabbibliotheek Faculteit: Godgeleerdheid/Uitgeverij Peeters, 2006, 109.

⁴¹G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, t. IV : *L'Église en tant que communion. La troisième session et la troisième intersession (septembre 1964-septembre 1965)*, E. Fouilloux, ed. fra., J. Mignon, V. Liard-Brandver, B. Lauret, transl., Paris/Louvain: Cerf/Peeters, 2003, 291.

⁴²K. Schelkens, ed., *Carnets conciliaires de Mgr Gérard Philips*, 111.

“situate the text in a broader context⁴³” taking as a working basis paper by G. Thils on the vocation to holiness, *De vocatione ad sanctitatem in Ecclesia*. From the outset, the author of this consensus text devoted the second section of his thinking to the institutes of evangelical perfection.⁴⁴ Apart from some points of detail on the first section, “the corrected the draft of Section 2 does not cause any difficulty⁴⁵.” Chapter 3, *De populo Dei et de speciatim de laicis*⁴⁶ and chapter 4, *De vocatione ad sanctitatem in Ecclesia*⁴⁷ from the *De Ecclesia* are completed on July 4, 1963. In Chapter 4, Cardinal L. J. Suenens gives the following *relatio*: “This text presents a positive and true doctrine which responds to the pastoral needs of our time. By exposing the true vocation to holiness, we wish to emphasize the paschal character of life and of Christian holiness.”⁴⁸

This is the text written by G. Thils during the first intersession which is presented to the Council Fathers. It consists of an introduction (No. 28) and two parts: Part 1 (No. 29-31) deals with the universal call to holiness for all members of the Church, Part 2 (No. 32-36) deals with various states of perfection in the Church.⁴⁹

The understanding of the Church as People of God “which draws its unity from the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (LG 4) brings the *De ordine morali* out of the extrinsecism. Charity does not become the basis of a treaty of moral theology but it is the consequence of an ecclesiology based on a Trinitarian perspective: love is a principle of Christian life that does the same communion among men that Trinitarian communion in God. In the first part, the universal call to holiness is established in connection with the commandment of love (No. 29).⁵⁰ This is in response to God’s call to be “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5: 48), that all Disciples of Christ are called to holiness, the fullness of Christian life. Holiness is to seek

⁴³K. Schelkens, ed., *Carnets conciliaires de Mgr Gérard Philips*, 111.

⁴⁴Cf. K. Schelkens, ed., *Carnets conciliaires de Mgr Gérard Philips*, 112-113.

⁴⁵K. Schelkens, ed., *Carnets conciliaires de Mgr Gérard Philips*, 112.

⁴⁶Cf. AS V/1, 574-583.

⁴⁷Cf. AS V/1, 583-594.

⁴⁸AS V/1, 594.

⁴⁹Cf. AS V/1, 584, au sujet du n°29. Ce projet de texte est adressé aux Pères le 19 juillet 1963 ; cf. G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, t. II, 484, note 1.

⁵⁰Cf. AS V/1, 592.

perfection in charity in the twofold commandment of love according to the measure of Christ's gift. The vocation to holiness can be called universal because all men are invited to follow Christ and, for those who are disciples, this call is a charter of life. This life in the unique holiness is exercised in many different ways in the life of the baptized (No. 30): alongside bishops, priests, deacons, religious and faithful baptized, the text presents marriage as a way of holiness: "We will then speak of the holiness of married couples and Christian parents and all for progress in holiness for the glory of the Most Holy Trinity and the manifestation of the mystery of the Church."⁵¹ The pursuit of holiness is varied depending on the state of life of every baptized but this search is consistent in the commandment of love that contains all the virtues and the evangelical counsels (No. 31). This command instructs the perfection of charity. Concerning the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, it is recalled that all Christians are not called to an actual practice of these counsels, but that everyone should strive to live these counsels with the concrete ways that are given by charity.⁵²

The second part develops the practice of the evangelical counsels in religious life (No. 32). This state of perfection (No. 33) is determined by rules approved under the authority of the Church (No. 34) which holds in high esteem the religious state, and perpetual consecration which never minimize but promote personality of those who are down that road (No. 35). Finally, the council praises religious life and every believer who is committed to this way of holiness (No. 36).

Chapter 4 is also accompanied by detailed notes⁵³ which call for several remarks from us:

1. A Definition of Perfection

A note seeks to better define the term of perfection related to Mt 5: 48. References are from the scriptural and patristic given (Jac 1: 4; 3: 2; *Didache* 1: 4; 3: 2; Ignatius of Antioch to the Ephesians, Origen and Pseudo-Macarius) and the theological given (*II^a-II^{ae}*, 184, 3). Perfection consists in charity and in full, it is of obligation.

⁵¹AS V/1, 592.

⁵²Cf. AS V/1, 592.

⁵³Cf. AS V/1, 587-592.

2. The Biblical Basis of God's Love and Love of Neighbour

The references are almost exclusively biblical. The note recalls Dt 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18 referred to in Mt 22:37-40 and Lk 10:27. Man must choose to love God and stick to it (Mt 6:24). The true love of neighbour is proposed in the Golden Rule (Mt 7:12) and extended to enemies (Mt 5:43; Lk 6:28). This love never ends (Rom 13:8), and lives in deeds and in truth (1 Jn 3:18). The new commandment is founded in Christ's love (Jn 13:34) which renews all things (2 Cor 5: 17) in true holiness and righteousness (Eph 4:24). Christ's love in the new commandment is unlimited in its application, it equates the Christian to Christ and gives life to the Spirit of Christ (Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 3:16; Jn 17:21; Mt 25:40; Rm 5:5).⁵⁴

3. The Universal Call to Holiness

The double commandment of love of God and neighbour says that all men are called to one and the same holiness. "The first and principal way to achieve holiness lies in the love of God and love of neighbour, which is both the form and the end of holiness"⁵⁵ as shown by biblical (1 Tim 1:5) and theological references (*II^a-II^{ae}*, 44, 2; 184, 1). This commandment of love is realized in the acts and in the exercise of all virtues (Mt 7:12; 22:40; Jn 14:21; Rom 13:10; 1 Cor 13:4; Col 3:15). Finally, the universal call to holiness lived in each state according to the diversity of life, is already contained in the spiritual tradition: "God does not want each person to keep all the counsels, and only those that are appropriate to the diversity of people, time, opportunities and forms, as well as charity requires ... All counsels are given for the perfection the Christian people, but not that of each individual Christian."⁵⁶ The evangelical counsels are not the only way to achieve the perfection of love which would be recommended for religious. Holiness is everyone's business because "wherever we are, we can and must aspire for perfection in life."⁵⁷

Interventions of the Council Fathers on the vocation to holiness highlight⁵⁸ some shortcomings in the text concerning charity⁵⁹

⁵⁴Cf. AS V/1, 580.

⁵⁵AS V/1, 588.

⁵⁶François de Sales, *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, VIII, 6, cité par AS V/1, 590. Cf. *Ia-IIae*, 184, 7, ad 1; 44, 4, ad 3.

⁵⁷François de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote*, I, 3, cité par AS V/1, 587-588.

⁵⁸Cf. AS II/3, 368-389, 632-670.

including a lack of precision, but overall satisfaction is perceptible.⁶⁰ Holiness is to be understood as a constant and progressive sanctification of the Christian who is on the way to the fullness of grace and love of the Father; he tries to live the virtues of faith, hope and charity. Thus, holiness is perfection in a life according to charity: "Holiness in this life is a relative perfection which is not static and complete, but dynamic and perfectible. All Christians can grow in holiness."⁶¹

The question of charity is processed through the prism of holiness and perfection from the point of view of the function of the evangelical counsels and the place of religious life in the Church. Until then, monks and nuns were seen as the best people living the virtue of charity, the religious life was the perfect way of pursuing holiness in the Church. Consideration of the baptismal vocation of the Christian into its deepest purpose led to difficulties with the religious who feared a lessening of their place in the Church and a weakening of their vocation. On the contrary, there has been a deepening of their specific vocation.⁶² These means of sanctification are not exclusive but specific to the consecrated life that everyone can commit to follow because of one's baptism. The evangelical counsels are the means of salvation which are not reserved for certain people: "Holiness is not a state but a driving force (Cardinal A. Bea). It is the mark of the true Church, whatever the weaknesses and failures of its members. To reach the top, those who are called to holiness must use the means available to them generously, [...] in a word, universal charity."⁶³

The major problems of the *De Ecclesia* are regarding the episcopate, collegiality and diaconate. The vocation to holiness in the Church is not the fundamental issue considered by the council. The

⁵⁹Cardinal J. De Barros Camara, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1585-1586 ; cf. *AS* II/3, 592-593. Cardinal F. Quiroga y Palacios, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1586 ; cf. *AS* II/3, 600-602. P.-E. Léger, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1593 ; cf. *AS* II/3, 633. Mgr F. Lopez de Moura, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1597 ; cf. *AS* II/4, 53-54.

⁶⁰Cardinal R. Silva Henriquez, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1583, cf. *AS* II/3, 370 ; Mgr L. Morstabilini, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1584, cf. *AS* II/3, 380-382 ; Cardinal M.-G. Cerejeira, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1585, cf. *AS* II/3, 590-592 ; Cardinal A. Béa, in *AS* II/3, 640 ; Mgr W. A. Schoemaker, in *DC* 60 (1963), 1583, cf. *AS* II/3, 373.

⁶¹*AS* II/3, 655.

⁶²Cf. G. Phillips, *L'Église et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican, Histoire, texte et commentaire de la Constitution Lumen Gentium*, t. I, Paris: Desclée, 1967, 40-45.

⁶³G. Phillips, *L'Église et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*, 41 ; cf. *DC* 60 (1963), 1590.

mainstreaming of holiness, however, shows the awareness that the Church cannot be presented only in the categories of the faithful or approached by themes and images such as People of God, Temple of the Spirit and the Body of Christ. The Church founded on Christ presupposes ecclesial life whose origin is charity, which is the rule of life in holiness and perfection. The text of G. Thils is an acceptable synthesis, though incomplete, in that, "starting from the universal call to holiness, the new text describes the multifaceted exercise of that holiness, the means used and the importance of this vocation for the life of the Church, whose authority must be respected."⁶⁴

Most of the subsequent amendments to the text on the vocation to holiness concern the distinction between the holiness of the baptized and the religious life, namely, whether we need to talk in two separate sections or in one: How to deal with the universal call to holiness of all the baptized without harming the role of religious life? In *LG*, the dividing line between the two ways to pursue holiness can be found as follows: on the one hand, thanks to the baptism, everyone including the religious require to respond to the vocation to the perfection of charity; on the other hand, religious life is a particular way to answer the call to holiness and not mandatory, though any other baptized person who wishes to follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience can undertake it.

The life of every baptized person is placed under the motion of divine love. Forms and categories, the ways and means are varied in response to this divine call to live a life of love. Modes are varied, the goal is the same: to participate in the holiness of the Father, reach the perfection of charity according to the new commandment that is lived through the Son and the new name of God that is revealed by word and deed.

Conclusion

Finally, there is an integration of charity in the work of theologians of the renewal, the experts and the Council Fathers: the life of every baptized person is oriented towards perfect charity of the Father that is communicated the Son. The orientation of human acts to charity is realized in the practice of double biblical commandment, namely, the law of charity towards God and neighbour. Conciliar debates on the

⁶⁴G. Alberigo, ed., *Histoire du concile Vatican II (1959-1965)*, t. II, 485.

vocation to holiness helped to reach a consensus, without neglecting the uniqueness of religious life, that charity should not be understood exclusively in terms of the evangelical counsels. As noted by Jean Desclos:

The primacy of charity in this sense can overcome any temptation to build an ethics with two degrees, one of the commandments and the other of advice. Charity is the source, soul and end of the holiness to which all are called (LG 42; AA 4). The distinction of vocations and charisms in the people of God is not related to the diversity of personal efforts of believers to be holy.⁶⁵

Moral life has a fundamental unity guaranteed by divine charity. This unity occurs in the world in moral actions of individual Christians who are called to grow in number and intensity under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. "By inviting the faithful to perfection, the council really thinks that those who are called by Christ must grow endlessly and tirelessly to become conformed to the image of the person of Christ."⁶⁶ These acts are not only those of obedience to divine law (or Church), but involves an attitude to firmly and dramatically live charity according to the twofold commandment of love. This horizon of moral growth is not an unattainable superhuman morality and it is in concrete acts that man progresses at his own pace, driven by the impulse of his will despite the inconstancy of his existential desire, driven by his desire to conversion in spite of his sin, benefiting from the dynamism of grace perfecting nature.

Charity structures the moral life of each person like a blessing and a commandment, a divine gift and a divine law written in the heart of man as an ongoing process of conversion. This is an important point reiterated by the Council that needs to be told to the people of today who are searching salvation and redemption.

⁶⁵J. Desclos, *Libérer la morale. Christocentrisme et dynamique filiale de la morale chrétienne à l'époque de Vatican II*, Montréal/Paris: Éditions Paulines/Médiaspaul, 1991, 127.

⁶⁶J. Fuchs, *Le renouveau de la théologie morale selon Vatican II*, Tournai, Desclée, 1968, 80 ; cf. G. Philips, *L'Église et son mystère au IIe Concile du Vatican*, t. I, 56.