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Charity as Friendship According to St. Thomas Aquinas

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CHARITY AS FRIENDSHIP ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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Dedication

To our Heavenly Mother, *Stella Maris,* Star of the Sea.

"It is surely fitting that her name is *Mary*, which is akin to the *Star of the Sea*, for just as sailors are directed to port by the star of the sea, so also are Christians guided by Mary to glory."
-Saint Thomas Aquinas

Et ideo convenit ei nomen Maria, quae interpretatur stella maris; quia sicut per stellam maris navigantes diriguntur ad portum, ita Christiani diriguntur per Mariam ad gloriam.
-Sanctus Thoma de Aquino

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Introduction

Saint Thomas Aquinas's teaching that charity is friendship with God is arguably the centerpiece of his *Summa theologiæ* because charity not only leads to eternal life with God, but it also foreshadows the perfect substance of heaven itself. In 1987 Fergus Kerr wrote an article on Thomas's teaching about charity, and he observed that Thomas's arguments about the essence of charity has had little success in Catholic theology.[1] My research has found that, in one sense, Kerr is correct in such an assessment; but in another sense, he might be pleased to see the recent amount of theologians exploring and utilizing Thomas's teaching on charity.

In the first sense, Kerr's assessment is correct based on his historical analysis in which he displays who attempted to remove Thomas's ideas from Catholic thought, including his own Dominican Order.[2] As it stands currently, however, Thomas's teaching on charity is being used by many theologians, both implicitly and explicitly. Most notably, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has implicitly expressed the implications of understanding charity as friendship in his Encyclical *Deus caritas est*, and in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*.[3] Arguably, both of these works do express what Thomas conveys regarding the mutual love that exists between God and man. Thomas's teaching on charity as friendship, however, is never mentioned by Benedict. In the second sense, recent scholars are writing about Thomas's teaching on charity. Most

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[1] Fergus Kerr, "Charity as Friendship," in *Language, Meaning, and God: Essays in Honour of Herbert McCabe*, comp. Brian Davies (London: G. Chapman, 1987), 2.

[2] Ibid., 22.

[3] I further explore what Benedict says in his two texts in the last part of chapter 4 of this current work.

notably, however, among these theologians are Denys Turner, Michael Sherwin, Anthony Keaty, Matthew Kauth, and Robert Barron.

Though it is a curious topic, examining the impact of Thomas's teaching on charity, or lack thereof, is not the primary purpose of this current work. Rather, this exploration of charity attempts to answer two fundamental questions, one on a philosophic level and the other on a theological level. These two inquires are: 1) Is friendship between God and man possible? and 2) why is the virtue of charity identified with such divine and human friendship? Thomas provides answers to both questions theologically, but respects the philosophical answer to the first question. According to Aristotle, friendship can neither exist between unequals nor between those who are mutually unaware of the other. As expressed his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Metaphysics,* Aristotle claims that god is only aware of the highest activity — contemplation — and man's nature is inherently unequal to the divine nature. Therefore friendship with the divine is rightly considered impossible in Aristotelian thought.[4] Theologically, however, Thomas is able to argue the contrary answer to this philosophic question, while still drawing upon Aristotle's requirements for friendship.

Thomas accomplishes this feat because of the nature of theology. He explains how theology, or sacred doctrine, operates in the first question of his *Summa theologiæ*. He notes: "As other sciences do not argue in proof of their principles, but argue from their principles to demonstrate other truths...so this doctrine [theology] does not argue in proof of its principles,

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[4] Aristotle's argument on the impossibility of friendship between man and the divine is given its own treatment in chapter 3.

which are the articles of faith, but from them it goes on to prove something else."[5] Thomas does not offer a logical proof that friendship with God is possible. Rather, he implicitly answers this question operating out of the principles of theology as expressed in the Church's creeds and sacred scripture. As is shown in chapter 4, knowledge of man's friendship with God is gained because of the Mystery of the Incarnation and because Christ calls his disciples his friends.[6] It should be noted that the limited Christian understanding of God is inherently different from philosophic or mythic accounts of the divine.[7] The second major inquiry that this current project seeks to understand is Thomas's statement that charity is friendship with God.

As referenced above, Thomas considers that *theology goes on from the articles of faith to prove something else.*[8] This aspect of theology is why Thomas can argue that charity is friendship with God. This understanding of charity is neither in scripture nor the creeds. Nevertheless, scripture does seek to explain the proper nature and implications of the love that belongs to charity; and Aristotle seeks to explain the love that exists between friends. Thomas shows that the love identified with charity is the same love that exists between friends; however, charity is particularly characteristic of that unitive love that exists between God and man. As a result, charity is also that proper love by which human beings ought to love each other, even to one's enemies. This divine and human friendship has been achieved after a long period of God's

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[5] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, trans. Laurence Shapcote (Landers, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), I Q. 1 a. 8. All citations are from Laurence Shapcote.

[6] *See*: John 15:15.

[7] This understanding is offered in chapter 4.

[8] See footnote 5.

interaction with humanity, beginning with God's creation of man. Furthermore, such friendship is the culmination of God's covenant with Isreal and the redemptive sacrifice that Christ made for man's salvation from sin and death. Therefore, if one is to realize the impact of Thomas's teaching on charity, it is necessary to become familiar with man's nature, God's salvific plan, and Aristotle's notion of friendship. With such an aim this project shall commence.

Chapter I
In the Beginning...

Saint Thomas Aquinas's conception of what it means to *be* human must be properly understood in order to grasp Thomas's teaching on charity. The reason for this necessity is because charity is the theological virtue by which humans can achieve their state of perfection. Since Thomas uses the metaphysical concepts of Aristotle to describe what it means to be human, it is fitting to briefly examine Aristotle's philosophy before moving to Thomas's theological understanding of human nature.

Aristotle states in his *Politics*, "the nature of a thing is its end...for what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature."[9] What a thing *is* is equivalent to its end. Therefore, in order for any being to reach its end, its *own* nature must be fully *actualized* or reach its state of *perfection* or *completion.* Different beings have different ends according to their distinct natures and powers. For example, a tadpole's nature is not to always be a tadpole. The full actualization of a tadpole is reached when it matures into a frog and carries out the suitable activities associated with being a frog. A being's distinctive activity is fundamentally important for the total development of its own nature. This idea is further developed in the first book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where he claims, "all things have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function."[10] If the proper function of a being can be determined, then what is necessary for that being's perfection will be identifiable; and this perfection, or

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[9] Aristotle, "Politics" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. Benjamin Jewett (New York: Random House, 1941), 1252b30.

[10] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), 1097b27. All citations from Aristotle's *Ethics* are from W.D. Ross unless otherwise noted.

attainment of its end, is good for the being. Aristotle says in *Parts of Animals,* that, "like a flute in a sculpture, in spite of its name it will be unable to do the office which that name implies."[11] Without the activity that is proper to any being's nature, the nature of a being cannot be complete. A flute, in its proper nature, though it is an artifact and not a natural being, must have the potency of being played to make music or else it is not a flute, but a pseudo flute. Thus, a being's proper activities in relation to its end is essential to understanding a being's nature because a thing's proper end and nature are inseparable.

Man is a peculiar species because he has more abilities than irrational animals and his end cannot be achieved by a mere biological maturation. Throughout his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle often references the distinguishing characteristics of a human being because with man's end, "something particularly human is being sought."[12] He rejects a life motivated by the achievement of base pleasures because lives of this sort "show themselves to be completely slavish by choosing a life that belongs to fatted cattle."[13] The distinguishing characteristic of man is his intellectual capabilities because no other forms of life seem to share in this capacity. Thus, to achieve human flourishing one must put "into action that in us that has articulate speech *(logos),*" according to Aristotle.[14]

Thomas agrees with Aristotle that man shares in the nutritive powers and sense perceptions that other animate beings possess and also that man's distinctive power is reason.

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[11] Aristotle, "Parts of Animals" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. William Ogle (New York: Random House, 1941), 641a1.

[12] Aristotle "Nicomachean Ethics," 1098a1.

[13] Ibid., 1095b21.

[14] Ibid., 1098a5.

Thomas, however, highlights another distinctive characteristic of human beings. He writes: "Man's life is twofold. There is his outward life in respect of his sensitive and corporeal nature. ... The other is man's spiritual life in respect of his mind."[15] The spiritual realm includes man's intellectual capacities and in this way he is not excluding the rational principle of man that Aristotle deems most distinctive about human beings. Thomas is, however, situating the rational principle as a part within a greater aspect of man — his spiritual life.

Thomas claims that "everything desires its own perfection" and that perfection is good for that being.[16] Considering man *qua* man, Thomas continues, "a man desires his ultimate end, that which he desires as his perfect and crowning good. ... It is therefore necessary that for the last end so to fulfill man's appetite, that nothing is left besides it for man to desire."[17] That which satisfies man's desires makes him happy. Man differs from other creatures, Thomas argues, because he is a "master of his actions through his reason and will." [18] Attainment of man's last end brings forth happiness (which is created in man) but that which brings forth happiness for man lies in an uncreated good according to Thomas. "The object of the will, that is, of man's appetite," Thomas states, "is the universal *good*; just as the object of the intellect is the universal *true*. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone."[19] For man's nature to reach perfection and happiness, he must obtain something beyond what is attainable in the finite realm of creation. In order for man, as a rational being with a will that has free choice, to be fully

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[15] *ST* II-II, Q. 23, a 1 ad. 1.

[16] *ST*. I-II Q. 1 a. 5.

[17] Ibid.

[18] *ST*. I-II Q. 1 a. 1.

[19] *ST* I-II Q. 2 a. 8. The emphases are mine.

happy, "the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause, thus, it will have its perfection through union with God."[20] Brian Davies helps make Thomas's point clear:

> Man is, by definition, an intelligent animal. From this fact, Thomas concludes that our ultimate good must lie in man's understanding (which is the characteristic activity of people), which, for Thomas means that we cannot be finally satisfied until we have somehow understood the source and goal of all things, i.e. God.[21]

If man is to attain his perfected state, his whole life must be rightly ordered and united to God.[22]

Thomas explains that man's nature is unique because he exists in three respective states: *man* as created by God in the grace of original justice, *man* as journeying toward God (while living in the fallen state from original justice), and *man* in his perfected state in the life to come.[23] He is able to make such a claim because the principles of theology are different from the principles of philosophy. Theological principles, for the Catholic tradition, are divinely revealed truths and are contained within the articles of faith expressed in the Church's creeds.

Man's created state in the Garden of Eden is said to be the state of *original justice* and this is held to be true, not by argument, but through the Catholic faith. Thomas maintains that the state of original justice "consisted in man's reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul."[24] As Brian Davies comments on the original state of the first man, there was a degree of union between man and God in the garden: "Adam knew and loved God and everything in his life contributed to him doing this in peace and harmony with the

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[20] *ST.* I-II Q. 3 a. 8.

[21] Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 229.

[22] More about Thomas's understanding on human happiness will be made in chapter 2.

[23] *ST.* I-II Q. 106 a. 4 ad. 1.

[24] *ST* I Q. 95 a. 1.

whole created order."[25] In the garden, man did not, however, see God's essence nor enjoy the beatific vision, as Thomas argues: "All who see God through his essence are so firmly established in the love of God, that for eternity they can never sin."[26] Nevertheless, before man sinned against God, Thomas maintains that man had a more perfect knowledge of God than humanity does in its present fallen state.[27] It is important to understand that the state of original justice is not considered to be *from* nature. Rather, its origin lies in God's grace as a gift, which ultimately has the possibility of being lost.[28] Though the *state* of man's nature might change, man's nature does not change because if it did, *man* would no longer *be man* — he would be some other creature with a different end altogether.

This state of original justice, however, was lost through man's first sin. On this matter Thomas states, "as original justice together with nature was to have been transmitted to man's posterity, so also was this disorder."[29] Because of the loss of original justice, man's nature no longer exists in the state that God had created it, and consequently, the whole of humanity is affected. Thomas speaks of living in the state of original sin, or the privation of original justice, as a habit in the sense that a "nature is well or ill disposed to something, chiefly when such a disposition has become like a second nature."[30] Original sin causes a destruction of the harmony

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[25] Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas,* 254.

[26] *ST.* I Q. 94 a.1.

[27] Ibid. "*Cognoscebat tamen Deum quadam altiori cognitione quam nos cognoscamus, et sic quodammodo eius cognitio media erat inter cognitionem praesentis status, et cognitionem patriae, qua Deus per essentiam videtur.*"

[28] *ST.* I Q. 95 a.1.

[29] *ST.* I-II Q. 81 a.2.

[30] *ST.* I-II Q. 82 a.1.

between man and God that was essential to original justice, and in this way Thomas calls original sin the *languor* (sickness) *of nature*.[31]

In the second article of question 82 in the Prima secundæ, Thomas specifies that this *sickness* in nature "removes the subjection of man's mind (*mentis*) to God."[32] In the next article he states "original justice consists in man's will (*voluntas*) being subject to God: which subjection, first and chiefly was in the will...so that the will being turned away from God, all other powers of the soul become inordinate."[33] From these two passages, the intimate relationship that exists between the intellect and the will in human action can be seen. The sin of the first man relates to the state of life that the rest of his descendants must live in because, as Davies puts it, "Adam's descendants can be regarded as one body with Adam as their head...and the will of Adam runs through his successors."[34] Thus, every member of the human race, whose origin is Adam, exists in a state of *fallen nature* that needs healing if it is to reach its end.

Thomas argues that the privation of original justice causes death for man. By the removal of original justice, man's reason lost governance over the soul's lower powers, and the soul lost control over the whole body.[35] Thomas adds that "death and all consequent bodily defects are punishments of original sin."[36] The reply to the question *whether death is natural to man* is

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[31] Ibid.

[32] *ST.* I-II Q. 82 a. 2.

[33] *ST.* I-II Q. 82 a. 3.

[34] Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 256.

[35] *ST.* I-II Q. 85 a. 5.

[36] Ibid.

significant because it highlights the particular role that original justice has in man's nature. Thomas replies:

> Nature would choose an incorruptible matter if it could (whose form of the human body is the rational soul). But God, to whom every nature is subject supplied the defect of nature, and by the gift of original justice gave the body a certain incorruptibility. It is in this sense that *God made not death*, and that death is the punishment of sin.[37]

The *defect of nature* is nature's inability to be either self-sustaining or independent of God's grace. In every respect, human nature depends on God in order to have existence and to be brought to completion. This understanding does not deny man's free choice, as Thomas argues at great length. Michael Sherwin explains Thomas's position well: "God, as the author of nature, has established the will to be an inclination that moves the human person to his ultimate end through the person's free decision. ... Humans are by nature to be free."[38] That free-choice exists in man's nature supports the idea that, although man is dependent on God for everything, God does not force the will of man to do anything. Even though man lost original justice, the end of human nature did not change because man *qua* man did not change, which reinforces the inseparable relationship between a being's nature and its end. Man's relationship and proximity to God, however, diminished with the loss original justice. Thus, that which causes a separation from man's last end must be overcome if he is to attain perfection. Nevertheless, there is no necessity that man reach his end: It is only from the *will* of God for man that God enacts His eternal plan for man's salvation.

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[37] *ST.* I-II Q. 85 a. 6.

[38] Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 54.

Chapter II
God's Eternal Plan of Man's Salvation: Law and Grace

For Thomas, man's attainment of his ultimate end is not only the perfection of his nature, it is also his salvation which leads to his total happiness because it is his true and proper good. As was previously mentioned, man's sin against God caused a *sickness* in man's natural state because the gift of original justice was taken away from him. Man thus became in need of healing from the effects of sin, ultimately death. Such healing is *salvation* or *redemption* from all kinds of sin and their consequences, not only original sin. Through God's salvific plan, man is able to reach his last end, which Thomas maintains is man's union with God. Man's fallen nature causes a disorder within his soul such that his choices do not always seek the highest good. His intellect may see one thing as good but his will might cause him to choose a lesser good for selfish reasons. Money might become man's priority instead of serving those in need, or the carnal desires for sexual intimacy might become more important than being married with children. These examples are different manifestations of what Thomas means when he teaches about a disordered soul: man's reason is not subjected to God and his passions are not properly governed by his reason. It is necessary that man's whole life be properly ordered to God if man is united to Him.

Man is often referred to as a natural creature with a supernatural end because God is ontologically above man. The Latin word that Thomas uses throughout his works is *supernaturale*. Etymologically, this word begins with *super-* meaning "above or over" and *naturale-* meaning nature. In order to achieve perfection, therefore, a human being must attain that which is beyond his own natural power. This view could easily lead one into despair because

there seems to be no hope for man to achieve what is necessary for his perfection since his end is beyond his own powers. It is for this fundamental problem that God enacted His eternal plan of salvation for the whole human race. This act of God ought not be interpreted as occurring automatically or for pragmatic purposes only. St. John's Gospel articulates why God chose to help man in his dilemma: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn. 3:16-17).[39] It is out of God's love for man that God provided a *way* for man to reach his perfection.[40] This particular kind of love that God has for man will be further discussed in the fourth chapter.

As previously mentioned, Thomas argues that the object of man's intellect is the *Truth* and the object of man's will is the *Good*. Both of these objectives are the same in God (in *Being*) and thus, his intellect and will are satiated when man is united to God. Catholicism maintains that a union with God is truly attainable. Thomas gives special attention to man's *happiness* with his consideration of man's last end. Brian Davies summarizes Thomas's thought on human acts thus: "We naturally gravitate to what we take to be good" though "we may be wrong when it comes to what we take to be good for us. ... in this sense, Thomas argues, we always aim at goodness and have an innate tendency to desire what is good."[41] Even if someone willingly chooses an objectively bad action, he subjectively perceives it as *good*. If there can be confusion

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[39] All biblical citations are from the Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

[40] The significance of God providing a *way* (*via*) for salvation will be shown in the fourth chapter because it is a characteristic that Christ identifies of himself, along with *the truth* (*veritas*) and *the life* (*vita*); see John 14:6.

[41] Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiæ*: A Guide & Commentary (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 155.

about what the proper human good is, arguments must be made to make sense of the true good for humanity. In one sense, Thomas describes the human good to be *happiness*, thus remaining in uniformity with Aristotelian thought as conveyed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Nevertheless, there is a distinction in Thomas's thought regarding temporal and eternal happiness. Davies expresses this distinction within Thomas's thought:

> Aquinas's answer is 'beatitude' (*beatitudo*), by which he means union with God after death, the beatific vision. The word *beatitudo* can be translated into English as 'happiness' as can the Latin word *felicitas*, so Aquinas holds that our good ultimately lies in being happy. When he uses the term *felicitas,* however, he is thinking of what we might call 'earthly happiness,' and it is not this that he has in mind when saying that our fulfillment lies in *beatitudo*.[42]

Achieving union with God brings about happiness for man, but the ultimate end of man cannot be considered happiness without qualification. It is for this reason that Thomas argues man's last end is uncreated (God) while the happiness that follows is created in man.[43]

God entering into human history and revealing Himself to mankind has a real effect on man's ability to achieve his last end. Michael Sherwin demonstrates Thomas's thought on the matter:

> God has instilled in human nature a unique receptivity for the gift of grace. ... Although the beatific vision is above the nature of the human soul, this vision is nonetheless according to the nature of the soul. ... Consequently, in the eternal plan of his providence, God has ordained for humans to attain full union with himself through the healing and elevating action of his grace."[44]

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[42] Ibid., 156.

[43] *ST* I-II Q. 2. a. 8. *Respondo: "Beatitudo enim est bonum perfectum, quod totaliter quietat appetitum, alioquin non esset ultimus finis, si adhuc restaret aliquid appetendum."*

[44] Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 125.

This means that man's nature always has the potentiality for achieving its actual perfection by way of possessing the ability to receive God's grace. Man was not created for an end that he could never achieve. Yet, he cannot achieve this end on his own. Just as original justice was a gift of God's grace, man needs added help to guide and govern his internal and external actions. Sherwin supports this idea, saying, "fallen humanity stands in need of a healing act of God's love. It stands in need of God's redemptive grace revealed in Christ."[45] God's providence, as mentioned by Sherwin, is the eternal plan of salvation whereby God offers man the help that is needed for him to enter into a loving union with Him.[46] Thus, God's salvific plan both heals man from the disordering effects of original sin by ordering man's intellect and will toward what is true and good, and lifts death as the corresponding punishment. The effects of salvation, however, are not automatic for man. Rather, each individual must respond to God's gift of friendship.[47]

Thomas argues that God's plan to aid man in the attainment of his last end consists of instructing man in two ways, "by means of His Law, and assistance by His Grace."[48] Considering law first, Thomas defines the essence of law to be "an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated."[49] He teaches that there are four kinds of law: eternal, natural, human, and divine.[50] Briefly, the eternal law is that through which

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[45] Ibid., 124.

[46] As will be shown in Chapter 4, this gift is charity because it unites man and God.

[47] Such is the nature of charity that will be shown in Chapter 4.

[48] *ST* I-II Prologue to Q. 90.

[49] *ST* I-II Q. 90 a. 4.

[50] Ibid.

everything in the whole universe is governed according to God's Intellect, which is not subject to time.[51] How anything can be a participant in the eternal law, Thomas argues, is from the eternal law being imprinted on it because it has being, and it is from this law that they are naturally inclined to their proper actions and ends. The human being partakes in the eternal law by virtue of his existence. Man can know the natural law by using one's reason to discern good and evil.[52] Human laws are particular ordinances established by men using the indemonstrable principles that are instilled in man from the natural law.[53] Human reason, however, "cannot have a full participation in the dictate of Divine intellection, but according to its own mode, and imperfectly."[54] Human beings, everywhere, and at all times can employ their reason to discern the common good and make laws that lead to such a temporal end. Nevertheless, human laws that act in accordance with natural law cannot lead man to his final end.

Thomas gives four reasons for God giving man a divine law, but only the first is pertinent to this present argument. Thomas writes, "since man is ordained to an end of eternal happiness which is disproportionate to man's natural faculty, it was necessary that, besides the natural and human law, man should be directed to his end by a law given by God."[55] Notice that Thomas says man should be *directed to his end,* meaning that following the divine law itself does not achieve perfect union with God. Some other power is necessary for man to reach his last end other than *sola lex.* That additional power is a form of grace conferred on man by Christ and

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[51] *ST* I-II Q. 91 a. 1.

[52] *ST.* I-II Q. 91 a. 2.

[53] *ST.* I-II Q. 91 a. 3.

[54] Ibid.

[55] *ST.* I-II Q. 91 a. 4. Modified translation.

such power will be discussed in Chapter 4. "Divine law's chief intention" according to Thomas, "is to establish man in friendship (*amicitiam*) with God."[56] The effects of all law are to make men good; and in relation to God, the good that He directs man toward is the True Good — which is God Himself — not some mutable or finite good.[57] There is a division in divine law, Thomas explains, according to the nature of God's salvific plan. This division is not a difference in species or kind, as a hippopotamus and a giraffe are different; the kind of division with regards to divine law is that of imperfection and perfection within the same species, as a child and adult are considered different.[58] Divine law is divided into Old and New, as imperfect and perfect law, respectively. When God first revealed Himself to Abraham and Moses in human history, the divinely given law was the starting point of a long processes to order mankind's internal and external actions toward God.

From this understanding of the *divine law* as inseparable from both the Old and New laws, Thomas is able to say that in one way, "the New Law is not distinct from the Old Law because they both have the same end, namely man's subjection to God; and there is but one God of the Old and New Testament."[59] In this way, the narrative story of man's salvation brought about by God cannot be separated from the Jewish forefathers since they were the starting point in man's salvation. In another way, however, Thomas distinguishes the Old from the New Law, as the Old Law "restrains man from committing some sins through fear of being punished. Also,

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[56] *ST.* I-II Q. 99. a. 2.

[57] *ST.* I-II Q. 92. a. 1.

[58] *ST.* I-II Q. 91. a. 5.

[59] *ST.* I-II Q. 107 a. 1.

his will does not shrink simply from sin, as does the will of a man who refrains from sin through love of righteousness: and hence the New Law, which is the *law of charity*, is said to restrain the will."[60] Human beings, however, especially in their fallen nature, cannot choose what is absolutely good at all times and always refrain from some kind of sin.[61] Thomas argues that this inability to perfectly refrain from sin occurs because "as the lower appetite ought to be subjected to reason, so should the reason be subject to God....but since man's reason is not entirely subjected to God, the consequence is that many disorders occur in the reason."[62] The Old Law foreshadows the New Law because, through the prophets, a promise of salvation is given.[63] And this salvation is brought about by Christ's life, death, and resurrection.[64]

The second way by which God directs man to true goodness is His grace. Thomas points out that grace is the necessary supernatural help (*auxilium*) that aids man in reaching his proper supernatural end.[65] In neither his corrupted nor perfected nature can man observe divine law without the help of grace. Thomas writes that one can fulfill the commandments "not merely regarding their substance of the act, but also as regards the mode of acting, i.e., their being done out of charity."[66] Grace, as divine help, is how man can properly order his will towards what is good. Thomas often refers to the New Law as the *law of charity*, *the law of liberty, the law of*

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[60] Ibid.

[61] *ST.* I-II Q. 109 a. 8.

[62] Ibid.

[63] *See* Isaiah: 62.

[64] *ST.* I-II Q. 106 a. 3.

[65] *ST.* I-II Q. 109 a. 3.

[66] *ST.* I-II Q. 109 a. 4.

grace, or *the law of the gospel.*[67] Actions that are in accord with the divine law bring about a good end, but if those actions are not done out of love for God (in particular, if they are not done out of charity), then, as St. Paul writes, "I am nothing...I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2-3). Thomas describes the nature of grace as distinct from naturally acquired virtues which only dispose man to a good within his temporal, earthly nature.[68]

An infusion of grace, Thomas argues, "disposes man in a higher manner and higher end, and consequently in relation to some higher nature, i.e., in relation to a participation of the Divine Nature...in this respect of receiving this nature that we are said to be born again sons of God."[69] It is fitting that grace is conferred on man through Christ because it acts as the remedy to the sickness of nature (the deprivation of original justice). With this elevation of man's fallen state, he has the possibility of achieving union with God. Sherwin deems it necessary to remember that "Aquinas places his theology of Christ and of redemption within his understanding of the primary function of grace which grants us a fuller participation in God's divine life."[70] It is only through the help of God's grace that man can obtain union with God because his own natural powers are insufficient for completing the necessary work to heal the wounds of sin.

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[67] This can be seen in throughout his treatment on the New Law and on Grace, *ST.* I-II Q. 106-113.

[68] A discussion on the compatibility of nature and grace, along with the distinction between theological virtues and the moral, and intellectual virtues, will be given in the third part of Chapter 4.

[69] *ST.* I-II Q. 110 a. 3.

[70] Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 126.

Just as original sin is considered a habit, inasmuch as it likens something to a second nature, Thomas thinks that grace is, in this sense, a *habit* which helps heal man's nature. Sherwin relates, "God's grace acts in the human soul as a type of 'second nature' from which certain cognitive and appetitive habits *(habitus)* flow and are that by which one lives his graced life."[71] In no way does man deserve this grace, but it is given out of God's loving will for his creatures: He gives this help freely. Through grace, offered to man through Christ, man's nature is *recreated.* Thomas claims this concept explicitly when he writes, "grace is said to be created inasmuch as men are created with reference to it, i.e., are given a new being out of nothing, that is, not from merits."[72] With the remedy of grace, man's nature can be brought to a state which is more disposed to seeing God's Divine essence, i.e., enjoying the beatific vision through union with Him.

Beginning with God's call of Abraham out of his homeland, around 2000 B.C., God's plan for humanity's salvation took an extensive amount of time and ended with Christ's victory over death. This plan has shaped much of human history and is affecting the world even 2000 years after Christ's life.[73] The promise, or covenant, God made to Abraham was more than just a legal contract. It was the beginning of a friendship between God and the whole of humanity.[74] St. Thomas teaches, as has been previously explained, that the aim of Divine Law is to bring man and God into friendship. Since any finite thing that is generated begins in a state of imperfection

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[71] Ibid., 127.

[72]. *ST.* I-II Q. 110 a. 3 ad. 3.

[73] One way that this is being accomplished is through the celebration of the Mass, which will be discussed in the fourth part of Chapter 4.

[74] Abraham his called the friend of God (*See:* Isaiah 41:8 and James 2:23).

and moves towards its end to achieve perfection, the friendship between God and man reflects such an organic generation. Beginning with the Jewish patriarchs, one particular race came into contact with the LORD — the one true God. They were not always faithful to God and did not always follow the Law that God had given to Moses, but God did not abandon His chosen people. Eventually and at the most fitting time in human history, God's only begotten Son was born from Abraham's descendants and was the source of blessings for the entire human race as promised from the Mosaic (Old) Law.

For the next object of concern it is important to recognize that God, or the idea of *God,* has not been always understood in terms of revelation to the Israelites and Christians. The divine has been the subject of philosophical inquiry since the birth of philosophy in ancient Greece. Thomas makes use of Aristotle's works, who was a Greek philosopher living about four centuries before the birth of Christ. This philosopher argued extensively about the nature of friendship and held the view that friendship with the divine was impossible because man is ontologically unequal to the divine.[75] This argument seems to be a major objection to St. Thomas's work, but Thomas notes that Aristotle operates out of a different set of principles than Christian theologians because Aristotle had no knowledge of God's self-revelation. Aristotle only had his natural reason (in the fallen state of human nature) and premised his arguments on what he observed in his society and on the operations of the physical world. Both God's revelation of Himself and His instructions to mankind, in conjunction with man's natural reason, are what Christian theologians use as their principles through faith. It is helpful, nevertheless, to examine how

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[75] Equality, for Aristotle, is a major requisite for friendship as will be shown in the next chapter.

Aristotle comes to the conclusion that friendship with God is impossible. Saint Thomas is familiar with Aristotle's claim, but still decides to employ Aristotle's notion of friendship in explaining the essence of charity. Thus, before turning to Thomas's claim that charity is friendship with God, Aristotle's arguments about friendship and its impossibility of existing between man and the divine will be examined next.

Chapter III
Aristotelian Friendship as Impossible Between Man the Divine

In order to make sense of Aristotle's claim that man cannot be friends with the divine, it is necessary to examine the differences between Aristotle's conception of *divinity* and the *Christian God.* The Aristotelian god is a necessary and eternal principle to make sense of the physical universe. Alluding to god's nature in his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says, "since that which is moved and moves is intermediate, there is something which moves without being moved, being eternal, substance, and actuality."[76] Anything that is in motion or has potential to change is incomplete in its nature, and the act of attaining anything suggests a dependency on external goods. He goes on to say, "the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved."[77] This *unmoved mover* is not dependent on any other external thing, yet it is a necessary first principle that accounts for the motion and change that takes place in the universe by "being loved."[78] An unmoved mover is the object of desire for imperfect beings. Consider a man being moved to wonder by a beautiful sunset or being moved to tears by a tragic play. In both instances, the object that causes motion — the sunset and the tragedy — is not itself moved. Thus, Aristotle's god involuntarily causes motion in subjects without being moved.

Another important aspect of Aristotle's conception of divinity is the one activity that pertains to god. At the end of Book 7 in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle says "if the nature of

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[76] Aristotle, "Metaphysics" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, trans. W. D. Ross (New York: Random House, 1941), 1072a25.

[77] Ibid., 1072a27.

[78] Ibid., 1072b4.

anything were simple, the same action would always be most pleasant to it. ... [G]od always enjoys a single and simple pleasure, for there is...an activity of immobility, and pleasure is found more at rest than in movement."[79] The one action that god does is the most desirable and pleasurable in itself because it is done for no other end. The *object* of god's activity, which is done for its own sake, has to be the same as the *subject* doing the activity because, for god, there are no external goods that could be desired since that would suggest motion and, thus, imperfection. This idea is articulated in his *Metaphysics*: "Thought [god] thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought...so that thought and the object of thought are the same."[80] He argues that intellectual pleasure gained from contemplation is the highest good, and man's intellect can imperfectly enjoy such pleasure. Aristotle notes that, "we enjoy [contemplating] for a short time."[81] As a self-sufficient unmoved mover, "god is always in that good state in which we sometimes are...and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best."[82] If god were to *behold* or *contemplate* anything besides god's self, which is *contemplation itself,* then there would be motion or change in god; yet as a first principle, god is incapable of contemplating or possessing anything external.

God is self-sustaining because "the actuality of thought is life, and god is that actuality; god's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. ... [G]od is a living being, eternal, most good."[83] The best activity is contemplation or possession of thought. For Aristotle, god's

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[79] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1154b27.

[80] Aristotle, "Metaphysics," 1072b20.

[81] Ibid., 1072b15.

[82] Ibid., 1072b23.

[83] Ibid., 1072b27.

only function is contemplation of the best activity, which is not external to god's own being. Though contemplation can be understood as the best and most pleasurable activity, eternal and independent self-contemplation is strictly for the divine nature. The nature of man is not the actualization of one simple activity. Rather, man is defined as a *rational and social animal*.[84]

The function of man that allows for an understanding of his nature can be found described in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics.* Christine Korsgaard shows that "[t]he purpose of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to discover the human good, that at which we ought to aim in life and action. ... Everyone calls this good *eudaimonia* (happiness, flourishing, well-being)."[85] Aristotle understands that man has similar characteristics with all living things, such as growth shared by plants, and sense perception shared by all animals, but the human good is "peculiar to man."[86] He explains that the distinctive faculty in man is his intellect, and thus man is a rational animal. Unlike god, whose one activity is intellectual and solitary, Aristotle warns that the human good is not attained in isolation "since man is born for citizenship."[87] Man is not only a rational animal, but also, as his *Politics* clearly argues, "man is by nature a political animal...and the only animal whom [nature] endowed with speech."[88] For man to fulfill his particular nature his actions ought to engage his intellectual faculty in a social setting.

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[84] Aristotle, "Politics," 1253a.

[85] Christine M. Korsgaard, "Aristotle's Function Argument" *The Constitution of Agency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 129.

[86] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1097b34.

[87] Ibid., 1097b11.

[88] Aristotle, "Politics," 1253a1-10.

Man *qua* man is only capable of achieving that which is in his nature, and the political life helps man to engage in the best activities. Aristotle shows how dependency is an efficient way to fulfill human nature: "if [man] were solitary, life would be hard for him; for by himself it is not easy to be continuously active; but with others and towards others it is easier."[89] If one were unable to live in society, or if one had no need for society, then, Aristotle claims that being would either be "a beast or a god."[90] To put this idea of competitiveness between distinct beings into context, if a plant developed the ability of sense perception, then it would no longer be a plant because its highest power would no longer be simply growth and reproduction. That plant would ontologically change, and it would be some kind of animal. Korsgaard makes an important point clear with this example:

> [Sense perceptions] are not just powers added, so to speak, on top of the [being's] nutritive and reproductive life: they [would] also change the way the [being would carry] out the tasks of nutrition and reproduction. ... These capacities also lead the animal to engage in activities not possible for a plant. [91]

Man's activities must pertain to his nature *qua* man. God and man are unequal and ontologically different *beings*. Therefore, it is appropriate for Aristotle to maintain that friendship is impossible between the two because one's nature would have to be compromised. This compromise means that even if a change in a man's ontology were to happen, that being would no longer be man. God, as *thought thinking thought*, would not engage in friendship because god only thinks thought and is unaware anything of else. Thus, it is a distinctive characteristic of man's nature to

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[89] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1170a7.

[90] Aristotle, "Politics," 1253a29.

[91] Korsgaard, "Aristotle's Function Argument," 142.

have friends since he is a rational and social animal, but friendship is not a fitting characteristic of god's nature.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle argues that there are different kinds of friendship predicated on what is commonly loved by the friends, and he chooses to identify three types of friendship. These are friendships based on utility, pleasure, and virtuous character.[92] Friendships predicated on utility and pleasure are ultimately not true friendships, but are only friendships inasmuch as they are closely related to the virtuous friendship.[93] Those who love the utility or pleasure that one can gain from another person enter the friendship, "not insofar as the other person is loved, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant...[and] these friendships are incidental."[94] True friendship then "is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other *qua* good, and they are good in themselves."[95] Besides this love of virtuous character, another important characteristic of true friendship is that "they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other."[96] Friendships based on virtue are rare because two people must be lovers of virtue: each must love the other and wish good for the other "as another self" and "such friendship requires time and familiarity."[97] Without the mutual acknowledgment of another, there can be no foundation for any kind of friendship, whether it be of use, pleasure, or virtue.

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[92] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1155b17.

[93] Ibid., 1158b7.

[94] Ibid., 1156a15-17.

[95] Ibid., 1156b9.

[96] Ibid., 1156a5.

[97] Ibid., 1169b7; 1156b25.

Equality and association are two more foundational requirements for friendship. The relationship between divinity and human beings, according to Aristotle, is not equal "for the gods surpass us most decisively in all good things."[98] If there is no commonality or association there can be no friendship. He claims: "Neither is there friendship towards a horse or an ox, nor slave *qua* slave."[99] Regarding the animals, man cannot enter a friendship because they are ontologically different and inherently unequal. He shows that there is no friendship with a slave *qua* slave, but "*qua* man, one can [have the possibility of friendship]. ... Therefore there can also be a friendship with him in so far as he is a man."[100] Two parties who are equal in *some way* have the *possibility* of friendship, and secondly, "every form of friendship involves association."[101] Regarding the divine, there is no possibility of friendship primarily because of the ontological difference and the lack of association between them. He writes: "When one party is removed to a great distance, as God is, the possibility of friendship ceases."[102] Therefore, Aristotle is correct in claiming that there can be no friendship between men and god because of his conception that god is a distant and self-sufficient being who has no activity beyond self-contemplation.

According to the nature of friendship, men must ontologically remain what they *are* in order to wish the other the greatest goods, "but" as Aristotle adds, "perhaps not *all* the greatest goods."[103] He suggests this caution because there is a fundamental difference between divine

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[98] Ibid., 1158b35.

[99] Ibid., 1161b2.

[100] Ibid., 1161b5-10.

[101] Ibid., 1161b11.

[102] Ibid., 1159a5.

[103] Ibid., 1159a14.

nature, which is necessarily intellectual and solitary, and human nature, which ought to be intellectual and political. Daniel Maher shows that, "wishing the greatest goods simply to one's friend seems impossible, not because one person's selfishness prevents generous wishing of the greatest goods to another, but because human nature cannot survive the greatest goods."[104] It is, therefore, not within human nature to possess the divine or greatest good. Rather, human nature ought to possess the greatest good that is within its own capabilities. The effect of a virtuous friendship is a growth in virtue for both parties. Aristotle writes, "friendship is a partnership, and as a man is to himself, so he is to his friend. ... The activity of this consciousness [of the other as *another self*] is produced when they live together...and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other."[105] Regarding Aristotle's conception of god, there is no possibility for improvement since god perfectly and eternally enjoys the possession of the greatest good — which is eternal contemplation. Therefore, according to Aristotelian thought, friendship with God is impossible and undesirable.

If there were the possibility of friendship between man and god, both the human and divine nature would have to necessarily remain in their respective ontology. If either nature were to change into the other, then the friendship would be between either gods or men. Just as in Aristotle's example of the slave and master, there would have to be equality and association *in some sense* for the possibility of friendship between man and the divine. Secondly, there would need to be a way by which the communication of goods is rendered possible with a mutual recognition of the other. The characteristics of living together and loving the other for an

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[104] Daniel P. Maher, "Contemplative Friendship in 'Nicomachean Ethics,'" *Review Of Metaphysics* 65, no. 4 (260) (June 1, 2012): 787.

[105] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1171b32-1172a10.

extended period would also have to be fulfilled in some fashion. Ultimately, considering god as a distant being removed from human affairs and as a necessary first principle, Aristotelian thought makes a logical conclusion regarding the impossibility of man having a friendship with god.

Nevertheless, if Aristotle's speculative conception of the divine — as a distant being and first principle — is not in accordance with the divine nature in truth, then his conclusions about friendship between the divine and man might also be inconclusive. Aristotle's arguments would provide the necessary principles of friendship that would have to be maintained if the divine were able to befriend man. It is according to the truths of revelation preserved by the Catholic faith that Aquinas disagrees with Aristotle's notion of the divine nature. Friendship is possible with the God who revealed Himself to mankind, Aquinas maintains, not because of any philosophical argument, but because of the mystery of the Incarnation whereby God entered into human history. According to this mystery, believed through faith, God became fully human without ceasing to be fully God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Chapter IV
Charity as Friendship: Life with God Now and Forever

Part One: Coinherence: The Mystery of God and His Incarnation

Friendship with God needs to be understood as possible before arguing that the virtue of charity is that kind of friendship between man and God. The major impasse that inhibits the possibility of divine and human friendship rests on a philosophical consideration that finite beings are radically unequal to God, and compatibility is an important characteristic for friendship. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Aristotle thinks that divine nature is completely incompatible with human nature. It is on this thought that the Christian doctrine of God, known through revelation and reason, seeks to correct the logical conclusions deduced by Aristotle in his consideration of friendship between man and God.

If God is another being among the many beings that exist, then it cannot be claimed — as Christianity does — that He is all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipotent, or infinite in any respect. If God is a being, he could be replaced by another who acquires more power. In coming into contact with man in the beginning stages of salvation, God introduces Himself, but not in His entirety.[106] Moses could only be allowed to see the back of God, suggesting the inherent limitations of human beings as finite creatures.[107] It is dangerous for Christians, as temporal and finite creatures to think that God, who is the eternal Creator, can be fully grasped because God is

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[106] This does not suggest that God is complex, that is, made up of parts, some of which man can know and others not. Rather, God allows man to imperfectly know him when He communicates to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets.

[107] *See:* Exodus 33:17-23.

then reduced to a mere being. Nevertheless, it is equally dangerous to consider that God is totally distant and removed, because then God is also conceived as a being among many.

This mystery of God has been expressed since the earliest stages of Christianity. Robert Barron helps to make this Christian teaching on God more understandable by developing the metaphysical idea of coinherence. He quotes Saint Augustine's *Confessions* where he writes, "God is simultaneously *intimior intimo meo superior summo meo* (more inward than my innermost and higher than my uppermost)."[108] How can Christianity make sense of this seeming contradiction? Barron gives credit to Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis for claiming that "the master idea of Christianity is *coinherence*: the implication of the being of one in the being of the other, the intertwining and interlacing of reality."[109] Coinherence primarily comes about from Christianity because of the Incarnation in which God the Creator became a created man in the person of Jesus, the Nazarene. Though not explicitly, the metaphysical idea of coinherence is in the background of Aquinas's teaching that friendship is possible between man and God and such friendship is identified with the theological virtue of charity. Coinherence will help to make sense of three requirements for friendship between man and God: 1) How God is compatible with his creation, 2) how God is present to man, and 3) how man is able reciprocate goods to God, despite the fact that God is not in a state of any need.[110]

As expressed by the Council of Chalcedon, the doctrine of the Incarnation teaches that God became fully man without ceasing to be God; it is from this understanding that the claim of

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[108] Robert Barron, "The Metaphysics of Coinherence," in *Exploring Catholic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 34.

[109] Ibid., 32.

[110] This third point will be shown in the third part of this chapter.

coinherence finds its premise. "Finite beings," Barron points out, "remain, at the most fundamental level, mutually exclusive so that one can 'become' another only through ontological surrender or aggression." For example, a rabbit *becomes* a wolf only by being killed and ingested, meaning that the particular rabbit must cease being a rabbit; similarly, the wood of a fire becomes coals and ash only by being burned. This interaction among finite things is not the case with God and humanity because, as Barron explains, "God becomes a creature without ceasing to be God or compromising the integrity of the creature that he becomes. ... [Therefore] God must be other than a creaturely nature." [111] Thus, the violence that normally occurs among finite beings when one ontologically changes into another does not apply when God enters into the world as a man. As Barron considers the Incarnation, he says: "Divinity and humanity come together in the most intimate kind of union, yet noncompetitively. ... Such noncompetitiveness is possible only in the measure that God is not himself a creaturely or finite nature."[112] God's transcendence to his creation, Barron explains, "allows God to affect an incomparable closeness to worldly things."[113] Creation's fundamental being is contingent on God because he willed it into existence, yet God is not dependent on anything because he is uncreated. This concept of creation's existence being interlaced with God's transcendent existence is the metaphysical idea of coinherence.

From this noncompetitive, coinherent nature between God and his creation, Catholic thought claims that the God of revelation is not a singular being among many. Rather, God *is*

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[111]Barron, "The Metaphysics of Coinherence," 34.

[112] Ibid., 33.

[113] Ibid., 34.

being itself. Barron references Aquinas, and says, "Thomas does not call God *ens summum* (highest activity) but *ipsum esse subsistens* (the sheer act of to be itself)...Being itself is utterly unlike any of the beings in the world, and it is the most intimate ground of all that exists in the world."[114] Considering God as *ipsum esse subsistens* opens an entirely different perspective with regards to the relationship between God and his creation. Any*thing,* at its most fundamental level of existence, is predicated on God; and, although God is transcendent to his creation, no*thing* can exist completely separate from God. The analogous example Barron borrows from Herbert McCabe to describe this *transcendent compatibility* is how a singer sustains a song: without the singer and her sustained act of singing, the song could neither come into existence nor remain in existence, and yet the singer is transcendent to the song.[115] It often said in Catholic theology that any existent thing necessarily participates *in God,* meaning that whatever has *being* is coinherent with God.

Breaking from ancient philosophic schools of thought, Christianity proposes something entirely new when it claims God creates out of nothing. Barron makes this point explicitly clear:

> Aristotle's first mover draws prime matter into shape through its irresistible attractiveness, and Plato's demiurgos manipulates the primal chaos after consulting the patterns of the forms. But the Christians proposed something new — namely, a doctrine of creation from nothing, according to which God brings the whole of finitude into being, in all of its dimensions and aspects and without reference to a preexisting substrate. This implies in turn that there is nothing substantial and external with which God enters into relationship but rather that all that is not God *is*, essentially *a relationship to God.*[116]

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[114] Robert Barron, "To See according to the Icon of Jesus Christ" in *Exploring Catholic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 66.

[115] Barron, "The Metaphysics of Coinherence" 34.

[116] Barron, "The Metaphysics of Coinherence" 35. The emphasis is mine.

Thus, from the idea of coinherence, it can be claimed that where there is existence God is necessarily present. The human being, however, does not have the same ontological existence as other created beings. The relationship that man is with God is not merely the same relationship that a rock is with God. Man was created in the image and likeness of God, and God became man out of love for man to redeem him from sin and death, so that anyone who comes to believe in Him might not die, but have life eternally.[117]

The limited human knowledge of God changed with the Incarnation because *God the Son* revealed to man *God the Father* and gave to mankind *God the Holy Spirit*.[118] The Incarnation, however, did more than give intellectualists added principles to consider so that other aspects of God could be expressed, such as the doctrine of the Trinity.[119] With the the actions of the Word Incarnate — namely, Christ's life, death, and resurrection — all of humanity could be healed from the effects and punishments of freely chosen sin against God.

Michael Sherwin displays some important points regarding Thomas's teaching on the elevation of human nature in relation to Christ. He says, "the human intellect and will, when immersed in the Trinitarian life of God, begin to participate more fully in the spiritual acts of knowing and loving God."[120] When the intellect and the will are given the gift of grace through Christ, they can become closer to their ends — the universal truth and universal goodness, respectively.[121] As a result of grace, the soul's powers can become more rightly ordered toward

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[117] *See:* Gen 1; John 1 & 3:15.

[118] *See:* John 1.

[119] *ST.* I Q.1 a. 1.

[120] Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love,* 126.

[121] *See:* Footnote 11.

God than when man exists apart from grace. Sin causes guilt, Thomas maintains, as it is a disobedient offense against God. In any human interaction where one is offended by another, the offender cannot, alone, escape responsibility for that transgression. Only the offended can help ease the offender's state of guilt. In the same way, it is only God's power who can wipe away the effects of man's sin because it is God who is offended. On this score, Thomas adds, "we could not conceive the remission of guilt, without the infusion of grace."[122] It is through Christ that this guilt can be taken away because he shared fully in human nature while remaining fully God as to have the efficacy to elevate human nature's fallen state through his passion, death, and resurrection.

Part Two: Christ's Life, Death, and Resurrection

Thomas stresses the importance of realizing that the grace needed to elevate human nature is given to us only through Christ's redeeming power. Regarding the life of Christ and the reason for the Incarnation, Thomas says, "Christ came principally to take away original sin," quoting Aristotle when he says, "the good of the race is a more Divine thing than the good of the individual."[123] Thus, the whole human race has the opportunity to be healed from the effects of original sin because Christ acts as the true high priest, the mediator between God and man.[124]

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[122] *ST.* I-II Q. 113 a. 2.

[123] *ST.* III Q. 1 a. 4.

[124] *See:* Heb. 4:14-16.

Christ reconciles the world to God as the high priest.[125] St. Paul refers to Christ as the *New Adam* inasmuch as Christ replaces Adam as the head of the human race for the sake of leading all of man from death to life.[126] This teaching might imply that only original sin is taken away and that there is no remission of actual, personal sins against God committed by individual people. Thomas argues against this implication, saying, "we do not exclude that Christ came to wipe away the sin of the whole nature rather than the sin of one person. But the sin of the nature is as perfectly healed in each one as if it were healed in him alone."[127] Christ intended to save every human person from death, not just a particular person or group of people.

Likewise, the teachings of Christ contained in the Gospel are meant for all people and the sanctification of the world.[128] The New Law, initiated by Christ, is not directed to only those of the Jewish faith who were subjected to the Old Law. Davies highlights this notion, "The New Law is a reality in people. It is God acting in them so as to make them more than what they can be as human beings exercising their human faculties after the fall of Adam...As Aquinas insists, it is the work of grace leading to beatitude."[129] In light of Thomas's teaching on Christ and the New Law, Davies explains: "For Aquinas, with the coming of Christ and the Spirit, people are

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[125] "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:17-19.

[126] "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." Rom 5:19.

[127] *ST.* III Q. 1 a. 4.

[128] *See*: Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15.

[129] Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 262.

able to love with God's love and not simply to obey him."[130] Therefore, according to Thomas, without the Incarnation, the New Law of Charity could not be established because Christ assimilated humanity to his divinity. Regarding the importance of Christ's unified humanity and divinity, Thomas argues, "Christ's humanity does not cause grace by its own power, but by virtue of the Divine Nature joined to it, whereby the actions of Christ's humanity are saving actions."[131] It is Christ's divine power that allows for an elevation of human nature, because, as Thomas points, out: "nothing can act beyond its species, since the cause must be more powerful than its effect."[132] The Incarnation is the way by which grace is able to heal humanity's fallen state inasmuch as it is from Christ's divinity that his death and resurrection were able to have saving effects for man.

It is not merely by the act of the Incarnation, *per se*, that the sins of humankind are washed away. Rather, Christ's obedient and undeserving execution on a cross for the sake of mankind takes away the punishment of death that human beings deserve. Thomas's claim of Christ's saving actions are rooted in the New Testament as Saint Peter writes: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24). Thomas argues that Christ's baptism, passion, and death were done for the sake of man's benefit.

With regards to Christ's baptism, Thomas cites Chrysostom as saying: '"Wherefore, though He needed no baptism for his own sake, yet carnal nature in others had need thereof' and

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[130] Ibid., 261.

[131] *ST*. I-II Q. 112. a. 2 ad. 1.

[132] Ibid., This is found in his *Respondeo*.

as Gregory of Nazianzen says 'Christ was baptized that He might plunge the old Adam entirely in the water.'"[133] Christ's baptism brings about no cleansing effects for himself because Christ had no sin against God. Christ could not be separated from God in sin because he is the unification of the divine and human natures. It is the common and repeated theme in Thomas's thought that all of Jesus' actions are wholly for humanity's sake and done out of *love* for man.[134]

Thomas writes, "Christ's passion was sufficient and superabundant for the sins of the whole human race. ...When sufficient satisfaction has been paid, then the debt of punishment is abolished."[135] It was on behalf of the human race that Christ suffered the punishments of sin that were in accord with Divine Justice. Christ's passion was acceptable to God the Father as a sacrifice because, as Thomas states, "Christ's voluntary enduring of the Passion was most acceptable to God, as coming from charity."[136] Because of Christ's Passion, man's debt for the sins against God can be removed since Christ did not share in the sin of humanity. As mentioned above, Christ is the true high priest, and he is also the perfect sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world.[137] Just as the the sin of man caused an expulsion from the garden and a separation from God, through Christ man is brought closer to God because of charity. Furthermore, Thomas argues, "by Christ's Passion we have been delivered not only from the common sin of the whole human race...but also from the personal sins of individuals who share in his Passion by faith and

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[133] *ST.* III Q. 39 a. 1.

[134] It will be argued in part four of this chapter that this *love* is *charity* and such love is the kind of love between friends.

[135] *ST.* III Q. 49 a. 3.

[136] *ST.* III Q. 48 a. 3.

[137] *See*: Heb. 4:14; Heb. 10:11-14.

charity and the sacraments of faith."[138] The saving power of Christ's Passion is made available through a sharing of Christ's Baptism. Thomas claims, "In order to secure the effects of Christ's Passion, we must be likened unto him. Now we are likened unto Him sacramentally in Baptism. ... Hence no punishment of satisfaction is imposed upon men at their baptism, since they are fully delivered by Christ's satisfaction."[139] Thus, Thomas maintains that only through the sacrament of Baptism can the effects of Christ's passion be made available to individuals. In Thomas's discussion on Baptism, however, he makes it clear that there are three forms of Baptism— by water, blood, and desire. Thus, maintaining that one cannot be saved without a *liturgical baptism* is not fully true and the Church's magisterium has properly taught on this subject.[140]

Christ's death and resurrection have further implications for bestowing unto man the saving power of redemptive grace. St. Paul's letter to the Romans makes clear the relationship between baptism as the way in which man can also share in Christ's death and resurrection. Paul writes: "We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Thomas argues the same concept when he writes: "Christ by His death brought us back to life,

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[138] *ST.* III Q. 49 a. 5

[139] *ST.* III Q. 49 a. 3.

[140] *See*: Thomas's teaching on Baptism in *ST.* III Q. 66. For more recent treatments on this question of salvation see Avery Cardinal Dulles's chapter "Who can be Saved" in his book *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007,* 522-543. For particular Second Vatican Council documents on salvation see, *Unitatis redintegratio, Lumen gentium, Sacrosanctum concilium, Ad gentes,* and *Nostra aetate.*

when by His death, He destroyed our death."[141] Instead of all of humanity having to endure the punishments of sin, Christ was the scapegoat for the sins of the human race. In the same way, through Christ's resurrection all of humanity has the opportunity to be resurrected. On man's relation to Christ's Resurrection, Thomas writes, "Christ was resurrected in order to complete the work of our salvation, because just as He did endure evil things in dying that He might deliver us from evil, so was He glorified in rising again in order to advance us toward good things."[142] The resurrection of Christ allows for man to share in eternal life with God because man has the opportunity to assimilate himself to Christ's divinity; the achievement of union with God is possible by His invitation of friendship in Jesus Christ, who displayed the greatest act of love in laying down his life for man. It is fitting that Thomas calls Christ *man's greatest friend.*[143] Man's last end becomes attainable because the work of God's eternal plan of salvation came to perfection with the coming of Christ and his victory over death.

Part Three: The Essence of Charity: Friendship with God

Thomas's claim on the possibility of friendship with God is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation and especially when the Word Incarnate calls his disciples "friends" in John 15:15. He does not make this argument out of the metaphysical claims that can be made of God as being *being itself,* but out of his teaching on God and His creative power.[144] Thomas argues that this

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[141] *ST* III Q. 50 a. 1, ad. 3.

[142] *ST.* III Q. 53 a. 1.

[143] *ST* I-II Q 108 a. 4, Sed Contra: "*Christus maxime est sapiens et amicus.*"

[144] These metaphysical arguments, however, can help answer philosophical objections to the claim that there can be friendship with God.

powerful friendship with God is what Christians ought to mean when they refer to charity. In the *Secunda secundæ* of his *Summa theologiæ* Thomas presents his extensive teaching on charity. Although the theological virtues of faith and hope cease when this temporal life ceases, charity is the theological virtue that endures into eternal life.[145] As Fergus Kerr points out, Thomas developed his argument on charity in his career.[146] Kerr shows that Thomas's early *Commentary on the Sentences of Perter Lombard* gives a different account of charity than what is found in his matured thought of his *Summa Theologiæ.*[147] It is widely believed among scholars that in the time between the composition of his *Commentary on the Sentences* and his *Summa* (1256 and 1269-72, respectively) Thomas had revisited Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and found some insights regarding the nature of friendship. Consequently, when Thomas considered the nature of charity as described in scripture, he decided that the love peculiar to *friendship* is the best way to describe charity's essence.

The argument that Thomas gives for charity being friendship with God is straightforward in the *Summa theologiæ.* Furthermore, the implications for this definition of charity give an understanding of human life's proper order, i.e., ordered to God. In his *Sed Contra*, Thomas uses John's Gospel as his authority when it describes Jesus calling his disciples not servants, but friends.[148] Thomas says that "this was said to them by reason of nothing else than charity."[149] It is notable that Thomas does not use Aristotle as the primary authority for describing charity.

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[145] *See:* 1 Cor. 13:13.

[146] Fergus Kerr, "Charity as Friendship," 2-6.

[147] Ibid.

[148] *See*: John 15:15.

[149] *ST* II-II Q. 23 a.1.

Rather, friendship with God is rooted in Christ's words, preserved in sacred scripture.[150] Thomas does, however, employ Aristotle in describing the nature friendship throughout the rest of the article. The first objector argues that charity is not friendship because, according to Aristotle, "*nothing is so appropriate to friendship as to dwell with one's friend.* ...[the objector states, referencing Dan. 2:11], Now charity is of man towards God and the angels, whose dwelling is not with men."[151] God's seeming lack of presence in the world has already been explored in the first part of this chapter with the idea of coinherence which shows that God, as *being itself*, is the substrate of all existing things; thus, in this sense, nothing can exist apart from God. Thomas answers this objection, however, by referring to man's twofold nature, i.e., corporal and spiritual. With a strict consideration of his corporeal nature, Thomas says, "there is no communication or fellowship between us and God or the angels."[152] The friendship that man can have with God is not predicated on a mere physical basis, (thus supporting the metaphysical claims made by coinherence). Rather, Thomas argues, it is "with regard to [man's spiritual] life that there is fellowship between us and both God and the angels, imperfectly indeed in this present life...but will be perfect in heaven."[153] Communication of goods is a fundamental aspect of friendship; and because the communication is imperfect in this life, it also follows that "charity is imperfect

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[150] *See:* Anthony W. Keaty, "Thomas'ss Authority For Identifying Charity as Friendship: Aristotle or John 15?" *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 581-601.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid. ad. 1.

[153] Ibid.

here, but will be perfect in heaven."[154] The substance of this communication is given its own treatment in his *respondeo*.

Thomas begins his *respondeo* by referencing Aristotle, saying, "not every love (*amor*) has the character of friendship, but that love which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him. ...Yet...a certain mutual love is requisite [for friendship]...and this well-wishing (*benevolentia*) is founded on some kind of communication."[155] Thus, when two honestly and *mutually* wish what is good for the sake of the other, then that love can be identified as the love proper to friendship.[156] Thomas goes on to identify the kind of love that exists between God and man by explaining what is communicated between God and man. This communication is nothing else but God's happiness.[157] It is from this loving communication of God's happiness (*beatitudinem)* to man that a particular friendship can be predicated. Careful readers of Aquinas should remember Thomas's argument about man's last end being happiness (*beatitudo)* created in man by his union with God. Thus, Thomas concludes: "The love which is based on this communication is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God."[158] *Charity* is chosen to describe this friendship between God and man because it is the distinctive kind of love that the New Testament writers use to describe the love that God has for the world. *Charity* is the Latin translation of the Greek

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

[156] I have emphasized the term *mutually* because non-reciprocated well-wishing is not considered friendship. Thomas points this aspect out in his response of *ST* II-II Q. 23 a.1.

[157] Ibid. *Cum igitur sit aliqua communicatio hominis ad Deum secundum quod nobis suam beatitudinem communicat, super hac communicatione oportet aliquam amicitiam fundari.*

[158] Ibid.

word *agape* (*ἀγάπη*). As Thomas operated out of the Latin translations for the New Testament, he saw charity as God's unique love for the world. This can be especially seen in the first letter of John, where it is written:

> He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is charity. By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4: 8-10 DRA).[159]

This etymological background and original usage of *agape/charity* ought to reveal that Thomas did not arbitrarily choose *charity* for describing the friendship-love that exists between God and man. Rather, he makes the argument that *charity* and friendship with God are one and the same.[160]

The dialogue between the second objector and Thomas's response gives added depth to the conclusion that charity is friendship with God. The objector states the contradiction that exists between the command made by Jesus to love one's enemies out of charity and the fact that friendship cannot exist if love is not reciprocated.[161] Thomas replies by expressing the proper order of charity, that is, *friendship with God*:

> Friendship...extends to someone in respect of another, as, when a man has a friendship for a certain person, for his sake he loves all belonging to him...connected with him in any way...even if [he] hurts or hates us; so that in this way, the friendship of charity

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[159] I choose to use the Douay-Rheims American Edition translation here because it properly translates the Greek *agāpé* into the Latin form of *charity*.

[160] Matthew Kauth alludes to Michael Sherwin who notes that Thomas is not the first one to argue that charity is a kind of friendship with God, but he is the first to use Aristotle's notion of friendship in describing the particular love that does exist between God and man. Kauth says that "the association of friendship with charity reaches back at least to St. Cassian." For more on this explanation, *See*: Matthew Kauth, *Charity as Divine and Human Friendship* (Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press, 2013), 162.

[161] *ST* II-II Q. 23 a. 1.

> extends even to our enemies, whom we love out of charity in relation to God, to Whom the friendship of charity is chiefly directed.[162]

By charity, one is not friends with his enemies as the objector suggests. Rather, by charity one is friends with God first and foremost, and it is out of friendship-love for God that one ought to love all those to whom God extends his love — which is every human being who ever existed.

Man can reciprocate goods to God, who is in no state of need, by treating human beings in a loving manner. Such actions are pleasing to God, as Jesus preached: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Matt. 25:45). In this teaching, God identifies himself with the poor and needy because all of humanity stands in some kind of need for the good. Furthermore, God's identification with poor human beings serves to reinforce the fact that all of mankind, by virtue of their human life, are created images of God and such created beings are participants of God's life. Jesus commands that the naked be clothed, the sick be cared for, the hungry be fed, *et cetera*. Thus, good deeds done for other people out of one's friendship for God are ways in which man can, and ought to, reciprocate goods to God, and such reciprocity is an essential feature of friendship.

It is on this interconnectivity that the idea of coinherence can strengthen the understanding that no human being is unrelated to God and, thus, no human being can be strictly unrelated to another. Barron explains this idea explicitly: "Because all created beings participate in God who is *ipsum esse subsistens*, they are unavoidably related to one another by means of that shared participation."[163] Thus, for the one who has true charity, all human beings ought to be loved for God's sake because they are all willed into existence by the Creator and are

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[162] *ST* II-II Q. 23 a. 1 ad. 2.

[163] Barron, "Metaphysics of Coinherence," 36.

reflections of God's image. Understood in another way, since sin against God causes a separation between man and God, then sin also causes a separation among men — which has been manifested throughout all of history when considering human wars and horrendous holocausts. Thus, since friendship creates a unity between friends, and charity unites man and God, it also ought to be a cause of unity among men.[164] While expressing Thomas's understanding of charity, Denys Turner highlights this notion saying: "God's friends share with God the divine life itself... and they love, whether it is God or their fellow human beings, by means of the divine love itself...which is the gift of the Holy Spirit."[165] This fundamental idea of doing good works out of one's friendship with God (*ex caritate*) is the root of Catholic social teaching because the intention behind human actions determines the effect of the action. This notion serves as the reason for St. Paul's renowned claim that one can execute actions that are truly good for others, or one can accomplish outstanding feats from having an impressive faith, such as moving mountains or becoming a martyr: But without charity, all of those good actions are fundamentally fruitless. [166] The proper fruit of true charity is union with God.[167]

Another fundamental aspect of friendship that cannot be ignored with regard to God is equality. Though the metaphysics of coinherence can show that the Creator is not in competition with creation and that the Creator and created are compatible, *equality* with God does not

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[164] Thomas often uses this premise of love having a unitive effect. Most notably with regards to charity, which is friendship-love, he describes the unity that comes into being between the lover and the beloved in *ST* II-II Q. 27 a.2.

[165] Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 161.

[166] *See:* 1 Cor. 13.

[167] ST. II-II 23 a.5-8.

necessarily follow. Rather, men are made equal to God through an elevation of nature made possible by His grace.[168] The second article on charity asks is *whether charity is something created in the soul*. This question is pivotal, not only for Thomas's doctrine on charity, but also for gaining a deeper understanding of God's eternal plan of salvation. As presented in chapters one and two Thomas teaches that man's last end is *supernatural* inasmuch as his end exceeds what his natural powers can acquire. God's grace helps man's natural faculties by adding to his nature, that is, creating something new in man that is not contradictory to his nature *qua* man. Charity is ultimately the result of God's grace as Thomas concludes, "it is most necessary that, for us to perform acts of charity, there should be in us some habitual form superadded to the natural power, inclining that power to the act of charity."[169] With the elevation of man's nature, made possible by the infusion of grace and caused by Christ's Incarnation and Passion, man is made equal to God and can quickly have friendship with him. Denys Turner helps to explain Thomas's interrelated teachings on grace, friendship, and man's freedom.

While considering that Jesus calls his disciples *friends*, Turner shows how Thomas understands man's equality with God. Turner writes, "if Jesus proclaims that now his disciples are to be called his 'friends,' this can be only because in some way the radical inequality of Creator and creature has been overcome, because there is, as it were a *new* creation, establishing a new order of relationship between God and human beings."[170] This *new creation* in man is possible because of Christ's divine and human natures. Just as God speaks into being his

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[168] The elevation of nature by the Incarnation was initially examined in the first two parts of this current chapter.

[169] *ST*. II-II Q.23 a.2.

[170] Turner, *Thomas Aquinas*, 149.

creation, what Jesus says, goes, because he is fully man and God. And Jesus says to his disciples, "I call you my *friends*" (John 15:15).[171] It is according to Christ's divine nature that he has authority to create as God creates. As Turner further points out, "that originating gift of friendship, of course, is the Incarnation, God's becoming a human so that, in Christ, human beings may become God."[172] Human nature is made equal to God, through his grace, so that man might attain his last end, viz., union with God and eternal beatitude. This union comes about because of charity, i.e., Christ's non-coercive offer of friendship that can be freely chosen or freely denied by man. Freedom is essential to the nature of friendship, because if coercion is that which bonds, then, in such a relationship, the essential mutual love appropriate to friendship is annihilated. A *coercive friendship* is simply not friendship; it is a kind of slavery. Jesus speaks against this slave-like relationship, when he says: "No longer do I call you *slaves* for the *slave* does not know what his master is doing (John 15:15)."[173]

According to Thomas, and supported by Turner, human freedom is not compromised by the work of grace. It is clear to anyone, Turner argues, that friends freely choose to be friends. Turner expresses Thomas's idea: "'Infallibly' but not 'coercively' God effects the work of our salvation through the offer of the shared life of friends: that is all that grace is, utterly irresistible, utterly free, a friendship infallibly brought about by means of human free choice enabled to share in the divine life itself."[174] Human free choice, is, at its essential ontology, grace from God, such

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[171] The emphasis is mine.

[172] Turner, *Thomas Aquinas*, 150.

[173] The RSV uses *servants*, but makes a note that *slaves* is an alternative translation. I have chosen to use the alternative and the emphases are mine.

[174] Turner, *Thomas Aquinas,* 153.

that there is no fundamental opposition between the two. Turner makes Thomas's idea even more clear, saying, "grace succeeds without fail but not by force, and that what in God is the unimpeded action of grace is in the human will the freedom that grace elicits: they are one and the same reality, seen, as it were, from opposite ends."[175] Human freedom is truly achieved when man's will is rightly ordered by choosing God's will because God is not in competition with man.[176] This idea is also seen in St. Augustine's famous commencement of his *Confessions*, when he prays: "our heart is restless until it rests in you [O Lord]." [177] When man attempts to conform his will to God's will, man achieves a sense of *beatitudo* because he rightly sees that his human nature and freedom of choice are fundamentally not in competition with God. Turner continues: "Our free actions are the direct creation of the divine will so that grace and our free consent to it are but one action that proceeds from the shared life, knowledge, and consent of friends..."[178] When man's whole life is rightly ordered to God's will, Turner shows, according to Thomas, that "human beings actually live the divine life itself, sharing, as friends do, a single life and a *single* will."[179] It is, according to Aristotle, a sign of friendship when friends live together.[180] The way in which charity fulfills this requirement of friendship is the end to which

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[175] Ibid., 154.

[176] This idea derives from the Christian idea of coinherence that was previously discussed.

[177] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book 1.

[178] Turner, *Thomas Aquinas,* 160.

[179] Ibid., 161.

[180] Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," 1171b30-1172a16.

human life has been ordained by God from the beginning: a sharing of life with God — imperfectly in man's present state, but made perfect in eternity.

Part Four: The Holy Eucharist as the Sacrament of Charity: A Foretaste of Heaven

It is Christ who says, "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:15 NABRE). The unity of human and divine wills, effected by charity, carries Christ's promise of life with God. Thomas speaks of charity as the most excellent virtue and the form of the virtues because "charity directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end."[181] Charity's end coincides with man's last end — which is God, who is the perfect good and true life.[182]

The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are distinct from moral and intellectual virtues. While the moral virtues aim for the good life in society and the intellectual virtues aim for contemplation, the object of the theological virtues is God. Yet, charity ranks higher than faith and hope because, Thomas Argues, "faith and hope attain God indeed insofar as we derive from Him the knowledge of truth or the acquisition of good, whereas charity attains God Himself that it may rest in him."[183] Thomas considers that the Holy Sacraments of the Church are ways in

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[181] *ST* Q. 23 a.8.

[182] This is taken from Christ's words when he says "I am the way, the truth and the life" and consequently says that "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:6-11).

[183] *ST* II-II Q. 23. a.6

which the effect of Christ's Passion (the effect being grace for salvation) is conferred on man.[184] As was discussed in the second part of this current chapter, man can be saved from death because Christ sacrificially offered his life for man's sake. At the last supper, Jesus claims, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." and then he calls his disciples his friends if they do his will, which is perfectly conformed to God's will (John 15:13-15).

Christ displayed the greatest kind of love when he willingly died for his friends, the human race. As examined in this chapter's previous part, the love that God has for man is charity. Therefore, Thomas's claim that *charity is friendship* is supported by Christ's words and actions, who says the greatest display of love, which is to willingly sacrifice one's own life for the sake of another, is done out of friendship. In the course of his three year public ministry, Jesus gave many teachings and preformed many miracles; however, none is greater than the miracle and teaching he gave at the time of the Last Supper. At this event, Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, and commanded that what he did be done in *remembrance* of him. The original Greek word for *remembrance* is *anamnesis* — which means something much more than the arguable connotation: *calling to mind something that has happened in the past.*[185] The most recent edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* helps to clearly the notion of *anamnesis:*

> In all the Eucharistic prayers we find after the words of institution a prayer called the *anamnesis* or memorial...the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but

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[184] *ST* III Q. 61. a1: "*Ad tertium dicendum quod passio Christi est causa sufficiens humanae salutis. Nec propter hoc sequitur quod sacramenta non sint necessaria ad humanam salutem, quia operantur in virtute passionis Christi, et passio Christi quodammodo applicatur hominibus per sacramenta, secundum illud apostoli, Rom. VI, quicumque baptizati sumus in Christo Iesu, in morte ipsius baptizati sumus.*"

[185] This connotation is my own view.

> the proclamation of the mighty works wrought by God for men. In the liturgical celebration of these events, they become in a certain way present and real...When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, she commemorates Christ's Passover, and it is made present: the sacrifice Christ offered once and for all on the cross remains ever present.[186]

Thus, Christ's historic sacrifice on the cross during the Liturgy of the Eucharist breaks through time and space and becomes present during every Mass. Christ's institution of the Eucharist, as the Second Vatican Council fathers have expressed, was done "in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages. ... [Thus the Eucharist is] a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity...and a pledge of future glory."[187] Thus, the Holy Mass brings man closer to God because Christ's sacrifice, offered for man's salvation, and his resurrected body are made present in the Eucharist. Barron also explains, "The Mass is nothing less than the summing up, the recapitulation, of this entire history [of God's eternal plan of salvation for man]. ... As we commune in the most intimate way with Jesus [in the Eucharist], we enter into the inexhaustible richness of the divine life."[188] The Eucharist is a *foretaste* of heaven because, in its worthy reception, man is physically and spiritually united to God, but still imperfectly.

Thomas directly relates the Eucharist to charity in his treatment on the *matter of this sacrament* in the final, unfinished, third part of his *Summa theologiæ.* After saying that Christ's true body is present in the Eucharist, he says: "this belongs to Christ's love (*caritati*), out of which for our salvation He assumed a true body of our nature. And because it is the special feature of friendship to live together with friends...He promises us His bodily presence as a

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[186] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., 1363-1364.

[187] *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, par. 47.

[188] Robert Barron, "The Eucharist: Sacred Banquet, Sacrifice, Real Presence," in *Exploring Catholic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015), 163.

reward."[189] It is recognized that Christ's friendship does not only extend to those historic people that knew Him before his passion, death, and resurrection. Thomas understands that Christ's sacrifice and true body is made present to man by the Holy Mass. Further, Thomas adds,

> Meanwhile, in our pilgrimage [to eternal life with God] [Jesus] does not deprive us of His bodily presence; but unites us with Himself in this sacrament through the truth of His body and blood. Hence (John 6:57) he says: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in Me, and I in him*. Hence this sacrament is the sign of supreme charity... from such familiar union with Christ with us.[190]

It is according to the nature of friendship that Thomas explains Christ's Eucharistic presence and calls it the *sign of supreme charity*. Therefore, friendship with God can be maintained and increased through the worthy reception of the Eucharist.[191] Robert Barron concurs that Thomas "observes that the 'real' presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is a function of Christ's friendship with his people, for there is no higher sign of intimacy than the desire to be with one's friends."[192]

Although Thomas explicitly develops charity's inherent relationship with the Eucharist Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI does not reference Aquinas in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est.* Benedict inexplicably expresses the concept of man's friendship with God: "Union with Christ [in the Eucharist] is also union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own."[193] And again: "The saints...constantly renewed their capacity for love of neighbor from their encounter with the Eucharistic Lord. ... Love (*amor*) is 'divine' because it comes from God

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[189] *ST* III Q. 75 a.1 ad. 2.

[190] Ibid.

[191] The reception of the Eucharist is discussed in *ST* III Q. 80.

[192] Barron, "The Eucharist," 169.

[193] *Deus caritas est*, par. 14.

and unites us to God."[194] The concept behind Benedict's teaching that all who love God with God's love are unified to God, and to each other, is the same as Thomas's teaching that charity is friendship. Benedict, however, explains this teaching without the qualifications and notions of friendship-love which is charity. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum caritatis*, Benedict writes:

> Man is created for that true and eternal happiness which God's love can give...every eucharistic celebration sacramentally accomplishes the eschatological gathering of the People of God. For us, the eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets...to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints.[195]

Both Benedict and Thomas articulate the same Catholic message, but in different ways. Benedict could have made use of Thomas's approach to charity by understanding that it is friendship with God, but Benedict did not. In one sense, the fact that Benedict makes no reference to Thomas's argument that charity is friendship supports Kerr's observation that Thomas's teaching "is a daring model for charity" and that it "has little success in Catholic theology and spirituality."[196] In another sense, however, Benedict's description of man's unity with each other, through unity with God predicated on *divine love*, is identical to the conclusions Thomas makes. The only major difference between Benedict and Thomas is the precise distinctions and metaphysical identifications that Thomas makes with regard to *amor*, *caritas*, and *amicitia*. Regardless of either theologian's approach, both express the same truth derived from the articles of the Catholic faith. Thomas's teaching might reduce possible misunderstandings of this truth because

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[194] Ibid., par. 18.

[195] *Sacramentum caritatis*, par. 30-31.

[196] Kerr, "Charity as Friendship," 7.

not any kind of love has the characteristic of friendship between man and God, but the nature of charity does.

For the Catholic faith, the sacramental reality of the Eucharist is the source and summit because it is the closest that man can get to his last end in heaven.[197] Nevertheless, St. Paul writes on the inescapable limitations of man's temporal and earthly state: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Cor. 13:12). Thomas, following St. Paul, teaches that there is a more perfect manifestation of friendship with God in eternal life than in the Holy Eucharist. While considering the effects of this sacrament, he writes "the refreshment of spiritual food and the unity denoted by the species of the bread and wine are to be had in this present life, although imperfectly, but perfectly in the state of glory."[198] Thomas understands that the Eucharist's true substance, Christ himself, is hidden in *a sacrament* which is a sign of man's *sanctification*, or being made less unworthy, for eternal life with God.[199] On this topic Thomas says, "a sacrament is a sign that is both a reminder of the past, i.e., the passion of Christ; and an indication of that which is effected in us by Christ's passion, i.e., grace; and a prognostic, that is, a foretelling of future glory."[200] Therefore, since the Eucharist is the sacrament of charity, and charity is friendship with God, it follows that, as Barron states "the fullness of divine friendship...is realized beyond the Eucharist, in the worship of the heavenly homeland."[201]

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[197] *See*: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1324.

[198] *ST* III Q. 79. a. 2.

[199] *ST* III Q. 60. a. 3.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Barron, "Eucharist as Telos of the Law," 143.

Thomas's teaching on charity helps man to understand that the perfect union with God in eternal life is according to the proper nature of friendship that Aristotle helps to provide. Man neither loses his individual existence nor his human nature when united to God in charity, understood as friendship. This divine and human friendship provides the necessary grace that heals man's fallen nature. *Man's greatest friend*, Jesus the Christ, offers his life and suffers the mortal punishments of sin for the sake of man's union with God and beatitude. Benedict XVI helps to express this idea, "this union of no mere fusion, a sinking in the nameless ocean of the Divine; it is a unity which creates love, a unity in which God and man remain themselves and yet become fully one."[202] Such a nondestructive union — which is the proper nature of friendship that Thomas develops — is rightly attributed to that particular kind of unifying love between God and man that is charity.

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[202] *Deus caritas est*, par. 15.

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