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On How the Infused Virtues Differentiate Christian Friendship from Natural Friendship

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On How the Infused Virtues Differentiate

Christian Friendship from Natural

Friendship

By: Maureen McNeill

Thesis Director: Dr. Paul Gondreau

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Introduction

Friendship is one of the primary goods of life. Without friendship, happiness and the full enjoyment of all other good things is elusive. Aristotle articulates this notion when he states that friendship “is most necessary with a view to life: without friends, no one would choose to live, even if he possessed all other goods.”¹ Life itself is filled with more joy when it is spent with friends. The universal goodness of friendship is easily recognized by all people and valued by all, but most highly valued by those who know the love of God. When something meaningful occurs in life it is a universal human desire everyone experiences to want to share this with their friends. Whether it is a joyful or sad experience, the desire to share it with others is intrinsic to being human. We are built for relationship with God and the friendships we share with others allow us to more fully recognize the love of God in our lives. Friends intensify the joyful experiences making them all the more joy filled, so too do friends make misfortunes easier to bear.

While friendship is universally acknowledged as a good thing, what makes a good friendship is rarely considered by the average person. Most people do not reflect deeply about the philosophical and theological dimensions of friendship; yet, examining friendship from such a viewpoint is critical for cultivating good friendships. The unexamined life is not worth living and unexamined friendships are not worth having.

This thesis will examine the notion of friendship, from both a philosophical and theological perspective. In particular, it will examine what defines both natural friendship and

¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1155a4-5.

Christian friendship, with emphasis on how the latter is distinct from the former. The purpose of this thesis is to show that Christian friendship is best understood as a type of charity. Christian friendship is more perfect than any non-christian friendship. The virtue of charity directs man to his proper end, transforming how he looks at the world and how he relates to all others. The thesis will argue that by the infused virtues, which direct man towards a supernatural end (whereas the acquired virtues direct man towards his natural end), Christian friendship gains a super-added quality that distinguishes it from the friendship enjoyed by virtuous persons without grace.

This thesis will begin by looking at the acquired virtues and infused virtues according to Thomas Aquinas, focusing on how the infused moral virtues and acquired virtues relate to each other. Specific focus will be given to Thomas' understanding of the natural and supernatural perfection of the virtues. The paper will then shift to the consideration of the notion of friendship proper, examining both classical and Christian theories of friendship, specifically, what perfect friendship consists of. The paper will conclude by looking at how Christian friendship is distinct from natural friendship, because just as only Christian virtue can be perfect in an unqualified sense due to the virtue of charity, so too friendship. Only Christian friendship has the benefit of being ordered to the supernatural end of man by the infused virtues. Thus, only Christian friendship can be perfect in an unqualified sense.

Chapter 1: Virtue in the *Summa Theologiae*

A significant portion of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is dedicated to the topic of virtue. Both the *Prima Secundae Pars* and the *Secuda Secundae Pars* treat the topic of virtue. The *Prima Secundae Pars* focuses on the principles of the moral life. One of the main focuses is virtue in general, it addresses what virtues are proper to man and how they are obtained. In the *Secuda Secundae Pars* Thomas address the theological and cardinal virtues individually and in great depth, treating both their sub-virtues and corresponding vices.

Before treating the topic of virtue, Thomas begins by looking at man's end and how it is attained. Thomas affirms both Aristotle's and Augustine's understanding of man's end. For Aristotle, man's end is happiness in this life, while Augustine believes man's end is happiness in the next life. Aquinas, argues both are correct; man has a natural end, a limited happiness attainable in this life in human society and through man's natural resources, and an ultimate end, perfect happiness only attainable after death and through God's grace.² Man's final and perfect happiness is perfect union with God achieved only by the beatific vision. Without union with God, man is not able to be perfectly happy.³ However, that is not to say that man's natural end does not matter. Man is able to attain an imperfect happiness in this life through the use of his natural powers. Man is able to attain this imperfect happiness through the exercise of virtue in this life.⁴ The natural good of man can be determined by natural knowledge and it can be pursued and attained through naturally acquired virtue. But because this natural happiness is

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote, O.P. ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon, (Lander: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), I-II 5.6.

³ ST, I-II 3.8.

⁴ ST I-II 5.5.

limited and does not fulfill man's ultimate end, man stands in need of God's grace in order to attain perfect happiness.⁵

Thomas' Definition of Virtue

Thomas' understanding of virtue draws upon both Aristotle and Augustine. The definition of virtue put forth by Thomas is a reiteration of Augustine's definition, "virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God works in us, without us."⁶ For Thomas, "this definition comprises perfectly the whole essential notion of virtue."⁷ However, Thomas alters the definition of virtue to be: virtue is a good habit of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use. He replaces "good quality" for "good habit," because, although "good quality" is not incorrect, habit is a more suitable word because it is more specific.⁸ Thomas drops "which God works in us without us" because this phrase can only be applied to the infused virtues of which God is the efficient cause.⁹ Without this last phrase Thomas' definition of virtue is able to apply to "all virtues in general, whether acquired or infused."¹⁰

⁵ Not all scholars are in agreement that Thomas holds a twofold end of man. Henri de Lubac, among many other scholars, argued that Thomas held man only has one end; supernatural union with God. This debate regarding the ends of man is well outside the scope of this paper. Overall, there is a general consensus in the debate regarding the acquired and infused virtues in the Christian that man has both a natural and supernatural end.

⁶ ST I-II 55.4. arg. 1.

This definition is gathered from what Augustine says about virtue in *De Libero Arbitrio*, particularly Book 2 Chapter 19; "These virtues are, therefore, great goods. But you must remember that not only the great but even the least goods exist through Him alone from whom all good things come, namely, from God. [...] these virtues which enable us to live rightly are great goods [...] no one puts virtues to bad use, since the function of virtue is the good use of those things which we can also put to bad use."

⁷ ST I-II 55.4.

⁸ ST I-II 55.4.

⁹ ST I-II 55.4.

¹⁰ ST I-II 55.4.

Virtue as Habit

Thomas asserts that virtue is a type of habit and his understanding of virtue in this way is greatly indebted to Aristotle. A habit is a quality or disposition “whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill, and this, either in regard to itself or in regard to another.”¹¹ A habit can be either good or evil and used either well or badly. The moral quality of a habit is determined by whether the “mode is suitable to the things nature.”¹² If it is in accordance with one’s nature then it is a good habit and if it is not suitable to nature then it is an evil habit. Something is in accordance with one’s nature when it does not act against the flourishing of the thing. Thus, health is a habit of a living thing that disposes it well by helping a living thing to continue living. Now, not all habits result from acts of will. Man has both habits of body and habits of soul.¹³ Examples of habits of body are health and disease; health is a good habit and disease is a bad habit, but man does not possess these habits through direct acts of his will. The habits of the soul are found in the powers of the soul (intellect and will) since the principle of operation of the soul is the powers.¹⁴ Virtues are among the habits of the soul found in the will (or powers of the soul only insofar as they are moved by the will).¹⁵

The habits of man can shape his rational powers to either good or evil acts. Yet virtue always produces good acts because it can only be used well. Virtue is a perfection of a power

¹¹ ST I-II 49.1.

¹² ST I-II 49.2.

¹³ ST I-II 50.1 and 2

¹⁴ ST I-II 50.3

¹⁵ ST I-II 56.3.

and a perfection of a power is always good.¹⁶ Evil implies a defect which is contrary to perfection and thus, virtue can never be evil.¹⁷ Virtue makes both its possessor and his work good.¹⁸ Since virtue is always good and can never be used badly, it is a habit that is suitable to nature, and is therefore a good habit.¹⁹ Vice can never be used well and is always a habit that is unsuitable to nature because it acts against reason. Thus, vice is a bad habit.²⁰

According to Thomas, virtue is natural to man inchoately, meaning man naturally has virtue in an initial way, but it must be developed in order to be virtue in the fullest sense. In man's specific nature, there are "naturally known principles of both knowledge and action, which are the nurseries of intellectual and moral virtues."²¹ Likewise, in man's individual nature there are tendencies "disposed either well or ill to certain virtues," and these give man a natural inclination to particular virtues.²² Virtue begins from these unique tendencies that naturally incline an individual to certain virtues more than others. However, these virtues, or tendencies, are only naturally in man in this initial way; they are not perfectly in man, and are thus not fully developed virtues. The perfection of the virtues only come about through the virtuous action of

¹⁶ ST I-II 54.3

¹⁷ ST I-II 55.3

¹⁸ ST I-II 56.3.

¹⁹ ST I-II 54.3

²⁰ ST I-II 54.3

²¹ ST I-II 63.1.

²² ST I-II 63.1.

man in specific situations.²³ All of man's virtues (other than those infused by God) are in him naturally but must be perfected over time.²⁴

Acquired habits of virtue and vice are caused respectively by good and bad acts. A habit is not caused by one act but requires many acts since reason must shape the appetitive power. Man's appetite is not overcome all at once, but slowly. Virtue is cultivated by many acts over time which drive out contrary dispositions and shape man's appetite to be inclined towards that which reason judges should be willed.²⁵ Vice is acquired through the same means, repeated bad acts over time shape man to no longer desire or act for the good but instead will the bad. Thus, it is by repeated good acts or repeated bad acts that man acquires virtue or vice.

Types of Virtue

There are both acquired virtues and infused virtues, distinguished by how man comes to possess them. Man cultivates the acquired virtues through his own powers and the infused virtues man only obtains directly from God's grace. There are two reasons this occurs. Thomas explains:

it follows that human virtue directed to the good which is defined according to the rule of human reason can be caused by human acts: inasmuch as such acts proceed from reason, by whose power and rule the aforesaid good is established. On the other hand, virtue which directs man to good as defined by the Divine Law, and not by human reason, cannot be caused by human acts, the principle of which is reason, but is produced in us by the Divine operation alone.²⁶

²³ ST I-II 63.1.

²⁴ ST I-II 63.1.

²⁵ ST I-II 51.3

²⁶ ST I-II 63.2.

Man has two ends, a natural end and a supernatural end; thus, he needs both the acquired and the infused virtues in order to act for these ends. The acquired virtues are ordered to man's natural end and can direct man to the good as defined by human reason but by them alone man is unable to act in view of man's supernatural end. This is because man's supernatural end surpasses man's natural abilities to reach it. The supernatural and ultimate end of man is supernatural union with God. To act for and attain this end man must receive from God the infused virtues. Man's supernatural end of happiness exceeds what he is able to accomplish naturally; this end is not proportionate to man's natural habits and thus, natural habits are not able to move man to attain his ultimate end.²⁷ Therefore, man requires habits which are proportionate to his supernatural end, known as infused virtues.

Moral Virtues

Aquinas uses Aristotle's definition of moral virtue as "a habit of choosing the mean appointed by reason as a prudent man would appoint it."²⁸ The effect of all moral virtues is some good operation.²⁹ For Thomas, the moral virtues are in the appetitive power of man and are a "natural or quasi-natural inclination to do some particular action."³⁰ Man's appetitive power is the power that moves man by desire; the appetite can desire either particular things such as 'that steak' or to desire universal things like knowledge.³¹ Moral virtue is the principle that allows

²⁷ ST I-II 51.4

²⁸ ST I-II 59.1. "Virtue, therefore, is a characteristic marked by choice, residing in the mean relative to us, a characteristic defined by reason and as the prudent person would define it" (1107a1-3).

²⁹ ST I-II 60.2.

³⁰ ST I-II 58.2.

³¹ ST I-I 80.2.

man to “choose aright” and it perfects the appetitive faculty.³² This means that moral virtue is able to shape man’s appetite so that it desires only what is good so that he only desire things at the right time and in the right way.

The four primary, called cardinal, moral virtues are prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Thomas follows Albert the Great and Phillip the Chancellor in their designation of which four virtues are cardinal.³³ Prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude are considered cardinal because they are principle among all the other virtues and all the other virtues can be reduced to these four.³⁴ These four virtues are primary among all virtues when considered both from their formal principles and among the subjects they are in. The formal principle of virtue is the “good as defined by reason.”³⁵ Thus, prudence is principal among all the virtues since it is prudence that applies right reason to action and is present in all acts of virtue. The other three cardinal virtues all are exercised by reason ordered to something else. Justice is exercised when any act is ordered by reason, and temperance and fortitude are exercised when the passions are ordered by reason.³⁶ The four cardinal virtues correspond to and perfect the four subjects of virtue: the rational power is perfected by prudence, the will is perfected by justice, the concupiscible power by temperance, and the irascible power by fortitude.³⁷ All the other virtues

³² ST I-II 58.3.ad 2.

³³ R.E. Houser, introduction to *The Cardinal Virtues: Aquinas, Albert, and Philip the Chancellor*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004), 65. In this introduction R.E. Houser offers an in depth examination of the development of the doctrine of the cardinal virtues.

³⁴ ST I-II 61.2. ad 1 and 3.

³⁵ ST I-II 61.2.

³⁶ ST I-II 61.2.

³⁷ ST I-II 61.2.

fall under and can be reduced to these four cardinal virtues; this does not mean that the other virtues are indistinguishable from the cardinal virtues, but rather they are more specific virtues that fall under the cardinal virtues. An example of this is chastity which comes under temperance. Temperance is the virtue that regulates passions in regards to food and touch. Chastity falls under but is distinct from temperance by regulating the passions specifically in regards to sex.

The four cardinal virtues are distinct from each other in reference to their diverse objects, yet are connected to each other since each only exists when the other virtues are present.³⁸ Each of these four virtues overflow into each other in the way that prudence is present in all the virtues and justice, temperance, and fortitude are present in each other as well. Yet, this overflow does not result in the virtues becoming one; instead each virtue remains distinct from the others because each still has its own determinate matter.³⁹ The interconnectedness of the virtues can be seen in the case of planning a meal; temperance at first seems to be the only virtue at play. Because temperance regulates food and drink it will determine how much you should eat and drink. But prudence also is necessary to determine what you should make based on what you can afford, what ingredients you already own, and what will give you the necessary nutrients. Justice and fortitude might be necessary in this situation if you are responsible for feeding others or need to persevere in abstaining from a meal so that your children may eat.

Infused Virtues

Theological Virtues

³⁸ ST I-II 61.4.

³⁹ ST I-II 61.4.

The theological virtues are virtues man receives directly from God. These virtues are faith, hope, and charity which direct man to God, who is his last end. These virtues are necessary for man to attain his ultimate end of beatitude with God. Because this end is supernatural, it surpasses man's natural principles. Man can only reach his ultimate end by receiving virtues proportionate to his ultimate end. The effect of an act can only be proportionate to its cause.⁴⁰ Man's acquired virtues are caused by man's natural powers; hence, man's acquired virtues are not able to act for an end that surpasses nature. Virtues that are proportionate to his supernatural end must be caused by God, otherwise they too would fall short of the supernatural end.

Infused Moral Virtues

Man's acquired moral virtues are proportionate to and can be directed towards his natural end, while the theological virtues are proportionate and directed towards his supernatural ultimate end. But in addition to these, man also needs infused moral virtues which are proportionate to his supernatural end. The acquired moral virtues are not sufficient on their own because they are acquired by man's actions and spring from man's natural principles.⁴¹ While the theological virtues direct man to his supernatural end, they only do this in an initial way; man still needs infused moral virtues to perfect his soul in regard to things other than God but still in relation to God.⁴² This need can be seen in those who convert to Christianity; the person who converts has the acquired moral virtues (whether perfect or imperfect) which guide him to do

⁴⁰ ST I-II 63.3.

⁴¹ ST I-II 63.3.

⁴² ST I-II 63.3.ad 2.

good acts and the theological virtues help to direct him to his ultimate end, but the theological virtues only do this in an initial way of knowing and loving God. The infused moral virtues are necessary because they help him to live out the theological virtues in his daily life of managing work, house chores, finances, and relationships. The infused moral virtues enables a Christian to develop the theological virtues by living a virtuous life directed towards love of God throughout everyday situations.

The acquired moral virtues and the infused moral virtues truly differ from each other and are not of the same species. It is not simply that the two types of virtue are the same, just one being miraculously given to man while the other is acquired.⁴³ Instead, the acquired and infused virtues differ in regards to both their objects and ends. Acquired virtue is directed towards objects that bring human flourishing in this life for the end of health and happiness; infused moral virtues are directed towards objects that bring about holiness for the end of supernatural union with God. Because the acquired moral virtues and their corresponding infused moral virtues differ in both object and end, their acts differ. Although the acts of acquired and infused temperance both moderate the desires for pleasure and touch, they do this for different reasons. The mean that is appointed by human reason (acquired virtue) differs from the mean appointed by Divine rule (infused virtue). Thomas uses the example of temperance; in regards to the consumption of food human reason dictates that “food should not harm the health of the body, nor hinder the use of reason,” but Divine rule states that it benefits man to “*chastise his body, and bring it into subjection* (1 Cor 9:27), by abstinence in food, drink and the like.”⁴⁴ Thus, the

⁴³ ST I-II 63.4.ad 3.

⁴⁴ ST I-II 63.4.

temperate amount of food to eat may differ under acquired and infused virtue. The virtues are directed to different ends; the acquired virtues direct man to good acts in respect to human affairs as a final end, while the infused virtues direct man to good acts in respect to human affairs ultimately ordered to the final end of “being *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God* (Eph 2:19).”⁴⁵ Thus, the acquired virtues and their corresponding infused virtues differ in species, and although their acts may look similar they are not identical.⁴⁶

Perfect and Imperfect Virtue

For Thomas, the moral virtues can be considered either as perfect or imperfect. He uses the term perfect virtue in two different ways: one when distinguishing connected moral virtue from unconnected moral virtue and another when distinguishing infused moral virtue from acquired moral virtue. When considering the first way, there are imperfect and perfect acquired moral virtues. An imperfect acquired moral virtue is simply “an inclination to do some kind of good deed” and this inclination can be from either nature or habituation.⁴⁷ These virtues are called unconnected virtue, meaning a person acts with what appears to be one or some of the virtues but does not have all the virtues. A man may have a natural inclination to temperance and perform acts of imperfect temperance, but lack the virtue of prudence and other virtues. This person may even be vicious in many other areas of life. In a certain sense he has the virtue of temperance, yet it is only imperfect since as stated above all the virtues are connected.

⁴⁵ ST I-II 63.4.

⁴⁶ ST I-II 63.4.ad 2.

⁴⁷ ST I-II 65.1.

True virtue depends on the other virtues. Perfect virtue, understood as “a habit that inclines us to do a good deed well” is always connected to other virtues.⁴⁸ For example, one cannot truly have fortitude if one lacks moderation which distinguishes temperance, discretion which belongs to prudence, and rectitude which belongs to justice. Further, the moral virtues are connected by their matter. All moral virtue requires prudence because moral virtue is about making right choices. But, prudence also requires the other moral virtues because “prudence is *right reason about things to be done*, and the starting point of reason is the end of things to be done, to which end man is rightly disposed by moral virtue.”⁴⁹ The person with perfect acquired moral virtue has prudence along with all the other virtues.

In the second way Thomas makes a further distinction in regards to the perfection of the moral virtues. As previously said, the connected acquired virtues are perfect in comparison to the unconnected virtues, but these connected acquired moral virtues are imperfect in comparison to the perfect infused virtues. For Thomas, only the infused virtues are perfect and can be called “virtues simply,” while the acquired virtues are “virtues in a restricted sense.”⁵⁰ This is because the infused virtues direct man to his ultimate end, while the acquired virtues only direct man to his natural, i.e. imperfect, end.

The distinction Thomas is making is more clearly seen in his *Disputed Questions on Virtue*. In Article 2 under *Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues* Thomas draws out a threefold grade of virtue. First, virtuous inclinations are wholly imperfect virtues. These exist without

⁴⁸ ST I-II 65.1.

⁴⁹ ST I-II 65.1.

⁵⁰ ST I-II 65.2.

prudence and since they failed to attain right reason they are more properly understood to be inclinations than virtues.⁵¹ Virtue cannot be used badly, but inclinations can be since they are not directed by prudence. A person can be naturally inclined to charitable giving, but if she lacks prudence she may donate her possessions and money while neglecting the basic needs of her children. Additionally, virtue implies action while inclination does not. Another person may be inclined to justice, but fail to act upon it out of fear of the judgment of others. Although inclined to acts of virtue, and despite carrying out these desires, a person who lacks the other virtues lacks true virtue.

The second grade of virtue is connected acquired virtue. These virtues are guided by right reason but do not have charity. These virtues are perfect in reference to the human good “but not simply speaking perfect, because they do not attain the first rule, which is the ultimate end.”⁵² This is seen in the case of virtuous non-Christians. Although one may have perfect acquired virtue, none of these virtuous acts can bring about union with God. They are true virtues because they can only be used well and are guided by prudence, but fail since they are not able to be directed to man’s final end.

The final grade of virtues is infused virtue; they are virtues *simpliciter*. These virtues are “perfect simply speaking, because they are with charity” and make man’s act simply good because they attain the ultimate end.⁵³ When one acts with infused virtue, one performs all virtuous actions through the grace of God for the ultimate end of union with God. Connected

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, trans. Ralph McInerny (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1999), a.2.

⁵² Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, a.2.

⁵³ Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, a.2.

acquired virtue can exist without the infused virtue of charity but, charity is necessary for man to have the infused virtues, which are virtues truly and perfectly. Just as prudence is necessary for the acquired moral virtues to be connected and perfect, so too charity is necessary for the infused virtues to be virtues *simpliciter*. This is because charity is the virtue that makes prudence and the other infused moral virtues well disposed toward man's ultimate end.⁵⁴ Because these acts are performed not simply through human ability but with the grace of God, they serve to be meritorious and thus, truly perfect.

On the topic of perfect and imperfect virtues, there is much debate among Thomists regarding if one can have connected moral virtue without charity.⁵⁵ While the concern of this paper is not to dive deep into this debate, it is important to sketch out the differing positions. The current debate centers on Bonnie Kent's critique of Alasdair MacIntyre's interpretation of Thomas on this question.⁵⁶ Kent accuses MacIntyre of misreading Aquinas as agreeing with Augustine that virtue is only possible with grace. In response to this, Thomas Osborne defends MacIntyre as upholding the "traditional thesis that even acquired virtue depends on grace for its full development with the view that there is no natural acquired virtue without grace."⁵⁷ Osborne maintains that acquired prudence can exist without grace, but that it remains imperfect. Brian

⁵⁴ ST I-II 65.2.

⁵⁵ Angela McKay Knobel, and Brian J. Shanley, O.P., read Thomas this way, others, follow the tradition of John of St. Thomas such as Jacques Maritain, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Thomas Osborne argue that true prudence does not exist without charity, and thus, the non-Christian cannot have perfect connected acquired moral virtues. See: Angela McKay Knobel, "Aquinas and the Pagan Virtues," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51.3 (2011):339-354. Brian J. Shanley, "Aquinas on Pagan Virtue," *Thomist: a Speculative Quarterly Review* 63.4 (1999): 553-577. Thomas M. Osborne Jr., "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas," *Thomist* 71 (2007): 39-64.

⁵⁶ Bonnie Kent, "Moral Provincialism," *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 269-285. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.

⁵⁷ Thomas M. Osborne Jr., "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas," *Thomist* 71 (2007): 40.

Shanley and Angela McKay Knobel strive to pave a middle ground between Kent and MacIntyre's positions.⁵⁸ Both Shanley and Knobel argue it is possible to acquire true virtue without grace, yet this virtue is imperfect since it is not ordered to man's ultimate end. Although Shanley and Knobel maintain a very similar position to Osborne, the difference lies in the questions of whether the acquired virtues (specifically acquired prudence) can be fully operative without grace.

Shanley and Knobel answer affirmatively; it is possible to acquire prudence through one's natural ability without the help of grace, yet this acquired prudence is imperfect; grace is necessary for perfect infused virtue. Osborne denies this, arguing that acquired prudence is always imperfect and can only be perfected through grace guiding one's actions. The difference between these two arguments stems from differing views of how the acquired and infused virtues relate. Shanley and Knobel view the person with grace as a person in possession of the infused moral virtues and possibly the acquired moral virtues. In their view, the corresponding acquired and infused virtues are distinct from each other yet present in one person. Osborne seems to view the moral virtues differently. Instead, he does not see two corresponding virtues, acquired prudence and infused prudence, but rather one virtue of prudence that in order to be perfected, must be directed by grace. In the next chapter of this thesis, the current debate on how the infused and acquired moral virtues relate in the Christian person will be examined. This will hopefully help to further unpack what it means to talk about perfect virtue and perfect friendship.

⁵⁸ Brian J. Shanley, "Aquinas on Pagan Virtue," *Thomist: a Speculative Quarterly Review* 63.4 (1999): 553-577. McKay Knobel, "Aquinas and the Pagan Virtues," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 51.3 (2011):339-354.

Chapter 2: Theories Regarding How the Infused and Acquired Moral Virtues Relate to Each Other

As my foregoing comments have suggested, there is an ongoing debate among commenters on Thomas concerning how the acquired and infused virtues relate to each other within a Christian's moral life. The majority of Thomist scholars agree that Thomas holds that the acquired and infused moral virtues can exist at the same time in the Christian. However, Aquinas never elaborated on how the acquired and infused moral virtues relate to each other. Thus, this silence on Aquinas's part has led to much discussion and debate between commenters on Aquinas.

Traditionally, the debate centered on the issue of facility. From the post-scholastic era until the mid-twentieth century, the debate regarding the acquired and infused virtues focused on whether the natural virtues facilitate the supernatural, and vice versa.⁵⁹ Since then, the focus of the debate regarding the infused and acquired virtues has shifted. Currently, the debate is concerned with whether the acquired virtues in the Christian are able to act on their own or whether they always act in union with the infused moral virtues.

The current debate centers on two main theories, Angela Knobel names the two main theories the 'coexistence theory' and the 'unification theory.'⁶⁰ I will use these names to describe the theories throughout this paper. The coexistence theory asserts that the acquired moral virtues remain in man alongside the infused moral virtues and act independently of each other. The

⁵⁹ Renee Mirkes, "Aquinas on the Unity of Perfect Moral Virtue," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1998): 601.

⁶⁰ Angela McKay Knobel, "Two Theories of Christian Virtue," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (2010): 599.

unification theory asserts that the acquired virtues and their corresponding infused virtues are united and act as one. This chapter will look at these theories and examine how they succeed or fail to align with Thomas' thought. I will first look at the two theories, then I will look at the strengths and weaknesses of both theories to be in accord with Thomas' thought.

The Coexistence Theory

Promoters of the coexistence theory argue that both the acquired moral virtues and their corresponding infused moral virtues act and are cultivated in the Christian. The acquired virtues are not superseded by the infused virtues; both exist and act independently of each other in the Christian.⁶¹ Acquired virtues act towards man's natural end, while divinely infused virtue acts for the sake of man's supernatural end. According to Bonnie Kent, Christians need both the infused and acquired moral virtues because, although "only the infused virtues are necessary for happiness in the afterlife [...] people need the acquired virtues to be happy in the ordinary human society of this life."⁶² The acquired virtues are necessary, because the infused virtues only act in regards to our salvation. In regards to worldly affairs, like success in business or war tactics, man must use acquired virtue.⁶³

Although man has both acquired and infused moral virtues, the acquired virtues are only virtues "in a relative sense by comparison with God-given habits."⁶⁴ The acquired virtues,

⁶¹ Knobel, "Two Theories," 600.

⁶² Bonnie Kent, "Habits and Virtues," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*. ed. Stephen J. Pope. (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 125.

⁶³ Kent "Habits and Virtues," 125.

⁶⁴ Kent "Habits and Virtues," 123.

without charity, are intrinsically imperfect. The only perfect and true virtues man can have are the infused virtues because it is only charity that perfects the virtues. Kent explains,

true unqualified virtue is that which directs one to mankind's principal good...and understood in this way, no true virtue can exist without charity. But if virtue is understood in relation to some particular end, something can be called a virtue without charity, in so far as it is directed to some particular good.⁶⁵

Although the acquired moral virtues are imperfect virtues, they are still virtues that act for the sake of genuine goods, such as educating one's children, feeding the homeless, and recycling.

Non-Christians are able to act towards these genuine human goods; their actions are not meritorious, but they are not sinful either. The non-Christian acting with acquired virtue produces acts that are good and praiseworthy.⁶⁶ In the Christian the acquired virtues are also at work. The Christian produces acts of acquired virtue, "both for their intrinsic worth and for the sake of God" and these acts of acquired virtues are meritorious.⁶⁷

The coexistence theory asserts that acts of acquired virtue by a Christian are meritorious because they are directed to God by charity. For Aquinas, a meritorious act is when man, acting out of love for God, gains a reward from God.⁶⁸ Although the acquired virtues are concerned with man's natural goods and are not proportionate to man's supernatural end, they are still able to receive from charity a further direction to supernatural beatitude. This direction from charity does not alter acquired virtue but "simply adds a further motive [...] they still produce the same

⁶⁵ ST II-II, 23.7.

⁶⁶ Kent "Habits and Virtues," 125.
ST I-II, 62.4; II-II, 10.4.

⁶⁷ Kent "Habits and Virtues," 126.

⁶⁸ ST I-II 114.1.

actions and seek the same proximate ends, but they now do so for a further motive: the love of God.”⁶⁹ Denis Bradley articulates this stating:

charity, in the supernatural life of a man or woman possessing sanctifying grace, is also the form of the acquired virtues, but the latter do not, thereby, lose their natural status. Charity commands but does not replace or radically supernaturalize the natural virtues.⁷⁰

Thus, a Christian’s daily life, filled with such things as going to work, spending time with friends, reading books, and watching movies, “can express both her love for strictly human goods and her love for God.”⁷¹

For the coexistence theory, acquired virtue acts in the Christian in matters of purely natural goods and acts out of love for God. Yet, this does not mean that the infused moral virtues are unnecessary for the Christian. The coexistence theory maintains that the Christian still needs the infused moral virtues because only the infused virtues are proportionate to the supernatural end of man. The infused moral virtues often direct man to act for a mean that does not align with the mean of the corresponding acquired virtue. The infused virtues give the Christian “distinctive ends and motivations, reason will dictate a mean more exacting than that revealed by natural reason unaided by grace.”⁷² An example of this would be days of religious fasting, like Good Friday. Acquired virtue is unable to direct man to the virtuous act of abstaining from meat and fasting; only the infused moral virtue of temperance is able to direct man to this proper mean and act.

⁶⁹ Knobel, “Two Theories,” 602.

⁷⁰ Denis Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 17.

⁷¹ Kent “Habits and Virtues,” 126.

⁷² Kent “Habits and Virtues,” 125.

The acquired and infused moral virtues act independently because they are “primarily ordered towards different goods” which means they produce different acts.⁷³ In the person with charity “both types of actions are ultimately ordered towards supernatural beatitude,” but the mean and act of acquired virtue differs from that of the corresponding infused virtue.⁷⁴ An example of this is with acquired temperance one eats the amount of food that does not harm the health of one’s body nor that hinders the use of reason. One with acquired temperance and the added direction of charity eats the amount of food that does not harm the health of one’s body nor hinder the use of reason, out of love for God. But an act of infused temperance would be guided by the Divine rule to “chastise his body and bring it into subjection” (1 Cor 9:27). Because the acquired and infused moral virtues not only have different ultimate ends but also have different proximate ends, they have different means and lead to different actions. Thus, the infused moral virtues remain necessary for the Christian because there are times that the Christian will need to act with the infused moral virtue and not the corresponding acquired virtue because a more exacting mean is necessary.

The Unification Theory

The unification theory argues that in the Christian, the infused moral virtues and the acquired virtues act as one supernatural virtue. Renée Mirkes argues that “acquired and infused moral virtues together form a unity, a single, indivisible virtue that is supernatural in character.”⁷⁵ According to supporters of the unification theory, the infused virtues can be understood as

⁷³ Knobel, “Two Theories,” 601.

⁷⁴ Knobel, “Two Theories,” 601.

⁷⁵ Mirkes, “Aquinas on the Unity of Perfect Moral Virtue,” 605.

perfections of the acquired virtues. They perfect the acquired virtues already present in the Christian.⁷⁶ Terrence Irwin states that “the infused virtues are developments of, not alternatives to, the virtues that perfect human nature in relation to its natural end.”⁷⁷ The acquired virtues are only able to be perfected in an unqualified sense through the command of charity which directs them to the supernatural end of man. The infused moral virtues are also able to perfect the acquired virtues because, “an infused moral virtue, having received its perfect form from charity, is also able to effect, produce, and create its own form or perfection in its acquired counterpart, enabling the acquired virtue to function just like itself.”⁷⁸

A person is able to act with both acquired and infused virtue at the same time because one agent is able to intend more than one end in one act. Thus, a Christian is able to simultaneously intend a proximate natural end and the ultimate supernatural end at the same time.⁷⁹ For example, a Christian can intend his natural end of health and his ultimate end of union with God by eating a well-balanced meal and working out. The Christian with the infused virtues still pursues the same proximate ends as he did before when he had the acquired virtues, but now the infused virtues strengthen him to be able to be successful in his endeavor.⁸⁰ Irwin explains, “the infused virtues extend the outlook of the acquired virtues, and do not supplant it with a

⁷⁶ Knobel, “Two Theories,” 607.

John Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues: Rethinking the Standard Philosophical Interpretation of Moral Virtue in Aquinas,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 27 (1999): 19-20.

⁷⁷ Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study*, vol. 1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 647.

⁷⁸ Mirkes, “Aquinas on the Unity of Perfect Moral Virtue,” 599.

⁷⁹ Mirkes, “Aquinas on Perfect Moral Virtue,” 599.
Knobel, “Two Theories,” 607.

⁸⁰ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 19-20.
Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, vol. 1, 647.

completely different outlook.”⁸¹ Those without the infused virtues do not have perfect virtue, “we have the acquired virtues, we can see what their perfection would be like, but we recognize that we lack it.”⁸² In the Christian, the supernatural end of the infused virtues completes and perfects the natural ends of the acquired virtues.

The unification theory argues that in most cases the end of an acquired virtue will be fulfilled if the end of an infused virtue is.⁸³ Both the ends of the infused and acquired virtues are served by the same act, and the higher end of the infused virtues allows the lower end of the acquired virtues to be fulfilled and fulfilled in a more perfect way. This is why, for supporters of the unification theory “infused moral virtue is required for each and every human activity.”⁸⁴ Without acting in unity with the infused moral virtues, the acquired virtues fail to be meritorious or unqualified perfect virtues.

Although supporters of the unification theory argue that the acquired and infused moral virtues are united into one perfect virtue, they maintain that both the acquired virtues and the infused virtues continue to exist in the Christian. For Mirkes, acquired virtue is the “secondary, subordinate” cause of perfect moral virtue, while infused virtue is the “perfecting power” that determines the virtue to a supernatural end.⁸⁵ The acquired and infused moral virtues are distinguished by their formal ends. Acquired virtue is only concerned with the goods of civil life, while the infused virtues are concerned with the goods of spiritual life as they bear on our

⁸¹ Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, vol. 1, 647.

⁸² Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, vol. 1, 647.

⁸³ Knobel, “Two Theories,” 608-609.

⁸⁴ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 14-15.

⁸⁵ Mirkes, “Aquinas on Perfect Moral Virtue,” 601.

supernatural relationship with God. Yet, the unity of the acquired and infused moral virtues is possible because they are materially the same.⁸⁶ Mirkes explains that the acquired and infused virtues come together and form a composite virtue that “is formally an infused moral virtue and materially an acquired moral virtue.”⁸⁷

John Inglis seeks to explain how the infused and acquired virtues can be distinguished from each other when they produce a single act. He begins by showing how the acquired and infused virtues are either the same or different in regards to the four causes. In both types of virtue, the matter is the same; in acts of temperance the desire for food is the material cause. The efficient cause differs in acquired and infused virtues, but it is possible to have two efficient causes present in one act. Inglis stresses that “infused virtue builds upon but does not destroy, virtuous characteristics acquired through human effort.”⁸⁸ These characteristics consist of one’s passions and dispositions shaped in a way that inclines one to virtuous acts. The acquired and infused virtues also differ in regards to their final cause, acquired virtues serve the civil good while the infused virtues serve man’s final and ultimate good. Under the unification theory even though the final cause of acquired moral virtue differs from that of infused moral virtue, both final causes are achieved by the same act, the supernatural end of man completes the natural end of man.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 12.
Mirkes, “Aquinas on Perfect Moral Virtue,” 601.

⁸⁷ Mirkes, “Aquinas on Perfect Moral Virtue,” 601.

⁸⁸ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 21.

⁸⁹ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 21-22.

Both the acquired and infused virtues support each other when together they produce a single act. The infused virtues “strengthens those characteristics of acquired virtue that remain, and it supplies an overriding final cause that transforms the virtue.”⁹⁰ The acquired virtues support the infused virtues by removing contrary habits and passions. In a Christian, acquired virtue takes on a subordinate role to infused moral virtue, but does not disappear from one’s moral life. Acquired virtue still informs infused virtue because infused virtue follows the rule of reason; an example of this is that the infused virtue of abstinence from food should not go against reason and harm one’s health.⁹¹

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Two Theories

Both the coexistence theory and the unification theory have strengths and weaknesses in accommodating Thomas’ thought. Both agree that the infused virtues, especially charity, are necessary for man to act for his supernatural end. They also both agree man has both natural and supernatural ends for which he acts. Yet, neither fully stands in line with Thomas in their attempts to account for how the acquired and infused virtues relate in the Christian. The following paragraphs will examine the strengths and weaknesses of both theories.

The coexistence theory does a better job maintaining the importance of proportionality in Thomas. Effects must be proportionate to their causes and principles. Acquired virtue is from man’s nature and ordered to man’s natural good; it cannot be ordered to man’s supernatural end. Thus, infused virtues are necessary because they are proportionate to man’s supernatural end and caused by grace. The unification theory fails to accommodate proportionality because it asserts

⁹⁰ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 22.

⁹¹ Inglis, “Aquinas’s Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues,” 22.

the same act is able to achieve both man's natural and supernatural end. However, the principle of sufficient reason cannot allow this because acquired virtue cannot act for man's supernatural end. The unification theory tries to accommodate the principle of sufficient reason by arguing that the acquired virtues are supernaturalized by the infused moral virtues and act as one virtue. However, this would only be possible if the means, object, and acts of the acquired and infused virtues were the same, which they are not. The coexistence theory does a better job accommodating the principle of sufficient reason because it maintains that "the acquired virtues produce acts proportionate to man's natural good, while the infused virtues produce acts proportionate to man's supernatural good."⁹²

In maintaining that the acquired and infused virtues have different means, objects, and acts the coexistence theory is more successful. The unification theory argues that the acquired and infused moral virtues fulfill both their ends simultaneously through a single act. This claim seems to completely ignore Thomas' response to an objection in Article 4 of Question 63 in the *Prima Secundae*. The objection argues that acts of infused and acquired temperance are the same. Thomas' response to this claim states that the acts of acquired and infused temperance cannot be the same because the reason for the act differs. Thomas explains "both acquired and infused temperance moderate desires for pleasures of touch, but for different reasons, as stated: wherefore their respective acts are not identical."⁹³ The unification theory tries to maintain that while acquired and infused virtues act for different reasons, they can still fulfill both these ends in one identical act. This claim is not reconcilable with Thomas.

⁹² Knobel, "Two Theories," 601.

⁹³ ST I-II 63.4.

Although the coexistence theory seems to do a better job according with Thomas, both the coexistence theory and the unification theory ultimately fail to provide a fully satisfactory account of how the acquired and infused moral virtues relate in a Christian. In an effort to maintain proportionality and the difference of means and acts of the acquired and infused virtues, the coexistence theory asserts the Christian acts with the infused virtues in matters necessary for salvation and the acquired virtues in human matters not necessary for salvation. The trouble with this claim is that it implies that man acts for two distinct and unconnected final ends, a natural final end and a supernatural final end. Continued work to provide an account of how Thomas believed the acquired and infused virtues relate in a Christian is necessary.

A third potential solution is provided by William C. Mattison III. In his article “Can Christians Possess the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” he asserts that Thomas does not maintain that the acquired virtues exist in the Christian.⁹⁴ This is a surprising claim since most contemporary Thomistic scholars maintain that the Christian possesses and cultivates both the infused and acquired moral virtue. Mattison strives to show it is a misreading of Thomas that has led to thinking the acquired virtues continue to exist in the Christian with the infused virtues. By reducing the virtues of a Christian in a state of grace to only the infused virtues, many of the problems both the unification and coexistence theories have are solved.

Mattison proposes that both in reality and in Thomas the Christian only possess the infused moral and theological virtues; never the acquired virtues. He asserts,

Since a person has only one last end and does everything for that last end, the Christian cannot have natural happiness as his or her last end, and therefore

⁹⁴ William C. Mattison III, “Can Christians Possess the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): 559.

cannot possess the natural virtues, which direct one towards natural happiness as the last end. Second, given that the infused cardinal virtues differ from acquired cardinal virtues [...] in species, the Christian with infused cardinal virtues [...] cannot simultaneously act in the same activity based on two sets of virtues that incline to formally different actions. Therefore, the Christian cannot possess the natural virtues, understood as functionally equivalent to the acquired cardinal virtues.”⁹⁵

This reading of Thomas helps to eliminate the issues found with both the coexistence and the unification theories; maintaining the strengths of both the coexistence theory and the unification theory while avoiding their weaknesses. Mattison’s argument for only infused virtue rests on the singularity of man’s last end and the difference of the formal object between acquired and infused virtue.⁹⁶ All the acts of a Christian are ordered to his one final end of supernatural union with God. This is done through the infused moral and theological virtues. But, this means the acquired virtues serve no purpose for the Christian. The acquired virtues only direct man to natural happiness as his final end, and the Christian cannot virtuously act for natural happiness as a final end. As already addressed, proportionality does not allow acquired virtue to act for man’s final end nor can the end of the acquired virtues be fulfilled in one single unified act of both the acquired and infused virtues since the mean and act of the acquired and infused virtues differ.

While most contemporary scholars interpret Thomas as holding that the Christian possesses both the acquired and infused moral virtues, Mattison strives to show how this is a misreading of Thomas. Mattison addresses two texts used to support the claim that the Christian has both the acquired and infused moral virtues. First, is question 51 article 4 in the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. In objection 3, the objector argues that virtues cannot be infused by God because then man would have two habits of the same species one acquired and

⁹⁵ Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 574.

⁹⁶ Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 560-566.

one infused.⁹⁷ Thomas's reply to this is "acts produced by an infused habit, do not cause a habit, but strengthen the already existing habit."⁹⁸ Traditionally scholars interpret the "already existing habit" as acquired virtue. Mattison disagrees with this interpretation. If one is performing acts of infused virtue, then infused virtue already exists in him and this is what is strengthened by the act. Mattison supports his claim by pointing out that "Aquinas's primary claim in this reply is that acts produced by an infused habit do not cause a habit but strengthen an already existing habit. In other words, the assumption is that there will *not* be *two* habits inclining one person toward the same material object."⁹⁹ Although different from the typical interpretation of this passage, Mattison's reading of Thomas is tenable.

The second text Mattison addresses is from Thomas's *Disputed Questions on Virtue* article, objection 4. The objection asserts that man does not have infused virtues since acquired virtues can be ordered to man's final end by grace. In response, Thomas explains that acts can only be meritorious with charity and that along with charity additional virtues are infused in man. Continuing his response, Thomas states "hence, the act of acquired virtue can only be meritorious by the mediation of infused virtue."¹⁰⁰ Typically, this passage is interpreted as Aquinas affirming that the acquired virtues persist in the Christian. But Mattison argues against this position explaining that Thomas never says the acquired virtues persist. Instead, Mattison proposes the acquired virtues do not persist as acquired virtues but are transformed into infused

⁹⁷ ST I-II 51.4.

⁹⁸ ST I-II 51.4.

⁹⁹ Mattison, "Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?" 567. Emphasis his.

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, 10.4.

virtue.¹⁰¹ Mattison contends “Aquinas insists that acts of acquired cardinal virtues cannot be directed toward the last end of supernatural happiness, toward which any meritorious act is certainly ordered. If an act is ordered toward supernatural happiness, it is no longer an act of an acquired cardinal virtue.”¹⁰²

The acquired virtues in a person no longer act in the Christian because they have been transformed by the infused virtues which have the strength to move man towards his final end. Mattison explains this change saying “the mediation of infused virtue is more properly said to (... literally) trans-form the act of the acquired virtue to make it meritorious.”¹⁰³ The infused virtues are literally transformative because there is a formal change of the act and mean of the virtue when grace is received. Yet, this change by grace does not destroy man’s nature, but builds upon and perfects it. Man’s nature remains intact because,

In some sense the acts of the acquired virtue do persist, namely, as acts with the same material object. That is why, for example, acquired temperance and infused temperance are both rightly called temperance. But the difference in rule results in a different mean and thus a different formal object of the act. Therefore the act is no longer properly said to be one of acquired temperance, even while it is still properly called temperance.¹⁰⁴

The axiom grace builds on nature is still maintained in this view. While the acquired virtues do not persist, one’s natural powers and passions do. The infused virtues perfect one’s powers of intellect and will and one’s passions. What persists in the Christian cannot be the acquired virtues because they are always ordered to a natural end as though it were the ultimate end.

¹⁰¹ Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 568.

¹⁰² Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 568.

¹⁰³ Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 568.

¹⁰⁴ Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 568.

Mattison explains “the acquired cardinal virtues habituate human powers according to the rule of human reason. The infused cardinal virtues habituate the same powers, directed toward the same sorts of activities, but in a formally distinct manner based on the divine rule.”¹⁰⁵ Man’s natural powers remain after the reception of grace, but his natural end cannot remain as a final end. Since man only has one final end, which is friendship with God, he only needs the infused virtues because only these can move him towards this end.

The benefit of Mattison’s argument is that he provides a more integrated account of how grace transforms the moral life of the Christian. Grace builds on nature; not only is man healed with the reception of God’s grace but he is raised up and transformed. The Christian who has received God’s grace does not continue his old life in the same way while adding some new acts in regards to salvation. If this were true, then it would be grace alongside nature, not grace perfecting nature. Instead, the life of the new convert becomes reordered, often to the chagrin of many people in his life. After the reception of grace and the infused virtues one’s whole life is ordered to a new final end and this final end gives new direction to everything else in one’s life. With the reception of grace, the life and acts of the virtuous person become refined and oriented towards a new goal that was previously impossible.

With these rivaling understandings of the acquired and infused virtues in mind, the focus of this paper will turn to the topic of friendship. Looking at both ancient non-Christian accounts of friendship and Christian accounts of friendship will help to decipher how the acquired and infused virtues relate in the Christian. The following sections of this paper will show how virtuous friendship among non-Christians is good and serves to perfect the friends in this life, yet

¹⁰⁵ Mattison, “Can Christians Posses the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?” 575.

it is imperfect when compared to the spiritual friendship that is made possible only through the reception of grace and especially charity.

Chapter 3: Ancient Philosophical Accounts of Friendship

It should be clear to the reader at this point how virtue, whether acquired or natural, is vital in the life of man. Without virtue, man will fail to be happy in this life and more importantly without the infused virtues man will fail to be happy eternally. Similarly, friendship too is intrinsically connected to man's happiness. Humans by nature are relational and virtue is a prerequisite to having true friendships. Aristotle considered friendship to be either a virtue itself or at least closely tied to virtue; "friendship is a certain virtue or is accompanied by virtue."¹⁰⁶

While the overall argument of this paper is that spiritual friendship, made possible only through the reception of the infused virtues, is the only perfect friendship *simpliciter*, this chapter will look at how man is able to naturally acquire virtuous friendships which bring about a qualified type of natural happiness. To do this, the following section will look at ancient philosophical accounts of natural friendship; specifically Aristotle's account found in Book 8 and 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's found in his *De Amicitia*.

Friendship in Aristotle and Cicero

Aristotle provides a systematic and detailed philosophical account of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The central ideas of his work are happiness as the ultimate end of man, how moral virtue is formed, and its role in man's happiness. The topic of friendship is taken up in Books 8 and 9. In these books Aristotle declares that friendship is a virtue and is necessary for all men's happiness. He then proceeds to break down friendship into three types and identify the characteristics and qualities necessary for friendship to develop and flourish.

¹⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a4.

Cicero treats the topic of friendship in his dialogue entitled *De Amicitia*. Although treating the same topic, Cicero's account differs from Aristotle's. Cicero presents his thought in the form of dialogue amongst friends. The style of Aristotle's work allows him to treat the subject of friendship in a more systematic and theoretical way, while Cicero's dialogue seeks to present a philosophical understanding of friendship within the context of personal experiences of friendship.

While Cicero and Aristotle approach the topic of friendship from different angles, they have numerous points of overlap. Namely, that friendship is good and natural to man, that it is integral to man's happiness, that friendship between good men is better and longer lasting than friendship between the base, and that true friendship is not based on mutual gain but rather on mutual affection for the other person because of who they are in themselves.

The Importance and Types of Friendships for Aristotle

According to Aristotle, friends are a choiceworthy good that is necessary for happiness; "he who will be happy will need serious friends."¹⁰⁷ Friendship is good for every person because it is good in itself, it is "good by nature and pleasant."¹⁰⁸ Since friends are among the most choiceworthy things it is best for a man to have friends, otherwise he would be lacking an important good. Friendship is necessary for all men's happiness because without it a man would be lacking one of the greatest goods.

Beginning his discussion of friendship, Aristotle states that friendship is a virtue necessary to life because "without friends, no one would choose to live, even if he possessed all

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170b18.

¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170b15-18.

other goods.”¹⁰⁹ Aristotle famously divides friendship into three categories: friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure, and friendship of virtue. Each of these forms of friendship correspond to the things that are lovable, namely the useful, the pleasant, and the good.¹¹⁰ In friendship of utility and friendship of pleasure friendship is not based on what the other person is in himself, but rather on what is supplied through the friendship.¹¹¹ Those who are friends of utility are loved “only insofar as they come to have something good from the other,” and the friends of pleasure insofar as they share mutual pleasure.¹¹² Since pleasure and material things are not stable, but instead are always intensifying and subsiding, all friendships based on these lack stability.¹¹³ When friends of utility or pleasure cease to be useful or pleasurable to the other, the love between them ends and the friendship dissolves.

One often sees friendships of pleasure and of utility among the old and the young. Friendships of utility are especially common among the old and the young; both pursue what is beneficial or advantageous to themselves. Aristotle also notes that often in friendships of utility, friends do not even find each other pleasant, they are simply brought together out of convenience and personal gain.¹¹⁴ Among the young friendships of pleasure spring up quickly but are short lived. The young live “according to passion and most of all pursue what is pleasant to them and at hand.”¹¹⁵ Those who live according to their passions, which are prone to change, have fleeting

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a4-6.

¹¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156a7-8.

¹¹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1164a10-12.

¹¹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156a10-16.

¹¹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1164a12-13.

¹¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156a26-29.

¹¹⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156a31-34.

friendships that begin and end as quickly as their passions. While friendships of use and pleasure are often temporary, there is a more perfect type of friendship that is permanent.

Friendship based on good character, or virtuous friendship, is a higher form of friendship than both the friendships of utility or pleasure. It arises among those who are “good and alike in point of virtue.”¹¹⁶ Friends of virtue are loved insofar as they are good.¹¹⁷ This type of friendship is the highest and truest form of friendship because it is friendship “for its own sake” and is based on virtue, which is stable and makes the friendship stable.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, virtuous friendship is friendship in the “primary and authoritative sense,” while all other friendships are named friendship “only by way of a resemblance.”¹¹⁹

This highest form of friendship is also the rarest of friendships, since those who are good and virtuous are rare.¹²⁰ The base can only have friendships of utility or pleasure while the highest form of friendship is reserved for the good. The base cannot partake of virtuous friendship because they do not delight in each other insofar as they are good, but only insofar as they receive something for themselves.¹²¹ A mark of friendship is like-mindedness, yet those who are base are not able to be of like-mind since their aim “is to grasp for more of what is beneficial to them.”¹²² For this reason, it is impossible for the base to be true friends. They only wish for their own advantage, never for the advantage of others. Instead, they only scrutinize

¹¹⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b7-8.

¹¹⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b9.

¹¹⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1164a14 and 1156b12-13.

¹¹⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1157a30-33.

¹²⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b25.

¹²¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1157a19-20.

¹²² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167b10-11.

and obstruct others.¹²³ Yet, friendship of virtue does not spring up for the sake of personal gain, but instead because of the mutual affection felt for the other by each individual.

The Importance and Types of Friendships for Cicero

Like with Aristotle, Cicero thinks that friendship ranks among the highest goods man can have. He defines friendship as “complete sympathy in all matters of importance, plus goodwill and affection.”¹²⁴ Cicero holds friendship in such esteem because it springs from man’s nature and causes joy for man in both good times and bad. He states, “friendship [is] ahead of all other human concerns, for there is nothing so suited to man’s nature, nothing that can mean so much to him, whether in good times or in bad.”¹²⁵ Friendship holds the power to bring happiness to all men, because friendship is so closely tied to human nature itself. The goodness and power of friendship is universally recognized, it “is the one thing in human life which all men with one voice agree is worthwhile [...and] that without friendship life is not worth living.”¹²⁶

Cicero sees friends as a great treasure, because a unity is built up between friends. This unity of friendship makes it so a friend is like a second self with whom you can “speak as freely as to yourself.”¹²⁷ Without friends, there would be no one to share joys or struggles with. This would make all good things less enjoyable and all bad things almost impossible to bear. Cicero insists “when fortune smiles on us, friendship adds a luster to that smile; when she frowns,

¹²³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167b13.

¹²⁴ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, In *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, ed. Michael Pakaluk (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), vi. 20.

¹²⁵ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, v.17.

¹²⁶ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxiii. 86.

¹²⁷ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, vi. 22.

friendship absorbs her part and share of that frown, and thus makes it easier to bear.”¹²⁸ Cicero declares that friendship is more advantageous than all other things; “with the exception of wisdom, the gods have given nothing finer to man than this [friendship].”¹²⁹ It is better than any pleasure, wealth, health, or virtue, and not even water and fire are “as universally essential to us as friendship.”¹³⁰

Although in agreement with Aristotle that friendship is among the most choiceworthy goods of man, Cicero categorizes the types of friendships and relationships shared between people differently than Aristotle. Aristotle systematically categorized friendship into three types: friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure, and friendship of virtue. Cicero is not as concise in categorizing the types of friendship he observes. For Cicero, there is no friendship based on utility or pleasure, since any relationship based solely on utility or pleasure is simply a relationship of convenience and fails to qualify as friendship. Although, both agree the fullest sense of friendship is based on virtue.

Cicero asserts that friendship can never spring from a desire for personal gain. If this were so, friendship would have a “base and ignoble birth.”¹³¹ Friendship would not be as praiseworthy if its foundation were personal gain and self-interest. Relationships based on mutual gain are not friendships according to Cicero; rather, they are “simulated friendship [...] esteemed only for the sake of convenience.”¹³² These relationships of convenience fail to be

¹²⁸ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, vi. 22.

¹²⁹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, vi. 20.

¹³⁰ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, vi. 22.

¹³¹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ix. 29.

¹³² Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, viii. 26.

friendships because friendship demands that there be “no element of show or pretense; everything in it is honest and spontaneous.”¹³³

Friendship is about loving the other, not yourself. Friendship gives advantage, but the advantage comes from an honorable competition; each friend striving to be “more inclined to do favors than to receive them.”¹³⁴ Instead, the more confident one is in himself and the more he knows he is self-sufficient, the better he is at making and keeping friends. If two people know they are self-sufficient and do not need each other, they are able to choose each other; they are able to simply admire the other’s virtue and feel affection for the other without seeking to receive anything back. This is the necessary foundation for friendship to be able to grow.

It is impossible for friendship to exist when one does not first possess virtue. Men who lack virtue may think they have friends, but in reality they do not.¹³⁵ It is virtue that “initiates and preserves friendship” and is the source of “the rational, the stable, the consistent element in life.”¹³⁶ To love a friend is to “cherish the person for whom one feels affection, without any special need and without any thought of advantage.”¹³⁷ This can only be done when both persons in a friendship strive for virtue.

Cicero very clearly states that “friendship can exist only between good men.”¹³⁸ It can seem like Cicero is limiting friendship to very few people, but he does not mean good men in the

¹³³ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, viii. 26.

¹³⁴ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ix. 32.

¹³⁵ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxii. 84.

¹³⁶ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxvii. 100.

¹³⁷ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxvii. 100.

¹³⁸ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, v.18.

sense of philosophers: that good men are those only with perfect wisdom and virtue. Rather, good men are those who “behave and live in such a way that they are regarded as models of honor, integrity, justice, and generosity.”¹³⁹ So long as you are not base, Cicero believes you can experience friendship. Thus, Cicero declares that many people, both those of ordinary and extraordinary character are able to have truly good friendships.

Although Cicero believes all good men can have friendship, he asserts there is a type of friendship which surpasses the friendships of ordinary men. He names it true friendship; friendship that is praised and remembered even after the death of the two friends. This is the friendship of those with extraordinary virtue and is very rare; true friendship “is so concentrated and restricted a thing that all the true affection in the world is shared by no more than a handful of individuals.”¹⁴⁰ This highest form of friendship, just like extraordinary virtue, is very rare.

Goodwill, Affection, and Friendship

Both Aristotle and Cicero spend time expounding upon what qualities are necessary for friendship. Aristotle identifies goodwill as necessary for friendship; Cicero asserts that mutual affection is necessary for friendship. But both assert that neither goodwill nor mutual affection is itself friendship.

According to Aristotle, mutual goodwill that is known by both friends is primary among the necessary characteristics for friendship. Yet, friendship goes further than simple goodwill; Aristotle states, “goodwill resembles something friendly, but it is surely not friendship.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, v. 18.

¹⁴⁰ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, v. 20.

¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166b30.

Goodwill does not require one to know the person he feels goodwill towards, it can arise suddenly and “is without intensity or longing.”¹⁴² However, friendship requires both persons to know each other and know that they are friends. There cannot be friendship when two people both wish for good things for each other but “are unaware that they each have this feeling for the other.”¹⁴³ The presence of reciprocal love must be known by each in order to qualify as friendship.

Although goodwill is not friendship, it is the beginning of friendship. One must have goodwill towards another before a friendship is able to develop. The feeling of goodwill arises not from a hope to receive something from another, nor because that person is a use to oneself, but rather it arises “on account of virtue and a certain decency, whenever someone appears to another as noble or courageous or some such thing.”¹⁴⁴ Because of this, goodwill is never the beginning of a friendship of utility or pleasure, since in these relationships only goodwill towards oneself is felt.¹⁴⁵ Only in virtuous friendship is mutual goodwill felt.

Instead of goodwill, Cicero writes of mutual affection as necessary to friendship. Mutual affection is similar to Aristotle's mutual goodwill. For Cicero, all friendships find their origin in mutual affection. According to Cicero, friendship begins from man's nature. All men desire to make friends because all naturally feel affection for others and know that friendship makes life worth living. Friendship does not begin from man's desire for personal gain. Instead, Cicero asserts that friendship springs from “an inclination of the heart together with a feeling of

¹⁴² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166b34-35.

¹⁴³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156a3-4.

¹⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167a18-20.

¹⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167a13-18.

affection.”¹⁴⁶ Affection for another comes from seeing virtue in another and this causes one to feel endearment for the other. When this affection is mutual, it is the cause of friendship. Virtue is most worthy of love; that is why when we see or even hear about virtue present in another there is always an affection we feel for that person.¹⁴⁷

Although mutual affection is the cause of friendship, it is not the only necessary element of friendship. Friendship can only exist when it rests on a firmer foundation than just mutual affection. Cicero asserts that for affection to become firm, it must be accompanied by mutual kindness, signs of the other’s interest, and an intimacy between the two persons.¹⁴⁸ When these conditions are met, affection is able to bloom into friendship.

Friends as Another Self

A friend is like another self. That is why Cicero declares “the one element indispensable to friendship [is] a complete agreement in aims, ambition, and attitudes.”¹⁴⁹ Aristotle describes this as a oneness of mind, a oneness that is not “merely likeness of opinion” but rather “it is about matters of action [...] and in particular about what is of great import.”¹⁵⁰ Aristotle explains that oneness of mind does not mean that each person has “the same thing in mind, whatever it may be.”¹⁵¹ Instead oneness of mind is possible among all who strive to be virtuous because the

¹⁴⁶ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, viii. 27.

¹⁴⁷ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, viii. 27-28.

¹⁴⁸ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ix. 29.

¹⁴⁹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, iv.15.

¹⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167a22 and 28-30.

¹⁵¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167a34-35.

common aim of virtue brings about oneness about important matters. Among all who strive for virtue there is a oneness of desire “for what is just and what is advantageous.”¹⁵²

Now, virtuous friendship cannot arise all of a sudden, but requires the passage of time, since two people must know each other and acquire the “habits formed by living together.”¹⁵³ In order to be friends there must be a similitude and time for oneness of mind to develop between two persons. This similitude allows friends to speak freely with each other as if with another self: “the essence of friendship consists in the fact that many souls, so to speak, become one.”¹⁵⁴ What Aristotle means by living together is, of course, not of simply living in the same place. Even herd animals do this, yet they lack friendship with each other. Instead, the living together necessary for friendship consists of “sharing in a community of speeches and thought.”¹⁵⁵ Friends exchange with each other their thoughts, hopes, and secrets. Friends share whatever they find most enjoyable, whatever one sees as the goal of life and the best way to spend his time is the activity shared between friends. Thus, some friends “drink together, others play at dice, still others exercise and hunt together or philosophize together” and by sharing these goods with friends they are better and more enjoyable.¹⁵⁶

What is shared among friends shapes each friend. The more friends spend time with each other, the more alike they will become. Among the base the activity of friendship consists of what is base, instead of influencing each other to pursue the good and virtuous life, these friends

¹⁵² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1167b3-5 and 8-9.

¹⁵³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b26-27.

¹⁵⁴ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xvi. 92.

¹⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170b11-14.

¹⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1172a4-5.

increase and encourage the other's baseness. What is base is unstable and so their friendship is unstable too.¹⁵⁷ Yet, in friendships among the virtuous, what is good is shared and these friends become better by sharing in it. Virtuous people strive to pursue the good themselves and they also assist their friends in this endeavor as well. The virtuous person corrects his friends when they do not act well, this serves to raise the other up into a better person.¹⁵⁸

The relationship between two people in friendship is deeper and more meaningful than relationships of mutual affection. Although mutual affection or goodwill can spring up quickly upon seeing another's virtue, honesty, trust, and the similitude of friends requires time to develop. Before time has passed only the wish for friendship exists. Aristotle describes this saying "it is not possible for people to know each other until they have eaten together the proverbial salt."¹⁵⁹ Goodwill can only bloom into friendship when it is sustained overtime and after both people have shared time and their life with the other. Friendship is an intimate relationship in which two people share their life and interests in such a way that a friend seems like another self. For Aristotle "friendship is a community."¹⁶⁰ Both community and friendship require living together over time. The unity and intimacy exchanged between friends is only possible when honesty and trust exist and friends can be judged as reliable. That is why Cicero says "without honesty the word 'friendship' has no meaning," because if honesty is not present, the two cannot trust each other and share openly.¹⁶¹ With honesty and trust, friends are able to

¹⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1172a9-12.

¹⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1172a12-14.

¹⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1156b28.

¹⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1171b33.

¹⁶¹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxv. 92.

share an intimacy with each other that serves to unite them so closely that the other seems to be a reflection of one's self.

Permanence of Friendship

True friendship is permanent. Genuine friendship is permanent because it is based in man's nature and his essential nature is unchanging. While friendship is able to be permanent, it is not an easy task to maintain a friendship throughout life. People's interests, opinions, and fortunes change throughout their lives and this can strain one's friendships. According to Cicero, "there [is] no greater danger to friendship, for ordinary men, than greed for money, and for truly good men, than ambition for public office and distinction."¹⁶² Cicero states the dangers to friendship are so numerous that "the avoiding of them requires not only wisdom but also sheer good luck."¹⁶³ Yet, while one's expectations and desires are always changing, true friendship is stable because it springs from man's nature and not his desires.¹⁶⁴

The quality that is necessary for the stability and permanence of friendship is trust. Without trust in friendship, it cannot endure.¹⁶⁵ In order for there to be trust in friendship, a friend must be honest, unpretentious, congenial, share one's interests and concerns, and be without any deception or hypocrisy.¹⁶⁶ In addition to trust, Cicero believes friends must have great loyalty to each other. According to Cicero, a friend should not only "refuse to listen to

¹⁶² Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, x. 34.

¹⁶³ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xi. 36.

¹⁶⁴ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, ix. 32.

¹⁶⁵ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xviii. 65.

¹⁶⁶ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xviii. 65.

accusations made by anybody against his friend, but to be himself above suspecting him.”¹⁶⁷

One should trust that his friends are loyal to him; he knows that his friends will not be swayed by accusations made by others, but instead will reject the accusations because he is sure of his friend’s virtue.

Friends are very difficult to maintain over time, but it is possible to have a permanent friendship when both friends strive to be virtuous. Often men expect more from their friends than they expect from themselves. Yet, this always undermines friendship. That is why lasting friendships are only possible when, first, one is a good man himself, and, second, he seeks out a good man to be friends with.¹⁶⁸ When both friends are good men and seek to do good and encourage the other to do good, they are able to better love, cherish and respect the other. Without these three qualities, especially respect, friendship is deprived “of its noblest crown.”¹⁶⁹

Ending of Friendships

True friendship shared between the wise can be permanent, but friendships shared among common types of people often come to an end because of one’s vices which often harm the friendship. When this occurs, the friendship must be ended. Yet, there is a proper way to end a friendship and care must be taken in this process. When intimacy between friends is lost because of vice, the friendship “must be unlearned rather than cut sharply off.”¹⁷⁰ Changes in the character and interests of friends occurs gradually. When these changes necessitate the

¹⁶⁷ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xviii.65.

¹⁶⁸ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxii. 82.

¹⁶⁹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxii. 82.

¹⁷⁰ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxi. 76.

friendship to end, it should be broken off in a way that does not cause hard feelings nor creates an enemy; rather it should simply end the friendship once shared.¹⁷¹ For Cicero, it is better for a friendship to “fade away rather than to be stamped out.”¹⁷² Further, once a friendship ends, there should always remain a type of respect that is maintained in honor of the friendship that once existed. Now, there are some cases, though they are more rare, that a friendship must be immediately ended. This happens when some type of wrongdoing occurs that is entirely intolerable (such as when a friend commits violence against you or your family).¹⁷³

Correcting Friends

One of the most important roles of a friend is to encourage his friends to do good and avoid evil. Together, friends ought to pursue the good and virtuous life. That is why one must offer criticism and correction to his friend when wrongdoing is committed. Reprimands offered by friends should come from a spirit of love and not be met with defensiveness nor be rejected.¹⁷⁴

Unfortunately, many do not respond well to a friend’s reprimands; instead they see these corrections as an attack on friendship. Often times, friends mistakenly think that avoiding correction is an act of friendship. Cicero warns that to fail to call out wrongdoing is to “let a friend fall to his ruin.”¹⁷⁵ Yet, too often this is exactly what occurs because friends fear harming both their friends and the friendship. That is why Cicero states, “in some respects our worst

¹⁷¹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xxi. 77.

¹⁷² Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xxi. 78.

¹⁷³ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xxi. 76.

¹⁷⁴ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xxiv. 88.

¹⁷⁵ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xxiv. 89.

enemies do us greater favors than those we think of as agreeable friends. The former often tell us the truth; the latter, never.”¹⁷⁶ Loving correction is a vital part of any friendship, and yet, it can be one of the more difficult parts. If one’s friend is overly sensitive, he will not respond well to correction and the friendship will suffer. But true friendships can only exist when reprimands are offered and received.

Correcting a friend should always be done out of love. For Cicero, correction “must be offered courteously, not peremptorily, and received with forbearance, not with resentment.”¹⁷⁷ Although correction when given or received without this proper disposition can undermine friendship, Cicero warns that the worse danger to friendship is “servility, sycophancy, flattery.”¹⁷⁸ Thus, friends should be far more afraid of remaining silent in the sight of wrongdoing than to offer loving correction, because it is their silence and flattery that will truly harm and undermine their friendship.

Equality in Friendship

Another necessary characteristic of friendship is equality. According to Aristotle, friendship can only exist between those who are equal. This is because friendship requires a sharing of activity, an exchange of goods, or the wishing of good things for the other.¹⁷⁹ When there is not an equality between friends, one will not receive in proportion to what he gave. A friendship cannot exist whenever there is a great difference between people, whether it is a

¹⁷⁶ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxiv. 90.

¹⁷⁷ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxv. 91.

¹⁷⁸ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxv. 91.

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1158b1-3.

difference of virtue, or vice, or something else.¹⁸⁰ If a friendship existed before the great difference arises, the difference dissolves the friendship. For Aristotle, the hindrance to friendship caused by inequality is most clearly seen in the case of gods and man; friendship between gods and man is impossible because gods exceed man in all good things.¹⁸¹ This difference is too great to be bridged because friendship requires similarity and equality between the two friends.

The Benefits of Friends

Aristotle and Cicero agree that friendship is both necessary and beneficial to all men. Without friends, man cannot be happy because he would have no one to share his joy and good fortune with in good times and no one to share his burdens and sorrows with in bad times. Further, friends are a benefit because they help to shape you and save you from error. Friends help one another perform good acts through offering correction and guidance by sharing advice and examples of how to overcome vice and grow in virtue. Friendship is a benefit to man because “‘two going together’ are better able both to think and to act.”¹⁸² Virtuous friends assist each other in the pursuit of virtue and happiness.

While personal gain is not the starting point of virtuous friendship, it can be a result of friendship. Among friends, there is often a mutual exchange of services.¹⁸³ Cicero proclaims that “‘friendship does not follow upon advantage, but advantage upon friendship.’”¹⁸⁴ Friendship

¹⁸⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1158b34.

¹⁸¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1158b35-36.

¹⁸² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a15.

¹⁸³ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, viii. 26.

¹⁸⁴ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xiv. 51.

provides what cannot be obtained otherwise. However, the benefits of friendship are not the reason two became friends. Cicero explains;

many great advantages came to us both from our association, but it was not in expectation of these that we first began to feel drawn toward each other [...] we are not led to friendship by the hope of material gain; rather, we judge it desirable because all its profits are encompassed by the feeling of love which it generates.¹⁸⁵

The greatest advantage gained through friendship is love itself. Cicero says “it is not so much what we gain from our friends as the very love of the friend itself that gives us joy, and what we get from a friend gives us joy since it comes to us with love.”¹⁸⁶ Cicero describes an honorable competition that occurs between friends to love and serve each other more than oneself is loved and served, by this “we shall obtain the greatest advantages from friendship.”¹⁸⁷

Friends should encourage each other freely in praiseworthy actions and offer advice to help guide each other in right action when needed. Cicero asserts that this advice should be pointed and direct when need be.¹⁸⁸ Friends have an obligation to help each other grow in virtue. One of the central purposes of friendship is that it helps one grow in virtue; “nature gave us friendship as an aid to virtue, not as an assistant to vice. It was her [nature’s] hope that since

¹⁸⁵ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, ix. 30-31.

¹⁸⁶ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xiv. 51.

¹⁸⁷ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, ix. 32.

¹⁸⁸ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicita*, xiii. 44.

virtue when solitary cannot arrive at the highest kind of life, it might do so when joined and shared with a companion.”¹⁸⁹

Reflecting on Natural Friendship

After reading these classical philosophies of friendship, one is faced with the question: is the true friendship described by Aristotle and Cicero possible? One is able to see many of the qualities of friendship promoted by both philosophers present in one’s actual friendships, yet Aristotle and Cicero seem to present an impossibly high ideal. Both present true friends as harmonious and empty of selfishness. Both Aristotle and Cicero argue that true friends are above reproach, not simply because they are our friends, but because of their virtue. Yet, it seems that even virtuous people fail in their virtue some of the time. Human weakness can be found in all people, even the very good; this seems to undermine true friendship as understood by both Aristotle and Cicero.

Cicero seems to recognize this tension when he speaks of the permanence of friendship. He asserts that true friendship found among the wise is permanent, but at the same time speaks of friendships that end when the characters of the friends change. Cicero does not offer a clear reconciling of these two claims. Cicero, rightly, wants to assert that virtue offers a solid foundation on which man can build a permanent relationship. Yet, he recognizes that when humans live out virtue, they are commonly inconsistent. A person’s character changes throughout her life, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. The changes a person undergoes throughout their life seems to undermine the stability of virtue.

¹⁸⁹ Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxii. 82.

Aristotle's and Cicero's accounts of friendship provide important insights into friendship but they do not provide the fullest account of true friendship. Their philosophical accounts illuminate the qualities that strengthen and foster true friendship but, while they identify many of the necessary attributes of true friendships, permanent friendship based on the natural virtue of the individuals within the friendship is not possible for man to attain. Just as man needs the infused virtues to reach his final end of union with God, man also needs the infused virtues to attain true friendship.

Perfect friendship is intrinsically Christian in nature. It is Christ who is the foundation and end of all perfect and lasting friendships. While acquired virtue is truly good and attainable, it is not perfect nor is it strong enough on its own to be a sure support of friendship over a lifetime since acquired virtue often fails because of human sin. The virtue of charity must permeate and enliven the friendships of man for these relationships to be truly perfecting. Just as with the other acquired virtues man can see the good that ought to be done but often struggles to carry it out without the additional help of grace, so too man can see much of what perfect friendship requires but struggles to fully live it out. With this in mind, we now will turn to Christian accounts of friendship to see that it is through Christ and the infused virtues that good natural friendships can be raised up into a more perfect form that helps perfect the friends themselves.

Chapter 4: Christian Accounts of Supernatural Friendship

The topic of friendship was not just of interest to pagan philosophers, but was and continues to be of interest to Christian thinkers. Many Christian theologians and philosophers have taken up the topic of friendship in their writings. Saint Basil of Caesarea, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Augustine of Hippo, Aelred of Rievaulx, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Francis de Sales are just some of the Christian writers who offer reflections on friendship in their writings.

While many Christian thinkers took up the topic of friendship, there were various problems posed for Christians by this topic. These thinkers were familiar with earlier, non-Christian accounts of friendship but struggled to find ways to bring friendship and Christianity into union with each other. One of the primary concerns of many of these writers is: whether particular friendships, in which some individuals are loved differently than everyone else, exist along side charity and can be in conformity with Jesus' command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk 12:31)? Christians understand that we must love everyone; those we like and dislike, our family and our enemies. Is friendship distinct from this command? Is it sinful to love a friend more than one loves everyone else? Even Jesus had friends—there was the beloved disciple, there was Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Jesus speaks of friendship saying:

no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father (John 15:13-15).

Is it sinful to have particular friendships? Christian writers have answered this question in a variety of ways. Søren Kierkegaard argues that friendship is always a perversion of Christian love; friendships are selfish and distract one from the Christian duty to love one's neighbors.¹⁹⁰ Saint Basil of Caesarea and Saint Teresa of Avila embrace friendship, but are cautious in regards to particular friendships within monasteries, worrying it will undermine the community. Yet, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint Augustine, Saint Francis de Sales, and many other Christian thinkers embrace friendship as an important and perfecting aspect of the Christian life. Although some Christians reject or are cautious about the coexistence of friendship and the Christian life, the Christian tradition overall looks favorably upon friendship, seeing that it is a good that benefits man and can coexist with charity.

The following sections of this paper are going to look closely at the accounts of Christian friendship put forth by Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas Aquinas. Both these sources are medieval, the first representing a monastic perspective on friendship, the second a scholastic perspective. These two thinkers offer positive theories of Christian friendship; they argue perfect friendship can be shared between God and man and it is through this friendship that perfect human friendships can flow.

In Europe, during both Thomas Aquinas's (1225-1274) and Aelred of Rievaulx's (1110-1167) life, there was an intellectual revival taking place. R. W. Southern argues that from 1100 to 1320 was "one of the greatest ages of humanism in the history of Europe."¹⁹¹ The topic of friendship was among many topic that received great attention. Southern asserts that "of all

¹⁹⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (New York: Harper, 1962), 53-58.

¹⁹¹ R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 31.

the forms of friendship rediscovered in the twelfth century, there was none more eagerly sought than the friendship between God and man.”¹⁹² This focus on friendship between God and man is especially significant considering that for Aristotle it was impossible.

Like many other Christian thinkers who have a positive view of friendship, Aelred and Thomas built their accounts upon those of non-Christian writers that we examined above. However, Aelred and Thomas did not simply adopt non-Christian accounts without any changes; they instead embraced certain aspects while changing others so that it fit within the Christian life. By doing this Aelred and Thomas raised up friendship to a more perfect form. Perfect friendship is Christian friendship. Friendship among non-Christians can be true, but just as acquired virtue fails to be perfect without qualification, so too does natural friendship fail when compared with the Christian friendships that perfect man and draw him closer to both God and neighbor.

The accounts of friendship put forth by Aelred and Thomas reach further than non-Christian friendships because they are steeped in and enlivened by the virtues unique to Christians: the infused virtues. In the following section, we will see that friendship among Christians is enlivened and guided by the infused virtues, specifically the virtue of charity. As already seen, the infused virtues are necessary to move man towards his final end of friendship with God. Similarly, the infused virtues are what allow man to have a more perfect friendship with his fellow humans and opens up to man the privilege of friendship with God.

Aelred of Rievaulx on Spiritual Friendship

Background about Aelred

¹⁹² Southern, *Medieval Humanism*, 35.

Aelred of Rievaulx was a 12th century Cistercian monk living in England. After a career in the Scottish courts, Aelred, still in his twenties, entered monastic life at the monastery of Rievaulx. Eventually, he became the Abbot at Rievaulx where he was an influential figure both in the monastery and outside of it, interacting with kings, bishops, abbots, and hermits.¹⁹³ Not only was Aelred busy with staying in contact with the notable people of his time, but he was also busy writing both historical and spiritual works.¹⁹⁴

Spiritual Friendship

One of Aelred's best known works is *Spiritual Friendship*. It was written towards the end of his life, sometime between 1164 and his death in 1167.¹⁹⁵ He was greatly influenced by Cicero's account of friendship in *De Amicitia*. *Spiritual Friendship* is, of course, about spiritual friendship and presents a Christian account of friendship that combines Divine Revelation with Cicero's thought. In addition to drawing on Cicero, Aelred also draws upon the thought of Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine.

The style of *Spiritual Friendship* is a dialogue. There are three books within the text. The dialogue of Book One takes place between Aelred and a younger brother monk named Ivo. Ivo asks Aelred to teach him about spiritual friendship because, although he is familiar with Cicero on friendship, he wants to be instructed in the ways of spiritual friendship that begins, progresses, and ends in Christ. Aelred, at first reluctant, agrees to share with Ivo what he knows on this topic. Book Two takes place years after the dialogue of Book One; this second dialogue

¹⁹³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, trans. Lawrence C Braceland, SJ, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010): 18.

¹⁹⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, 19.

¹⁹⁵ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 22.

is between a monk named Walter and Aelred. Ivo has since died but the manuscript of his dialogue with Aelred was recently found at the monastery after being lost for years. Walter engages Aelred on the topic of spiritual friendship after he read the newly found manuscript. During the dialogue a third monk, named Gratian, (also interested in learning about friendship) joins the conversation. Book Three continues the conversation between Aelred, Gratian, and Walter.

How Aelred Goes Further than Cicero

In his own account of friendship, Aelred drew upon the works of Cicero, the Fathers of the Church, and Scripture to develop his own unique theological understanding of how human friendship perfects man and leads him into a closer union with Christ. While Aelred drew on more sources than just Cicero, he is certainly most indebted to the ideas of Cicero. Building upon this pagan philosopher, Aelred was able to further develop the ideas of Cicero and bring Cicero's thought into harmony with a Christian understanding of friendship.

In the prologue of *Spiritual Friendship* Aelred speaks of how in his youth Cicero's *De Amicitia* greatly inspired him and provided a model for his pursuits of love and friendship. He begins by telling his reader "at last a volume of Cicero's *On Friendship* fell into my hands. Immediately it seemed to me both invaluable for the soundness of its view and attractive for the charm of its eloquence [...] I was grateful to find a model to which I could recall my quest for my many loves and affections."¹⁹⁶ As Aelred grew spiritually and encountered the Scriptures his understanding of friendship flourished beyond what Cicero offered in *De Amicitia*. Yet, Aelred continued to love what Cicero offered and writes that although "nothing not honeyed with the

¹⁹⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Prologue, 2-3.

honey of the sweet name of Jesus [...] wholly won my affection” he continually returned to Cicero and “began to wonder whether perhaps they might be supported by the authority of the Scriptures.”¹⁹⁷ It was this desire to bring the ideas of Cicero under the authority of Scripture that lead to his writings on spiritual friendship.

The form of *Spiritual Friendship* imitates Cicero’s three-book dialogue of *De Amicitia*. Both Cicero’s and Aelred’s works present reflections on friendship through the form of a dialogue about friendship among friends. Aelred even used Cicero’s definition of friendship as “*agreement in things human and divine, with good will and charity*” as his starting definition of friendship.¹⁹⁸ Many of the points Aelred makes regarding what friendship is follow upon Cicero. Aelred too asserts that true friendship is its own reward, that friendship benefits man because it helps one to bear life’s sorrows, and that friendship continues on even after the death of a friend. Yet, Aelred does not simply provide a medieval reworking of Cicero; he contributes unique and notable ideas to his thought on friendship.

Aelred departed from Cicero most clearly in his own insistence that friendship begins, progresses, and ends in Christ. For Aelred, God is present in human friendships and these human friendships help Christians to grow in friendship with Christ Himself. While Cicero asserts that true friendship is centered on virtue, Aelred asserts that perfect friendship is centered on Christ. While both agree that true friendship brings wonderful benefits to the friends, Aelred understands that the rewards of friendship are not simply for this life, but also for eternal life. Although Aelred and Cicero agree on many aspects of true friendship, there remains an intrinsic difference

¹⁹⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Prologue, 5.

¹⁹⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 46.
Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, vi. 20.

between their two theories since Cicero's philosophy of friendship is built upon the virtue of friends and Aelred's upon the foundation of Christ.

Friendship and Charity

For Aelred, charity and friendship are closely related but should not be confused as the same. Charity extends beyond the scope of friendship.¹⁹⁹ Before the Fall of man friendship and charity were extended to all people. Friendship was originally intended to unify all people but because of sin, friendship no longer is able to accomplish this task since there can be no union of will or ideas shared between the good and the vicious.²⁰⁰ Now, charity is extended to all people, while friendship is only able to be extended to virtuous people.

For Aelred, the love of charity and the love of friendship differ. Charity is a love extended to everyone, to both friends and enemies. Friendship, after the Fall, is distinguished by intimacy only extended to those one can totally entrust their hearts to, namely friends. Charity binds all people together in love while friendship serves to unite two people more closely. Aelred explains that "divine authority approves that more are to be received into the bosom of charity than into the embrace of friendship. For we are compelled by the law of charity to receive in the embrace of love not only our friends but also our enemies."²⁰¹ For Aelred, friendship "is that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness, and out of many are made one."²⁰² The love of charity extends further than friendship but, is less personal and intimate

¹⁹⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 32.

²⁰⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 59.

²⁰¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 32.

²⁰² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 21.

than friendship. For Aelred, both the love of charity and the love of friendship are from God and beneficial to all men.

The virtue of two individuals is a prerequisite for friendship since in friendship there is an exchange of intimacy. The love of charity can be extended to both friends and enemies because it does not require an exchange of intimacy and openness. However, friendship requires intimacy which is why it is only with friends that “we can fearlessly entrust our heart and all its secrets” because only friends are bound to us by the same law of faith and security.”²⁰³ The intimacy of friendship raises it up as superior to charity insofar as through friendship one is united in a sweet and mutual love with those who are most pleasing to him;

friendship outshines charity in this, that among those who are mutually bound by the bond of friendship, all things are experienced as joyful, secure, pleasant, and sweet. Through the perfection of charity we have perfect love for many who are a burden and a bore to us. Although we consult their interests honestly, without pretense or hypocrisy but truthfully and voluntarily, still we do not invite them into the intimacies of friendship.²⁰⁴

The unity and trust that exists in friendship can be lacking in charity. The love of friendship is built upon unity and mutual trust, this allows intimacy to be exchanged and makes friendship so sweet.

Origin of Friendship

²⁰³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 31.

²⁰⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 19.

Friendship is natural to man. The desire for friendship has been impressed upon the human soul by God. From the beginning of mankind, friendship has existed; Aelred identifies the first human friendship as that between Adam and Eve. In this original friendship the equality and unity of friends is highlighted by Eve's origin from Adam. Aelred describes this saying "how beautiful it is that the second human being was taken from the side of the first, so that nature might teach that human beings are equal and, as it were, collateral, and that there is in human affairs neither a superior nor an inferior, a characteristic of true friendship."²⁰⁵ From his creation, man has entered into friendships.

Yet friendship is not the same as it was in the beginning, sin has confused and damaged it. In his fallen state, man will often place his private good ahead of the good of others, and this of course, harms friendships.²⁰⁶ Those who are vicious are not able to take part in friendship; after the Fall, friendship no longer is able to bring about unity between all persons. Sin leads to vices and disordered desires, desires for private goods and envy for the goods of others undermine the unity and love of friendship.

Although friendship is damaged by the Fall it is not entirely lost, man still recognizes the wonderful benefits gained in friendship and still seeks out friends. Aelred praises friendship saying, "nothing in human life is hungered for with more holiness, nothing is sought with more utility, nothing is found with more difficulty, nothing is experienced with more pleasure, and nothing is possessed with more fruitfulness. Friendship bears fruit in our present life and in the

²⁰⁵ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 57.

²⁰⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 58.

next.”²⁰⁷ While sin caused great damage to friendship, it is not insurmountable. Friendships still are able to be sought and maintained, these relationships of mutual affection and intimacy help those who partake of them to be moved towards holiness and perfection.

Forms of Friendship

Aelred offers only one form of friendship: true, spiritual friendship. Friendship is the virtue that binds two people into one through ties of love and is “cemented by similarity of life, morals, and pursuits among the just.”²⁰⁸ Thus, friendship is only possible between those who love and desire friendship as a good in itself. The reward of spiritual friendship is the friendship itself, not any external advantage.²⁰⁹ It springs from a “likeness of life, habits, and interests, that is *by agreement in things human and divine, with good will and charity.*”²¹⁰ The highest and most perfect type of friendship is the friendship in which the two friends know and love God and become friends with God Himself.²¹¹ For Aelred, true friendship benefits man not only in his earthly life, but also in his spiritual journey. True friendship helps to move man closer to God.

Friendship is very powerful in the life of man because it helps to perfect man through fostering virtue and crushing vice. Aelred believes that it is the sweetness of friendship that “is a foundation for all the virtues, and with its virtue it destroys the vices.”²¹² The greatest benefit of true friendship to man is that it is perfecting. True friendship is the “highest step toward

²⁰⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 9.

²⁰⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 38.

²⁰⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 45.

²¹⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 46.

²¹¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 14.

²¹² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 10.

perfection.”²¹³ Friendship serves to unite two people in not only earthly, human matters but, in divine matters as well. It is this special unity in both earthy and spiritual matters that helps to guide persons on the path to perfection.

Those who are united in a mutual interest of vices only have a false friendship, named by Aelred as carnal friendship. These relationships are not properly called friendships because instead of being united by virtue, they are united by vice.²¹⁴ Vicious people are not able to be friends because they do not love their own soul or the souls of others. They cannot love because “‘he that loves iniquity’ does not love, but ‘hates his own soul.’ Truly, he who does not love his own soul will not be able to love the soul of another.”²¹⁵ Thus, due to a malformed soul, the base cannot experience friendship. Instead, they are limited to a distorted lookalike.

A second type of ‘friendship’ is worldly friendship. Worldly friendship also falls short of true spiritual friendship because it springs from one’s desire for temporal things. Each friend is motivated by his hope for personal gain. These friends desire to gain personal advantage and possessions but recognize that these things will be better enjoyed when shared with a friend.²¹⁶ Thus, the worldly friendship is brought about through mutual desire for temporal things. These friendships are formed casually, with no consideration of the other’s virtue and ability to form a friendship; they are formed without “‘thoughtfulness nor sanctioned by judgement nor guided by reason but is blown in all directions by gusts of affection.”²¹⁷ Because these friendships are

²¹³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 15.

²¹⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 38.

²¹⁵ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 35.

²¹⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 39-41.

²¹⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 41.

neither founded on nor guided by virtue and reason, they are always unstable and are filled with “fraud and deception” instead of trust and love.²¹⁸ Worldly friendships are not permanent and end when the friends’ desires for worldly things no longer coincide. Worldly friendship often “exhausts itself or disappears into the mist from which it was formed.”²¹⁹

Yet in these worldly friendships, unlike the carnal friendships, joy is shared between the friends. For this reason, Aelred admits that a certain similarity exists between worldly friendship and true friendships. False friendships are able to be called friendship in a qualified way; although Aelred is clear that the only true friendship is spiritual friendship while both carnal and worldly friendships are false friendships.²²⁰ Although worldly and spiritual friendship greatly differ from each other, Aelred believes that worldly friendship can lead to “a certain degree of true friendship” when the friendship no longer is “preserved for the sake of some temporal advantage” but instead becomes preserved by the love of the friendship.²²¹

Caution in Friendship

In order to have true friendship, caution and good judgment must precede the friendship. One of the faults of worldly friendship is that it does not follow reason. Those who enter into worldly friendship do not first consider and judge the potential friend but rather jump into friendship without cautiously discerning if a true friendship can exist. When one is too eager for friendship “he risks being deceived by its likeness, accepting false for true, feigned for real, and

²¹⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 42.

²¹⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 41.

²²⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 37-38.

²²¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 44.

carnal for spiritual.”²²² This is why one seeking true friendships must be cautious and discern if the potential friend is virtuous and capable of mutual love and trust, or if he is motivated by vice and gain.

When seeking to make a friend one must “first choose, then test, and finally admit someone considered right for such a trust.”²²³ Those who are not able to enter into friendship are those who pursue vice. The vices especially toxic to friendships are belittling a friend, being suspicious of others, and verbosity. Belittling poisons a friendship since it undermines the freedom one has when a friend is trustworthy.²²⁴ The suspicious person never relaxes nor embraces the peace of friendship, instead he will always be anxious and looking for his friend to turn on him.²²⁵ Verbosity should be avoided in a friend because the one who is always in a hurry to speak is often careless with words.²²⁶ Aelred finds all these qualities especially poisonous to friendship and if a person with these vices does not regulate and check these passions he should not be embraced as a friend.²²⁷

Only those who are good, who cultivate virtue and restrain their vice, are able to enter into friendship. Those who are virtuous are experienced in overcoming vice with virtue and thus make very good friends. The more practiced one is in virtue, the less hold vice has on him, which frees him to be a better friend.²²⁸

²²² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 16.

²²³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 6.

²²⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 28.

²²⁵ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 29.

²²⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 30.

²²⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 30 and 55.

²²⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 32.

The four most important virtuous qualities of a friend are loyalty, right intention, discretion, and patience. Aelred instructs that these qualities should be tested in order to know if someone should be admitted into friendship.²²⁹ For Aelred, loyalty is the most important of these qualities because it is a “comrade in everything,” in adversity and prosperity, in joy and sorrow.²³⁰ Loyalty is best tested by first entrusting trivial secrets to a potential friend, and if he is loyal in these matters you can begin to entrust more serious things to him. Likewise, intention, discretion, and patience should be tested as well. Intention should be tested so you can be sure the one you befriend is not entering into friendship for personal gain and profit, but out of love. Discretion is tested by offering corrections and seeing if the friend is able to endure the reprimand. If the reprimand is accepted then he also has patience.²³¹ The final thing one should consider when selecting friends is to “choose one who does not differ too much from your character or conflict with your disposition.”²³² There are many people who are capable of entering into true friendship but, you should select only those who are similar to yourself because you are all the more suited to the unity of friendship.

The Role of a Friend

A true friend is a guardian of love, looking after the mutual love of friendship and the spirit of his friend. Friends protect the intimacy shared in friendship; they “preserve all its [friendship’s] secrets in faithful silence.”²³³ Loyalty exists and confidences are maintained out of

²²⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 61.

²³⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 62.

²³¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 61-75.

²³² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 58.

²³³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 20.

love for a friend. The best type of friendship, the one that brings the most happiness to the friends, is the friendship where total trust is present. This allows for both friends to be fully themselves and united as one;

But how happy, how carefree, how joyful you are if you have a friend with whom you may talk as freely as with yourself, to whom you neither fear to confess any fault nor blush at revealing any spiritual progress, to whom you may entrust all the secrets of your heart and confide all your plans. And what is more delightful than so to unite spirit to spirit and so *to make one out of two*.²³⁴

The friendships with true trust allows for freedom among the friends. Because there is no fear of secrets being divulged or promises broken, each friend is just as confident in the love and loyalty of the other as they are with themselves.

Without friendship, man is not able to be happy. According to Aelred, “a friend is medicine for life.”²³⁵ Friends help each other bear the burdens of life and to share this with a friend makes the burden more manageable. Friends also make good fortune and gain all the more enjoyable because they rejoice with you in your good fortune. That is why Aelred states, “friendship by dividing and sharing makes prosperity more splendid and adversity more tolerable.”²³⁶ A friend is beneficial in all of one’s life and there is never a place or circumstance that cannot benefit from the presence of a friend.

Christ as the Model of Friendship

²³⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 11.

²³⁵ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 12.

²³⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 13.

Unique to Aelred is his assertion that true friendship begins, progresses, and ends in Christ. Aelred maintains that the desire of friendship is naturally in man, given as a gift from God, but true friendship begins in Christ. It is in friendship that “we join honesty with kindness, truth with joy, and sweetness with good will, and affection with kind action. All this begins with Christ, is advanced through Christ, and is perfected in Christ.”²³⁷ True, spiritual friendship is Christological. The unity of friends comes about through Christ; “a friend clinging to a friend in the spirit of Christ becomes *one heart and one soul* with him.”²³⁸ Christ Himself is the one who inspires true unity between friends and the friends exchange the love of Christ with one another. It is Christ who is able to overcome differences and bring about true harmony, when in friendship “it seems that there exists but one soul in different bodies,” this unity is brought about by Christ.²³⁹

Friendship among Christians and non-Christians

According to Aelred, true friendship is spiritual friendship, yet non-Christians can experience true friendship. Aelred clearly recognizes that Cicero himself had great insight into what true friendship consists of. Yet, while true friendship can be found among both Christians and non-Christians, it is more rare among the latter. Aelred explains that virtue is necessary for friendship and virtue is found in more abundance among Christians. Aelred sees the abundance of Christian friendships in the example of martyrs, “through faith in Him they were prepared to

²³⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 20.

²³⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 21.
Acts 4:32 and 1 Cor. 6:17.

²³⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 2, 26.

die for one another—I do not say three or four, but I offer you thousands of pairs of friends.”²⁴⁰

True friendships are found in more abundance among Christians because Christians have the benefit of knowing through Revelation that “greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).

Permanence of Friendship

According to Aelred, true friendship will never end. If a friendship comes to an end, then it was never truly friendship. In friendship, love is perpetually exchanged. Aelred quotes *Proverbs* stating “he that is a friend loves at all times” (Prov. 17:17), concluding that this means friends cannot ever stop loving. A true friend will never harm or insult his friend, nor will he cease to love if he is offended by a friend. There is no instance in which a true friend will ever stop loving his friend: “though challenged, though injured, though tossed into the flames, though nailed to a cross, *a friend loves always*.”²⁴¹ This mutual affection extended in friendship is permanent and steadfast. This permanence of friendship is truly beautiful, because “being *unwearied in affection*, it should present an image of eternity.”²⁴² The constant devotion of friendship is an image of what is to come after death.

Once one has established a friendship with another, nothing should undermine the friendship and “there should exist no separation of spirits, affection, will, or opinion.”²⁴³ Aelred, admits there are times friends transgress one another in either words or deeds, but the faults of a

²⁴⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 28.

²⁴¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 1, 23. Emphasis his.

²⁴² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 6. Emphasis his.

²⁴³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 7.

friend should be tolerated. So long as one is sure of his friend's affection, the insult can be borne with patience and the friendship is able to survive. When a wrong is committed, one should either excuse his friend or correct his friend with friendliness and without resentment.²⁴⁴

True friendship only dissolves when one friend departs from the foundation of the friendship. The foundation of friendship is the love of God, so nothing short of a friend departing from God can dissolve a true friendship.²⁴⁵ All transgressions against friendship that fall short of this are able to be borne with patience and love and the friendship is able to continue. Aelred, drawing from Sirach 22:22, identifies five vices that destroy friendship. These five vices are slander, reproach, pride, betrayal of secrets, and a treacherous blow of a secret detraction.²⁴⁶ Slander destroys a friend's reputation which in turn destroys charity, pride prevents humble confession "which alone could heal a wounded friendship," a betrayal of confidence robs a friendship of love, kindness, and gentleness, and secret detraction is like a mortal wound from a snake.²⁴⁷ Aelred later adds a sixth vice of harming those who should be loved equally by the two friends. This is because "love should not outweigh religion, loyalty, love of fellow-citizens, or the safety of the people."²⁴⁸ According to Aelred, a friendship that ends was never a true friendship "in that part in which it was harmed, since a friendship that can end was never genuine."²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 17.

²⁴⁵ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 5 and 7.

²⁴⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 23.

²⁴⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 23-25.

²⁴⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 46.

²⁴⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 48.

Although true friendship is always permanent, there are times friendship is wounded (when its foundation is departed from) and must be dissolved. Aelred draws directly from Cicero in his council that “friendship should not be broken off but so gradually dissolved as not to erupt in hostilities.”²⁵⁰ The withdrawal from friendship “must proceed with some moderation and respect, so that if the shock is not too great, some vestige of a former friendship may seem to remain forever.”²⁵¹ Although there are cases where friendship must be withdrawn, Aelred insists that love should never be withdrawn. This means even when a friendship dissolves, one should still “consider [his friend’s] welfare, respect his reputation, and, even if he has betrayed the secrets of your friendship, never betray his.”²⁵² Even when the friendship no longer exists, the rights and responsibilities of friends to guard the other’s welfare and secrets remain forever out of love for the former friend.

For Aelred, there are four main qualities of friendship. These qualities are love, affection, reassurance, and joy. When a friendship dissolves three of these qualities end along with the friendship. Affection, reassurance, and joy no longer continue without friendship since the inner delight of friendship, the intimate communication of secrets, and the joy of friendly exchanges all end.²⁵³ Only love continues, but is altered since it is no longer shared through familiar and intimate conversations.²⁵⁴ The love that continues is the love of charity, no longer is the mutual and intimate love of friendship exchanged.

²⁵⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 42.
Cicero, *Laelius de Amicitia*, xxi, 76-79.

²⁵¹ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 52.

²⁵² Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 44.

²⁵³ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 51.

²⁵⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Book 3, 52.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas' thought on friendship is seen most clearly in his treatment of charity in the *Summa Theologiae*. Although the topic of friendship does come up in some of Thomas' other writings, what is seen in the *Summa Theologiae* will be the focus of this section because it provides his most mature and refined thoughts on the subject.²⁵⁵ Much of Thomas' treatment of friendship draws from Aristotle's three types of friendships contained in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Compared to Aelred, Thomas' treatment of love can appear to be dry and technical. But, throughout his treatment of love and friendship it is clear Thomas appreciates the important and vital role these play within the life of man. Thomas succeeds in providing a clear yet technical analysis of the types of love man experiences and the role it serves in human life and relationships.

On the Types of Love

Thomas begins his examination on love and charity in the *Summa* by identifying what power of man's soul the passion of love is in, namely the concupiscible power. Man's concupiscible power moves man based on sense knowledge; moving man either towards what is perceived to be good or away from what is perceived to be harmful. Thus, love in man arises when good and helpful sensible things (or at least that which is thought to be good) are perceived. All of man's acts are done out of some type of love. This is because "every agent acts for an end [...and] the end is the good desired and loved by each one."²⁵⁶ Thus, every time

²⁵⁵ The other texts in which Thomas treats friendship are *Sententia Libri Ethicorum*, *In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, *Summa contra Gentiles*.

²⁵⁶ ST I-II 28.6.

man acts, he is moved by love to attain or protect a particular good he desires. Thomas even argues that hatred is also a result of love.²⁵⁷

Thomas identifies four names for love. All four words refer to the same thing, namely love, yet they differ since they express various aspects of love. Thomas distinguishes between love, dilection, charity, and friendship. The word love is able to be applied most broadly; for example, all dilection and charity is love but not vice versa. Friendship is a habit, love and dilection are expressed in act and passion, while charity can be either a habit or expressed in act. Dilection is a specific type of love since it is proceeded by a choice made by the intellect to love. Because it is characterized by rational choice, it is always in the will and is of a rational nature. Charity too is more specific than love because it is a perfection of love.²⁵⁸

Thomas draws out a further distinction between the types of love, namely love of friendship and love of concupiscence. For Thomas, love has a twofold tendency. It can be inclined towards the good thing itself that one wishes to someone (either to himself or to another) or love can be inclined towards the one to whom the good is wished (either to himself or to another). The first type of love is a love of concupiscence, a love in which something is loved insofar as it serves another good. The love of concupiscence is a relative love. An example is a man who loves mac and cheese and wishes the good of mac and cheese to his children. The man truly loves the good of pasta covered in cheese, but this love is relevant to its use. The mac and cheese is not loved in itself, but rather insofar as it is possessed by one who can use it. The second type of love is love of friendship, where man loves someone and wishes the good for

²⁵⁷ ST I-II 29.2.

²⁵⁸ ST I-II 26.3.

them.²⁵⁹ In the love of friendship, someone is loved not for anything she does, but simply and for herself. Thus, a man loves his wife not insofar as he can use her for some other good, but rather he loves her simply.

Friendship is a specific type of love. As previously stated, friendship is a habit; it is a disposition of man to act for the good of the one who is loved. Thomas also describes friendship as love together with benevolence and it is this benevolence that moves the lover to wish and act for the sake of his beloved's good.²⁶⁰ However, friendships cannot be one-sided, mutual affection is required. Agreeing with Aristotle and Cicero, Thomas declares that friendship requires more than "well-wishing," both members of a friendship must desire the good of the other and communicate their love to each other.²⁶¹

Types of Friendships

In examining the types of friendships, Thomas builds upon the thought of Aristotle. Thomas affirms three types of friendships, namely friendships of use, pleasure, and virtue. Friendships of use and pleasure share characteristics of true and virtuous friendship and can be properly called friendship because in each one wishes a good for his friend.²⁶² However, the love found in these relationships of use or pleasure is the love of concupiscence not friendship, because the good wished is ultimately referred to oneself.²⁶³ This is because instead of loving a friend simply, the friend is loved only insofar as he is pleasurable or useful to the lover. For

²⁵⁹ ST I-II 26.4.

²⁶⁰ ST-II-II 23.1.

²⁶¹ ST-II-II 23.1.

²⁶² ST I-II 26.4.ad 3.

²⁶³ ST I-II 26.4.ad 3.

example, two women may bond over a love of tennis and enter into a friendship of pleasure over their mutual love of playing tennis. These two companions may play tennis together once a week and even get lunch after their weekly games. But if one of the friends was to no longer play tennis, due to loss of interest or injury, the friendship would end since the pleasure the lover received from the friendship is no longer present. Consequently, friendships of use and pleasure, although sharing characteristics with virtuous friendships, lack the character of true friendship.²⁶⁴

Although Thomas follows Aristotle's example of three types of friendship, he diverges from the Philosopher when he expands friendship to be possible between man and God. Communication between friends is a requirement of friendship, although for Aristotle communication was not possible between man and God. Thomas knows through faith and Revelation God does communicate to man. The starting point of friendship between man and God is this communication.²⁶⁵ God communicates His happiness to man and this is the foundation upon which man's friendship with God is built. The love of friendship shared between God and man is distinct from that of all other friendships. This love is known as charity.²⁶⁶ In this life, the friendship between the Divine and man remains imperfect since the communication is imperfect, but in heaven charity will be perfected.

Charity

²⁶⁴ ST I-II 26.4.ad 3.

²⁶⁵ ST II-II 23.1.

²⁶⁶ ST II-II 23.1.

Charity is the love between God and man. More specifically, “charity is the friendship of man for God.”²⁶⁷ Charity is not something that is in man’s soul, but rather is a movement of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man.²⁶⁸ Although charity is a movement of the Holy Spirit in man, the Holy Spirit does not make use of man’s will as if it is an instrument; rather, charity builds upon man’s nature and man freely chooses to act with charity under the motion of the Holy Spirit.²⁶⁹ Now, the Divine Essence is charity. Thus, when man loves with charity he is participating in the love of God.²⁷⁰ Additionally, charity is what serves to unite man to God.²⁷¹

Now, charity is the friendship man has for God and he is able to extend it not only to God but also to his neighbor. The charity shared between man and God serves as the basis for relationships between men. The friendship between men can be extended in two ways, commonly referred to as friendship and charity.²⁷² In both friendship and charity, the love of charity can be the love that is extended to the beloved.

The first type of friendship is commonly given the name friendship. This is a relationship of mutual love between the lover and beloved and can never be extended to one’s enemies. In this traditional type of friendship, love is extended in respect of the friend; because the friend is good and there is a mutual benevolence, love is extended to him for his own sake. Either the love of friendship or the love of charity can be extended in this friendship. Virtuous friendship

²⁶⁷ ST II-II 23.1.

²⁶⁸ ST II-II 23.2.

²⁶⁹ ST II-II 23.2.

²⁷⁰ ST II-II 23.2.ad 1.

²⁷¹ ST II-II 23.3

²⁷² ST-II-II 23.1.ad 2.

can be enjoyed by both Christians and non-Christians. Virtuous persons are able to mutually exchange the love of friendship and form a virtuous friendship with each other. However, the more perfect love of friendship is the love of charity. This is because the most perfect form of true friendship consists of man's love and desire for himself and his neighbor to love God. The love of God as one's last end is the love of charity, and thus, the Christian loves his friends with the love of charity.²⁷³ All friendships are based on and are primarily concerned with "the subject in which we chiefly find the good on the fellowship of which that friendship is based."²⁷⁴ Virtuous friendships are founded upon the fellowship of virtue while the friendship of charity is based on the fellowship of happiness, which is found perfectly in God. Mutual friendships that exchange the love of charity are a truer friendship because they are ordered to man's principal end, namely God. Furthermore, friendships with the love of charity are more permanent because they are based on God who is unchanging.

The second type of friendship is commonly called charity and this can be extended more widely than the first type of friendship.²⁷⁵ With the friendship of charity, the love of charity is what is extended by the lover to his beloved. This love is extended "in respect of another," meaning the beloved is not loved for his own sake, but for the sake of God.²⁷⁶ It is only with the love of charity that man is able to fulfill Christ's command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' [...and to] 'love

²⁷³ ST II-II 25.1

²⁷⁴ ST II-II 26.2

²⁷⁵ ST-II-II 23.1.ad 2.

²⁷⁶ ST-II-II 23.1.ad 2.

your neighbor as yourself.” (Mk. 12:30-31). This extreme love is possible because love is extended not in respect to the individual but in respect to God.²⁷⁷

Thomas agrees with Aristotle that friendship based on virtue is only ever able to be extended to the virtuous person. However, Thomas also asserts that it is possible to extend love to non-virtuous persons out of love for a virtuous person. Man is able to “love those who belong to him [the virtuous person], even though they be not virtuous.”²⁷⁸ It is in this way that one loves the friends of friends, and more specifically, how Christians can love all of humanity; not out of love for the individuals directly, but out of love for God to whom all of humanity belongs. A Christian loves his neighbor with the love of charity since what he loves in his neighbor is “that he [the neighbor] may be in God.”²⁷⁹

To be clear, there are not two types of charity, charity for God and charity for neighbor, but only one charity. When man loves either God or man with charity it is for the end of the goodness of God and is based on the fellowship of everlasting happiness.²⁸⁰ Charity for God is not distinct from charity for neighbor, rather it is the same. God is the principle object of charity; thus, one loves her neighbor insofar as he is under the aspect of God. When one loves man with

²⁷⁷ ST-II-II 23.1.ad 2.

²⁷⁸ ST-II-II 23.1.ad 3.

²⁷⁹ ST II-II 25.1.

²⁸⁰ ST II-II 23.5.

the love of charity she is not loving the individual as her last end but rather loving man “for God’s sake.”²⁸¹

While all men are able to strive for virtue, perfect virtue in this life is rarely, if ever, attained. Yet, God is perfectly good. It is because of God’s goodness that all persons can be loved with the love of charity, whether they are striving for virtue or living sinfully. The Christian is able to extend the love of charity to all of humanity because each individual is loved not for their own virtue and goodness, but because they belong to God who is perfectly good.

The Origins and Causes of Love

As previously stated, love resides in the concupiscible power of man. Thomas identifies three causes of love: the good, knowledge, and likeness. Understanding the causes of love is important to understanding origins and motivations for friendships. Different causes of love lead to different types of friendships. As previously examined, love is caused when the lover apprehends an object and perceives it to be good and it is loved in so far as it is perceived to be good.²⁸² Things that are evil can be loved, but only insofar as it is considered good in some respect, such as when it leads to pleasure, wealth, power, or honor.²⁸³

²⁸¹ ST II-II 25.1.ad 3. Although Thomas asserts that humanity can be loved with charity because they belong to God, he explains in II-II 25.3 that irrational creatures cannot be loved with charity nor friendship. Neither charity nor friendship are able to be extended to irrational creatures. This is because the love of friendship consists of “the love for the friend to whom our friendship is given,” and “the love for those good things which we desire for our friend.” Now, one cannot love irrational creatures with the love of friendship because first, friendship is extended to those one wishes good things to and irrational creatures cannot properly possess the good since only rational creatures through free-will can possess and use good things. Furthermore, friendship requires fellowship and sharing one’s life together, fellowship in human life can only occur between those possessing reason. Finally, the love of charity “is based on the fellowship of everlasting happiness” which cannot be attained by irrational creatures. But, irrational creatures can be loved out of charity insofar as they are the good that is wished for others.

²⁸² ST I-II 27.1.

²⁸³ ST I-II 27.1.ad 1. Yet when evil is loved, the love is evil because it tends towards that which is not a true good.

Love is caused not only by the good, but also by knowledge since to love a good object one must know it to be good. Without some type of knowledge of the object, love cannot exist. But the perfection of love does not require the perfection of knowledge.²⁸⁴ Only partial knowledge of an object is required for love. Therefore, man is able to perfectly love God even when he does not perfectly know God.²⁸⁵

The final cause of love that Thomas identifies is likeness. There are two types of likeness and these two types correspond with love of friendship and love of concupiscence. The first kind of likeness corresponds to the love of friendship. This likeness “arises from each thing having the same quality actually.”²⁸⁶ When some quality is shared by two people or things, they are alike in a certain regard and “one in that form.”²⁸⁷ This likeness causes a unity between the two. An example is two people who share a love of gardening, the two share a likeness and unity with each other in regards to gardening. Because of this unity, the two gardeners wish the other success in gardening in the same way as he wishes success to himself; “the affections of one tend to the other, as being one with him; and he wishes good to him as to himself.”²⁸⁸ Although this type of likeness causes the love of friendship, it can also lead to hatefulness between the two who are alike. This occurs when the good of the other hinders the good of oneself.²⁸⁹ An example of this would be if the flourishing of one gardener’s trees overhung into the other gardener’s yard, giving shade and preventing the flourishing of the other’s sunflowers. This hinderance would

²⁸⁴ ST I-II 27.2.

²⁸⁵ ST I-II 27.2.ad 2.

²⁸⁶ ST I-II 27.3.

²⁸⁷ ST I-II 27.3.

²⁸⁸ ST I-II 27.3.

²⁸⁹ ST. I-II 27.3.

upset the second gardener and would likely lead to his hoping that his neighbor's trees would fail.

It is this type of likeness that gives rise to virtuous friendships. In a virtuous friendship, virtue and the love of God are present in both persons. This commonality gives rise to the unity found in true friendships. In the case of virtue and love of God, what one possesses does not in anyway limit what the other can have. Because of this, hatred and jealousy are more easily avoided in friendships based in the likeness of virtue and love of God. Instead of hindering one's good, the flourishing of a friend's virtue and love for God encourages and forms one's own virtue and love for God.

The second type of likeness corresponds to the love of concupiscence and the friendships of use and pleasure. This type of likeness "arises from one thing having potentially and by way of inclination, a quality which the other has actually."²⁹⁰ This second type of likeness can be seen between a child learning to swim and Michael Phelps; what the child has potentially is actualized in Phelps. It is this type of likeness that gives rise to friendships of use and pleasure. In friendships of use and pleasure the love of concupiscence arises because one either takes pleasure in seeing the other actualize what is only potential in oneself or hopes to gain a quality the other has that is lacking in oneself.²⁹¹

Effects of Love

²⁹⁰ ST I-II 27.3.

²⁹¹ ST I-II 27.3.ad 3. Aquinas also identifies a sort of subcategory of likeness; the likeness of proportion. This likeness is when one loves something about another that he does not love in himself. This is possible because man can love a quality in another, not because it is a shared quality, but because it is in respect to some other quality one loves in himself. The example Thomas uses is "if a good singer loves a good writer, we can see a likeness of proportion, inasmuch as each one has that which is becoming to him in respect of his art." Thus, the likeness between the two is not a likeness of a same quality, but a likeness in respect to the broader category of artist.

Self-evident to all people, love shapes and changes the one who loves. Both the love of concupiscence and the love of friendship bring about new effects in the lover. Primary among love's effects is union between the lover and the beloved. Love moves the lover in such a way that the loved object becomes united to the lover. For Thomas, "the lover stands in relation to that which he loves, as though it were himself or part of himself" and it is from the passion of love that union comes about.²⁹² This union is twofold. First, is the "real union" which is when the beloved and the lover are present to each other.²⁹³ Love leads man to desire and pursue the physical presence of the beloved which brings about this real union. The second type of union is the union of affection, which develops after the apprehension of the beloved. In this second type of union, the love itself is what forms the bond between the lover and beloved.

Both types of union can apply to both the love of concupiscence and the love of friendship. Both types of love "arise from a kind of apprehension of the oneness of the thing loved with the lover."²⁹⁴ In the love of concupiscence one apprehends the object of love as belonging to his well-being and thus, he desires to possess it and have union with it. In the love of friendship the lover "apprehends him [the beloved] as his other self" and thus, he wills the good to the beloved as if to himself.²⁹⁵

A second effect of love is a mutual indwelling between the lover and beloved. There are three ways in which the mutual indwelling occurs. First is mutual indwelling through the apprehensive power. The beloved is in the lover insofar as the beloved "abides in the

²⁹² ST I-II 26.2.ad 2.

²⁹³ ST I-II 28.1.

²⁹⁴ ST I-II 28.1.

²⁹⁵ ST I-II 28.1.

apprehension of the lover;” it is in this ways that it can be said the beloved is ‘in the heart of the lover.’²⁹⁶ The lover dwells in the beloved insofar as the lover is not satisfied with apprehension but “strives to gain an intimate knowledge of everything pertaining to the beloved, so as to penetrate into his very soul.”²⁹⁷ The second way mutual indwelling occurs is through the appetitive power. In this way the beloved is in the lover “inasmuch as it is in his affections” and this causes the lover to either “take pleasure in it [the beloved], or in its good, when present; or, in the absence of the object loved, by his longing.”²⁹⁸ The way the lover dwells in the beloved differs between the love of concupiscence and the love of friendship. When, in the love of concupiscence the lover “seeks to possess the beloved perfectly, by penetrating into his heart,” then the lover can be said to dwell in the beloved. In the love of friendship, the lover is known to dwell in the beloved when the lover experiences the good or evil that befalls his friend as if it were his own, so much that “it seems as though he felt the good or suffered the evil in the person of his friend.”²⁹⁹ The mutual indwelling of friendship makes it seem as if the lover and beloved are one with each other; the lover wills and acts for his beloved’s sake as if for his own. The final way mutual indwelling occurs is only in the love of friendship. This is mutual indwelling through reciprocal love. Friends are in each other insofar as they exchange love, both desiring and seeking the good of the other.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ ST I-II 28.2.

²⁹⁷ ST I-II 28.2.

²⁹⁸ ST I-II 28.2.

²⁹⁹ ST I-II 28.2.

³⁰⁰ ST I-II 28.2.

A third effect of love is ecstasy. Ecstasy is caused by every type of love. Yet ecstasy simply, is only caused by the love of friendship. Ecstasy means “to be placed outside oneself” and this can occur either in the apprehensive or appetitive power. Ecstasy of the apprehensive power is when one is:

raised to a higher knowledge; thus, a man is said to suffer ecstasy, inasmuch as he is placed outside the connatural apprehension of his sense and reason, when he is raised up so as to comprehend things that surpass sense and reason.³⁰¹

This ecstasy is caused by love when the lover dwells intently on the beloved and his mind is drawn away from other things. Ecstasy of the appetitive power is “when that power is borne towards something else, so that it goes forth out from itself.”³⁰² This second type of ecstasy is caused by love of friendship simply, and love of concupiscence in a restricted sense. In the love of friendship, the lover’s affection goes out simply to the beloved since he wishes and acts for the good of his friend. However, in the love of concupiscence, the lover is carried outside of himself insofar as he is not satisfied with the good that he has and looks to enjoy the good that is outside of himself. Yet since this external good is still desired for himself, the lover does not fully go outside of himself simply.³⁰³

The final effect of love that Thomas identifies is zeal. Zeal is only an effect of the love of friendship. It arises from the intensity of love and it seeks to remove everything that opposes the lover’s movement towards the object loved. In the love of friendship, zeal leads to the lover moving “against everything that opposes the friend’s good.”³⁰⁴ It is zeal that moves one to acts

³⁰¹ ST I-II 28.3.

³⁰² ST I-II 28.3.

³⁰³ ST I-II 28.3.

³⁰⁴ ST I-II 28.4.

of sacrifice if it will benefit his friend's good. The zeal caused by love for a friend is what moves a person to donate his kidney to save his friend's life. In the love of concupiscence the intensity of love does not lead to zeal, but rather to jealousy since the lover moves against anything that hinders his gain and enjoyment of his beloved.

Comparing Aelred and Thomas on Friendship as Charity

When comparing Aelred's and Thomas' accounts of Christian friendship one is able to see many common themes and ideas. But the most striking difference between these two medieval thinkers on this topic of Christian friendship is that Thomas asserts that charity is friendship, while Aelred draws out a clear distinction between friendship and charity in an effort to show they are not the same. In the following paragraphs Aelred and Thomas' views of friendship will be compared and it will be shown that ultimately, Thomas has the more accurate understanding of love and friendship.

Friendship is clearly founded upon virtue. And the truest, most perfected friendships are those built upon the foundation of the infused virtues. As clearly shown above, it is the infused virtue of charity that is most central and transformative in the Christian. It is charity, loving God for His own sake, that illuminates one's worldview in a way nothing else is able to. When one begins to love God for His own sake everything else in one's life becomes reorganized and is brought into a new and more perfect harmony. Just as Christ is at the center of a rose window in a gothic cathedral while all other things are harmoniously ordered around Him, so too in the soul of a Christian all things are ordered around charity.

The truest friendship is one which flows from the love of charity. This friendship is far stronger than it could be if it was based in any other love. Charity is directed towards God as the principle object and is therefore, the most perfect type of love. Charity in friendship makes friendship stronger because it is more capable of withstanding injury. It is from the love of charity that forgiveness can flow most freely because the love is based not in the virtue of the beloved but in the goodness of God. Thus, when a friend fails in some way, the love of charity and the friendship remain unharmed.

The great power of charity can be seen in the Gospels. Jesus has true friendship with His disciples, yet they still fail and betray their friend. In the Gospel of John, Christ calls the disciples His friends saying, "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). No one other than Christ Himself is able to declare with more confidence and certainty that a true friendship exists. Yet, even after Christ's declaration of true friendship, He is betrayed by His friends. When Jesus was in His greatest time of need, Peter abandoned Him and denied all relationship with his friend. For Cicero and Aristotle, this would be a clear violation of true friendship. This act of Peter would annihilate any friendship based only upon naturally acquired virtue. Yet the friendship between Peter and Christ continues because it is not based upon acquired virtue alone but upon God's goodness. Although Peter betrayed Christ in this most severe way, Christ forgave Peter of his transgression. The standard of friendship according to Cicero and Aristotle is superseded by what we see in the Gospels.

Both Aelred and Thomas believe true friendship is built upon the love of Christ and it is precisely this love that allows for friendship to be lasting and permanent. Aristotle and Cicero

base the permanence of friendship on the virtue of the friends, but Aelred and Thomas understand that it is each friend's love of Christ that is a more perfect foundation. The foundation of true friendship is charity and it is precisely from this charity that reconciliation and forgiveness of a friend's transgressions and insults flows. When one is sure of a friend's love for Christ and of his love for you, one is able to bear with patience insults to friendship.

Those with the infused virtues have greater patience and forgiveness for both themselves and others. The Christian who has received the gift of charity knows that he himself fails to be perfect by his own natural abilities; he knows he is in need of God's grace to support him. Thus, this same Christian knows all people are in need of God's grace. This knowledge of self and others allows one to overlook the vices and failings of their friend so long as it is clear the friend strives for virtue and seeks to rely on God and His support. Just because a friend fails you in some way, even in a great way, does not mean the friendship collapses. This is because the friendship itself never depended solely upon the virtue of the friend but upon something far greater, namely Christ.

While Thomas and Aelred both believe that charity is the foundation of friendship, their understanding of exactly how charity serves to strengthen and support friendship differs. Thomas asserts the love of charity is the love exchanged in friendship, while Aelred argues charity is the foundation of friendship but the love exchanged in friendship is not the love of charity. Instead, Aelred believes the love of charity accompanies the love of friendship; friendship begins, progresses, and ends in the love of Christ, but this love of Christ is not what is exchanged between friends. Charity serves to heal friendship when it is harmed but it is not the love of friendship, rather a friend loves with both the love of friendship and the love of charity.

With this in mind, we should consider how Aelred's and Thomas's understanding of friendship can account for Christ's response to Peter's betrayal. In the case of Peter's betrayal, the insult brought upon the friendship is Peter's denial of his friendship with Christ. In three moments of confrontation on the morning of Christ's arrest, Peter denied his friendship with Jesus. In this act Peter denied his love for God. It would seem that Peter and Jesus' friendship would be dissolved according to Aelred's standards but remain under Thomas'.

Aelred believes true friendship never ends because a friend never ceases to love. When insult or harm is brought by a friend, it can be borne patiently and corrected with love as long as one is sure of the affection of his friend. But, Aelred does admit that true friendships do dissolve when one friend departs from the foundation of friendship, namely love of God. In Peter's betrayal, he denies his love for Jesus, both Jesus as his friend and Jesus as God. Perhaps Aelred would account for reconciliation of Peter and Christ by arguing that Peter did not permanently depart from the foundation of friendship. Soon after Peter's betrayal Christ forgave Peter of this denial and Peter reaffirmed his love for Christ three times. The charity of Christ and the charity that Peter later returns to is able to heal the love of friendship which Peter previously broke away from. However, it seems more likely that Peter's denial of friendship with Jesus also constitutes a denial of love for God.

Thomas would argue that because friendship is not simply based on the virtue of the friends but rather on the goodness of God Himself, this allows Jesus' and Peter's friendship to withstand betrayal. Christ is able to remain in friendship with Peter and forgive His friend's betrayal not because Peter is virtuous (he clearly fails because of his human weakness), but because God Himself is good and loving. Peter is loved by Christ because Peter is loved by God.

Even when Peter harms the friendship because of his sin, even the sin of denying God, Peter is still loved by God. It is charity that allows friendship to be healed of the wounds of sin.

Although it can seem like Thomas collapses any distinction between the love of friendship and the love of charity one extends to all of humanity by declaring friendship to be charity, he does not. For Thomas, friendship differs from a general love of humanity not because of the love (in both cases a Christian loves his fellow man with the love of charity); rather the difference is the relationship between the lover and beloved. The love extended by the Christian to any human is the same but the relationship between him and the beloved is different. Friendship is the love of charity, extended to a particular individual who loves the lover in return. This mutual love for the other is known by both parties, it is exclusive between the two, and there is a communication between them. Because the love is mutual, intimacies can be shared and the relationship of love deepens as the two friends spend time with each other. Charity for humanity in general is extended to both friends and enemies alike and the relationship between the lover and beloved need not be close nor the love be mutual. All that is required is that the person is loved by God, which every person is. In both Christian friendship and charity the love of God, the love of charity, is extended. All that is different between these relationships is that friendship is a mutual and intimate exchange of love.

This difference of relationship can be seen in the love God has for man. God loves all of humanity with the same perfect love. But, Christ Himself identified certain individuals as His friends. What distinguished these persons as friends of Christ is not the love Christ offered them, as this love is the same love He has for each individual man. Instead the differentiating aspect is the relationship Christ had with these individuals. Christ explains in His declaration of

friendship what distinguishes these persons as His friends when He says “I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father” (John 15:15). It is the intimate knowledge of the other and the secrets of his heart that allows for a relationship based on charity to be declared a friendship.

Thomas’ understanding of friendship goes so much further than either Aristotle’s or Cicero’s. Neither Aristotle nor Cicero could fathom the most perfect form of friendship because they could not see how man is able to enter into friendship with God. The highest and truest form of friendship cannot be attained by human virtue alone, but only through first knowing, loving, and being in relationship with God Himself. It is God Himself who gives man the necessary virtues, the infused virtues, to build permanent friendships that are able to withstand human failings.

Chapter 5: The Perfection of the Virtues and the Perfection of Friendship

Christian and non-Christian Friendship

Friendship among Christians differs from friendship among virtuous non-Christians because of the infused virtues, specifically the infused virtue of charity. Natural friendship found among non-Christians is founded upon a mutual love that is known and communicated and upon the wishing of the good for the other simply because the other is good. Friendship among Christians is founded upon mutual love that is known and communicated, however, this love is not simply based upon the virtue of the other but is founded on the love and goodness of God and how God loves the friend.

Charity is loving God simply for who He is, for His goodness. The Christian with charity loves not only God with charity but also all persons. Not because all people are good, as there are many people who certainly lack virtue, but out of love for God and His goodness one is able to love all humanity, despite the evil they may commit. Christian friendship builds upon this charity, but also goes further in that friendship is an intimate communication of mutual love for each other and for God.

Both Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas Aquinas build upon the pagan philosophies of friendship. However, there are some striking differences between their Christian theories of friendship and the non-Christian theories they drew upon. Most notable is that both Aelred and Thomas assert that man can have friendship with God. Although there is a great inequality between God and man, there still exists a communication between God and man that allows for friendship. This is no small difference between Aristotle and Christian thinkers since both

Aelred and Aquinas assert that the friendship between God and man is perfect friendship and is the basis for all other true friendships experienced by man.

For Aelred, true friendship is spiritual friendship and is intrinsically Christological. Nathan Lefler discusses this central difference between the pagan and Christian understanding of God and man's relationship in his book *Theologizing Friendship*. Lefler describes Cicero's *De Anima* as "both model and foil for [Aelred's] own reflections."³⁰⁵ Lefler points to how Aelred before his conversion "had been much captivated by Cicero's descriptions of the intimate, affectionate friendships possible between virtuous men," but after his conversion he declares that true friendship begins, continues, and ends in Christ.³⁰⁶ The ultimate goal of friendship for Aelred is rooted in Christ and scripture. Lefler argues "the goal of spiritual friendship, the perfect union of will and ideas (affection and reason), epitomized by the mutual sharing of secrets, finds its warrant in the biblical doctrine of the Incarnation [...] specifically Johannine Christology."³⁰⁷ Aelred emphasizes the sharing of secrets as central to true friendship, and this is modeled by Jesus's relationship with His disciples in John 15:15 when He names the disciples as friends not servants and shares with them His knowledge of the Father which would otherwise be unknowable.

Marko Fuchs, in his article examining Thomas's use of Aristotle's theory of friendship, points to Thomas's allowance of friendship between man and God as the central difference between Aristotle's and Thomas's theories of friendship. Perfect friendship according to

³⁰⁵ Nathan Lefler, *Theologizing Friendship: How Amicitia in the Thought of Aelred and Aquinas Inscriptures the Scholastic Turn*, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2014), 60.

³⁰⁶ Lefler, *Theologizing Friendship*, 60.

³⁰⁷ Lefler, *Theologizing Friendship*, 63.

Aristotle requires an equality between the friends. Relationships of inequality are friendships only in qualified senses. For Thomas the “highest form of perfect friendship is not a relation between equals but one between highly unequal partners.”³⁰⁸ Thomas asserts that perfect friendship is first between God and man, and out of this friendship perfect human friendships can flow. This further distinguishes Thomas’s thought from Aristotle’s because true friendship between men is not based on the friend’s goodness but on God’s goodness present through the friend. The third point of divergence from Aristotle according to Fuchs is that Thomas drops Aristotle’s assertion that perfect friendship is based on loving another for his friend’s own sake. For Thomas, true friendships between men are based in charity.³⁰⁹

While the foundation of Christian friendship differs from that of non-Christian friendship, these friendships share many qualities. Both the non-Christian and Christian thinkers we have examined agree that friendship is a mutual love communicated between two people, that friendship takes time to develop and should be approached with caution and testing. They are also in agreement that friendship is necessary for man’s happiness and that friends help to shape each other's characters, for better or for worse. All agree that the highest form (or only form) of friendship is friendship between virtuous people. Yet despite these points of agreement, there remains a huge gap between non-Christian and Christian friendship that can only be bridged by the grace of God through the infused virtues.

The Perfection of the Virtues and the Perfection of Friendship

³⁰⁸ Marko Fuchs, “Philia and Caritas,” In *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, and Matthias Perkams, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 213.

³⁰⁹ Marko Fuchs, “Philia and Caritas,” 213, 218-219.

Recalling the insights offered by the debates that revolve around how the acquired and infused moral virtues relate, we can try to deepen our understanding of the role the moral virtues play in friendship. True friendship, like true virtue, whether Christian or not, is a true good that helps to perfect both friends. However, Christian friendship is the truest type of friendship that not only perfects but sanctifies the friends. When the foundation of friendship is the love of God, everything about the friendship is altered. Christian friendship is stronger and more perfecting because nothing is more stable and sure than its foundation of the love of God, and the friendship not only shapes the friends to be virtuous but helps them be holy.

To help explain the difference between Christian and non-Christian friendship the distinction between the perfect and imperfect virtues is helpful. For Thomas the infused moral virtues are the only moral virtues considered perfect simply, while the connected acquired moral virtues are perfect only when compared to the unconnected moral virtues. Similarly, virtuous non-Christian friendship can be considered perfect friendship when compared to the friendships between those who are base. Virtuous friendships among non-Christians are truly good. The friends love each other; they desire the good for their friend, confide in each other, and correct each other in their pursuit for virtue. But, a more perfect friendship exists.

Perfect friendship is between Christians and is based on charity; this is friendship simply. It is more perfect than friendship between non-Christians because it is directed towards man's ultimate end, God. Friends of this sort rely not only on the virtues they acquire themselves to be the foundation and strength of their friendship, but also on the grace of infused virtue. The friendship is strengthened by these perfect virtues because they bring man into friendship with God and it is the love of God that serves as the strong foundation of spiritual friendship.

Although this perfect friendship's foundation is charity, the other virtues still are necessary to the beginning, continuation, and perfection of the friendship.

Although virtuous non-Christian friendship is truly good and can properly be called true friendship, it fails to be the fullest sense of friendship. The highest form of friendship, spiritual friendship can only be reached by the grace of God. Once charity and the other infused virtues are received, the old friendship will be raised up and transformed into the more perfect Christian friendship. Just as with the moral virtues in the Christian, the natural friendship guided by natural virtue is no longer present, instead it has been perfected by grace. Although friendship between the same two people continues, the friendship has received a new stronger foundation and a new more sublime end.

Christian friendship is founded on God and is ordered to God. The love of God is what two friends communicate. Only God loves perfectly, but the Christian inspired by charity is able to love like God. Instead of friendship being limited by human frailty, friendship among Christians is strengthened and transformed by the grace of God.

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