Chapter 1

Just War among the Quaestiones on Charity

Read in isolation, the “Quaestio de bello” seems straightforward enough. It exposits the idea of *bellum iustum* by reference to the three requirements of legitimate authority, just cause, and right intention (article 1), and then examines which circumstances (relating to persons, time, and means used) must be met if a just war is to be prosecuted rightly (articles 2–4). But read in relation to the *quaestiones* that come before and after, this “Quaestio de bello” seems strangely incongruent with its surroundings. Ostensibly about a good act – waging just war – it is set within a section of the *ST* that treats a particular category of vice.

In his prologue to the preceding question 39, Aquinas announces the sequence of questions of which the “Quaestio de bello” is a part: “Among the vices contrary to peace, we must now consider those that involve outward deeds, namely schism (*schisma*), brawling (*rixa*), sedition (*sedition*), and war (*bellum*).”

War,¹ as it appears in this list, is unambiguously the name of a vice. This is borne out by its companionship with the other terms mentioned, each of which designates the sinful violation of a specific type of concord: “schism is opposed to the spiritual bond of the multitude, namely ecclesiastical unity”;² brawling is opposed to the private good in which

¹ In addition to *bellum*, the term *guerra*, of Germanic origin, was also in usage among medieval Latin authors. The difference between the two terms has often been characterized in terms of the contrast between public and private war. *Bellum* being an armed conflict between sovereign princes and *guerra* the fighting that might break out at lower levels. This neat division of labor, however, is not borne out by the actual texts. As Hagnenmacher has shown (*Grotius et la guerre juste*, pp. 81–85 and 102–103), the two terms were functional equivalents; each could serve to designate armed confrontations at all echelons. *Bellum* was favored by lawyers and theologians (hence it resonated as a term of art) whereas *guerra* was employed by a wider range of authors and subsequently found its way into modern European languages, obviously French and Spanish, but also English (*war* derives from the Germanic *warr*, which signified an entanglement or disorder; hence from it also springs the term *wurst*, i.e., a sausage) (see ibid., p. 81, footnote 145). St. Thomas may be found employing the two terms *bellum* and *guerra* interchangeably, as in *In Job* 38:23 (p. 204, line 446).

² *ST* II-II, q. 42, a. 1, ad 2.
several persons are joined together, while sedition tears apart the common good of a city or kingdom. Indeed, on reading the articles devoted respectively to these three vices, it becomes readily apparent that each is focused squarely on the sinfulness of the acts in question. Schism and sedition are termed “special sorts of sin,” while brawling is condemned as “always sinful.” In light of this treatment one would expect Aquinas’s account of war to follow the same path; yet on reaching q. 40 the author abruptly shifts course. Rather than detailing the contours of a sin he instead explains under what conditions a war might be deemed just.

Clearly, some special characteristic sets “war” apart from “schism,” “brawling,” and “sedition.” Although it would be contradictory to speak of a “just schism,” a “just brawling,” or a “just sedition” (the three terms denote sin and sin only) “war” alone permits subclassification into good and bad kinds. Curiously, however, St. Thomas does not work up a terminological contrast between “just” and “unjust” war. Despite the expectation created by its placement among the “sins against peace,” he says scant little about unjust war in q. 40. Although St. Thomas does note in a. 1 that a “depraved intention can render war illicit,” the term “bellum iniustum” does not appear within the quaestio. Instead, after announcing (in the prologues to qq. 37 and 39) that he will discuss a sin called “bellum,” he proceeds in q. 40 to describe a (presumably) good act named “just war.” Here is a patent discrepancy between, on the one hand, the theme of war as announced in the prologues and the actual treatment of this theme, on the other. What path led Aquinas from the idea of “sins against peace” to an analysis of just war?

Sins against Peace

The idea of “sins against peace” is first introduced in the prologue to II-II, q. 34, where it is subsumed under the broader category of “vices against charity”:

We must now consider the vices opposed to charity (caritas): in the first place, hatred [q. 34], which is opposed to love; second, sloth [q. 35] and envy [q. 36],

\[1\] Ibid., a. 2.

\[2\] Ibid., a. 1, ad 2.

\[3\] Bellum iniustum is, however, introduced later, first in ST'II–II, q. 66, a. 8, ad 1, where Aquinas notes how there is an obligation to return plunder (ad restitutionem tenuentur) that has been seized in an unjust war, and then later, in II-II, q. 69, a. 4, the term is used to designate a condemned prisoner's forcible resistance against a just sentence of capital punishment. This represents an imprecise or extended (generale) usage of the term, as he later took care to note in ST II–II, q. 123, a. 5.
which are opposed to the joy of charity; third, discord \[q. 37\] and schism \[q. 29\], which stand contrary to peace \(\textit{pax}\); and fourth, offense and scandal \[q. 43\] which are contrary to beneficence and fraternal correction.

Further specification is provided in the prologue to q. 37, which divides the sins contrary to peace into five different kinds:

We must now consider the sins contrary to peace, in the first place discord \(\textit{discordia}\) which is in the heart \[q. 37\]; second quarrelling \(\textit{contentio}\) \[q. 38\] which is on the lips; third, those which consist in outward deeds, namely schism \[q. 39\], war \[q. 40\] and brawling \[q. 41\].

When these two prologues are read together with the one (reproduced previously) from q. 39, a progression appears. In the initial list of sins (alternatively termed “vices”) against peace in q. 34, we find Aquinas mentioning only discord and schism. A broadening occurs in q. 37 with the addition of quarrelling, war, and brawling. Not, however, until q. 39 is sedition brought into the list,\(^6\) making finally for six sins in total. This progression suggests that when Aquinas began writing the section of the \(ST\) concerned with vices against charity he had not yet formed the plan to include war, sedition, and related vices under the heading of “opposition to peace.”

Today it would seem counterintuitive not to view war as what principally stands opposed to peace. But for Aquinas as for other medieval theologians, \(\textit{pax}\) designated first and foremost a spiritual reality.\(^7\) It was the third of the “fruits of the Spirit” enumerated by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:22–23.\(^8\) Hence, in the prologue to \(ST\) II-II, q. 28, we find St. Thomas explaining how the placement of \textit{peace} within the sequence of \textit{quaestiones} in the \textit{Summa} will mirror the order of spiritual effects that Paul enunciated in Galatians:

We must now consider the inner and outer effects which result from the principal act of charity which is love \(\textit{dilectio}\). Of the former, three will be considered: in the first place joy \[q. 28\], second peace \[q. 29\], and third mercy \[q. 30\].

\(^6\) In the standard English translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, revised edition, 1920, “sedition” is included in the list of sins against peace in the prologue to q. 37 (p. 1346). The term does not, however, figure in the 1882 (“Leonine”) Latin text (Vol. 8, p. 300) that served as the basis for the 1920 translation. The translators must have noted the omission of sedition from the Latin version and sought to introduce this “correction” into their translation.

\(^7\) In this setting, peace is understood as the condition that excludes any kind of internal disturbance \(\textit{perturbatio}\), whether from moral guilt, punishment, or other cause. See \textit{In Phil.} 4: 7 (section 159), where Aquinas concludes that “God alone can deliver the heart from all disturbance.”

\(^8\) “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, …” On Aquinas’s biblical reflections concerning peace, see Matthew A. Tapie, “For He Is Our Peace”: Thomas Aquinas on Christ as Cause of the Peace of the City of Saints,” \textit{Journal of Moral Theology} 5.1 (2016): 114–132.
A virtue implanted in us by God, enabling the human heart to cleave in friendship to God and fellow men, charity has a set of characteristic acts. First and foremost there is love (dilectio), an inward impulsion of the soul toward God (and by extension toward self and other human beings), who is grasped as an object of affection. This act is extended into a set of “effects,” including joy (gaudio), peace (pax), and mercy (misericordia), to which Aquinas devotes in each case a single quaestio. He recognizes, however, that these spiritual effects do not arise in us without our consent; on the contrary, their presence depends on a free choice of the will by which our consent is given or taken away. Hence, the treatment of charity would be inadequate were it not also to include a study of the contrary movement by which one turns away from the divinely inspired love of God, self, and neighbor. This consideration takes Aquinas into a treatment of hatred, sloth, envy, and related vices, each of which is inimical to charity or its effects. Here too he follows the lead of St. Paul, whose enumeration of “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19–21 included several conflict-causing vices.9

Finally, it should be noted that for St. Thomas charity has an inherently social dimension. Consisting in mutual benevolence, charity is founded upon a communion (communicatio) in the shared good of divine beatitude.10 Hence charity is inseparable from a characteristic form of community, a point that Aquinas recognized in the Vulgate version of I Cor. 1:9, where it was written that God has called us into the “society” (societatem) of His Son.11 In describing the sins opposed to charity, Aquinas was thus concerned not only with vices of a strictly personal nature (sloth, for instance) but also with actions (and dispositions) that stand counter to the social dimensions of this virtue. This furnished him with an additional rationale for listing schism, war, sedition, and other such sins that wound the conviviality of human beings (whether based on our natural sociability or the supernatural principles of grace), in opposition to charity.

**Peace in and between Polities**

Having established a tight link between theological charity and peace (the second being viewed as an extension or immediate effect of the first), it

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9 “Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like.”

10 *ST II-II*, q. 23, a. 1.

11 “Deus per quem vocati estis in societatem Filii eius Iesu Christi Domini nostri.”
is unsurprising that Aquinas would initially posit schism (and not war) as the paradigmatic case of an external sin opposed to peace. If the social function of caritas consists in “directing many hearts together . . . to the divine good,” then any willful dissension from that shared good (the communion of charity in the ecclesia) will dispose the dissenter to perpetrate acts of schism. Hence, in his first enumeration of sins against peace we find him listing only two vices, one manifested chiefly by inward opposition to the communion of charity (discordia), the other in outward deeds that disrupt this communion (schisma).

However, as his writing progressed from q. 29 (“On peace”) to the subsequent questions on sins against peace, Aquinas seems to have realized with greater clarity that the social bond of charity can find expression at contrasting levels. Already, in q. 29, he recognized a distinction between “perfect” and “imperfect” peace.12 The first characterizes the peace of the blessed in heaven;13 having crossed the threshold of death, their communion in the vision of God renders them participants in the attribute of divine immutability. As peace at this level cannot be assailed by violence or in any way harmed by dissension,14 there is no need to posit any vice in opposition to it. By contrast, the “imperfect peace of the wayfarer”15 is the condition of peace as it is found among the virtuous of “this world.” Peace of this sort is vulnerable to attack, because the shared truth that lies at its foundation – and the communion of charity that flows from it – rests on belief, not intellectual vision; hence the threat of grave dissension remains a constant danger. In this respect there is need to guard against an opposing vice, namely schism.16

Q. 29, “De pace,” is written entirely from the perspective of a theologian meditating on the implications of St. Paul’s teaching that peace flows

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12 ST II-II, q. 29, a. 2, ad 4.
13 In In Job 25: 2 (written ca. 1265) Thomas adds additional levels of “perfect peace”: First, there is the peace that characterizes the “higher intellectual substances [good angels] who live in supreme concord” (in summa concordia vivunt). Wholly without the indigence (abique miseria) of lower creatures, and participating to a greater degree in the unity of the divine power, “they are preserved in a condition of supreme peace” (in summa pace eas conservans). Second, there is the concord of the heavenly bodies, which undergo no contrariety, either of generation or corruption, as is found in lower bodies, nor discord of wills, as among human beings (pp. 142–143, lines 20–40).
14 See Comp. theol., II, chapter 9 (p. 205, lines 476–77): “… that state [heaven] will not be subject to the attack of any enemy” (per alicuius hostes impugnationem).
15 ST II-II, q. 29, a. 3, ad 2.
16 In addition to the locus classicus ST II-II, q. 39, schism is also discussed in In Eph. 4: 3 (“Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” – in vincula pacis), where St. Thomas explains how this bond is maintained especially by four virtues (humility, mildness, patience, and charity) and is disrupted by four vices (pride, anger, impatience, and inordinate zeal).
from divine charity as a result of the action in us of the Holy Spirit. We thus find St. Thomas writing that “without sanctifying grace, peace is not real but merely apparent.”17 Likewise he takes care to emphasize how charity alone causes peace, for “there is no other virtue except charity whose proper act is peace.”18 Peace flows from charity in two ways. On the one hand it designates the unity of appetites within a single person. By directing the faculty of will to God as the unique last end, charity ensures a convergence of the will’s acts with those of the lower sense appetites, resulting in an inner harmony of the soul. On the other hand, charity also brings into convergence the distinct wills of individual human beings. Following St. Augustine, Aquinas terms this second mode of peace concordia (“peace among men is well ordered concord,” citing De civitate Dei, XIX, 13); it arises when “the wills of various hearts agree together in consenting to one thing.”19 And in opposition to each of these modes of peace there will be a twofold dissention, insofar as a man (1) has conflicting desires within himself (hominis ad seipsum), and (2) enters into conflict with others (hominis ad alterum) (ibid., ad 3). On closer scrutiny, the second category proves to be a genus that further subdivides into several distinct kinds,20 according to whether divisiveness (a) stands as an inward inclination of the heart (discord), (b) is expressed in words (quarreling), or (c) passes into external action (schism, war, sedition, and brawling).

At the same time that he was composing the second part of the ST, Aquinas was also hard at work commenting on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics. He had, in other words, highlighted the value of properly natural forms of friendship.

17 ST II-II, q. 29, a. 3, ad 1.
18 Ibid., a. 4. Aquinas opens up a rather different perspective on the causation of peace in his commentary on Isaiah 2:4 (“He will judge the nations...,” p. 21, lines 101–102). Distinguishing the cause, sign, and fruits of peace, he explains regarding the first how by his judgment the king assures the nations of their prerogatives, and in so doing brings about peace (“Effectuim pacis est regis iudicium, et ideo primo dicit iudicabit gentes, dando eis iura...”).
19 Ibid., a. 1. For a parallel discussion of concord, see In Rom. 12: 15–16 (sections 1004–1006) where St. Thomas considers (1) the effects of concord (rejoicing over another’s good or grieving over evil suffered by him); (2) the constitutive acts of concord (agreement in matters of “correct faith” and more generally about actions to be done, but not necessarily about purely speculative matters); and (3) the obstacles to concord (pride, i.e., pursuing one’s own excellence to the detriment of others, and presumption, i.e., overestimating one’s own wisdom to the exclusion of alternative viewpoints). A fine treatment of concord may be found in Daniel Schwartz, Aquinas on Friendship (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
20 See ST II-II, q. 37, a. 1, prologue.
Very early in the treatise on charity, Aquinas makes clear that this “human friendship of which the philosopher treats” is founded not directly on our communion in the divine good, but rather on goods connatural to us as human beings. Thus, having read and commented on *Nicomachean Ethics*, books 8–9, St. Thomas saw the value of integrating into his *ST* account the natural forms of sociability that had been discussed by Aristotle.

In pondering the different forms of natural friendship, Aquinas seems to have been particularly struck by a phrase that appears in chapter 1 of *Nic. Ethic.* book 8. On enumerating the benefits that friendship brings to human life, Aristotle observes that its importance is not confined to the private sphere, but extends even more crucially to the public sphere as well, “For polities (civitates), it seems, are held together (continere) by friendship.” Reading this phrase in the translation of William of Moerbeke, Aquinas, who commented on it in his *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, would undoubtedly have noticed how in the remainder of the sentence Aristotle linked the theme of friendship as a binding force within the polis to the related theme of concord:

> ... and legislators are more zealous about it [friendship] than about justice; this is evident from the similarity between friendship and concord (cordia); for legislators most of all wish to encourage concord and to expel discord as an enemy of the polity.

As St. Thomas had already learned from St. Augustine that *cordia* is another name for peace, on reading these lines the Dominican friar would spontaneously infer a connection between Aristotle’s analysis of friendship in the civil sphere, his own treatment of Christian charity as the most eminent form of friendship, and the theme of peace.

Although not explicitly cited within the “Secunda pars,” Aristotle’s idea that “polities are held together by friendship” was made operative

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21 *Ibid*, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3. Although the account of friendship in the *ST* is very much focused on the sort of relationships that arise from *caritas*, Aquinas does make occasional mention elsewhere of the corresponding natural forms of friendship. The contrast is clearly drawn in *ST*, I-II, q. 99, a. 2, where he states that “just as the principal aim of human law is to establish friendship between human beings (*faciat amicitiam hominum ad invicem*), likewise the principal aim of divine law is to establish the friendship of human beings with God.” Also worth citing is *De regno*, I, chapter 3 (p. 453, lines 93–101), where Aquinas observes that when “a bond of friendship is established among citizens” (*amicitia fedus firmetur*), they come to enjoy the benefits of peace (*pacis emolu mento*). This spirit of friendship is fostered through “weddings, banquets, and similar activities which generate familiarity and trust” (*familiaritas et fiducia generat*). See also *ibid.*, I, chapter 10 (pp. 460–463).


23 *Super Ethic.*, at 1155a22–26 (p. 441).
within the *Summa* treatment of charity at two different levels. On the one hand, St. Thomas applied it in the way that it was manifestly intended by Aristotle, namely *ad intra* to the members of a single polity, say within the ancient city-state of Athens or the medieval kingdom of Naples. On the other hand, and importantly for our subject, Aquinas saw that it also could extend *ad extra* when one independent polity was joined in friendship to another. This distinction between the two kinds of civic friendship, namely intra- and interstate, is made explicitly by Aquinas in *Super Ethic.*, book 9, chapter 6 (1167b2–4). Whereas Aristotle had referred solely to concord among citizens of the same polity, Aquinas discretely adds that it could also encompass the mutual relations of distinct polities:

[Aristotle] Political friendship (*politica amicitia*), then, seems to be concord, as is commonly held; for it deals with affairs that advance their interests and concern their lives.\(^{24}\)

[Aquinas] Next, at “Political then,” Aristotle shows how concord is related to friendship among citizens. He notes that political friendship, either between citizens of the same polity (*civium unius civitatis ad invicem*), or between different polities (*inter diversas civitates*), seems to be identical with concord. And people usually speak of it this way: that polities or citizens (*civitates vel cives*) in concord with one another (*conordes*) enjoy mutual friendship (*habent amicitiam ad invicem*).\(^{25}\)

It is difficult to identify with any accuracy what might have prompted St. Thomas to speak of friendship between distinct polities in a commentary on a text that is framed exclusively in terms of the concord that can arise within a single polity. It is possible that this resulted from a Stoic influence. This, however, would not in itself explain Aquinas’s addition to Aristotle’s text, as the Stoics typically conceptualized the theme of concord at the macro level of the entire human race (or even the whole cosmos), constituted as a unity under a single law, rather than specifically in terms of the relation between separate political units. He could have taken inspiration likewise from the idea of Christian unity in Europe, wherein the independent principalities and kingdoms were joined together into one community under the spiritual leadership of the pope. By contrast, Aquinas’s clear distinction between schism on the one hand, and sedition, on the other, shows that he conceptualized the unity of Christians in the supranational Church as essentially different in kind than the temporal unity of citizens in a civil polity. The former

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 520.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 521, lines 74–80.
derives from supernatural and the latter from natural principles. That the temporal sphere is a distinctive arena for the achievement of peace, St. Thomas summed up succinctly in this phrase from his “Secunda-secundae” discussion of courage: “The peace of the commonwealth (pax reipublicae) is good in itself.”

Hence when St. Thomas speaks of the relation of friendship between civil polities, in a philosophical text that makes no mention of shared faith, it seems clear that his thought was not moving in the direction of the supranational Christian republic, of the sort articulated some fifty years later in Dante’s *Monachia*. Under the modest cover of a literal commentary, Aquinas launched an original idea, one familiar to us today, yet new to medieval Europe: by their concord, premised on ties of friendship, the nations of the world constitute a natural community. This is a special sort of community, analogous (but not reducible) to the one constituted by the friendship of citizens within a single polity, or of the ecclesial society of faith and charity.

In the *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, this condition of friendship between polities is termed “concord,” but it does not yet receive the designation “peace.” This could only be expected, as Aristotle does not employ the Greek term for peace, *ἐιρήνη*, in this specific context. By contrast, in the theological context of the “Quaestio de pace” it was only natural that Aquinas would follow the lead of St. Augustine in establishing a close link between *concordia* and *pax*.

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26 See *ST* I-II, q. 87, a. 1, where Aquinas sets up a contrast between two forms of governance, “spiritual” (*spiritualiter*) and “temporal” (*temporaliter*). The latter is subsequently divided into two forms, “political” (*politicum*) and “familial” (*oeconomice*).

27 *ST* II-II, q. 123, a. 5.

28 See *ST* II-II, q. 59, a. 1, where Aquinas speaks of the common good of humanity (*bonum commune humanum*).

29 For an alternative contemporary Catholic viewpoint akin to Dante’s, see Pierre Manent (“L’Église entre l’humanité réelle et l’humanité rêvée,” in M. A. Glendon, R. Hittinger, and M. Sánchez Sorondo, eds., *The Global Quest for Tranquillitas Ordinis, Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later* [Vatican City: The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Acta (8, 2013), pp. 109–118] who, after noting how “From the Christian perspective, the healing and the unification of humanity enter through the element of charity of which the Church is the bearer and the instrument” (p. 112), suggests that because the Catholic Church is “the only real universal community that is completely constituted – the only ‘perfectly spiritual republic,’ she can address herself to all other religious communities who seek support in a political association and in a certain confusion of spiritual and political orders. She can address herself as well to that pagan empire that is China. In brief, she is the center from which and toward which the spiritual constellation of humanity is ordered” (p. 117).

30 In joining together the signification of the two terms in *ST* II-II, q. 29, a. 1, Aquinas admits that they are not purely and simply identical: “Peace includes concord and adds something thereto …
That there exists a special sphere of peace corresponding to the inter-relation of separate polities (each under its own prince) is never stated directly in the *ST* (although we do find Aquinas making passing reference to the idea of a *communitas totius mundi* within his youthful commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard). This sphere of peace has nevertheless a very real operative presence within the *ST*, as it is the premise on which Aquinas builds his distinction between sedition and war. Working from the supposition that every vice must be defined by reference to the virtue that it vitiates, in his treatment of sedition Aquinas explains how this sin “is opposed to a special kind of good, namely the unity and peace of the multitude.” The vice consists accordingly in a violent conflict “between mutually dissentient parts of one people, as when one part of the civic community rises in tumult against another part.” To bring the point home, Aquinas compares sedition to the related case of war, in which one multitude contends against another (*multitudinis ad multitudinem*), each considering the other its external enemy (*extraneos hostes*). This was later called “public war” by the medieval civil lawyers. Looking at questions 39–42 as a single sequence, readers are invited to complete the parallel for themselves: just as sedition stands opposed to the unity of a single political community, schism to the unity of the church, and brawling to the various forms of private association, war disrupts the bond whereby one independent multitude (a people or nation) enjoys good relations with another. Each of these unities has the character of a community (an ordered fellowship); each accordingly represents a distinct arena for the achievement of peace.

Concord denotes a union of appetites among various persons, while peace denotes, in addition to this union, the union of appetites even in one man.”

26 Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace

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