

## SUMMA THEOLOGIÆ, 2a2æ. 23, 1

consequenter considerandum est de caritate. Et primo, de ipsa caritate; secundo, de dono sapientiæ ei correspondente.

Circa primum consideranda sunt quinque:

primo, de ipsa caritate; secundo, de objecto caritatis; tertio, de actibus ejus; quarto, de vitiis oppositis; quinto, de præceptis ad hoc pertinentibus.

Circa primum est duplex consideratio: prima quidem de ipsa caritate secundum se; secunda de caritate per comparationem ad subjectum. Circa primum quæruntur octo:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>The Summa has already dealt in a general way with the theological virtues in 1a2æ. 106-8 (Vol. 30, ed. G. Ernst); and on the life of perfection, 2a2æ. 184 (Vol. (Vols. 31, 32, 33). [For the present treatise consult also the discussions on the nature of love and delight, 1a2æ. 26-39 (Vols. 19 & 20, ed. E. D'Arcy) which range beyond these affects considered merely as emotions; on the Gospel Law of grace, 1a2æ. 106-8 (Vol. 30, ed. G. Ernst); and on the life of perfection, 2a2æ. 184 (Vol. 47, ed. J. Aumann). Also the Disputations, De caritate].



#### THE NATURE OF CHARITY

WE COME NOW TO CONSIDER CHARITY.<sup>a</sup> First charity itself, then the Gift of Wisdom which corresponds to it (45).<sup>b</sup>

As to charity itself there are five main topics for discussion:

first, its nature; second, its object (25-6); third, its actions (27-33); fourth, the vices opposed to it (34-43); fifth, the appropriate precepts (44).

Under the first heading we consider charity first in itself (23), and then in relation to its possessor (24).

bThe Gifts of the Holy Ghost, of very great importance in the theology of St Thomas, have already been treated in general in 1a2æ. 68 (Vol. 24, ed. E. D. O'Connor). They are qualities, shed on us by the grace of the Spirit, which supplement the virtues and set us in instinctive sympathy with divine things transcending ethical judgments and deliberation. Each of the seven Gifts is associated with a particular virtue or group of virtues. With the theological virtues, the Gifts of Understanding and Knowledge correspond to Faith (2a2æ. 8 & 9), and that of Fear to Hope (2a2æ. 19). Wisdom corresponds to charity and is studied in Question 45 of this volume.



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# Quæstio 23. de caritate secundum se

Circa primum quæruntur octo:

- 1. utrum caritas sit amicitia;
- 2. utrum sit aliquid creatum in anima;
- 3. utrum sit virtus;
- 4. utrum sit virtus specialis;
- 5. utrum sit una virtus;
- 6. utrum sit maxima virtutum;
- 7. utrum sine ea possit esse aliqua vera virtus;
- 8. utrum sit forma virtutum.

#### articulus 1. utrum caritas sit amicitia

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur: 1 r. Videtur quod caritas non sit amicitia. Nihil enim est ita proprium amicitiæ sicut convivere amico, ut Philosophus dicit. 2 Sed caritas est hominis ad Deum et ad angelos, quorum non est cum hominibus conversatio. 3 Ergo caritas non est amicitia.

- 2. Præterea amicitia non est sine reamatione,\* ut dicitur in Ethic.<sup>4</sup> Sed caritas habetur etiam ad inimicos, secundum illud Matt., Diligite inimicos vestros.<sup>5</sup> Ergo caritas non est amicitia.
- 3. Præterea, amicitiæ tres sunt species secundum Philosophum,6 scilicet amicitia delectabilis, utilis et honesti. Sed caritas non est amicitia

<sup>\*</sup>Piana: redamatione

¹cf 1a2æ. 65, 5. III Sent. 27, 2, 1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Ethics VIII, 5. 1157b20

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Daniel 2, 11

<sup>4</sup>Ethics VIII, 2. 1156a4

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Matthew 5, 44

<sup>6</sup>Ethics VIII, 3. 1156a7

The vocabulary is important. The Greek word agapē, it would seem, was adopted by the NT and later writers for the specifically Christian concept which is subject of this treatise: with some exceptions it bears this sense (cf C. Spicq, Agapē dans le Nouveau Testament, Paris, 1958). Other possible words were eros and philia, the former a predominantly sexual love, and so unsuitable for the purpose (cf 'erotic' in English), though, later on, the Pseudo-Dionysius was to defend his use of it energetically (De Divinis Nominibus, 4), and, even earlier, St Ignatius of Antioch had declared, 'Christ my Eros is crucified'; the latter signified friendship or warm natural affection for those near and dear, and is used, though seldom in Scripture (Mt. 10, 37; In. 11, 3, 36, 4). But agapē is by far the most common and is a keyword in the NT. In Latin it was rendered as caritas instead of amor or amicitia, possibly because of their impure or secular associations. The English 'charity', has, unfortunately, suffered with time and lost much of its old vigour since Rheims



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## Question 23. the nature of charity

There are eight points of enquiry:

- I. is charity a friendship?
- 2. is it a creaturely reality in the soul?
- 3. is it a virtue?
- 4. and specifically distinct?
- 5. a single virtue?
- 6. and sovereign among the virtues?
- 7. can there be any true virtue without it?
- 8. is it the form of the virtues?

## article I. is charity a friendship?

THE FIRST POINT: 1. It seems not. For according to Aristotle, nothing so marks friendship as dwelling together. 2b Now man's charity is with God and the angels whose dwelling, as Daniel puts it, is not with creatures of flesh. 3 Therefore charity is not friendship.

- 2. Moreover, according to Aristotle,<sup>4</sup> friendship is not without love returned. But the evangelical command, *Love your enemies*,<sup>5</sup> embraces even those who make no such return. And so charity is not friendship.
  - 3. Besides, for Aristotle<sup>6</sup> there are three kinds of friendship, friendship

and Douay adopted it throughout to translate 'caritas'. The AV and the Confraternity Version use it often, while the RV and the Jerusalem use 'love'—('charity' occurs once in the RSV viz. in Acts 9, 36)—probably because charity in Modern English has come to have the restricted meaning of kindness to the poor and afflicted, alms-giving, etc. However, in a theological treatise it seems best to retain 'charity', both because of its continued use in English theological discourse, and because the only other working alternative 'love', has suffered even more than charity. In fact both will be used in suitable contexts. 'Friendship' (OE, freond, present participle from the Teutonic word meaning 'to love') translates the Latin amicitia and Greek philia, frequently used by classical writers. Latin Christian writers soon took over amicitia, e.g. St Augustine, St Ambrose and, later on, St Bernard, St Alred of Riveaulx and others. By St Thomas's time it was common in theological and spiritual writings. Though 'friend' and 'friendship' have also lost vigour in modern English, they are still more immediately meaningful than charity, though often not readily connected with Christian love, even in religious circles.

b'Dwelling together' is given its full and active force here; 'for those who live together delight in each other and confer benefits on each other', as Aristotle says a little earlier in the same passage. Convivere, conversatio, communicatio, participatio are key-words for the association which is the basis of friendship. cf the NT koinōmia.



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utilis aut delectabilis; dicit enim Hieronymus in epist. ad Paulinum quæ ponitur in principio Bibliæ, Illa est vera necessitudo, et Christo glutino copulata, quam non utilis rei familiaris, non præsentia tantum corporum, non subdola et palpans adulatio, sed Dei timor et divinarum Scripturarum studia conciliant.<sup>7</sup> Similiter etiam non est amicitia honesti, quia caritate diligimus etiam peccatores, amicitia vero honesti non est nisi ad virtuosos, ut dicitur in Ethic.<sup>8</sup> Ergo caritas non est amicitia.

SED CONTRA est quod Joan. dicitur, Jam non dicam vos servos, sed amicos meos. Sed hoc non dicebatur eis nisi ratione caritatis. Ergo caritas est amicitia.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod secundum Philosophum,<sup>10</sup> non quilibet amor habet rationem amicitiæ, sed amor qui est cum benevolentia, quando scilicet sic amamus aliquem ut ei bonum velimus. Si autem rebus amatis non bonum velimus, sed ipsum eorum bonum velimus nobis, sicut dicimur amare vinum aut equum aut aliquid hujusmodi, non est amor amicitiæ sed cujusdam concupiscentiæ. Ridiculum enim est dicere quod aliquis habeat amicitiam ad vinum vel ad equum.

Sed nec benevolentia sufficit ad rationem amicitiæ, sed requiritur quædam mutua amatio, quia amicus est amico amicus. Talis autem mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliqua communicatione.

Cum igitur sit aliqua communicatio hominis ad Deum secundum quod nobis suam beatitudinem communicat, super hac communicatione oportet aliquam amicitiam fundari. De qua quidem communicatione dicitur I Cor., Fidelis Deus per quem vocati estis in societatem Filii ejus. <sup>11</sup> Amor autem super hac communicatione fundatus est caritas. Unde manifestum est quod caritas amicitia quædam est hominis ad Deum.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod duplex est hominis vita. Una

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Epist. LIII. PL 22, 540

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Ethics VIII, 4. 1157b3 <sup>9</sup>John 15, 15

<sup>10</sup>Ethics VIII, 2, 31

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>I Corinthians 1, 9

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>c</sup>The analogy of friendship with the threefold division of the good, cf 1a. 5, 6. Vol. 2. 'Pleasurable' seems the best rendering here of *delectabilis*, as it includes the delights of good company, intelligent conversation etc., as well as of grosser or more fleshly intercourse, which is not necessarily bad, and indeed can be subordinate, at least habitually, to the end of charity (cf art. 7 below). Friendship for profit sums up the various friendships where men use each other for their own interests: business luncheons, much of the social life of a great city, for example. Like the pleasurable, these friendships are not of themselves bad and can be meritorious. *Amicitia honesta* is difficult to translate. 'For worth', i.e. moral



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for utility, for pleasure, for worth. Now charity is none of these. It is not useful, nor is it pleasurable, as Jerome brings out in the letter to Paulinus that prefaces his Bible: Intimacy cemented in Christ is true friendship. It is kept alive not by bodily presence nor by subtle and insidious flattery, but by the fear of God and the study of sacred Scripture. Likewise, charity is not Aristotle's friendship for worth, for that is for the virtuous alone, whereas charity extends to the wicked also. Consequently charity is not friendship.

ON THE OTHER HAND the Lord's words, No longer will I call you servants but my friends, 2 can be explained only in terms of charity, which, therefore, is friendship.

REPLY: According to Aristotle<sup>10</sup> not all love has the character of friendship, but that only which goes with well wishing, namely when we so love another as to will what is good for him. For if what we will is our own good, as when we love wine or a horse or the like, it is a love not of friendship but of desire.<sup>d</sup> It makes no sense to talk of somebody being friends with wine or a horse.

Yet goodwill alone is not enough for friendship for this requires a mutual loving; it is only with a friend that a friend is friendly. But such reciprocal good will is based on something in common.<sup>e</sup>

Now there is a sharing of man with God by his sharing his happiness with us, and it is on this that a friendship is based. St Paul refers to it, God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son. 11 Now the love which is based on this sort of fellowship is charity. Accordingly it is clear that charity is a friendship of man and God.

Hence: I. Man leads a double life. One is outward according to the

worth, fitting for man as a rational creature, not merely as a being capable of pleasure or self-interest, gives much of the sense. Virtuous' also conveys the sense, for to be virtuous is to live according to right reason, and so, fittingly. Similarly 'honourable'. It may be noted that, in the concrete, the three kinds of friendship overlap, and are to be integrated as parts in Christian living. cf In Ethics VIII, lect. 3. 'Aristotle is dealing with the basic distinction between 'interested' love (amor concupiscentiæ) and 'disinterested' love (amor amicitiæ). Yet, as will be seen, friendship is not identical with altruism.

\*Communicatio, translated here as 'in common', and further down as 'fellowship', which is a good scriptural word, Greek koinōnia. RSV has retained it in many passages where it occurs in AV; in others, terms such as 'taking part in', 'partnership', 'participation', 'share', are used. The Jerusalem seems to have dispensed with it entirely, using expressions such as 'brotherhood', 'joined to', 'in communion with', 'companion', 'sharing in', 'partnership', 'in common', 'in union with'. In any case the general idea is plain enough: men must share something together if there is to be friendship.



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quidem exterior secundum naturam sensibilem et corporalem, et secundum hanc vitam non est nobis communicatio vel conversatio cum Deo et angelis. Alia autem est vita hominis spiritualis secundum mentem, et secundum hanc vitam est nobis conversatio et cum Deo et cum angelis, in præsenti quidem statu imperfecte, unde dicitur *Philipp.*, *Nostra conversatio in cælis est.*<sup>12</sup> Sed ista conversatio perficietur in patria quando servi ejus servient Deo et videbunt faciem ejus, ut dicitur Apoc.<sup>13</sup> Et ideo hic est caritas imperfecta, sed perficietur in patria.

- 2. Ad secundum dicendum quod amicitia se extendit ad aliquem duplicitur. Uno modo respectu suiipsius, et sic amicitia nunquam est nisi ad amicum. Alio modo se extendit ad aliquem respectu alterius personæ, sicut si aliquis habet amicitiam ad aliquem hominem, ratione ejus diligit omnes ad illum hominem pertinentes, sive filios sive servos sive qualitercumque ei attinentes. Et tanta potest esse dilectio amici, quod propter amicum amantur hi qui ad ipsum pertinent etiam si nos offendant vel odiant. Et hoc modo amicitia caritatis se extendit etiam ad inimicos, quos diligimus ex caritate in ordine ad Deum, ad quem principaliter habetur amicitia caritatis.
- 3. Ad tertium dicendum quod amicitia honesti non habetur nisi ad virtuosum sicut ad principalem personam, sed ejus intuitu diliguntur ad eum attinentes etiam si non sint virtuosi. Et hoc modo caritas, quæ maxime est amicitia honesti, se extendit ad peccatores quos ex caritate diligimus propter Deum.

### articulus 2. utrum caritas sit aliquid creatum in anima

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur: 1 I. Videtur quod caritas non sit aliquid creatum in anima. Dicit enim Augustinus, Qui proximum diligit, consequens est ut ipsam dilectionem diligat. Deus autem dilectio est. Consequens est ergo ut præcipue Deum diligat. 2 Et dicit, Ita dictum est, Deus caritas est, sicut dictum est, Deus spiritus est. 3 Ergo caritas non est aliquid creatum in anima sed est ipse Deus.

<sup>12</sup>Philippians 3, 20

<sup>13</sup>Revelation 22, 3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>1 Sent. 17, 1, 1. De Caritate 1 <sup>3</sup>op cit. xv, 17. PL 42, 1080

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>De Trinitate VIII, 7. PL 42, 957

<sup>&#</sup>x27;The text chosen points to the reason for charity's imperfection in this life, namely that it is charged with the imperfect knowledge of faith, which is a 'hearing', not a 'seeing' (Rom. 10, 17; cf 2a2æ. 1, 4; 4, 8). For the 'perfection' of charity and its degrees, see below 2a2æ. 24, 8 & 9: Also 44, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>Note a similar question about grace in 1a2æ. 110, 1. It arises naturally from the NT phrase, *God is charity* (1 *In.* 4, 8), and the fact that it could still be freely debated in St Thomas's time indicates its complexity. Two problems are involved:



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world of body and senses; the communion or intercourse with God and the angels of which we are speaking is not here. The other is inward, according to the life of mind and spirit; it is here that we have intercourse with God and the angels, though imperfectly in our present state, for our citizenship is in heaven, 12 yet perfectly in man's true home where his servants will serve God and will see his face, as the Revelation says. 13f And so here our charity is imperfect, but will be made perfect in heaven.

- 2. Friendship goes out to another in two ways. When he is loved in himself, and such friendship is only for a friend; and when he is loved because of another person, as when for the sake of a friend you love those belonging to him, be they children, servants or anyone connected with him at all, even if they hurt or hate us, so much do we love him. In this way the friendship of charity extends even to our enemies, for we love them for the sake of God who is the principal in our loving.
- 3. In a friendship of true worth we love principally a man of virtue, though out of regard for him we love all who belong to him, even if they are not virtuous. In this way charity, which above all is friendship, reaches out to sinners whom we love for God's sake.

article 2. is charity something creaturely in the soul?a

THE SECOND POINT: 1 I. It would seem not. Augustine writes, Who loves his neighbour in consequence loves this love itself. But God is love. The consequence is that he loves God his first love. 2 Again he writes, It is said that God is charity as it is said that he is spirit. 3 Therefore charity is not a creaturely reality in the soul but is God himself.

<sup>1.</sup> Is charity, in any sense, created? 2. Granting that it is, does its act spring from a created quality or habit of charity? A subsidiary question arises, much debated by the Scholastics: Is 'created' to be taken strictly or in extended sense? Strictly a thing is said to be created when its presupposes nothing of itself or of its subject (ex nihilo sui et subjecti cf 1a. 45, 1), i.e. nothing of itself existed, nor was there any material from which it was made. Ferrariensis and other theologians held to this view, arguing that grace (and the same holds for charity), being supernatural realities, were not made out of the subject, that is the soul or the will, in any way. Others argued that 'created' is not to be taken in the strict sense here but more broadly; 'according as to be created signifies improvement in things; as when we say that a bishop is created' (1a. 45, 1 ad 1). It would seem that grace and charity, according to the mind of St Thomas, are created in this latter sense. Bañez, in his commentary on 1a2æ. 109-14, argues strongly for this position, teaching that grace 'is educed from the obediential potency of the soul by God, and this is sufficient to show that it is not created in the strict or proper sense'. It can, however, be described as 'created in the wider sense because it does not presuppose any merits on the part of the subject, and in no way proceeds from them, but is given gratis, and elevates the subject to the higher order of supernatural reality'.



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- 2. Præterea, Deus est spiritualiter vita animæ, sicut anima vita corporis, secundum illud *Deut.*, *Ipse est vita tua.*<sup>4</sup> Sed anima vivificat corpus per seipsum. Ergo Deus vivificat animam per seipsum. Vivificat enim eam per caritatem, secundum illud *Joan.*, *Nos scimus quoniam translati sumus de morte ad vitam, quoniam diligimus fratres.*<sup>5</sup> Ergo Deus est ipsa caritas.
- 3. Præterea, nihil creatum est infinitæ virtutis, sed magis omnis creatura est vanitas. Caritas, autem, non est vanitas, sed magis vanitati repugnat; et est infinitæ virtutis quia animam hominis ad bonum infinitum perducit. Ergo caritas non est aliquid in anima.

SED CONTRA est quod Augustinus dicit, Caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum Deo propter ipsum.<sup>6</sup> Sed motus animi est aliquid creatum in anima. Ergo et caritas est aliquid creatum in anima.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod Magister perscrutatur hanc quæstionem,<sup>7</sup> et ponit quod caritas non est aliquid creatum in anima sed est ipse Spiritus Sanctus mentem inhabitans. Nec est sua intentio quod iste motus dilectionis quo Deum diligimus sit ipse Spiritus Sanctus, sed quod iste motus dilectionis est a Spiritu Sancto non mediante aliquo habitu, sicut a Spiritu Sancto sunt alii acutus virtuosi mediantibus habitibus aliarum virtutum, puta habitu\* spei aut fidei aut alicujus alterius virtutis. Et hoc dicebat propter excellentiam caritatis.

Sed si quis recte consideret, hoc magis redundat in caritatis detrimentum. Non enim motus caritatis ita procedit a Spiritu Sancto movente humanam mentem quod humana mens sit mota tantum et nullo modo sit principium hujus motus, sicut cum aliquod corpus movetur ab aliquo exteriori movente. Hoc enim est contra rationem voluntarii cujus oportet principium in ipso esse, sicut supra dictum est.<sup>8</sup> Unde sequeretur quod diligere non est

<sup>\*</sup>Piana: omits habitu

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>De Doctrina Christiana III, 10, PL 34, 72

<sup>71</sup> Sent. 17

<sup>81</sup>a2æ. 6, I

bIt is true that, compared to God, who is being itself, a creature is as nothing: cf De Veritate II, 3 ad 16 & 18. Such apophasis not rarely appears in St Thomas's theology; the influence of the Pseudo-Dionysius and of the theologia negativa tradition is strong. Not only God, but all the mysteries of faith are more in shadow than in light. The reverence consequently evoked would naturally lead to the style of the present question. Recall St John of the Cross, Ruysbroeck, the author of The Cloud of Unknowing, and other mystical writings, which show the same sense of the 'otherness' and complete transcendence of God and his mysteries. Also Karl Barth.

ePeter Lombard (ca. 1100-60), or the Magister as he was referred to by generations



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- 2. Moreover, spiritually God is the life of the soul as the soul is the life of the body; in the words of *Deuteronomy*, 'He is your life'. Now the soul of itself vivifies the body. Therefore God directly vivifies the soul. He does this by charity: We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. He, therefore, is charity itself.
- 3. Besides, nothing created is of infinite power. Rather every creature is vanity.<sup>b</sup> Charity, however, is far from vanity, indeed is the very opposite; and moreover is of infinite power since it brings the human soul to infinite good. Hence charity is not something creaturely in the soul.

ON THE OTHER HAND Augustine says, Charity I call a movement of the soul towards enjoying God for his own sake,<sup>6</sup> and such a movement is creaturely.

REPLY: Peter Lombard<sup>c</sup> investigated this question,<sup>7</sup> and concluded that charity is not something created in the soul but the Holy Spirit himself dwelling there. Not that he meant that our very movement towards God is the Holy Spirit himself,<sup>d</sup> but that love comes from the Holy Spirit unmediated by any habit,<sup>e</sup> such as is the case with activities of the other virtues. These indeed spring from the Holy Spirit but issue through habits such as faith or hope or any other virtue. Note that it was the very excellence of charity that prompted this opinion.

Yet, to look at the matter rightly, this rather derogates from charity. The motion of charity springs from the Holy Spirit, but not in such a way that the human mind is passively set in motion and is in no sense the active source of the motion, like a body which is set in motion by an outside force. For this would be incompatible with the very character of a voluntary act, the active principle of which, as shown, lies within the subject itself.

of scholars, was one of the eclectic group of theologians who aimed to unify logically the whole of theology. His Liber Sententiarum became a theological classic and was commented upon by hundreds of masters, including St Thomas himself. It remained the semi-official text-book of theology for centuries, and was only superseded gradually in the Schools by the Summa Theologiæ of St Thomas.

<sup>a</sup>The *De Virtutibus* I, I uses stronger language: 'Ridiculus to say that the very act of love, which we experience when we love God and our neighbour, is the Holy Spirit himself.'

eHabitus, a species of the category 'quality' (1a2æ. 49, 1, 2). An operative habit, which is in question here, may be defined as a stable and permanent quality inclining a power to act well or ill with regard to the nature of the person possessing it. See 1a2æ. 50, 2, 3, 4, 5 (Vol. 22 in this series). It is a settled as opposed to an unstable or transient disposition, and, if morally good, it is called a virtue. See 1a2æ. 55, 1, 2, 3 (Vol. 23). Virtues, in turn, are natural and acquired by human effort, see 1a2æ. 51, 2, 3; 61; 63 (Vols. 22 & 23), or supernatural and infused by God, see 1a2æ. 51, 4; 63, 2, 3 (Vols. 22 & 23). The latter are divided into theological and moral virtue; see 1a2æ. 63, 2, 3, 4.