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INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Thomas Instituut organized its fourth international conference in Utrecht, on the topic of 'Faith, Hope and Love. Thomas Aquinas on living by the theological virtues.' Many scholars from all parts of the world gathered together to share four days of intense and focused study on Aquinas's thought in this field. A collection of several of the studies that were presented and discussed during those days, will be published in the second half of 2014, in the institute's series of publications at Peeters Publishers, Louvain.

Whereas a certain number of contributions was not ready for publication, others were very worthwhile but could not be included in the conference proceedings for various reasons. We are happy to be able to present four of the contributions belonging to this last category in this year's yearbook.

John O'Callaghan, philosopher and director of the Jacques Maritain Center of the University of Notre Dame, undertook a large project studying the concept of *miser cordia* and its antecedents in classical antiquity. This valuable and extensive piece of work is published in the conference proceedings in a shorter version that was actually presented as a lecture, but the material in its elaborate version deserves publication as well. Therefore, this yearbook presents O'Callaghan's study in full.

The next two contributions belong together, since both of them study Aquinas's thoughts on faith in relation to non-Christians. These studies fit into a tradition of our yearbook, that has published many papers on the subject of Aquinas's theology of interreligious dialogue, as we would call it today. Pim Valkenberg, professor in Christology and Muslim-Christian dialogue at the Catholic University of Washington, and a member of our institute, probes into the possible relationship between Aquinas's theology of interreligious dialogue and Vatican II constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. Matthew Tapie, currently also teaching at the Catholic University of America, and

about to publish his dissertation in this area, focuses on a particularly interesting phrase in Aquinas's commentary on Romans, and discusses the question whether it could be the case that Aquinas – in this commentary – takes a positive stand towards post-biblical Jewish worship. As Tapie himself twice mentions, this study is of an evidently speculative nature, and interestingly provocative.

The fourth study presented here, is by Marcel Sarot, professor of Fundamental Theology at Tilburg University, and member of our institute. Sarot discusses the question whether Aquinas can offer us a way out of a problem that was posed by Vincent Brümmer, emeritus professor of Philosophical Theology at Utrecht University, concerning the logical status of gift love: is it a *contradictio in terminis*, or not; can gift love be conceived as value creating, with the help of Aquinas?

Our Jaarboek 2013 concludes with the publication of a lecture by the undersigned on Thomas Aquinas on God and evil. In this lecture, the reasons why Aquinas cannot be said to address the problem of theodicy, which is a modern one indeed, are discussed. In relation to this, since for Aquinas evil and sin are almost equated, the fruits and the function of the cross of Christ are elaborated.

In 2015 our institute will celebrate its twenty-fifth jubilee. On this joyous occasion, we will organize a fifth international conference, following up upon the conference on Faith, Hope and Love we had in 2013. During the conference of 2013, questions were raised on Aquinas's interpretation of the moral virtues that he considers to be infused. What is the relationship between the acquired and the infused moral virtues? To these and possibly other questions a conference will be devoted, to be held in Utrecht on December 16-19, 2015. Further information will be published on our website: www.thomasinstituut.org.

In the meantime - in the course of 2015 - we will put together our Jaarboek 2014. We hope that this yearbook will be fitting our twenty-fifth jubilee as well. Therefore, we kindly invite our readers to submit any papers on the theology and philosophy

concerning Thomas Aquinas that they want to share. Please submit them for consideration before March 1, 2015.

I would like to thank Alexis Szejnoga MA (hons) for his editorial help in preparing this yearbook for publication.

August 22, 2014

Henk J.M. Schoot,
Editor-in-Chief.

MISERICORDIA IN AQUINAS
A Test Case for Theological and Natural Virtues
[Elaborate Version]

John O'Callaghan

Introduction

Aquinas's treatment of *Misericordia* ^{* see endnote} presents a good test case for considering the relationship of infused theological virtues to the so-called natural virtues. In the first question of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas argues for the necessity of a revelation from God that reveals not only those things that cannot be understood about God by human endeavor, but also many things that can be known by human rational endeavor unassisted by revelation. The reason that these truths that can be known apart from revelation are nonetheless revealed is that they are necessary for salvation, and without revelation are very difficult to know, take a long time to know, and will most likely be accompanied by a great deal of error. The emphasis there is upon revelation as a kind of cognitive resource for salvific knowledge about God. The thesis of this paper is that Aquinas's discussion of *Misericordia* in the *Summa* provides a kind of practical analogue in the life of virtue and action to the point that Aquinas made about the philosophical disciplines in the first question. *Misericordia* it turns out is a natural virtue that is nonetheless an effect of *Caritas*. As a natural virtue it can in principle be acquired by human endeavor unassisted by the gift of grace that infuses *Caritas*. If acquired by human endeavor alone it will not bear upon salvation and eternal happiness, but the happiness of this mortal life. And yet, as an effect of *Caritas* when it is infused, presumably because in the moral life it is like those speculative truths of the philosophical disciplines, it is necessary for salvation. Apart from *Caritas* it is very difficult to acquire, would take most of a life to do so, and

would likely be associated with much practical error. In addition, when it is brought about by *Caritas*, it is in fact infused and elevated to bear upon eternal beatitude. *Misericordia* is seen then to be a natural virtue that is nonetheless necessary for salvation. However, this salvific context for Aquinas's discussion causes him to depart radically from the pagan philosophical discussion he inherits in arguing that it is a natural virtue.

I will not argue here for most of the claims made above, just the last one. I will consider Aquinas's discussion of it as a natural virtue, in order to show how he departs radically from the philosophical traditions he engages while discussing it, even as he argues for its character as a natural virtue and seeks to see his discussion in continuity with those philosophical traditions. I will proceed first by introducing briefly the tension between theological and natural virtues in relation to *Misericordia*. Second, I will look selectively at the Greek and Roman background of Aquinas's discussion of *Misericordia*, particularly the sources he replies upon, Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero, and then finally proceed to Aquinas's discussion proper to see the ways it presupposes but also critically and significantly departs from the ancient discussion.

In giving a practical analogue in the discussion of *Misericordia* to the speculative truths considered in the first article of the first question, Aquinas enacts what he had argued in article four of that first question, namely that *Sacra Doctrina* is both a speculative and a practical science.

The Problem: Natural versus Theological Virtues

The natural virtues pertain to a happiness that is proportionate to human nature, and that can be acquired by means of the principles of human nature and action that are directed to that proportionate end. They are directed to goods attainable through human action proceeding from those natural principles. Theological virtues pertain to "another" different happiness that surpasses human nature, a happiness that can only be acquired by God's power infusing the principles of action that are directed to

that supernatural end by a kind of participation in divinity.¹ The natural virtues are divided into the intellectual and moral virtues, while the theological virtues are divided into Faith, Hope, and Charity (*Caritas*). Aquinas clearly identifies *Misericordia* as a moral virtue when he discusses it. It follows from that identification that it is not for him a theological virtue. Of itself it pertains to the happiness proportionate to human nature, not the “other” happiness made available by God’s grace.

And yet the context for his identification of it as a moral virtue in the *Summa Theologiae* is in the discussion of *Caritas*. Aquinas argues that *Misericordia* is one of the interior effects of *Caritas*. *Caritas* is of course the exemplar of an infused theological virtue. It is brought about in a human being by God’s grace and cannot be acquired by human effort. It bears upon that “other” end that is not proportionate to human nature. And so as an effect of a theological virtue, one might think that *Misericordia* should not be considered a natural virtue, since as an effect of *Caritas* it also bears upon the end that is not proportionate to human nature. *Misericordia* is also discussed throughout Holy Scripture, most especially in the Psalms and in the parable of the Good Samaritan. God is regularly described as a “merciful” God. For example, the Vulgate of Exodus 22:27 says in the voice of God “si clamaverit ad me exaudiam eum quia misericors sum.” The Greek of Luke’s Gospel relating the parable of the Good Samaritan uses the term ‘*ἔλεος*’, and the Vulgate has ‘*Misericordia*’. Thus for the Christian tradition that Aquinas presupposes *Misericordia* has a distinct relation to sacred revelation in Jewish and Christian history, and it seems to have a distinctly religious character.² A

¹ “Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas, ut supra dictum est. Una quidem proportionata humanae naturae, ad quam scilicet homo pervenire potest per principia suae naturae. Alia autem est beatitudo naturam hominis excedens, ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest, secundum quandam divinitatis participationem; secundum quod dicitur II Petr. I, quod per Christum facti sumus consortes divinae naturae.” *STh* I-II, q. 62, a 1 co.

² For a discussion of Compassion in Jewish and early Christian history, as well as its relation to pagan philosophy, particularly that of Aristotle, see Christoph Markshies, “Compassion: Some Remarks on

final reason for thinking that *Misericordia* sits uneasily as a natural virtue is the treatment it received at the hands of the major Greek and Roman philosophers. Aquinas engages in his theological discussion of the virtues, Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca, who, as we will see, by and large either ignored it as a virtue or dismissed it.

The philosophers' treatment of *ἔλεος* is all the more striking against the background of Athenian religious piety, for as related by a number of classical sources there was a temple in Athens dedicated to the god *ἔλεος*. "In the Athenian market-place among the objects not generally known is an altar to Mercy [*ἔλεος*], of all divinities the most useful in the life of mortals and in the vicissitudes of fortune, but honored by the Athenians alone among the Greeks."³ One might conclude that in ordinary Greek religious

Concens of Divine and Human Compassion in Antiquity." *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, VIII.5, 91-104. Among other things Markshies disagrees with and seeks to mitigate the thesis of David Konstan in *Pity Transformed*, (London: Duckworth, 2001) that there is a large gap between classical thoughts on Pity and the Christian tradition. For a discussion of *ἔλεος* particularly in relation to Jewish and Christian practices of alms giving, see Gary Anderson, *Charity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

³ Pausanias. *Pausanias Description of Greece with an English Translation* by W.H.S. Jones, M.A. in Six Volumes. London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1931. BK I-II. I.17.1. Loeb Classical Edition. And Statius in Latin writes, "There was in the midst of the city an altar belonging to no god of power; gentle Clemency [*Clementia*] had there her seat, and the wretched made it sacred; never lacked she a new suppliant, none did she condemn or refuse their prayers. All that ask are heard, night and day may one approach and win the heart of the goddess by complaints alone. No costly rites are hers; she accepts no incense flame, no blood deep-welling; tears flow upon her altar, sad offerings of severed tresses hang above it, and raiment left when Fortune changed. Around is a grove of gentle trees, marked by the cult of the venerable, wool-entwined laurel and the suppliant olive. No image is there, to no metal is the divine form entrusted, in hearts and minds does the goddess delight to dwell. The distressed are ever nigh her, her precinct ever swarms with needy folk, only to the prosperous is her shrine unknown." *Statius Thebaid with an English Translation* by J. H. Mozley in Two

thought and practice, at least Athenian, thinking of *ἔλεος* as a positive element within human life pertains, as it does in Jewish and Christian biblical revelation, to religious devotion and inspiration, not the philosophically purified moral character of Virtue Ethics. So perhaps Aquinas is wrong or inconsistent, and *Misericordia* ought really to be considered a theological virtue associated with divinity and not accessible to the pagan philosophical wisdom of the Greeks and Romans even as it is intimated at in ordinary Athenian piety. At the very least there is an uneasy tension in the background sources of Aquinas's discussion, theological and philosophical, even as he argues for its being a natural virtue.

On the other hand, one reason for thinking that it ought to be considered a natural virtue is that even as the pagan philosophers either ignored or dismissed it as a virtue, they recognized the *passion* that it pertains to—suffering within oneself when one apprehends the suffering of another. The Greek term for this passion was the same term used by Luke in his gospel—*ἔλεος*. For the pagans it is a recognizable and natural human passion. The theological virtues that are the gifts of grace can be said to pertain to a passion for God and neighbor as beloved by God that we do not ordinarily have and that is not proportionate to human nature.

Volumes, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, Bk V-XII. XII.481-496. Notice the use of '*Clementia*' in Statius' Latin for the Greek *ἔλεος*, instead of '*Misericordia*'. David Konstan discusses the scholarship on the ambiguity of Latin terminology involving '*Misericordia*' and '*Clementia*' at this time in Roman linguistic practice, as well as the later separation of the terms. See "Clemency as a Virtue," *Classical Philology*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (October 2005), 337-346. We will see below that while Cicero will use '*Misericordia*' to refer to what will later clearly be distinguished as *Clementia*, Seneca will explicitly distinguish *Clementia* from *Misericordia* precisely to praise the former and abuse the latter. And Cicero will himself abuse *Misericordia* proper in his *Tusculan Disputations*. For more on the altar of *ἔλεος* see "The Altar of Eleos," R. E. Wycherley, *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 4. No. 3/4, 143-150. See also, "The Altar of Pity in the Athenian Agora," Homer A. Thompson, *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, vol. 21, No. 1, 1952, 47-82.

But it is manifestly false that human beings only experience the passion of pain at the sight of another's pain as a result of the gift of grace and the infusion of *Caritas*. Even animals other than human beings experience analogues of this passion. So at least the passion is recognizably natural and proportionate in us to our human animal natures. But, as Aristotle makes clear,⁴ it is the task of the virtues guided by prudence to bring strength, stability, and excellence to the human passions and actions that arise within the particular conditions of daily life. So it seems that if there is a virtue of *Misericordia* it ought to be considered a moral virtue because it pertains to a natural human passion, which would place it, as Aquinas argues, within the context of the natural virtues not the theological.

The Greek and Roman Background: Greek Tragedy

Because of the role that the Greek tradition of tragic drama plays in Aristotle's later reflections upon *ἔλεος* in his *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, I want to consider briefly that tradition as we see it in the story of Achilles and Priam from the *Illiad*. Priam comes to Achilles to beg for pity and ask for his son Hector's dead and desecrated body. Priam mentions Achilles's father Peleus, reminding him of his sufferings in the absence of Achilles off to war. Priam then says that his own sufferings are that much greater than Achilles's father's for he Priam has lost all of his sons to the war, and in particular his heroic son Hector lies dead outside Achilles's tent, his body desecrated by Achilles in his sorrow and rage at the recent loss of beloved Patroclus at the hands of Hector

⁴ "Now excellence is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and both these things are characteristics of excellence. Therefore excellence is a kind of mean, since it aims at what is intermediate," NE II.6 1106b24-26. Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics*, Transl. W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*, Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

and others. Achilles's memory of Peleus causes him to experience pain and weep for his father. He and Priam then sit down together weeping in their sorrow, the one for his son the other for his father. Only after he has wept for his own father, and put away the pain in his heart, does Achilles turn to grant Priam's request, proceeding to lament the fate of men at the hands of the gods, particularly Zeus who doles out happiness to some and sorrow to others. The word Priam uses in begging for pity is 'ἐλέησον', imperative form of the verb 'ἐλέεω' and cognate to 'ἔλεος' which is commonly translated in English as 'pity'.⁵

But there is a curious feature to this scene from the *Illiad*, if we look at it closely. The scene of the two men weeping together is extraordinarily moving. And yet it isn't Priam's suffering as such that pains Achilles, moves him to tears, and the act that follows. On the contrary, Priam's tears along with Priam's words about Achilles's father are the occasion for Achilles to experience 'ἔλεος', which then prompts him to lament the suffering of mankind at the hands of the gods. In that respect it is a much more complicated scene than a straightforward scene of being pained at the sight of another's suffering and acting to alleviate that suffering because of the pain. It is the memory of his father's suffering that causes pain in Achilles', and reflection upon the near universal suffering of mankind at the hands of the gods that moves him to grant Priam's request.⁶ Achilles must first relate the suffering of Priam to someone close to him—his own father. He then universalizes that thought of suffering. So Achilles doesn't suffer with Priam as such. He certainly doesn't identify with Priam's suffering. They suffer together but not with one another.⁷

⁵ See *Homer: The Illiad With and English Translation*, A. T. Murray, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. XXIV: 477-676.

⁶ I'm grateful to David O'Connor for his help in seeing the importance of this universal lament in Achilles.

⁷ Marjolein Oele also argues that the scene does not show Priam and Achilles suffering "with" one another. She describes it as a matter of two men suffering in private their own individual pain, even as they do so together. She then argues that this occasions a move toward friendship between the two that moves beyond and transcends pity. In effect, she argues that they leave behind their sufferings and become friends. See

So the memory of his own suffering father mediates the act directed at Priam. It will be important to remember this mediated aspect of the scene when we consider Aristotle's reflections upon *ἔλεος* in the *Poetics*, the *Rhetoric*, and the *Nichomachean Ethics*.⁸

The Greek and Roman Background: Plato

To provide further context for Aristotle's reflection on *ἔλεος*, it is important to consider Plato's discussion of it briefly. By and large Plato uses the term in his dialogues as a descriptive term in reference to some character taking pity upon another, or the gods taking pity upon human beings.⁹ And he has Socrates say in *The Apology* that he will not beg for mercy as is expected in the law court of Athens when a negative judgment is made against the accused.¹⁰ But as a topic or theme for discussion, it is near the end

"Suffering, Pity, and Friendship: An Aristotelian Reading of Book 24 of Homer's *Iliad*, in *Electronic Antiquity*, Vol. 14(1), 2010, 51-65.

⁸ Martha Nussbaum has examined at great length and sympathy a number of other cases from Greek tragedy in addition to Priam and Achilles too numerous to examine here. She does so in order to argue for a "Pity Tradition" in Western thought, and the need for greater attention to literature in education. These include "Pity and Mercy: Nietzsche's Stoicism," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, Ed. Richard Schacht, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. "Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 10, 1992, 107-159. "Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion", *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 13, 1996, 27-58. "Compassion: Human and Animal", *Ethics and Humanity: Themes from the Philosophy of Jonathan Glover*, Eds. N. Ann Davis, Richard Keshen, and Jeff McMahan, Oxford: OUP, 2010, 202-226.

⁹ See the Perseus online searchable catalogue at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/search> for contexts of such uses.

¹⁰ As noted by Kenneth J. Dover it was a regular feature of Greek trials for the accused to plead for compassion in various ways, in particular for him to parade his children before the court. Thus invoking it well or avoiding it becomes an important topic for forensics. See *Greek*

of the *Republic* that he considers the role of tragic poetry and its portrayal of suffering in relation to *ἔλεος*; this discussion is crucial for understanding Aristotle's own latter discussion. It takes up again the role of the poets in *The Republic* that Plato had discussed earlier in Books II and III. In the later discussion Plato has Socrates describe the "power to corrupt, with rare exceptions, even the better sort" of men as "surely the chief cause of alarm" arising out of the experience of tragic poetry. The tragic hero is portrayed in grief as engaged in a "long tirade in his lamentations or chanting and beating his breast," and we experience a pleasure at the sight of it, by which we "abandon ourselves and accompany the representation with sympathy...." But then Plato's Socrates points out that when the very same affliction as is portrayed in tragedy actually befalls us in our lives, "we plume ourselves upon the opposite, on our ability to remain calm and endure, in the belief that this is the conduct of a man, and what we were praising in the theatre that of a woman."

Plato's Socrates thinks there are two dangers to this phenomenon of the experience of tragic poetry for those who concern themselves with it. First it betrays a kind of inconsistency of judgment to praise in a dramatic character what we would "abominate" and be "ashamed of in ourselves." Second, it can give free reign to that part of the soul that is prone to tears and lamentations, the part of the soul that needs to be guarded against and "forcibly restrained" by the "best element in our nature," the reasoning part of the soul. Enjoying tragic poetry, we thus run the risk of weakening the role of reason when evils befall us in our own lives, and "after feeding fat the emotion of pity there [in tragic poetry], it is not easy to restrain it in our own sufferings."¹¹

Finally, because of the subsequent role that the feminine will play in characterizing *ἔλεος* in Aristotle and *Misericordia* in the Stoics, I want to mention the way in which he points to what appears to be a paradox in our appreciation of tragic poetry. Acts

Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974, 195-201.

¹¹ See Plato, *The Republic*, Vols. 5&6, transl. by Paul Shorey, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969, 605c-606e.

of pity expressed in lamentation will be described in the real lives of men as “abominable,” “shameful,” and to be avoided as womanly; and yet those same acts will be praised and enjoyed when portrayed in the lives of tragic heroes. This inconsistency weakens the strength of the soul appropriate to reasonable and good men. In effect, in the Republic it looks as though the danger of enjoying tragic poetry is that men will begin in their own lives to act shamefully like women.

The Greek and Roman Background: Aristotle.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* *ἔλεος* is touched upon in only the most cursory way. It is mentioned three times. Two of those are in passing and incidental when Aristotle points out that those who suffer passions and act involuntarily are not to be praised or blamed but, rather, pardoned and “sometimes pitied.”¹² In the third instance it is mentioned substantively among the passions with which virtue concerns itself, passions like “appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain.”¹³ So we have in Aristotle the clear recognition of the fact of the passion in human life, and even implicitly in this passage that it should be the subject of some virtue.

However, when Aristotle gives his catalogue of the moral excellences in Bk. II.7, while he lists thirteen excellences, including Justice, Courage, Temperance, Friendliness, and so on, he makes no mention of a virtue appropriate to *ἔλεος*, a mean between extremes in rationally dealing with the passion. The closest he comes to mentioning suffering or pain in the entire chapter is when he raises Righteous Indignation or *Νέμεσις*; that virtue is “concerned with the pain and pleasure that are felt at the fortunes of our neighbors.” The generality of that description might suggest that it will concern itself with the suffering of our neighbors in bad fortune. But then Aristotle immediately adds that

¹² NE III.1 1109b32 and 1111a1.

¹³ NE II.5 1105b21-22.

he means to restrict *Nέμεσις* to the good fortune of our neighbors, not their bad fortune or a reversal of fortune from good to bad; “the man who is characterized by righteous indignation is pained at underserved good fortune.”¹⁴ In addition, the Greek word for pain there is not ‘*Έλεος*’ but ‘*λνπέω*’. As we will see in the discussion of *Έλεος* in the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, the passion of being pained at undeserved good fortune signified by ‘*λνπέω*’ would appear to be the exact opposite of *Έλεος*. So Aristotle’s ignoring of the latter in his catalogue of virtues concerning the passions is all the more striking. What is missing from the *Nichomachean Ethics* is any discussion of what virtue or moral excellence might be displayed in a well ordered and prudential response to *Έλεος*. We cannot conclude from that fact that Aristotle does not think there is a virtue associated with it, although his ignoring of it in a context in which he discusses the virtue associated with pain at undeserved good fortune is suggestive.

When we turn to the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* there is a more substantive discussion of *Έλεος*. It occurs in the *Rhetoric* in six passages and the *Poetics* in five. The most important substantive passage is in the *Rhetoric* when Aristotle defines the passion. “Pity may be defined as a feeling of pain at an apparent evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend or ours, and moreover to befall us soon.”¹⁵ Notice the

¹⁴ NE II.7 1108b1-5.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, transl. W. Rhys Roberts, II.8 1385b13-16, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*, Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. The translation here is a little awkward, since “apparent evil” is ambiguous as between “apparent but not real evil” and “evil that appears.” The setting of the *Rhetoric* doesn’t help to disambiguate, since the *Rhetoric* is about the principles of persuasion directed to an audience. Presumably in such contexts one will in words attempt to have an evil appear to the imagination of the audience; one will not place an actual occurrent evil in front of it. But presumably the imagination of evil in such a setting will be parasitical upon the speaker’s and audience’s knowledge of the

difference from *λυπέω*, which we saw in the *Ethics* is pain at undeserved good fortune in others. In both the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* *ἔλεος* is closely associated with the passion of fear or *φόβος*. So Aristotle will regularly refer to both in the two works as involving situations that arouse “pity and fear.” If we look at the definition of *ἔλεος*, the last half explains the association with fear, for it describes the situations in which *ἔλεος* is aroused as those situations that we might “expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours.” The pain related thus to ourselves, it seems that *φόβος* will arise and not just *ἔλεος*. Aristotle is talking about situations in which we do not simply experience a physical or emotional pain at the sight of someone else’s pain, akin to the way we may have a shiver down the spine or our stomach may turn upon the vision of some gruesome bodily injury, or experience anguish at the sudden death of a friend’s child. The setting must be one in which we also fear that we will undergo the same actual pain as is being suffered by another. So to pity another is also to fear for ourselves.

Aristotle also explains that such pity and fear requires that the object of pity be significantly like us and that the situation involve an undeserved reversal of fortune.¹⁶ It is interesting to note that Pausanias’s description of the Altar of *ἔλεος* mentions the idea of a change of fortune, and seems to suggest that it is a change from good fortune to bad that is relevant when he says that it is only the prosperous who are unacquainted with the altar. On the other hand, Statius makes no mention of the reversal of fortune.¹⁷ Now, if the one suffering were not like us we would not fear the prospect of his suffering happening to us. If the loss has already taken place in us, then we will not fear it. Thus we see the importance of the idea of a reversal of fortune for the passion. This fear of a future loss on our part because of the similarity to us

manifestation or appearance of real evils in life as well as the conditions for the possibility of their manifestation.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. I Bywater, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*, Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 13 1453a1-5.

¹⁷ See note 4 above.

appears to be a necessary condition for the occurrence of pity. Aristotle writes that pity is not felt “by those who imagine themselves immensely fortunate—their feeling is rather insolence, for when they think they possess all the good things of life, it is clear that the impossibility of evil befalling them will be included....”¹⁸ Presumably this feature of *ἔλεος* is not something that a god could undergo in relation to human beings, since gods are so far from being like us and so powerful that they cannot fear the reversals of fortune we suffer as vulnerable and subject to Fortune.¹⁹ And the suffering or pain we observe and fear must be undeserved, for if it is a loss that is deserved presumably we should rejoice in justice having been done to the one who suffers, and not fear for ourselves except insofar as we too deserve such suffering. Indeed Aristotle is clear that there is no pity for the wicked who suffer a reversal of fortune.²⁰

We do not, however, have an actual account in the two works of a moral virtue that pertains to the passion, however much one might surmise what such an account might look like. The object of the *Rhetoric* is to analyze the skill of persuasion; it is not to give a further catalogue or analysis of virtues in addition to the *Ethics*. A good rhetorician will arouse passions of pity and fear in his audience, whether the audience is a judge or a group of citizens. The object of his skill is not an action or a practical judgment, but a favorable judgment. So the object is not an analysis of the moral development of virtue. The object of the *Poetics* is to analyze the structure of good tragedies and discuss the “pleasure” of tragedy. Primarily, a good tragedy elicits within its plot the passions of pity and fear resulting in a catharsis for the characters within the plot. In that respect, Aristotle is considering

¹⁸ *Rhetoric* II.8 1386b21-24.

¹⁹ For a discussion of divinity in respect to Pity, see Nussbaum, “Tragedy and Self Sufficiency,” 120, and “Pity and Mercy,” 142-143. David Konstan agrees with this implication of Aristotle’s account, but also argues that it is not generally the case in other Greek sources that the gods do not pity human beings. See *Pity Transformed*, London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 2001.

²⁰ *Poetics* 13 1453a1-5.

tragic drama on its own terms, rather than moralizing its effect upon the audience that Plato had criticized in the *Republic*. But drama may also produce such passions and catharsis within the audience. In that respect, Aristotle's account is secondarily open to being an argument on behalf of the good of tragic drama for the audience, precisely upon the moralizing point Plato's Socrates had criticized. But in neither case, whether in the *Rhetoric* or the *Poetics*, is the object of persuasion or tragedy to produce moral virtue as we see it discussed in the *Ethics*. So again Aristotle remains silent as to what virtue might be associated with *Ἔλεος*.²¹

²¹ However, if one moralizes both works, that is, makes them serve the purpose of moral formation in the audience, on Aristotelian grounds the virtue that ought to be associated with Pity is Courage, since as described within the two works Pity appears to have as its point the eliciting of Fear within the one who experiences it; but we know that Aristotle does give us an account in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of the virtue that pertains to Fear—Courage. Nussbaum briefly notes this relation to Courage in “Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency,” 136. However, her overall project of providing a modified Rawlsian theory of Justice employing Aristotle's reflections on Pity, make that reference look incidental to the analysis. I am not suggesting such a moralizing reading of the two works. I consider it simply because of those readings that do moralize them, particularly the *Poetics*. Nor do I use ‘moralizing’ in any pejorative sense here. Nussbaum is aware of the moralizing reading she is giving. See “Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency,” 114. For a similar though less direct moralizing reading of Pity portrayed in Greek tragic drama in relation to Plato and Aristotle, see Stephen Halliwell, “Tragedy, Reason and Pity: A Reply to Jonathan Lear”, *Aristotle and Moral Realism*, London: University College London Press, 1995. And “Plato and Aristotle on the Denial of Tragedy”, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, Vol. 30. 1984. Also Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986. Esp. chpt. VI, “Tragedy and the Emotions,” and VII, “Fallibility & Misfortune: The Secularisation of the Tragic.” For anti-moralizing readings of Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Alexander Nehamas, “Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*,” in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, Ed. Amelie Rorty, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. See also David K. O'Connor, “Aristotle's Aesthetics”, *The Routledge Companion to Ancient Philosophy*, ed. James Warren and Frisbee Sheffield, New York, 2014.

Before leaving Aristotle, it is important to look at what he says about friendship and grieving with a friend in book IX.4 of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, because Aquinas will combine this passage in the *Ethics* with what is said about *ἔλεος* in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* to develop his account of *Misericordia* in the *Summa*. We saw that in the experience of *ἔλεος* that it has a very limited context, namely, among those whom we can imaginatively see as sufficiently like ourselves in being well off. As Aristotle sees it, it is not a passion that is particularly general in its occurrence among fellow human beings, as it is confined to well off people like oneself. On the other hand, in speaking of the phenomenon of grieving or suffering with another, he does think there may be a kind of generality to this suffering. He writes that “some” hold that it is a characteristic of friends that they will grieve with one another, while others hold that it involves wishing and doing what is good for another for the sake of the other, and still others hold that a friend is one among whom one lives with the same tastes, and so on. Aristotle concludes the passage by saying that it is by “some one of these characteristics that friendship...is defined.”²² So friendship may perhaps be defined as involving suffering with one who is counted as a friend; but it may be defined in some other way.

What is interesting about this text is that when speaking of grieving with a friend, Aristotle does not use the passion term *ἔλεος* that we have seen in the *Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics*. On the contrary, he uses the noun *συναλγοῦντα* for those who suffer with others; the noun however is related to the verb *συναλγεῖν* which signifies the act of suffering with another. Virtues bear upon both passions and actions. *ἔλεος* is the passion of feeling a pain upon the apprehension of the pain of another. *συναλγεῖν* on the other hand is the act of suffering with someone, namely, a friend. And while *ἔλεος* occurs substantively in only one passage in the *Nichomachean Ethics* and never in the *Eudemian Ethics*, *συναλγεῖν* appears in four passages concerning friendship in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, and three passages in the *Eudemian*

²² BK IX.4 1166a1-9.

Ethics.²³ It also appears once in the *Rhetoric* when Aristotle writes, “those who love us share in all our distresses...”²⁴ as well as “it follows that your friend is the sort of man who shares your pleasure in what is good and your pain in what is unpleasant, for your sake and for no other reason.”²⁵ In these contexts in which *Συναλγεῖν* is mentioned, there is no mention of fear for oneself, nor of reversals of fortune. So it is open to question whether *ἔλεος* plays any part in such suffering or grieving with.

There is a distinction to be observed here. It doesn't seem that *ἔλεος* is particularly related to *Συναλγεῖν*. *ἔλεος* is prompted in one when one observes pain in someone sufficiently like one, but it need not be in a friend. And we've seen that it requires fear that one may undergo a similar loss in oneself that prompts the pain. Consider again the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*. It is not necessary for the purposes of persuasion or tragedy that the one in whom I imaginatively perceive some pain or suffering be a friend. Indeed, the figures presented to me in tragedy certainly won't likely be friends or even possible friends. What's necessary for the experience of *ἔλεος* is a sufficient likeness, not a friendship. *ἔλεος* appears to be mostly unrelated to the discussions of friendship in Aristotle, except that Aristotle says the fear of a reversal of fortune that we experience may be a fear on behalf of our friends. In that respect it seems that the scope of *ἔλεος* is broader than *Συναλγεῖν*. And *Συναλγεῖν* is not associated with *Φόβος* as *ἔλεος* is.

The case of Achilles complicates this point even further. Recall that Achilles does end up granting Priam's request. He grants Priam's request, but only after he “had had his fill of lamenting” for Peleus and Patroclus. But does he engage in an act of *Συναλγεῖν* directed at Priam, an act of suffering or grieving with Priam over the loss of Hector when he grants Priam's request? No. What moves Achilles to act is not Priam's suffering, but the memory of his father and Patroclus. Achilles acts in virtue of that

²³ Hermannus Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955.

²⁴ BK II.2 1379b22.

²⁵ BK II.4 1381a37.

memory, not because he is *suffering with* Priam as a friend; he can't suffer with him as a friend, since Achilles is an enemy who has slaughtered and desecrated the body of Priam's son. Thus there is no place here for *Συναλγεῖν*.²⁶

What this distinction between *ἔλεος* and *Συναλγεῖν* allows us to recognize is that one can suffer pain in the presence of another's pain, real or imagined, and yet not *suffer with* that other—not act according to *Συναλγεῖν*. The pain of another may simply be the occasion for my suffering a pain, without it at the same time uniting me with the suffering of the other by *Συναλγεῖν*. In addition, one can grieve with another (*Συναλγεῖν*) without it being the occasion of a fear (*Φόβος*) for oneself. To use the standard English translation of *ἔλεος*, pity is not enough for an act of compassion.

And yet Aristotle gives us no more account of a virtue that would pertain to the act of *Συναλγεῖν* than he does of the passion of *ἔλεος*. *Συναλγεῖν* is even more restrictive in scope than *ἔλεος* which could at least extend to those imagined to be like one even if they were not friends. In fact his comments about the act are somewhat ambiguous and even troubling given the Athenian context in which they were written. While he mentions that some have said that *Συναλγεῖν* characterizes friendship, he then says this characteristic is found in mothers most of all in the way they suffer with their children.²⁷ And the difficulty of grieving with lots of

²⁶ Indeed, Marjolein Oele argues that from an Aristotelian perspective the point is for Priam and Achilles to move beyond their individually realized lamentations and pity toward a friendship that transcends suffering. In that reading the order begins with pity for oneself, but leaves that self-regarding pity behind as common friendship is established. See Oele, "Suffering, Pity, and Friendship: An Aristotelian Reading of Book 24 of Homer's *Iliad*."

²⁷ Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, transl. J. Solomon, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: Revised Oxford Translation*, Ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, VII 1240a33-38. Here again in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle associates *Συναλγεῖν* with mothers in their relation to their children, but then adds it is also characteristic of birds. "To sorrow with the sorrowing, for no other reason than their

people is one of the reasons he gives for avoiding having too many friends.²⁸ So even if *Συναλγεῖν* characterizes friendship, it poses a distinct problem for friendship. So it doesn't look like it would be related to or proceed from a virtue if it poses such a problem for friends.

On the other hand, Aristotle writes that our "grief is lightened when friends sorrow with us."²⁹ But almost immediately he adds that it is "people of a manly nature [who] guard against making their friends grieve with them, and unless he be exceptionally insensible to pain, such a man cannot stand the pain that ensues for his friends, and in general does not admit fellow-mourners because he is not himself given to mourning." Here he is not speaking of the one who *suffers with*, but those who are the occasion for a friend to suffer with. A manly man will avoid being the occasion of others suffering with him. It is difficult not to think again of Plato's Socrates making the point in the Republic that in our own lives we will "plume" ourselves on our ability to avoid the sort of womanly lamentations that we enjoy in the characters of a tragic drama. In order to avoid being an occasion of grief for his friends, a friend will not himself be particularly given to mourning.³⁰ But that raises the paradoxical problem that if the manly man is not particularly given to mourning and avoids it, how will he be prepared to mourn with his friends, however manly they are, when they do mourn? Aristotle goes on immediately to write that it is "women and womanly men [who]

sorrow, we shall regard as love...as mothers feel towards their children, and birds that share one another's pain."

²⁸ Bk IX.10 1171a6-10. Nussbaum is silent on this discussion in Aristotle when considering *Ἐλεος* and the Pity Tradition she identifies. Perhaps she is silent because *Συναλγεῖν* is for Aristotle inherently limited by the scope of one's friendships and is a motive for restricting that scope. It would not thus provide the universalizing motives of *Ἐλεος* and *Φόβος*, as she understands them.

²⁹ BK IX.11 1171a29-33.

³⁰ Recall the character that Plato's Socrates displays in the face of his impending death, and the way he chastises his friends for weeping like women, weeping like Xanthippe his wife whom he had sent away early in the dialogue.

enjoy sympathizers in their grief, and love them as friends and companions in sorrow. But in all things one obviously ought to imitate the better type of person.”³¹ So it seems that grieving or suffering with, *Συναλγεῖν*, however much it is a characteristic of friendship, is associated with women and being womanly; given the ancient Athenian context of women and mothers in view, it is associated with weakness. Virtue being a kind of strength, it is at least plausible to suggest that Aristotle gives us no virtue of suffering with, despite acknowledging *Συναλγεῖν* as a characteristic of friendship, because of this association with weakness.

To conclude the discussion of Aristotle, we have seen that *Ἐλεος* is mentioned in the *Ethics* but not discussed. Instead it is discussed in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. Insofar as we can conclude anything from those works, it has a number of features. First, it is a pain felt upon the apprehension of the pain of another. Second, it involves a significant reversal of good fortune. Third, it prompts fear in the one apprehending the pain that a similar reversal of fortune may befall one. So the sufferer must have recently been fairly well off, but also the one who pities him and fears for himself must be fairly well off with regard to good fortune. Fourth, it requires that there be a sufficient likeness between the one who suffers the reversal of fortune and the one who apprehends it—there is no fear and thus no pity, when the one suffering is sufficiently unlike the one who apprehends the suffering. Fifth, it appears foreign to divinity in relation to humanity because the gods cannot fear the reversal of fortune characteristic of serious human suffering. Sixth, as a passion it is to be distinguished from the act of suffering or grieving with someone. The latter act pertains to one’s friends, and is a reason for restricting the scope of one’s friendship to a small group. And finally, the act of *Συναλγεῖν* appears to be troublesome for virtue, insofar as it seems to be associated in Aristotle’s mind with a certain amount of womanly weakness.

³¹ BK IX.11.

The Romans: Cicero and Seneca

It is important to consider the importance of the Roman Stoics Cicero and Seneca to Aquinas's discussion of *Misericordia* in order to clearly distinguish *Misericordia* from another virtue Aquinas recognizes and discusses, namely, *Clementia*, as well as to amplify the ancient attitude toward *Misericordia*. According to Aquinas, *Clementia* is the virtue of a judge or ruler forgiving or mitigating a just punishment that has been imposed upon a wrongdoer.³² It is particularly important to distinguish the two virtues in Aquinas, because the terms '*Misericordia*' and '*clementia*' are often translated into English by the same term, namely, 'mercy'.³³ The common translation risks confusion and equivocation in the discussion of *Misericordia*—*Misericordia* isn't Clemency or Forgiveness.

When Aquinas raises the question whether *Misericordia* is a virtue, in the *sed contra* he cites a passage from Augustine's *City of God*, book IX.5. That passage in Augustine is itself a quotation from Cicero praising Julius Caesar. Cicero said of Caesar, "none of your virtues are more admirable or gracious than your *Misericordia*."³⁴ The passage in Augustine comes from Cicero's oration "Plea for Ligarius." There Cicero pleads before the Roman Senate and Caesar who is sitting in judgment as dictator that Caesar allow Quintus Ligarius to return from exile. Ligarius was a rebel officer in the recent civil war in Africa.³⁵ Given Cicero's use of '*Misericordia*' we might think that he is praising Caesar for the virtue that Aquinas will analyze in his own

³² See *STh* II-II, q. 157.

³³ See endnote * below.

³⁴ "...nulla de virtutibus tuis nec admirabilior nec gravior Misericordia est." *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3 *sed contra*. The passage as it appears in Aquinas' citation of Augustine is slightly different from its appearance in Cicero's oration "On Behalf of Ligarius," before Caesar and the Roman Senate. "Nihil est tam populare quam bonitas, nulla de virtutibus tuis plurimis nec admirabilior nec gravior Misericordia est." Cicero, *The Speeches with an English Translation*, transl. N. H. Watts, London: William Henemann LTD, 1931, "On Behalf of Ligarius," 35-37.

³⁵ See translator's introduction to "On Behalf of Ligarius," 454-457.

response, and certainly Aquinas is taking him that way through Augustine. However, it is clear from the context in Cicero that his use of ‘*Misericordia*’ is not understood in reference to the passion of *ἔλεος* we have seen among the Greeks. Caesar is not suffering pain upon the apprehension of Ligarius’ exile; it was Caesar who exiled him, and is now being asked to pardon or forgive the exile; he certainly is not considering it because of a fear that he too may one day be exiled. On the contrary, it is Ligarius’ brother Titus who has asked Caesar as judge to pardon the exile. Neither is Caesar engaged in an act of *Συναλγεῖν*—an act of grieving with either Quintus or Titus as friends. On the contrary, as judge he is sitting in judgment on a case as to whether a presumably just punishment he has imposed ought to be mitigated. Recall that *ἔλεος* excludes contexts in which someone is suffering justly. The sort of judgment concerning Justice and the virtue that may mitigate just punishment is what later comes to be clearly distinguished as involving *Clementia*.³⁶

In order to understand what Cicero actually thought of the *passion* of *Misericordia* associated with the Greek *ἔλεος*, as opposed to the action and virtue he here praises in Caesar, we have to turn to his defense of Stoicism in the *Tusculan Disputations*. There his criticism of the passion the Greeks called *ἔλεος* is unsparing. First he tells us that the *passion* of *Misericordia* is a perturbation of the mind falling under the general heading of grief, along with such other perturbations as jealousy, distress, mourning, sorrow, and so on. It is defined as grief for another who is laboring under an undeserved suffering. Recall that the apprehension of “undeserved suffering” was one of the defining marks of *ἔλεος* in Aristotle. To suffer from this passion along with the others either occasionally or habitually involves a kind of mental illness. Cicero will later describe these and other passions as involved in evil, and full of error. To the

³⁶ David Konstan provides a useful summary of the scholarship on the confusion of Latin terminology involving ‘*Misericordia*’ and ‘*Clementia*’ at this time in Roman history, as well as the later separation of the terms. See “Clemency as a Virtue,” *Classical Philology*, Vol.100, No. 4 (October 2005), 337-346.

objection that some of these mental illnesses may be useful in bringing about good actions like helping others, Cicero argues that they are never necessary for such aid.

With regard to the passion of *Misericordia* specifically, he writes two things of interest to us. First, “why feel *Misericordia* [*miserere*], if you are able to produce some help instead? For aren't we able to be liberal without *Misericordia*? For we ourselves ought not to suffer grief for others, but we ought, if we are able, instead lift the grief of others.”³⁷ Here Cicero is suggesting that a “wise man” will express a liberal spirit and virtue in assisting others without having to suffer the mental disease of being pained at the sight of others' pain. While we “ought” to relieve suffering, we “ought not” to suffer with those who suffer. The virtue of assisting others in their distress is to be praised insofar as it does not involve the passion of suffering pain at their pain.

Speaking broadly again of the mental perturbations that include *Misericordia*, Cicero goes on to add that the cure for these mental perturbations is to teach that they are *per se* vicious (*per se esse vitiosas*) and “we see that grief itself is lightened, when we upbraid those who grieve with the imbecility of a feminine soul, and when we praise the gravity and constancy of those who endure without turbulence human events.”³⁸ Here what was simply a suggestion of womanliness and weakness in Aristotle discussing *Συναλγεῖν* comes out into the open as a Stoic charge of stupidity and effeminacy directed against the passion of *Misericordia*, regardless of whatever Cicero had to say about Caesar's clemency as a judge. In that respect, if Aquinas's defense

³⁷ “Cur miserere potius quam feras opem, si id facere possis? An sine Misericordia liberales esse non possumus? Non enim suscipere ipsi aegritudines propter alios debemus, sed alios, si possumus, levare aegritudine,” Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations with an English Translation* by J. E. King, London: William Henemann, 1927, IV.26 57-61.

³⁸ “...ut ipsam aegritudinem leniri videmus, cum obicimus maerentibus imbecillitatem animi effeminati, cumque eorum gravitatem constantiamque laudamus, qui non turbulente humana patiantur,” *Tusculan Disputations*, BK IV.28.

of the thesis that *Misericordia* is a virtue presupposes the passion of *ἔλεος*, then it turns out his use in the *sed contra* of the authority of Cicero mediated by Augustine is badly off target.

This distinction between *Clementia* and *Misericordia* brings us to the later Stoic Seneca. Seneca had written a letter to Nero, *De Clementia*,³⁹ praising the *Clementia* of a ruler. *Clementia* is a Stoic virtue that perfects the ruler as such, and shows the greatness of his soul insofar as he stands in judgment of those below him. It regulates his desire to punish, and in that respect is not like Justice directed at a good other than himself. This is the Clemency that Cicero had earlier praised in Julius Caesar under the name '*Misericordia*'. But now, a hundred years later Seneca wants to clearly distinguish this virtue of *Clementia* from any association at all with *Misericordia*. *Clementia* is a virtue that pertains to the greatness of soul of a judge. It is not concerned with the suffering of those who are being punished. To be concerned with that suffering, to acknowledge it, and to be pained by it is on the part of a judge a vice.

In order to praise *Clementia* all the more, Seneca is even more abusive of *Misericordia* than Cicero had been. He writes, "At this point it is pertinent to ask what *Misericordia* is; for many people praise it as a virtue and call a man good who has *Misericordia*. But this is a vice of the soul." In calling it a "vice" he uses the same Latin word that Cicero had earlier used—'*vitium*'. It is "[m]ost familiarly found in the poorest of persons; there are old and wretched women who are moved by the tears of the most wretched criminals." "For it is a vice of a tiny soul that succumbs to the sufferings of others."⁴⁰ The key for Seneca is that the virtue

³⁹ *De Clementia* in Seneca, *Moral Essays with an English Translation* by John W. Basore, London: William Henemann LTD, 1985.

⁴⁰ "Ad rem pertinet quaerere hoc loco, quid sit Misericordia; plerique enim ut virtutem eam laudant et bonum hominem vocant misericordem. Et haec vitium animi est." "Itaque pessimo cuique familiarissima est; anus et mulierculae sunt, quae lacrimis nocentissimorum moventur..." and "Est enim vitium pusilli animi, ad speciem alienorum malorum succidentis," *De Clementia*, II.iv.4-v.1 Consider also what Seneca wrote to his friend Marrulus, when his friends little boy had died. "You expect solace? Receive abuse. You bear the

of *Clementia* not be confused with the vice of *Misericordia*. *Clementia* pertains to the activity of a judge and does not concern itself as such with the suffering of prisoners. It shows a concern for the greatness of the judge's soul, not the suffering of those who fall under his judgment. To be pained at their suffering, and act to mitigate it introduces vice into the life of a judge. *Misericordia* is a vice opposed to *Clementia*. So Seneca is even more unsparing in his identification of *Misericordia* with womanly weakness and corruption than even Cicero had been in his *Tusculan Disputations*.

Aquinas treats of *Clementia* in *IIaIIae*.157, 127 questions after his treatment of *Misericordia* in *IIaIIae*.30. His primary classical source is Seneca's *De Clementia*, although he also mentions Cicero and Aristotle. However, *Clementia* is not treated under the theological virtue of *Caritas* or even under the cardinal natural virtue of Justice. Instead, it is treated along with Meakness under the cardinal natural virtue of Fortitude. Virtues bear upon "passions and actions." Meakness and Clemency bear upon the passion of anger and the actions that proceed from it. But Meakness mitigates the passion of anger itself, restraining it from being immoderate, while Clemency mitigates the act of external punishment that proceeds from anger, restraining the act from being immoderate. However, *Clementia* can only be exercised in the context of a just punishment that has been imposed. It is not an expression of virtue to stop unjustly punishing; at best it is a move back toward Justice. In that respect, *Clementia* is bound to and concerns questions of Justice, while at the same time it is not addressed to questions of Justice as its object.

It is very important that Aquinas places *Clementia* under the heading of Temperance rather than Justice. Justice does not bear

death of your son effeminately..." ("Solacia expectas? Convicia accipe. Molliter tu fers mortem filii..."), *Seneca Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, with and English Translation by Richard M. Gummere, London: William Heinemann, 1925, Epistle XCIX 2. *Molliter* could be translated as 'softly' or 'meakly', a point made to me by Alasdair MacIntyre. However because of Seneca's own remarks as well as Cicero's parallel comment, I think 'effeminately' is justified here.

upon an internal passion of the individual as such. It bears upon the good of others and the common good. Now for Aquinas, even though the exercise of *Clementia* has as an effect the lessening of the just punishment of a wrongdoer, in that sense bearing upon him, may even be motivated by love of the wrongdoer, and, as we've seen, is bound to questions of Justice, its object is not the good of the wrongdoer and Justice. On the contrary, its object is the individual good of the one who punishes, for it mitigates concupiscence in inflicting just punishment proceeding from anger. *Clementia* looks to and perfects the good of the individual with respect to a form of concupiscence, which is why it is placed under Temperance. And in that respect Aquinas agrees with Seneca for whom *Clementia* is concerned with the individual good of the judge and the greatness of the soul of the judge, not the good of the punished, and is only indirectly concerned with Justice insofar as it is bound to or circumscribed by it.

Aquinas and *Misericordia*

Turning now to *Misericordia* proper, Aquinas treats of it in question 30 of the second part of the second part of the *Summa* as one of the three interior effects of *Caritas*. The other two effects are Joy and Peace. He argues that neither Joy nor Peace is a virtue but, rather, effects of *Caritas* as acts that proceed directly from that theological virtue. So in question 30, article 3 he considers the objection that because Joy and Peace are effects of *Caritas* without being virtues, so also *Misericordia* must be an effect without being a virtue. On the contrary, he argues in the body of the response that *Misericordia* is an effect of *Caritas* that is different from Joy and Peace because it is a virtue in its own right. It is important to consider that argument.

“*Misericordia* involves sadness at another’s misery.”⁴¹

This is an abbreviated expression of what Aquinas had written in article 1 of question 30 paraphrasing Augustine’s *City of God*, Bk.

⁴¹ “...*Misericordia* importat dolorem de miseria aliena,” *STh* II-II, q. 30 a. 2 c.

IX.5, an abbreviated expression that emphasizes the passion of sadness. The earlier definition in article 1 is “*Misericordia* is compassion in our heart at another’s misery, whereby we are compelled to aid him if we can.”⁴² Both the abbreviated description and the more expansive definition relate *Misericordia* to *ἔλεος*. But the earlier definition makes it clear that it does not simply bear upon the passion of sadness, but extends to an action directed at relieving suffering. Aquinas argues that this sadness is twofold. In the first place it may denote a movement of the sensitive appetite, in which case it is a passion and not a virtue. Here we might think of the way we experience a pain or physical reaction of revulsion at the sight of someone breaking his leg in an excruciating fashion or any other such injury. In the second place it may denote a movement of the rational appetite or will, “insofar as the evil suffered by another is displeasing to one.”⁴³ Here we might think of the way the death of the son of our beloved friend displeases us and causes us great anguish, or other such complex sufferings, anguish that will likely include a physiological response of some sort as well. But it may also involve a much more complicated response of the will to the broken leg that may otherwise merely cause a reaction of physical revulsion.

Aquinas argued much earlier in the *Summa* that the intellect provides the intelligible form of the movements of the will.⁴⁴ So his claim that *Misericordia* can be a movement of the will in addition to the sensitive appetite implies that *Misericordia* can be cognitively structured, though it need not be if it remains a mere passion of the sensitive appetite. So, insofar as Aquinas argues that *Misericordia* has this twofold aspect, it is not a simple

⁴² “*Misericordia est alienae miseriae in nostro corde compassio, qua utique, si possumus, subvenire compellimur, dicitur enim Misericordia ex eo quod aliquis habet miserum cor super miseria alterius.*”

⁴³ “...secundum quod alicui displicet malum alterius,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a.3 co.

⁴⁴ See *STh* I-II, q. 82 a 4 and I-II, q. 9 a 1. 82.4 argues that the intellect moves the will as an end because the intellect apprehends the object of the will. 9.1 adds that this apprehension of the object of the will provides the formal specification of the will’s act.

passion, but a cognitively rich structure of passion in relation to beliefs about evil and suffering that inform and lead to action.⁴⁵ It is because of this cognitively rich character of the movement of the will that it is subject to the ordering of reason, and through the movement of the will so ordered the movement or passion of the sensitive appetite is also ruled. So *Misericordia* does not bear simply upon passions or simply upon actions, but upon both. Now, “since the *ratio* of a human virtue consists in this that a motion of the soul may be regulated by reason,...,” it follows that *Misericordia* is a virtue.⁴⁶

To the specific objection that Joy and Peace are not virtues and so by a parity of reasoning neither should *Misericordia* be, Aquinas responds that neither of the former add anything to the *ratio* of the good which is the object of *Caritas*, which he had earlier argued in *STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 1 is the love of God and the love of neighbor in God. Joy is the act of *Caritas* in the presence of God and neighbor in God, while Peace is the act of *Caritas* that consists in the concord of appetites among human beings and within a human being himself in God. But, by contrast, “*Misericordia* concerns a particular *ratio*, namely, the misery of one who is suffering.”⁴⁷ It has a different object than *Caritas*, and so cannot be an act of *Caritas*. Thus, even though it is an effect of *Caritas*, it is not an act of *Caritas*; it is rather a virtue distinct from but caused by *Caritas*.

⁴⁵ Notice this meets Nussbaum’s emphasis upon Pity being a cognitively rich response to suffering. See “Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity,” 133. See also “Compassion: The Basic Social Emotion,” 32-33. See also Halliwell, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, 173-174. Again, for a discussion somewhat different from Nussbaum’s, see Alexander Nehamas “Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics*, Ed. Amelie Rorty, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

⁴⁶ “Et quia ratio virtutis humanae consistit in hoc quod motus animi ratione reguletur, ut ex superioribus patet, consequens est Misericordiam esse virtutem,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3 co.

⁴⁷ “Sed Misericordia respicit quandam specialem rationem, scilicet miseriam eius cuius miseretur,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a.3 ad 3.

In particular, Aquinas responds to the fourth objection of article 3 that it is a “moral virtue existing in relation to the passions....”⁴⁸ And here is where our examination of Aristotle on *ἔλεος* comes to a head. The objection was that it is not an intellectual virtue because it belongs to the appetitive power and it is not a theological virtue because it does not have God for its object. Aquinas does not contest these two points, in particular that it is not a theological virtue. But the objection had further claimed that it is not a moral virtue because first it is not Justice, which is concerned with operations. Again, Aquinas does not contest this point, although we will see that the relationship to Justice is more complicated than a failure to contest. Finally the objection continues that it is not a moral virtue because it is not concerned with the twelve means or virtues that Aristotle had posited in II.7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in addition to Justice.⁴⁹

In response Aquinas first relies upon his response to the second objection, which objection had claimed that *Misericordia* can't be a virtue because according to Aristotle in *Rhetoric* II.9 it is opposed to *Nemesis* which latter passion Aristotle praises. But a virtue cannot be opposed to that which is praiseworthy. There Aquinas had responded that Aristotle considers them in *Rhetoric* II.9 as passions simply and that as passions they are not opposed in themselves, but because of what they bear upon, distress at undeserved suffering (*Misericordia*) versus distress at undeserved good fortune (*Nemesis*). The extreme opposed in itself to *Misericordia* is Envy. Still, Aquinas points out that in *Rhetoric* II.9 Aristotle actually praises both passions as coming “from the same character.” However, we have seen that Aristotle's attitude toward *ἔλεος* is much more ambiguous than Aquinas's response to the second objection would suggest.

⁴⁸ “...*Misericordia*, secundum quod est virtus, est moralis virtus circa passiones existens, et reducitur ad illam medietatem quae dicitur *Nemesis*, quia ab eodem more procedunt, ut in II Rhet. dicitur,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3 ad 4.

⁴⁹ “...nec est circa passiones, non enim reducitur ad aliquam duodecim medietatum quas philosophus ponit, in II Ethic,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 3 obj. 4.

Aquinas uses the response to the second objection to respond to the fourth. It provides him with an interpretive tool to claim that in fact Aristotle treats *Misericordia* in *Ethics* II.7 under the heading of *Nemesis*. Because Aristotle had written in *Rhetoric* II.9 that *Misericordia* and *Nemesis* come from the same character, Aquinas writes “*Misericordia*, insofar as it is a virtue,..., is reduced [in *Ethics* II.7] to the mean that is called *Nemesis*.” He concludes that even as they are praised in *Rhetoric* II.9 as passions “nothing...prohibits them from resulting from an elective habit. And according to this they assume the *ratio* of a virtue.”

This interpretation of *Ethics* II.7 is certainly a stretch and a very charitable reading of Aristotle. It is only justified by the passage in *Rhetoric* II.9 that is clearly speaking of *Misericordia* and *Nemesis* as passions, and the praise they receive. But nothing in the text of *Ethics* II.7 itself suggests that Aristotle intends to include *Misericordia* as a virtue reducible to *Nemesis*. Aquinas’s thought seems to be that *Nemesis* generically involves suffering at the apprehension of what is undeserved. Then the virtue would be directed at two different forms of what is undeserved—suffering when others suffer undeservedly and suffering when others prosper undeservedly. But then it looks like an equivocation on *Nemesis* for it to name both the genus under which *Misericordia* falls as well as the species of “being pained” that is concerned with undeserved good fortune.

On the contrary, all Aristotle says in *Ethics* II.7 is that *Nέμεσις* bears upon undeserved good fortune—being pained at the undeserved good fortune of a neighbor. The extremes it stands between are envy that is pained at any good fortune of another and spite that feels no pain at all at undeserved good fortune, but rather rejoices in it. *Ἐλεος* does not show up in the text of *Ethics* II.7 as it does in *Rhetoric* II.9, and no mention at all is made of feeling pain at the undeserved bad fortune of a neighbor in *Ethics* II.7. In using *Rhetoric* II.9 to interpret *Ethics* II.7, Aquinas is ignoring the context of the *Rhetoric*. The point in the *Rhetoric* of praising the passions *Nέμεσις* and *Ἐλεος* is to achieve the end of persuasion, a favorable judgment by the judge or audience. Praising them in a rhetorical context does not inform us about their ethical weight. This forensic purpose is clear at the end of the

paragraph in *Rhetoric* II.9 when, having rehearsed the way various passions may be opposed to *ἔλεος*, Aristotle writes “we can now see that all these feelings tend to prevent pity...so that all are equally useful for neutralizing an appeal to pity.”⁵⁰ Despite Aquinas’s reading of him, Aristotle is suggesting that *Νέμεσις* is useful to oppose *ἔλεος* in debate, not that they are, as it were, two specific sides of the same generic virtue coin. Furthermore, Aquinas’s own account of *Misericordia* is inconsistent with that reduction, since in reply to the first objection of article 1, he makes it clear that *Misericordia* extends even to suffering that is deserved as punishment. *Misericordia* is not restricted to what is undeserved as *Nemesis* is. So it is ironic to say the least that while Aquinas claims that *Misericordia* as a virtue is reduced to a species of *Nemesis* in order to claim that Aristotle discusses it, Aquinas, in a kind of mirror image of Aristotle’s treatment of *ἔλεος*, nowhere gives an account of the virtue of *Nemesis* despite giving an account of *Misericordia* as a gift of *Caritas*.

However, even if Aquinas’s attempt to find a discussion of *Misericordia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is unconvincing there are at least two points to make about it. His argument that it is a virtue doesn’t actually depend upon the authority of Aristotle. It depends upon the claim that the passion is a passion of both the sensitive appetite and the rational appetite or will, and subject to reason in virtue of the latter. Second, Aquinas clearly wants to attribute it to Aristotle in the *Ethics*, even if he has to stretch to “reduce” it to *Nemesis* to do so. But that simply confirms the judgment that he thinks it is a natural moral virtue pertaining to the happiness proportionate to human nature, and in principle achievable by human beings in pursuit of that happiness.

Aquinas’s Departure from Aristotle

Now, if we look more closely at Aquinas’s account of *Misericordia* we can see how far it departs from Aristotle’s account of *ἔλεος*, even as he seeks to relate it to Aristotle.

⁵⁰ *Rhetoric* II.9 1387a3-5.

Consider the features of *ἔλεος* I summarized at the end of the discussion of Aristotle. 1) *ἔλεος* is a pain or suffering felt at the apprehension of a pain suffered by another. 2) *ἔλεος* involves a serious reversal of the good fortune of another. 3) *ἔλεος* is prompted when the suffering of another is apprehended as “undeserved.” 4) *ἔλεος* prompts fear in the one apprehending the pain, a fear that a similar future awaits one. 5) *ἔλεος* requires a sufficient likeness between the one suffering the pain and the one apprehending the pain. 6) *ἔλεος* appears to be foreign to divinity, because divinity cannot have sufficient likeness to a human being suffering. 7) *ἔλεος* has to be distinguished from *συναλγεῖν* as a passion is distinguished from an action. *συναλγεῖν* is the act of grieving with a friend. But it is also limited in scope, as it is limited to a small circle of friends; in that respect *ἔλεος* is broader in scope. 8) *συναλγεῖν* expresses a kind of weakness associated with women in Aristotle’s mind, an association the Roman Stoics amplify by associating *Misericordia* with a vice of the soul, and the weeping of wretched and old women. I will consider each of these points, but not strictly in the order they are listed here.

1) *ἔλεος* is a pain felt at the apprehension of a pain suffered by another. *Misericordia* similarly involves the feeling or passion of pain at the sight of another’s pain. But recall that in Aristotle it was not clear that the passion is anything more than the occasion of pain at the sight of the pain of another. It does not look like suffering *with* the other. First, if we consider the instance of Achilles, his suffering is not a suffering *with* Priam as such, but suffering upon the occasion of Priam’s suffering when Achilles recalls his own father. Second, the main discussion of *ἔλεος* takes place in imaginative contexts of either dramatic tragedy or forensic debate, which cannot by their very nature involve suffering with the actual suffering of another. Finally, the absence of any substantive discussion of it in the *Ethics* appears to remove it from the exercise of virtue in the concrete circumstances of daily Athenian life in which one might encounter the actual suffering of others, and where one might thus expect Aristotle to discuss it as a suffering *with* those others.

And yet Aquinas is quite clear in his definition that it involves suffering *with* the one who is suffering. He uses “in nostro corde compassio.” ‘*Compassio*’ is obviously a compound Latin word constructed from ‘*passio*’ meaning *passion* and the prefix ‘*com*’ meaning *with*. It is not simply an absolute passion within ourselves upon the occasion of another’s suffering, but a relational passion that unites us *with* the sufferer—it is a *passion-with* or less awkwardly *suffering with*. Our heart goes out to the one suffering and suffers *with* him or her. It is a passion that in its relational character unites us to the sufferer in a way that Achilles is not united to Priam by *Ἔλεος*. Thus Aquinas departs from Aristotle on the very nature of the passion as relational.

4) *Ἔλεος* prompts fear in the one apprehending the pain, a fear that a similar future awaits one. Recall that Aristotle seemed to think that *Φόβος* was necessary to *Ἔλεος* because those who do not fear for themselves a similar fate will not pity those who are suffering.

Aquinas does not deny that *Misericordia* may involve fear for oneself that a similar fate may await one. But such fear is a secondary consideration and not necessary to *Misericordia* in the way *Φόβος* is necessary to *Ἔλεος*. In response to article 2 of question 30 whether the reason for *Misericordia* is a defect or evil in the one suffering, Aquinas argues on the basis of the relational character of compassion that the suffering of *Misericordia* only occurs insofar as one apprehends the suffering of the other as one’s own. But this apprehending of the suffering of another as one’s own expresses a kind of union between persons that can take two forms. The second form is the form that involves fear that a similar fate may befall one because of a likeness to the sufferer and thus a “real union” that exists between the one suffering and the one apprehending it. In describing this second form that *Misericordia* may exhibit, Aquinas cites *Rhetoric* II.8 and the proximity or likeness condition. “Human beings suffer concerning those to whom they are conjoined and alike, because through this they judge that a similar suffering may happen to

them.”⁵¹ Here, presumably, the likeness is a simple fact. Someone is suffering. I am like him or her in the respect in which he or she is subject to suffering. Acknowledging that likeness, I fear a similar fate may befall me. This union of likeness prompts *Misericordia*.

But the first form of union that prompts *Misericordia* is quite different from this second form, as it ignores fear and is based upon a different sort of union. It is not based upon likeness, but upon “the union of affections which is made through love.” “For, since the lover reckons the friend as another self, he reckons [the friend’s] pain as his own pain, and so he aches for his friend’s pain as if it were his own.”⁵² I want to emphasize here the difference between likeness and identity. Instead of a likeness, here we have a kind of identity of lover and beloved. And here there is no fear about the future for oneself. Why? Well presumably because the suffering is in fact already one’s own through the identity achieved by love. There is no point to fearing that it *may* befall one, because it has already befallen one through one’s love of the sufferer. And instead of citing the *Rhetoric*, as Aquinas does with the form of union through likeness, he cites *Ethics* IX.4 where Aristotle discusses *Συναλγεῖν*. “And so it is that the Philosopher puts among the characteristics of friendship to suffer with a friend.”⁵³ The relevant Latin term is ‘*condolere*’ formed from the prefix ‘*con*’ meaning ‘with’ and ‘*dolere*’ meaning ‘to suffer pain’.

So again we have the relational character of suffering *with*, but now not involving fear for oneself, but, rather, the love of one’s friend. By making this form of *Misericordia* spring from friendship, Aquinas tacitly relates it to Aristotle’s discussion in

⁵¹ “homines miserentur super illos qui sunt eis coniuncti et similes, quia per hoc fit eis aestimatio quod ipsi etiam possint similia pati,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 2 co.

⁵² “Quia enim amans reputat amicum tanquam seipsum, malum ipsius reputat tanquam suum malum, et ideo dolet de malo amici sicut de suo,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 2 co.

⁵³ “Et inde est quod philosophus, in IX Ethic., inter alia amicitia ponit hoc quod est condolere amico,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 2 co.

books VIII and IX of the *Ethics* of the friendship in which one makes the good of another one's own in the sense of acting for the sake of the friend's good. However, love achieves more in *Misericordia* precisely because it goes beyond the good of one's friend to take on his or her suffering, to make his or her suffering one's own. Of course the suffering is related by negation or deprivation to the good of one's friend. So Aquinas is arguing that you cannot be a friend to another if making his or her good your own does not also entail making his or her suffering your own.

A crucial feature of what Aquinas has done here is precisely the stress upon *Compassio* with its relational character, where *ἔλεος* lacked that character. Aquinas thinks we can have a virtue of *Misericordia* because, while it involves a "passion of the sensitive appetite," it also involves a movement of the will. But love is the condition of the will that moves it to achieve the union of friends. So it is important to see that the passion is *compassion* because of the movement of the will which is rationally ordered proceeding from love. Thus, it isn't a matter of a "compassion" first arising in us, and only thereafter the will being moved to love accordingly. No--the will through love informed by reason orders and transforms the passion into compassion. The love of friendship precedes the compassion.⁵⁴ If there is compassion without love it is the secondary form in which we fear for ourselves. We do not have a simple case in which there is a passion, namely compassion, that is either accompanied by fear or by love. Compassion informed by fear will have a very different character from compassion informed by love; a compassion that fears for itself is without love. Indeed, the two forms of compassion only fall under the same name *Misericordia* by analogy.

Of course Aquinas would not have seen the difference in the Greek between the *ἔλεος* of the *Rhetoric* and the *Συναλγεῖν* of the *Ethics*. 'Condolere' is the Latin verb taking the place of the Greek

⁵⁴ This precedence of Friendship to Compassion is directly opposed to the Aristotelian reading of the friendship between Priam and Achilles argued for by Marjorie Oele, in which the friendship is achieved by transcending and leaving suffering behind, a friendship that follows suffering rather than precedes it.

‘συναλγεῖν’. What is interesting here is Aquinas placing both discussions under the same heading of *Misericordia* where Aristotle had not associated them under the same term. And yet Aquinas also respects and preserves the difference between the two that is found in Aristotle by arguing that they are two different forms of *Misericordia*. So the primary case and focal meaning of *Misericordia* does not involve fear; it involves love. And in the rest of the discussion in the *Summa* Aquinas’s discussion will focus upon that first form.⁵⁵

5) *Ἐλεος* requires a sufficient likeness between the one suffering the pain and the one apprehending the pain. I have already touched upon the role of *likeness* in 4). The primary form of *Misericordia* involves not a simple likeness but an identification that is achieved through love and friendship with another. But it is worth adding here that the role of friendship in establishing this identity takes the primary form of *Misericordia* out of the context of either poetic or forensic imagination. It is perhaps not absurd to think that someone arguing a case and pursuing a favorable judgment in court may try to get the judge or jury to imagine being a friend to the accused. Nonetheless, such an imaginative friendship would not on its face be a genuine friendship or a real identification with the suffering of the accused. But it is certainly absurd to think that the point of a tragic drama is to attempt to get the audience to befriend the characters suffering in the tragedy. Perhaps one might argue that the point is

⁵⁵ Aquinas’ discussion of the love as the movement from which this primary sense of *Misericordia* arises as well as the identification with the sufferer through friendship echoes Gregory of Nyssa’s discussion of the Beatitudes, particularly the beatitude concerned with *Misericordia*. See Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Beatitudes*, an English version with commentary and supporting studies, proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Paderborn, 14-18 September 1998. See also Markshies, “Compassion,” 100-101, to which discussion I am indebted for this reference to Gregory’s thought. It is also relevant to point out that Aquinas cites Gregory in *STh* II-II, q. 30 a 1 ad 1 when he argues that *Misericordia* extends even to those who are suffering deservedly.

to educate the audience's passions in such a way that through imagination they more easily extend to actual human beings within one's community.⁵⁶ But then one might think that a more effective way to achieve that end would be to introduce the audience members to actual members of their community whom they could befriend, rather than to present them with imaginative examples of greatness like their own brought low in tragic drama.

It is here that we see the significance of Aquinas emphasizing the first form of *Misericordia* as involving an identification that is actively achieved through love rather than a pre-existing likeness that is passively recognized and gives rise to fear. One can through imagination fear that what befell Oedipus might befall oneself, if again through imagination one thinks one is like Oedipus. What one cannot do is make Oedipus' suffering one's own through love of him.

2) *Ἐλεος* involves a serious reversal of the good fortune of another. Aquinas writes nothing at all about the element of the reversal of fortune so characteristic of the context of *Ἐλεος* present in Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. Instead, discussing the motives that prompt *Misericordia*, he focuses in article one on the frustration of happiness. Happiness is related to the fulfillment of the will. Aquinas argues early in I-II, qq. 1-28 that happiness is the *telos* of human life pursued through intellect and will in relation to the passions. Here in his discussion of *Misericordia*, he argues that the will wills in three ways: first according to natural appetite, second according to deliberate and direct choice, and third according to a cause in which one wills the effect of a cause that one has willed. And this leads to three different motives for *Misericordia*. First we are moved to *Misericordia* when someone suffers "that which is contrary to the natural appetite of the will, namely corruptive and distressing evils which are contrary to what a human being naturally desires."⁵⁷ Second we are moved even

⁵⁶ Again, see Nussbaum and Halliwell for this moralizing reading.

⁵⁷ "...illud quod contrariatur appetitui naturali volentis, scilicet mala corruptiva et contristantia, quorum contraria homines naturaliter appetunt. Unde philosophus dicit, in II Rhet., quod *Misericordia* est

more readily to *Misericordia* “if [such evils] are contrary to a voluntary choice. And so the Philosopher says that evils prompt our *Misericordia* when fortune is the cause...as when something turns out badly that we had hoped would end well.”⁵⁸ In both of these passages Aquinas refers us to *Rhetoric* II.8. In the second he makes reference to “fortune.” But that reference to fortune has nothing to do with a serious reversal of “good fortune” as described in the *Rhetoric*. It’s clear from the context in Aquinas that it pertains to some course of action not turning out as planned, and in that context “fortune” means what is due to chance rather than what is intended. So in the case of these first two motives there is no mention of a serious “reversal of fortune” from good to bad.

3) *Ἐλεος* is prompted when the suffering of another is apprehended as “undeserved.” The third motive that Aquinas gives for *Misericordia* also does not bear at all upon the “reversal of fortune” theme, but does raise the theme of whether or not the suffering is “deserved.” Thomas tells us in the same article that the third and greatest motive in us for *Misericordia* are those evils that “are wholly contrary to what is willed, as when someone has always pursued the good and yet evil befalls him. And so the Philosopher says, in the same book, that *Misericordia* is greatest concerning the distress of one who suffers undeservedly.”⁵⁹ The suggestion is that those who always strive to do good and suffer for it are the occasion of our greatest *Misericordia*. But there is no suggestion that their suffering must have been preceded by

tristitia quaedam super apparenti malo corruptivo vel contristativo,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 1 co.

⁵⁸ “Secundo, huiusmodi magis efficiuntur ad *Misericordiam* provocantia si sint contra voluntatem electionis. Unde et philosophus ibidem dicit quod illa mala sunt miserabilia quorum fortuna est causa, puta cum aliquod malum eveniat unde sperabatur bonum,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 1 co.

⁵⁹ “Tertio autem, sunt adhuc magis miserabilia si sunt contra totam voluntatem, puta si aliquis semper sectatus est bona et eveniunt ei mala. Et ideo philosophus dicit, in eodem libro, quod *Misericordia* maxime est super malis eius qui indignus patitur,” *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 1 co.

success or good fortune in order for them to deserve *Misericordia*. Their striving to always do good ought to cause happiness, and yet it results in misery.

It is worth noting that this third motive opens up a possibility for Aquinas that Aristotle presumably could never see—the possibility of extending *Misericordia* to those who have always suffered, the weak, the poor, the ill from birth, and so on, so long as those in such dire circumstances strive to do good.⁶⁰ And insofar as it is in this third motive that Aquinas locates the element of “undeserved suffering,” his discussion suggests that the first two motives do not involve questions of whether the suffering is deserved. Now the second motive, insofar as it concerns chance would seem to be neutral on desert—one just suffered bad luck; chance it would seem doesn’t raise the question of desert. But, it is in the first motive that we see the possibility for extending *Misericordia* even to those who suffer justly, that is, deservedly. Presumably the pains and sufferings of punishment are, however much they are deserved, “contrary to what a human being naturally desires.” So, as we have seen, Aquinas explicitly argues in response to the first objection that *Misericordia* can extend even to those who are justly suffering through punishment. But strictly speaking *Misericordia* is not forgiveness. Forgiveness for Aquinas is related to the distinct virtue of *Clementia*. Not being a judge, I may be in no position to forgive the one being punished, and yet I may extend *Misericordia* to him.

The third motive only amplifies the first two in which there is no suggestion that *Misericordia* requires that the suffering be undeserved. *Misericordia* is greatest when the suffering is undeserved. But bad luck is not a matter of injustice and there may well be a frustration of the deepest desires of the will for happiness that has nothing to do with choices that have been made or what one has striven to achieve in one’s actions, and yet both cry out for *Misericordia*. Indeed, the third motive brings into particularly sharp relief the first. For the simple fact of being in a condition in which the deepest impulses of human nature are

⁶⁰ Nussbaum seems to see this problem in “Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency” (note #32, 123) but does not adequately address it.

frustrated opens up the possibility of extending *Misericordia* even to those who suffer and yet have not always striven to do good, indeed may never have striven to do good.

Here it is good to recall the Altar of *Ἔλεος* in Athens. While Aristotle is clear that *Ἔλεος* arises in the context of undeserved suffering and has no place where the suffering is deserved, at least one classical source tells us that the Altar of *Ἔλεος* was subject to the lamentations and supplications of those who were presumably suffering deservedly. Statius writes, "...hither came flocking those defeated in war and exiled from their country, kings who had lost their realms and those guilty of grievous crime."⁶¹ Presumably if one is guilty of a grievous crime the suffering in virtue of which one is pleading before the Altar of *Ἔλεος* is in large measure deserved. And so Aquinas's capacity to see a place for *Misericordia* in contexts in which one is suffering deservedly places his thought on it closer to common Athenian religious piety than to the discussion of *Ἔλεος* we get among the philosophers, particularly Aristotle.

7) *Ἔλεος* has to be distinguished from *Συναλγεῖν* as a passion is distinguished from an action. We've seen that Aquinas considers *Misericordia* as bearing upon both a passion of the sensitive appetite and a movement of the will bearing upon action. The passion of the sensitive appetite parallels Aristotle's *Ἔλεος* while the movement of the will parallels *Συναλγεῖν*. And we saw that there is a form of *Misericordia* that covers the association of *Ἔλεος* with *Φόβος* and yet another form of *Misericordia* that covers *Συναλγεῖν*. So clearly Aquinas associates the passion with the action in a way that Aristotle does not. In particular the mere likeness associated with *Ἔλεος* becomes an identity of *compassion* and is an achievement of friendship associated with *Συναλγεῖν*. However, *Misericordia* as defined does not extend only to compassion of either sort, that is, the passion alone. It proceeds to alleviating the suffering "if one can." In Aristotle there was no discussion of alleviating the suffering in either the case of *Συναλγεῖν* or *Ἔλεος*. Ironically, it was the Stoics who were

⁶¹ Statius, *Thebaid*. XII.507-509.

concerned with acting to alleviate the suffering, although doing so is seen to proceed from a vice if it is so motivated by *Misericordia*.

Recall that the association of *Συναλγεῖν* with friendship was a reason for Aristotle to keep the circle of one's friends fairly small, in particular smaller than the circle of human beings to whom one might bear a likeness. Aquinas does not discuss the scope of friendship that is relevant to *Misericordia* in this question in the *Summa*. However, in his discussion of whether Friendliness is a virtue in II-II, q. 114 he provides some guidance. Considering an objection that to treat a stranger as a friend would involve a certain dishonesty, he makes two points. First that "every human being is naturally a friend to every [other] by a certain general love." Citing Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)13:19, he claims this general love is grounded in the likeness of human animal nature. "...as every animal loves its like."⁶² However, it is not an undifferentiated and abstract love of or friendship for humanity as such; this general love is a kind of imperfect friendship, for "[one] does not show the perfect signs of friendship to [strangers], because one does not treat [them] with the same familiarity as one does those to whom one is joined by a particular friendship."⁶³

In other words, concerning *Misericordia* the question isn't how far to extend it and how to limit it to one's friends, as it was with Aristotle's *Συναλγεῖν*. Friendship ought to extend to all human beings. As one moves in from that universal scope, it takes on a perfection according to greater proximity as one achieves friendships making the particular good of particular others one's own. Similarly, *Misericordia* ought to extend out to the edges of humanity as a simple fact of human nature, but take on a particular perfection insofar as one makes the particular suffering of particular others one's own. But if that is the case with

⁶² "...omnis homo naturaliter omni homini est amicus quodam generali amore, sicut etiam dicitur Eccli. XIII, quod omne animal diligit simile sibi..." *STh* II-II, q. 114, a. 1 ad 2.

⁶³ "Non enim ostendit eis signa perfectae amicitiae, quia non eodem modo se habet familiariter ad extraneos sicut ad eos qui sunt sibi speciali amicitia iuncti," *STh* II-II, q. 114, a. 1 ad 2.

Misericordia it does not give one a reason to limit one's friendships, but, rather, a reason to enrich, deepen, and perfect where possible, "if we can," the friendship one ought already to have with all human beings.

Here Aquinas gives a particularly mundane but touching example in commenting on Bk.VIII of Aristotle's *Ethics*. "...there is the natural friendship which every man has to one another in turn, according to the natural likeness of *species*....This is most clear with those straying along the roads. For everyone calls back even an unknown and foreign stranger from going the wrong way, as if every man is naturally an acquaintance and a friend of every other man."⁶⁴ Presumably being lost along the road is a kind of suffering, although it may not be particularly great. One reaches out to assist those who are lost along the way, even the stranger, because of one's compassion for a friend. Of course "lost along the way" can be given both a literal sense and a moral sense. And this image of coming across someone on the road is reminiscent of the story of the Good Samaritan in which the Samaritan happening upon a man on the road is described in the Vulgate as a man of *Misericordia* or in Luke's Greek *Ἐλεος*.

6) *Ἐλεος* is foreign to divinity, because divinity does not have sufficient likeness to a human being suffering. I think all of the previous departures from Aristotle that we have seen in Aquinas point toward the culmination of the most striking claim that Aquinas makes in question 30 about *Misericordia*, namely, that *considered in itself* it is the greatest of all virtues because it is the most godlike virtue. Considered in itself he argues that it is even greater than *Caritas*. He acknowledges that if you consider it in its subject, then in us *Caritas* is greater than *Misericordia*, because while *Caritas* directs us in love to that which is higher, namely

⁶⁴ *In Eth*, Liber VIII, lc 1, 1541: "Et maxime est naturalis amicitia illa, quae est omnium hominum ad invicem, propter similitudinem naturae speciei...ut manifeste apparet in erroribus viarum. Revocat enim quilibet alium etiam ignotum et extraneum ab errore, quasi omnis homo sit naturaliter familiaris et amicus omni homini."

God, *Misericordia* directs us in love to that which is lower, namely, those who suffer.

But keep in mind this directing to what is lower is not a self-satisfied beneficence or pity that remains as it is while attempting to assist those who suffer. This directing of *Misericordia* to what is lower is an identification through love with what is lower—the love of friendship prompts one to identify with the weak, and in compassion unites the strong with the weak and those who suffer making their suffering one's own, only thereafter to assist those who suffer. Strength in a way first weakens itself in this identification of friendship by descending to those who have been brought low by their suffering. Recall that the Good Samaritan descends from his mule, stoops down to pick up the man set upon by thieves, and then raises him up to ride upon the mule. It is an odd and unfortunate fact that the English word “condescend” has taken on a very negative connotation, since etymologically it simply means to lower oneself to be with others.

Aquinas acknowledges that the impassibility of divinity as such means that it cannot suffer the passion associated with *Misericordia*. However, insofar as *Misericordia* is a virtue bearing upon the movement of the will informed by understanding, a movement of the will that terminates in an operation giving succor or assistance to those who suffer, it can be attributed to divinity as divinity can achieve the object of the virtue which is to alleviate suffering.⁶⁵

8) *Συναλγεῖν* expresses a kind of weakness associated with women in Aristotle's mind, an association the Roman Stoics amplify by associating *Misericordia* with a vice of the soul, and the weeping and tears of “wretched and old women.” While Aquinas makes much of the identification through friendship with those who suffer and may be weak, there is no particular

⁶⁵ Aquinas doesn't address the following in question 30. But if God were to unite Himself to humanity through love, and befriend us in our humanity, if He were to “condescend”, then presumably He could make our suffering his own, adopting our passion as His own compassion. That is by and large the topic of the third part of the *Summa Theologiae*.

association of *Misericordia* with mothers. It pertains to all human beings, male or female, and his term is entirely general throughout—*homo* not *vir*. It is not a vice of the soul as the Stoics had claimed, but a virtue of human beings. And even though his main source for his own later discussion of the different virtue of *Clementia* is Seneca, neither there nor here in the discussion of *Misericordia* does he so much as mention Seneca's reference to wretched and old women.

On the other hand, Aquinas explicitly associates *Misericordia* with weeping and tears. When he distinguished the two forms of *Misericordia* in 30.2, the one associated with friendship as mentioned in *Ethics* IX.4 and the one associated with fear as mentioned in the *Rhetoric*, he cites Romans 12:15 to characterize the first form of *Misericordia* that goes with friendship and love. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."⁶⁶ The *Misericordia* of friends does not avoid tears, but begins in them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, within the context of developing *Sacra Doctrina*, Aquinas takes a virtue he thinks can be found in Aristotle and transforms it in ways that directly oppose or go well beyond various positions Aristotle took with regard to it, and also definitively rejects the Stoic abuse of it. But he continues to maintain that it is a moral and thus a natural virtue. The occasion for this transformation is the opportunity to think about the relationship between *Caritas*, a theological virtue, and one of its effects *Misericordia*. The result of *Misericordia* remaining a natural moral virtue in Aquinas, is that even as he transforms it against the background of *Sacra Doctrina*, insofar as his analysis is correct we can see how inadequate the philosophers' treatments of it are, treatments bordering on failure, achieved after a very long time, with a great deal of error. On its own terms, the pagan

⁶⁶ "Et apostolus dicit, In Rom XII, gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus," *STh* II-II, q. 30, a. 2 co.

philosophical conception of *Eudaimonia* and the role of the virtues within it is seen to be inadequate on its own terms for failing to develop a virtue pertaining to suffering and the passion we experience upon the apprehension of it. I think the setting of this transformation that leaves intact its character as a natural virtue makes it all the more striking that Aquinas claims *Misericordia* is the most Godlike virtue. We should recall that the prologue to the second part of the *Summa* in which the discussion of *Caritas* and *Misericordia* takes place, tells us that it is concerned with God's image, "that is, a human being, insofar as he is the principle of his own acts, having free will and power over his acts."⁶⁷ Aquinas of course knows that Jesus wept. Indeed, it is reported in Scripture that Jesus, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," wept at least three times *in hac lachrymarum valle*.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *STh I-II prol*: "...restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem."

⁶⁸ I'd like to thank Gary Anderson, Jon Buttaci, Kevin Flannery, Doug Henry, Alasdair MacIntyre, and David O'Connor for their very helpful comments in the writing of this paper.

* A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

When I translate a Latin text I will leave *Misericordia* untranslated. As my discussion will span the Greeks and the Ancient Romans, translating *Misericordia* with either the term ‘mercy’ or ‘pity’ can lead to unnecessary confusion in scholarly discussion. Often in contemporary religious contexts it will be translated with the term ‘mercy’, as in the Catholic prayer *Salve Regina*, “*Mater misericordiae*” will be translated “Mother of mercy.” However in contemporary philosophical discussion in English much of the discussion of Mercy is confined to questions of legal Justice. When is Mercy required if at all in the imposition of or mitigation of a just punishment? But in Aquinas that discussion of punishment and mitigation bears upon the distinct virtue of *Clementia* not *Misericordia*. See *Summa Theologiae*, IIaIIae.157. In addition the etymology of ‘mercy’ ultimately comes from the Latin *merces* meaning wages, fee, bribe, rent, price, or commodity, and is related to the roots of such words as ‘mercantile’, ‘merchant’, ‘mercenary’, and possibly ‘market’. All of these terms place ‘mercy’ etymologically within the context of due exchange and thus questions of Justice. In Portia’s famous soliloquy on Mercy from *The Merchant of Venice* (“The quality of mercy is not strained....”) she is talking about what Aquinas would identify as *Clementia* not *Misericordia*. As we will see, *Misericordia* is not set within the discussion of Justice and what is due to another. Etymologically it bespeaks misery in one’s heart. Perhaps of some surprise is that the English term ‘miser’ is related to it, since a miser is thought to be suffering in his attitude toward money. Ironically the miser Silas Marner in George Eliot’s novel is ultimately saved from his misery concerning money by his *Misericordia* directed at the abandoned child Eppie. ‘Pity’ is often used to translate the Greek term *ἔλεος* and cognates. As we will also see the discussion of *Misericordia* in Latin has its roots in the Greek discussion of *ἔλεος*, a feeling of pain upon the apprehension of the pain of another. Further confusion arises in translation when the Greek prayer *Κύριε, ἔλεῆσον* in the Roman Catholic Mass is translated as “Lord, have mercy,” not “Lord, have pity.” The etymology of ‘pity’ comes from the Latin *pietas* which in post-

classical Latin picked up the note of compassion. That might argue for the use of 'pity' as a better translation of *Misericordia*. Indeed, the contemporary philosophical discussion of Pity as opposed to Mercy is related to the classical discussion of *ἔλεος*. Unfortunately, however, 'pity' in English has come to take on a negative connotation of a kind of self-satisfied looking down upon those who suffer or are weak. But as we will see, that kind of looking down upon those who suffer is excluded by *Misericordia*. So it seems that in contemporary English both 'mercy' and 'pity' lead to confusion as translations of *Misericordia*. For these brief remarks about the etymologies of the respective words in English see the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* <http://www.oed.com/>. So, when I translate a Latin text, I will leave *Misericordia* untranslated. However, when quoting another translation, either from the Greek or the Latin, I will quote the text as is, while indicating in brackets the root word in the original.

HOW OTHERS BEAR WITNESS
TO OUR FAITH
Aquinas and Lumen Gentium

Pim Valkenberg

When Thomas Aquinas writes about faith as one of the theological virtues, he clearly distinguishes between Christians as members of a community that seeks to live in faith inspired by Christ, and others who do not live by this faith and even seem to reject it. In his own historical context Aquinas classified these others as not living by faith, or even stronger as actively resisting faith. So the language that he uses to classify them as unbelievers is undoubtedly negative, and in this respect there seems to be a wide chasm between his theology of unbelievers and our cultural reality of interfaith collaboration that seems to require a different theological approach. And yet, dealing with the question as to whether the rites of unbelievers should be tolerated, Aquinas indicates that there is something good in the fact that Jews publicly show their faith, since even if they are “our enemies” as Aquinas says, they still “bear witness to our faith, and that what we believe is set forth as in a figure.”¹ As the tension between “something good” and “our enemies” indicates, this remark does not lead Aquinas to an overall positive view of Jews, let alone of

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 10, a. 11: “Ex hoc autem quod Judaei ritus suos observant, in quibus olim praefigurabatur veritas fidei quam tenemus, hoc bonum provenit quod testimonium fidei nostrae habemus ab hostibus; et quasi in figura nobis repraesentatur quod credimus.” Text and English translation according to: *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae*, volume 32: Consequences of Faith (2a2ae. 8-16). Latin text, English translation, Notes & Glossary Thomas Gilby O.P., London: Blackfriars, 1975; reprint Cambridge University Press, 2006, 72-73.

other unbelievers, but nevertheless this “unofficial view,” as Bruce Marshall calls it,² can be mined to partially bridge the hermeneutical distance between Aquinas and our time. In this article, I will use the Second Vatican Council and its dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* as an interpretive lens to make Aquinas relevant for the way in which the Catholic Church bears witness of its faith in dialogue with religious others.

While I do not think that we can directly learn from Aquinas on this topic because of the enormous difference in the context between his time and ours, I do think that his theological approach – enlightened by the Second Vatican Council and *Lumen Gentium* in particular – can help us to think in a more theological fashion about the relation between Christians and members of the other two Abrahamic faiths: Jews and Muslims. Consequently, I will begin by exploring chapter 16 of the document *Lumen Gentium*, and I will subsequently turn to Thomas Aquinas in order to reach a theological hypothesis about the way in which we might speak about Jews and Muslims as living by a form of faith that somehow bears witness to the faith of Christians.

1. *Lumen Gentium* 16: different relations to the People of God

If we want to find out how the Second Vatican Council may be described as a normative event that may be a hermeneutical mediation between our approach to other religions and that of Thomas Aquinas, it makes sense to look at the institutional dimension first. How did the Church in fact apply its doctrines about its relationships with religious others? Again, we will see that there is a sizeable difference between our times and previous centuries, and again we will see how the Second Vatican Council seems to have a pivotal position in these changes.

In a time in which members of other religions were considered as unbelievers, the Church’s task was to bring them to faith and

² Bruce D. Marshall, “*Quasi in Figura: A Brief Reflection on Jewish Election, after Thomas Aquinas,*” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 7/2 (2009): 477-84, on 482.

therefore they would be addressed in an endeavour to promote the Christian faith, as was the objective of the *sacra congregatio de propaganda fide* between 1622 and 1988. Since then, the congregation is renamed *congregatio pro gentium evangelisatione*. Even though its aim is still the proclamation of the Gospel, the distinction between faith and unbelief is no longer that stark.

Fifty years ago, during the second Vatican Council, a separate organization for relations with non-Christians was formed by Pope Paul VI in May 1964, the *secretariatus pro non-Christianis* following the establishment of a secretariat for Christian Unity by Pope John XXIII at the dawn of the Second Vatican Council, in 1960.³ The term “non-Christians” can be seen as neutral in the sense that it does not denote others as unbelievers but as other than Christians, but it still is a negative denotation. This changed when the secretariat received its new name, *pontificium consilium pro dialogo inter religiones* (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue) by Pope John Paul II in 1988. This time, the common term is “religions,” and dialogue between them is what the pontifical council is supposed to promote.

This new name also signals that our cultural context is already different from the Second Vatican Council 50 years ago since the Council certainly did something new by issuing a declaration about other religions, but it did so in ecclesiological terms and in negative terminology: *declaratio de Ecclesiae habitudine ad religiones non-Christianas* (“Declaration about the relation between the Church and non-Christian religions”). Consequently,

³ The events leading to the establishments of these secretariats, and their accomplishments can be followed in the diaries of some of the bishops and theologians working for these secretariats. Among them are Johannes Willebrands and Yves Congar. See Theo Salemink, *You Will be Called Repairer of the Breach: the Diary of J.G.M. Willebrands 1958-1961*, Leuven: Peeters, 2009; Leo Declerck, *Les agendas conciliaires de Mgr. J. Willebrands, secrétaire du secretariat pour l'unité des Chrétiens*, Traduction française annotée, Leuven: Peeters, 2009; and Yves Congar, O.P., *My Journal of the Council*, Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2012; orig. *Mon journal du Concile*, Paris, 2002.

the document that was named *De Iudaeis* for years since it was to concentrate on Christian-Jewish relationships, ended up being named *De non-Christianis* which gives a considerably broader range but a negative terminology as well. As Gerald O'Collins remarks in his recent book, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, when the declaration would have been written thirty years later, the title would have been different.⁴ But the document was unprecedented in its own time, so much so that we get a lively impression of improvisations when we try to follow its prehistory that still has not been fully described as of yet. In the first instance the document was to address the Holocaust and the need for a better Catholic catechesis about Judaism as Jules Isaac requested in a private audience with pope John in 1960. Yet a complicated history of both Church politics and secular politics made it necessary that the document include the Muslims and by extension adherents of other religions as well.⁵ Prepared by the Secretariat for Christian Unity, the document was not immediately voted on because of the political circumstances, and later it was withdrawn and then re-introduced in different formats, as a chapter or an appendix to the text on Ecumenism, or as a chapter in the text on the Church.

This is not the place to discuss the sometimes sharp debates over the different forms of the text; it is more relevant to make an important point regarding the hermeneutics of the Council: the declaration on the relation between the Church and the non-Christian religion is derived from the Church's self-image, and thus *Nostra Aetate* could only have been written after the paragraphs in *Lumen Gentium* that speak about the Church as the

⁴ Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 84.

⁵ The best introduction to the history of the text is still Johannes Oesterreicher's commentary in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*: "Erklärung über das Verhältnis der Kirche zu den nichtchristliche Religionen," in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche (zweite Auflage)* XIII, Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1967, 406-478. The German text has been translated into English in his book *The New Encounter between Christians and Jews*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1986.

People of God and the ways in which others are related to or ordered (*ordinantur*) towards the People of God. Again, the pre-history of the text betrays an important shift of perspective, since the first draft of the document (1963) spoke about the non-Christians “who are to be led to the Church” while the final document talks more neutrally about an ordering.⁶ This shift of perspective did not meet much resistance according to Ralph Martin, author of a recent book in which he states that *Lumen Gentium* has been misinterpreted by theologians as saying that human beings can be saved without explicit faith in Christ, while in fact the document warns that the majority of humanity will not be saved. Martin is an eloquent representative of a recent theological tendency to interpret the documents of the second Vatican Council according to a hermeneutics of continuity rather than a hermeneutics of radical discontinuity. Even though I think that the linguistic shifts that I have indicated clearly show a large amount of discontinuity, I agree with the protagonists of a hermeneutics of continuity that one cannot consider declarations such as *Nostra Aetate* on its own but that they need to be subordinated to dogmatic constitutions such as *Lumen Gentium*. In a book on *Catholic Engagement with World Religions*, Ilaria Morali, for instance, states: “The most common trend among today’s theologians is in fact to assign *Nostra Aetate* a dogmatic value superior to that of *Lumen Gentium* 16 and of *Ad Gentes* (...) and often to omit so much as a mention of these last.”⁷ It is for this reason that I will concentrate not on *Nostra Aetate* but on the second chapter of *Lumen Gentium* that talks about the way in which God established a relationship between the Church as the

⁶ See Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization*, Grand Rapids MI / Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2012, 18.

⁷ Ilaria Morali, “Salvation, Religions, and Dialogue in the Roman Magisterium: from Pius IX to Vatican II and Postconciliar Popes,” in: *Catholic Engagement with World Religions*, eds. Karl Becker & Ilaria Morali, Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis books, 2010, 122-142, quotation on 126.

People of God and others. After all, this is “the single most important document of the sixteen that the Council ratified.”⁸

The relationship between the People of God and others is characterized by a word, *ordinari*, that is used to indicate a relation and a hierarchy at the same time. According to *Lumen Gentium*, the Church is central and others are related to her in a certain way. As Gerald O’Collins indicates, the origin of this idea of “ordering towards the Church” can be found in the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* by Pope Pius XII in 1943 that exhorts the faithful to pray for “those who have not yet received light from the truth of the Gospel.”⁹ The encyclical continues to discuss the relationship between the Mystical Body of Christ and those who are outside as follows: “Although they may be ordered (*ordinentur*) to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by some unconscious yearning and desire ... yet they are deprived of those many great heavenly gifts and aids which can be enjoyed only in the Catholic Church.”¹⁰ So in this text from 1943 the language of a hierarchical relationship is formulated in negative terms: they have not yet received the light, they are deprived of the heavenly gifts. In *Lumen Gentium* 14-16, on the contrary, the relationship is positive but differently. First, the Catholic faithful belong to the Church in different ways. Second, the Church is in many ways related to those who are baptized but do not profess the Catholic faith.¹¹ Third, “those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God.”¹² The old language

⁸ Paul Lakeland, *A Council That Wil Never End: Lumen Gentium and the Church Today*, Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2013, xiii.

⁹ *Mystici Corporis* 101, quoted in O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions*, 48.

¹⁰ *Mystici Corporis* 102 in O’Collins, *o.c.*, 49.

¹¹ *Lumen Gentium* 15: “Ecclesia semetipsam novit plures ob rationes coniunctam.” For the Latin text of *Lumen Gentium*, see *LThKXII*, Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1966, 202. For English paraphrases, see the official translation on the Vatican website.

¹² *Lumen Gentium* 16: “Ii tandem qui Evangelium nondum acceperunt, ad Populum Dei diversis rationibus ordinantur”, *LThK XII*, 204.

is still there (“they have not yet received the Gospel”) but at the same time the positive relationship is now highlighted.

Interestingly, the text of *Lumen Gentium* 16 has a footnote that contains one of the few references to Thomas Aquinas, namely to the third part of the *Summa* about the grace of Christ as head of the Church. Confirming that there must be a relation between Christ as head and all human beings, Aquinas states that unbelievers might not be actual members of the Church, yet they may be potential members.¹³ He adds that there are two reasons for this potentiality; the principal reason is the power of Christ (*in virtute Christi*) whose grace – which is the issue discussed here – is sufficient for the salvation of the whole of humankind; the second reason is human free will.

Aquinas suggests that this “ordering towards” the Church is not only a preparation for the Gospel, as is often suggested, but that there is already a potential relationship thanks to the power of the grace of Christ. So Christ is somehow potentially present in these relationships. One may see here a possible influence of two major models in the theology of religions of that time, as represented by Jean Daniélou and Karl Rahner who perceived other religions as preparations for the Gospel and in the case of Rahner also as containing a hidden presence of Christ.¹⁴ According to Gérard Philips “who perhaps more than any other single theologian was involved in the crafting of *Lumen Gentium* from its very beginnings,”¹⁵ the new texts that discuss the relationship between the Church as the people of God and those who are differently ordered toward the Church tried to show the universality of God’s saving will on the one hand, and the necessity of missionary

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *STh* III, q. 8, a. 3 ad 1: “...illi qui sunt infideles, etsi actu non sint de Ecclesia, sunt tamen de Ecclesia in potentia.”

¹⁴ For a description of these two models and their influence on the Council, see Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997, 133-57.

¹⁵ Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved?*, 19.

endeavours on the other.¹⁶ As Philips indicates, articles 13-16 of *Lumen Gentium* followed quite naturally from the idea that human beings are ordered differently to God's universal saving will according to their different spiritual positions. As Msgr. Garrone mentioned in his *relatio* to the Fathers of the Council on September 17, 1964, the main idea was to prevent an extreme individualism and to clearly distinguish between the different non-Christians.¹⁷

One of the consequences was that *Lumen Gentium* 16 contains separate references to four different groups: the Jews, the Muslims, those who are seeking the unknown God, and those who do not know the Gospel of Christ. Of those four groups, the passage on the Muslims who are mentioned by name as *Musulmani* is most remarkable, since for the first time in history the Church describes this religion in positive terms. Even though Congar writes that the 553 votes *placet iuxta modum* were mainly related to this paragraph on the Muslims, *Lumen Gentium* 16 as such was relatively uncontroversial in comparison to the big debates about the idea of episcopal collegiality expressed in the third chapter of this dogmatic constitution about the Church.¹⁸ In comparison, the text about the first of the groups ordered toward the church is relatively short and unremarkable since the big debates about the relationship with the Jewish people were related to the fourth chapter of *Nostra Aetate*, the text that during the council was always referred to as *De Iudaeis*.¹⁹ Therefore the text of *Lumen Gentium* 16 limits itself to stating the theological nature of the relationship with the Jews, namely that they are "the people

¹⁶ Philips, "Die Geschichte der dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche 'Lumen Gentium'", in: *LFThK* XII, Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1966, 139-155, on 151.

¹⁷ Philips's *relatio* to the Council fathers in St. Peter on *Lumen Gentium* 16 is reproduced in Martin, *Will Many be Saved?*, 211-12; English translation 213-14.

¹⁸ Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, 580; Martin, *Will Many Be Saved?*, 11 with reference to Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, Mahwah N.J. Paulist Press, 2006.

¹⁹ See the council journals by Congar and Willebrands, *passim*.

to whom the covenants and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh.” Furthermore, this people “remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.”²⁰ As has been recently observed, this theology of Judaism is basically derived from Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapters 9-11.²¹ The second group is the only group mentioned by name in this text, and it receives a remarkably full theological description, even though the text in *Nostra Aetate* 3 one year later will be a bit more comprehensive. Four elements can be distinguished: “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among them the Muslims who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge humankind.”²² The first element is of a more generic nature: the acknowledgment of God as creator. The second element is the claim to possess the faith of Abraham, a claim that is cautiously acknowledged. The third element is that they adore, together with the Christians, the one and merciful God. One hears here an echo of the *basmala* in which the oneness and the mercifulness of God are mentioned.²³ The fourth element is the faith in the last day when God will pass judgment.

²⁰ “... populus ille cui data fuerunt testamenta et promissa et ex quo Christus ortus est secundum carnem (Rom. 9: 4-5), populus secundum electionem carissimus propter patres: sine poenitentia enim sunt dona et vocatio Dei (Rom. 11: 28-29).” Text according to *LThK* XII, 204.

²¹ Matthew Tapie, contribution to this *Jaarboek*; for the important part of these Pauline chapters in the change in Catholic thinking about the Jews, see John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: the Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews 1933-1965*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

²² “Sed propositum salutis et eos amplectitur, qui Creatorem agnoscunt, inter quos imprimis Musulmanos, qui fidem Abrahae se tenere profitentes, nobiscum Deum adorant unicum, misericordem, homines die novissimo iudicaturum.” Text in *LThK* XII, 204.

²³ The *basmala* is the formula that introduces almost all *surahs* in the Qur’an: in the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate; in Arabic transliteration: *bi-smi llahi r-Rahmani r-Rahim*.

What unites Jews and Muslims in their being ordered towards the Church is their relation with the one true God. In the case of the Jews, the relation is characterized by the idea of the covenant and the promises (*promissa*) that God keeps; in the case of the Muslims, it is characterized by a faith like that of Abraham, a faith (*fides*) in the one and merciful God.²⁴ So the Council acknowledges that the Muslims adore the One and Merciful God together with the Christians. But with reference to the faith of Abraham, there seems to be an intentional ambiguity here. The text does not state that Muslims share the faith of Abraham, but that they claim to do so. The text in *Nostra Aetate* 3 is similar, so this cannot be a coincidence: it acknowledges that Muslims adore the One God, but it is circumspect with reference to the faith of Abraham: Muslims “take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.”²⁵ Twice the Council mentions the connection between the faith of Abraham and the Muslim faith, and it uses the term *fides* in both cases, but it does not directly state that Muslims have the faith of Abraham; it only states that they like to refer to Abraham and his faith.

²⁴ In his commentary on this paragraph, Alois Grillmeier (LThK XII, 206) remarks that an earlier version drew a parallel with Jews by referring to Muslims as the “sons of Ishmael, who, recognizing Abraham as father, also believe in the God of Abraham.” The present version underscores the faith in one God as defining characteristic of Muslims, and in doing so it singles out what unites Catholics and Muslims: their stress on Abraham’s faith. See also Pim Valkenberg, *Sharing Lights on the Way to God: Muslim-Christian Dialogue and Theology in the Context of Abrahamic Partnership*, Amsterdam – New York: Editions Rodopi, 2006, 65.

²⁵ “Ecclesia cum aestimatione quoque Muslimos respicit qui unicum Deum adorant, viventem et subsistentem, misericordem et omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae, homines allocutum, cuius occultis etiam decretis toto animo se submittere student, sicut Deo se submitit Abraham ad quem fides islamica libenter sese refert.” Text in LThK XIII, 490. English translation from the Vatican website.

This indirect recognition of the faith of Muslims again seems to be halfway between Aquinas's negation of Muslims as faithful and our inclination to recognize their faith as true faith in the One God whom they adore together with us, as the Council affirms twice. In his commentary on these two texts on the Muslims, Georges Anawati O.P. mentions that the Council Fathers said something that was really new, so they had to proceed very carefully.²⁶ But where did this new language come from? Almost all scholars seem to indicate that it originated with pope Paul VI who was influenced in his view on Islam by Louis Massignon who explicitly talked about Islam as "the faith of Abraham."²⁷ Even though the Second Vatican Council did not follow him closely in this respect, since it did not adopt the questionable historical claim of the Arab people to be parts of the Abrahamic heritage through Ishmael, it seemed cautiously to endorse the idea that the Islamic faith shares theologically in the faith of Abraham. Gavin D'Costa recently pointed out that pope Paul VI had said similar things about Islam in his encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* (August 1964), where the pope distinguished several concentric circles around the church; the second of these circles consists of those who adore the one God, and in this respect pope Paul VI explicitly mentions the Jewish and Muslim forms of monotheism, referring to them as *religiones*.²⁸ D'Costa comes to the conclusion

²⁶ See Georges Anawati, "Exkurs zum Konzilstext über die Muslim" in: *LFThK XIII*, Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1967, 485-87. He speaks about "äußerste Vorsicht."

²⁷ See Sidney Griffith, "Sharing the Faith of Abraham: the 'Credo' of Louis Massignon," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8 (1997) 193-210; Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Juden – Christen – Muslime: Herkunft und Zukunft*, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2007, 606f; Gavin D'Costa, "Continuity and Reform in Vatican II's Teaching on Islam," *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013) 208-222.

²⁸ Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* nr. 107; Latin text quoted from the Vatican website: "Mentionem scilicet inicimus de filiis gentis Iudaeae, reverentia et amore nostro sane dignis, qui eam retinent religionem, quam Veteris Testamenti propriam esse dicimus; deinde de iis, qui Deum adorant religionis forma, quae monotheismus dicitur,

that the Second Vatican Council acknowledged more than simply natural knowledge in Islam, and that it even might have affirmed a partial truth of the claim that the Qur'an and Muhammad would have mediated some knowledge of the true God.²⁹

Yet things are different in Aquinas: he applies a similar idea of concentric circles as Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*, but in his case these circles are not connected to the faith of the Church but to its opposite: unbelief.

2. Thomas Aquinas on Three Forms of Unbelief

It might be possible to find some texts by Aquinas on those of other faiths that look more promising than the way in which he discusses religious others in the context of unbelief as a vice opposed to the virtue of faith in the *Secunda secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*. When one digs deeper into the treasures of his commentaries on Scripture, one may – at least in the case of the Jews – find some texts that could form an easier bridge to the modern preoccupations with interfaith relationships. Yet even in the seemingly negative texts about Jews and others in the *quaestiones* concerning unbelief (or disbelief), heresy and apostasy, we may be able to find some suggestions that could help us to be faithful to the intentions of *Lumen gentium* 16 in the present time. The central *quaestio* here is ST II-II q.10 *de infidelitate in communi*.³⁰ What exactly is *infidelitas*? We would

maxime ea qua Mahometani sunt astricti, quos propter ea quae in eorum cultu vera sunt et probanda, merito admiramur.”

²⁹ D'Costa, “Continuity and Reform in Vatican II's Teaching on Islam,” 221-222.

³⁰ Latin text with English translation in Thomas Gilby, O.P., *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae*, volume 32: Consequences of Faith (2a2ae. 8-16). Latin text, English translation, Notes & Glossary Thomas Gilby O.P., London: Blackfriars, 1975; another English translation in Mark Jordan, *On Faith. Summa theologiae*, Part 2-2, questions 1-16 of St. Thomas Aquinas, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Mark D. Jordan, Notre Dame – London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.

probably tend to translate this word as “unfaithfulness,” as Mark Jordan does³¹ (1990: 20) but that would lead us to import moral connotations to this word that might lead us away from Aquinas’s view. We would associate it with someone who does not keep his promise, who is not reliable. Even though *infidelitas* can certainly have this meaning, Aquinas begins with a descriptive distinction: *infidelitas* can be considered as a simple negation of faith, or as an opposition to it. In the first case faith is simply absent, while in the second case there is a refusal to accept what has been heard. The presupposition here is that faith comes from hearing, so we may distinguish between “non-belief” as the situation of those who simply have not heard the Christian faith, and “un-belief” as the situation of those who have heard it but have decided not to accept it. In the first case, Aquinas speaks of a *negatio pura*, which means a mere absence of faith. In the second case, Aquinas speaks of *contrarietas*, an attitude of opposition to faith. Now only the second situation, properly speaking, involves the vice of unbelief as contrary to the virtue of faith, while the first situation does not in itself involve sinfulness. According to what Aquinas states elsewhere, such non-believers will not be saved, not however because of their nonbelief, but because of other sins.³²

Aquinas comes back to this matter when he discusses the peculiar case of Cornelius, the Roman centurion who is described by Luke in the book of Acts as “devout and God-fearing along with his whole household, who used to give alms generously to the Jewish people and pray to God constantly.”³³ This Cornelius who became the model of the “righteous among the heathen,” is called by an angel to meet Peter in order to listen to his preaching and be baptized. Peter, who first did not want to have companionship with this Gentile, now has changed his mind and

³¹ Jordan, *On Faith*, 20.

³² In the footnotes on pages 38-41 of his translation, Gilby clearly has some trouble accepting Aquinas’s position here, partly because of theological reasons (how can there be other sins when there is no knowledge of faith?) partly because of the hermeneutical distance that has been sketched at the beginning of this article.

³³ Acts 10:2 New American Bible.

says: “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?”³⁴ So, Aquinas uses Cornelius as an example in the *sed contra* of ST II-II.10.4 to argue that not every act of a nonbeliever is sinful, since his almsgiving was acceptable to God even though he was not yet a believer. At the end of the article, Aquinas addresses this case by stating that Cornelius was not *infidelis* since without faith no one can please God – an implicit reference to Hebrews 11:6 – so he had implicit faith while the truth of the Gospel had not been made manifest to him.³⁵ These are words that remind us of the text from *Lumen gentium* in two ways. In the first place, there is a relation between a true non-believer and God, and this relation is characterized as “implicit faith” because of the text from Hebrews that says that no one can please God without faith. Since Cornelius obviously pleased God, he must have had some form of faith. Secondly, the relation can be characterized as “not yet,” a true *praeparatio Evangelii*, and that is why he was sent to Peter in order to be instructed in the explicit faith. But, as Peter confessed, the Spirit was already present in him.

Again, there is a clear sense of directedness or being ordered toward the Christian faith as its normative center, which we find in the documents of the Second Vatican Council as well. When he discusses the different kinds of unbelief or nonbelief, Aquinas shows that there is a double relation here³⁶. On the one hand, there is the dominant aspect of sinfulness since unbelief is a vice against faith, and in this way we can distinguish between those who deny the faith that they had accepted before, and those who never embraced the true faith. In this respect, the sinfulness of the heretics is the greatest since their rejection is more intense than

³⁴ Acts 10:47 NAB.

³⁵ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 4 ad arg.s.c.: “De Cornelio tamen sciendum est quod infidelis non erat; alioquin ejus operatio accepta non fuisset Deo, cui sine fide nullus potest placere. Habebat autem fidem implicitam, nondum manifestata Evangelii veritate.”

³⁶ Aquinas discusses this in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 5 on the “plures infidelitatis species”, and in q. 10, a. 6 “utrum infidelitas gentilium sive paganorum sit caeteris gravior.”

the rejection of those who have not accepted the Gospel, like the heathen, or those who have only accepted it *in figura* as is the case with the Jews. On the other hand, there is a secondary, more quantitative aspect that measures the number of tenets that the *infideles* have in common with the believers. In this aspect, the heretics are closest since they accept much of the Christian faith³⁷, such as the Gospels. Next come the Jews who accept part of the faith such as the Old Testament, and finally there are the nonbelievers with which we have least in common. Yet, Aquinas is quick to point out that real unbelief that implies culpability is only found in those who willingly resist faith, and less in those who only have nothing in common with faith.

Since he is dealing with theological virtues here, and with what is opposed to these virtues, the ethical notion of rejection or resistance against faith is so dominant that the notion of *infidelitas* immediately seems to connote the idea of someone who willfully resists the truth (*qui renititur fidei* is the formula Aquinas uses time and again) and thus there seems to be hardly any room for the notion of non-belief as a non-encounter with the Christian faith. It is my suggestion that this has not only to do with the situation in the Middle Ages in which the presupposition was that most people would have heard about the truth of the Christian faith in one way or another – so so that the famous case of the *nudus in silva* could be discussed as an interesting exception – but that it has mostly to do with the great commission as an apostolic heritage of the Christian faith. Someone who has not heard of the Gospel is always someone who has not yet heard it, as we read in the beginning words of *Lumen gentium* 16. This makes the situation of non-believers basically a deficient stage, like children who still need to learn what is good for them. Yet this situation tends to be sketched in moral terms, so that lack of knowledge becomes a refusal of what has not yet been heard. In ST II-II, q.10, a. 5 for instance, Aquinas says: “...in relationship to the virtue of faith, there are several infidelities determinate in number

³⁷ Regarding this quantitative aspect, the word “faith” refers to ‘fides quae creditur’, rather than ‘fides qua creditur’ as in the rest of the discussion.

and kind. For its sinfulness consists in resisting the faith, and this may come about in two ways: either the faith is fought against before it has been accepted, and such is the unbelief of pagans or heathens; or that is done after the Christian faith has been accepted, whether in figure, and this is the unbelief of the Jews, or in the revelation of the very truth, and this is the unbelief of heretics.³⁸

It is evident that at this place Aquinas lets the moral dimension of unbelief as resistance against faith overshadow the notion of non-belief as not in itself sinful but a pure absence of faith. While it is problematic to speak of fighting a faith before it has been accepted, Aquinas is certainly right to point out that there is – theologically speaking – no place for a mere neutral non-belief if we accept the possibility of a virtual presence of the Spirit that is not yet recognized, as Aquinas admitted in the case of Cornelius. If this optimistic anthropology can be generalized by saying with Henri de Lubac or Karl Rahner that there is no pure nature without grace, it might be possible to harmonize what Aquinas says here with some of the statements in *Lumen Gentium* and in *Gaudium et Spes* that seem to imply a such an optimistic anthropology indeed. Yet, at the same time Ralph Martin has recently shown that such an optimistic vision might go against the long tradition of Augustine and Aquinas for whom the large majority of non-believers will not be saved.³⁹

The most important theological point that Aquinas wants to make, however, is not about anthropology but about Christology:

³⁸ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 5: “si infidelitas attendatur circa comparationem ad fidem, diversae sint infidelitatis species et numero determinatae. Cum enim peccatum infidelitatis consistat in renitendo fidei, hoc potest contingere dupliciter, quia aut renititur fidei nondum susceptae, et talis infidelitas est paganorum sive gentilium; aut renititur fidei christianae susceptae, et hoc vel in figura, et sic est infidelitas Iudaeorum; vel in ipsa manifestatione veritatis, et sic est infidelitas haereticorum.” Text and translation in Gilby, *Consequences of faith*, 52-53.

³⁹ See Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization*, Grand Rapids MI / Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2012.

the virtual presence of the Spirit is an effect of the *virtus Christi*. It is the power of the grace of Christ that is effective not only in the Church but in the entire humanity, as Aquinas said in the text from ST III.8 that was quoted at the beginning of *Lumen gentium* 16. So, even if it is true that there is an aspect of sheer non-belief (*infidelitas secundum puram negationem*, *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 1), there is no *natura pura* outside of the reach of the grace of Christ. Therefore, the theological aspect of unbelief as rejection (*infidelitas secundum contrarietatem ad fidem*) is predominant. And in this respect, there is already a relationship between Christ and his Spirit and non-Christians, whether that relationship be characterized negatively as Aquinas does in his analysis of unbelief, or positively as *Lumen gentium* shows in its idea of their being ordered towards the Church.

It might even be possible – albeit somewhat speculative – to say that there is no real inconsistency in Aquinas, but that he looks at the reality of faith and its opposite in two ways. Faith in its external dimension becomes public as organized religion – even though Aquinas did not use the word *religio* in this sense, but rather *cultus* or *ritus*, or *Lex* in the case of Jews and Muslims – and in this respect Aquinas recognizes the otherness of other religions since he realizes that the Church has no authority over them. Aquinas discusses this dimension several times, for instance: “The Church does not forbid the communion of the faithful with unbelievers who have nowise received the Christian faith, namely with pagans and Jews. Because she has no right to exercise spiritual judgment on them...”⁴⁰ The phrase “nowise received” (*nullo modo receperunt*) seems in clear contrast with the earlier text where Aquinas said that the Jews – differently from the pagans – denied the Christian faith after its acceptance *in figura*. Yet such a position makes sense when considering the external side of faith as institutionalized religion where there need

⁴⁰ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 9 (text and translation in Gilby, *Consequences of Faith*, 64-67): “...non interdicat Ecclesia fidelibus communionem infidelium qui nullo modo fidem christianam receperunt, scilicet paganorum vel Judaeorum, quia non habet de eis judicare spirituali iudicio...”

to be clear boundaries and responsibilities. Since the Church has no spiritual jurisdiction over Jews or pagans, it cannot force them to be converted or baptized.⁴¹ But when Aquinas considers the internal dimension of faith, he emphasizes that there are no boundaries to the power of the grace of Christ and of the Spirit.⁴² And in this respect, Aquinas is able to recognize the seeds of the Word in individual believers like Cornelius in a way that Jean Daniélou would make fruitful on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. Yet the Council itself seemed to go a little further by drawing attention to the communal aspect of faith, following Karl Rahner, both in *Lumen Gentium* 16 and in *Nostra Aetate* since in these documents the dominant metaphor is the Church as the people of God⁴³, so that the others in their being ordered towards the Church, are primarily seen in their corporate dimension as well; in the case of Jews and Muslims, this corporate dimension is even explicitly recognized as their religious identity. The fact that the Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium* 16 devotes a separate paragraph to the Muslims and mentions them by name is certainly new and different from how Aquinas deals with the Muslims and their divergence from the Christian faith.⁴⁴

⁴¹ See *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8 on forced conversion (“compelle intrare”, Luke 14:23) and *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 12 on forced baptisms.

⁴² A similar distinction between a more “political” and a more “theological” aspect in Aquinas’s writings on the Jews is hinted at in Henk Schoot and Pim Valkenberg, “Thomas Aquinas and Judaism” in: *Aquinas in Dialogue: Thomas for the twenty-first Century*, eds. Jim Fodor and Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, Malden MA: Blackwell, 2004, 47-66.

⁴³ See Herwi Rikhof, *The Concept of Church*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1981.

⁴⁴ Henk Schoot, “Christ Crucified Contested: Thomas Aquinas Answering Objections from Jews and Muslims” in: *The Three Rings. Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds. Barbara Roggema, Marcel Poorthuis and Pim Valkenberg, Louvain: Peeters, 2005, 141-62.

3. The good of Jews and Muslims living by their faiths

While it is true that Thomas Aquinas and *Lumen Gentium* may be in harmony in the theological awareness of the power of the grace of Christ in religious others, as exemplified by the quotation from the *Summa theologiae* in the latter document, there is still another way in which Aquinas might contribute to a better theological understanding of religious others, more specifically Jews – and Muslims. It is based on what seems to be an offhand remark about the usefulness of the rites of contemporary Jews. This text is significant because it clearly refers not to the use of Jewish rites and ceremonies in the period of the Old Testament, but to Jews living in his own days, and therefore it can be applied to Jews in the twenty-first century as well. With regard to the question as to whether the rites or religious ceremonies of the unbelievers should be tolerated,⁴⁵ Aquinas follows a well-known assertion by St. Augustine when he states that the rites of the Jews should be tolerated because there is a certain good in them that bears witness to our faith. Yet he adds something to it as well: "... from the fact that Jews keep their ceremonies, which once foreshadowed the truth of the faith we now hold, there follows this good, that our very enemies bear witness to our faith, and that what we believe is set forth as in a figure."⁴⁶ It is difficult to overlook the word *hostis* (enemy) here, because it evokes the history of anti-Judaism and supersessionism of which Aquinas is a part. So we are far from religious pluralism or multi-culturalism here. Yet at the same time Aquinas sees something good in the religious observances of the Jews because they represent what

⁴⁵ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 11 "utrum ritus infidelium sint tolerandi." I follow Bruce Marshall's analysis of this article in "Quasi in figura: A Brief Reflection on Jewish Election, after Thomas Aquinas," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 7 (2009) 477-84.

⁴⁶ Text and translation in Gilby, *Consequences of Faith*, 72-73, "... ex hoc autem quod Judaei ritus suos observant, in quibus olim praefigurabatur veritas fidei quam tenemus, hoc bonum provenit quod testimonium fidei nostrae habemus ab hostibus; et quasi in figura nobis repraesentatur quod credimus. Et ideo in suis ritibus tolerantur."

Christians believe as in a *figura*: “It means that the Jewish people, just by being faithful Jews, by circumcising their sons and celebrating the Passover, (literally) worship the one true God, and (figuratively) his Christ, despite their literal rejection of him.”⁴⁷ I propose that the word *ritus* here needs to be taken in a broad sense: it does not just refer to certain ceremonies, but to the public display of institutionalized religious activities. This public side of religion is what we called the external dimension of faith before, but this time Aquinas distinguishes between the *ritus* of the Jews and those of the other unbelievers, since the Jews somehow represent what the Christians believe. In the quotation just given, Bruce Marshall shows the contents of this representation: worshipping the one true God. But if this reference to God is true, and if the word *figura* at this place lacks the usual temporal connotation of a prefiguration of Christ, then the same might be said for contemporary Muslims as well.

It is at this point that *Lumen Gentium* gives us a fuller picture of what this “representation *quasi in figura*” could mean, even though this brings us at a distance from Aquinas who would not hesitate to classify Muslims among the unbelievers whose rites should not be tolerated. In the case of the Jews, *Lumen Gentium* mentions the idea of the covenants and the promises made, the faith of the Fathers and their close relationship to God, and finally their relationship to Christ. In the case of the Muslims, the text mentions their claim to be part of the Abrahamic heritage, their worship of the one and merciful God, and finally their faith in the last judgment. As we know, *Nostra Aetate* would add to that their special regard for Jesus and his virgin mother Mary.⁴⁸ If all of this can be interpreted as being included in the *testimonium fidei nostrae*, we would have a very rich foundation for a Christian contribution to a future Jewish-Christian-Muslim theology.⁴⁹ It

⁴⁷ Marshall, “*Quasi in Figura*,” 483.

⁴⁸ Gavin D’Costa, “Continuity and Reform in Vatican II’s Teaching on Islam,” *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013) 208-222.

⁴⁹ David Burrell, C.S.C., *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

would stop short of recognizing Judaism and Islam as ways to salvation in a way that would not be faithful to the Second Vatican Council. But it would at least recognize essential elements of the Jewish and Islamic ways of living their faiths as something good that would somehow represent the faith of Christians.

“Out of Zion the Deliverer Shall Come”
St. Thomas Aquinas on Jewish Worship as
Figura praesentis spiritualis beneficii

Matthew Anthony Tapie

In the decades that followed the Second Vatican Council, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews not only developed *Nostra Aetate*'s teaching that the Jews “remain dear to God” but did so while pointing out traditional Christian teachings that must be set aside. In 1985, the Commission insisted that the Jewish people are a “permanent reality,” and ongoing “witness” to the God of Israel. “The history of Israel did not end in 70 A.D. It continued, especially in numerous Diaspora which allowed Israel to carry to the...world a witness - often heroic - of its fidelity to the one God.”¹ The Commission did not want its affirmation to be understood with reference to the Augustinian teaching that Jews unknowingly witness to the truth of Christianity by observing their religious customs.² In fact, the Commission explicitly states that the Church must set aside this doctrine: “We must...rid

¹ “Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church,” sec. 6.1. Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, June 24th, 1985.

² “We see and know that it is in order to bear this witness—which they involuntarily supply on our behalf by possessing and preserving these same books—that they themselves are scattered among all peoples, in whatever direction the Church of Christ expands.” Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 18.46, ed. George E. McCracken et al.; 7 vols., Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957-60, 6:50-51. See also Paula Fredriksen’s explanation of the testamentary doctrine. Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, Doubleday Religion, 2008, 276-77.

ourselves of the traditional idea of a people...preserved as a living argument for Christian apologetic.”³

The Church’s affirmation of the positive and ongoing value of Judaism is an important step toward building the mutual respect between Christians and Jews called for by *Nostra Aetate*. Yet theological questions remain as to whether this contemporary teaching can be reconciled with premodern Christian interpretations of Jewish worship *post passionem Christi*. For example, it seems that the Commission’s teaching on the theological status of Jewish worship is in tension with the view of St. Thomas Aquinas on the duration of what Aquinas referred to as *caeremoniae veteris legis* or ceremonies of the old law.⁴ In

³ “Notes,” sec. 6.1.

⁴ For Aquinas, “Jewish worship” can be considered under the category of *caeremoniae veteris legis* (ceremonies of the old law). Ceremonies of the old law are the precepts of the Mosaic law that concern the worship of God. *STh* I-II, q. 99, a. 3, ad 2. These ceremonies include the “sacraments” of circumcision, Passover, and dietary regulations. In *STh* I-II, q. 101, a. 4, Aquinas divides the ceremonies of the old law into four categories: 1) *sacrificia* or sacrifices; 2) *sacra* or sacred things; 3) *sacramenta* or sacraments; and 4) *observantiae* or observances. All of these categories are referred to together as *caeremoniae veteris legis*. The 1) *sacrificia* include sacrificial animals offered by the Levite priesthood. 2) *Sacra* include instruments such as the temple, tabernacle and the vessels. 3) *Sacramenta* include circumcision, “without which no one was admitted to the legal observances” (q. 102, a. 5) and the eating of the paschal banquet. Aquinas actually refers to the paschal banquet as an observance but it is treated in the same article on sacraments, indicating that the Passover, for him, may fit into both *sacramenta* and *observantiae* categories. 4) *Observantiae* mostly refers to dietary regulations, which include the prohibition of blood and fat of animals. According to Aquinas, the latter two precepts, which are the 3) sacrament of circumcision and 4) observances both function together to consecrate the Jewish people to the worship of God. In *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 6 Aquinas affirms the literal, rational cause for the *observantiae* of the law as “a special prerogative of that people.” All of these precepts are ceremonial in character in the sense that they give public expression to divine worship. English translations are from the Benziger edition unless otherwise noted. *Summa*

Summa theologiae I-II, q. 103 a. 4, Aquinas teaches that the ceremonial law, which includes circumcision, Sabbath, and dietary laws, was fitting only during the time in which it prefigured the passion of Christ.⁵ However, to observe the rites after grace has been preached is a mortal sin since because it amounts to saying Christ has yet to be born. It seems that, for Aquinas, Jewish worship in the diaspora indicates not fidelity to God but unbelief.

However, Aquinas's teaching that Jewish observance of the ceremonial law in I-II, q. 103, a. 4, which emphasizes observance of the law as unbelief, does not represent his complete thought on Jewish worship after Christ.⁶ I hope to show that when one reads

Theologica, transl. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York: Benziger, 1948.

⁵ For the Jew aware of the teaching that Christ is the First Truth (i.e. a Jew *not* in invincible ignorance), observation of the old sacraments is a mortal sin. *STh* I-II, q. 103, a. 4: "Just as it would be a mortal sin now for anyone, in making a profession of faith, to say that Christ is yet to be born, which the fathers of old said devoutly and truthfully; so too it would be a mortal sin now to observe those ceremonies which the fathers of old fulfilled with devotion and fidelity. Such is the teaching Augustine (*Contra Faust.* xix, 16), who says: 'It is no longer promised that He shall be born, shall suffer and rise again, truths of which their sacraments were a kind of image: but it is declared that He is already born, has suffered and risen again; of which our sacraments, in which Christians share, are the actual representation.'" Matthew Levering argues that Aquinas's teaching is directed at "Jewish Christians" only, and not Jews: "Aquinas does not condemn the observance of Torah by Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ." Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2002, 161fn60. However, Aquinas explicitly states that the observation of the rites, for the Jew aware of the Church's teaching, is a mortal sin, in *In Galat.* 5.1.278: "To observe the legal ceremonies after grace had been preached is a mortal sin *for the Jews*. But during the interim, i.e., before the preaching of grace, they could be observed without sin even by those who had been converted from Judaism, provided they set no hope on them." [Emphasis added].

⁶ I am speaking here of the idea of unbelief in Aquinas that refers to those who have heard of the Christian faith and willingly decide not to

Aquinas's comments on Judaism with attention to his Romans commentary, an important connection between his thought and the Church's contemporary teaching on Jewish worship emerges.⁷ I am not the first scholar to discuss Aquinas's positive view of the Jews in the Romans commentary.⁸ Nevertheless, these scholars

accept it (*contrarietas*). Valkenberg helpfully refers to *contrarietas* as "an attitude of opposition to faith." See Valkenberg's contribution to this *Jaarboek*, page 67.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the commentaries from the Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, Lander, Wyoming: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012. Aquinas conceived of the Pauline commentaries as a unit, not as individual books. This becomes quite clear from a reading of the prologues Aquinas attached to the beginning of each commentary. I examine the Pauline commentaries as a unit in another study that treats the relationship between the *Summa theologiae* and the commentaries on the theological status of Jewish observance of the ceremonial law after the passion of Christ. See my *Aquinas on Israel and the Church: A Study of the Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Wipf & Stock, 2014 [forthcoming].

⁸ See Steven C. Boguslawski, *Thomas Aquinas on the Jews: Insights into His Commentary on Romans 9-11*, Paulist Press, 2008; Bruce Marshall, "Quasi in Figura: A Brief Reflection on Jewish Election, After Thomas Aquinas," *Nova Et Vetera* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 523–28. Neither scholar treats Aquinas's description of Jewish worship as "figures of present spiritual benefit." Aquinas's commentary on Romans has received more scholarly attention than any other of the commentaries on Paul's letters. However, studies of the *lectura* are understandably limited to one or two chapters. My examination of the *lectura* is no different. A comprehensive analysis of Aquinas's view of Israel in the Romans commentary would require a thorough examination of all sixteen chapters. For these reasons, I cannot give comprehensive treatment to the relevant themes that pertain to Israel, including those famous chapters, 9 through 11. My examination of the *lectura*, therefore, focuses rather narrowly on Aquinas's view of the ceremonial precepts, especially circumcision, in the era after grace. I view this essay as building on Marshall's work by drawing upon R. Kendall Soulen's insightful reading of the significance of Paul's present tense descriptions of Israel for Jewish-Christian relations. I discuss Soulen's work below.

have not addressed Aquinas's view of Jewish worship as "figures of present spiritual benefit" or its relevance for contemporary Jewish-Christian relations.

In what follows, I argue that in places in the Romans commentary there exist an affirmation of postbiblical Jewish worship after the passion of Christ as 1) a present spiritual benefit *for Jews* and that 2) retains a figural function, although in a way unspecified. Aquinas's affirmation of the present spiritual value of Jewish observances, which includes circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath, lends significant theological support for the Commission's claim that Jewish worship retains a positive theological significance in the diaspora.

I proceed in two steps. First, I show that several positive and present tense descriptions of the Jewish people in Paul's letter to the Romans afford Aquinas the opportunity to elaborate upon the theological significance of Jewish religion after the passion of Christ.⁹ Aquinas affirms Jewish election and worship, despite unbelief in Christ, as one aspect of what he calls "prerogatives of the Jews" (*praerogativae Iudaeorum*). Aquinas also teaches that Jewish observances, including circumcision, are "figures of present spiritual benefit" (*figura praesentis spiritualis beneficii*).¹⁰ Second, I argue that the way in which these rites might remain "figures" even after the passion might be explained via Aquinas's statement in IIa-IIae q. 10 a. 11, that the rites of the Jews, although unbelievers, continue to figure the Christian faith "in a way."¹¹ Here, I suggest the ceremonial law continues to figure

⁹ *Nostra Aetate* 4.

¹⁰ My translation of *In Romanos* 9.1.744, is based on Robert Busa, ed., *Opera Omnia: Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia*, Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Fromman-Holzboog, 1980. The editors of the recent Aquinas Institute English translation also render these figures of spiritual benefit (9.1.744) in the present tense.

¹¹ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 11. "Thus from the fact that the Jews observe their rites, which, of old, foreshadowed the truth of the faith which we hold, there follows this good--that our very enemies bear witness to our faith, *and that our faith is represented in a figure, so to speak.*" [Emphasis added]. Marshall, "Quasi in Figura: A Brief Reflection on

Christ by pointing forward to that Day which the Church awaits, in company with the Apostle and Prophets, when “Out of Zion the Deliverer shall come.”¹²

A. Aquinas’s Affirmation of Jewish Election and Worship after the Passion of Christ

Aquinas views the letter to the Romans as the first piece of a larger theological work that includes nine other Pauline letters all focused on the topic of grace as it exists in the Church.¹³ The theme of Gentiles and Jews is prominently featured throughout the commentary, and can be said to function as a secondary theme, under the more general theme of the gospel of grace. Aquinas writes that most of Romans treats the power of Christ’s grace as it relates to “the people for whom the Gospel works salvation, namely both Jews and Gentiles.”¹⁴

Jewish Election, After Thomas Aquinas,” *Nova et Vetera* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 523–28.

¹² Romans 11:26, cited in Aquinas, *In Rom* 11.4.918. I am not implying that the figural meaning of Jewish worship is “the conversion of the Jews.” My intention is to echo the eschatological theme in *Nostra Aetate*.

¹³ *In Rom, prologus* 11. Aquinas assumes Paul authored Hebrews. The book is considered the first of fourteen epistles on grace in general. Aquinas understands nine of the epistles to consider grace as it exists in the Church. He explains that grace as it exists in the Church can be considered in three ways. First, in itself, and this is in the epistle to the Romans. Second, is grace as it is in the sacraments. This is treated in 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. The third way is in the effect of grace, which is, namely, the unity of the mystical body that is the Church. The foundation of the Church’s unity is treated in Ephesians; The progress and confirmation of the Church’s unity is treated in Philippians; and lastly, the defense of unity against error and persecution is treated in Colossians, and 1 and II Thessalonians. See the preface he attaches to the commentary on Romans. *In Rom, prol.*

¹⁴ *In Rom* 1.5.74; 1.5.97. Regarding the major division of the text, Aquinas explains that the greater portion of the commentary (chapters 1 through 11) consider three things in relation to the power of Christ’s

It is in this context of his theological account of grace that Aquinas references the “prerogatives of the Jews” at least eight times in the commentary.¹⁵ Aquinas also refers to the Jews’ “advantage” (*amplius*), and their “dignity” or “greatness” (*dignitatem*), and seems to use these terms interchangeably with the term “prerogatives.” For Aquinas, the “prerogatives of the Jews” includes the Mosaic law in general, and that aspect of the Mosaic law he calls “ceremonial,” which includes (but is not limited to) circumcision, Passover, and dietary laws. In the Romans commentary, Aquinas uses the term “prerogatives of Israel” to refer to the matrix of advantages he ascribes to Judaism, especially circumcision, Passover, and dietary laws.¹⁶

Below, I treat four reflections on the “prerogatives of the Jews” in the commentary on Romans, each of which shares an important characteristic. In each reflection, a positive and present tense Pauline phrase about the Jews provides Aquinas the opportunity to comment on the theological significance of the prerogatives of Israel after Christ.

Kendall Soulen’s work suggests this connection between Paul’s present tense descriptions of Israel and Aquinas’s affirmation of

grace: to what the gospel of grace extends, which is salvation; how the gospel confers salvation, which is through faith; and finally, “the people for whom the Gospel works salvation, namely, both Jews and the Gentiles.” *In Rom* 1.6.98-101.

¹⁵ The first two occurrences can be found in 2.4.224, the third is in 2.4.226. Each of these occurrences refers to the *praerogativa Iudaeorum* in regard to the Law. The fourth time occurs in 2.4.227 in regard to the “fruit of the Law.” The fifth and sixth times are in regard to “Judaism’s prerogative” as it relates to circumcision. Both these references appear in 3.1.248. The seventh time is in reference to the idea that someone might “belittle the Jews’ prerogative” in 3.1.252. The eighth time is in reference to the idea of the prerogatives being “taken away” and appears in 3.1.253. In 3.1.249 he refers to the Jews as having “great and important” advantages. In 9.1.743-47, Aquinas refers to the Jew’s “dignity” or “greatness” (*dignitas*).

¹⁶ In addition to law and circumcision Aquinas includes the term *gens* which be interpreted as “race”, “tribe”, or “people.”

the prerogatives is not a coincidence.¹⁷ For Soulen, the most important element of Paul's letter to the Romans for Jewish-Christian relations is its use of the present tense to characterize the Jewish people.¹⁸ Soulen warns that when present tense descriptions of the Jews are ignored it leads to a reading of the election of the Jewish people as a phenomenon of the past:

When Christians do not attend in a serious way to “the shock of the present tense” in Romans 9-11, they are prone to read their Scriptures in ways that lead them to conclude that God's election of the Jewish people was a phenomenon of the *ancient past*. Perhaps if they pay a little attention to Rom 11, they will also think of Israel's election as a phenomenon of the *eschatological future*, when ‘all Israel will be saved’ 11:26. This traditional Christian view of Israel's election may remind us of the Queen's attitude toward tea in *Alice in Wonderland*: “Tea yesterday, and tea tomorrow, but never tea today!” ... To the degree that Christians submit themselves to this shock, they will turn to their Jewish neighbor and see one who is God's beloved – not *only* in the primordial past and eschatological future – but *also* and *above all* in the abiding *now* of covenant history.¹⁹

Below, I show that Aquinas's four reflections on the prerogatives of the Jewish people reflect a perspective shaped by Paul's present tense descriptions of Israel in Romans.²⁰ All of the reflections, which are selected and organized with attention to Aquinas's reading of Paul's positive and present tense language

¹⁷ R. Kendall Soulen, “‘They are Israelites’: The Priority of the Present Tense for Jewish-Christian Relations,” in Florian Wilk, J. Ross Wagner, and Frank Schleritt, eds., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9-11*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

¹⁸ Soulen, 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁰ Boguslawski points out that Aquinas uses Israel and Jews interchangeably throughout his *lectura*. I therefore refer to the Jews' prerogatives or Israel's prerogatives interchangeably. The phrase “era after grace” appears in the *lectura* in 2.4.238; 4.2.357. Aquinas uses the term to refer to the period of salvation history after the passion of Christ.

about the Jews, contain the theme of Jewish election and relate to Jewish worship indirectly. The first and the third reflection concern the status of Jewish observances after Christ directly, especially circumcision. I present each reflection according to the order in which it appears in the commentary.

The first reflection includes an affirmation, elaboration, and defense of the prerogatives of the Jews and unfolds as a comment Aquinas makes upon the emphatic present tense statement Paul supplies to his own rhetorical question in Romans 3:1-2 “What advantage has the Jew?” (after grace) which is, “Much in everyway!”

The second reflection includes Aquinas’s defense of Jewish prerogatives despite the vice of unbelief. Aquinas considers an objection he understands Paul to raise regarding the advantage of the Jew: The objection is represented by Paul’s rhetorical question in Romans 3:3, “What if some of them have not believed? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” and his answer: “God forbid!”²¹

The third reflection includes an affirmation of the ceremonial law as “figures of present spiritual benefit” after Christ and unfolds as a comment upon Paul’s present tense statement “They are Israel,” in Romans 9:4-5.

The fourth reflection includes an affirmation of the prerogatives of the Jews as promises that cannot be revoked in Romans 11:28-9: “They are most dear for the sake of their fathers. For the gifts and the call of God are without repentance.”²²

1. The Great Advantages of the Jews in the Era After Grace

Aquinas’s first reflection is on the great advantages of the Jews. Near the end of the second chapter of his commentary on Romans, Aquinas contrasts “inward and outward Judaism,” based on Paul’s words that circumcision in one who breaks the law becomes

²¹ *In Rom* 3.1.251.

²² *In Rom* 11.4.912-26.

“uncircumcision.”²³ Aquinas understands Paul to argue that inward Judaism amounts to keeping the moral precepts, while an “outward Jew” is one who *only* keeps the ceremonial law and neglects the moral law. Based on Paul’s language of “uncircumcision” it seems that circumcision profits *only* if the law, i.e., the moral precepts of the old law, are also observed.²⁴ “He is truly a Jew,” explains Aquinas, “who is one *inwardly*, i.e., whose heart is possessed by the precepts of the Law, which the Jews professed.”²⁵

In chapter three, Aquinas presents what he refers to as Paul’s objection to his own teaching on outward Judaism. After Paul has argued that the Gentile, just like a Jew, can obtain the status of being a “true Jew,” by observing the moral precepts, Aquinas says Paul “objects to his own doctrine.”²⁶ According to Aquinas, the objection is represented by Paul’s rhetorical question, “Then what advantage has the Jew?” Aquinas then summarizes Paul’s rhetorical question in his own terms, and, in Paul’s voice, in order

²³ *In Rom* 2.4.243.

²⁴ Aquinas divides the Mosaic legislation into moral, ceremonial, and judicial law. The moral law more or less corresponds with the natural law. The ceremonial and judicial laws deal with the application of the universal precepts of the natural law to the particular occasions of worship of God and human relations. The latter two forms of law derive their force from God’s command and not from natural law alone. The ceremonial law had a twofold purpose that corresponds to the literal and spiritual meaning of the law. The literal meaning of the ceremonial law is that it enclosed the Jewish people in the worship of the one God. The spiritual meaning of the old law is that it prefigured Christ. Christ perfectly fulfills the Old Law in his passion and does so in order to bring it to an end in His own self, so as to show that it was ordained to Him. After Christ, the judicial laws can be observed in any political community, so long as the precepts are no longer viewed as binding through enactment by God in the old law. This is not the case for the ceremonial law. In *STh* Ia-IIae q. 103.4, Christ’s fulfillment of the Old Law ultimately means that the ceremonial precepts become dead and deadly after the passion.

²⁵ *In Rom* 2.4.244.

²⁶ *In Rom* 3.1.246.

to further clarify his view of the objection to outward Judaism: “If what I say is so, i.e., that the true Jew and true circumcision are not something outward but inward in the heart, ‘Then what advantage has the Jew,’ i.e., what has been given to him more than others? *It seems to be nothing.*”²⁷ Aquinas then puts the question in even more precise terms and asks: “Or what is the value of circumcision, i.e., outward?” and states, “it seems from his previous teaching [on outward Judaism] that there is no value.”²⁸

In his response to the objection that it seems circumcision has no value in the era of grace, Aquinas seems to shift away from the traditional position that Jewish observances become dead after the passion of Christ.²⁹ Aquinas appeals directly to Paul’s answer to his own rhetorical question in order to reject the idea that circumcision in the era after grace is superfluous. He understands Paul to answer his own objection, “What is the value of circumcision, i.e., outward?” with Paul’s own emphatic and immediate reply in Romans 3:2: “Much in every way!!” Aquinas writes, “when [Paul] says ‘Much in every way’ he answers the objection [that circumcision has no value].”³⁰

This Pauline affirmation of the theological status of the ceremonial law after Christ’s passion then compels Aquinas to embark on a lengthy defense of the advantage of outward Judaism. Aquinas explains that “when [Paul] says ‘Much in every way!’ he answers the objection: first, in regard to Judaism’s prerogative; secondly, in regard to the value of circumcision....” While Aquinas does not seem to think the rites provide justifying grace, he appears to hold that circumcision remains valuable as a prerogative of the Jewish people. Indeed, in his extended reply to the objection that circumcision is superfluous, Aquinas seems

²⁷ *In Rom* 3.1.247. [Emphasis added]

²⁸ *In Rom* 3.1.247. *Videtur quod non* is of course a phrase used to introduce a scholastic objection. That Aquinas uses the phrase to introduce the latter part of the objection (i.e. that circumcision has no value) seems to show he thinks there is a difficulty regarding the value of circumcision in the era after grace.

²⁹ *STh* I-II, q. 103, a. 4

³⁰ *In Rom* 3.1.248.

concerned to state, in four ways, the positive theological status of this Jewish rite *in the present tense*.

First, Aquinas attempts to elaborate on why circumcision is of value in the era after grace by linking the rite to the doctrine of the election of Israel—that the Jewish people are God’s special possession. Aquinas writes, “[the idea that there is no advantage to the Jew] is not fitting, since the Lord had said: ‘The Lord, your God, has chosen you to be a people for his own possession’ Deut 7:6.”³¹ For Aquinas, the election of Israel is the ground of the ongoing value of circumcision. The advantage is grounded in the theological claim that God has chosen this people.

Second, Aquinas states that another reason that the idea of circumcision being superfluous is not fitting in the era after grace is because God imposed it upon this chosen people. It is “not fitting” to say there is no value in circumcision because, Aquinas writes, “[circumcision] was imposed by God, Who says: ‘I am the Lord, your God, who teaches you unto profit’ Is 48:17.”³²

Aquinas then adds a third theological defense against the idea that there is “no value” to this significant Jewish rite after Christ. That he understands Paul’s “Much in everyway!!” to solidly defeat the objection that there is no advantage to the Jew and no longer a theological value in circumcision becomes quite clear as he elaborates upon the advantage of the prerogatives of the Jews in the present by listing the advantages of Judaism. Aquinas argues that Judaism’s “advantage is both quantitative, which is indicated when [the Apostle] says, ‘much,’ and numerical, which is indicated when he says, ‘in every way.’”³³ He then outlines several advantages including, “contemplating divine matters,” by which he means their receiving the revealed knowledge of God, and “the provision of temporal things,” by which he means deliverance from Egypt. The third advantage is “advantages relating to their ancestors,” which he explains are “the promises to their offspring.” In reference to these “promises” he cites Romans 9:4, which states, “They are Israelites, and to them belong the

³¹ *In Rom* 3.1.247.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *In Rom* 3.1.249.

sonship, the glory, the covenant.”³⁴ Each advantage of the Jews is described in the present, not in the past, which indicates that Aquinas understands these advantages of the election of Israel as an ongoing reality.

Fourth, Aquinas adds that, “In each of these there is no small advantage, but great and important ones, which are summed up when [the Apostle] says, ‘much.’”³⁵ The great and important Jewish advantage that Aquinas specifies as a chief advantage (*praecipue amplius*), is that “[the Jews] are entrusted the oracles of God, being His friends: ‘I have called you friends’ Jn 15:15.”³⁶ Their chief advantage is expressed in their closeness to God. This is because man’s “greatest good lies in knowing and clinging to God and being instructed by God.”³⁷ Here, Aquinas’s remarkably positive and present tense affirmation of the Jews as the friends of God now is reminiscent of Pope John Paul II’s positive language about the Jews as “elder brothers.”³⁸ To cite John 15:15 to support the idea that the Jews *are* entrusted with knowledge of God and enjoy a closeness to God seems to raise the theological status of Israel after the era of grace to a level not commonly affirmed in the history of Christian theology. Indeed, Aquinas seems to move well beyond Augustine’s negative but protective stance, “slay them not,” and constructs a literal theological ground for the Jewish people as the elect who remain the friends of God even after the passion of Christ.

³⁴ *Ibid.* I show below that Aquinas thinks the covenant mentioned here, in 9:4, is the old covenant.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *In Rom* 3.1.250.

³⁷ *In Rom* 3.1.249.

³⁸ Bruce Marshall, “Elder Brothers: John Paul II’s Teaching on the Jewish People as a Question to the Church,” in *John Paul II and the Jewish People: A Christian-Jewish Dialogue*, ed. Dalin David and Matthew Levering, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007, 113–29.

2. Advantages of the Jews Despite Unbelief in Christ

Next, Aquinas considers the challenge of unbelief in Christ to this doctrine. In reply to the objection he makes the argument that God's faithfulness would actually be compromised if the prerogatives of Israel were annulled due to unbelief. He does this when he considers an objection he understands Paul to raise regarding the advantage of the Jew.

The objection is represented by Paul's question, "What if some were unfaithful?"³⁹ Aquinas then restates the objection in his own terms: the unfaithfulness of Israel seems manifest in their ingratitude and lack of belief in God. Would not such unbelief mean the annulment of their prerogatives?⁴⁰ Aquinas then builds the strength of the objection by explaining that someone could belittle the Jews' prerogative on the basis that they were ungrateful to God's message and lack belief. He writes, "Someone could belittle the Jews' prerogative by citing their ingratitude, through which they would seem to have set aside the value of God's message." Aquinas then explains that this is exactly why Paul takes the time to suggest the objection, "What if some were unfaithful?" and Aquinas once more explains the objection, but in his own terms: "Does this show that the Jew has no advantage?"⁴¹ Aquinas then sharpens the objection by pointing out the nature of the unbelief he thinks is assumed by the question. Jewish unbelief is not only lack of belief in God's message, but also lack of belief in the mediators of the message: the Lawgiver himself, the prophets, and even the Son of God. Aquinas then lends biblical support to the objection by stringing together witnesses from the Old and New Testaments concerning unbelief: "For they did not

³⁹ *In Rom* 3.1.251.

⁴⁰ *In Rom* 2.4.253. Aquinas's description of this objection seems rather reminiscent of the "punitive supersessionism" of the *adversus Iudaeos* tradition. Soulen defines punitive supersessionism as follows: "According to punitive supersessionism, God abrogates God's covenant with Israel on account of Israel's rejection of Christ and the gospel." See Soulen, *The God of Israel*, 29-30.

⁴¹ *In Rom* 3.1.252.

believe the Lawgiver: ‘They had no faith in his promises’ Ps 106:24 or the prophets: they are a rebellious house Ez 2:6.” The objection even becomes more pointed with the last citation—the words of Christ to the Jews: “. . . Or the Son of God: ‘If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?’”⁴²

In his reply to this sharp objection to Jewish prerogatives Aquinas unpacks a robust theology of God’s promise to Israel. He bases his reply to the objection that the prerogatives of Israel are threatened by Jewish unbelief on Paul’s answer to the rhetorical question “Does their unfaithfulness nullify the faithfulness of God?” which is, “Let it not be!” Aquinas explains Paul’s “Let it not be!” by appealing to the idea of the faithfulness of God. He cites Hebrews 10:23: “God is faithful in keeping His promises: ‘He who promised is faithful.’”⁴³ Here, it becomes clear that Aquinas understands God’s faithfulness as the foundation of the election of Israel and it is a foundation that remains steadfast in the face of the vice of unbelief in the Son of God: “[God’s] faithfulness would be nullified, if it happened that the Jews had no advantage, just because some have not believed.” Aquinas goes on, “For God promised to multiply that people and make it great,” and then cites Genesis 22:16: “I will multiply your descendants.”⁴⁴ God’s faithfulness cannot be nullified, explains Aquinas, because “it is unacceptable for God’s faithfulness to be nullified on account of men’s belief.”⁴⁵

Aquinas then goes on to state how the prerogatives of Israel relate to God’s permanent promise of Jewish election. Aquinas argues that the prerogatives cannot be taken away without compromising God’s faithfulness. The perpetuity attributed to the prerogatives of Israel, which includes the ceremonial law, is wrapped up with the very faithfulness of God. Aquinas understands Paul to exclude the objection that there is now, after Christ, no longer an advantage to the Jew by arguing against “the unacceptable conclusion it engenders.” Aquinas states:

⁴² *In Rom* 3.1.252.

⁴³ *In Rom* 3.1.254.

⁴⁴ *In Rom* 3.1.253.

⁴⁵ *In Rom* 3.1.254. [Emended]

For if the Jews' prerogative were abrogated (*praerogativa Iudaeorum tolleretur*) on account of the unbelief of some, it would follow that man's unbelief would nullify God's faithfulness—which is an unacceptable conclusion.⁴⁶

For Aquinas, to hold that the prerogatives of Israel are annulled is “an unacceptable conclusion” because it calls into question the faithfulness of God.⁴⁷ “God's justice, which involves keeping His promises,” writes Aquinas, “is not changed on account of sin.”⁴⁸ He then cites Proverbs 8:8: “All the words of my mouth are righteous.” And Psalm 145:13: “The Lord is faithful in all his words...”⁴⁹ For Aquinas, the perpetuity of the value of the prerogatives is connected to God's promise to this people, which he will keep because God is “faithful in all [God's] words” and does not lie.

3. Spiritual Benefits of the Jewish People

Aquinas discusses the prerogatives of Israel as these relate to election once more in chapter 9, and under the category of the *dignitatem Iudaeorum* or greatness of the Jews. However, in this third reflection, the positive theological significance of Jewish worship is stated in a more explicit way when the rites are described as “figures” even after the passion of Christ. For Aquinas, *dignitatem Iudaeorum* is demonstrated in three ways: a) the Jewish people are the descendants of Jacob; b) the Jewish people enjoy benefits from God now and in the future; and c) the

⁴⁶ *In Rom* 3.1.253. [Emended]

⁴⁷ Although *inconueniens* is an adjective that can be translated “unfitting,” Aquinas uses the term to refer to a statement (the theory that the prerogatives might be removed). In the context of his usage of the term, it seems the word should carry more force: unreasonable, absurd. See Roy J. Deferrari, *A Latin-English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas, Based on The Summa Theologica and Selected Passages of His Other Writings*, St. Paul Editions, 1986, 533.

⁴⁸ *In Rom* 3.1.257.

⁴⁹ *In Rom* 3.1.257.

observances of Jewish worship are “figures of present spiritual benefit.”

a. *Dignitatem Iudaeorum* as Descendants of Jacob

First, their dignity is from their being Israelites according to the flesh. Aquinas states: “‘Who are Israelites,’ i.e., descending from the stock of Jacob who was called Israel (Gen 32:28). This pertains to their greatness (*dignitatem*), for it is said: ‘neither is there any nation so great as to have their gods coming to them’ (Deut 4:7).⁵⁰ Aquinas once again acknowledges God’s election of this particular people and names it as a benefit in the present.⁵¹ This view of the Jewish people can be viewed as an echo of Aquinas’s high view of election before the passion of Christ in the *Summa theologiae*. There, Aquinas remarks that the Israelites were “specially chosen” based on gratuitous election (I-II, q. 98, a. 4) for the worship of God (I-II, q. 102, a. 6), and that it was fitting that the people of whom Christ was to be born should be signalized by a “special sanctification (I-II, q. 98, a. 4).”⁵² For both of these reasons, the Jew enjoys a special dignity in Aquinas’s thought. However, in the *Prima Secundae* the special designation for the Jews becomes, after the passion of Christ, fades into the past. The significance of this view in the Romans commentary is that Aquinas explicitly extends the affirmation of the greatness of the Jewish people into the era of grace, despite unbelief in Christ.

⁵⁰ *In Rom* 9.1.743.

⁵¹ *In Rom* 9.1.745.

⁵² Citing Augustine’s own warning (in the *Lectures on the Gospel of John XXVI*), Aquinas points out that one should not judge why God chose this people for a special designation, and not another: ‘Why He draweth one and draweth not another, seek not thou to judge, if thou wish not to err.’”

b. *Dignitatem Iudaeorum* from God's Present and Future Spiritual Benefits

Second, Aquinas says the Jews enjoy dignity from two spiritual benefits (*spiritualia beneficia*) from God (*Dei beneficiis*), a present spiritual benefit, and a future spiritual benefit.

The first spiritual benefit from God is identified as a *present* spiritual benefit and described as Israel's adoption as "sons of God."⁵³ Aquinas writes, "Second, [Paul] shows the greatness (*dignitatem*) of that race (*gentis*) from God's benefits: first, the spiritual blessings, one of which refers to the present: to whom belongs the adoption of sons of God. Hence it says in Exodus: Israel is my son, my firstborn (Exod 4:22):"⁵⁴

Aquinas then explains that the literal meaning of this sonship refers to "spiritual men" who arose among the Jewish people (*spirituales viros qui fuerunt in illo populo*). As he does in other places, Aquinas contrasts spiritual men to "worldly men" of the nations: ". . . but as to worldly men he stated above (Rom 8:15) that they received the spirit of slavery in fear." The high view of the spiritual men of Israel should not be overlooked. Aquinas uses the term in other places to refer to Christians and monks.⁵⁵

⁵³ "Second, he shows the greatness of that race from God's blessings . . . the spiritual blessings, one of which refers to the present . . ." *In Rom* 9.1.744.

⁵⁴ *In Rom* 9.1.744.

⁵⁵ Cf. Aquinas's *Commentary on John* 6.3.896; In *STh* III, q. 41. a. 4. Aquinas uses the term "spiritual men" as a synonym for "sons of God." There may also be an important connection present between the term "spiritual men" in this text and the Galatians commentary, in which the ceremonial law is also discussed. He is concerned to protect the idea that Christ observed the ceremonial law, which he says seems to be undermined by the opposition of spirit to law in Ga. 5:18. "But here a difficulty comes to mind from what is said below, namely: If you are 'led by the spirit, you are not under the law' (5:18). Hence if Christ is not only spiritual but the giver of the Spirit, it seems unbecoming to say that He was made under the Law. [Emphasis added] I answer that "to be under the Law" can be taken in two ways: in one way so that "under" denotes the mere observance of the Law, and in this sense Christ was made under

Aquinas refers to the second benefit from God as a *future* spiritual benefit. He explains that this “spiritual blessing refers to the future when Paul says: ‘the glory.’ Aquinas explains that this glory refers to “the sons of God promised to them,” which may refer to the existence of “spiritual men” rising among future generations of Israel or to what he expects as the conversion of the Jews at the second coming. Aquinas bases this interpretation in Exodus 40:32: “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”⁵⁶

c. *Dignitatem Iudaeorum* from Circumcision, Law, and Worship as “Figures of Present Spiritual Benefit”

Aquinas then goes on to introduce another classification of spiritual benefits from God. He explains that Paul sets out three “figures of present spiritual benefit” (*figura praesentis spiritualis beneficii*). Aquinas frequently uses the term *figura* throughout his works to refer to the symbolic meaning of the ceremonial law as foreshadowing Christ. However, this is the only place in his work where he employs the phrase “figures of present spiritual benefit,” and this novelty seems to indicate something important. I list these “present figures” which are also spiritual benefits as 3, 4, 5, in

the Law, because He was circumcised and presented in the temple: “I am not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Mt 5:17). In another way so that “under” denotes oppression. And in this way one is said to be under the Law if he is oppressed by fear of the Law. *But neither Christ nor spiritual men are said to be under the Law in this way. Ad Galatas 4.2.* [Emphasis added] In both texts the “spiritual men” under the old law are affirmed as a positive theological possibility. In the Galatians commentary the spiritual men are discussed as under the law in a positive way, as Christ was. But in Galatians, Aquinas clearly thinks this time has passed. However, in the Romans commentary, it appears Aquinas employs the concept of “spiritual men” of Israel under the law as a present spiritual benefit after the passion of Christ. This would mean that Aquinas may have been open to the Spirit allowing for the observation of the Jewish law by Jews beyond the promulgation of grace (see *STh* II-II, q. 103, a. 4). I realize that this is highly speculative but it seems the category of “under the law” is worthy of further investigation.

⁵⁶ *In Rom* 9.1.744.

order to maintain continuity with the second category (present and future spiritual benefits). The difference between the second category and the third is that this last set of spiritual benefits are not only present benefits, but “figures.” It is important to note that Aquinas explicitly lists the figures of present spiritual benefit as the third proof for the “greatness” of *the Jews, not Christians*.⁵⁷

The first “figure of present spiritual benefit” is identified as the covenant mentioned in Romans 9:4, which Aquinas says is “the pact of circumcision [*pactum circumcisionis*] given to Abraham, as is recorded in Gen 17” Here, Aquinas explicitly states that circumcision is a figure of a *present* spiritual benefit (*praesentis spiritualis beneficii*). That circumcision is described as a “present” figure that remains connected in any way to a spiritual benefit after the passion of Christ is incredibly significant given Aquinas’s standard teaching, a point I will return to below. Additionally, Aquinas’s identification of the covenant of Romans 9:4 as the pact of circumcision diverges from the standard biblical commentary of his day, the *Glossa ordinaria*, which is careful to state that the covenant mentioned in Romans 9:4 refers to “the New Testament” covenant, *not* the old.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *In Rom 9.1.744*: “...beneficia figuralia, quorum tria sunt figura praesentis spiritualis beneficii....” Larcher’s original translation of these benefits as “were figures of present spiritual benefit” rather than “are figures of present spiritual benefit.” However, the Italian Dominican Study Edition of the Romans commentary translates these benefits in the present tense. See Tommaso d’Aquino (san), *Commento al Corpus Paulinum (expositio et lectura super epistolas Pauli apostoli) vol. 1-3 - Seconda Lettera ai corinzi-Lettera ai galati*, ESD-Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2006, 601. Additionally, the Aquinas Institute translation (2012) of the commentary also noticed Larcher’s mistranslation and amended it to the present tense.

⁵⁸ *In Rom 9.1.744*: “Deinde ponit alia beneficia figuralia, quorum tria sunt figura praesentis spiritualis beneficii. Et horum primum est testamentum, id est, pactum circumcisionis Abrahae datum.” Aquinas considers the possibility that Paul might be referring not to the covenant with Israel but to the New covenant: “although this could be referred to the new covenant preached first to the Jews. Hence, the Lord Himself said: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 15:24);

The second “figure of present spiritual benefit” is the Law given through Moses. “Hence, he continues: ‘the giving of the law: Moses commanded a law to us (Sir 24:33).’”

The third “figure of present spiritual benefit” is divine worship, which Aquinas describes as “the service with which they served God,” and he places Jewish observances in contrast to the idolatry of the nations.

What is the relationship of these “figures of present spiritual benefits” to the first category of Jewish greatness as well as the “present” and “future” benefits of the second category of Jewish greatness?

It may help to examine what Aquinas says about each dignity or greatness in light of what Aquinas teaches on the notion of *figura* and the election of Israel in the *Summa theologiae*. Aquinas teaches that the ceremonial law, which was indeed good, had a twofold purpose: the literal purpose is that the law was that it a) enclosed the Jewish people in the worship of the one God. The figurative purpose of the law was b) to prefigure Christ.⁵⁹ The first dignity listed above (in the Romans commentary) seems to pertain to what Aquinas usually understands as the literal meaning of Israel, or God’s choice of these particular people to be his own possession. Aquinas does not say that God’s choice of this people

and Jer (31:31): “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.” Despite the alternative interpretation Aquinas offers regarding the reference to the covenant—that it “could be” the new covenant—he thinks the “pact of circumcision” is the literal meaning. That he mentions the possibility of it being the new testament seems to be a nod to the standard medieval interpretation, the *Glossa ordinaria* on Romans, which explicitly states that this reference to the covenant means the new covenant and not the old: “*the glory*--because they are a peculiar people, or because of what they do through miracles. *The testament*--the New Testament. *The legislation*--which the Old Testament presented through figures...” Nevertheless, by listing circumcision first Aquinas seems to deliberately move away from this interpretation. See Michael Scott Woodward, tran., *The Glossa Ordinaria on Romans*, Western Michigan University, 2011, 138-9.

⁵⁹ *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 2.

is figurative.⁶⁰ Although Aquinas teaches that it is fitting that the Jewish people enjoy a special, literal sanctification, because they are the people from whom Christ will come, God's election of these people is not referred to as a figure.

The second dignity listed above, which discusses the present benefit of sonship, also seems to refer to the literal meaning of the elect people in general. The Jews are not only the people chosen by God but also a people called to be set apart or distinct from the nations. Aquinas seems not to attribute a spiritual meaning to the notion that the Jews are "adopted sons" from among the nations. Aquinas may consider the future glory a literal benefit because he is aware of Paul's teaching that all Israel will be saved.

However, the ceremonial precepts, by which the Jewish people are enclosed in the worship of the God of Israel (literal meaning), are usually referred to as figures of Christ. Perhaps this is why the third category, which is the only category that explicitly mentions circumcision, the Law of Moses, and divine worship, are named as figures. When Aquinas uses the phrase "figures of present spiritual benefit" he is discussing the sacraments he usually refers to as figures of Christ.⁶¹

However, what is especially noteworthy about Aquinas's description of the ceremonial rites as "figures of present spiritual benefit" is that these observances are explicitly named *present figures*. Indeed, the concept of Jewish worship as "present figure" after the passion of Christ represents a divergence from his standard teaching, as represented in *STh*. q. 103 a. 4, and the commentaries on Galatians and Hebrews, that the rites *were* figures.

According to Aquinas's standard position, the old sacraments have been made void because the prefiguring function has been exhausted by the arrival of the reality to which the rites pointed. In

⁶⁰ See *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 4.

⁶¹ This is not to say that the first and second forms of dignity (election of Israel; present and future benefits) cannot have spiritual meanings. I am pointing out that it is Aquinas's usual practice to identify the ceremonial law as figures of Christ whereas his language about the election of Israel seems to leave out references to the spiritual meaning.

the Hebrews commentary, Aquinas explains why the ceremonial laws are no longer to be followed when he explains why it is acceptable to tithe even though tithing is a commandment of the old law, which has passed away. When he introduces his comment on the problem, Aquinas summarizes this objection to tithing and mentions that observing the ceremonial law is now a sin: “since the observance of a commandment of the law is now a sin, it seems unlawful to give or receive tithes now.”⁶² Aquinas then responds to this objection by presenting the famous distinction between moral and ceremonial law:

I answer that there were in the law some precepts purely ceremonial, such as circumcision, the offering of the lamb, and so on. *Such laws, since they were only figurative, it is no longer licit to observe*, for they were a figure of something to come; hence, anyone who observes them now would be signifying that Christ is still to come. But others were purely moral, and these must be observed now. Among these was the giving of tithes . . . but the determination of such a portion is now made by the Church, just as in the Old Testament it was determined by the law.⁶³

Later, Aquinas asks why God would command sacrifices if he did not desire them. He states once more that observance of the ceremonial law after Christ is a sin. God does not want these observances “for that time in which the shadows cease with the advent of truth, and hence a person would sin by offering them now.”⁶⁴ These ceremonies were accepted because “they *were* figures of Christ whose passion was accepted by God.”⁶⁵ After Christ, these observances are no longer figures. Indeed, to observe

⁶² *In Heb.* 7.2.339. [Emphasis added]

⁶³ *In Heb.* 7.2.339.

⁶⁴ *In Heb.* 10.1.488. It seems clear here that Aquinas is describing how observing the ceremonial law, in this case, the sacrifices, is a sin for anyone who offers such things, not only Jewish believers in Christ.

⁶⁵ *In Heb.* 10.1.488. This twofold meaning of the ceremonial law echoes that of the *Summa theologiae* in that it prefigures Christ’s passion and also served as to enclose the Jewish people in worship.

the ceremonies after the passion “would be an insult (*iniuria*) to the sacrifice of Christ.”⁶⁶

In almost every place where Aquinas discusses the sacraments of the Old Testament, the twofold ratio of the rites is affirmed as something in the past. The rites are no longer figures. The ceremonial law enclosed the Jewish people in proper worship of God and it served to prefigure the perfect priesthood of the One who was to come. After Christ, however, to observe these rites brings spiritual death for Jews. In *In Galatas* 5.1.278: Aquinas states the hard consequences of observing the law after grace: “To observe the legal ceremonies after grace had been preached is a mortal sin for the Jews.”⁶⁷

However, in the Romans commentary, Jewish observances are not described as rites that *were* figures that are now *mortua et mortifera*.⁶⁸ Rather, Aquinas thinks the rites somehow retain a figuring function. Why? It seems that the present tense force of Paul’s words (“Much in every way!” and “They are Israelites . . .”) may have pushed Aquinas to reconfirm the literal and figural ratio for the rites based on Pauline authority.

First, Aquinas locates a literal meaning for the theological value of Jewish worship in Paul’s teaching that the advantages of the Jews cannot be abrogated without calling into question God’s faithfulness. Second, Aquinas asserts a figural meaning for the value of Jewish worship when he says that these rites are “figures of present spiritual benefit.” To say the pact of circumcision is spiritually beneficial for Jews in any way seems a significant step away from the “dead and deadly” view of Jewish worship in ST I-II 103.4. Aquinas’s teaching seems to imply that the sacrament of circumcision retains a present figural meaning, although he does

⁶⁶ *In Heb* 10.1.500.

⁶⁷ *In Gal* 5.1.278.

⁶⁸ *STh* I-II, q. 103, a. 4. References to figures in the Old Testament appears in *In Heb* 1.3.51; 4.1.202. The first time Aquinas elaborates on the prefiguring aspect of the old law is in his explanation of the sense in which the Levitical priesthood is described as “perpetual” in Exodus 27:21. The most explicit treatment of the prefiguring function of the ceremonial law seems to be in 7.3.352.

not specify what this is.⁶⁹ Next, I briefly treat the last reflection on the prerogatives of the Jewish people in the Romans commentary. I then suggest how this continuing figuring function might be understood via a text on the “toleration” of Jewish rites in the *Secunda Secundae*.

d. *The Certainty of God’s Promise to Israel*

The final reflection in the Romans commentary that I want to highlight is when Aquinas comments on Paul’s famous words in Romans 11:29, “For the gifts and the call of God are without repentance.” Here, Aquinas once again secures the perpetuity of the election of Israel by grounding it in God’s unchanging promise.⁷⁰ In particular, he does this when he responds to an objection he raises to the idea that God’s command can change.⁷¹ Indeed, Aquinas explains the objection as follows: “God’s call seems to be changed sometimes, since it is written ‘Many are called but few are chosen’ Mt 22:14.”

In his reply, Aquinas once again explains that the ongoing election of Israel is secured by God’s promise, which is a promise that is, because of God’s predestination, “as good as given.” Commenting upon Romans 11:29, “For the gifts and the call of God are without repentance,” Aquinas says that: “it should be noted that ‘gift’ is taken here for a promise [*promissione*] made according to God’s foreknowledge or predestination, and ‘call’ is taken for election.” “Because both are so certain,” explains

⁶⁹ In the second part of the essay, I propose how the rite might continue to figure Christ below.

⁷⁰ *In Rom* 11.4.926.

⁷¹ In the Hebrews commentary, Aquinas actually argues for the opposite position when drawing upon Augustine. He argues that God’s providence is different than God and that while God does not change, his providence can. The difference between these two texts is that in the Romans *lectura*, Aquinas is more aware of the robust depth and perpetuity of the promise to carnal Israel while in the Hebrews *lectura* the promise is defined narrowly, as a temporal and physical phenomenon. See *In Heb* 7.3.352.

Aquinas, “whatever God promises *is as good as given* and whomever [God] elects is somehow already called.”⁷²

However, Aquinas then adds an eternal/temporal distinction regarding God’s promise in order to explain that a promise from God can “change” in the sense that human persons can cast off God’s grace. Aquinas says this change is not because God’s eternal acts change, but because man changes when he throws off God’s grace.

Nevertheless, what Aquinas’s says concerning God’s promise to Israel seems secured by his argument concerning the unbelief of the Jews in *In Rom* 3.1.257. If one were to claim that the promise to Israel can be invalidated not by a change in God but by a change in man, e.g., the Jews’ rejection of Christ understood as the “fall” of the Jews, the problem of the cancelled promise remains. As Aquinas states in 3.1.257, if the election of the Jews was abrogated on account of their unbelief in God in Christ (i.e. “change in man”), this would be unacceptable because it calls into question God’s faithfulness. In other words, when Aquinas does address Jewish unbelief at length in *In Rom* 3.1.257, the conclusion he draws seems to employ a notion of *promissione* that is not dislocated from the idea of God’s faithfulness to the particular people, the Jews.

Overall, these reflections seem to affirm the election of Israel and Jewish worship and undermine the teaching that observance of the ceremonial law is, after the passion of Christ, superfluous at best and sinful at worst. Yet it is not at all clear how exactly the spiritual benefits of the law and circumcision can be said to remain figures if the exact relationship of the rites to Christ and to his passion is not specified. I attempt to address this difficulty in the final section of the essay.

⁷² *In Rom* 11.4.926.

B. “Out of Zion the Deliverer shall come”: Jewish Worship as a Figure of that Day which the Church awaits with the Apostle and Prophets

It is well known that Aquinas follows the traditional view of the preparatory role Judaism played in salvation history:⁷³ In so far as the old sacrament of circumcision prefigured Christ it also conferred grace. Whether this can be the case after the passion, and on Aquinas’s terms, is problematic to say the least. In the Romans commentary, Aquinas does not explain how the rites can be said to remain figures and spiritually beneficial in so far as the rites relate to Christ. How can Aquinas describe the old sacrament as a present figure *and* a spiritual benefit if Christ has already come? What can we say about the logic of the concept of a “figure of present spiritual benefit”?

First, it is important to briefly reflect upon the historical theological context of Aquinas’s thought on duration of the figuring function of the old sacraments. Medieval preoccupation with the relationship between the old and new covenants was commonplace. According to Marie-Dominique Chenu, the twelfth-century theological world understood fulfillment of the Old Law within a dialectic between two poles: 1) continuity with the old law and 2) break with the old law.⁷⁴ Chenu explains that

⁷³ Schoot and Valkenberg’s description of this prefigurative formula is one of the most concise: “What has been said in the Old Law figuratively is now revealed in Christ in truth.” Pim Valkenberg and Henk Schoot, “Thomas Aquinas and Judaism,” in *Aquinas in Dialogue: Thomas for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jim Fodor and Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, Wiley-Blackwell, 2004, 56. Although Valkenberg and Schoot’s discussion of the prefiguring concept concerns Aquinas’s christological interpretation of the Psalms, their insights about this hermeneutical approach can be said to apply to Aquinas’s interpretation of the Old Testament in general.

⁷⁴ See Marie-Dominique Chenu, “The Old Testament in Twelfth-Century Theology,” in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1997, 160. See also Beryl Smalley “William of Auvergne, John of La Rochelle

this century experienced an increasingly positive attention to figures in the old covenant and did not treat it as a bygone and defunct stage. Rather, theologians sought to elaborate upon how it might illuminate various aspects of Christendom. It was thought that the new lies enveloped in the old and thus typological exploration of the old abounded.⁷⁵ Attending to the two poles of what Chenu refers to as the “textual continuum” was “intrinsic to the progress of the economy of salvation, a progress that anticipated its final course through prefigurations of the future.”⁷⁶ Continuity with biblical history was encapsulated in Christ’s words “I have not come to destroy the Law.” And yet breaks with this same biblical history were encapsulated in Christ’s words “but I say to you.”⁷⁷

That Aquinas shared this medieval preoccupation with the old covenant and its relation to the new is evidenced in a number of ways. First, the *Libri Sententiarium* contains few references to the old covenant. But by the time Aquinas writes the *Prima Secundae* his interest in the old law had expanded so much that the articles

and St. Thomas Aquinas on the Old Law,” in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning From Abelard to Wyclif*, Hambleton Continuum, 1981; Richard Schenk, “Covenant Initiation: Thomas Aquinas and Robert Kilwardby on the Sacrament of Circumcision,” in *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris: Image et Message de Saint Thomas d’Aquin à travers les Récentes Études Historiques, Herméneutiques et Doctrinales: Hommage au Professeur Jean-Pierre Torrell OP à l’occasion de son 65e Anniversaire*, ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira, Fribourg, Suisse: Editions universitaires, 1993, 555–93; “Views of the Two Covenants in Medieval Theology,” *Nova Et Vetera* 4, no. 4 (2006): 891–916. Of course, exploring “the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament in light of Christ and the New Testament” is not simply a medieval theological tradition but the traditional Christian approach to the Old Testament. See Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture: Volume 1*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998, ix.

⁷⁵ Chenu, 158.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

on the ceremonial law represent the longest in the entire *Summa*.⁷⁸ Second, Aquinas discusses the famous controversy between Augustine and Jerome on the intention of the apostles' observance of the law in both the *Prima Secundae* and *ad Galatas*. Third, Aquinas wrestled with the interpretation of the relationship of the rites to the grace of Christ throughout his advanced teaching career. As Pim Valkenberg and Henk Schoot point out, in his *Libri Sententiarum*, Aquinas taught that the sacrament of circumcision mediated grace in and of itself. In the *Summa theologiae*, he shifts his view toward a more Christocentric teaching and argues that the sacrament mediates grace in so far as the rites prefigure Christ.⁷⁹

In the Romans commentary Aquinas seems to view the Pauline affirmations of the greatness of the Jews despite unbelief as a reconfirmation of the twofold purpose of Jewish worship. Aquinas seems to identify a literal meaning for the Jewish rites in the era of grace—the advantages of the Jews are bound up with God's faithfulness. Aquinas also introduces a novel concept of the figural meaning for the old sacraments when he suggests that these rites are present figures even after Christ. Is it possible that the language of "figures of present spiritual benefit" represents another stage in the development in Aquinas's thought?

Indeed, in addition to the "figures of present spiritual benefit" of *ad Romanos* 9.1.744, there is another text that indicates a possible development in Aquinas's view of the figuring function of Jewish worship. In *IIa-IIae* q. 10 a. 11, the old sacraments are also described as present tense *figura* after the passion. In his discussion of unbelief (*infidelitas*) as a vice against faith, and whether such unbelief should be tolerated in Christendom, Aquinas states that Jewish rites should be tolerated because of a

⁷⁸ John Y. B. Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews*, 40; Wyschogrod, "A Jewish Reading of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Old Law," 126; Edward Synan, "Some Medieval Perceptions on Jewish Law," 120; Coolman points out that *I-II*, q. 102, a. 3 ad 5 runs for more than 8,000 words. Holly Taylor Coolman, "Christological Torah," 5.

⁷⁹ The old view is in *In IV Sent* d. 1, q. 2, qua. 3. Aquinas revises his view in *STh* III, q. 62, a. 6 ad 3; q. 70, a. 4.

particular good: “Thus from the fact that the Jews observe their rites, which, of old, foreshadowed the truth of the faith which we hold, there follows this good—that our very enemies bear witness to our faith, *and that our faith is represented in a figure, so to speak.*”⁸⁰ Although the standard view is confirmed when Aquinas says the rites prefigured the truth of the Christian faith, in the past, he seems open to a continuing figuring function in relation to the Christian faith. The rites are also said to continue to bear witness to Christianity, somehow, even in the present. Bruce Marshall helpfully explains the significance of this text:

Given the tremendous weight Thomas ascribes to the figurative meaning of Jewish worship *before* Christ, to say that this worship retains a figurative significance after Christ is not a trivial claim. If Jewish worship even now attests Christian truth in a figurative way, it must somehow still do what it *did* from the beginning: point to Jesus Christ in its own distinctive fashion, join the faithful worshipper to his incarnation and passion, and so confer the grace of justification (cf. *STh* I-II, q. 103, a. 2 c; *In Gal.* 3, 4, no. 145).⁸¹

It is important to note that this teaching differs from Augustine’s doctrine of Jewish witness. Augustine’s teaching on the apologetic function of Judaism does not teach that Jewish worship is a figure of Christ. Rather, Augustine’s witness doctrine teaches that when the Jews embrace their scriptures they unknowingly prove that Christians do not make up the prophecies about Christ. The traditional Augustinian concept of Jewish witness therefore has nothing to do with the concept of the rites as “figures” of Christ. On Augustine’s terms, the old sacraments become dead after the passion.

This text in Aquinas reflects an idea about the spiritual meaning of Jewish law that seems similar the Aquinas’s Romans commentary. II-II, q. 10, a. 11 is noteworthy because Aquinas

⁸⁰ *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 11: “Ex hoc autem quod Iudaei ritus suos observant, in quibus olim praefigurabatur veritas fidei quam tenemus, hoc bonum provenit quod testimonium fidei nostrae habemus ab hostibus, et quasi in figura nobis repraesentatur quod credimus.”

⁸¹ Marshall, “Quasi in Figura,” 483.

does not refer to Jewish worship *only* as rites that *prefigured* the Christian faith, which was the function of Jewish worship *before* Christ. Rather, the observances of the Jews are said to continue to figure Christ so to speak. In the Romans commentary, it is asserted that Jewish worship possesses a present figuring function. Yet the reality the rites figure is unspecified. In II-II, q. 10, a. 11, however, Aquinas is more specific, and he says that Jewish worship continues to figure the Christian faith.

In what way might the religion of our Jewish brothers and sisters continue to “figure” the Christian faith, “so to speak,” even after the advent of Christ? As Marshall says, “It is a bit hard to see how Jewish worship could be a denial of Christ (*STh* I-II, q. 103, a. 4) and at the same time could figurally attest Christ.”⁸²

Perhaps the way in which the ceremonial law could continue to figure Christ can be explained by way of the claim Aquinas makes concerning the rites continuing to figure the Christian faith, not only the passion. Although I am on quite speculative ground here, it seems Jewish worship could be said to figure that Day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice. *Nostra Aetate* highlights the importance of Paul’s witness concerning this day: “In company with the Prophets and...the Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice.”⁸³ It is this future day when, “Out of Zion the Deliverer shall come,” that there will be a *perfect fulfillment* of God’s promise. As the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews stated in 1985, “We believe that those promises were fulfilled with the first coming of Christ. But it is nonetheless true that we still await their perfect fulfillment in his glorious return at the end of time.”⁸⁴ Faithful Jewish observation of the rites in the

⁸² *Ibid.*, 484.

⁸³ *Nostra Aetate* 4.

⁸⁴ Christ’s fulfillment of the promises does not necessarily entail a perfect and complete fulfillment. It seems that, at least for the Commission, there is a notion of eschatological fulfillment of Israel’s promise that has yet to be worked out theologically. “When commenting on biblical texts, emphasis will be laid on the continuity of our faith with

diaspora, after the passion, might be said to figure this complete fulfillment of God's promise on that Day known to God alone.

In summary, at several places in his commentary on Romans, Aquinas seems to allow present tense, positive descriptions of Israel to shape his views of the theological status of Jewish worship even in the face of unbelief in Christ. Aquinas affirms and defends the ongoing election of Israel when and he argues that abrogating the prerogatives of the Jews would compromise God's faithfulness. Aquinas's Romans commentary contains a theological affirmation of the Jewish practices of circumcision, law, and worship, as beneficial to the Jewish people. Aquinas recognizes such observance as spiritually beneficial despite the fact that observance of Jewish rites does not constitute faith in Christ. The Jewish rites are not only beneficial to the Jewish people but these rites are also described as figures, although Aquinas does not specify their relation to Christ's ministry or how this might be reconciled with his teaching from I-II, q. 103, a. 4, which states the observance of the rites is mortal sin. Perhaps the rites continue to figure the future reality the Church awaits with the Apostle Paul and the Prophets, when, "out of Zion the Deliverer shall come."

that of the earlier Covenant, in the perspective of the promises, without minimizing those elements of Christianity which are original. We believe that those promises were fulfilled with the first coming of Christ. *But it is none the less true that we still await their perfect fulfillment in his glorious return at the end of time.*" "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*," 1974. Additionally, the Pontifical Biblical Committee has stated that the Jewish reading of the Old Testament and the Jewish messianic hope remain valid. "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures affirms that "Christians can and ought to admit that the Jewish reading of the Bible is a possible one, in continuity with the Jewish Sacred Scriptures from the Second Temple period, a reading analogous to the Christian reading which developed in parallel fashion. Both readings are bound up with the vision of their respective faiths, of which the readings are the result and expression. Consequently, both are irreducible." The Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible", Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002.

According to John Connelly, one of the most revolutionary aspects of *Nostra Aetate*, is that the Church employs the “use of the present tense to refer to the Jews’ ‘sonship’ [Romans 9:4-5].⁸⁵ At some level, Aquinas seems to have absorbed the “shock of the present tense” in Paul’s letter to the Romans sometime during his teaching career as *magister in sacra pagina*. Aquinas’s positive view of Jewish worship after the passion of Christ provides premodern support for the Church’s contemporary teaching that the Judaism of the diaspora retains positive theological significance. It is my hope that this reading of the Romans commentary, alongside of II-II q. 10, a. 11, might contribute to the sort of bridge-building between Aquinas and the vision of the Second Vatican Council that my colleague Pim Valkenberg has suggested is necessary.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012, 261.

⁸⁶ Valkenberg, “Three Ways of Not Living By Faith,” 2.

THE VALUE OF INFUSED LOVE
Nygren, Brümmer and Aquinas on *Agape* and *Caritas*

Marcel Sarot

Eros and Agape

To what extent is love self-seeking? On the romantic ideal of love, love is completely disinterested. Probably to his own surprise, to St Paul belongs the honour of formulating the main creed of this ideal:

Love is kind and patient,
never jealous, boastful,
proud, or rude.
Love isn't selfish
or quick tempered.
It doesn't keep a record
of wrongs that others do.
Love rejoices in the truth,
but not in evil.
Love is always supportive,
loyal, hopeful,
and trusting.
Love never fails! (1 Corinthians 13: 4–8a CEV)

Triggered by Dawkins's concept of the selfish gene, on the other hand, evolutionary biologists often seem to suppose that self-interest is the ultimate engine of all behaviour, including love.¹ Economists and psychologist have, on various grounds, argued the same, and have shown that partner choice, for instance,

¹ Cf. Ross Buck, "The Genetics and Biology of True Love: Prosocial Biological Affects and the Left Hemisphere", *Psychological review* 109/4 (2002), 739–744 (741–742).

seems to be motivated by self-interest. The connection between self-interest and love has long been noticed; that self-interest plays a role in erotic love was a theme already in Plato.²

Some theologians unhesitatingly apply to God *all* aspects of human love, including self-interest and even the pursuit of sexual relief. The most extreme example that I have come across is that of the British Roman Catholic Theologian Murdoch Dahl. He argues:

If it is legitimate to use analogy in talking about God, it seems inescapable to me that we should admit that God is a 'sexual' God. Sex is his invention; it must say something about his nature. ... The orgasmic experience ... is the most exquisite physical experience anyone can have ... , ... heavenly bliss. I use the word 'heavenly' advisedly. ... God is a sexual God. If a 'big bang' started the universe, as most astro-physicists now claim, then I believe it may be described, without irreverence or salaciousness, as God's mighty ejaculation.³

Fortunately, few theologians have displayed this degree of bad taste in their characterization of God. But the idea that God is motivated by self-interest is not alien to theology. The Reformed theologian Richard Mouw, for instance, claims that:

Needless to say, from a Reformed perspective, the kinds of objections that can be lodged against psychological egoism as a general theory of *human* motivation do not apply when adapted as an account of the divine psyche. God has every right in the universe to think exclusively in terms of divine self-interest. So, if God's recognition of God's basic desire for self-glorification turns out to be best understood in terms of God's complete self-absorption, so be it.⁴

² See, e.g., Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love*, Cambridge: CUP, 1993, 110–118.

³ Murdoch Dahl, *Daughter of Love*, Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1989, 277–278, 280.

⁴ Richard J. Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001, 63. More on divine self-interest in Sandra L. Gravett, Karla G. Bohmbach, F.V.

The majority of the Christian tradition, however, has always asserted that God's love is disinterested and self-giving, not self-interested. This has been nicely articulated by C.S. Lewis in the Introduction to his *The Four Loves*. There, Lewis distinguishes between need-love and gift-love:

The typical example of Gift-love would be that love which moves a man to work and plan and save for the future well-being of his family which he will die without sharing or seeing; of the second, that which sends a lonely or frightened child to its mother's arms. ... Divine Love is Gift-love. The Father gives all He is and has to the Son. The Son gives Himself back to the Father and gives Himself to the world, and for the world to the Father, and thus gives the world (in Himself) back to the Father too.⁵

So the love of God is pure gift-love. As often, Lewis is perceptive, not original. The distinction between need-love and gift-love is indebted to, if not identical with, Anders Nygren's classic distinction between *agape* and *eros*. *Eros* is the desire for an absent good that I need in order to obtain happiness, *agape* the gift of oneself in service to the other. In his analysis of *eros*, Nygren draws on Plato. *Eros* is born out of a lack and strives for a good: it desires beauty, goodness, friendliness, warmth, etc. According to Plato, we love other persons for the sake of the goods we can acquire through them: we love a physician, the rich for the sake of wealth, the strong for the sake of support. This means that we do not love people for the sake of themselves, but for the sake of the goods that they bring with them.⁶ For the concept of *agape*, on the other hand, Nygren draws on St Paul.⁷ While *eros* is an upward movement, *agape* comes down. *Eros* is

Greifenhagen & Donald C. Polaski, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: A Thematic Approach*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008, 453.

⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Glasgow: Fount Paperbacks, 27 1989, 7.

⁶ Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, rpt. London: SPCK, 1982; cf. Brümmer, *Model of Love*, 110–118.

⁷ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 105–145.

the aspiration of human beings towards the higher, *agape* 'is the attitude of the higher in stooping down in service to the lower'.⁸ Eros is born from want: it aims for the good which it lacks; agape is born from abundance: an abundance of good, from which it gives to one who has not. Thus, *eros* 'recognises value in its object', while *agape* 'creates value in its object'.⁹ The idea is, that there is no way from human beings to God; we cannot reach God by our own initiative. But God can reach us, and He does so in *agape*; out of *agape*, God offers us His grace.¹⁰ For Nygren, then, agape and eros are incompatible: they are 'two fundamentally opposed types of religion and ethics'.¹¹ It is important to note that, while human beings can have *eros*, God cannot; and while God can have *agape*, human beings by themselves cannot:

If it is asked what motive there is for Christian love towards one's neighbour, what inspires it and sets it in motion, there can only be one answer: God Himself. ... Since God is Agape, everyone who is loved by him and has been gripped and mastered by His love cannot but pass on this love to his neighbour.¹²

In the life that is governed by Agape, the acting subject is not man himself; it is ... God.¹³

Thus, human beings become a kind of tube through which God hands on God's love to our human neighbours.

There are various problems with Nygren's views to which Vincent Brümmer, a contemporary colleague and friend of Ferdinand de Grijns, the founding father of the Thomas Institute, has drawn attention.¹⁴ I shall focus here on one of these, the criticism that *agape*, far from excluding *eros*, needs it to be able to create value:

⁸ Brümmer, *Model of Love*, 128.

⁹ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 210.

¹⁰ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 80–81.

¹¹ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 205.

¹² Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 216.

¹³ Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 129.

¹⁴ Brümmer, *Model of Love*, 131–134, 159–160.

It is impossible to oppose need-love and gift-love in the way Nygren does, since in crucial respects they are identical: it is only by needing that we can give. It is only through need-love, which desires your good as well as your love, that I can bestow value and identity on your person and your love and so ‘secure your self-esteem and give body to your sense of identity’. The Beatle Paul McCartney expresses his desire still to be loved ‘when I get older losing my hair, many years from now’, in the words: ‘Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I’m sixty-four?’ Obviously feeding is not enough; we also need to be needed. If I am not needed, I am nothing. To be loved and have literally nothing asked of one, and to be made to feel that there is no way in which one can ever give back anything of any value, is to be made into a pauper. Nygren is correct in his claim that love creates value in its object, but mistaken in thinking that this creative function belongs to *agape* rather than to *eros*. This also applies to the love of God. Only by needing us can God bestow value on us and upon our love for him. If God does not need us, we become infinitely superfluous.¹⁵

This brings us back to where we began: to the idea that God’s love is, in a sense, self-seeking. While Dahl made this point in a crude way, Brümmer does so in a sophisticated way. He makes the conceptual point that love creates value *by* needing the other, and applies this to God as well. If Brümmer is correct, we are confronted with the following alternative: Either we deny the value-creativity of God’s love, or we affirm that God’s love includes *eros*, while simultaneously explaining how this is compatible with God’s self-sufficiency, God’s transcendence and the other things we believe of God. Brümmer chooses the second alternative,¹⁶ and in his wake I have done so in the past.¹⁷ But is Brümmer correct? One might hope and expect that the line of thought that Brümmer is criticizing has in the course of the

¹⁵ Brümmer, *Model of Love*, 241–242; cf. Brümmer, “Bestowed Fellowship: On the Love of God”, in: Gijsbert van den Brink & Marcel Sarot (eds.), *Understanding the Attributes of God*, Frankfurt aM: Peter Lang, 1999, 33–52, esp. 51–52.

¹⁶ Brümmer, *Model of Love*, esp. 237.

¹⁷ Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality*, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992.

Christian tradition been articulated in ways that render it less vulnerable to criticism than the articulation that Brümmer has selected as his target. Aquinas's theory of love as a theological virtue seems a likely candidate for various reasons. Not only is Aquinas conspicuously absent in Brümmer's book on love, but also might it be argued that in the theology of Aquinas many strands and loose ends from previous thinkers are focused into one powerful beam. Therefore I shall in the next section have a look at Aquinas's theology of love, and try to find out whether he has explained how *agape* can be value-creating without including *eros*.

Aquinas's Theology of Love

Love is a complex phenomenon, and by the term 'love' we refer to various distinct realities. We did not need Anders Nygren to discover this and to distinguish between various forms of love; already Aquinas was aware of the complexity of love and distinguished between various forms. The most fundamental distinction that Aquinas introduces is that between love as a passion of the soul and love as a theological virtue. In Latin, these are distinguished also by the words used: Aquinas calls the passion of the soul *amor* and the theological virtue *caritas*.¹⁸ In English, the same distinction is sometimes made by using the words *love* and *charity*. I will not follow this practice here, since *charity* in English has for a long time meant something else. Already in 1945, C.S. Lewis warned against the use of *charity* in theology. *Charity*, he said, 'means (a) alms (b) a "charitable organization" (c) much more rarely – indulgence (i.e. a "charitable" attitude toward a man is conceived as one that denies or condones his sins, not as one that loves the sinner in spite of them)'.¹⁹ I will use *love* both for *amor* and *caritas*, then.

¹⁸ On the other terms Aquinas uses for love, see Aquinas, *STh* I-II, q. 26, a. 3 co; Jeanrond, *Theology of Love*, 78.

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis, "Christian Apologetics" (1945), in: Lewis, *Compelling Reason*, London: HarperCollins, 1996, 64–80, esp. 73. Even

The passions of the soul correspond roughly to what we would nowadays call emotions. A contemporary philosopher, William Lyons, defines ‘emotion’ as ‘a physiologically abnormal state caused by the subject of that state’s evaluation of his or her situation’.²⁰ Aquinas claims virtually the same about passions of the soul when he states that in them, the soul apprehends something suitable or harmful and is drawn towards the suitable or repelled by the harmful. This leads to a bodily change,²¹ by which the soul is in turn indirectly affected.²² By the way, this also explains why Aquinas calls this sort of passion *passio animalis*: It is the only kind of passion that is (efficiently) caused by the soul.²³

Among the emotions, there is a certain order, and the primary emotion, from which all other emotions spring, is love:

All other motions of appetite and will presuppose love; it is like their very root. No one desires an object or rejoices in it unless it be a good that is loved. Nor is there any hatred except for what is contrary to a thing loved, and the same applies to grief and the rest: they all come back to love as to their primordial source.²⁴

more negative about the usefulness of ‘charity’ in Christian theology is Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God*, London: SCM, 2002, 74: Charity is “a term which has degenerated into the preferred description of those devices by means of which connivance at injustice wears the mask of generosity.”

²⁰ William Lyons, *Emotion*, Cambridge: CUP, 1980, 58.

²¹ *De Ver* q. 26, a. 2 co: “nam huiusmodi per apprehensionem et appetitum animae peraguntur, ad quae sequitur corporis transmutatio.” Cf. q. 26, a. 9 co: “passio animalis ... causatur ex hoc quod anima aliquid apprehendit ex quo appetitus movetur, cuius motum sequitur quaedam transmutatio corporalis.”

²² Cf. Rémi Tittley, “La Douleur Sensible Est-Elle Une Passion Corporelle ou une Passion Animale selon Saint Thomas d’Aquin?”, unpublished diss. Montréal 1967, 69; Journet D. Kahn, “A Thomistic Theory of Emotion”, unpublished diss. Notre Dame, Ind. 1957, 33.

²³ Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality*, 109. On the following (the order of the emotions) see *ibid.*, 113.

²⁴ *STh* I, q. 20, a. 1 co: “omnes alii motus appetitivi praesupponunt amorem, quasi primam radicem. nullus enim desiderat aliquid, nisi bonum

Thus love is the primary emotion and the principle of all the other emotions.²⁵ As Robert Miner has noted, ‘The primacy of love among the passions in 1a2ae points ahead to the place of *caritas* among the theological virtues in the 2a2ae’.²⁶ In *STh* II-II, Aquinas explains that *caritas* is the most excellent of the theological virtues (q. 23, a. 6).

The distinction between the emotion of love and love as a theological virtue lies not – as one might expect²⁷ – in the objects of love, as if love for men was an emotion, love for God a theological virtue. The emotion of love is discussed in the first part of the second part of the *Summa Theologiae*, where Thomas discusses the movement of human beings towards God;²⁸ this emotion, then, may be directed to God (*STh* I-II, q. 26, a. 3 ad 4).²⁹ And love as a theological virtue comprises both love of men

amatum, neque aliquis gaudet, nisi de bono amato. Odium etiam non est nisi de eo quod contrariatur rei amatae. Et similiter tristitiam, et caetera huiusmodi, manifestum est in amorem referri, sicut in primum principium.” Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 25, a. 2; q. 29, a. 2, *De Ver* q. 26, a. 5 ad 5.

²⁵ Contrary to this, it could be argued that *joy* is the first of the emotions, because joy is the final end of all passion. Aquinas responds to this argument by making a distinction between the order of execution and the order of intention: ‘In the line of execution and attainment love is the first passion, but in the line of intention joy is prior to love and is the reason for loving’. *De Ver* q. 26, a. 5 ad 5: “Ad quintum dicendum, quod in via exequendi vel consequendi, amor est prima passio; sed in via intentionis gaudium est prius amore, et est ratio amandi.”

²⁶ Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, Cambridge: CUP, 2009, 139.

²⁷ Sarot, *God, Passibility and Corporeality*, 111.

²⁸ Jeanrond, *Theology of Love*, 78.

²⁹ It does not go without saying that we can love God in an emotional way, since the passions of the soul belong to the sensitive appetite only, and the objects of the sensitive appetite are sensible objects only. God, however, is no sensible object. But in *STh* I-II, q. 26, a. 3 ad 4 Aquinas states: “amor importat quandam passionem, praecipue secundum quod est in appetitu sensitive. ... Magis autem homo in Deum tendere potest per amorem, passive quodammodo ab ipso Deo attractus, quam ad hoc eum propria ratio ducere possit, quod pertinet ad rationem dilectionis, ut dictum est. Et propter hoc, divinius est amor quam

and love of God; it is directed towards God, but we may find God in our neighbour as well (*STh* II-II, q. 24, a. 12 obj. 4, q. 25, a. 1). Even loving our enemies is included. Not that charity requires that we love our enemies *as enemies*; that would be absurd. We can, however, love our enemies *as neighbours*; when we love our neighbours, this includes our enemies, so that *implicitly* we love them as well. All our neighbours bear the image of God; we love the image of God in them. If we reach the *perfection* of *caritas*, however, we love individual enemies as well. Aquinas provides a helpful example here: When we love a particular couple, we must love their children as well, even though they are unkind to us. We love them for the sake of their parents. Thus, Aquinas implies, we should love particular enemies as well, when we become aware of the way God is related to them (*STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 8)³⁰.

Thus, there is a huge overlap between the possible objects of *amor* and the possible objects of *caritas*: both can be aimed at God and at lovable human beings. *Caritas* goes further, however, in also including persons who display no lovable characteristics; we may love them *for the sake of God*. A second difference between *amor* and *caritas* is that while *amor* springs from our natural inclination to love the lovable, *caritas* is a gift received from God: *caritas* is infused love.

Both of these differences between *amor* and *caritas* point to the identity of *agape* and *caritas*.³¹ *Caritas* is no *eros*: it is no value-seeking love and it is not distinguished by the fact that it moves upward. It may just as well stoop downward. It loves the beloved irrespective of his or her actual merits. Moreover, only God can give us the virtue of *caritas*.

dilectio.” I take this to mean that God can use sensible means to draw human beings by *amor* to Godself; in this sense, *amor* can be directed towards God.

³⁰ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 1 ad 2.

³¹ Here I disagree with the statement of Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 620. Nygren, however, though he mentions Aquinas, restricts the analysis from which he draws this conclusion to Dante. And when later on he does discuss Aquinas’ views, the *theological virtue* of love never really comes into focus.

Aquinas on the Value of Infused Love

Now that I have established the identity of *caritas* and *agape*, it is time to return to the question that drove us towards Aquinas: Can Aquinas's analysis of *caritas* explain how love can create value without being based on a lack or a need?

In order to answer this question, I would like to return to the example of loving the unsympathetic children of one's friends. If I may tease out the meaning of this example just a little bit further, there are two reasons why we should love the children of our friends, even if they are not sympathetic to us. The first reason is the importance they have to our friends; we cannot love our friends and oppose what is of uppermost importance to them. And the second is that, however hidden the likeness of these children to their parents may be, there must be some likeness, and since we love the parents, we must love the likeness in the children. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to our love for particular enemies: we *must* love them, both because they are God's creatures and God loves them and because they bear God's image, even though they may be very imperfect image-bearers.

Both of these aspects, I think, can help to explain how *caritas* can create value without being born out of a lack. Firstly, if we define an internal relationship as a relationship of X to something or someone else without which X would not be X, and an external relationship as a relationship of X to something or someone without which X would still be X, being a creature of God and being loved by God are internal relationships. Let me explain this in some more detail. When I am standing on a platform waiting for the train to Amsterdam and a tall man in a green coat is standing beside me, I am related to him in the sense that we stand next to each other. Without this relationship, however, I would be the same person; it is an external relationship. This does not apply to the relationship 'being a child of my parents'; without that relationship I could not be I. And still less would it apply to the relationship expressed in 'being a creature of God'. If I were not a creature of God, I would not be at all, so I believe. These are internal relationships.

Now if I love a person for an external relationship that love is not value-creating. To give an example: If I fall in love with a woman because of the library she owns,³² reason would require me to stop loving her if she lost her library. In fact, one might say, I love her library rather than her. Such love is not value-creating! If, on the other hand, I love a person for an internal relationship, a relationship without which that person would not be that person, a relationship that is somehow constitutive for that person, there is no possibility that this person would lose this relationship. It is essential to her identity. Thus I love her for something that is really hers, that is part of her identity. Being a creature of God, I would argue, is precisely this type of relationship.

But there is one problem that is not solved this way: Since all of us are creatures of God, if I love a person because she is a creature of God, I still do not love her for her unique characteristics, and she is still replaceable by other beloved creatures of God. To give the floor to Brümmer once more:

Your love for me ... bestows intrinsic value on my person by looking on me *as an irreplaceable individual*. If you reject my fellowship, you reject me as a person and in so doing you threaten my ability to conceive of myself as intrinsically worthy, whereas in loving me you bestow a value on my person which I cannot give it myself. It means that my person ... not only matters to me but also to someone else apart from me, and that therefore receives a significance which it is beyond my power to bestow on it myself. Your love bestows value on me which I would otherwise not have. It does not merely recognize a value which I already have apart from this recognition. In this sense Nygren is correct in his observation that love creates value in the beloved, and does not merely recognize it.³³

My friends will love each of their children with a different love; their love will be directed towards their childrens' particular individualities. But if I love my friends' children *merely because*

³² This is what Aquinas would call *amor concupiscentiae*. See *STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 1 co.

³³ Brümmer, *Model of Love*, 235 (my italics – MS).

they are their children, I will love all of them with the same love, irrespective of their particular individualities. And if I love God's creatures merely because of their being created by God, I will love each of them with the same love. But that, according to Brümmer, is not the type of love that creates value.

For that, I suggest, we must concentrate on the second reason to love one's friends' children or God's creatures. One loves God's human creatures because they bear the image of God. In a perceptive analysis, Kevin O'Reilly has shown that the image of God in Aquinas is characterized both by a factual element (he – not Aquinas – calls this “the likeness of analogy”) and by a normative element (‘the likeness of conformation’). The likeness of analogy is actualized by creation; it is the image of God in so far as it already is there. The likeness of conformation will be actualized in the eschaton; it is the likeness of God that is potentially there, but has not yet been fully actualized.³⁴

If we love our enemies because they bear the image of God, this must mean that in their case we do not perceive much of the likeness of analogy; if we did, they would not be our enemies, but our friends. But the Spirit³⁵ helps us – remember that this type of love is infused – to glimpse the analogy of conformation: a potential likeness that is not yet fully actualized. Here, I would argue, the individual character of the person that we love *does* come into play, for the image of God that is potentially but not actually present, will differ from person to person. We do not all have the same talents, the same potential for image-bearing. To say it otherwise: There are many ways of becoming more like God, ways that differ not only in degree³⁶ but also essentially.³⁷ One might even say that there are so many forms of becoming like

³⁴ Kevin Eamonn O'Reilly, *The Hermeneutics of Knowing and Willing in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Leuven: Peeters, 2013, 23–44, and cf. Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 93, esp. q. 93, a. 4; I-II, q. 27, a. 4.

³⁵ On the role of the Holy Spirit in *caritas*, see Aquinas, *STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 2.

³⁶ *Lumen gentium* 44.

³⁷ *Lumen gentium* 10.

God as there are people.³⁸ In *caritas*, it is given to us to glimpse that even those who are currently our enemies have a specific potential for becoming Godlike: a potential for which these people are irreplaceable.³⁹ Seeing that does not mean loving our enemies *as enemies* (*STh* II-II, q. 25, a. 8): The behaviour that annoys and repels us does not suddenly become attractive to us. But it does mean that we see the good that *is there*, either potentially or actually, and the mere fact that we see this good will either reinforce it, or encourage its actualization. Finally, it may help to transform the enmity by transforming the caricatures that enemies tend to make of each other.

The question with which we started was whether Aquinas's theory of infused love can show how *agape* can have the value-creating characteristics that have often been ascribed to them. The conclusion is that it can: Aquinas argues that infused love can – through the grace of God – help us to focus on the good potentials of those people to whom we feel not naturally drawn, and thus to love them in a way that makes them irreplaceable and this creates value. Thus, Brümmer's critique has been refuted and Nygren's theory vindicated with the help of the theology of Thomas Aquinas, a medieval theologian ignored by Brümmer and dismissed by Nygren.⁴⁰

³⁸ See my "A Communal Perspective on the Imitation of Christ", *Doctrine and Life* 63/10 (December 2013), 12–24 (21).

³⁹ There is an analogy here with other forms of love and friendship, because in these also we identify not merely with the current actualization of the talents of our friends, but with the good potentials that are in them. That is the way in which we can become friends with a thief: Not by identifying with theft, but by arguing that he *really* is better than the behaviour he is displaying, and that it is only the circumstances that have brought him to this. The nice thing is that identifying with the good in a person, rather than condoning the evil, will encourage this person to become a better person. That other people 'believe in us' can be a strong motivation, not to let them down. Cf. Aquinas, *STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 1 ad 3; q. 25, a. 6.

⁴⁰ To be fair, Brümmer includes Aquinas in his discussion in other books, e.g. in *Speaking of a Personal God*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.

THOMAS VAN AQUINO OVER GOD EN HET KWAAD

Henk J.M. Schoot¹

Mijn eerste kennismaking met het werk van Thomas van Aquino was precies met de *Quaestiones Disputatae De Malo*, over het kwaad. Dat moet zo ongeveer in 1980 of 1981 geweest zijn, in het Utrechtse Werkgezelschap Thomas van Aquino onder leiding van Ferdinand de Grijs. De Grijs wist mij te raken met opvattingen over het kwaad die geen gemeengoed waren, en die hij ongetwijfeld aan Thomas had ontleend. In een discussie over de methodologie van de theologie van Bernard Lonergan riep hij plotseling uit: dacht jij soms dat het kwaad uit de wereld geholpen moet worden? Mij leek het bevestigende antwoord op die vraag evident. Maar al gauw leerde ik dat het kwaad dulden minstens zo evangelisch is als het kwaad bestrijden. En ook leerde ik dat het voor Thomas een evidente zaak is dat het goed van een geordend universum, samengaat met bijkomend kwaad, bijvoorbeeld het kwaad van vergankelijkheid. Het goed van de leeuw, kan ten koste gaan van het lam.

Ik wil twee onderwerpen op dit terrein met u bespreken. Op de eerste plaats wil ik uitleggen waarom de hele kwestie van de theodicee bij Thomas niet te vinden is. Op de tweede plaats wil ik aandacht schenken aan het kruis, en de vergeving van zonden die daarmee bewerkt wordt. In Thomas' visie valt kwaad namelijk bijna geheel samen met zonde, als schuld en straf.

¹ Bewerkte versie van een lezing, gehouden op het symposium "Religie in de spiegel van het kwaad", bij gelegenheid van het afscheid van Marcel Sarot als hoogleraar Geschiedenis en Wijsbegeerte van Religiewetenschap aan de Universiteit van Utrecht, 19 september 2012, Academiegebouw Utrecht.

Thomas stelt in de *Summa Theologiae* de vraag naar de betekenis van de naam ‘God’, *Deus*.² “Betekent de naam God iets van een bepaalde soort, van een bepaalde natuur?” Die vraag stelt twee verschillende problemen aan de orde, die wel nauw met elkaar samenhangen. Het ene probleem is dat van de etymologie van de naam God, die niet zozeer op een bepaalde natuur, maar op een bepaald handelen lijkt te wijzen. Johannes van Damascenus immers, herleidt de Griekse naam *Theos* tot *thein*, zorgen, of tot *aithein*, verbranden³, of tot *theastai*, alle dingen in beschouwing nemen. Betekent dat dan niet, dat *Deus* of *Theos* niet zozeer een aard of natuur, maar eerder een bepaald soort handelen aanduidt? Het andere probleem hangt hiermee samen. De naam van iets heeft als betekenis de aard van datgene wat betekend wordt. De connotatie van een woord, de begripsinhoud ervan, geeft toch de aard van het betekende aan? We gebruiken het woordje ‘God’ om over en tot God te spreken, maar als de begripsinhoud van het woordje ‘God’ de aard van God is, betekent dat dan dat we de aard van God kennen? Als de goddelijke natuur ons onbekend is, dan kunnen we ook niet over de goddelijke natuur spreken, en kan het woordje ‘God’ die natuur niet betekenen.

De kwestie die Thomas hier aansnijdt, ligt in het hart van zijn theologisch auteurschap. De onkenbaarheid Gods. De aandacht voor de aard van ons spreken over God. Als we ons buigen over het geloof in God en de betekenis daarvan, en nu in het bijzonder als we ons buigen over de relatie tussen God en het kwaad, dan is het van het grootste belang om niet te doen alsof we weten wie of wat God is, om niet te doen alsof we twee werkelijkheden met elkaar vergelijken die ook werkelijk vergelijkbaar zijn, om niet te doen alsof we weten wat God is, en weten wat het kwaad is, en we nu alleen nog maar hoeven te vragen naar wat het een met het ander te maken heeft.

Thomas geeft antwoord op de vraag naar de naam ‘God’, door een onderscheid te maken tussen datgene waaraan een naam wordt

² *STh* I, q. 13, a. 8: “Utrum hoc nomen ‘Deus’ sit nomen naturae.”

³ In het voorbijgaan noteer ik dat verbranden in aanmerking komt, omdat, zegt Johannes Damascenus volgens Thomas, “Onze God is een verterend vuur” (*De Fide Orthodoxa* I,9, zie He 12,29 en Dt 4,24).

ontleend, en datgene waartoe de naam gebruikt wordt. Dat het woord God afgeleid wordt van een bepaald soort handelen dat als goddelijk wordt beschouwd, zoals zorgen, verteren of beschouwen, wil nog niet zeggen dat dat de begripsinhoud van het woord God is. Of om het anders te zeggen: het woord God is een naam voor de aard, de natuur van God, maar dat impliceert niet dat we precies weten wat die aard, die natuur van God is. Thomas zegt het letterlijk zo: “Uit de effecten van Gods handelen kunnen we de goddelijke natuur zoals die in zichzelf is niet kennen, zodat we zouden weten wat hij is.”⁴ Thomas verwijst dan vervolgens naar de drie trappen van Godskennis die hij aan Pseudo-Dionysius ontleent, de weg van de overtreffende trap, de weg van de oorzakelijkheid, en de weg van de ontkenning. En concludeert: “De naam ‘God’ betekent de goddelijke natuur; deze naam wordt gebruikt om iets te betekenen wat bestaat boven alles, wat het begin is van alles, en wat onderscheiden is van alles. *Supra omnia existens, principium omnium, remotum ab omnibus*. Wij zouden het zo kunnen formuleren: God behoort niet tot de dingen van deze wereld. God is van een andere orde dan alles wat bestaat, dan alles wat door Hem geschapen is.

Welnu, dit is precies de reden, waarom de Engelse filosoof en dominicaan Brian Davies stelt, in zijn vorig jaar verschenen boek *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, dat Thomas eigenlijk geen deel uitmaakt van de discussie over de theodicee.⁵ De kwestie van de theodicee zoekt naar een rechtvaardiging van God: hoe kan het bestaan van een algoede en almachtige God verzoend worden met het bestaan van zoveel kwaad, ook van het kwaad dat niet op het conto van mensen is te schrijven? Ofschoon het het vak van

⁴ “Sed ex effectibus divinis divinam naturam non possumus cognoscere secundum quod in se est, ut sciamus de ea quid est;” en vervolgt: “sed per modum eminentiae et causalitatis et negationis [...]. Et sic hoc nomen Deus significat naturam divinam. Impositum est enim nomen hoc ad aliquid significandum supra omnia existens, quod est principium omnium, et remotum ab omnibus. Hoc enim intendunt significare nominantes Deum,” *STh* I, q. 13, a. 8 ad 2.

⁵ Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas on God and Evil*, Oxford: OUP, 2011, 77. Zie ook Herbert McCabe, *God and Evil in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, London: Continuum, 2010.

Thomas is om vragen te stellen, kent hij deze vraag niet eens. Het is niet in hem opgekomen om God te rechtvaardigen in het zicht van al het kwaad dat bestaat. En dat komt, zegt Davies, omdat voor Thomas God zo anders is dan alles wat bestaat, dat God niet gedacht kan worden als een onderdeel van een tegenstelling. Wat ook de aard en de metafysische status van het kwaad is, God staat er boven. Wanneer we God goed noemen, dan is daarmee geen morele goedheid bedoeld. Het woord 'goed' wordt analoog van God gezegd; niemand is goed zoals God goed is. Thomas associeert de begripsinhoud van deze goedheid vooral met volmaaktheid en aantrekkelijkheid: al wat bestaat en redelijk is, wordt aangetrokken door God, streeft naar eniging met God, en daarom is God het hoogste goed, het *summum bonum*. Een dergelijke goedheid kan niet genormeerd worden, maar is zelf de norm, is boven alle normativiteit verheven.

Nu zal men misschien tegenwerpen: dus omdat het probleem voor Thomas niet bestond, bestaat het probleem helemaal niet? Nee, dat wil ik niet zeggen. Wat ik wil zeggen is dat de vraag van de theodicee dus kennelijk een typisch moderne kwestie is. Wij modernen kunnen veel over onszelf aan de weet te komen door ons te spiegelen aan grote denkers uit vroegere tijden die niet tot die moderniteit behoren. Hier is dat wel op een heel bijzondere manier het geval. De centrale vraag voor Thomas is niet de rechtvaardiging van God, maar de rechtvaardiging van de mens. Het is niet God die zichzelf rechtvaardigt op het kruis, maar het is de mens die door het kruis wordt gerechtvaardigd.

De moderne tijd echter plaatst God in het beklagdenbankje. De kwestie van de theodicee is misschien wel het belangrijkste argument om het bestaan van God überhaupt ter discussie te stellen en te ontkennen. Als God het kwaad niet kan vermijden is hij niet almachtig en derhalve geen schepper, en als God het kwaad niet wil vermijden is hij niet algoed en derhalve geen God. God bestaat niet. Een dergelijke benadering stelt de mens centraal, en dat is precies wat Thomas niet doet. Voor Thomas staat God centraal, in al zijn denken kent hij een consequent theocentrisme.

Thomas huldigt de opvatting dat alle kwaad een *privatio boni* is, oftewel het ontbreken van een goed dat er had moeten zijn. Het kwaad is nooit iets wat op zichzelf bestaat, maar iets wat gezegd

wordt te ontbreken aan iets dat als zijnde wel degelijk een goed is. Een mens die blind is, ontbeert het goede gezichtsvermogen, maar is daarmee nog wel een fundamenteel goed zijnde. Zo lijkt het er echter op dat God toch nog wordt gerechtvaardigd, hij kan immers niet verantwoordelijk gesteld worden voor iets wat niet bestaat; hij is niet de schepper van wat niet bestaat, alleen maar van datgene wat wel bestaat. Sommigen lijkt dit een onaanvaardbare ontkenning van de realiteit van het kwaad. Maar Thomas kan niet anders. God is voor hem *ipsum esse subsistens*, ofwel het zijn zelf; niet het hoogste zijnde, in een reeks, maar het zijn zelf, onderscheiden van al het andere dat is. Al het andere dat is, ontleent zijn zijn aan het zijn van God. Gods schepper zijn bestaat in het verlenen van zijn; al wat is deelt in het zijn van wie het zijn zelf is. Een beroemde uitspraak van Thomas in dit verband is dat hij zegt dat God door zijn zijn aan de dingen tegenwoordig is op de meest intieme manier die denkbaar is. God is de *intimus agens*, de meest intieme handelaar, in al wat bestaat.⁶ En omdat, op grond van Gods enkelvoudigheid in God zijn en goedheid identiek zijn, kan God niet in het kwaad zijn, kan God niet gedacht worden zijn te geven aan datgene wat kwaad is. Omdat de leer van het kwaad als het *privatio boni* dus geen rechtvaardiging van God beoogt te zijn, want dat zou een theologisch anachronisme opleveren, mag het ook niet verweten worden niet zo'n rechtvaardiging te zijn. Dat lijkt me wel duidelijk. Voor Thomas geldt wat Davies zegt: "God is not the sort of thing to be evaluated." God hoeft niet gerechtvaardigd te worden, het zijn de mensen die daar behoefte aan hebben.

De leer van het *privatio boni* betekent dus niet dat het kwaad buiten God om gaat. Het kwaad is een realiteit, al ontvangt het het zijn niet van God. Dat geldt niet alleen voor het kwaad waar mensen niet verantwoordelijk voor gesteld kunnen worden, zoals de gevolgen van een aardbeving. Het geldt ook voor het kwaad dat mensen veroorzaken. Het is voor Thomas ondenkbaar dat een vrije wilskeuze zou kunnen bestaan zonder de wil van God. De aard van de keuze komt voor de verantwoordelijkheid van de mens, maar de keuze zelf is er niet buiten God om. Thomas

⁶ *STh* I, q. 8, a. 3; *In Ioannem* I, l. 5.

gelooft niet in een onderscheid tussen (alleen) toestaan en (niet) veroorzaken, maar de keuzes zijn wel van de kiezer, en niet van God.

Ik kom nu bij het tweede onderwerp dat ik onder uw aandacht wil brengen. In Thomas' visie valt kwaad bijna geheel samen met zonde, als schuld en straf. En de menswording van Christus is er juist op gericht om die zonde weg te nemen, om vergeving van zonde te bewerkstelligen. Wie aandacht wil schenken aan Thomas over God en het kwaad, zal ook aandacht willen besteden aan de heilswaarde van het lijden en de dood van Christus.

De kernbegrippen die Thomas hanteert in zijn uitleg van de heilsbetekenis van het kruis, heb ik straks al opgesomd. Het gaat om *meritum*, *satisfactio*, *redemptio* en *sacrificium*. Soms krijg je uit de literatuur de indruk, als zou het lijden van Christus op het kruis genoegdoening hebben bewerkt, en loskoping. Het lijkt dan net alsof het bij het kruis juist daarom zou gaan, om die genoegdoening of verlossing teweeg te brengen. Maar Thomas wijst dat af. Hij maakt, zo blijkt bij nauwgezette lezing, een zeer subtiel maar onmiskenbaar onderscheid tussen enerzijds de vruchten van de verlossing en anderzijds de wijzen waarop lijden en sterven vruchten teweeg brengen.⁷ Genoegdoening en loskoping zijn geen vruchten van de verlossing; bij de verlossing gaat het niet om genoegdoening en loskoping. Nee, bij de verlossing gaat het om de vergeving van de zonden, de overwinning van het kwaad, het wegnemen van de straf, verzoening met God, en het openen van de toegang tot het eeuwig leven. Dat zijn de vruchten van het kruis, dat wil Christus bewerkstelligen. Maar hoe doet hij dat? Hoe werkt het kruis, hoe brengt het kruis die vruchten voort. De kernbegrippen die ik zojuist genoemd heb, zijn evenzovele antwoorden op die vraag. *Meritum*, *satisfactio*, *redemptio* en *sacrificium* zijn functies van

⁷ *STh* III, q. 48. Ik heb dit eerder uitgewerkt in "Divine transcendence and the mystery of salvation according to Thomas Aquinas", Harm Goris, Herwi Rikhof, and Henk Schoot (eds.), *Divine transcendence and immanence in the work of Thomas Aquinas*, Louvain: Peeters, 2009, 255-281.

het kruis, zouden wij misschien zeggen. Elk voor zich is het een poging om te benaderen wat de wijze is waarop het kruis effect heeft. Het meervoud van die functies duidt niet op verschillende vruchten, het meervoud van die functies duidt op onze onmogelijkheid om adequaat te begrijpen en onder woorden te brengen wat dit kruis is, hoe dit lijden heilzaam kan zijn; met andere woorden, de meervoud van de kernbegrippen dient de benadering van het geheim van de verlossing, en respecteert het geheimvolle karakter ervan. Genoegdoening is een analogie, net als loskoping of offer dat is. Telkens wordt een bepaalde context te hulp geroepen, om te benaderen hoezeer dit kruis een heilzame werking kan hebben op de relatie van zondige mensen met hun schepper en verlosser. De context van de rechtspraak, of de context van de handel, of de context van de tempel worden te hulp geroepen. Maar het blijft behelpen.

Het is overigens wel zo, dat er een zekere ordening aanwezig is in deze vier kernbegrippen. Want genoegdoening, loskoping en offer staan niet op dezelfde lijn als *meritum*, maar wortelen daarin. *Meritum* moet niet vertaald worden met ‘verdienste’, omdat dat teveel in de richting gaat van de opbrengst van een bepaald handelen. Het is beter om het te vertalen met ‘verdienstelijk handelen’, waardoor nog open is wat er precies verdiend wordt. Ook in dit opzicht is dit kernbegrip dus functioneel. Het is functioneel ten opzichte van de vruchten van de verlossing, maar ook functioneel ten opzichte van de liefde van God. Want – zo maakt Thomas bijzonder duidelijk zowel in het tractaat over God de Verlosser als in het tractaat over de genade – de wortel van alle verdienstelijk handelen is de liefde van God en de liefde van Christus. Die liefde maakt het überhaupt mogelijk dat een mens handelt op een wijze die zijn relatie met God rechtvaardig maakt. Die liefde maakt het überhaupt mogelijk dat de Zoon van God, uit liefde mens geworden, in gehoorzaamheid handelt op een manier die vruchten voortbrengt. Niet alleen en niet zozeer voor zichzelf, hoewel daar ook sprake van is, maar vooral voor allen die met hem in liefde verbonden zijn. Voorbij het theologisch debat over woorden als plaatsvervangende of substitutie, die inderdaad veel misverstanden kunnen oproepen, geeft Thomas als zijn overtuiging dat de vruchten van het kruis langs de weg van de

liefde hun weg vinden naar de gelovigen. Keer op keer zegt Thomas: *Radix merendi est caritas*, de wortel van verdienstelijk handelen is de liefde. Zonder liefde geen verdienste.

Voor Thomas van Aquino is het kwaad van de wereld geen reden om aan het bestaan van God te twijfelen, of om God ter verantwoording te roepen. Het kwaad van de wereld is enerzijds terug te voeren op de goede ordening van de wereld, die nu eenmaal vergankelijkheid met zich mee brengt, en anderzijds op het immorele handelen van de mensen, die Gods vergeving nodig hebben, én aangeboden krijgen in Christus.