Mercenary Love: A Scholastic Debate over a Patristic Notion and Aquinas's Solution

Michael S. Sherwin, O.P.
Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas
Rome, Italy

Introduction: The Early Scholastic Debate on Charity

Although it was over forty years ago that Robert Wielockx first drew our attention to the early Scholastic debates over the nature of charity, his groundbreaking dissertation remains largely unknown.[1] Wielockx masterfully reconstructs these debates and convincingly points to their influence on later definitions of charity. These debates arose in the early twelfth century some eighty-five miles northeast of Paris within the walled

[1] Robert Wielockx, "La discussion scolastique sur l'amour d'Anselme de Laon à Pierre Lombard d'après les imprimés et les inédits" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of Louvain, 1981). Wielockx revised and published parts of his dissertation in three installments in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* [*ETL*] under the general title "La sentence *De caritate* et la discussion scolastique sur l'amour." The first installment establishes the text of the *De caritate* (*ETL* 58 [1982]: 50–86); the second is a chronology of the composition of the *De caritate* in relation to other contemporary texts on love, where Wielockx concludes that the *De caritate* was written between 1133 and 1136 (*ETL* 58 [1982]: 334–56); the third is a study of the possible authorship of the text, where he tentatively suggests that Walter of Mortagne (1100–1174) was author of all or part of the *De caritate* (*ETL* 59 [1983]: 26–45). Wielockx did not publish his rich philosophical analysis of the psychologies of love advanced by the *De caritate* and related texts, which is over two hundred pages long and forms more than half of the dissertation, publishing only a brief three-page synopsis of the doctrinal implications of the *De caritate* at the end of the third installment (43–45). For this reason, although all references to the text of the *De caritate* will be to the edition contained in the first published essay, references to Wielockx's philosophical analysis will be from the dissertation.

city of Laon.[2] They subsequently moved to Paris and reverberated out to the monasteries of France and its adjoining regions. They were debates about Augustine's theology of charity, and were unleashed by an anonymously authored work that has come to be known as the *De caritate*.[3] The controversy was provoked by the *De caritate*'s anti-Augustinian portrayal of charity, which it defines in the following terms: "Charity is the spirit's motion toward loving God for God's own sake, and loving oneself and one's neighbor for the sake of God."[4] As Wielockx notes, if we begin with Augustine's definition of charity from the *De doctrina christiana* (where Augustine states that "I call 'charity' the spirit's motion toward enjoying God for himself, and enjoying one's self and one's neighbor for God"[5]), we see that the author of the *De caritate* has removed "enjoying" (*fruendum*) from Augustine's definition and replaced it with the more generic term "loving" (*diligendum*).[6] The *De caritate* then explains that to love God for God's own sake means serving him without desiring any recompense or reward for doing so: "We should love God, not for the sake of any reward we might expect from him, but for his own sake alone, that we might serve him."[7] As Wielockx amply demonstrates, this anti-Augustinian definition

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2 For more on the Scholastic context in Laon, see Cédric Giraud, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son école au XIIe siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Valérie Fasseur and Jean-René Valette, eds., *Les écoles de pensée du XIIe siècle et la littérature romane (oc et oïl)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016); Richard Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, vol. 1, *Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 198–204.

3 Wielockx argues convincingly that two other contemporary texts form the complete original text of the *De caritate* (and were so considered by later scholars such as Hugh of Saint Victor). Specifically, the *Tria sunt genera* was the beginning of the work, while the *Cum vero caritas* was its conclusion. For these three texts as Wielockx established them, see *ETL* 58:50–86.

4 *De caritate* 1: "Caritas est motus animi ad diligendum Deum propter Deum et se et proximum propter Deum" (Wielockx, *ETL* 58:69; all Latin from *De caritate* comes from the three *ETL* publications by Wielockx; unless otherwise attributed, all English translation in this article is my own). Wielockx places the date of *De caritate*'s composition between 1133 and 1136, but Constant Mews places it sometime in the late 1120s ("Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Abelard and Heloise on the Definition of Love" *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 60 [2004]: 650).

5 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 3.10.16: "Caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum" (*Patrologia Latina* [*PL*] 34:76).

6 Wielockx, "La discussion," 179.

7 *De caritate* 3: "Deum enim debemus diligere, non propter aliquod praemium quod ab eo expectemus, sed propter ipsum solum, cui ut serviamus." The author interprets self-love and neighbor love in the same way: "That we should love ourselves for God's sake means this alone: that we should love God and serve him [Seipsum quoque debet unusquisque diligere propter Deum, id est: ad hoc tantum, ut Deum diligat et ei serviat]" (*De caritate*

of charity caused much consternation among Scholastic and monastic writers for over a century.[8] Many writers both attacked the assertations of the *De caritate* and attempted to articulate their own definition of charity in response to it.

One of the neglected aspects of these debates concerns the way the *De caritate* distinguishes charity from both servile love and mercenary love. "Some serve God from fear, and these are called slaves; others serve him because of rewards and these are called hirelings [*mercenarii*]; while others serve him from love and these are called sons."[9] The distinction between slaves, hirelings, and sons would have been familiar to medieval readers of the *De caritate* because of its prominence in the *Conferences* of John Cassian.[10] In what follows, we shall consider how Cassian develops this distinction, how the *De caritate* employs it, and how several subsequent writers develop their own interpretations of this distinction. Lastly, we shall note how Aquinas's solution to the problem effected a minor revolution in the tradition.

7–8). Thus, the injunction to love our neighbor as ourselves means only this: "Just as we love ourselves that God may be served, likewise should we love our neighbor: that God may be served [ut sicut se diligit ad serviendum Deo, ad idem diligat proximum]" (*De caritate* 16–17). This phrase parallels closely the famous text from Augustine, *De doct. christ.* 1.30[33], where Augustine states that God "has mercy on us that we may enjoy him, and we have mercy on our neighbor so that we many enjoy him [God] [ille nostri miseretur, ut se perfruamur, nos vero invicem nostri miseremur, ut illo perfruamur]" (*PL* 34:32). Here again, however, the *De caritate* has replaced the notion of enjoyment with that of service. See Wielockx, *ETL* 58:69.

8 Wielockx, "La discussion," 180–81.

9 *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera* 1–3): "Alii enim Deo serviunt pro quocumque timore et hi dicuntur servi; alii pro mercede et hi dicuntur mercenarii; alii pro amore et hi dicuntur filii" (Wielockx, *ETL* 58:72). On the *Tria sunt genera* as the original introduction to the *De caritate*, see Wielockx, *ETL* 58:71–79.

10 John Cassian, *Collationes* 11 (*PL* 49:847–70). For the English edition quoted in this essay, see *The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, with annotation (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 403–27. For the influence of John Cassian's *Collationes* on medieval Western monasticism and Scholasticism, see Columba Stewart, "Benedictine Monasticism and Mysticism," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Julia A. Lamm (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), 219–23, and Michele Mulchahey, *"First the Bow Is Bent in Study . . .": Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), 110, 194–203.

John Cassian on the Stages of Perfection

In his famous conference 11, "On perfection," John Cassian follows Basil the Great—who seems to have introduced the tripartite distinction among slaves, hirelings and sons—and portrays each of these three as restraining us from vice and keeping us obedient to God.[11] Cassian goes beyond Basil, however, by associating each attitude with a corresponding theological virtue, associating fear closely with faith: "There are three things that restrain people from vice—namely, the fear of Gehenna or of present law; or hope and desire for the kingdom of heaven, or a disposition for the good itself and a love of virtue."[12] Cassian subsequently explains these attitudes in relation to the stages of perfection in the Christian life.

> If, therefore, a person is tending to perfection, he will mount from that first step of fear—which we have properly designated as servile and about which it is said, "when you have done everything, say: we are useless slaves" (Luke 17:10)—to the higher step of hope, progressing by degree. Here the comparison is not with a slave but with a hireling [*mercennario*], because now the person looks forward to the payment of a wage [*mercedem*] and is, as it were,

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[11] Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae fusius tractatae* (*Patrologia Graeca* [*PG*] 31:896). For Basil's influence on Cassian, see Michel Olphe-Galliard, "Vie contemplative et vie active d'après Cassien," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 16 (1935): 273–75, and Michel Olphe-Galliard, "Les Sources de la Conférence XI de Cassien." *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 16 (1935): 292–98. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *De Vita Moysis* 2.320 (*PG* 44:429).

[12] Cassian, *Collationes* 11.6.1: "Tria sunt, inquit, quae faciunt homines a uitiis temperare, id est aut metus gehennae siue praesentium legum aut spes atque desiderium regni caelornm aut affectus boni ipsius amorque uirtutum" (*PL* 49:852). Cassian explicitly refers this fear to faith when, in the following paragraph (11.6.2), he continues: "Therefore the blessed Apostle includes the entire sum of salvation in the perfection of these three virtues, saying: 'Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three' (1 Cor 13:13). For it is faith that, through dread of future judgment and punishment, makes us refrain from the contagion of vice; hope that, calling our minds away from things present, despises all the pleasures of the body and waits for heavenly rewards; love that, inflaming us mentally with the love of Christ and with the fruit of spiritual virtue, makes us utterly despise whatever is contrary to those things [et idcirco beatus apostolus omnem salutis summam in istarum trium uirtutum consummatione concludens nunc, inquit, manet fides, spes, caritas, tria haec. fides namque est quae futuri iudicii ac suppliciorum metu uitiorum facit contagia declinari, spes quae mentem nostram de praesentibus auocans uniuersas corporis uoluptates caelestium praemiorum expectatione contemnit, caritas quae nos ad amorem Christi et spiritalium uirtutum fructum mantis ardore succendens, quidquid illis contrarium est, toto facit odio detestari]" (*PL* 49:852).

> untroubled by the absolution of his sins, and the fear of punishment and is conscious of his own good works. Although he seems to strive for a reward, for what is pleasing, still he is unable to attain to the disposition of a son who trusts in the generosity of his father's indulgence and who has no doubt that everything which belongs to his father is his.[13]

For Cassian, the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) is the model of one who passes through these three stages. He passes from fearful servitude among the swine to thoughts of wages and the desire to become one of his father's hirelings; ultimately, through the father's generosity, he is reestablished as a son.[14] Although there are passages where Cassian underlines the imperfection of the first two stages—"For only he does what is good who is moved not by fear or by the hope of reward, but by a disposition for the good alone"[15]—he ultimately concludes that each attitude is a legitimate stage of perfection.

> There are three different degrees of perfection. . . . One who is blessed and perfect in the fear of God and who proceeds, as it is written, "from strength to strength" (Ps 84:7), and from one perfection to another—that is, who mounts with eager mind from fear to hope—is invited again to a more blessed state, which is charity.[16]

Cassian sees each of these stages as steps on the ladder of love: "Charity, in which there is a fuller confidence and already an enduring joy, takes them from a servile fear and a hireling's hope [*mercennaria spe*], and brings them

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13 Cassian, *Collationes* 11.7.1: "Si quis igitur ad perfectionem tendit, de illo primo timoris gradu quem proprie diximus esse seruilem, de quo dicitur: cum omnia feceritis, dicite: quia serui inutiles sumus, ad altiorem spei tramitem gradu proficiente conscendet, qui iam non seruo, sed mercennario comparatur, quia mercedem retributionis exspectat et quasi de peccatorum absolutione et poenali timore securus ac bonorum sibi operum conscius, licet placiti praemium uideatur expetere, tamen ad affectum illum filii, qui de paternae indulgentiae liberalitate confidens, omnia quae patris sunt sua esse non ambigit, peruenire non potuit" (*PL* 49:853).

14 Cassian, *Collationes* 11.7.2 (*PL* 49:853).

15 Cassian, *Collationes* 11.6.2: "Ille namque solus ea quae bona sunt nullo metu, nulla remunerationis gratia prouocante, sed solo bonitatis operatur affectu" (*PL* 49:852).

16 Cassian, *Collationes* 11.12.5: "Uidetis ergo perfectionum gradus esse diuersos . . . is qui in timore dei beatus et perfectus extiterit, ambulans sicut scriptum est de uirtute in uirtutem et de perfectione ad aliam perfectionem, id est de timore ad spem mentis alacritate conscendens, ad beatiorem denuo statum, quod est caritas" (*PL* 49:864).

to the love of God and to adopted sonship, and, from being perfect, makes them somehow more perfect."[17]

The *De Caritate*'s Less Optimistic View and the Reaction Against It

The author of the *De caritate* has a darker view. He makes no reference to faith or to hope; nor does he view the first two stages as stages of perfection. Moreover, although he recognizes that, among the hirelings, some seek eternal (as opposed to temporal) rewards, he nonetheless affirms that "those who seek eternal rewards desire to see Christ and to be in heaven for the sake of their own enjoyment [*propter propriam delectationem*]."[18] He thus concludes—paraphrasing St. Paul's affirmation that charity "seeks not its own" (1 Cor 13:5)—that "those who seek what is their own [namely their own enjoyment] do not seek what is Christ's, and consequently neither will they attain Christ."[19] Far from being a positive stage on the way to perfect charity, therefore, the hireling's desire for God fails even to attain union with Christ.

Wielockx convincingly traces the effect of the *De caritate* on the schoolmen at Laon and Paris by presenting an impressive collection of Scholastic texts that react directly against it.[20] A full account of these reactions is beyond the scope of this brief essay.[21] For our present purposes, however, we should note one aspect of Hugh of Saint Victor's response to the *De caritate*, because it refers explicitly to mercenary love. In his major theological treatise *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*,[22] Hugh asserts:

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17 Cassian, *Collationes* 11.12.6: "Caritas rursum, in qua plenior fiducia perpetuumque iam gaudium est, adsumens eos de timore seruili et mercenuaria spe ad dilectionem dei et adoptionem transferet filiorum et quodammodo perfectiores faciet de perfectis" (*PL* 49:864).

18 *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera* 5–6): "Qui vero quaerunt aeternum, hi sunt qui propter propriam delectationem Christum videre desiderant et in paradise esse optant" (Wielockx, *ETL* 58:72).

19 *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera* 6–8): "Hi ergo quaerunt quae sua sunt, non quae Jesu Christi. Propterea nec illud habebunt" (Wielockx, *ETL* 58:72).

20 See Wielockx, "La discussion," 184–89.

21 For a fuller account of these controversies, see my essay "Aquinas, Augustine, and the Medieval Scholastic Crisis concerning Charity," in *On Love and Virtue: Theological Essays* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 67–105.

22 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De sacramentis* (*PL* 176:173–618). Although I have not used it in this article (instead using Wielockx's French to inform a fresh translation of the Latin), a full English edition has been published as *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, ed. and trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951). A more recent translation was published by Brepols in 2020, but it is limited and does

> Certain fools say: "We love God and serve him, but we do not seek any reward. We are not hirelings [*ne mercenarii simus*]. Nor do we seek him. . . . We cast out of hand any payment so that we do not seek the one we love. For we love with a pure, gratuitous, and filial love, not seeking anything. We love him without seeking anything, not even seeking the one we love." Those who say these things do not understand the virtue of love [*virtutem dilectionis*].[23]

Instead, Hugh advances a radically opposed view, asserting that to love [*diligere*] signifies "to desire and to will to have and possess and enjoy."[24] Thus, for Hugh, charity's love of God is nothing other than "to will to have him."[25] With Hugh, the battlelines are clearly drawn. Either charity's act is to serve God without seeking any reward, or charity's act is a willed desire to possess and enjoy God. Evidence suggests that ripples from these debates travelled out to the monasteries, troubling the calm waters of their contemplation. St. Bernard sought to return calm to these waters by developing a middle way between these two extreme views.

Bernard of Clairvaux and the Stages of Love

Bernard of Clairvaux, in a letter that he wrote to a Carthusian community in the early 1120s (some ten years before the composition of the *De caritate*),[26] warns the monks against selfish forms of love. Bernard explains that charity toward our neighbor is "true and sincere" only when we love

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not contain such passages as that quoted in note 23; the 1951 Deferrari trans. is still the only full edition in English.

23 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De sacramentis* 2.13.8: "Dicunt . . . stulti quidam: . . . Diligimus Deum et servimus illi, sed non quaerimus praemium, ne mercenarii simus: etiam ipsum non quaerimus. . . . In tantum enim excutimus manus ab omni munere, ut etiam ipsum non quaeramus quem diligimus. Pura enim et gratuita et filiali dilectione diligimus, nihil quaerimus. . . . Diligimus ipsum sed non quaerimus aliquid, etiam ipsum non quaerimus quem diligimus. . . . Qui hoc dicunt virtutem dilectionis non intelligent" (*PL* 176:534); see also Wielockx, "La discussion," 194–95.

24 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De sacramentis* 2.13.7: "Quid est diligere nisi concupiscere, et habere velle et possidere et frui?" (*PL* 176:534; see also Wielockx, "La discussion," 190).

25 Hugh of Saint Victor, *De sacramentis* 2.13.6: "Quid est Deum diligere? Habere velle. Quid est Deum diligere propter seipsum? Ideo diligere, ut habeas ipsum" (*PL* 176:529). He subsequently expresses this even more succinctly in 2.13.8: "What is it to love except to will to have him? [Quid est enim diligere nisi ipsum velle habere?]" (*PL* 176: 534); see also Wielockx, "La discussion," 190–91.

26 As noted above (note 1), Wielockx argues that the *De caritate* was written at Loan between 1133 and 1136 (*ETL* 58:334–56).

our neighbor as much as we love ourselves, explaining that "he who loves more his own good or only his own good proves that he does not love the good chastely, and that he certainly loves it for himself and not for itself."[27] When Bernard applies this to our love for God, he draws on Cassian's tripartite distinction.

> One person confesses that the Lord is powerful, another confesses that he is good to him, yet another confesses that the Lord is simply good. The first is a slave and fears for himself; the second is a hireling and covets for himself; but the third is a son who defers to his father. He who fears and he who covets both act for themselves. Only in the son is that charity which seeks not her own (1 Cor 13:5).[28]

With a severity that will subsequently be echoed by the *De caritate*, Bernard underlines the selfish character of the first two ways of relating to God. "The slave and the hireling have a law of their own which is not from the Lord. The former does not love God, while the latter loves something more than God."[29] The hireling loves something more than God—namely himself. This is the very point the author of the *De caritate* will subsequently make. On this issue, therefore, Bernard and the *De caritate* agree.

Bernard differs from the *De caritate*, however, in siding with Cassian that the first two attitudes are stages on the way to perfection. The journey begins in carnal selfishness, but through the action of grace, we become spiritual. "Since we are carnal and born of concupiscence of the flesh, our cupidity or love must begin with the flesh, and if it is directed in the right order, our love, led by grace, advances by its own certain steps, until it is

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27 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 3: "Illa siquidem vera et sincera est caritas . . . qua proximi bonum aeque ut nostrum diligimus. Nam qui magis aut certe solum diligit suum, convincitur non caste diligere bonum, quod utique propter se diligit non propter ipsum" (*PL* 182:110). As we shall see, Bernard subsequently integrates this letter into his later work, the *De diligendo Deo*; see, e.g., 12.34 (*PL* 182:995).

28 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 3: "Est qui confitetur Domino quoniam potens est, et est qui confitetur quoniam sibi bonus est, et item qui confitetur quoniam simpliciter bonus est. Primus servus est, et timet sibi; secundus, mercenarius, et cupit sibi; tertius, filius, et defert patri. Itaque et qui timet, et cupit, utrique pro se agunt. Sola quae in filio est caritas, non quaerit quae sua sunt" (*PL* 182:111). See *De diligendo Deo* 12.34 (*PL* 182:995).

29 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 5: "Caeterum servus et mercenarius habent legem, non a Domino, sed quam ipsi sibi fecerunt: ille Deum non amando, iste plus aliud amando" (*PL* 182: 111–12). See *De diligendo Deo* 13.36 (*PL* 182:996).

consummated in the spirit."[30] Bernard famously sees this love as progressing by four distinct stages.

> Man first loves himself for himself because he is carnal and unable to savor anything but himself. Then, when he sees himself (that he cannot subsist by himself), he begins to seek God by faith and to love him as necessary to himself. So in the second stage of love, man loves God for man's sake and not for God's sake.[31]

These are the stages of a slave and of a hireling. Bernard explains, however, that the hireling, through his self-interested familiarity with God—through thinking about him, reading about him, praying to him and obeying him—is led eventually to savor God's goodness for itself. "When man tastes how sweet God is, he passes to the third stage of love in which man loves God not now because of himself, but because of God."[32] Bernard suspects that this third stage of adopted sonship is the stage of perfection attainable in this life: that we love God for himself, and not for ourselves. He recognizes, however, a fourth and higher stage, proper to heaven, when we come to love even ourselves for God. Bernard explains that, at this stage, the Christian "in some wondrous way forgets himself and ceasing to belong to himself, he passes entirely into God and adhering to him, he becomes one with him in spirit."[33]

This is where Bernard's reflections remained until he returned to the

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30 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 8: "Verumtamen quia carnales sumus, et de carnis concupiscentia nascimur, necesse est ut cupiditas vel amor noster a carne incipiat; quae si recto ordine dirigitur, quibusdam suis gradibus duce gratia proficiens, spiritu tandem consummabitur" (*PL* 182:113). See *De diligendo Deo* 15.39 (*PL* 182:998).

31 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 8: "In primis ergo diligit seipsum homo propter se; caro quippe est, et nil sapere valet praeter se. Cumque se videt per se non posse subsistere, Deum quasi sibi necessarium incipit per fidem inquirere, et diligere. Diligit itaque in secundo gradu Deum, sed propter se, non propter ipsum" (*PL* 182:113). See *De diligendo Deo* 15.39 (*PL* 182:998).

32 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 8: "Sic gustato quam suavis est Dominus, transit ad tertium gradum, ut diligat Deum, non jam propter se, sed propter ipsum" (*PL* 182: 114). See *De diligendo Deo* 15.39 (*PL* 182:998).

33 Bernard, Letter 11, no. 8: "Miro quodam modo oblitus sui, et a se penitus velut deficiens, totus perget in Deum: et deinceps adhaerens ei, unus cum eo spiritus erit" (*PL* 182:114). This is one of the few places where either Bernard or a copyist has made the version of the letter as it appears in the *De diligendo Deo* more sober, because, while the sentence in the letter begins "quasi enim ebrius miro quodam modo," in the treatise it is simply "quasi enim miro quodam modo," with the *ebrius* removed. See *De diligendo Deo* 15.39 (*PL* 182:998).

question of love's desire some ten years later in *On Loving God*, to which he would append his earlier letter.[34] The controversy at Laon and Paris over the *De caritate* had by now been raging for some time and had reached the monasteries. In his response, Bernard once again draws on Cassian's description of a hireling's mercenary love. At the same time, however, more than he had done before, he underlines that, while charity does not seek a reward, it will nonetheless receive one.

> God is not loved without a reward, although God should be loved without regard for reward. True charity cannot be left empty, even though she is not mercenary and seeks not her own (1 Cor 13:5). Love is an affection, not a contract: it cannot acquire nor be acquired from a pact. It arises willingly and it makes one willing; true love is content in itself.[35]

Charity loves God for himself, but doing so makes us happy. This is a voluntary (*spontaneus*) property of charity that God himself has placed within it. When Bernard turns to the third stage of charity's development, he affirms that one who attains this stage loves God truly, chastely, and justly. Then, in language reminiscent of the *De caritate*, Bernard holds that one who has attained this stage of perfection seeks "not what is his own but what is Christ's."[36] The author of the *De caritate* had condemned those who desire to enjoy God in heaven, asserting that "those who seek what is their own do not seek what is Christ's, and consequently neither will they attain Christ."[37] Bernard seems to agree, but holds that those who attain

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[34] As noted above, Bernard integrates Letter 11 into the *De diligendo Deo*. Specifically, he uses paragraphs 3–9 of the letter as the third and final section of *De diligendo Deo*. For the dating of the *De diligendo Deo*, see Jean Leclercq and Henri Rochais, eds., "Introduction," *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vol. 3, *Tractatus et Opuscula* (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1963), 112.

[35] Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 7.17: "Non enim sine praemio diligitur Deus, etsi absque praemii intuitu diligendus sit. Vacua namque vera caritas esse non potest, nec tamen mercenaria est; quippe non quaerit quae sua sunt (1Co 13:5). Affectus est, non contractus: nec acquiritur pacto, nec acquirit. Sponte afficit, et spontaneum facit. Verus amor seipso contentus est. Habet praemium, sed id quod amatur" (*PL* 182:984).

[36] Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 9.26: "non quae sua sunt, sed quae Jesu Christi" (*PL* 182:990).

[37] *De caritate* (*Tria sunt genera* 6–8): "Hi ergo quaerunt quae sua sunt, non quae Jesu Christi. Propterea nec illud habebunt" (Wielockx, *ETL* 58:72). The textual parallel is striking. Although the first part of the phrase ("quae sua sunt") comes from the Latin version of 1 Cor 13:5, the "quae Jesu Christi" is added by both. Who was influencing whom, or were they both drawing on a common source?

the third level of perfection no longer seek what is their own. "This is the third degree of love. In it God is already loved for his own sake."[38]

In his description of the fourth stage, which is the perfect love of God in heaven, Bernard attempts to resolve the remaining tension by offering a fusional account of our union with God. Like water assimilated into a goblet of wine or iron that becomes molten in the fire and thus takes on the properties of fire, "so it is necessary for the saints that all human affections melt in a mysterious way and flow into the will of God."[39] In this way, "we will rejoice not so much in our dreamy needs or chance happiness, but in the fact that his will be fulfilled in us and by us."[40] Bernard here attempts to resolve the problem of charity's desire by relocating the source of this desire. It is God who wills that the saints delight in him: "He will then entirely inebriate his beloved ones; he will then give them to drink of the torrent of his delight [*torrente voluptatis*] (Ps 35:9)."[41] Like a bridegroom whose love delights his bride, God's love is a river that delights his saints: "For, indeed, in that ardent but chaste embrace of bridegroom and bride, the river's rushing current gives joy to the city of God. (Ps 45:5)."[42] In heaven, the saints will thus will what God wills and rejoice in what God rejoices in. Specifically, for the saints, to rejoice in God is what God wills for them. As a result, "the just feast and exult in the sight of God, and they delight in joy."[43] Nevertheless, for Bernard, charity's act remains a type of desire, but one that no longer implies imperfection: "here is insatiable curiosity without restlessness; here is that eternal, inexplicable desire without need."[44] Bernard ventures to the edge of intelligible language, embracing the language of paradox: charity becomes a desire without need, like a

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38 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 9.26: "Iste est tertius amoris gradus, quo jam propter se ipsum Deus diligitur" (*PL* 182:990).

39 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 10.28: "Sic omnem tunc in sanctis humanam affectionem quodam ineffabili modo necesse erit a semetipsa liquescere, atque in Dei penitus transfundi voluntatem" (*PL* 182:991).

40 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 10.28: "Delectabit sane non tam nostra vel sopita necessitas, vel sortita felicitas, quam quod ejus in nobis, et de nobis voluntas adimpleta videbitur" (*PL* 182:991).

41 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11.33: "Tunc prorsus inebriat charissimos suos, tunc torrente voluptatis suæ potat (Psal. xxxv, 9)" (*PL* 182:994).

42 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11.33: "Quoniam quidem in complexu illo aretissimo et castissimo sponsi et sponsæ, fluminis impetus lætificat civitatem Dei (Psal. xlv, 5)" (*PL* 182:994–95).

43 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11.33: "Justi epulentur et exsultent in conspectu Dei, et delectentur in lætitia (Psal. lxvii, 4)" (*PL* 182:995).

44 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11.33: "Hinc insatiabilis illa sine inquietudine curiositas: hinc aeternum illud atque inexplicabile desiderium, nesciens egestatem" (*PL* 182:995).

thirst remaining in one who is satiated; it is a "sober drunkenness" which is nonetheless still a "burning for God."[45] Satisfied with this solution, Bernard concludes: "From this then that fourth degree of love is possessed forever, when God alone and above all is loved, for now we do not love ourselves except for his sake, that he may be the reward of those who love him, the eternal reward of those who love him forever."[46]

But is Bernard's solution ultimately satisfying? Setting aside the conceptual difficulties inherent in such notions as needless desire and sober drunkenness, does Bernard ever directly confront the moral character of the Christian's desire for God in this life? Is the desire for union with God a holy desire? Is it an act of charity or at least animated by charity? Bernard never directly confronts these questions. In spite of the efforts of the best minds of the era, therefore, the twelfth century is left with an aporia concerning charity and desire.[47] In what sense is it wrong to seek a reward for the good we do for the love of God and neighbor? The author of the *De caritate* considers the desire for reward as always sinful and incompatible with charity: we are to serve God without desiring God or the joy of union with him. At the other extreme, Hugh of Saint Victor affirms that to love God from charity is nothing other than to will to have him and to enjoy him. Bernard attempts a middle way by affirming that charity both loves God for himself and will receive a reward. Moreover, while the author of

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45 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11.33: "hinc denique sobria illa ebrietas, vero, non mero ingurgitans, non madens vino, sed ardens Deo" (*PL* 182:995).

46 Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 11.33: "Ex hoc jam quartus ille amoris gradus perpetuo possidetur, cum summe, et solus diligitur Deus: quia nec nos ipsos jam nisi propter ipsum diligimus, ut sit ipse præmium amantium se, præmium æternum amantium in æternum" (*PL* 182:995).

47 The most satisfying twelfth-century Scholastic solution was offered by Peter Abelard, who asserts that "Love is good will towards the other for himself, by which we wish that things go with him as we believe it is well for them to go, and we desire this more for him than for ourselves [Amor vero est bona erga alterum propter ipsum voluntas, qua videlicet optamus ut eo modo se habeat quo se habere bonum ei esse credimus, et hoc eius potius quam nostri causa desideramus]" (*Theologia scholarium* 1.1; *PL* 178:982), subsequently explaining that "we are not talking about charity if we love God more for ourselves, in other words, for our own utility and for the happiness of his kingdom which we hope to receive from him, than for himself: in such a case we are placing our end in ourselves and not in him [Nec iam etiam caritas dicenda si propter nos eum, id est pro nostra utilitate et pro regni eius felicitate quam ab eo speramus, diligeremus potius quam propter ipsum, in nobis videlicet nostrae intentionis finem, non in ipso constituents]" (*Commentaria ad Romanos* 3.487–90; *Opera theologica*, 201). See Sherwin, *On Love and Virtue*, 91–94.

the *De caritate* regards mercenary love as sinful, Bernard follows Cassian and portrays it as lived in faith and as animated by God's grace.

Thomas Aquinas on Charity, Hope, and Mercenary Love

St. Thomas Aquinas famously defines charity as a type of friendship with God and draws on Aristotle to offer a more satisfying account of the love proper to friendship.[48] Unlike desire in the sense appetite, desire in the will arises as part of the will's deeper affirmative act, whereby the beloved is not so much desired as affirmed. Thomas explains this by distinguishing between *amor amicitiae* (the love proper to friendship) and *amor concupiscentiae* (the love proper to desire).[49] These are not two distinct acts, but two features of the will's proper act of love. To love, Thomas asserts, is always to will some good for the beloved.[50] The will's affirmation of the beloved thus contains within it the desire for that good (when absent) or the celebration of that good (when present). "Love has a twofold tendency: toward the good that a person wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and toward the one to whom he wishes some good."[51] The will's spiritual desire thus arises from within the will's spiritual affirmation of the existence and goodness of the beloved. Love in the will is thus always love for someone.[52] Most fundamentally the good we will to our beloved is that they exist. "The first thing that one wills for a friend is that he be and live."[53] Only subsequently do we will particular goods for our beloved and direct our actions accordingly.[54] In relation to God, charity's proper act is to love God for himself, which means to celebrate his existence and goodness.[55]

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48 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] II-II, q. 23, a. 1: "Charity is a certain friendship of man toward God." Not only does St. Thomas draw on Aristotle's treatment of friendship in books 8–9 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, but he also employs Aristotle's definition of friendship love's proper act, which Aristotle articulates in *Rhetoric* 2.4.1380b35–1381a1: "We define friendship [*philian*] and love [*philein*] by saying: to love [*philein*] signifies to will to another all that you hold to be good, and to do so for the other and not for yourself." Thomas helpfully condenses this to: "to love is to will good to another" (*ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4).

49 *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4. See Guy Mansini, "*Duplex amor* and the Structure of Love in Aquinas," in *Thomistica*, ed. E. Manning (Leuven: Peters, 1995): 137–96.

50 *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4.

51 *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4.

52 *ST* I, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3.

53 *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 7.

54 We see this progression described when we read the above cited sentence from *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 7, in its larger context. See also *ST* I, q. 20, a. 2.

55 *ST* II-II, q. 31, a. 1, ad 1.

One can, of course, turn this love toward oneself. In loving ourselves, we are affirming our own existence as good and desiring further good for ourselves. This fact helps St. Thomas distinguish hope from charity. Both theological virtues reside in the will, but hope is an *amor concupiscentiae*, while charity is an *amor amicitiae*. "Hope presupposes love of him whom one hopes to attain, which love is a love of concupiscence, by which one more loves oneself, desiring a good, than willing a good to another. Charity, however, entails a love of friendship, toward which hope flows."[56]

John Cassian, as we have seen, already associated hope with a form of self-regarding love for God. He portrays this love, however, as the mercenary love of a hireling. Thomas Aquinas refuses to do this. For Aquinas, mercenary love (*amor mercenarius*) is by definition always evil and contrary to charity, because it loves God for temporal rewards.[57] Hope, on the other hand, loves God as our eternal reward. From Aquinas's perspective, when Cassian associated the virtue of hope with the love of the hireling, he failed to recognize that the desire for God as our eternal fulfillment is already a filial love for God.[58] It is already to love God as a son, but as a son whose love is not yet perfect.

> Love indeed is perfect and imperfect. Perfect love is that whereby someone is loved for oneself, as when someone wills a person some good for his own sake; thus a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that whereby someone loves something, not for its own sake, but that he may obtain that good for himself; thus a man loves what he desires. The first love of God pertains to charity, which adheres to

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56 *ST* II-II, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2.

57 *ST* II-II, q. 19, a. 4: "That love is called mercenary that loves God on account of temporal goods, which is essentially contrary to charity. Therefore, mercenary love is always evil."

58 Thomas Aquinas, *Super Titum* 3, lec. 1: "But how heirs? *According to hope*, because the hope for this life is already in us: let us rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God (Rom 5:2) [Sed quomodo haeredes? secundum spem, quia iam non est spes huius vitae. Rom. V, 2: gloriamur in spe gloriae filiorum dei]." See also *Super Rom* 8, lec. 5: "He mentions what is awaited, saying *waiting for the adoption of the sons*, i.e., for the completion of this adoption. For this adoption was begun by the Holy Spirit justifying the soul: *you have received the spirit of adoption of sons* (v. 15). But it will be brought to fulfillment when the body is glorified: *we rejoice in the hope of sharing the glory of the children of God* (5:2) [ponit rem expectatam dicens adoptionem filiorum dei expectantes, id est completionem huius adoptionis. Inchoata enim est huiusmodi adoptio per spiritum sanctum iustificantem animam. Supra eodem: accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum. Consummabitur autem per ipsius corporis glorificationem. Unde supra v, 2: gloriamur in spe gloriae filiorum dei]." See also *ST* I, q. 33, a. 3; *In Symbolum apostolorum* 8.

> God as to himself; while hope pertains to the second love, since he that hopes, intends to obtain possession of something for himself.[59]

Charity is more perfect than hope because charity responds to God as a friend who is present (since charity loves God from a union of affections),[60] and thus we love him as another self (*secundum seipsum*), while hope responds to him as a good that is absent and difficult to attain.[61]

St. Thomas recognizes (citing Augustine) that fear can lead us to God and that hope on the level of its generation precedes charity.[62] He thus concedes these elements of the twelfth-century debate: fear and the supernatural gift of hope can lead us to charity. Hope understood in this way, however, is not yet a living hope.[63] For Aquinas, spiritual growth and the stages of perfection all pertain to charity.[64] Hope's proper act, therefore, flows from charity and charity's affective union with God.[65] This was

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[59] *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 8: Amor autem quidam est perfectus, quidam imperfectus. Perfectus quidem amor est quo aliquis secundum se amatur, ut puta cui aliquis vult bonum, sicut homo amat amicum. Imperfectus amor est quo quis amat aliquid non secundum ipsum, sed ut illud bonum sibi ipsi proveniat, sicut homo amat rem quam concupiscit. Primus autem amor dei pertinet ad caritatem, quae *inhaeret* deo *secundum seipsum*, sed spes pertinet ad secundum amorem, quia ille qui sperat aliquid sibi obtinere intendit." Note closely Thomas's use of the expression *secundum seipsum*, which grammatically must refer to the subject of *inhaeret* and not to its object. Thomas is, therefore, not saying that the Christian "adheres to God for His [God's] own sake." Thomas affirms something more profound: the Christian "adheres to God as to himself [i.e., as to the Christian's own self]." In charity, God becomes our new self, since, as Thomas elsewhere states in *ST* I-II, q. 28.1 ad 2, union is an effect of love to such an extent that "the lover stands to the object of his love, as to himself [*ut ad seipsum*]."

[60] *ST* II-II, q. 27, a. 2: "Love, as an act of charity, includes a certain goodwill, but to such *dilectio* or *amor* is added a union of affection."

[61] *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 3: "Love and hope differ in this, that love denotes a certain union between lover and beloved, while hope denotes a certain movement or stretching forth of the appetite toward an arduous good. Now union is of things that are distinct, wherefore love can directly regard the other whom a man unites to himself by love, looking upon him as his other self: whereas movement is always toward its own term which is proportionate to the subject moved. Therefore hope regards directly one's own good, and not that which pertains to another."

[62] *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 8: "In the order of generation, therefore, hope precedes charity. For just as someone is led to love God, through fear of being punished by him for his sins, as Augustine states (in his *Commentary on First John*, tractate 9), so too, hope leads to charity, inasmuch as someone, through hoping to be rewarded by God, is encouraged to love God and to keep his commandments." See also *ST* II-II, q. 27, a. 3, ad 3.

[63] See *ST* I-II, q. 64, a. 2; II-II, q. 17, a. 8, ad 2 and ad 3.

[64] *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 9.

[65] *ST* I-II, q. 65, a. 4.

already implied in Thomas's portrayal of hope as an *amor concupiscentiae*, which, as we have seen, always exists within the dynamic of an *amor amicitiae*, which in this case is charity's friendship love for God. Specifically, hope's desire exists from within charity's love for God: we desire perfect union with God (hope), because we love God from a union of affection right now, a union so profound that God becomes our other self.[66] Hope desires perfect union with God because God wants this for us.[67] God created us in the image of the Trinity, elevated this image in the gift of sanctifying grace, and instills in us the desire for the perfection of this triune image in the beatific vision in heaven.[68] The movement from grace to glory is like the natural growth of a child.[69] Thus, like a mother who does not begrudge her children's desire for her milk, God does not begrudge hope's desire that our union with him become perfect. Through baptism and his gifts of sanctifying grace, God makes us sons and daughters of the Father,[70] becoming by adoption what Christ is by nature, so that in the Spirit we too can cry out: "Abba, Father."[71] As his children, therefore, God also desires that we be united to him as our fulfillment. (This is what the author of the twelfth-century *De caritate* failed to recognize.) Indeed, for Aquinas, hope's desire is not selfish because the self in whose service it desires this is God himself: that friend who has become our other self (*ut ad seipsum*).[72] As Aquinas holds, in hope we desire the happiness of heaven not so much for ourselves as for God, who by means of this becomes perfected in us. Aquinas, therefore, has integrated the insights of John Cassian, of the *De caritate*, and of St. Bernard, while deftly avoiding the limitations of each of them. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, St. Thomas removes mercenary love from the stages of perfection and decouples hope from the desires of the hireling, thus effecting a minor revolution in the spiritual traditions of the West. Instead, he reminds us that hope's desire is born of the charity that is proper to the Father's sons and daughters, who become by adoption what Christ is by nature. N·V

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66 See *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1

67 See *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 4.

68 See *ST* I, q. 93, a. 4.

69 See *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 9.

70 *ST* III, q. 23, aa. 1–4. See also *Super Ioan* 1, lec. 6. See Luc-Thomas Somme, *Fils adoptifs de Dieu par Jésus Christ* (Paris: Vrin, 1997); Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 82–89.

71 ST II-II, q. 19, a. 2, ad 3: "By the love of charity God becomes our Father, according to Rom 8:15, 'You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father.'"

72 *ST* I-II, q. 28.1 ad 2. See note 58 above.