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Faith before Hope and Love

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Abstract

Thomas' *Compendium* was composed in imitation of Augustine's *Enchiridion,* and with the intention of correcting features which struck Thomas, as they have struck other readers, as strange. The treatment of faith was the principal focus of Thomas' discontent. In place of Augustine's wandering history of the engagement of divine goodness with the world, Thomas emphasised the cognitive aspect of faith and its concern with being. The two approaches differ in the extent to which they can allow a distinction of the cognitive from the voluntative in virtue. Augustine's insistence on keeping them together has definite strengths in resisting voluntarism, but Thomas' emphasis imposes constraints on the moralising reduction of faith to action.

Keywords

Thomas, Augustine, faith, hope, love

At the opening of the *Compendium Theologiae,* a late and unfinished summary of doctrine addressed to his secretary Reginald, Thomas quotes a programmatic statement from the beginning of Augustine's *Enchiridion,* or *Handbook,* a work of similar purpose and also from its author's last years. "The worship of God is comprised of faith, hope and love," Augustine had declared.[1] The quotation serves a purpose rather different from the normal run of Thomas' quotations from Augustine, which might be drawn from *florilegia* and are chosen to articulate well-known opinions that a scholastic theologian had to negotiate. Here it is not Augustine's opinion that Thomas draws attention to, but Augustine's book, on the design of which Thomas will model his own. By showing himself aware of Augustine's original, he invites his readers to measure his own performance, some eight hundred and fifty years later, against it. Both works are constructed

[1] *Enchiridion* 3. *Comp. Theol.* 1.1. Quotations from Augustine are based on the Maurist text, those from Thomas use *Opuscula Theologica I,* ed R. A. Verardo (Rome: Marietti, 1953).

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upon the three virtues of 1 Corinthians 13:13, both use the Apostles' Creed to guide the treatment of faith, and the Lord's Prayer to guide the treatment of hope. Augustine then used Jesus' summary of the law to guide his treatment of love, and Thomas, though his work was broken off before it could reach that point, leaves indications that this was his plan, too.

Yet for two works conceived on precisely the same lines, they are remarkably unlike each other. This can hardly have escaped Thomas' notice, and it is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that he thought Augustine's execution of the design defective, and had the ambition of improving on it. A comparison of the two promises to be illuminating. That Thomas has left us 246 chapters on faith, only 10 on hope (breaking off after "Thy kingdom come"), and nothing at all on love, is less of a problem than might appear, since by accident it leaves us with a work of very similar shape to the *Enchiridion*. And the most striking differences emerge in their contrasting treatments of faith. In the truncated section on hope we see Thomas following the ancient theologian in some detail, echoing him on particular points, but on faith they go in completely different directions. Thomas adopts only the purely formal feature of treating the Apostles' Creed, and then draws much of the substance from his own *Contra Gentiles*. Through the lens of this contrast some essential underlying differences in their two conceptions of theology can be observed. Let me summarise my conclusion at the beginning: Augustine viewed faith as a moment in the act of worshipping God, Thomas viewed it as a cognitive presupposition of the worship of God. Thomas turns the face of faith in a cognitive and ontic direction, towards being, while Augustine turns it in an evaluative direction, towards goodness.

Let us begin with some background to the *Enchiridion*. Augustine preferred to call the work *Faith, Hope and Love;* the title "Handbook" was dreamed up by its dedicatee, one Laurence, who asked the author for a work of reference small enough to carry about with him. Augustine obliged, while treating both the request and the requester with some irony. The *Enchiridion* was popular in the scholastic age, presenting a mature summary of Augustine's thought in a small compass, which, when the purchase of a book might involve an outlay comparable to the purchase of a house today, made it possible for an individual scholar to own a copy. It was popular in the Reformation, bequeathing its title to works by Erasmus and Melanchthon, and even, in some early editions, to Luther's *Small Catechism*.[2] Later on it found admirers among Reformed theologians, who enjoyed the steely late-Augustinian assertions of the sovereignty of grace and, later still,

[2] W. Jannasch, "Enchiridion". *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 3te Aufl., hrsg. H. von Campenhausen *et al*., II (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1958) p. 463. (The subtitle of that mighty six-volume reference work describes it, implausibly, as a *Handwörterbuch* . . .)

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for similar reasons, among the Jansenists. Subsequently it fell out of favour, Catholics distrusting its Jansenist associations, Protestants disturbed by its anticipations of certain medieval doctrinal constructions such as the perpetual virginity of the Mother of the Lord, *post mortem* purgatorial fire and even, in a hint, the *Limbo Parvulorum,* all making unique appearances in Augustine's work. Modern scholarship has perpetuated the work's comparative neglect. The article in *Augustine through the Ages* contains, exceptionally, no bibliography, referring the reader to the edition that Joseph Rivière contributed to the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* series.[3] That was slightly mischievous, since that volume, too, contained no bibliography, presumably because Rivière could find no materials for one.[4] His Introduction and Notes to the *Enchiridion* are therefore more or less what we have, and not, it must be said, of the most penetrating, though it is surely to Rivière's credit that he found the neglected little work so fascinating that he lavished on it all the editorial space allotted him, leaving the early *De fide et symbolo,* designated to share the volume, with barely an Introduction and absolutely no Notes.

What is likely to intrigue the contemporary reader of the *Enchiridion* is precisely what may have deterred Augustine's admirers in earlier ages, including, in all probability, Saint Thomas himself, namely its wholly bewildering structure. Here are the essential elements in the puzzle: Augustine sets out to instruct his correspondent Laurence on the essentials of Christianity in pocket-book scope. He announces as his programme the virtues of faith, hope and love, insisting on their inseparability. Loosely following the Apostles' Creed, he proceeds to expound the topic of faith over fifty columns of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*. He then turns to hope, and gives it one column, subsequently bestowing two upon love. (And this from the man who coined the phrase, *Dilige et quod vis fac!)* He does not explain what he is doing, nor even remark upon the strangeness of his procedure, though elsewhere he could show himself very conscious of the spatial limitations of a codex and would sometimes apologise, after some relaxed and discursive argument, for having to hurry past other questions to complete his programme before space ran out. Here all we find is a complacent remark on the length of the work – too long, he suspects, for the "handbook" he was asked for, but that will be for Laurence to decide!

[3] John Cavadini, "Enchiridion", in *Augustine through the Ages: an encyclopedia,* ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald *et al*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 296.

[4] *Exposés Généraux de la Foi,* Oeuvres de Saint Augustin 9, texte, traduction, notes par J. Rivière. (Paris: Desclée, de Brouwer, 1947). The footnotes to Rivière's "Introduction" (pp. 79–100) point us to a previous article of his own and to a solitary article of 1903 spun off a critical reedition of the text.

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The comparison with Thomas' plan for the long section of the *Compendium* on faith only yields further grounds for surprise at Augustine's wayward procedure. Thomas' discussion is organised lucidly around two objects of faith, God as trinity and the humanity of Christ. The teaching on God is then subdivided under three heads: unity of essence, trinity of persons, and divine operations (covering the first and third articles of the Apostles' Creed). The teaching on Christ's humanity follows the narrative order of the second article of the creed, beginning with man's fall and proceeding to Incarnation and Paschal Mystery, Ascension and Last Judgment. Augustine, by contrast, seems to ramble in the most surprising directions, taking occasion from the loose constraints of the Apostles' Creed for an extended treatment of the sin of lying and a long discussion of the practice and meaning of almsgiving. A rehearsal of the late-Augustinian doctrine of predestination shorn of its usual anti-Pelagian polemics finds its way in, but there is no presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which, as Lewis Ayres has taught us to recognise, he had handled so judiciously and traditionally in that earlier exposition of the Apostles' Creed, the *De fide et symbolo*.[5] Yet the speculative climax of his many thoughts about the Trinity in the completion of his great fourteen-book work, the *De Trinitate,* had been reached not very long before the *Enchiridion* was written.

Was Augustine up to something? It is true, of course, that nothing in his manner of thinking and writing ever approached the ideal of systematic order that the scholastic age worked so hard to achieve, but among ancient writers he is outstanding for his ability to plan and execute discussions of complex organisation on a large scale. The impression of rambling which a discursive piece of Augustinian exploration can give is usually superficial, the underlying structures carefully thought out. To which we may add that he wrote at least one other small digest of doctrine suggesting what new Christians should be taught in catechetical classes, *De catechizandis rudibus,* the contents of which are well ordered and conform to expectations. If, then, the *Enchiridion* does not conform to them, the most probable reason is that it was not meant to. Prompted, perhaps, by what he thought of as the pretentiousness of Laurence's expectations, Augustine took it into his head to do something entirely different.

Laurence had listed the topics he wanted to see treated under six headings, which Augustine dismisses faster than it takes to repeat them. They are all answered, he assures him, by a right understanding of faith, hope and love, for in these three is comprised what is meant by worship, "calling on the name of the Lord". Noting that in Christian catechesis faith is conveyed by teaching the Apostles

[5] L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 72–92.

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Creed, hope and love by teaching the Lord's Prayer – a hint that Laurence, whose more extensive knowledge he politely compliments, really needs help at the simplest level – Augustine presses home the interconnectedness of the three virtues, which, though they may be distinguished, cannot be separated. This produces what might be seen as a kind of *communicatio idiomatum*: it is proper to faith to believe, and proper to hope and love to pray, and yet faith, too, prays through the medium of hope and love. One of his favourite Pauline quotations in the anti-Pelagian period is the saying that faith "works through love" (Gal. 5:6), and this is the Ariadne's thread that will lead us through the labyrinthine turns of the *Enchiridion*. Its aim is to display faith as the root of action, capable of generating works of love, and, at a median point in that dynamic, of generating hope as the framework of action. The intellectualism of Laurence's pretensions is thus quietly set to one side. He is warned in the words of Romans 16:19, "I would have you wise unto good, simple in evil".

Love presupposes hope, and hope and love both presuppose faith. That is the sequence of the three virtues on which Augustine, and Thomas after him, are careful to insist. (Neither attends to the default sequence, more common in the Pauline letters: faith, love, hope.) But the retrospective sequence is balanced, in Augustine's thought, by the forward energy of faith "working through" hope and love. Without that balancing movement, absent from Thomas, the "presupposition" has a very different content. Thomas explores faith through a series of propositions, some grounded on natural reason – God exists, God is unmoved mover, God is necessary, God is eternal, without change and without parts, God is not a species of any genus, and nothing is a species of the genus God, God is one, not body nor bodily form or strength, God is infinite and of infinite strength, every perfection included in him eminently and united with every other perfection, God is referred to by non-synonymous, non-defining names that are neither univocal nor equivocal, God has intelligence and will, in act and not in potency, which are not other than each other – and others, when the limits of natural reason have been reached, on revelation: the trinity of persons, *intellectum in intelligente* and *amatum in amante,* and the divine works, creation, diversity of rank and order, potency and act in created things, intellectual substances and free will. It is the genius of Thomas' art to allow these propositions to flow sequentially from one another in an unbroken logic that carries assent irresistibly from one to the next.

For Augustine the propositional content of faith is much less extensive and wholly different in focus. Scientists may know many causes of things, he tells us, but when it comes to religious faith only one proposition is necessary: the sole cause of all things, heavenly

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and earthly, visible and invisible, is the creator's goodness.[6] The controlling position given to goodness here is striking. Thomas will introduce divine goodness for the first time in his hundred and first chapter, when discussing the ends for which God acts. Augustine, with a more Platonic view of goodness as self-outpouring origin, places it at the head of all thought about God and the universe. His exposition presents faith as the moral apprehension of the good as the origin of all that comes to be. In these later works he often liked to revisit and reaffirm the ground he had occupied in early arguments with Manicheism, partly to head off Pelagian critics who accused him of having forgotten his opposition to metaphysical dualism. A metaphysic that identifies goodness and being and denies the substantial reality of evil was the only exclusively cognitive element in faith. All else was the free embrace of sovereign good, its gifts and its works. In this, of course, he followed a patristic tradition. A century before him the young Athanasius had thought the same.[7]

The wide-ranging exposition of faith which follows is best understood, I would think, as a history of divine goodness. Good ventures out of itself into self-giving, generating the narrative of creation. When it encounters refusal – the only way to conceive of a non-substantial evil is as an act of refusal – it overcomes it by occupying the material world, the site where negation is possible. It is this agenda that gives rise to the unexpected discussion of lying, which follows directly upon the exposition of evil as wilful refusal of immutable good. Lying, Augustine liked to say, is the foundation of all sin, because it is what the devil does natively. Paul Griffiths has taught us to recognise that Augustine had an idiosyncratic idea of what constituted a lie: not dissonance between speech and reality, but dissonance between thought and utterance.[8] Lying interrupted the self-communication of the good by imposing a wall of concealment between thought and word, an act of the mind to disguise what it has accepted as truth. This mental blockade against the good's self-outpouring grounds the strong emphasis on the bondage of the will. Only the sovereign self-giving of the good can overcome our reluctance to share with others what is given to us. Christ's death and resurrection offer a living form into which we can be inducted by baptism in the Holy Spirit, not simply imitating the saving events but participating in the divine goodness that shapes them. Repentance, daily practised, thus marks the moment of difference between faith

[6] *Enchiridion* 3.9: Satis est christiano rerum creatarum causam siue coelestium siue terrestrium siue uisibilium siue inuisibilium non nisi bonitatem credere Creatoris.

[7] Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 1.

[8] P. J. Griffiths, *Lying: an Augustinian theology of duplicity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004).

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alive and dead faith. Its ongoing form is almsgiving, a term which has a greatly widened sense for Augustine, extending to all types of action that are done in kindness.[9] He devotes a great deal of time and attention to this part of his exposition, all under the phrase "the forgiveness of sins" in the Apostles' Creed. The eschatological section then sees the vindication of the goodness of God in the act of final judgment.

Faith, Augustine tells us, "asks, seeks and knocks" for an access of hope and love, but with so much included in faith, what are hope and love to supply?[10] Essentially, an individual-historical disposition and practice that can realise the victory of divine goodness within the practical engagements of the life it is given. Reaching out to grasp the goodness of God, faith needs a concrete human agency that can meet the challenge, a capacity to envisage human ends of action, on the one hand, to purpose human actions fit to pursue those ends, on the other. The end of action, which is the object of hope, can be envisaged in our context only to the extent that God's will is seen as a real possibility there. Hope, then, depends on faith to disclose the possibilities of encountering God's goodness in the world, while faith directs hope to discern those possibilities in the historical situation. That is why faith teaches hope to find its true form in prayer, calling upon God from the place we find ourselves, yet calling in words that are taught and authorised, not simply improvised out of the situation. The purposing and enacting of right acts, the work of love, requires this full and hopeful engagement of the agent with the moment and place of service. The fulfilment of the moral law in love, then, is at the same time a deepening of the generalities of law into a concrete sympathy with the will of God for here and now. Love is the hermeneutic of moral obligation, involving the subject in a complete harmony with God's ordering of human works.

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This, then, is what Thomas is resolved to correct. It is not goodness that unfolds itself to faith, but being, and a logic of being that proceeds from initial self-evidence to lay the ground for the presence of divine being in saving history. So the rational demonstration of the Trinity as Being with its Word and its Love precedes an account of the incarnation and saving work of Christ. Summarising broadly, we might say that Augustine distinguishes faith from the other two virtues as we might distinguish *the good* and *the right,*

[9] *Enchiridion* 19.72: Ac per hoc ad omnia quae utili misericordia fiunt, valet quod Dominus ait, 'Date eleemosynam, et ecce omnia munda sunt vobis'.

[10] *Enchiridion* 31.117: Ipsa est autem fides Christi, quam commendat Apostolus, quae per dilectionem operatur, et quod in dilectione nondum habet, petit ut accipiat, quaerit ut inveniat, pulsat ut aperiatur ei.

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the objective loveliness of the created order from the particular path of obligation we discern before our feet, while Thomas distinguishes them as we might distinguish *being* and *goodness*. (I avoid saying "fact" and "value", or "is" and "ought", modern variants which have given the opposition a positivist twist, of which Thomas is certainly innocent.)

We recall, however, that Thomas apparently proposed to return to Augustine's guidance when he reached the exposition of hope and love. How could an Augustinian hope and love be appended to such an un-Augustinian faith? If God's goodness was not, after all, the object of faith, how could hope and love supply the concrete engagements responding to God's goodness in the world? A bridge had to be built across the cleft between being and goodness. And here we may notice two words which Thomas introduces into his presentation of hope, not having found them in Augustine. First, there is "intention", which appears at the outset of the *Compendium* in the following overview: "Human salvation consists in knowing the truth . . . , in intending the right end and in observing righteousness . . . . The knowledge of truth necessary to human salvation God has wrapped up in a few brief articles of faith . . . . Human intention he has corrected through a brief prayer, wherein . . . he has shown the direction that our intention and hope should turn. Human righteousness, consisting in observation of the law, he has summed up in the single command of love."[11] In speaking of the direction in which "our intention and hope" should turn, he has virtually treated those two nouns as synonyms. In Augustine's treatise the noun "intention" appears only twice, in neither case connected with hope.[12]

Even more striking is the word "movement" (*motus*). At the opening of the section on hope Thomas explains the distinctive contribution of that virtue as follows: as faith's knowledge, being only a foretaste, is not a knowledge in which desire can rest, "there remains a movement of the soul to something further", *i.e.* towards the perfect sight of truth and the pursuit of means conducing to it. "Among the doctrines of faith we have mentioned," he adds, "there is one, belief in divine providence over human affairs, which causes a movement of

[11] *Comp. Theol.* 1.1.1: Consistit enim humana salus in veritatis cognitione, . . . in debiti finis intentione, . . . in iustitiae observatione . . . Cognitionem autem veritatis humanae saluti necessariam brevibus et paucis fidei articulis comprehendit . . . Intentionem humanam brevi oratione rectificavit: in qua dum nos orare docuit, quomodo nostra intentio et spes tendere debet, ostendit. Humanam iustitiam quae in legis observatione consistit, uno praecepto caritatis consummavit.

[12] It appears once in the discussion of lying, which is the sin *par excellence* against faith, where he says that real lying depends on the *intentio,* which is to communicate something other than what one believes. It appears a second time in the section on love, where he distinguishes loving action from what we may do prompted by a *carnalis intentio*.

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hope to arise in the believer's mind. With the help of that movement, as instructed by faith, the believer pursues goods that are the object of natural desire."[13] Faith is here strikingly distinguished from a "movement of the soul". Movement is aroused in response to a single article of faith only, that on providence. The energy of movement is drawn from natural desire, while faith is confined to instruction as to the *possibility* of the objects of desire being realised. Thus instructed, the desiring soul is free to move, and its movement is hope. Until hope arises, then, the soul is conceived of as motionless. Augustine has no difficulty in principle in discussing motions of the soul, and does so especially when he deals with the four elementary passions, or emotions, of delight, sorrow, hope and fear (of which he is a stout defender within the terms current in his own day, though to modern tastes he can still appear too cautious). In that context the idea of a movement of the soul would naturally be associated with hope. But it is striking that that connexion is not made in the *Enchiridion,* where *motus* is used once of fear, once of love, and several times in a specialised logical sense of persuasion. These word-chasing points are no more than straws in the wind. Yet they give supporting indications of a fact that we would anyway be forced to concede, that Augustine never approximates Thomas' idea that the boundary between faith and hope lies where instruction gives rise to movement. The distinction between objects of cognition and objects of appetite, architecturally so important to Thomas' organisation of psychology, is nowhere found in Augustine.

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Let us ask ourselves at this point what broader conclusions might follow from a comparison which, for all that we may think that Thomas actually invited it, is undoubtedly very restricted in its scope and material. We may find the results rather disappointing – old-fashioned, indeed, in that it delivers us back to some depictions of the contrast between the two thinkers which were typical a few generations back, and which recent re-readings have tended to soften by an emphasis on Thomas as biblical expositor and theologian. Let us simply notice, by way of a balancing gesture, that Thomas – gratuitously, one might say, and without any compulsion from Reginald or anyone else – aligns himself with Augustine's proposal to expound Christian faith and life in terms of the three virtues. Faith *is* a virtue for Thomas, no less than for Augustine. And, as we find in the *Summa Theologiae,* he is prepared to defer to the observation that

[13] *Comp. Theol.* 2.1.545: Sed quia inter cetera fidei documenta unum esse diximus ut credatur Deus per providentiam de rebus humanis habere, insurgit ex hoc in animo credentis motus spei, ut scilicet bona quae naturaliter desiderat, ut edoctus ex fide, per eius auxilium consequatur.

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it is not to be located among the "intellectual virtues".[14] "Without faith we cannot please him" (Heb. 11:6). That quotation from the Epistle to the Hebrews, a text to which he devotes some very acute observations, is one that Thomas can claim to defend with as much right as Augustine or Luther.[15]

Yet this virtue is, in some sense or other, supposed to be without *motus*, and if we pose the question of what a motionless virtue might be, we may come by the shortest route to the point at issue. Not, to be sure, *inert;* that would be a simple contradiction in terms. Nor even *inactive,* since Thomas knows of such a thing as the *intellectus agens*. But it is a virtue practised without striving, without any idea of change. The paradoxical coexistence of motion and rest, characteristic, as Augustine thought, of our eschatological perfection, when God who is "ever in motion, ever at rest", will rest in us as he forever works in us, seems to have been brought back by Thomas into the pilgrim mind as a duality of potential, the faculties of intellect and will.[16] Here we discern a cardinal point of departure: Augustine knows nothing of these distinct faculties. It has to be repeated, to defend him against a misunderstanding deeply rooted in the textbooks, that a *voluntas* in Augustine is a *will-act,* a definite focussing of love upon an object, not a faculty or power residing in the soul. It is true, of course, that in developing his famous analogy between the divine trinity and the trinity in the mind, knowledge and love are distinguished as elemental and complementary functions of the mind corresponding to the second and third persons of the godhead. But these are enactments, complementary expressions of the self-sameness of the subject, and the descriptions of them for which he finally settles at the end of his long journey in the *De Trinitate* are as perpetual self-reflective activities: *memoria sui, cognitio sui, dilectio sui*. The essential unity of the acting self matters as much to him as the essential unity of God.

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Let me conclude with an attempt to draw up a brief balance-sheet between these two archetypal approaches to the Christian life. It is very difficult to do this judiciously, as they correspond in more than a few ways to two distinct eras of Christian history; Augustine could not have been Augustine without the patristic theological environment, as Thomas could not have been Thomas without the wider adventures of scholasticism. Where the two horizons met, as they

[14] *ST* 1–2.58.ad 3 To the objection that faith is not listed among the five intellectual virtues he replies simply, "Faith, hope and charity surpass human virtue, for they are virtues of men as made partakers in divine grace."

[15] Note especially *ST* 2–2.4.1.

[16] *Comp. Theol.* 1.149.298.

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did, for example, in Bernard and Abelard, there could be incomprehension, and even third parties with the advantage of a millennium's distance may have difficulty in doing justice to them both. I had better declare at once that I am, by upbringing and outlook, an Augustinian. I find it immediately easy to see what Augustine is up to and why, while Thomas is always surprising and puzzling me. I have learned, however, to value those surprises, which are usually sprung with the greatest dissimulation, as a bureaucrat might make some startling announcement while filling in a routine form.

I also come to the comparison as a Moral Theologian, and am inclined to compare them, first of all, as offering alternative strategies for resisting voluntarism. By insisting on the cognitive function as prior to and distinct from the voluntative, Thomas hoped to build a richer and more comprehensive account of moral reason. The risk was that by allowing the voluntative its distinct point of beginning, he might allow moral thinking to fall in two, leaving the soul divided between what may be known as the good and what may be willed as the right. By insisting on the coinherence of the two functions, Augustine hoped to avoid the notion of a pure act of will, independent of knowledge; his thought assigned such an act a role in theodicy, but only in the abstract thought-experiment of the pre-cosmic mind of Satan and the rebel angels.[17] The risk Augustine ran was that this banished Satanic will would creep back into the world to infect our understanding of the human and divine. Neither could claim total success in making himself understood. Thomas counts some furious voluntarists among his professed disciples, while Augustine must bear some responsibility for the rise of fourteenth-century voluntarism. Yet as a moralist myself I have found it generally more fruitful to think along Augustinian lines in response to modern voluntarism, keeping the cognitive and voluntative functions of reason inseparably mixed up.

But if, as a Moral Theologian, I believe I have received more help on this point from Augustine than from Thomas, that is not to belittle Thomas' achievements in the moral field. It would, of course, be perverse to blame him for the aridity and rigidity of what some of his followers made in Moral Theology, as it would be perverse to deny the great value of much that he suggested to major thinkers. The legacy of Francisco di Vitoria is a fixed point for any Christian ethics of international relations, and in this area where the peculiar virtues of precision are clearly needed, we should be hard put to it if we had nothing more to build on than Augustine's *City of God*. I am also far from thinking of Thomas as a simple purveyor of Aristotelian wisdom. His concern to rethink what the world had learned

[17] *De civitate Dei* 12. 6–8.

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from Aristotelian texts in terms authentic to Christian civilisation was not superficial, as we can see from the treatise on justice in the *Summa*, where Aristotle's famous distinction between distributive and exchange justice is left in a shape that would have astonished its author. If we consider the deeper infrastructure of Thomas' Christian ethics, however, it was his fate as a scholastic to have his task set for him by two great intellectual movements: the interpreters of Gratian on the one hand, the recoverers of Aristotle on the other. Augustine's hermeneutically derived categories, drawn from Psalms, Gospels and Pauline letters, achieve, I cannot help thinking, a more profoundly evangelical conception of the Christian life than Thomas' impressive but somewhat over-massive reconciliation of law and virtue.

But what when we step back from Moral Theology? It is the task of every intellectual discipline to understand its own relation to the wider range of intellectual disciplines. Moral theology knows of the temptation of "moralism", the desire to absorb everything into morality, a strong temptation in a practical discipline which ranges without limit over a universe of worldly contexts which the theoretical disciplines have to apportion very strictly. Moral *Theology* has the particular responsibility to situate itself modestly in relation to the literary discipline of hermeneutics and the descriptive discipline of dogmatics. The great virtue of Thomas' emphasis on objective knowledge is its ability to keep moralism in check. Moral theory has a predominant role in the *Summa Theologiae,* as is often pointed out, and yet is guarded front and back by the doctrines of God and of Christ and salvation. One might see the strategy of the *Summa* as keeping morality in proper bounds. The moralist, preoccupied with living and acting, is made to remember that our living and acting has to be de-centred – dissolved into the objectivity of an eternal worship which recapitulates the worship of the angels before we human agents were thought of. That ultimate decentering is necessary if we are to enter into the object-centredness of worship. Calmly, Thomas invites us to anticipate that objectivity in our imaginations, conceiving what it may be simply to *know* something true about God, keeping every question of what we may do about it out of sight. He has, therefore, a safeguard against the debased Augustinianism (for which Augustine is no more to blame than Thomas for the inadequacies of his followers) which would draw the Creator and his universe down into the sentiments and aspirations of the common man. There is no risk that anyone thinking on Thomas' lines will end up with moralistic vacuities like "All you need is love!"

The mystery of agency, we may say, is the conversion of a proposition into a proposal. "The sea is calm tonight . . . . Ah, love! let us be true to one another!" The proposal originates in a proposition; the proposition emerges as a proposal. Agential thought effects that conversion, but one of the things that is meant by describing it as a

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mystery is that we can only look at the conversion from one end or the other, not conceive the two poles and their connexion in a synthetic logical overview. If it is Thomas' peculiar bent to remind us of the *proposition* behind every proposal, and Augustine's to remind us that agents derive *proposals* from their propositions, can we intelligibly, knowing what we are doing, claim to prefer one to the other? Yes, we must maintain the Augustinian legacy – but in dialogue with the Thomist one!

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