

Introduction

A mare et amari: these lapidary words of St. Augustine's haunted the High Middle Ages and its theologians, both in the monasteries and in the Schools.¹ The phrase not only captured Augustine's romantic pre-Christian notion of friendship, thereby bearing importantly on humanistic questions of an anthropological or psychological cast; since "God is love," according to St. John, "to love and to be loved" must in some way pertain to the heart of theology as well.² But if *amor* describes in the most general terms an action or disposition that could be further specified as one of either *amicitia* or *caritas*, what, in turn, is the relationship between these latter two notions? In one way or another, both monks and schoolmen came to be exercised by these questions, and the revival of the Roman rhetorical tradition in the twelfth century, including crucially Cicero's *De Amicitia*, along with the translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in the following century, only added fuel to the flame. Among those who became keenly interested in the issue were the Cistercian abbot, Aelred of Rievaulx, and the Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas.

Not surprisingly, the theological treatments of friendship produced by these two authors—the twelfth-century monk on the one hand, the thirteenth-century scholastic theologian on the other—differ in many significant ways. It is precisely the central thesis of the following dissertation that the differences between these two accounts of friendship exhibit a certain congruence with fundamental differences between monastic and scholastic theology *tout court*. However, this thesis may be further subdivided, inasmuch as we will argue that the correspondence asserted is not merely

1. Augustine, *Confessions*, II, 2. For allusions by our own two authors, see Aelred of Rievaulx, SC I.25.71, SA Prologus.1, and Thomas Aquinas, *Sent.* distinction 27, question 2, article 1.

2. Deus caritas est. 1 Jn. 4:8 (Vulgate).

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formal, limited, for example, to ways in which each of our two authors' accounts of friendship respectively instantiates monastic or scholastic theological method *per se*. Rather, we contend that the discovered correspondence touches also the particular subject matter in question, namely, *friendship* under its Christian theological aspect. What is true, therefore, about the monastic notion of friendship can be seen to characterize the monastic theological project as well, and the same reasoning applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the scholastic notion and enterprise. In order, then, to facilitate the reader's progress through the dissertation, we will now briefly outline the procedure whereby we arrive at these conclusions.

In chapter 1, we undertake a preliminary survey of the distinguishing features of monastic and scholastic theology in the period spanned by the lives of our two authors. The aim of this preparatory chapter is twofold: first, to provide ourselves with a general sense of the very different cultural and theological milieux within which Aelred and Thomas lived and wrote;³ second, to delineate a number of more particular criteria, drawn from our assessment of these milieux, by which we may gauge the theological projects of Aelred and Thomas in the ensuing chapters.⁴ It is here that we find reasons for our expectations of significantly different approaches on the parts of our two authors. The chapter also contains a brief survey of the typical sources employed by the two milieux in their theological endeavors, noting both the commonalities and some significant differences.⁵ On all of these points, our principal guidance comes from the lifework of Dom Jean Leclercq, whose defense of monastic theology provides one of the seminal impulses behind our own inquiry. In the final major section of the chapter the choice of Aelred and Thomas, as both typical and at the same time outstanding representatives of their respective milieux, is defended.⁶ A brief

3. The monastic and scholastic milieux are, however, carved out of the much larger common culture of high medieval educated Western Europe, in consequence of which it is possible to overdraw the differences between these two sub-cultural units. On this point, see the sections entitled: "Common Culture" and "Cautionary Paragraph" from chapter 1 and "Conclusions, Challenges, Possible Avenues for Further Exploration" from chapter 4.

4. See especially the conclusion of the section entitled: "Differences between Monastic and Scholastic Theology" in chapter 1, below.

5. See the section on "Sources" in chapter 1, below.

6. See sections "Aelred: How Typical; How Understanding" and "Thomas: How Typical; How Understanding" in chapter 1, below.

argument is also made for the choice of friendship as the theological *topos* for investigation.⁷

Chapters 2 and 3 comprise the bulk of our investigation of primary sources, namely, the writings of Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas Aquinas. We begin each of these chapters with a summary of contemporary scholarship,⁸ followed by a sketch of the author's own major sources.⁹ Having surveyed each author's corpus as a whole, we train our attention on those works in which are to be found their most trenchant and comprehensive theological treatments of friendship: Aelred's *Speculum caritatis* (hereafter referred to as SC) and *De spiritali amicitia* (hereafter referred to as SA), on the one hand, and the *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter referred to as ST) of Thomas on the other.

The principal task of chapter 2 is to provide a close analysis of the two major works by Aelred that bear significantly on the subject of friendship.¹⁰ In addition to elucidating the content of each work in detail, the chapter gives careful consideration to the relationship between them, with respect not only to their theological content, but also to the formal and historical relations between the texts themselves. In the course of the textual analysis of these works, the distinctive features of Aelred's theological account of friendship are delineated. A brief treatment of Aelred's approach to Scriptural exegesis is appended to the main discussion, in consequence of our conviction of the impact of one's mode of *reading*—especially the Bible—on the way one does theology.¹¹ In conclusion of the investigation of our first major author, we argue that Aelred presents a splendid spiritual vision of holy friendship and its eschatological telos, in the idiom of medieval monastic theology.¹² Neither argumentative nor systematic, Aelred's account bespeaks his own innocence and purity of heart. Thus, his theology of friendship proves to be an integral and harmonious expression of his monastic life, a life defined by prayer, both in solitude and in choir, and by the virtually unceasing practice of *lectio divina*.

7. See the section "Why Their Accounts of Friendship" in chapter 1, below.

8. See the sections in chapter 2 and 3 on "Contemporary Scholarship," below.

9. See section "Aelred's Sources" in chapter 2 and "Thomas's Sources" in chapter 3, below.

10. See the section entitled "Aelred's 'Synthesis' and Original Position" in chapter 2, below.

11. See the section "Aelred's Friendly Exegesis" in chapter 2, below.

12. See the section "Conclusion: Aelred's Monastic Theology of Friendship" in chapter 2, below.

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In chapter 3 an analysis of Thomas Aquinas's theological account of friendship is carried out, in deliberate parallel with the analysis of Aelred's account in chapter 2.¹³ Thomas's most mature and thorough treatment of friendship is discovered to transpire wholly within the bounds of what is technically a single work, the *Summa theologiae*.¹⁴ Nevertheless, we find that this treatment is readily parsed out between two subsections of that work, namely, the *Prima Secundae*, where Thomas first deals with love and friendship in the natural realm, and the *Secunda Secundae*, in which he brings his previous explanation of friendship to bear on the subject of supernatural charity.¹⁵ Thus, we find an immediate parallel with Aelred, in terms of both the structure and the constitutive elements of the two authors' accounts: on the one hand, each of the accounts spans two major textual loci; on the other hand, each of these loci, in turn, is preoccupied with one of the two key theological terms, *amicitia* or *caritas*. As with Aelred, we proceed through a close analysis of Thomas's texts to enumerate the signal features of his theological account of friendship,¹⁶ again ending with a brief look at his exegetical practice.¹⁷ In conclusion of our inquiry into his work, we contend that Thomas's finely wrought definition of charity as man's friendship for God embodies *in nuce* one of scholasticism's most remarkable achievements: the harmonization of Christian revelation with Aristotelian philosophy.¹⁸ In anticipation of chapter 4, we also observe that Thomas's theological account of friendship exhibits the major characteristics of scholastic theology in general, described in chapter 1.

The fourth and final chapter of the dissertation draws together the key findings from the three preceding chapters. More specifically, here our assessments of the two theological accounts of friendship are directly juxtaposed and compared point by point, with respect both to their material characteristics, and also to their form. That is to say, first, the distinctive features of the content of each of the two accounts, to which we have drawn attention in the two preceding chapters, are set side by side

13. See the section "Thomas's Synthesis and Original Position" in chapter 3, below.

14. See the section "Rousselot's 'Problem of Love' and Vansteenbergh's 'Amitié'" in chapter 3, below.

15. See the section "Thomas's Sources" in chapter 3.

16. See the section "Thomas's Synthesis and Original Position" in chapter 3, below.

17. See the section "Thomas's Exegesis: *Lectio utilis*?" in chapter 3, below.

18. See the section "'Conclusion: Thomas's Scholastic Theology of Friendship" in chapter 3, below.

and each characteristic is evaluated relative to the parallel characteristic of the alternative account.¹⁹ The outcome of this comparative analysis is then supplemented by a formal comparison between the accounts, again based on the findings of chapters 2 and 3, only this time with further reference to the formal comparative framework established in chapter 1.²⁰ Finally, the results of this stereoscopic analysis are distilled into a single formulation, articulated in terms of an analogy of friendship.²¹ This pithy conclusion is in turn elaborated in terms of an Aelredian and monastic expression on one side and a Thomistic and scholastic version on the other.²² In both cases it is asserted that the analogy spans three elements treated in the dissertation: the author's notion of friendship itself, his way of reading, and ultimately the way he does theology. So, too, *mutatis mutandis*, with the two authors' respective milieux. In light of this general conclusion, several challenges are proposed to each of our two authors' accounts, either from the perspective of the alternative account, or independently.²³ The dissertation ends with four brief speculative suggestions for further inquiry.²⁴

Two further points are in order, which will prove in the final analysis to be complementary aspects of the same underlying reality. One point concerns the dissertation's principal subject matter, the other the intellectual approach entertained by the author of the dissertation towards the dissertation itself. First, there is a mild degree of intellectual embarrassment, never adverted to explicitly in the dissertation, resulting from a profound asymmetry between the two notions of friendship treated by Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas Aquinas, respectively. This is not to say that the two perspectives share no common ground, much less that they cannot be placed in counterpoint and conversation with each other. Nevertheless, such a project presents a dilemma likely to appear initially rather daunting, particularly—and precisely—when such a project is undertaken according to the constraints of the peculiarly modern genre called the doctoral dissertation. The dilemma is, in the words of the old but durable cliché,

19. See the section "Content of the Two Accounts Compared" in chapter 4, below.

20. See the section "Form of the Two Accounts Compared" in chapter 4, below.

21. See the section "The Analogy of Friendship" in chapter 4, below.

22. See the sections "Aelred and Monastic Friendship" and "Thomas and Scholastic Friendship" in chapter 4, below.

23. See the section "Challenges: Evaluations of the Two Analogies and Beyond" in chapter 4, below.

24. See the section "Speculative Suggestion for Further Inquiry" in chapter 4, below.

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how to compare an apple with an orange. Furthermore, the fathers of the Enlightenment generated a ratiocinative apparatus that has often tempted its users, when faced with such a comparison, to begin by trying to turn the orange into an apple, or vice versa, in order to carry out the much easier comparison between two specimens of the same fruit. Originally erected in service of the so-called hard sciences, this apparatus gradually made its way into humanistic intellectual endeavors as well,²⁵ influencing in the process all genres of academic writing—preeminent among them, the dissertation. And with the seductive tool came the besetting temptation noted. The effort by the current dissertation's author to employ the tool judiciously while resisting the temptation brings us to the second point.

So far as was deemed compatible with the conventional scholarly requirements of the genre, we have attempted *not* to succumb to the occasional academic weakness for prestidigitation, touching either fruit or friendship. Consequently, the reader will find rather drastic disparities between the lengths of sections treating the same or parallel themes in our respective authors. Yet to have forced these sections into the same-sized outfits, as it were, would have falsified both positions, and thereby also necessarily undermined our comparison between them, ultimately rendering our conclusions and the whole enterprise intellectually suspect. Similarly, while the reader will find in the following pages a great deal of careful, logical argumentation, shored up by regular appeal to both primary and secondary sources, he will not find the presumption that the conclusions arrived at are to be received as indisputable, scientifically watertight propositions: quite the contrary. Moreover, we insist that this state of things, however unsatisfactory it may be to some, is no decoy for desultoriness on our part: rather, we believe we wander closer to the truth (often in spite of ourselves) when we allow it a certain amount of room to play. Consider, for example, such relatively recent oddities as Goedel's Incompleteness Theorem, chaos theory, or fuzzy mathematics: all essentially post-modern responses—now each more or less well-respected—to modern rationalism and its totalizing agenda. We engage our topic, then, deliberately in somewhat the mode of a juggler, or particle physicist, keeping elements of the discussion alive and in the air, knowing full-well that they are liable to change in bumping into one another. This is not sloppy science in a modern register: it is more like the highly rational yet non-restrictive activity of

25. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer's classical treatment of this complex process in *Truth and Method*, especially 171–379.

dancing, and dancing in a post-modern key. Indeed, if it is conceded that the dissertation is a thoroughly modern genre, we predict that the genre will eventually implode, if it cannot expand to allow the self-confrontation invited by the post-modern challenge to a rationalism ultimately imperiling the very search for truth it claims to champion.

In brief, the following dissertation seeks, as its title indicates, to shed further light on the relationship between monastic and scholastic theology, both historically and *in se*, through the high-filter lens of friendship, construed as a theological *topos* or category, focused narrowly on two personal subjects, Aelred and Thomas, both of whom had important things to say about the topic. As suggested above, we are also concerned to guard against the superficial and false homogenizing of the two accounts that would result if we reduced our analysis to questions of method. This would be, in our opinion, to cede the field of debate to one side, namely, that of scholasticism, before the discussion had even been joined. In this connection too, we may construe our own project as one that, loosely, employs both more monastic approaches—the existential and historical—and more scholastic approaches—the speculative and systematic—in order to elucidate the differences between Aelred and Thomas on friendship. More than this, we have sought to draw attention to some elements of a genuine monastic theology that have indeed been muted, if not even altogether lost, in the wake of the ascendancy of scholasticism and its continuous dominance of the Church's professional theological enterprise until the present. Without, then, we trust, giving short shrift to the genuine benefits of the basic formalities of the academic dissertation, we have aimed at the same time for a modest transcendence of those long established boundaries. It is for the reader to judge whether, and to what extent, we have succeeded in our endeavor.