

## VIRTUES IN THE THEOLOGY OF THOMAS AQUINAS

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*[Editor's Note: The theology of virtues formulated by Thomas Aquinas follows an Aristotelian model in which the virtues, as new quasi-faculties, flow from a distinctive life form, grace. The author shows how this theology, evident in Aquinas's works and long a theme of the Dominican school, has important ramifications (often overlooked) in today's ethics of virtue.]*

RECENT YEARS have seen the publication of studies advocating an orientation for Christian ethics based upon virtue. Stanley Hauerwas, Alasdair MacIntyre, Paul J. Wadell, Jean Porter, Daniel Mark Nelson, and others are associated with this approach.<sup>1</sup> To many who had known and experienced Roman Catholic moral theology in the decades before Vatican II, this invitation to a restoration of virtue ethics, when it first appeared, was somewhat unexpected and surprising. Some Catholic schools and religious orders had been sustaining theologies of virtues for one or more centuries, and those approaches had continued up through the 1950s. Also a few Catholic moral theologians during the middle third of the 20th century had been developing new approaches (distinct from forms of neo-Scholasticism) in which virtue had an important role and which expanded ethics' horizons through modern biblical studies, Christology, and theories of personality and social analysis.

During the past years some Protestant ethicists have found an ethics of virtue attractive. Why? Perhaps because it seemed to be original and yet had a venerable pedigree; it was formal but not legalistic, human but not transcendental. An ethics of virtue, unlike approaches based on natural law, can suggest biblical words. However, in arguing for the value of virtues, often as a reaction to the recent history of secular liberal or Protestant ethics, some new advocates of an ethics of virtue have largely ignored the distinct and diverse history of Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> See William C. Spohn, "The Return of Virtue Ethics," *Theological Studies* 53 (1992) 60-75.

moral theology which century after century had included not a few theologies centered on virtue.

Some advocates of virtue ethics adopted the posture of discovery and originality. But for Catholics this discovery occurred as the ethics of virtue was completing a cycle of influence within Catholic moral theology; any claim of a restoration of an ethics of virtues overlooks the many presentations on virtues in Catholic moral theology from 1860 to 1960 (or from 1560 to 1860) in numerous neo-Scholastic journals and multivolume moral treatises. If influential Catholic moral theology texts such as those by Arthur Vermeersch, Heribert Jone, and Aloysius Sabetti took an approach drawn from the commandments, nevertheless not only manuals but also catechisms and devotional books often treated virtues. Recent summonses to an Aristotelian-Scholastic ethics have been accompanied at times by a monitory tone: modernity is evil, and Catholicism is slipping into a modern abyss by setting aside its Baroque seminary form of moral theology. For enthusiasts of these ethics of virtue it must have been disappointing that the wide world of Roman Catholicism did not join immediately and universally in this renewed discussion of virtues. But that could hardly have been expected: something from the past can be represented in a new form, but the course of history never repeats itself, nor does it go backwards.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas were understandably summoned to be the advocates and sources of an ethics drawn from virtues. For me, as an outsider to the field of ethics, my long Thomistic education within the Dominican Order raises questions about this rehabilitation of an ethics of virtue *in the name of Aquinas*. Should a teaching on virtues be extracted from Aquinas's commentaries on philosophical texts or from blocks of philosophy situated within his theological works? Was Aquinas's theology in its principles and focus actually centered on the virtues? What lies at the heart of new virtue-based approaches? Is it Aristotle, Aquinas, neo-Thomism, neo-Aristotelianism? What is the relationship of recent interpretations of virtues to the venerable schools of moral theology such as the school of Alphonsus Liguori or a centuries old tradition of Thomist interpretation like the Dominican school?

Some contemporary ethicists and philosophers cite Aquinas without seeing if his theology supports their interpretation. Stanley Hauerwas originally presented an ethics where virtues described in Aristotelian language were linked to biblical phrases and the imitation of Christ, or where "natural virtues" were changed by the character of a story,

<sup>2</sup> Otto Hermann Pesch, looking at neo-Thomist teaching on virtue a few years into its postconciliar decline, sketched its limitations and its "perduring significance"; see his "Die bleibende Bedeutung der thomanischen Tugendlehre," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 21 (1974) 359–91 (summarized and abbreviated as "The Theology of Virtue and the Theological Virtues," in *Changing Values and Virtues*, Concilium 191 (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist, 1987) 81–97. Interestingly the papal overview of moral theology, *Veritatis splendor*, seems to omit virtue ethics, and the new Catholic Catechism does not choose it as its ethical framework.

whether of Jesus or the community,<sup>3</sup> but recently he has mentioned that for Aquinas (whose theology “can give the impression that all Aquinas is doing is ‘topping’ Aristotle’s virtues with faith, hope, and charity”<sup>4</sup>) virtues become true or Christian or not vicious through charity. But how this happens, the secondary role of charity, and the real milieu of a supernatural order, life, and telos are not explained; Christian life, character, and virtues lack a real ground, or, at least, the source and ground of Aquinas.

Alasdair MacIntyre linked his thought to Aquinas through occasional references, but his books, perhaps because he is writing for a secular audience, do not give access to Aquinas’s theological context. Virtues—whether they are infused or acquired is not discussed—are “qualities which enable men to survive evils on their historical journey”<sup>5</sup> rather than empowerments of the Holy Spirit’s life in men and women. There is a mention of “that charity which is a gift of grace”<sup>6</sup> described vaguely as something which “alters the conception of the good for man in a radical way; for the community in which the good is achieved has to be one of reconciliation,”<sup>7</sup> but grace is not specified as a dynamic quality nor is its place in a supernatural order outlined. MacIntyre states a higher goal concerning “man’s true end . . . , a matter of faith”<sup>8</sup> but locates what is central in Aquinas’s view of Christianity only in a vague “goodness of God”<sup>9</sup> rather than in trinitarian life. “Actual grace” is referred to Aquinas,<sup>10</sup> but this term and its kind of grace is proper to the Baroque commentaries and absent from Aquinas.

Daniel Mark Nelson’s observation, “A theology of grace, for Thomas, is a necessary supplement to a morality of virtue,”<sup>11</sup> turns Aquinas’s perspective upside down. One can suspect at times in theoreticians of

<sup>3</sup> S. Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1975) 81–82. Compare his further remark, “To be sanctified is to have our character determined by our basic commitments and beliefs about God . . . , to have one’s character determined in accordance with God’s action in Jesus Christ” (ibid 203, 227); also *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1983) 103.

<sup>4</sup> S. Hauerwas, “The Difference of Virtue and the Difference It Makes: Courage Exemplified,” *Modern Theology* 9 (1993) 256. Other writings fail to consider the supernatural source of virtues by employing the excuse that some recent theologies have severely separated nature and grace; this might be true of schools of neo-Thomism in past centuries but it does not justify referring to Aquinas and omitting his harmonious interplay of grace and nature (*Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* [Notre Dame: Fides, 1974] 119).

<sup>5</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981) 175.

<sup>6</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988) 182.

<sup>7</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 174.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>9</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? 192.*

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 164.

<sup>11</sup> D. Nelson, *The Priority of Prudence: Virtue and Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas and the Implications for Modern Ethics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992) 1–2.

virtue a naturalist or Pelagian tone, as in Paul Waddell's view: "Happiness is lasting intimacy with God, but it is a kinship possible only when we are enough like God in goodness to have union with God. This is what the virtues help achieve, the ongoing, penetrating remaking of ourself through habits that make us godly. We need to develop the virtues because godliness does not come naturally to us, nor does it come easy."<sup>12</sup> The activities of acquired virtues, however, are for Aquinas infinitely distant from divinization in virtue by the Spirit.

Jean Porter's recovery of virtue suggests Aquinas's "unified theory of morality" as an option for contemporary Christian ethics.<sup>13</sup> Porter's work is more Thomist and more theological: she mentions the interplay between the natural and the supernatural, and a special goal "bestowed on us only through a supernatural transformation of our capacities for knowledge and love, which begins in this life through grace."<sup>14</sup> Her opening chapters on "a general theory of goodness" focus on the goodness of creation and on the human individual and social good but note "the fact that we are actually directed toward a supernatural end."<sup>15</sup> The central chapters on virtues, however, do not locate them within Aquinas's theology. Grace's role is mentioned but left imprecise ("transforming," "uniting") in its relationship to habits and actions, and in its place charity is claimed to be "the supreme organizing principle."<sup>16</sup> The relationship of the supernatural to the natural, and the nature of all the infused virtues are not explored. A further essay shows that the theology of Aquinas interests Porter, but her queries about the dualism of nature and grace lead her away from further considerations of Aquinas's theological framework.<sup>17</sup> Porter asks whether the "ecclesiastically sanctioned language of supernatural grace" might be dropped or partly ignored, but she does not mention which of the dozens of theologies of grace are in question here, or how the central revelation of Christianity would then be expressed.

Some followers of Aquinas might raise at least four problems in recent ethical studies on virtues. (1) These studies claim to reflect the thought of Thomas Aquinas, but they do not relate their presentation of virtues to Aquinas's theological project. (2) Certain approaches, lacking Thomistic theological principles, seem to be an Aristotelianism joined to some other religious element, e.g., to an Enlightenment view of religion or to a general Calvinism. (3) The virtues themselves in these studies have been emptied of the principles pervading Aquinas's

<sup>12</sup> P. Waddell, *The Primacy of Love: An Introduction to the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Paulist, 1992) 147.

<sup>13</sup> J. Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990) 16.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 67.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 169, 63–65.

<sup>17</sup> J. Porter, "The Subversion of Virtue: Acquired and Infused Virtues in the *Summa theologiae*," *The Annual* (of the Society of Christian Ethics) (1992) 39.

theology and appear to be motive forces open to the charge that their context is Pelagian or secular. (4) One virtue, charity, attractive in its Christian radicalism, replaces grace as the distinctively religious and Christian factor in this new virtue ethics, a position alien to the thought of Aquinas.

I write this article as a systematic theologian in order to offer some reflections on the theological and historical context of Aquinas's theology of virtues but not to venture into the conclusions or issues of contemporary ethics. Is it not important to ask whether the theological orientation of such an important thinker as Aquinas has been accurately portrayed? My purpose is to locate Aquinas's thought on the virtues within his distinctive theology (a theology of personality and grace where, using Aristotelian terms, grace is depicted as a special quasi-nature whose capabilities are virtues and their acts); to argue further for grace as the context of the virtues by summarizing how this emphasis perdures in the Dominican school of interpretation of Aquinas. The long tradition of the Dominican school is not the only legitimate interpretation of the texts of Aquinas, but it can, because of the importance of figures from the 16th or 20th centuries, lay claim to some antiquity and fidelity to Aquinas's theology. It asserts that Aquinas's presentation of virtue is theological precisely by his emphasis upon grace as a special life principle. Aquinas's theology is not an Aristotelian psychology grafted onto some phrases about Christ. Aquinas employs an Aristotelian philosophy of nature to explain aspects of Christian revelation, a revelation that is, as he sees it, of realities believed and not just of beliefs. The Christian life is a kind of physics and psychology of a supernatural realm grounding human and Christian life in God's special presence as revealed in a history of salvation. To anticipate my conclusions, I argue that Aquinas's theological ethic of virtues flows fully and necessarily from a divine presence called grace, because the virtues of a life, even that which is the dynamic source of Christian action, must (in the perspective of Aristotelianism) like all potentialities and activities, have a ground or a "nature."

First, I look at Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* (*ST*) in order to observe what is characteristically Christian in the human journey and community, and then at the Dominican school's interpretation of Aquinas. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks on consequences of removing virtues from their ground, grace.

#### GRACE AS THE SOURCE OF VIRTUES IN AQUINAS

I am not arguing that the recent approaches to virtues are without value in present-day discussion of ethics, but only that some may have overlooked the theological framework, indeed, the revealed and religious source of virtue. Beyond "habit," "virtue," "charity," and "telos" there is much more to the moral theology of Aquinas. And yet, the theology of human life as outlined in the *ST* is not particularly com-

plex. Its pattern runs along these lines. Out of divine wisdom and love the human being is offered a supernatural destiny (incipient in this life and fulfilled in the next); since God endows all beings with the intrinsic capability to reach their goals, a divine "form" is generously given which is the dynamic source of activities such as virtues (one of which is love), and of higher modes of action such as the gifts of the Spirit.

### *An "Ordo" and Its Nature*

Grace names the message, the power, and the goal of the *ST* whose opening lines (1, q. 1, a. 1) announce a higher ordination, that is, a special plan and destiny for people. This supernatural *ordo* engages the entire work and each question. The term *ordo* means not a logical order nor a revelation of commands but a basic orientation vitalizing and directing all that it touches. *Ordo*, a significant facet in medieval culture, attracted artists and lawyers, theologians and architects. What was more exciting or profound than a realm of beings, or what was more subtle or beautiful than a pattern drawing ideas and sources into a harmonious whole. There is an order of the universe, an order of nature, and an order of grace. It belongs to the professor and the wise person to see and to re-present the orders in the world and in life. The divine plan (predestination) and presence (trinitarian mission) unfold an *ordo*. Salvation is not religious ideas meriting a paradise or a transitory divine power warding off a devil but a deeper, perduring vitality offered to human life silently. C.-J. Pinto de Oliveira observes that Aquinas surrounded human activity with "a luminous crown of relationships. . . . Each of the three parts of the *ST* treats the bearer of these acts, the human person, and the activity of God in people."<sup>18</sup> The theology of the virtues looks to the Trinity bringing a new mode of existence (1, q. 43, a. 6) called grace: it has a climax and source in the incarnate grace of Christ, the head of the new human race. Aquinas found sources of this real elevation and destiny for the human race in the writings of John and Paul on the special missions of the Trinity that are new ways of God existing on earth. "The mission of a divine person can mean, on the one hand, the procession of origin by the

<sup>18</sup> C.-J. Pinto de Oliveira, "Ordo rationis, ordo amoris: La notion de l'ordre au centre de l'univers éthique de S. Thomas," in *Ordo sapientiae et amoris: Image et message de saint Thomas d'Aquin à travers les récentes études historiques, herméneutiques, et doctrinales* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1993) 285. Although Aquinas spoke repeatedly of the ordering of human life toward a supernatural goal, he rarely used the expression "supernatural order" but preferred "the order of grace." "Thomas sees the *ordo salutis* in a radical way as salvation-history: salvation is realized in an event; and too, every event between heaven and earth is either salvation-history or its opposite" (Max Seckler, *Das Heil in der Geschichte* [Munich: Kösel, 1964] 121); see also Yves Congar, "Le moment 'économique' et le moment 'ontologique' dans la sacra doctrina," in *Mélanges offerts à M. D. Chenu* (Paris: Cerf, 1967) 135-53; U. Horst, "Über die Frage einer heilsökonomischen Theologie bei Thomas von Aquin," in Klaus Bernath, ed., *Thomas von Aquin*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978) 1.373-96.

one being sent, and, on the other hand, a new mode of existence in someone" (1, q. 43, a. 1). These missions—Incarnation in Jesus, and presence and incorporation by Word and Spirit in us—do not just establish a relationship or turn divine contacts on and off but produce a lasting effect in their believing recipients. The empowerment for this order is grace. That grace is not only a new relationship or a divine acceptance but a vital reality in the creature: not a transitory divine help but a principle for people living in and toward a special destiny (1, q. 23, a. 2, ad 4). In the climaxes of the *ST* 1-2, religious law becomes the grace of the Spirit bestowing a graced anthropology.

Aristotle's thought suggested to Aquinas imaginative ways to describe this new life for human existence, namely, a psychology of form with its multiple activities. In Aristotelian analysis living creatures act out of their forms for their goals, and so natures reveal themselves in actions.<sup>19</sup> When this philosophy is employed in a theology of shared divine life, grace is presented as a principle of various activities and potentialities for action. Grace therefore is an intrinsic, fundamental source and not just an extrinsic force. Otto Hermann Pesch observes:

No student of Aquinas can overlook what a strong accent Thomas placed in treating creation from the perspective that God's own creative activity does not remove the proper activity of creatures but grounds them—and that [grounding] is due to God's greatness. . . . This illumines the quite differently fashioned structure of thinking which Thomas developed for the description and interpretation of the created character of grace. Grace is not "created" as an independent reality. Rather the "special love" of God must have necessarily a created and creative effect in the human being.<sup>20</sup>

Aquinas was uninterested in an expression of salvation that was mainly verbal, paradoxical, or erratic. Since telos determines nature and activity, and since humans have a destiny (revealed in Christ) of faith and mercy, of ministry and resurrection, there must be for hu-

<sup>19</sup> For the Aristotelian philosophy of natures acting for goals; see Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle, *In octo libros de physico auditu* (Naples, 1953), lect. 11 and 13, 111–13. Johann Auer noted the importance of the Aristotelian metaphysics of natures in Aquinas's theology of grace, precisely as a contrast to Bonaventurian and Augustinian theologies (*Die Entwicklung der Gnadenlehre in der Hochscholastik*, 2 vols. [Freiburg: Herder 1951] 2.213).

<sup>20</sup> Otto Hermann Pesch, "Die bleibende Bedeutung" 378–79. See Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P., "Grace as a Theological Structure in the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 55 (1988) 130–153; L. Hödl, "Lumen gratiae: Ein Leitgedanke der Gnadentheologie des Thomas von Aquinas," *Mysterium der Gnade*, ed. Heribert Rossmann and Joseph Ratzinger (Regensburg: Pustet, 1975) 238–40. "Grace is that creative presence of the eternal love of God in the midst of the human personality who thereby is drawn out of the limitations of nature and brought to a shared life with God" (Otto Hermann Pesch, *Einführung in die Lehre von Gnade und Rechtfertigung* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981] 89). "In assenting to the things of faith a person is raised above human nature, and this assent comes from a supernatural source moving that person interiorly . . . , from God moving inwardly through grace" (2-2, q. 6, a. 1).

mans a "nature" corresponding to the goal. As God enables countless natures to live and procreate, so God equips the human personality to live in the supernatural order. In a passage that contains the theme of this essay Aquinas wrote:

It is not suitable that God would provide more for creatures being led to a natural good by divine love than for those creatures to whom that love offers a supernatural good. For natural creatures God provides generously . . . forms and powers which are principle of acts so that they are inclined to activity through their own beings. . . . Even more for those moved to reach an eternal supernatural good he infuses certain forms or qualities of the supernatural order according to which easily and enthusiastically they are moved by God to attain that good that is eternal. And so the gift of grace is a kind of quality (1-2, q. 110, a. 2).

Quality here describes grace as a stable source of activity. Grace, the new "nature," brings with it coinfused habits and activities (virtues and gifts) that meet and interact with a personality and its acquired virtues. Rejecting the views that grace and infused virtue are the same, or that they exist in utterly different orders, Aquinas wrote: "Grace is located in the first species of quality, although it cannot properly be called a habit because it is not immediately ordained to action but to a kind of spiritual existence which it gives to the soul. . . . Still there is nothing like grace in the accidents known by the philosophers, for they have examined only those accidents of the soul ordained to acts proportionate to human nature."<sup>21</sup>

What is grace according to Aquinas? Because grace is a divine presence, he is reserved in his language and uses a number of admittedly limited terms. Grace is a participation in deeper levels of God's life (1, q. 43, a. 3), but also a "supernatural principle moving one interiorly" (2-2, q. 6, a. 1). Grace is a created "quasi-form" of the uncreated,<sup>22</sup> "a kind of supernatural reality in the human being coming from God" (1-2, q. 110, a. 1), a "kind of quality" (1-2, q. 110, a. 2). This under-

<sup>21</sup> *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 2, ad 7; further, "grace is in the soul as a kind of form having being complete in itself" (3, q. 63, a. 5, ad 1). Grace is in the first species of quality although properly it cannot be called a habit because it is not immediately ordained to action, and so Aquinas's commentators found a special category for it. On grace as a "quality" distinct from habits, a topic of neo-Scholastic discussion, see Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Grösse mittelaltlicher Theologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1988) 241.

<sup>22</sup> *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 1. "It is therefore necessary that there be given to the human being . . . something by which human nature itself should be raised to a dignity that would mark such an end suited to it. For this, grace is given . . . , a spiritual existence" (ibid. q. 27, a. 2). Aquinas always takes the idea of a divine "accepting" further; the divine action begun in justification ends in love's effect in us. "For God to accept something and to love it (which is the same thing) is nothing other than willing to that one something good. . . . Thus a person is said to have grace not only because that one is loved by God unto eternal life but because a reality has been given by God through which one is worthy of eternal life" (ibid. q. 27, a. 1). "Grace, prior to virtue . . . , is in the essence of the soul as a subject, participating in divinization" (*ST* 1-2, q. 110, a. 4).



standing of grace first as a form of life distinguishes him from many theologies of grace from Trent to Vatican II where grace means transitory actual graces. Grace, of course, is not captured in a form, nor is it to be trivialized as merely an adorning quality. A passage from Aquinas that has received considerable attention in recent decades has underscored his shift in theological emphasis from efficient causality to inner life: "Grace is not said to make one graced effectively but formally" (q. 111, a. 1, ad 1). "Form" and "quality" offer analogical expressions for grace, while "habit" and "disposition" describe virtues. In this theology built upon the system of Aristotle where goal and action-to-goal follow from nature, quality and form affirm a new nature by which men and women act in a higher order, living not as strangers or aliens in the realm of God. If grace is a sharing in something divine, there must be an intrinsic form mediating between the divine and the human; otherwise human beings would be too close to God's being. Thus, in spite of the mechanical and dualist theologies that neo-Scholasticism produced from the 17th to the 20th centuries, Aquinas's conception kept grace and personality together in intimacy while retaining their necessary distinction.

A nature exists to act and live, and grace comes to the human personality as a source of life, as a more or less stable reality enabling persons to become true secondary causes of their lives in a higher order. "No being can act beyond the limits of its specific nature. . . . Now the gift of grace surpasses every capacity of created nature, since it is nothing other than a certain participation in the divine nature, which surpasses every other nature" (1-2, q. 112, a. 1). Pesch notes that "God's salvation (grace) assumes in the Incarnation visible form and clear features. Salvation is precisely the form of this 'union'. . . . Consequently grace is not something abstract but necessarily incarnational and Trinitarian in its form that means it owns personal dimensions. This grace finds concreteness in and through the events of human life . . . [that] reveal at the same time grace and human being-graced."<sup>23</sup> The moral theology of the *ST* is both a pneumatology and a theology of the economy of salvation. In the unfolding of that work (whose patterns and principles are clear despite the work being left unfinished) considerations of God led to the Trinity and the missions of Word and Spirit bring a graced life to men and women; that becomes in the Second Part a graced anthropology.<sup>24</sup>

In the *ST* 1-2 several dozen initial articles present an Aristotelian psychology of habits and serve as the precursor and background for a theology of habits and actions. They were preceded by the Trinity's

<sup>23</sup> Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin* 122.

<sup>24</sup> "This continuity of movement which we have seen inscribed in a precise way in the *Ia Pars* rejects being enclosed upon itself and constituting an autonomous block. . . . Thus the first part leads in a sovereign and explicit way to the *Ila Pars*" (Albert Patfoort, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Les clefs d'une théologie* [Paris: Cerf, 1983] 63).

supernatural actions and by the creation of an image of God capable of journeying to a special destiny; they are followed by a new "law" where law and religion become grace, and, as a climax, by a theology of grace itself. Thus in the *ST* 1-2 beneath several modes of powers and actions lie two principles (1-2, q. 49): an Aristotelian psychology, and an extrinsic help, grace.<sup>25</sup> For Aquinas it would be incoherent and unintelligible for God to presume that a created nature could, on its own, live virtuously in the life of the Spirit, or that God would leave the image called to a supernatural realm without the inner means for that life. So two principles are needed for the human journey to the eschaton. They correspond to the two immense gifts from God to us: the gift of being a true cause, and the gift of the Spirit. The *ST* 1-2 presents these two principles viewed somewhat separately, while the 2-2 treats them together in the active graced personality.

According to an Aristotelian adage, formal, efficient, and final causes are similar. Here that means that the life of grace, the Trinity, and heaven are realizations, infinitely different, of one salvific realm. "Grace and glory are referred to the same genus, because grace is nothing other than a kind of beginning of glory in us. But charity and nature do not pertain to the same genus" (2-2, q. 24, a. 3; sec 1-2, q. 50, a. 2, ad 2; q. 56, a. 1, ad 3). In Aquinas's theology both human nature and grace are highlighted; neither is subservient to or obscured by the other: "The human person is accordingly said to have the grace of God not only from his being loved by God with a view to eternal life but also from his being given some gift [*gratia gratum faciens*] by which he is worthy of eternal life. . . . Similarly God, without any mediating agent, bestows upon us a gratuitous spiritual being, but nevertheless there is the mediation of a created form which is grace."<sup>26</sup> This "spiritual being" is not the transitory actual graces of the later Baroque but a source of life.

### *Grace and Virtues*

After Peter Lombard had linked the three theological virtues with the four cardinal ones, Thomas's teacher, Albert of Cologne, joined a morality of virtues to a theology of grace. Albert's Aristotelian inclinations did not permit him to pursue a psychology where habits or activities were independent of a nature, in this case a human nature. As the soul is prior to its faculties, so is grace prior to the virtues. He

<sup>25</sup> "We must now consider that exterior principle of human actions, namely God, as he is the one from whom we are assisted to act rightly through grace" (1-2, q. 109, introduction). Pesch observes: "We cannot grasp the true meaning of Thomas simply by looking up terms in an index of the *ST*. The decisive motive for introducing the teaching on habits is not to be found in the treatment of the virtues in general or in that on the theological virtues but in the teaching on grace where Aquinas inquires into grace as a 'qualitas'" (*Thomas von Aquin* 241).

<sup>26</sup> *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 1, and ad 3.

wrote: "In my view, charity is not grace: it is a facet of it like all the other virtues."<sup>27</sup> T. A. Graf concluded: "Albert understood the relationship of grace to the virtues through the analogy of soul and faculties. Grace and soul bestow the first act: being alive. The activity of both is expanded by the powers which proceed from each, e.g., virtues, whose foundation they give."<sup>28</sup>

The faculties of the human personality are not substances, and their operating habits, virtues, are given the Aristotelian category of quality. Accidents such as quality cannot subsist on their own; there must exist some subject to bear virtues. In this line of thought, virtuous activities do not come and go easily. A new life with its life-principle (this expression captures the intention of "habit," "form," and "quality") is profoundly—Aquinas would say "essentially"—supernatural.<sup>29</sup> "Just as the natural light of reason is something beyond the acquired virtues which are described in their order to that very natural light, so also is the light of grace which is itself a participation in the divine nature; it is something beyond the infused virtues which are derived from that light and are ordained to that light" (1-2, q. 110, a. 3). Virtuous activity would emerge not first from ethical debate or community discipline but from the new life of the Spirit in us. Faith, for example, is not a higher ethical reasoning but an acceptance of the real realm of grace and an intuition into its ideas and behavior.

What is the relationship of virtues to grace? The analogous pattern attributed to Albert the Great is presumed: to the soul corresponds grace, to its faculties correspond grace's virtues and gifts. "There is a goal prepared by God for human beings exceeding any proportion to human nature, namely eternal life . . . , and it is fitting that humans be given something not only to enable activity toward that goal, but that the very nature of the human being be elevated to a dignity and competence toward that goal, and to this grace is given. And just as in natural things the nature is one thing and the inclination of nature is another, and the movement or operation a third, so, in the realm of grace, grace is different from charity and the other virtues."<sup>30</sup> The depth of the human personality can be modified by a variety of habits and virtues. It is a subject that enables diversity—"all the potential-

<sup>27</sup> Albert the Great, *In Commentarii in III Sententiarum*, d. 27, a. 3, *Opera Omnia* 28, S. C. A. Borguet, ed. (Paris: Vivès, 1894) 513.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Aquinas Graf, "Die Lehre des hl. Albertus Magnus über das psychologische Subjekt der Gnade und Tugenden," *Divus Thomas* (Freiburg) 9 (1931) 190-92.

<sup>29</sup> "Some who read the *Summa theologiae* in an entirely material manner reach the conclusion that our act of faith is a substantially natural act clothed with a supernatural modality. . . . Virtues are supernatural in their very essence raising infinitely the vitality of our intelligence and of our will. They are specified by a formal object, or a formal motive, which infinitely surpasses the natural powers of the human soul and those of the highest angels" (Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation according to St. Thomas and St. John of the Cross* [St. Louis: Herder, 1944] 63, 78); see also Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Theological Virtues* (St. Louis: Herder, 1965).

<sup>30</sup> *De Veritate* q. 27, a. 2.

ties of the soul . . . flow from the essence of the soul as from a principle" (1, q. 77, a. 7)—and so it follows by analogy that the varied activities of an individual whose journey is a life within trinitarian presence need a stabile source.

Aquinas composed in the *ST* a theology of virtues: 12 questions treat them in general (in the 1-2), and then 170 questions (in the 2-2) consider their precise realizations of supernatural life. Not only faith, hope, and charity are infused along with grace but also those habits called "cardinal virtues" and their sub-virtues. This divine life is initially bestowed not through philosophical or biblical ideas or solely through practice and exercise but through the gift of the Spirit out of which the human personality acts.

### *Which Virtues?*

Virtues for Aquinas were never simply habits in the mode of grooved actions; nor were they religious duties attached to pious ideas and sparked by some divine force. Grace and its powers cannot be the same as the acquired natural virtues, for solely natural habits cannot bring a higher life or reach a supernatural destiny; it cannot be the same as the theological virtues because habits necessarily imply a subject. "Grace is not the same as virtue but is a kind of habitude which is presupposed by infused virtues as their principle and root" (q. 109, a. 3, ad 3). Aquinas saw two sets of virtues within us; natural and supernatural, acquired and infused, those ordered to the realm of human nature and those capable of following a law of the Spirit (1-2, q. 63, a. 2). "A person is perfected by virtue toward those actions by which one is directed towards happiness. . . . And so to be sent to this supernatural happiness, we have to be divinely endowed with some additional source of activity. Its role is like that of our native capabilities which direct us . . . to our connatural end. Such sources of action are called theological virtues" (1-2, q. 62, a. 1). If infused and acquired virtues are similar in their actions, they differ not only in their goals but in their source. Only a supernatural ground can enable this supra-natural activity in its forms (1-2, q. 63).

While not wishing to diminish acquired virtuous activity and its varied contributions to society and person, Aquinas observed from the theological viewpoint of the *ST* that "only infused virtues are complete and deserve to be called virtues absolutely, since they direct a human being to the absolutely ultimate end. Other virtues, those acquired, are such in a limited sense and not without qualification. They direct a person in a particular area" (1-2, q. 65, a. 3). Each virtue retains its natural dynamic of exercise and habit in the created human personality, but this is expanded by grace whose animations of the virtues are found not in self-improvement or in an extrinsic imitation of Jesus but in a vital form which brings higher capability and orientation. Infused virtues differ from natural modes of virtue not because they are con-

nected vaguely to charity or because they are mentioned in the Bible, but because they flow from grace, that extrinsic (and then intrinsic) principle bringing something of the life of the Trinity. "Faith, hope, and love . . . are the virtues of the human being as it has become a participant in divine grace" (1-2, q. 58, a. 3, ad 3). If grace is a kind of nature, then it will always be alien to Aquinas to conceive of habits or religious actions apart from their "principle and root."<sup>31</sup>

Sometimes overlooked is the fact that not only faith, hope, and charity are infused, that is, given as flowing from the Spirit, but also other central moral virtues and their sub-virtues emerge from grace. John Duns Scotus and many Scotists have held that the moral virtues exist only in an acquired form at times empowered by charity, but neither the text of Aquinas nor moralists viewed as Thomists have held this.<sup>32</sup> The *ST* states that along with faith, hope, and charity modalities of the moral virtues are also infused. "All virtues, intellectual and moral, acquired by our actions, proceed from certain natural principles pre-existing in us. . . . Theological virtues conferred on us by God direct us to a supernatural destiny. So it is right that also there correspond to these theological virtues other habits divinely caused in us which are related to theological virtues just as moral and intellectual virtues are related to the natural principles of the virtues" (1-2, q. 63, a. 3). The Fribourg moral theologian Servais Pinckaers observes of Aquinas: "His sense of the Incarnation, of the penetration of grace into human nature, like the union of soul and body, inspired in him an original idea which many theologians have later hesitated to take up. Considering that grace calls all our faculties to collaborate in its work, he thought it was understandable that a special elevation of our moral virtues would occur—these he named infused moral virtues."<sup>33</sup> Some traits of the acquired virtues remain in their infused counterparts, for the two are intertwined in living. The entire Second Part is introducing and describing many virtues, individual and social, and the many which proceed from grace are "the virtues of the citizens of the household of God" (1-2, q. 63, a. 4; citing Ephesians 2:19). The graced moral virtues can be viewed as one of the continuations of the Incarnation prominent in the structure of the *ST*.<sup>34</sup> To puzzle over the relationship of infused

<sup>31</sup> For Aquinas the acquired virtues, as experience illustrates, can remain for an individual in the state of alienation from eschatological grace (1-2, q. 73, a. 1, ad 2) and so can hardly bear in their cardinal forms the Christian life.

<sup>32</sup> For a survey of Thomist and Scotist positions through the centuries, see R. F. Coerver, *The Quality of Facility in the Moral Virtues* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1946) 5–10, 107–17.

<sup>33</sup> S. Pinckaers, *L'Évangile et la morale* (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 68–69. Compare Albert Patfoort: "The Second Part considers the free actions of a spiritual creature but principally its supernatural options. [This part] reflects on all these issues from the perspective of the virtues and grace that the creature has received for this purpose" (*St. Thomas d'Aquin* 52).

<sup>34</sup> On the distinction and interplay of theological, acquired, and infused moral virtues

and acquired virtues (limited but not counterfeit) is to be lead to two insights: first, this issue is a consequence of the more fundamental interplay of the human personality as God's image and of grace; second, as theologians have seen for fifty or two hundred years, an Aristotelian psychology has its limits.

### *The Form of Virtues*

For Aquinas charity was not the same as the Holy Spirit nor a synonym for grace (the opinions of some prior theologians) (2-2, q. 23, a. 2). Charity is one virtue, "the most excellent virtue" (2-2, q. 23, a. 6), but it has a proper activity. Although it has a special relationship to other virtues, it remains one limited form dependent upon a subject and does not have the all-encompassing role of grace. It is not the immediate result of trinitarian presence but emerges from that gift of grace (2-2, q. 24, a. 2). Grace and nature are parallels; charity and nature are not (2-2, q. 24, a. 3, ad 2).<sup>35</sup> Biblical exaltation of charity as the "form" of the virtues does not alter the fact that charity itself is one facet bestowed by the principle of supernatural life. As Aquinas repeated, the organizing form that charity gives is, nonetheless, not the essential quasi-form of grace.<sup>36</sup> "Charity is called the form of the other virtues not in the mode of exemplification or of essence but rather in the mode of an efficient cause as it bestows a particular form" (2-2, 23, 8). Aquinas devoted only a single article to charity as the "form" of virtues. There he made it clear that the form it gives to virtues is one of direction. Charity clearly does not give the subject from which the

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see Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Theological Virtues* 26–28. Jean Porter comes to recognize that there are infused moral virtues but does not take the next step and relate closely infused and acquired virtues, corresponding to the real natural end of humanity included in the supernatural destiny, as Aquinas did ("The Unity of the Virtues and the Ambiguity of Goodness: A Reappraisal of Aquinas' Theory of the Virtues," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 21 [1993] 139).

<sup>35</sup> In these articles (e.g., 1-2, q. 65, a. 2) charity never has a solitary role but exists with the other virtues that in some ways precede or influence it. Typical of Dominican neo-Thomists from the Baroque to Vatican II is Charles René Billuart: "Charity is not the intrinsic and essential form of other virtues; otherwise all the virtues would be of the same species, but only an extrinsic and accidental form, in that through it they are referred to the supernatural end formed therein" (*Summa s. Thomae hodiernis academiarum moribus accomodata sive Cursus theologiae juxta mentem divi Thomae* [1746] [Paris: Albanel et Martin, 1839] 6.272).

<sup>36</sup> *Quaestio disputata, De Caritate*, a. 2, ad 7. Further: "The grace of God is called the form of the virtues in as much as its gives spiritual existence to the soul, so that it is able to receive the virtues. But charity is the form of the virtues according as it forms their operation" (ibid. a. 4, ad 19). For examples of past theologies from the 17th to the 20th century holding the view that charity and affectivity rather than the reality of grace ground virtuous life, see R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Herder, 1947) 1.140–42.

infused virtues emerge: it is the herald and coordinator of the many infused virtues. "Just as in natural things, nature itself differs from its motions and operations, so in the things of grace there is a difference between grace, and love and the other virtues."<sup>37</sup> Of course, love is sublime and broad enough to influence other actions, but it does not escape, in Aquinas's theology, being one virtue with a specific activity. Even charity could not lead one to eternal life without a ground that offers prior similarity to the divine source and goal.<sup>38</sup>

Aquinas described the formative action of grace in some detail; it lies at an altogether deeper and more extensive level than the influence of charity. In the opening article on the essence of grace he observed that grace is secondarily God's love of men and women, and primarily "a supernatural reality in a human being coming to us from God" (1-2, q. 110, a. 1). With grace as a life principle the activities of charity toward the God of the New Testament in the spirit of its teaching are possible. To give charity dominant roles apart from grace is like describing hands and memories apart from people. Charity is not the motor or organism of virtues but remains on the same level as the other virtues. "Form" has a very clear meaning in Scholastic thought, and nuanced neo-Thomist analyses of how in tenuous analogy a form (charity) could direct another form (another virtue) are available. Direction to a goal is possible only for a nature, a form, and so whatever impetus charity gives to virtues presupposes the prior subject of virtues in the graced personality. If love is the "form" of the virtues, this is not at the price of the rational structure and real diversity among the virtues. Justice, for instance, has its own form, object, and goal. Moreover, the virtues are not solely habits of the will or modes of love but imply and need knowledge and faith. Prudence, the virtue of the practical intellect, is a second directing force, somewhat similar to charity.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 3; see q. 14, a. 5, ad 1 and q. 27, a. 5, ad 5; and the expression "grace by which charity itself is formed" (ibid. q. 27, a. 2, ad 6). Charity touches and organizes the virtues grounded in the Spirit and in communion with Christ but it does not replace the proper action of each and every virtue (Pinckaers, *La morale catholique* [Paris: Cerf, 1991] 95). On the relationship of the virtues to Christ, through the Spirit and grace, see Pinckaers, "La loi évangélique, vie selon l'Espirt, et le sermon sur la montagne," *L'Évangile et la morale* 50.

<sup>38</sup> *De Veritate*, q. 27, a. 3, ad 4.

<sup>39</sup> Curiously MacIntyre views Aquinas's few articles on the virtue of religion as central to the Dominican's theology (*Whose Justice?* 188, 201). But religion is a subdivision of justice and simply furnishes Aquinas with an opportunity to treat vices like superstition and magic. Aquinas made it quite clear in his introductions to sections that Christianity is concerned with Trinity, Creation, graced life, Jesus Christ, and sacraments. The climaxes of the two moral parts of the *ST*'s theology of the Christian life are important—the evangelical law (1-2) and the gifts leading to infused contemplation (2-2)—and both are realizations not of religion but of grace. From 1650 to 1950 some textbooks used religion to organize not only theology but apologetics, an approach stimulated by the Baroque and prominent during the Enlightenment but it is one not frequently found in Thomist schools.

*Virtues' Climax*

Albert Patfoort sees in the *ST* 1-2 "three zones of great pneumatological concentration: gifts, the new law, and a treatise on grace."<sup>40</sup> Thomistic virtues have not only a special ground, grace, but climaxes, heightened modes: gifts, beatitudes, fruits of the Spirit (1-2, q. 69; q. 70). In this third level the sphere of activity begun in a particular virtue is intensified by a gift of the Spirit, but again this flows from grace. "It is suitable that there be in the human being higher perfections according to which a person is disposed to being moved by God. And these perfections are called gifts" (1-2, q. 68, a. 1). An easy and prompt response to divine inspiration, a meeting between the divine and the human at an instinctual level, the gift is a less deliberative mode of living. Here the struggle of virtue has reached what Aquinas named a "connatural" contact with the realm of God (1-2, q. 68, a. 2). The gifts, however, are not extraordinary or transient charisms. They too flow from the life principle that, as we saw, is the Trinity's presence in people.

The moral theology of Thomas Aquinas is first and foremost an anthropology of grace. It is a description of the potentialities offered by the triune creator in the realms of being and grace for life's journey to a special future.

## VIRTUES AND MORAL THEOLOGY IN THE DOMINICAN SCHOOL

Over centuries, the Dominican school has preserved and developed the theology of Thomas Aquinas that I have just sketched. That school emphasized actions as indicative of the person, grace as foundational, the distinction and close interplay of the natural and supernatural orders, the presentation of a Christian psychology grounded ultimately in a life brought by the Spirit. Some schools and texts in moral theology from the 17th century to the 20th century had set aside virtue for commandment, and in the decades prior to Vatican II there were debates over the relationship of virtues to sanctifying grace. A morality of virtue could be found in seminary manuals throughout the world and in textbooks for North American high schools.<sup>41</sup> In the first half of this century, a few writers presented virtues in a non-Scholastic style<sup>42</sup>: Josef Pieper's Thomist imagination offered *The Four Cardinal Virtues*,

<sup>40</sup> Patfoort, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin* 87.

<sup>41</sup> See the English translation of Dominic M. Prümmer, *Handbook of Moral Theology* (New York: Kenedy, 1957). A theology of Thomist virtues for the college student was James Wilfred Regan et al., *A Primer of Theology*, 3 vols. (Dubuque: Priory, 1955); and for the high-school level there was Francis L. B. Cunningham et al., *Responding to God: A Textbook in Moral Theology* (Dubuque: Priority, 1957).

<sup>42</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Notre Dame: Fides, 1966). See also Romano Guardini, *The Virtues: On Forms of Moral Life*, trans. Stella Lange (Chicago: Regenery, 1967); and in a similar direction, Jacques Maritain, *Bergsonian Philosophy and*



while Romano Guardini wrote an original (and decidedly not neo-Scholastic) set of meditations on some classical virtues as well as on some new ones such as "keeping silent," "gratitude," and "recollection."

The long history of Thomism is marked by two major neo-Thomist revivals: one in the 16th century, and one extending from 1860 to 1960. Each had its own patterns and theologies, its universities, and religious orders. To outsiders, Roman Catholicism with its centrist authority, ecclesiastical organization, and canon law appears monolithic. In fact, because Catholicism has a long history and has been embodied in various cultures, it is a gathering of many communities with different traditions in theology and devotion. Still, this pluralism emerges within a credal and sacramental unity. From Pius IX to Pius XII, Vatican administrations aimed at reducing theology to a single approach that melded neo-Scholasticism with Baroque spirituality, ecclesiology, and canon law. Nevertheless, considerable variety of schools and spiritualities survived. One cannot speak of "Thomism" or "neo-Thomism" as though it might be a single theology or school. From universities, or more frequently from religious orders, came a variety of interpretations of Aquinas. They were more than a text or an argument. A particular interpretation was sustained in history by a group that found such an approach useful and illuminating. When a consistent approach to theology or spirituality moved from individuals to communities, there emerged a school or a movement. The genius of a spiritual leader such as Ignatius Loyola or the needs of a ministry such as those perceived by Alphonsus Liguori summoned from the gospel a new but historically consistent interpretation such as Aristotelianism and Albertinism, Scotism and Suarezianism, the Baroque Ecole Française and the Tübingen school. Karl Rahner described these theological schools as "structures which within the Church and its creeds form a more or less deep and unified perspective on theology or spirituality. . . . The Church has (one could say with some shock) in a generous and naive way recognized, indulged, and protected the simultaneous existence (even in points where they were mutually contradictory) of diverse moral theologies."<sup>43</sup> These schools have their births and their deaths; they may reach the point where they no longer understand their own beginnings or may end in petty disputes. Only a few last

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*Thomism*, trans. Mabelle and J. Gordon Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955) 225-27.

<sup>43</sup> "Schulen, theologische Schulen," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1964) 9.509-10; A. Landgraf, *Einführung in die Geschichte der theologischen Literatur der Frühscholastik, unter dem Gesichtspunkte der Schulbildung* (Regensburg: Gregorius, 1948). On the shift from medieval *summae* through new approaches and issues in the 16th century to the subsequent structure of moral theology as an independent discipline and on the separation of casuistry from virtues in the theologies of some religious orders more than in others, see J. Theiner, *Die Entwicklung der Moraltheologie zur eigenständigen Disziplin* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1970).

several centuries. The broader the original perspective the longer the school lasts.

As Vatican II began in 1962, the Roman Catholic theological world was located mainly in seminaries and houses of studies for religious orders, and those orders and theological schools had different views concerning virtue. In French and North American seminaries, at Thomistic centers in Louvain or Toulouse, in the Roman schools, or with the Redemptorists, Carmelites, or Jesuits, within general Catholic principles and a broad Scholastic style different groups presented their viewpoints. For the Dominicans, the text of Aquinas's *ST* has served as the text for moral theology in one way or another from the 14th, and more formally, from the 16th centuries.<sup>44</sup> The Dominicans saw some negative consequences of the Baroque spirit (a religious milieu whose influence continues in Catholicism through the 20th century): a separation of moral theology from the rest of theology, a loosening of the moral virtues from the habit of grace now treated apart in dogmatic theology, a view of the Christian life as natural virtuous habits sparked by actual grace. The strongly supernatural character of the graced personality was diminished in the Baroque figures of transitory graces, heroic human efforts, and threatening sins. However, a psychology of Christian life was not universally replaced by an ethic of commands. The Dominican school through the centuries sought to promulgate not just the ideas but the leitmotifs of Aquinas's theology. In teaching on morals there was a focus centered on supernatural grace in an Aristotelian framework, that is, on grace understood as a "quasi-form" that bestowed virtues and gifts that interact with the human personality.

Dominican interpretations of the *Summa's* theology of personality, grace, virtues, and gifts gave different emphases over the centuries, but decidedly supernatural orientations remained and were affirmed as the real thought of Aquinas. Within its metaphysical bent, the strong supernatural emphasis of Thomas de Vio (Cardinal Cajetan) in the early 16th century is well known. In the Spanish school of Salamanca in the 16th century, figures such as Diego de Deza, Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo Bañez, and Bartolomé de Medina highlighted the interplay of nature and grace as they engaged in various controversies, whether over the salvation of the indigenous in America or over a

<sup>44</sup> In 1571 the Dominicans divided theological education into speculative theology and moral theology (both to be taught from the *ST*) and practical cases; those close to ordination were given courses in "practical moral" aimed at concrete problems in morality, canon law, and liturgy; see Theiner, "Die Dominikaner," in *Die Entwicklung* 335. For a survey of other figures in the Dominican school, see P. Mandonnet, "Frères précheurs (La théologie dans l'ordre des)," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 6 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924) 863-65; William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1966).

markedly supernatural mysticism in Spain.<sup>45</sup> In the next century both John of St. Thomas (1589–1644) in his lengthy Baroque collections and Vincent de Contenson (1641–1674), attempting to combine Scholastic commentary with devotional meditations, were involved in controversies with Protestants, Jesuits, and Jansenists over an intrinsically supernatural theology of graced virtue. In the middle of the 18th century the rather lifeless systems of Charles René Billuart asserted Aquinas's grounding of theological and moral virtues in grace over against a neo-Scotist revival, as they brought Renaissance and Baroque neo-Thomism to an end.<sup>46</sup> One has only to study those commentaries on the key questions concerning grace and virtue to see their resemblance to each other and to Aquinas.

The Dominican textbooks from the most recent Scholastic revival leading up to Vatican II added to a central section exploring virtues, laws, sins, and pastoral issues a large practical theology on liturgical and confessional issues. Still they alluded to an underlying graced anthropology even if they treated grace in dogmatic theology.<sup>47</sup> Dominican manualists such as B. H. Merkelbach (1871–1942) and D. Prümmer (1866–1931) wrote large multivolume handbooks for priests, which, despite their deviation from Aquinas's order, occasioned by arrangements of practical issues drawn from the 19th century, managed to retain something of the pattern of virtues. Merkelbach listed Alphonsus Liguori, Vermeersch, and others who have "nothing" on the

<sup>45</sup> Cajetan explained: "It is right that the soul should exist in a divine way in terms of its goal, and also that it should relate to those things which lead to the goal. . . . The infused moral virtues are ordained to be proportionate to that supernatural end. . . . It is suitable that there be infused moral virtues in the soul beyond the theological ones . . . for in us supernatural perfection is begun by grace and the theological virtues, and without them [infused moral virtues] that supernatural fulfillment would remain incomplete" (*Sancti Thomae Aquinatis . . . opera omnia* [Rome: Typographia Polyglotta, 1891] 6:409–10 [1-2, q. 63, a. 4]). And similarly in the next century, John of St. Thomas wrote: "From this it must be inferred that all other virtues are infused. . . . The supernatural destiny must be appropriated through means, through supernatural choices; and, if this is to occur in a supernatural manner, it happens through infused virtues which order the person well toward the goal" (*Cursus theologicus* 6 [Paris, 1885] 514–15). The important *Clypeus theologiae thomisticae*, 6 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1659–1669) of Jean Baptiste Gonet (1616–1681) proceeds in volumes 4 and 5 according to the pattern of the *ST* from grace and justification to infused virtues and gifts.

<sup>46</sup> Billuart concluded: "Beyond the acquired moral virtues there are others infused by God—the common viewpoint of Aquinas against Scotus. The theological virtues elevate and dispose well a person toward a supernatural end, and it is connatural and necessary that likewise the person be elevated and disposed through infused moral virtues toward the means to reach this supernatural end. . . . God does not provide less in the order of grace than in the order of nature" (*Cursus* 4.265); see also Francisco de Larraga, *Promptuario de teología moral*, ed. P. Lumbreras (Madrid, 1953; original ed. 1776).

<sup>47</sup> See his *Cours de théologie morale*, 17 vols. (Rome: Angelicum, 1957–1961); Santiago María Ramírez, *De hominis beatitudine: Tractatus theologicus*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Aldecoa, 1942–47).

topic, while A. Tanquerey and H. H. Noldin have "some" treatment, and the offerings of his confrère Prümmer is "more complete".<sup>48</sup> He discouraged any separation of Aristotelianism from theology, or virtues from grace. Moral theology is concerned with human acts leading toward God as a supernatural end, and human life is enabled for this and the future life by a supernatural principle of action.<sup>49</sup> Prümmer, the advocate in moral theology of a speculative approach drawing on aspects of spirituality and psychology, arranged his moral theology in a pattern where laws, conscience, and sins come between human acts and virtues, that is, in an order different from that of the *ST*.<sup>50</sup> If grace, he said, is now treated thoroughly in dogmatic rather than moral theology (because it is embattled by modern heterodox movements), nevertheless aspects of grace must also be treated in moral theology, for morality explores the means (grace and the evangelical law as well as the double rule of law and conscience) through which God enables men and women to reach a supernatural destiny. If some Dominican manualists present little of a broader theological context, they nonetheless retain the motifs of supernatural life in their lengthy treatments of the virtues. In the 20th century, on a theoretical level, moral theologians such as M.-M. Labourdette in France, Santiago Ramírez in Spain, or Pedro Lumbreras at Rome's Angelicum emphasized the supernatural source, form, and telos suffused and infused by the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup>

We can see the consistent tradition of the Dominican school continuing into the middle of the 20th century when we look briefly at a few prominent theologians of recent decades.<sup>52</sup> The Dominican school in

<sup>48</sup> "Modern authors of manuals are not accustomed to have much on virtues because all of them are involved in distinguishing, enumerating, and measuring sins, so that one would rightly say that their moral theology is only an *elenchus* or *codex peccatorum*" (Benedikt Heinrich Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis ad mentem S. Thomae*, 3 vols. [Paris: Desclée et Brouwer, 1956, first ed. 1930] 1.449).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 1.10–11.

<sup>50</sup> Dominic M. Prümmer, ed., *Manuale theologiae moralis secundum principia S. Thomae Aquinatis*, 3 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 1935) 1.9.

<sup>51</sup> Dominican *studia* around the world as well as Rome's Angelicum produced in the 1950s a series of moral theologies of grace and infused virtues that lay midway between the medieval *summae* with their Baroque expositors and the practical moral textbooks: see Michel Labourdette, *Cours de théologie morale* (Toulouse, 1958); Lodovico Giuseppe Fanfani, *Manuale theoretico-practicum theologiae moralis ad mentem D. Thomae*, 4 vols. (Rome: Angelicum, 1950); Pedro Lumbreras, *Curso superior de teología moral*, 12 vols. (Rome: Angelicum, 1935–37). Prümmer was available in a smaller handbook version. The moral theology of figures from John of St. Thomas to Prümmer was often written up in practical digests, or, in North America, in guidebooks and textbooks extracted from the large seminary manuals: Elwood F. Smith and Louis A. Ryan, *Preface to Happiness* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950); Walter Farrell, *A Companion to the Summa*, 3 vols. (New York: 1938–1942); John Ambrose McHugh and Charles J. Callan, *Moral Theology: A Complete Course Based on St. Thomas Aquinas and the Best Modern Theologians*, 2 vols. (New York: Wagner, 1929, 1958).

<sup>52</sup> Martin Grabmann at the turn of this century wrote of the Dominican moralists: "Today . . . outstanding Thomists like Garrigou-Lagrange and Gardeil discuss a speculative deepening of moral theology which ordinarily finds its form in an interior and

the first half of this century has representatives as different as A. D. Sertillanges and Juan Arintero, M. D. Chenu (1895–1990) and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877–1964), but all wrote within a perspective emphasizing the foundational role of grace.<sup>53</sup> Chenu noted: “Without doubt there is a certain kind of moralist who finds [in Aquinas] only considerations which are in fact preliminary, a metaphysical extrapolation or a mysticism at a distance from practical human conduct and from the special criteria of human liberty. For St. Thomas, on the other hand, moral science is precisely *theological*: interior to this high knowing, both theoretical and practical at the same time. Its purpose is to see and to locate all beings and all of being in and by their order to God from whom they flow forth in a delineated participation which leads back to God.”<sup>54</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange was a relentless advocate of a Thomism where grace is a *stabile* quality, and where actual, transitory graces are decidedly secondary. Following Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, his theology, moral theology, and spirituality inevitably described grace as a participation in the divine nature and the source of all Christian life. In a modern paraphrase of Aquinas, Garrigou-Lagrange wrote: “Sanctifying grace, the seed of glory, introduces us into this higher order of truth and life and is an essentially supernatural life, a participation in the intimate life of God, in the divine nature . . . immensely superior to a perceived miracle and above the natural life of our intellectual and immortal soul.”<sup>55</sup> In a polemical manner he

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sympathetic affinity with dogmatics and so gains a deeper influence upon Christian life through a deep grasp of grace, the Christian virtues, and the gifts of salvation” (*Die Idee des Lebens in der Theologie des hl. Thomas von Aquin* [Paderborn: Schöningh, 1922] 5).

<sup>53</sup> John A. Gallagher’s valuable history mixes various times and schools in its treatment of neo-Thomism (the Jesuit outsider Kleutgen leads abruptly to the much later Dominicans, Callan and McHugh). Although Gallagher quotes Merkelbach (“By his positive will and gratuitous goodness God has destined us to his supernatural glory which is procured through habitual grace and infused virtues . . .”) and knows of some neo-Thomist retentions of Aquinas on grace and the new law, his mention of actual graces, of theological virtues alone as infused, and of grace as a “turning” of will and mind, as well as of textbooks arranged around religion and supernatural acts and motivations without a ground may reflect some manualists but not the Dominican tradition. The observation that “the specifically theological doctrine of providence constituted the architectonic plan of the theology of Thomas Aquinas” (69) is imprecise. For Aquinas providence is God’s general care for all beings acting toward their goals, while predestination, a mode of providence, sets up the supernatural order and directs humans through divine participation to the eschaton (*Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* [New York: Paulist, 1990] 54–60).

<sup>54</sup> M. D. Chenu, *St. Thomas d’Aquin et la théologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1959) 126. “Grace is in us like a (super) nature, i.e., like a most interior principle, most ours and at the same time most divine, possessing a dynamism that makes us capable of vital communion with God” (*ibid.* 67).

<sup>55</sup> R. Garrigou-Lagrange, “The Spiritual Organism,” in *The Three Ages of the Interior Life, Prelude of Eternal Life*, 2 vols., trans. M. Timothea Doyle (St. Louis: Herder, 1949) 1.50–51; similarly *Grace* (St. Louis: Herder, 1952) 114. “The infused virtues . . . which flow from habitual grace are qualities, that is, *permanent principles* of supernatural and meritorious operations; it is then necessary that habitual or sanctifying grace (a *state* of

attacked theologians who could not get beyond religious words to the reality of grace, calling their viewpoint "nominalist," and he scolded those neo-Scholastic schools who posited the motive force (actual grace) and the goal (heaven) as supernatural but who viewed the virtues as natural and acquired.

The Dominican-Thomist approach has continued up to the present day. In the 1960s Thomas Gilby introduced the early questions on morality in the *ST* by observing that Aquinas's thought is not "a moral philosophy inspired by a classical and liberal spirit, perhaps tintured with Christianity."<sup>56</sup> Rather, the moral life is fully integrated into an exposition of God's revealed order of grace and can be appreciated only when it is read as part of an organic whole. The questions on moral psychology are well integrated into the entire fabric of the *ST*, and their teleology comes not from a supreme good but from the God who has revealed participation in God's life. Today Thomist moral theology of the Dominican tradition finds a creative presentation in the writings of Servais Pinckaers who focuses on God's supernatural presence within the plan of the *ST* by noting how virtues and moral behavior are the central panel of a triptych: they are preceded by the evangelical law that is itself grace, and followed by the gifts of the Spirit. "If moral theology has for its object responding to the question of happiness, it finds of immediate importance the knowledge of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are inviting us to enter into intimacy with them and partake in their happiness. When the law of the Gospel is principally constituted by the grace of the Holy Spirit received by faith in Christ, the moral theology it inspires will be intimately linked to the person of Christ and will not turn grace into an abstraction. . . . How one sees this issue of the key and gate of entry into the house of moral theology plays a determining role."<sup>57</sup> The treatise on law flowing into the gospel's law, he continues, serves as an anticipation of and a bridge to the following questions on grace, and then in the large second part of the Second Part the two dynamic principles, personality and the grace of the Spirit, meet in families of virtues. "St. Thomas perceived in a profound way a transforming action flowing from the life of grace into the human virtues and through them into the direction of concrete

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grace), from which these virtues proceed as from their root, is itself an infused and permanent quality and not a motion like actual grace" ("La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle?" *Angelicum* 23 [1946] 129). In Garrigou's opinion, this position was defined by Trent.

<sup>56</sup> "Introduction," in *Summa theologiae* 18: *Principles of Morality* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965) xxi; see in the same volume from the Blackfriars translation, Thomas Gilby's "Philosophical and Theological Morals" and "The Treatise in the *Summa*" 147-49, 123-25.

<sup>57</sup> Pinckaers, *L'Évangile et la morale* 11; see also *L'Évangile et la morale*, chap. 3; and Pinckaers, "L'enseignement de la théologie morale à Fribourg: Passé et avenir," in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle*, S.-T. Bonino, ed. (Paris: Saint-Paul, 1994) 430.

activity.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately grace drew virtues to higher levels, the gifts of the Spirit.<sup>59</sup>

Even a brief history shows how the Dominican school, in contrast to the theologies of actual graces or the various philosophies of human virtues, placed a constant emphasis on grace as a divine presence and as the supernatural source and character of the virtuous life. Naturally there were criticisms of the Dominican school, a school that existed as an interpretation of Aquinas amid several other neo-Thomist ones and many neo-Scholastic directions. Its emphasis on grace might obscure psychological effort in cultivating virtue, or its insistence on infused virtues beyond the three theological ones might end in a dualism. On the other hand, the Dominicans protested that some neo-Scholastic theologies, while never fully setting aside Aquinas's principles, focused on the psychological, and did not emphasize the trinitarian graced milieu and telos of the virtuous life.

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

1. This article does not pretend to offer suggestions to present-day moral theology with its difficult and multiplying issues. It merely aims to illumine virtue ethics from the basic orientation and principles of

<sup>58</sup> *L'Évangile et la morale* 68–67. The Lyons Dominican Christian Duquoc wonders whether the official neo-Scholastic moral theology was ever particularly Thomist and mentions the emphases on external authority and the tragic element of sin (“De l’actualité de Saint Thomas,” in *Interpréter: Mélanges offerts à Claude Geffré*, ed. Jean-Pierre Jossua and Nicolas-Jean Seo [Paris: Cerf, 1992] 20). Continuing in a rather perennial style the Dominican emphasis upon the supernatural is Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> Although neo-Thomisms also ruminated on the definitions and machineries of virtues to the neglect of their higher modes, the Dominican school emphasized the gifts of the Spirit. Moral theology did not end with an ascetically developed set of virtues nor with a high degree of will power or rational discussion, but with a familiarity with the divine that is intuitive and instinctual. The influential treatise of John of St. Thomas from the 17th century inspired in this century books from figures as different as Ambroise Gardeil, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Walter Farrell. They more or less present the theology summed up in Gardeil’s words: “The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not actual interventions of the Spirit in our life, but habitual dispositions placed in our soul which lead it easily to consent to his inspirations. . . . Through these God shines freely across the Christian’s whole moral and supernatural life, initially illumined by the calm light of the virtues” (*The Gifts of the Holy Ghost in Dominican Saints* [Milwaukee: Bruce, 1937] 31, 20). See John of St. Thomas *The Gifts of the Holy Ghost* [1645] (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1951); Antonin Massoulié, *Méditations de Saint Thomas sur les trois vies* [1678] (Paris: Lethielleux, 1934); Walter Farrell and Dominic Hughes, *Swift Victory* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955); Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* 1.66–68; Santiago María Ramírez, *De donis Spiritus Sancti deque vita mystica . . . Thomae expositio* (Madrid: Aldecoa, 1974); Juan González Arintero, *The Mystical Evolution* (St. Louis: Herder, 1949); M.-M. Labourdette, “Dons du Saint-Esprit, IV, Saint Thomas et la théologie thomiste,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957) 1610–12. Pinckaers sees the neglect of the gifts of the Spirit to lie in the fears of rationalism concerning the instinctive and mystical in religion (“L’instinct et l’Esprit au cœur de l’éthique chrétienne,” in *Novitas et veritas vitae* [Paris, 1991] 213–24).

Thomas Aquinas's theology, showing its interpretation within the Dominican school. None of the ideas I have outlined here is original, nor would they surprise anyone who has studied the theological structure of the *ST* or the writings of past and recent commentators on the Second Part.

Thomism has witnessed not a few attempts to extract from the writings of Aquinas a neutral or philosophical Aristotelian ethics. One has only to look at the journals and books of the neo-Scholastic revival from 1860 to 1960 to see how much it preferred philosophy over theology, and to note the many articles on the machinery of virtues and the few on the Trinity. But not every neo-Aristotelianism bears the theology of Aquinas. The commentaries on Aristotle, not fully independent works, served as defenses in the 13th century for the controversial employment of Aristotle in Aquinas's own theology. They were often composed as a similar area of the *ST* was being written.<sup>60</sup>

Aquinas was himself a Latin neo-Aristotelian, and the forms and language of both thinkers are important. Aquinas's *ST* follows the thought of Aristotle by developing a theology of activities (not a hermeneutics of terms) flowing from divine and human natures. Here originality in ethics consisted in integrating morals into theology and in using Aristotelian insights to describe the life patterned on the Sermon on the Mount and enabled by the Spirit of the Risen Christ. As Ruedi Imbach has noted, "Thomas Aquinas is a theologian: whoever does not understand or interpret him as a theologian misunderstands him completely. In research on Aquinas since Gilson and Chenu this has been presented and pursued with the greatest force."<sup>61</sup> An Aristotelian segment or pastiche can be abstracted from some of Aquinas's writings, but the *ST* is a metaphysics and a psychology of the supernatural order. Its theology of virtues is neither an ascetic method nor a call to a prudent withdrawal from contemporary issues; neither a heroic subjectivity, nor an Aristotelianism with religious overtones. The extraction of an Aristotelian philosophy of virtue from 12 questions in the *ST* and from commentaries on philosophy has its limits. That enterprise was pursued by neo-Scholastics from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Aquinas's thought is, above all, a theology; it is not a

<sup>60</sup> R. A. Gauthier concludes: "Thomas never was and never wished to be anything but a theologian. If, at the time he was presenting moral theology in the Second Part of the *ST*, he was commenting on the Nichomachean ethics, that was solely because he saw in the moral philosophy of Aristotle the rational instrument by which he could give an account of what faith teaches about the purpose of human life. Thomas then never wrote a moral philosophy, nor an interpretation of Aristotle, solely for Aristotle . . . but used the moral philosophy of Aristotle in a theology animated by a spirit unknown to Aristotle" (*L'Éthique à Nicomaque* [Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1970] 275). The commentaries on Aristotle's psychology and ethics were written as Thomas composed the 1-2: "Thomas commented on them in his role as theologian" (Imbach, *Prologe*, lviii).

<sup>61</sup> Francis Cheneval, Ruedi Imbach, ed., *Prologe zu den Aristoteleskommentaren* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1993) ix; see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin: Sa personne et son oeuvre* (Paris: Cerf, 1993) 327-29.



theodicy or a discourse on a virtuous life. One can today use Aristotelian passages for apologetic reasons in a secular and pluralist society, but one should not imply that such is Aquinas's theology.<sup>62</sup> As the late Walter Principe wisely observed of Thomas:

Like his teacher, Albert, he saw no opposition between nature and grace or between truths discovered by reason and those revealed by God. It cannot be stressed too much, however, that what Thomas intended to be was always primarily a theologian: even his commentaries on Aristotle were done for theological purposes. To treat him as a philosopher and to extract a "Thomistic" philosophy from the theological context in which Aquinas uses philosophy is a disservice too frequently done by those professing to follow him. Divorced from its living theological context, such a desiccated body of doctrines loses the force of vitality of Aquinas's thought and is at least partly responsible for the current neglect of his teaching in many quarters.<sup>63</sup>

Any attempt to present a philosophical Thomism must first engage the reader by indicating that such an ethic is not originally and formally the work of Aquinas, and then by explaining for a theological audience how these Aristotelian ideas relate to Christianity. This essay does not imply that there are not other interpretations of Aquinas (there are a number), but for the Dominican school Aquinas is a theologian, and his theology is essentially an unfolding of a special divine presence in people. Moral theology will not be well served today by confusing it with a basic course in philosophical neo-Scholasticism.

Paradoxically, what is absent from some proponents of an ethics of virtue is precisely its Aristotelianism: substance and subject, activities flowing from natures through orientations and habits. Aquinas's ge-

<sup>62</sup> MacIntyre sees Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle as "deviant" and "questionable" (*After Virtue* 166) and finds the *Summa* filled with debate and tension (*Whose Justice?* 172) and in the process of construction. Of course, a central Thomistic thought form, one of many vivifying from the tranquil order of the *ST*, is synthetic wisdom drawing respectfully from a dialectic of opinions, each of which has some truth and some limitation. MacIntyre eschews the medieval sapiential style of Aquinas, characteristic of Catholicism and emphasized by French and German scholars in this century, and prefers a style of conflict and fragmentation. He imagines that "Aristotle would certainly not have admired Jesus and would have been horrified by St. Paul" (*After Virtue* 172), but most Thomists through seven centuries see considerable success in Aquinas's careful use of Greek philosophy. A presentation of Aquinas's ethics with no substantial allusion to grace, the gospel law, infused virtues or supernatural destiny can already be found in Etienne Gilson, *Moral Values and the Moral Life: The System of St. Thomas Aquinas* (St. Louis: Herder, 1931).

<sup>63</sup> W. Principe, "Aquinas, St. Thomas," in *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard McBrien (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994) 85–89. Ludwig Hödl reached a similar conclusion: "The moral theology of Thomas is formally and essentially theology, for God is the source and the goal of the moral activity. The employment of philosophical concepts and statements does not alter the basic theological intention of Thomas; in the *Summa theologiae* we find no trace or element of a philosophical ethic which do not, in the theological synthesis, find a theological character . . ." ("Philosophische Ethik und Moral-Theologie," in A. Zimmerman, ed., *Thomas von Aquin: Werk und Wirkung im Licht neuerer Forschungen* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988] 30, 34).

nius introduced a psychology, the innovative psychology of Aristotle, into theology. The medieval theologian distinguished grace from activities in order to let the personality act but also to give that activity a stability, a personal subjectivity in both the orders of nature and of grace.

2. In the last analysis Aquinas's moral theology is not strictly speaking only an ethics of virtue. The genius of the *Summa theologiae* was to place the Second Part in dynamic proximity to the great themes of Christianity.<sup>64</sup> Virtues are one set of forces in a broad description of the human image of God living amid various instructive realms (*leges*) and participating in eschatological life. Aquinas's theology does not begin with human virtues nor does it end with them. It proceeds from two vital sources, the total human personality and divine grace, and it ends in the instinctual gifts of the Spirit.

3. Catholicism distinguishes between philosophy and theology, between the divine gift of being and that of grace. A moral theology is not Christian because an Aristotelian philosophy concludes with passages from the Bible or with virtues exemplified in Jesus, or because it exalts charity. It is Christian because it relates the Incarnation to human life. The union of grace and humanity has a history that finds not its exhaustion but its center in Jesus Christ. Incarnation is an underlying pattern of the *ST*, an incarnation reaching from the mission of the Word to the sacrament of the sick and dying. The affirmation of grace as a life principle, given an original development by Aquinas, analyzed by many Scholastic theologies, and sustained by the Council of Trent, characterizes the Western Catholic viewpoint. The Incarnation continues in people, sacraments, Church, and in cultural and political movements. Perhaps some ethicists consciously or unconsciously wish to shift Aquinas's theology away from the too Catholic perspective of perduring grace in the individual, and so they have adopted a nontheological perspective of virtues as good habits and actions apart from grace. That can be done, but not with Thomas

<sup>64</sup> Recent research on Aquinas's purpose in composing the *ST* puts moral theology in a broad context. Leonard E. Boyle shows that the *ST* was written first as a text in moral theology, and that Aquinas creatively situated those issues in a larger theological work. "By prefacing the *Secunda* or moral part with a *Prima pars* on God, Trinity and Creation, and then rounding it off with a *Tertia pars* on the Son of God, Incarnation and the Sacraments, Thomas put practical theology, the study of Christian man, his virtues and vices, in a full theological context. . . . Christian morality, once for all, was shown to be something more than a question of straight ethical teaching of vices and virtues in isolation. Inasmuch as man was an intelligent being who was master of himself and possessed of freedom of choice, he was in the image of God. To study human action is therefore to study the image of God and to operate on a theological plane. To study human action on a theological plane is to study it in relation to its beginning and end, God, and to the bridge between, Christ and his sacraments" (*The Setting of the "Summa theologiae" of Thomas Aquinas* [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982] 16).

Aquinas as a support. The issues of nature and grace distinguish today, as they did in the 16th century, Catholicism from Protestantism, even as the understanding of nature and grace, apart and together, remains an important ecumenical issue, perhaps the last ecumenical issue because it was the first.<sup>65</sup>

Some advocates of centering ethics in virtues do not permit Aquinas's theology to present itself; they skirt or race beyond the distinct (but not separate) realms of nature and grace. A certain duality in Christian theology is inevitable if one understands creation and graced humanity as distinct from God. Aristotelianism's love of natures and their activities encouraged Aquinas's view that both creation and grace, precisely in their distinctiveness, glorify God. Aquinas emphasized the obvious conclusion that Creator and creature are infinitely distinct, even as his theology of a presence of Word and Spirit in an individual through grace interpreted as a quasi-formed cause gave the human person an intimacy with the divine life. One can disagree with Aquinas's perspective (and with that of Catholicism before and after Trent), but theologies must be permitted to have their own identities and not, under the slogan of ecumenism, be collapsed into opposing ways of thinking.<sup>66</sup> History suggests that a theology that is markedly Protestant would differ from that of Aquinas precisely in the area of graced anthropology.

4. The neo-Scholastic moral theology of virtues fell into disrepute at various times in history, and the years around Vatican II witnessed a deflation of that approach. There were various reasons for that decline beginning centuries before. First, not infrequently a schema of virtues was too philosophical or too mechanistic; virtues seemed to result very

<sup>65</sup> "With 'virtues' and '*habitus*' we have entered not only the heart of Thomist theology but have met the central point of all the controversies between the theologies of the Reformation and Scholasticism. . . . We must not consider the [Thomist] concept of 'virtue' as it has been presented in German philosophy after Kant, as a moral enabling, as character training for educational activity" (Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin* 223).

<sup>66</sup> Stanley Hauerwas writes: "I have no sympathy either with the nature-supernature form of Catholic ethics . . . , a theology that assumed that 'nature' is relatively autonomous and sufficient in its own sphere, needing only to be 'topped' by grace. However, the distinction was never so crudely drawn in the work of the great classical theologians such as Aquinas. De Lubac and Rahner's work, therefore, should in this respect be seen as a return to the more classical tradition of charity as the form of the virtues" ("*Love's Not All You Need*," in *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* [Notre Dame: Fides, 1974] 119). It is well known that the distinction and interplay of Aquinas's *gratia perficit naturam*, the underlying principle of his theology, has different modes of interpretation in the history of Thomisms, and that the nature-supernature distinction has been presented by some in a rigidly separate and mechanistic way. De Lubac and Rahner knew, however, that some distinction between the two orders is unavoidable. The issue is how, in contemporary language, to express their interplay. Rahner's theology, of course, presents through existential and transcendental thought forms the self-communication of God (grace) present as constant offer and frequent realization in each human existence constituted in a world of grace in order to try to express the infinitude of God and the intimacy of grace in men and women.

much from human effort. Second, one never quite knew if one had a virtue at all, or if one had enough of it. Third, a neo-Aristotelian clarity responded neither to new issues nor to people's lives; private virtues reached with difficulty social responsibility, while asceticism was separated from liturgy. In American Catholic educational circles by the 1950s an ethics of virtues became so remote that it appeared to be on the same level as something like the psychology of the four temperaments. The test of a moral theology centered in virtues is whether it can influence people and churches. Thus one might research whether, for instance, ethnic Catholic populations referred to virtues in the abstract or only to virtues in particular saints. Did the theology of virtue typical of the century after 1870 enter papal documents on the family or society? Did it further the liturgical movement? Precisely because the theory of virtue remained abstract, spiritualities became partly a substitute for a vital moral theology. For the ordinary Catholic the life of virtue was located and expressed in the world of devotions.

If Dominican theology affirmed but also tended to separate the virtues of nature and of grace, other Catholic theories after the 17th century ended up (in the eyes of the Dominicans) with an ethic drawn too much from Aristotle, a humanism, or the Enlightenment. Some moral theologies appeared to be an ethics of acquired virtues, virtues that were then adorned with religious texts and empowered by actual graces. Independent human virtues were extrinsically stimulated by transient and actual graces (the emphasis upon actual grace reduced the stability and depth of the graced life); or they were given a psychological impetus by willed charity or religious obedience. Intentionality elevated and directed moral action, and the real specificity of an act as well as its impact upon other people lost importance as an action was morally defined largely by the intention of the doer. Through this approach liturgy and spirituality lost their moorings in social and psychological life, while the emphasis upon actual grace reduced the stability and depth of the graced life. In theology fissures opened between moral theology and the major themes of Christianity. The spiritualities developed in different countries and in various religious orders from the 16th to the 20th centuries did often reflect a personal theology of saints and communities, and those men and women were often related to specific virtues.

5. The thought of a genius eludes quick appreciation. Some recent authors by and large do not explain the theology of Aquinas from out of his own world. Furthermore, there is little usage made of social hermeneutics, i.e. views drawn from traditions, experts, and schools. As a result, Aquinas is perceived as a thinker whose thought is immediately intelligible and who has no interpretative history, as if the meaning of his thought simply leaps from the page unassisted by a history of interpretation. Part of the task of comprehending a theologian is learning the historical context of his theology and the history of

its interpretation. After centuries of moral theologies and Scholasticisms, studies on the history of moral theology and the history of neo-Scholasticism are still sparse. Without some understanding of these histories ethics may rehearse what has often been presented, indeed presented at length. Not to understand the historical context of Aquinas and the history and diversity of Thomism is to research the past again needlessly and perhaps to repeat some of its mistakes. Historical research is important for showing how Roman Catholicism's theological and cultural history has its own contours and how its history is quite different from that of Protestantism or the Enlightenment. Repetition in research and an isolation from modern issues were characteristics of neo-Scholasticism, and that explains why the contributions of Scripture, spirituality, and modern psychologies have directed contemporary moral issues in new directions since 1950. It is a mistake to ignore the rich historical and theological studies of Aquinas in this century from Grabmann to Chenu, from Pesch to Pinckaers and Torrell. As Pesch has observed:

The contemporary value of Aquinas can only be indicated by recognizing a basic distance of him from us. Thomas did not begin with our issues, nor did he take up our theological questions. Admittedly it is important to value the suggestions he gives and to see our connection with the problems he faces. Thomas is certainly an outstanding example of how basic problems of Christian theology, i.e., basic questions of faith and existence, continue on through changing forms of expression. Recognizing their lasting importance, however, and seeing the historical continuity with Thomas doesn't happen without work or without living and thinking in another period. The reward is clear: the experience of an important and graced period in history out of which we come and in which we still live to some extent. This mentality brings also an effective protection against instant, fashionable applications of Aquinas which think that his thought can be presented without its historical roots; and against the opposite presumption that real Christianity only began with our modern age.<sup>67</sup>

One can exaggerate the presence of Thomas Aquinas before Vatican II—of Aquinas, not of neo-Thomism—and one can overlook the study and research that has prospered in the past three decades.<sup>68</sup> Despite

<sup>67</sup> *Thomas von Aquin 27.*

<sup>68</sup> Recent claims by Paul J. Wadell (*The Primacy of Love* 1) and Jean Porter (*The Recovery* 172) that centuries of schools of interpretations missed Aquinas's "spirit" or that today Aquinas's influence among Protestant theologians is greater than among Catholics are odd when one knows of the international collection of centers, journals, critical texts, schools, and experts in the world devoted to Aquinas. Almost a decade after the Vatican II the anniversary year 1974 brought forth thousands of pages; see, e.g., Willehad Paul Eckert, ed., *Thomas von Aquino: Interpretation und Rezeption* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1974) 980 pages; *Tommaso d'Aquino*, 9 vols. (Naples: Edizioni domenicane italiane, 1974); four volumes of *The Thomist* for 1974; *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274—1974: Commemorative Studies*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974). The breadth and quality of studies on Aquinas since the anniversary year is illustrated by the writings of Weisheipl, Pesch, Brian Davies, Principe, and most

the necessity decline of neo-Thomism in the 1960s, Pesch thinks that "in recent decades a remarkable change has taken place. In German, French, English-speaking, and, of course, in Italian and Spanish circles highly qualified works on Thomas have sprung up like mushrooms."<sup>69</sup> Surveying current writings on Aquinas occupies an entire journal (the *Bulletin thomiste* and its successor the *Rassegna di letteratura tomistica* [Naples]), and a steady stream of Thomist research supports the cautionary tone of this article. Ideas that today appear novel may already have been researched to the point of exhaustion by scholars, schools, and traditions. While there is no comprehensive study of Thomism since the Reformation, there are a number of guides to its history and to its most recent renaissance.<sup>70</sup>

6. Some have seen character to be the result of virtues. Virtues can indeed lead to a narrative theology of character. Romano Guardini wrote about character some fifty years ago.<sup>71</sup> In a broad sense, that is, in the multiple traditions of two millennia of Christianity, "Christian character" has been called through the centuries "being a saint." Story becomes concrete in an individual graced life. The saints are not replicas of Jesus and Mary nor modern failures afraid of commitment, faith, or joy. They are individuals whose complex lives unfold amid personality, grace, and sin. As instinct complements acquired virtue, the gifts of the Spirit presume that human beings live out of layers of rational and intuitive consciousness and that the spiritual life is not an addition to the moral life. The great spiritualities have sprung from and nourished individual lives, and in them vision becomes incarnate in praxis. An individual selects and emphasizes a coherent gathering of teachings and images; and that arrangement of religious truths and powers into a personalized pattern constitutes a spirituality. Stimulated by a particular time and by a charismatic individual, a religious movement leads, at least in Catholicism, not to a new church or to one correct approach, the sectarian judge of all others, but to one particular ensemble of theology, psychology, and liturgy, one among many concrete styles of living out Christian life. There are Benedictine monasteries but there are also Catholic Worker houses. A theory of virtue can

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recently Torrell, as well as by a number of multivolume series from on-going European symposia. A recent bibliography lists over 3500 books and articles for the 15 years after 1977 (Richard Ingardia, *Thomas Aquinas: International Bibliography, 1977-1990* [Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University, 1993]).

<sup>69</sup> Lydia Maidl and Otto Hermann Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Gestalt, Begegnung, Gebet* (Freiburg: Herder, 1994) 13-14.

<sup>70</sup> On the history of Thomism in this century, see the various writings of G. McCool, e.g., "Twentieth-Century Scholasticism," in *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure*, a special issue of *The Journal of Religion* 58 (1978) 198-217; T. F. O'Meara, "The 'New Theology': Neoscholasticism," in his *Church and Culture: German Catholic Theology, 1860-1914* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1991) 33-50.

<sup>71</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Virtues: On Forms of Moral Life* (Chicago: Regnery, 1967).

play a role in Christian lives, but equally active are liturgy, devotions, ministry, theologies, cultures, eras, and places. A moral theology of virtue can lead to tradition and community, but, as we have seen, there is not one neo-Thomist tradition on virtue but presentations by different schools and religious orders over seven centuries. How those views of virtue have worked out in communities can be seen in the history of different religious orders and movements with their devotions, spiritualities, and ministries.

7. Some advocates of virtue seem to be hoping from this ethics something that would clearly define or even isolate Christian activities. But Aquinas used philosophical and psychological names of virtues to present virtues that are Christian because they are facets of a life principle of the new presence of the Trinity that Christianity not only reveals but offers. Grace for Aquinas is invisible but widely offered; it is ordinary, but nonetheless “the good of grace in one person is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe” (1-2, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2). There is indeed a distinctive subject of Christian faith and theology: it is not, however, words and rules but divine grace, a term expressing the kingdom of God and life in the Spirit. An important climax of the moral teaching of the *ST* (and of the entire work) is the central identification of the gospel with the presence of the Spirit called grace. In the questions on evangelical “law” (1-2, qq. 106–108) law has become human, interiorized, active; in short, the external realms of religion and covenant have become the Spirit’s presence, grace. “That which is most powerful in the law of the New Covenant and that in which its entire power consists is the grace of the Holy Spirit” (1-2, q. 106). Traditions, liturgies, and texts (even the written gospel) serve that indwelling of the Spirit.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Sometimes recent discussions of virtue, in their search for what is “Christian,” raise the issue of how human beings ignorant of Christ receive offered grace, responding to it through the actions of their lives. In today’s world the issue of God’s universal salvific influence beyond knowledge of the gospel is an issue of high importance, one whose centrality and difficulty will only increase. It is not at all evident that Jesus or Paul, or Clement of Alexandria or Thomas Aquinas, or historians of the first century would agree with MacIntyre’s generalization: “For New Testament Christians there is no salvation outside the apostolic church” (*After Virtue* 173), although this would be the view of some recently founded Protestant churches. Jean Porter has a broader viewpoint. On the long history of Catholic theologies of wider salvation, see Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York: Paulist, 1992). Aquinas struggled with this matter in areas related to virtue, e.g., in his considerations of implicit faith, the basic orientation of adult moral life, baptism *ex voto*, and the lordship of Christ. “The grace of God is the sufficient cause of a person’s salvation. Now God bestows grace upon people in the manner appropriate to them” (3, q. 61, a. 1, ad 2). From the perspective of Catholicism there are no human lives apart from the dialectic of sin and grace, and dialogue with the world’s religions is ultimately concerned not only with comparisons of rituals and texts but with analysis of the presence of grace in the followers of a religion and in the religion itself. How that grace is present in the

Twenty years ago Otto Hermann Pesch noted that any reconsideration of the virtues would have to relate them to contemporary theologies of grace.<sup>73</sup> If an ethics for life is Christian, it must find its source, goal, and service in that reality called the reign of God. In Christianity what is called revelation or grace becomes a human being in Jesus of Nazareth and then through his Spirit brings his life to many. The psychology and decisions of ethics would not want to escape this source and milieu. We can only hope that a richer appreciation of the origins of an ethics of virtue will further its influence as it unfolds its particular insights alongside other directions in moral theology.

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religion and virtue of members of other religions is the theme of Thomist theologies from Bartolomé de Las Casas to Karl Rahner.

<sup>73</sup> Pesch, "The Theology of Virtue" 96.

THE CONCEPT OF  
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## The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics

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