

QUESTION 23

Charity in its own right

We next have to consider charity: first, charity itself (questions 23-44) and, second, the gift of wisdom, which corresponds to charity (questions 45-46).

Concerning the first topic we have to consider five things: first, charity itself (question 23-24); second, the object of charity (questions 25-26); third, the acts of charity (questions 27-33); fourth, the vices opposed to charity (questions 34-43); and, fifth, the precepts that pertain to charity (question 44).

Concerning the first topic, there are two things to consider: first, charity itself in its own right (question 23) and, second, charity in relation to its subject (question 24).

On the first topic there are eight questions: (1) Is charity friendship? (2) Is charity something created that exists in the soul? (3) Is charity a virtue? (4) Is charity a specific virtue? (5) Is charity a single virtue? (6) Is charity the greatest of the virtues? (7) Can any genuine virtue exist without charity? (8) Is charity the form of the virtues?

Article 1

Is charity friendship?

It seems that charity is not friendship (*caritas non sit amicitia*):

Objection 1: As the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 8, nothing is as proper to friendship as sharing one's life with one's friend (*convivere amico*). But charity belongs to a man with respect to God and the angels, whose lives, as Daniel 2:11 says, are not with men. Therefore, charity is not friendship.

Objection 2: As *Ethics* 8 says, friendship does not exist without reciprocity (*non est sine reamatione*). But charity is had even with respect to one's enemies—this according to Matthew 5:44 (“Love your enemies”). Therefore, charity is not friendship.

Objection 3: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 8, there are three species of friendship: friendship of *pleasure* (*amicitia delectabilis*), friendship of *utility* (*amicitia utilis*), and friendship of *virtue* (*amicitia honesti*). But charity is neither friendship of utility nor friendship of pleasure; for in *Epistola ad Paulinum*, which is placed at the beginning of his Bible, Jerome says, “A true relationship (*vera necessitudo*), joined by the glue of Christ, is where men are drawn together not by the usefulness of familial matters, or by mere bodily presence, or by crafty and cajoling flattery, but by the fear of God and the study of the divine Scriptures.” Again, charity is likewise not a friendship of virtue, since by charity we love even sinners, whereas a friendship of virtue, as *Ethics* 8 says, exists only with the virtuous. Therefore, charity is not friendship.

But contrary to this: John 15:15, “I no longer call you servants, but my friends.” But this was said to them only by reason of charity. Therefore, charity is friendship.

I respond: According to the Philosopher in *Ethics* 8, not every sort of love has the character of friendship; rather, friendship is a love that exists with *benevolence* (*cum benevolentia*)—more specifically, when we love someone in such a way as to will the good for him. By contrast, if we do not will the good for what we love, but instead will for ourselves the very good that belongs to them, then this is a love of concupiscence and not a love of friendship. For it is ridiculous to claim that someone has friendship with wine or friendship with a horse.

However, benevolence is not sufficient for the character of friendship; instead, a certain mutual loving is required, since a friend is a friend to his friend.

Now this sort of mutual benevolence is founded upon something shared in common (*fundatur super aliqua communicatione*). Therefore, since man shares something in common with God insofar as God communicates His own beatitude to us, it must be the case that some sort of friendship is founded upon this sharing. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says of this sharing, “... the faithful God, by whom you have been called into the fellowship of His Son.” But the sort of love built on this sharing is charity. Hence, it is clear

that charity is a certain sort of friendship of man with God.

Reply to objection 1: There are two kinds of human life:

One is the *exterior* life, in accord with our sentient and corporeal nature, and as regards this kind of life, there is no sharing or commonality between us and God or the angels.

The other kind of human life is man's *spiritual* life in accord with his mind. And as regards this kind of life, we have a shared life both with God and with the angels—imperfectly in our present state, which is why Philippians 3:20 says, “Our true life is in heaven.” But this shared life will be perfected in heaven, when God's servants will serve Him and see His face, as Revelations 22:3-4 says. And so charity is imperfect here, but will be perfected in heaven.

Reply to objection 2: There are two ways in which friendship is extended to someone:

In one way, with respect to his very self, and in this sense there is never friendship except with respect to a friend.

In a second way, it is extended to someone with respect to another person; for instance, if someone has a friendship with a man, then by reason of that friendship he loves all those who belong to that man, whether his children or his servants or those who are related to him in any way whatsoever. And the love for a friend can be such that, because of one's friend, those who belong to him are loved even if they offend us or hate us. And it is in this way that the love of charity extends even to our enemies, whom we love out of charity in relation to God, with whom the love of friendship is had principally.

Reply to objection 3: A friendship of virtue is had only with respect to one who is virtuous as with respect to the principal person, but for his sake those who belong to him are loved even if they are not themselves virtuous. And in this sense charity, which is friendship of virtue to the highest degree, extends to sinners, whom we love out of charity for God's sake.

Article 2

Is charity something created that exists in the soul?

It seems that charity is not something created that exists in the soul (*non sit aliquid creatum in anima*):

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 8 Augustine says, “If someone loves his neighbor, it follows that he loves Love itself.” But God is Love. Therefore, it follows that he principally loves God. And in *De Trinitate* 15 he says, “It was said, ‘God is charity’, just as it was said, ‘God is Spirit’.” Therefore, charity is God Himself and is not something created that exists in the soul.

Objection 2: God is spiritually the life of the soul in the same way that the soul is the life of the body—this according to Deuteronomy 30:20 (“He is your life”). But the soul vivifies the body through itself. Therefore, God vivifies the soul through Himself. But He vivifies the soul through charity—this according to 1 John 3:14 (“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brethren”). Therefore, God is charity itself.

Objection 3: Nothing created has infinite power, but instead every creature is emptiness (*vanitas*). But charity is not emptiness; instead, it is opposed to emptiness and has infinite power, since it leads a man's soul to an infinite good. Therefore, charity is not something created that exists in the soul.

But contrary to this: In *De Doctrina Christiana* Augustine says, “By charity I mean the mind's movement toward enjoying God for His own sake.” But a movement of the mind is something created that exists in the soul. Therefore, charity is likewise something created that exists in the soul.

I respond: The Master examines this question thoroughly in *Sentences* 1, dist. 17, and he claims that charity is not something created that exists in the soul, but is instead the Holy Spirit inhabiting the mind. Now he does not mean that this movement of love by which we love God is the Holy Spirit

Himself; instead, he means that this movement of love is from the Holy Spirit but not by the mediation of any habit in the way in which other virtuous acts are from the Holy Spirit by the mediation of the habits of the other virtues, e.g., by the mediation of the habit of hope or of faith or of some other virtue. And he makes this claim because of the excellence of charity.

However, if one considers the matter correctly, this view redounds to the detriment of charity. For it is not the case that the movement of charity proceeds from the Holy Spirit, who is moving the human mind, in such a way that the human mind is only moved and is in no sense a principle of this movement, in the way that a body is moved by an exterior mover. For as was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 6, a. 1), this is contrary to the character of the voluntary, the principle of which has to exist in the thing itself. Hence, it would follow that the act of loving (*diligere*) is not voluntary. This implies a contradiction, since love (*amor*) by its nature implies that it is a voluntary act (*actus voluntatis*).

Similarly, one cannot claim that the Holy Spirit moves the will to an act of loving in the way that an instrument is moved, since even though an instrument is a principle of an act, it is nonetheless not within its power to act or not to act. For the character of the voluntary would likewise be removed in such a case and the character of merit would be excluded—and yet it was established above (*ST* 1-2, q. 114, a. 4) that the love of charity is the root of meriting.

Instead, the will has to be moved by the Holy Spirit toward an act of loving in such a way that it itself also effects the act. But no act is perfectly produced by an active power unless the act is connatural to the power through some form that is a principle of the act. Hence, God, who moves all things toward their fitting ends, endows individual things with forms through which they are inclined toward the ends instituted for them by God, and it is in this way that “He disposes all things sweetly,” as *Wisdom* 8:1 puts it. But it is clear that an act of charity exceeds the nature of the power of willing. Therefore, if no form were added to the natural power by which one is inclined toward an act of elective love, then the act would thereby be less perfect than natural acts and the acts of the other virtues; nor would it be easy and delightful. But this is clearly false, since no virtue has as great an inclination toward its act as charity does; nor does any virtue act with as much delight.

Hence, for an act of charity, it is absolutely necessary for there to exist in us some habitual form which (a) is added to our natural power, which (b) inclines that power toward the act of charity, and which (c) makes it operate promptly and with delight.

Reply to objection 1: God’s essence is itself charity, just as it is likewise wisdom and goodness. Hence, just as we are called good by the goodness which is God and wise by the wisdom which is God, because the goodness by which we are formally good is a certain participation in God’s goodness, and the wisdom by which we are formally wise is a certain participation in God’s wisdom, so, too, the charity by which we formally love our neighbor is a certain participation in God’s charity. For this mode of speaking was common among the Platonists, whose teachings Augustine was imbued with—though some who did not realize this have taken his words as an occasion for going wrong.

Reply to objection 2: It is as an *efficient cause* (*effective*) that God is the life both of the soul through charity and of the body through the soul, but it is as a *formal cause* (*formaliter*) that charity is the life of the soul, just as the soul is likewise *formally* the life of the body. Hence, one can thereby conclude that just as the soul is immediately united to the body, so charity is immediately united to the soul.

Reply to objection 3: Charity operates as a formal cause (*operatur formaliter*). However, the efficacy of a form is in accord with the power of the agent that induces the form. And so the fact that charity is not emptiness, but instead brings about an infinite effect when it conjoins the soul to God by justifying the soul, demonstrates the infinity of God’s power, which is the source of charity.

Article 3

Is charity a virtue?

It seems that charity is not a virtue:

Objection 1: Charity is a certain sort of friendship. But friendship is not posited as a virtue by the philosophers, as is clear from the *Ethics*; nor is it numbered among either the moral virtues or the intellectual virtues. Therefore, charity is not a virtue, either.

Objection 2: As *De Caelo* 1 says, “A virtue is the ultimate limit (*ultimum*) of a power.” But charity is not an ultimate limit; instead, it is joy and peace that are the ultimate limit. Therefore, it seems that it is not charity that is a virtue, but joy and peace.

Objection 3: Every virtue is a certain habit that is an accident (*est quidam habitus accidentalis*). But charity is not a habit that is an accident. For charity is more noble than the soul itself, and no accident is more noble than its subject. Therefore, charity is not a virtue.

But contrary to this: In *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine says, “Charity is a virtue which, when our affections are absolutely upright, joins us to God, and by which we love Him.”

I respond: Human acts have goodness insofar as they are regulated by an appropriate rule and measure, and so human virtue, which is a principle of all good human acts, consists in attaining to the rule of human acts. Now, as was explained above (q. 17, a. 1), there are two such rules, viz., (a) human reason and (b) God Himself. Hence, just as a moral virtue is defined as being in accord with right reason—this is clear from *Ethics* 2—so, too, attaining to God constitutes the nature of a virtue, as was likewise explained above in the case of faith and hope (q. 4, a. 5 and q. 17, a. 1).

Hence, since, as is clear from the passage cited from Augustine, charity attains to God by joining us to God, it follows that charity is a virtue.

Reply to objection 1: The Philosopher does not deny in *Ethics* 8 that friendship is a virtue; instead, he says that it is “either a virtue or accompanied by virtue” (*virtus vel cum virtute*).

One could claim that friendship is a moral virtue having to do with operations that concern others (*operationes quae sunt ad alium*), though in a way that differs from justice. For justice has to do with operations that concern others under the concept *legal debt*, whereas friendship—as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 8—has to do with operations that concern others under the concept *amicable and moral debt* or, better, under the concept *gratuitous favor*.

On the other hand, one could claim that friendship is not in its own right a virtue distinct from the others. For it has the nature of something praiseworthy and upright only from its object, viz., insofar as it is based upon the uprightness of the virtues. This is clear from the fact that not every type of friendship has the nature of something praiseworthy and upright, as is clear in the case of friendship of pleasure and friendship of utility. Hence, virtuous friendship is more like something that *follows upon* the virtues rather than being itself a virtue. However, it is not like this with charity, which is founded mainly upon God’s goodness and not upon human virtue.

Reply to objection 2: It belongs to the same virtue to love someone and to rejoice over him, since, as was explained above when we were discussing the passions (*ST* 1-2, q. 25, a. 2), joy follows upon love. And so love is posited as the virtue rather than joy, which is an effect of love.

Now ‘ultimate limit’, as posited in the definition of a virtue, means not that which is last in the order of *effects*, but rather that which is last in the order of *exceeding*, in the way that a hundred pounds exceeds sixty pounds.

Reply to objection 3: With respect to its *esse*, every accident is inferior to a substance, since a substance is a being in its own right (*ens per se*), whereas an accident is a being-in-another (*ens in alio*).

On the other hand, with respect to the *nature of its species*, an accident that is caused by the principles of its subject has, to be sure, less dignity than its subject, in the way that an effect has less

dignity than its cause. However, an accident that is caused by participation in some higher nature has more dignity than its subject insofar as it is a likeness (*similitudo*) of that higher nature, in the way that light (*lux*) is more dignified than a diaphanous body. And it is in this latter way that charity has more dignity than the soul, insofar as charity is a certain sort of participation in the Holy Spirit.

Article 4

Is charity a specific virtue?

It seems that charity is not a specific virtue (*virtus specialis*):

Objection 1: Jerome says, “Let me briefly summarize the whole definition of virtue: Virtue is charity, by which one loves God and neighbor.” And in *De Moribus Ecclesiae* Augustine says, “Virtue is an ordering of love (*ordo amoris*).” But no specific virtue is posited in the definition of virtue in general. Therefore, charity is not a specific virtue.

Objection 2: Something that extends to the works of all the virtues cannot itself be a specific virtue. But charity extends to the works of all the virtues—this according to 1 Corinthians 13:4 (“Charity is patient, is kind, etc.”). Likewise, it extends to all human works—this according to 1 Corinthians 16:14 (“Let all your works be done in charity”).

Objection 3: The commandments of the Law correspond to the acts of the virtues. But in *De Perfectione Iustitiae Humanae* Augustine says, “The general command is: ‘You must love’ (*diliges*), and the general prohibition is, ‘Do not covet’ (*ne concupisces*).” Therefore, charity is a general virtue.

But contrary to this: Nothing general is enumerated with what is specific. But charity is enumerated with specific virtues, viz., with faith and hope—this according to 1 Corinthians 13:13 (“Now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three.”) Therefore, charity is a specific virtue.

I respond: As is clear from what was said above (*ST* 1-2, q. 18, a. 2 and q. 54, a. 2), acts and habits are specified by their objects, and so where there is a specific sort of good, there is a specific sort of love. But the divine good, insofar as it is the object of beatitude, is a specific sort of good. And so the love of charity, which is the love of this good, is a specific sort of love. Hence, charity is likewise a specific virtue.

Reply to objection 1: Charity is posited in the definition of all virtue not because it is by its essence every virtue, but rather because, as will be explained below (a. 7), all the virtues in some sense depend on it. In the same way, as is clear from *Ethics* 2 and 6, prudence is posited in the definition of the moral virtues because the moral virtues depend on prudence.

Reply to objection 2: A virtue or art (*ars*) that the ultimate end belongs to rules over the virtues or arts that other secondary ends belong to—in the way that, as is explained in *Ethics* 1, the military art rules over the equestrian art. And so, since charity has as its object the ultimate end of human life, viz., eternal beatitude, it extends to the acts of all of human life in the manner of a command and not in the sense that it directly elicits all the acts of the virtues.

Reply to objection 3: The commandment that has to do with loving is said to be a general command because all the other commandments are traced back to loving as an end—this according to 1 Timothy 1:5 (“The end of the commandment is love”).

Article 5

Is charity a single virtue?

It seems that charity is not a single virtue:

Objection 1: Habits are distinguished by their objects. But there are two objects of charity, God and neighbor, which are infinitely distant from one another. Therefore, charity is not a single virtue.

Objection 2: As was explained above (q. 17, a. 6 and *ST* 1-2, q. 54, a. 2), diverse conceptions of an object make for diverse habits, even if the object is one and the same thing in reality. But there many conceptions of loving God, since we are debtors to His love for each one of His perceived favors. Therefore, charity is not a single virtue.

Objection 3: Friendship toward one's neighbor is included under charity. But in *Ethics* 8 the Philosopher posits diverse species of friendship. Therefore, charity is not a single virtue, but is instead multiplied into diverse species.

But contrary to this: Just as God is the object of faith, so too He is the object of charity. But faith is a single virtue because of the oneness of divine truth—this according to Ephesians 4:5 (“... one faith ...”). Therefore, charity is likewise a single virtue because of the oneness of God's goodness.

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), charity is a sort of friendship of man with God.

Now, in one way, the diverse species of friendship are taken from the diversity of the ends, and in this sense there are three species of friendship, viz., (a) friendship of utility, (b) friendship of pleasure, and (c) friendship of virtue (*amicitia honesti*).

In a second way, the diverse species of friendship are taken from the diversity of the sorts of commonality upon which the friendships are based. For instance, the species of friendship that belongs to relatives is different from the species of friendship that belongs to fellow citizens or fellow travelers, since the one is founded upon a natural communion, whereas the others are founded upon a civil communion or upon the common life of a journey. This is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 8.

However, charity cannot be divided into many virtues in either of these ways. For there is a single end of charity, viz., God's goodness. There is likewise a single communion of eternal beatitude, upon which this friendship is founded. Hence, what follows is that charity is a single virtue absolutely speaking and is not distinguished into more than one species.

Reply to objection 1: This argument proceeds on the assumption that God and neighbor are objects of charity in equivalent ways (*ex aequo*). But this is not true. Rather, God is the principal object of charity, whereas one's neighbor is loved out of charity for the sake of God.

Reply to objection 2: God is loved out of charity because of Himself (*propter seipsum*). Hence, there is only a single reason for loving that is principally attended to by charity, viz., God's goodness, which is His substance—this according to Psalm 105:1 (“Give glory to the Lord, for He is good”).

Now the other reasons that induce one toward love, or that make for an obligation to love, are secondary and consequent upon this first reason.

Reply to objection 3: Human friendship—which is the sort of friendship the Philosopher is talking about—has diverse ends and diverse types of association. As has been explained, there is no room for this sort of diversity in the case of charity. And so the arguments are not parallel.

Article 6

Is charity the most excellent virtue?

It seems that charity is not the most excellent virtue:

Objection 1: A higher virtue belongs to a higher power, just as a higher operation does. But the intellect is higher than the will and directs it. Therefore, faith, which exists in the intellect, is more excellent than charity, which exists in the will.

Objection 2: That through which a thing operates seems to be lower than that thing itself, in the way that a minister through whom a lord operates is lower than the lord. But as Galatians 5:6 says, “Faith works through love.” Therefore, faith is more excellent than charity.

Objection 3: What comes about through an addition to another thing seems to be more perfect than that other thing. But hope seems to come about through an addition to charity, since the object of charity is *the good*, whereas the object of hope is *the arduous good*. Therefore, hope is more perfect than charity.

But contrary to this: 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “The greatest of these is charity.”

I respond: Since in human acts the good arises from the fact that the acts are regulated by an appropriate rule, human virtue, which is a principle of good acts, must consist in attaining to the rule for human acts. But as was explained above (a. 3), there are two rules for human acts, viz., human reason and God. However, the *primary* rule is God—even human reason has to be regulated by this rule. And so the theological virtues, which consist in attaining to that primary rule by virtue of the fact that their object is God, are more excellent than the moral or intellectual virtues, which consist in attaining to human reason. Because of this, it must be the case that, among the theological virtues, the one that attains to God to a greater degree is the greater.

Now that which is such-and-such in its own right (*per se*) is always greater than that which is such-and-such through something else (*per aliud*). But faith and hope attain to God insofar as the cognition of the true or the acquisition of the good come to us from Him, whereas charity attains to God Himself insofar as He exists in Himself and not insofar as something comes to us from Him. And so charity is more excellent than faith and hope—and, as a result, it is more excellent than all the other virtues. In the same way, prudence, which attains to reason in its own right, is more excellent than the other moral virtues, which attain to reason insofar as a mean is set by reason in human operations or passions.

Reply to objection 1: The intellect’s operation is brought to completion insofar as what is understood exists in the one who has the act of understanding, and so the nobility of an intellectual operation arises from the measure of the thing as understood (*attenditur secundum mensuram intellectus*).

By contrast, the operation of the will—or of any appetitive power—is perfected in the inclination of that which has the appetite toward the real entity which is the terminus of the appetite (*perficitur in inclinatione appetentis ad rem sicut ad terminus*). Therefore, the dignity of an appetitive operation arises from the real entity that is the object of its operation.

Now things that are lower than the soul exist in the soul in a way that is more noble than the way in which they exist in themselves; for, as the *Liber de Causis* explains, one thing exists in another in the manner of the thing in which it exists. By contrast, things that are higher than the soul exist in themselves in a way that is more noble than the way in which they exist in the soul.

Therefore, the cognition of things that are lower than us is more noble than the love of them. That is why the Philosopher places the intellectual virtues above the moral virtues. By contrast, the love of things above us—and especially the love of God—is preferable to the cognition of those things. And that is why charity is more excellent than faith.

Reply to objection 2: Faith does not operate through love as through an instrument, in the way that a master acts through his servant. Rather, faith operates through love as through its proper form. And so the argument does not go through.

Reply to objection 3: The very same good is the object of both charity and hope. But charity implies union with that good, whereas hope implies a certain distance from it. And this is why charity

does not relate to that good as an arduous good, in the way that hope relates to it. For what is already united does not have the nature of the arduous. And from this it is clear charity is more perfect than hope.

Article 7

Can any genuine virtue exist without charity?

It seems that genuine virtue can exist without charity:

Objection 1: It is proper to a virtue to produce a good act. But those who do not have charity perform certain good acts, e.g., when they clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and do other similar things. Therefore, some genuine virtue can exist without charity.

Objection 2: Charity cannot exist without faith, since it proceeds from “unfeigned faith,” as the Apostle puts it in 1 Timothy 1:5. But genuine chastity can exist in non-believers when they control their sensual desires, and genuine justice can exist in them when they adjudicate correctly. Therefore, genuine virtue can exist without charity.

Objection 3: As is clear from *Ethics* 6, scientific knowledge and art are virtues. But virtues of this sort are found in men who are sinners and do not have charity. Therefore, genuine virtue can exist without charity.

But contrary to this: In 1 Corinthians 13:3 the Apostle says, “If I should distribute all my goods to the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, but not have charity, it profits me nothing.” But genuine virtue profits one greatly—this according to Wisdom 8:7 (“She teaches temperance and justice, prudence and virtue, which are such that men do not have anything more profitable in life”). Therefore, genuine virtue cannot exist without charity.

I respond: As has been explained (*ST* 1-2, q. 55, a. 4), virtue is ordered toward the good. But the good is mainly the end, since the means to the end are called good only in relation to the end. Therefore, just as there are two sorts of end, one ultimate and the other proximate, so, too, there are two sorts of good, one ultimate and the other proximate and particular.

The ultimate and principal end for man is the enjoyment of God—this according to Psalm 72:28 (“It is good for me to adhere to God”). It is toward this end that a man is ordered by charity.

On the other hand, there are two possible kinds of secondary and, as it were, particular ends for man, (a) one of which is genuinely good because in its own right it can be ordered toward the principal good, i.e., toward the ultimate end, and (b) the other of which is an apparent and not genuine good, since it leads one away from the final good.

So, then, it is clear that a genuine virtue, absolutely speaking, is one that orders a man toward his principal good. In the same way, in *Physics* 7 the Philosopher says, “A virtue is a disposition of what is perfect toward what is best.” And so no genuine virtue can exist without charity.

However, if one takes ‘virtue’ as it is used in relation to a particular end, then some virtue can be said to exist without charity, insofar as it is ordered toward a particular good.

Still, if that particular good is an apparent good and not a genuine good, then the sort of virtue which is ordered toward that good will not be genuine virtue, but will instead be a false likeness of a virtue—in the same way that, as Augustine explains in *Contra Julianum*, “In the avaricious it is not the genuine virtue of *prudence* by which they think up different ways to make a profit, and it is not the genuine virtue of *justice* by which, because of their fear of punishment, they judge the property of others not to be worth bothering about, and it is not the genuine virtue of *temperance* by which they restrain their appetite for luxurious things because they are too expensive, and it is not the genuine virtue of *fortitude* by which, as Horace puts it, ‘he braves the sea, he crosses mountains, he goes through fire, in

order to avoid poverty’.”

On the other hand, if the particular good in question is a genuine good, e.g., the preservation of the city or something of that sort, then there will be, to be sure, a genuine virtue, but it will be an incomplete virtue (*virtus imperfecta*) unless it is referred back to the final and complete good.

And this is the sense in which there cannot be any genuine virtue, absolutely speaking, without charity.

Reply to objection 1: There are two possible sorts of act that belong to someone who lacks charity:

One sort accords with his lack of charity in the sense that he does something ordered toward that which makes for a lack of charity. This sort of act is always bad; as Augustine explains in *Contra Julianum* 4, an act that belongs to a non-believer insofar as he is a non-believer is always a sin, even if he clothes the naked, or does anything else of this sort, while ordering it toward the end of his unbelief.

But, as was explained above (q. 10, a. 4 and *ST* 1-2, q. 85, a.2), there can be a second sort of act that (a) belongs to someone who lacks charity not insofar as he lacks charity, but insofar as he possesses some other gift from God—whether faith or hope or even some natural good—and that (b) is not completely corrupted by sin. And in this sense, in the absence of charity there can be an act which is good by its nature—and yet not perfectly good, since it lacks the appropriate ordering toward the ultimate end.

Reply to objection 2: Since the end in practical matters is like the principle in speculative matters, it follows that just as there cannot be genuine scientific knowledge absolutely speaking unless there is a correct estimation of first and indemonstrable principles, so, too, there cannot be genuine justice or genuine chastity absolutely speaking unless there is a proper ordering toward the end, which comes through charity—even if one is correctly situated with respect to everything else.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (*ST* 1-2, q. 56, a. 3) scientific knowledge and art imply by their very nature an ordering toward some particular good and not toward the ultimate end of human life. In this they are unlike the moral virtues, which make a man good absolutely speaking.

Article 8

Is charity the form of the virtues?

It seems that charity is not the form of the virtues:

Objection 1: The form of a real entity is either an exemplary form or an essential form. But charity is not the exemplary form of the other virtues, since in that case the other virtues would have to belong to the same species that charity belongs to. Likewise, it is not the essential form of the other virtues, either, since in that case it would not be distinct from them. Therefore, there is no sense in which charity is the form of the virtues.

Objection 2: Charity is related to the other virtues as their root and foundation—this according to Ephesians 3:17 (“... rooted and grounded in love ...”). But a root or foundation does not have the nature of a form. Rather, it has the nature of matter, which is the first part in an act of generating. Therefore, charity is not the form of the virtues.

Objection 3: As is clear from *Physics* 2, the form and the end and the efficient cause do not coincide in something numerically the same. But charity is called the end and the mother of the virtues. Therefore, it should not be called the form of the virtues.

But contrary to this: Ambrose claims that charity is the form of the virtues.

I respond: In moral matters the form of an act is taken mainly from the end. The reason for this is that the principle of moral acts is the will, whose object and, as it were, form is the end. Now the form of an act always follows upon the form of the agent. Hence, it has to be the case that, in moral matters,

whatever gives the act its ordering toward the end also gives it its form. But it is clear from what has been said (a. 7) that it is through charity that the acts of all the virtues are ordered toward the ultimate end. Accordingly, charity itself gives the form to the acts of all the other virtues. And it is said to be the form of the virtues to the extent that they themselves are called virtues in relation to their informed acts.

Reply to objection 1: Charity is said to be the form of the other virtues neither as their exemplar nor as their essence, but rather as an efficient cause, i.e., insofar as imposes its form on all of them in the way explained above.

Reply to objection 2: Charity is compared to a foundation and root insofar as all the other virtues are sustained and nurtured by it—and not in the sense in which a foundation and root has the nature of a material cause.

Reply to objection 3: Charity is called the end of the other virtues because all the other virtues order one toward its end. And by reason of the fact that the mother is the one who conceives within herself from another, charity is called the mother of all virtues. For from the desire for the end it conceives the acts of the other virtues by commanding them.