New Blackfriars

DOI:10.1111/nbfr.12763

Aquinas on Kinship and *Caritas*

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ABSTRACT

Both within and without the Church, contemporary political discourse is haunted by the question of ethnicity and identity. Many thinkers further have sounded the death knell of the liberal world order, which promised the eventual abolition of ethnic ties and the coalescence of the brotherhood of humanity. At the same time, there is a rising tide of 'ethnonationalism', which (over-) emphasizes the importance of ethnic identity at the expense of recognition of a shared common humanity among all people. Happily, St. Thomas Aquinas presents a remedy in his work, noting the importance of ethnic identity and kinship, which the Angelic doctor places within a wider framework of charity.

Keywords

Aquinas, Politics, Aristotle, Yoram Hazony, Community

As we round the second decade of the 21st century, the questions of identity, ethnicity, and immigration are at the forefront of intellectual discourse both in and outside the Church. Works treating questions of identity and community such as *The Virtue of Nationalism*[1] by the Israeli intellectual Yoram Hazony have complemented the works of Catholic authors such as *First Things* editor, R.R. Reno's *The Return of the Strong Gods*.[2] The general tenor of these works is that nationalism and national identity have once again appeared at the forefront of Western consciousness after an apparent post-World War II mellowing of national identity—especially in continental Europe. However, at the same time, these works have attempted to offset the rise of what has been called 'ethnonationalism' or the excessive

[1] Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

[2] R.R. Reno, *Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism, and the Future of the West* (New York: Regnery, 2019). To round out the 'triple melting pot' of American Religions, see the work on nationalism by the Protestant editor of *National Review*, Rich Lowry's *The Case of Nationalism: How It Made Us Powerful, United, and Free* (Broadside Books, 2019). See also Samuel Goldman's recent *After Nationalism: Being American in an Age of Division* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021).

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preoccupation with human biodiversity and genetics and their relation to social formation. Hozany, Reno, and others, although recognizing with the Catholic thinker Patrick Deneen that political liberalism has largely failed, do not embrace the post-liberal and authoritarian policies of ethnonationalist or what has been called 'dissident' or 'alternative' right wing movements that have sprung up in the digital wastelands of the 21st century.[3] Thus, there is a sort of impasse among religiously informed political thinkers—especially among Catholics—who do not see a way forward for theologically-informed politics in the post-liberal twenty first century. All of these works acknowledge what appears to be the end of liberalism. They further acknowledge the importance of ethnic identity to humans. However, they do not—with the exception of Hazony and Reno—ultimately provide a solid blue print for a robust political order that acknowledges the importance of ethnic identity within a wider harmonious global order.

However, within Catholicism, there is a strong pre-liberal tradition of thought that avoids the pitfalls and excesses of post-liberal authoritarianism and ethnonationalism. One of the critical sources for 21st century Catholic philosophy is the writings of the Universal Doctor of the Catholic Church, St. Thomas Aquinas. Within St. Thomas Aquinas's writings on the theological virtue of charity, drawn from the *Summa Theologiae*, as well as a host of other lesser known works, the Angelic Doctor lays out a vision of community that is attentive to the claims of kinship and community. This vision further simultaneously allows for a transcendence of these natural bonds of family and folk into the realm of a deeper and more lasting sense of human community as perfected in the bonds of love within the Church. As a result, Thomistic thought can provide much needed groundwork for Catholic engagement with the wider global theopolitical discussion. Aquinas recognizes the importance of ethnic identity; however, at the same time, he also emphasizes a community that is broader and more important than the tribe: the Church. Finally, Aquinas, with the aid of later Catholic thinkers such as Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre, emphasizes the limits and tenuousness of earthly life in light of identity. Aquinas's thought thus provides a blue print for a future politics that solves the tension between reactionary ethnocentricism and radical multiculturalism.

Aquinas on Kinship

Throughout his writings on politics and human community, Aquinas makes special note of the bonds shared among humans who share the same, blood, culture, and community. In Question 101 of the Second

[3] See Patrick Deneen's *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

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Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas lays out an explanation of the virtue of piety, which provides a window into his thinking on how human communities are formed and the obligations that humans have for one another. For Aquinas, man is a 'debtor chiefly to his parents and his country, after God', and piety requires one 'to give worship to one's parents and one's country'.[4] This debt is rooted in the 'various benefits' that people receive from their 'parents and country, that have given us birth and nourishment'.[5] Aquinas further argues that the 'worship' (or reverence) 'due to our parents includes the worship given to all our kindred, since kinsfolk are those who descend from the same parents….The worship to our country includes homage to all our fellow-citizens and to all the friends of our country'.[6] The key point here is that Aquinas is not a liberal or postmodern individualist who sees relationships as being predicated upon free choice or volitional contracts. Rather, a human's relationships are ultimately grounded in the bonds of kinship and family. These bonds further form a patchwork of relationships that ultimately form the village and then the province or kingdom.

In his discussion of the various forms of friends in the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas writes of varying communions on which friendships are based, including 'friendship between kinsmen'.[7] The bond of kinship, however, for Aquinas is not simply one of many coequal bonds. Rather, it is the key basis and foundation of human community. Indeed, following the example of Aristotle, Aquinas sees humans as fundamentally being social animals. In his *De regno*, Aquinas writes that 'man must live in a group, because he is not sufficient unto himself to procure the necessities of life were he to remain solitary…'.[8] The bonds of this group, however, are not based in contract or volition, but in the ties of family. In *De regno,* Aquinas lays out a patchwork of social formation beginning with the 'household' or family followed by the city, 'which is the perfect community' and, finally, the 'province' (*provincia*).[9] The family is headed by the father, and the province is ultimately headed by a king who, as Aquinas notes, acts as a father for the wider political community: 'The ruler of a household is called father, not king, although he bears a certain resemblance to the king, for which reason kings are

[4] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1948), II-II, q. 101, a. 1.

[5] *S.T.* II-II, q. 101, a. 1.

[6] *S.T.* II-II, q. 101, a. 1.

[7] *S.T.* II-II, q. 23, a. 5.

[8] St. Thomas Aquinas '*De regno ad regem Cypri*', Trans. Gerald B. Phelan, rev. I. Th. Eschmann O.P. (Toronto: Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949), (2.14).

[9] Aquinas, *De regno*, 2.14.

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sometimes called the fathers of their peoples'.[10] The important point here is that the bonds among a people are (at least often, if not always) articulated in the language of the structure of a family precisely because the wider community envisions itself as one people and a family.

The structure of human social formation follows Aristotle's narrative in his *Politics* of the formation of a *polis*. Although Pasquale Parro argues that St. Thomas's commentary on the *Politics* 'does not permit us to gain a precise picture of his political doctrines, which can perhaps be more easily reconstructed from *De regno* and the *Summa*', Aristotle's philosophical framework in the *Politics* is largely consonant with Aquinas's political vision in *De regno* and the *Summa*.[11] The polis, the Greek philosopher famously writes, begins with 'the union of those who cannot exist without each other; namely of male and female…'.[12] The foundation of human community is marriage in which a male and female join together to produce offspring. From the union of male and female, thus comes the family, 'the association established by nature for the supply of men's everyday wants…'.[13] The family is a natural union of those joined by blood relation who work together collaboratively for a common good. Aquinas thus has a profound recognition of the importance of family in the formation of human identity.

Recent thinkers have echoed Aquinas. As Hazony notes in *The Virtue of Nationalism,* unlike later Enlightenment theorists like John Locke and Hobbes, the Bible itself depicts the family as being the basis of society, not a collective contract or agreement among individuals. Rather than 'polis' or 'province', Hazony uses the term 'nation' to denote 'a number of tribes with a common language or religion, and a past history of acting as a body for the common defense and other large scale enterprises'.[14] In contrast to Hazony's (semi- and unacknowledged) Aristotelian-Thomistic view, the Jewish philosopher notes that John Locke, in his 1689 *Second Treatise*, 'offers a rationalistic view of human political life that has abstracted away every bond that ties human beings to one another than consent. In speaking of 'consent', Locke means that the individual becomes a member of a human collective only because he has agreed to it and has obligations toward such collectives only if he has accepted them'.[15] Hazony's view is that such a vision of human community is unnatural and, ultimately, un-Biblical, for, according to Hazony, 'The Bible systematically promotes the idea

[10] Ibid.

[11] Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, trans. Joseph G. Trabbic and Roger W. Nutt (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 338.

[12] Aristotle, 'Politics', Trans. Benjamin Jowett. *Internet Classics Archive*, 2009, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.html, 1.2.

[13] Aristotle, 'Politics', 1.2.

[14] Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 18.

[15] Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 31.

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that members of a nation should regard one another as "brothers"…'.[16] Hazony's thought, which echoes St. Thomas's own, seems shocking after nearly a century of the triumph of a form of post-World War II liberalism in which citizenship in a nation is emphasized over ethnic ties.

This point is especially critical, for much discussion of St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle has been from a decidedly liberal perspective that used the language of citizenship drawn from Enlightenment political theory. Jacques Maritain, the most famous and influential NeoThomist philosopher of the twentieth century, for example, writes in his 1951 *Man and the State* of the importance of fellow feeling and friendship as being the basis of citizenship.[17] Maritain expresses a similar view in *Christianity and Democracy* (1943), in which, drawing from his mentor, Henri Bergson, Maritain writes, 'it is the urge of a love infinitely stronger than the philanthropy commended by philosophers which caused human devotion to surmount the closed borders of the natural social groups—family group and national group—and extended it to the entire human race, because this love is the life in us of the very love which has created being and because it truly makes of each human being our neighbor'.[18] Maritain's statements, drawn from the largely liberal milieu from which he emerged, echo Biblical and other theological arguments for the universal brotherhood of humankind, but they need greater distinction, which Maritain does, in fact, provide in *Christianity and Democracy*. He notes that his vision of universal human love does not break 'the links of flesh and blood, of self-interest, tradition and pride which are needed by the body politic' nor does such universal love destroy 'the rigorous laws of existence and conservation of this body politic…'.[19] Nevertheless, 'such a love extended to all men transcends, and at the same time transforms from within, the very life of the group and tends to integrate all of humanity into a community of nations and peoples in which men will be reconciled'.[20] There is an uneasy and unresolved tension in Maritain's statements between a reconciliation of the traditional human social bonds of family and community and Maritain's desire for an emerging global community. In his earlier 1936 magnum opus, *Integral Humanism*, Maritain writes of the hopeful emergence, 'assuming the liquidation of the capitalist

[16] Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 18.

[17] Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 10.

[18] Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. Doris C. Anson (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 53-54.

[19] Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, 54.

[20] Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, 54.

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regime', of 'the natural association of *collaborators* in one work',[21] This collaborative effort would then transcend the bonds of kinship (and, it appears, even faith and baptism). Maritain's view is largely informed by the (anticipated) triumph of liberal democracy during the post-World War II era in which earlier political forms human community largely had been dismissed due to the taint of racialism found in Nazism and fascism. Moreover, Maritain himself would later play a key role in the crafting the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[22] However, the notion of a kin-based political community antedates the brutal and evil totalitarian movements of the twentieth century and, in fact, provides the basis of both Thomistic and Aristotelian political thought.

In his *Politics*, Aristotle further notes that the family forms what he terms a village. Although twentieth century thinkers such as Eric Voegelin have argued that Christianity made the Greek notion of the *polis* obsolete (even though Voegelin described his own method as 'Aristotelian'), there is little question of the effect of Aristotle's thought on Thomas Aquinas.[23] The Greek philosopher explains, 'But when several families are united, and the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs, the first society to be formed is the village. And the most natural form of the village appears to be that of a colony from the family, composed of the children and grandchildren…'.[24] The village, then, like Aquinas's 'city', is an extended family joined together by marriage and kinship. Aristotle notes that not all villages are necessarily formed in this manner, but those villages that are most 'natural' are formed by the welding together of families. Indeed, the great student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great notes that this unification would produce a situation in which the colonies would all share the 'same blood'.[25] There is then an emphasis in Aristotle on the 'naturalness' of a community that is grounded in familial bonds.[26] Reason follows the directives of nature, which indicate that the village is ultimately rooted in the family, which itself has marriage as its foundation.

[21] Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism, Freedom in the Modern World, and A Letter on Independence*, ed. Otto Bird, trans. Otto Bird, Joseph Evans, and Richard O'Sullivan, K.C. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 279.

[22] See Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2002).

[23] See Jacqueline Pfeffer Merrill's discussion in 'Voegelin on Aristotle's "Science of the Polis"', *Political Science Reviewer* 41, no. 1 (2017): 52-74.

[24] Aristotle, 'Politics', 1.2.

[25] Aristotle, 'Politics', 1.2.

[26] Discussing Aquinas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, Pasquale Porro notes that nature is 'a model for art and predisposes its principles', and human reason 'must bring to completion what nature suggests to it…'. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 337. Reason, Porro further argues, aims at ordering human beings 'insofar as they permit themselves to be directed and governed by reason', 377.

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The village, however, is not the ideal community. Rather, the ideal community is the *polis* or 'state'. Aristotle explains, 'When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life'.[27] It is unclear here if there is a shared bond of kinship among all of the members of the state. As José Luis Cendejas Bueno notes, for Aristotle the work of the household or *oikonomia* is integrated by the 'natural result of virtuous personal action and an ideal of a good social order'.[28] Moreover, as Cendejas Bueno further argues, '[i]t's natural character makes this order both a positive and a normative reality'.[29] Thus, what we seem to have is, like Aquinas's province, a patchwork of ethnic blocks that are united together for the sake of the good life and human flourishing—a situation not unlike some American cities during the early twentieth century in which various ethnic communities formed one largely polis. Here, the naturalness of the state seems to be based not so much on kinship, but on the teological fitness of the state. Aristotle writes that 'if the earlier forms of society are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end'.[30] The state is natural, for Aristotle, because it provides the human being the ability to realize his or her potential, for, as Aristotle concludes, 'it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal'.[31] Thus, for Aristotle, human formation is rooted in marriage, which, in turn, leads to the formation of families, who likewise unite together in the formation of villages. At these early stages of social formation, the naturalness of the human community is rooted in the bonds of kinship. However, a village is an incomplete human community. In order for the human being to reach his or her end, villages must yoke together in a state, which transcends (but not abolishes) the ties of kinship. Some recent scholars have attempted to shift discussion of Aristotle's politics back into Aristotle's own historical milieu.[32] Other thinkers emphasized the relevance of Aristotle to

[27] Aristotle, 'Politics', 1.2.

[28] José Luis Cendejas Bueno, 'Economics, chrematistics, *oikos* and *polis* in Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas', *The Journal of Philosophical Economics: Reflections on Economic and Social Issues* 10, no. 2 (2017): 5-46, 8.

[29] Cendejas Bueno, 'Economics, chrematistics, *oikos* and *polis* in Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas', 8.

[30] Aristotle, 'Politics', 1.2.

[31] Aristotle, 'Politics', 1.2.

[32] Richard Mulgan, 'Was Aristotle an "Aristotelian Social Democrat?"', *Ethics* 111 (2000): 79–101. Eugene Garver *Aristotle's Politics: Living Well and Living Together* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); and Adriel M. Trott, *Aristotle on the Nature of Community*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

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contemporary political debate.[33] Indeed, it may be possible to combine both methods. Nonetheless, this Aristotelian foundation serves as the bedrock of Aquinas's understanding of human social formation. It even guides Aquinas's development of the order of charity.

Aquinas on Charity and Kinship

Throughout the later twentieth and early twenty-first century, much if not most of Catholic thought has presented a radically universal message of charity without distinction or gradation. However, even in his discussion of charity, Aquinas argues that preference should be given in the order of charity to kinsmen. Arguing that '[g]race and virtue imitate the order of nature, which is established by Divine wisdom', Aquinas states that 'every natural agent pours forth its activity first and most of all on the things which are nearest to it…'.[34] As a result, 'we ought to be most beneficent towards those who are most closely connected with us'.[35] However, Aquinas further clarifies that kinship is not the only 'connection' shared among humans; there are other 'connections', including that 'intercourse' of 'fellow-citizens…in civic matters' as well as 'of the faithful…in spiritual matters…'.[36] Nonetheless, in all of these matters, 'we ought to preference to bestow on each on such benefits as pertain to the matter in which, speaking simply, he is most closely connected with us'.[37] This principle, however, is qualified by 'various requirements of time, place, or matter in hand', for there are, Aquinas argues, situations in which a person should 'succor a stranger, in extreme necessity, rather than one's own father, if he is not in such urgent need'.[38] This qualification may give some credence to Stephen Pope's comment that Aquinas did not 'view the order of charity as a simple system of con-centric circles…in which family and members of one's own household come first, next close friends, neighbors and associates and finally others in an outwardly radiating gradation of various relations to the self'.[39] Rather, according to Pope,

[33] See, for example, Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice and Conflict in Aristotelian Political Thought* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), as well as Fred D. Miller, *Nature, Rights and Justice in Aristotle's Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Andrés Rosler, *Political Authority and Obligation in Aristotle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); and Martha Nussbaum, 'Aristotelian Social Democracy' in *Liberalism and the Good*, ed. Gerald Mara, Henry S. Richardson, and R. Bruce Douglass (New York: Routledge, 1990), 203–52.

[34] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, a. 3.

[35] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, q. 3.

[36] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, a. 3.

[37] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, a. 3.

[38] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, a. 3.

[39] Stephen Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love.* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 64.

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Aquinas's 'interpretation of the order of charity recognizes the importance of different spheres of life and acknowledged the need for different schemes of priority, depending on the various matters that are the basis of the different connections people share'.[40] However, as we have seen, Aquinas does give priority to kinship in the order of charity while, at the same time, recognizing the demands of charity to love all men and women. It is precisely this twofold character of charity within the realm of political discussion that makes Aquinas's thought so fertile to contemporary discussion of identity and community within a global context.

Those bond together in a polity and focused on a shared common good are bond together in shared form.[41] In Question 8 of the First Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas himself explains that likeness is 'properly speaking…a cause of love'.[42] One kind of likeness, Aquinas explains, 'arising from each thing having the same quality actually…'.[43] Curiously, Aquinas gives the example of 'whiteness', noting that this kind of likeness 'causes love of friendship or well-being. For the very fact that two men are alike, having, as it were, one form, makes them to be, in a manner, one in that form: thus two men are one things in the species of humanity, and two white men are one thing in whiteness. Hence the affections of one tend to the other, as being one with him; and he wishes good to him as to himself'.[44] This oft forgotten passage is especially rich, for it points to the 'patchwork' understanding of kinship in Aquinas in which there is a concentric order of loves radiating through ones immediate kinfolk and extending to all of humanity. This passage is especially apropos to the current 'post-populist' political milieu in which the extremes of nationalism (and even a cruel form of 'ethnonationalism') and a deracinated globalism clash. For Aquinas, one naturally has a close bond with his or her community and family, but he or she also is, at the same time, connected together with all of humanity as being part of shared species.[45] Humans as humans share a common form, and French as

[40] Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love*, 64.

[41] As Br. Raphael Joshua Christianson OP explains in a recent article, in the thought of Aquinas 'even before becoming friends, individuals must pursue some similar good, which means they must each have some likeness or similar form directing them to that good'. Raphael Joshua Christianson OP, 'A Thomistic Model of Friendship with God as Deification', *New Blackfriars* 100, no. 1089 (2019): 509-525, 513.

[42] *S.T.* I–II, q. 27, a.3.

[43] *S.T.* I–II, q. 27, a.3.

[44] *S.T.* I–II, q. 27, a.3.

[45] As Br. Raphael further explains, friendship, further strengthens the bonds the natural and formal human bonds: 'For two individuals to share one form means those two individuals have some common organizing principle directing them to perceive certain ends or activities as good and so to engage in those activities. Prior to friendship, they each possess some similar form or organizing principle leading them to delight in certain activities. When they

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French share a common form (and Parisians as Parisians). This form is further strengthened and 'reinforced' by friendship and collaborative labor toward a common good. However, this shared formal relationship and friendship is further strengthened by a charity, which itself, in the thought of Aquinas, follows an order.

The order of charity is, however, not merely restricted to kinship and friends. In his discussion of the order of charity, Aquinas emphasizes the importance of directing charity toward those who are closer to God than others. Aquinas explains, 'we ought to give alms to one who is much holier and in greater want, and to one who is more useful to the common weal, rather than to one who is more closely united to us, especially if the latter be not very closely united, and has no special claim on our care then and there, and who is not in very urgent need'.[46] Kinship is the not the only concern for Aquinas. If one is of greater importance to one's community, then he or she is more deserving of charity. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, one is more deserving of charity if he or she is closer to God and holier. This notion that a holier person is more deserving of charity is especially important to Aquinas's discussion of the order of charity in heaven.

Aquinas explains that the order of charity will endure in heaven; however, it will be transformed. In heaven, one will, of course, love God above all things. One will also love 'better men more than himself…'.[47] It further appears that Aquinas held the order of charity that takes account of kinship will be dissolved and perfected in heaven, and 'a man will simply love those who are better, according to the love of charity'.[48] Aquinas explains, 'Because the entire life of the blessed consists in directing their minds to God, wherefore the entire ordering of their love will be ruled with respect to God, so that each one will love more and reckon to be nearer to himself those who are nearer to God'.[49] In heaven everyone will be directed to God, and the entirety of glorified human existence will be governed by the love of God. Due to manifold and continent nature of earthly life, humans relied on family and kin to survive; however, in heaven this will no longer be the case as St. Thomas explains, 'For then one man will no longer succor another, as he needs to in the present life, wherein each man has to succor those who are closely connected with him rather than those who are not, no matter what be the nature of their distress: hence it is that in this life, a man, by the inclination of charity, loves more those

enter into friendship, that organizing principle and the delight they receive in those activities can be reinforced'. Christianson, 'A Thomistic Model of Friendship with God as Deification', 514.

[46] *S.T.* II-II, q. 32, a. 3.

[47] *S.T.* II-II, q. 26, a. 13.

[48] *S.T.* II-II, q. 26, a. 13.

[49] *S.T.* II-II, q. 26, a. 13.

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who are more closely united to him, for he is under a greater obligation to bestow on them the effect of charity'.[50] This passage provides an interesting explanation of the relationship between kinship and the order of charity on earth, which here is rooted in a sense of mutual cooperation and obligation among family and kin. If we read this passage with Aquinas's discussion of the shared form among ones family and kin, we see that this obligation is ultimately rooted in a real formal relationship and is not merely the result of the practical necessity for cooperation. Indeed, Aquinas further explains in Question 26 of the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa* that in heaven a human will 'love in several ways one who is connected with him, since the causes of virtuous love will not be banished from the mind of the blessed'.[51] There will seemingly still remain bonds among family and friends, yet, as Aquinas explains, 'all these reasons are incomparably surpassed by that which is taken from nighness to God'.[52] The centrality of God in the order of charity is thus one of the biggest challenges in Catholic political discourse in a multipolar and seemingly infinitely diverse world that is as much online as it living in the physical and enfleshed 'desert of the real'.

Aquinas on *Caritas*

One of the key points that distinguishes Aquinas's thought from secular writers or Christian thinkers writing to a secular audience is the Angelic doctor's emphasis on charity. Charity is essential to Aquinas's ethics, and for Aquinas 'love for God granted by God himself is the very center of the Christian faith, the source of its perfection'.[53] In fact, as the Angelic Doctor argues, charity is the 'most excellent of virtues', for 'charity attains God Himself that it may rest in Him…', making 'charity… more excellent than faith or hope, and, consequently, than all the other virtues…'.[54] Charity, in as much as it 'attains God most', serves as a 'due rule', which regulates human acts.[55] Aquinas further states that charity is 'the form of virtues', for charity 'directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end…'.[56] Moreover, St.

[50] *S.T.* II-II, q. 26, a. 13.
[51] *S.T.* II-II, q. 26, a. 13.
[52] *S.T.* II-II, q. 26, a. 13.
[53] Roberto Di Ceglie, 'Faith, reason, and charity in Thomas Aquinas's thought', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79 (2016): 133-146, 140.
[54] *S.T.* II-II, q. 23, a. 6.
[55] *S.T.* II-II, q. 23, a. 6.
[56] *S.T.* II-II, q. 23, a. 8. As Robert Miner explains, 'Charity is not so much the form in the standard sense as it is a formative power. It "gives" form to the other virtues by ordering their acts and ends to the *finis ultimus*, the "enjoyment of God" (*Dei fruition*)', Robert Miner, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Dialogue on Love and Charity', *New Blackfriars* 95, no. 1059 (2014): 504-524, 512.

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Thomas Aquinas argues that since charity orders an act 'to the final and perfect good', which is God, 'no strictly true virtue is possible without charity'.[57] Many have noted the importance of charity to Aquinas's ethics. Meghan J. Clark argues that Aquinas 'separates the infused and acquired virtues by carefully delineating an action's relationship to a proximate end and the final end. Insofar as an action is directed to the final end, one cannot have virtue without charity because charity is what unites us with God. However, in relation to the proximate end, it is possible to have virtue without charity'.[58] On the other hand, few have taken note of its importance to Aquinas's political theory. However, charity provides an essential ingredient to Aquinas's political theory that can be utilized in contemporary discussions of globalization—precisely because of the universal scope of charity.

Aquinas argues that charity, and especially beneficence, should be directed toward all humans, but should be regulated 'according as time and place require: because all acts of virtue must be modified with a view to their due circumstances'.[59] Aquinas further explains in his reply to Objection 1 in the same question that

> Absolutely speaking it is impossible to do good to every single one: yet it is true of each individual that one may be bound to do good to him in some particular case. Hence charity binds us, though not actually doing good to someone, to be prepared in mind to do good to anyone if we have time to spare. There is however a good that we can do to all, if not to each individual, at least to all in general, as when we pray for all, for unbelievers as well as for the faithful.[60]

This point is key, for in it we see that, contrary to Platonic and Aristotelian political theory, Christian charity considers the common humanity of all men and women.[61] Thus, while Aquinas's notion of charity gives priority to kin as well as those part of the household of faith, it nonetheless should be extended to all humans in as much as one is able to do so. As a result, the Thomistic vision of charity, which takes account of the importance of kinship, can serve as a grounding for Christian theopolitical discussion. Aquinas's starting point is charity, not economic interest or the chauvinism found in many political theories-especially those that emphasize the importance of ethnic identity to humans. Moreover, the eschatological nature of Christian charity strengthens rather than diminishes the power of charity in the political realm.

[57] *S.T.* II-II, q. 23, a. 7.

[58] Meghan J. Clark, 'Love of God and Neighbor: Living Charity in Aquinas's Ethics', *New Blackfriars* 92, no. 1040 (2011), 415-430, 417.

[59] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, a. 2.

[60] *S.T.* II-II, q. 31, a. 2.

[61] As Meghan Clark argues, ''…Aquinas is clear that charity extends to one's neighbors, by which he means the entire human community', Clark, 'Love of God and Neighbor', 418.

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The Eschatological and Metaphysical Ends of *Caritas*

One of the principle criticisms of Christianity in the post-Christian age is that it is too preoccupied with the afterlife. Indeed, Marx's criticism of the concept of 'false consciousness' is predicated on the notion that many 19th century European proletariats were still enmeshed in Christianity and thought that their suffering would be rewarded in the afterlife. However, Aquinas's eschatological vision does not abandon the earthly political realm but rather undergirds and strengthens it. Taking note of the primacy of charity for human action, Aquinas explains that 'end of the spiritual life is that man be united to God, and this union is effected by charity, while all things pertaining to the spiritual life are ordained to this union, as to their end'.[62] Indeed, all virtue is subsistent charity, which is, for Aquinas, 'the greatest precept', for charity prepares man, so 'he may love God'.[63] Aquinas explains that the virtue of charity will only be perfected in heaven where will be 'entirely united' to God, although, Aquinas notes, charity is 'imperfectly' fulfilled 'on the way' to heaven.[64] Charity, therefore, is the end and goal of human action, which finds its perfection in heaven. The *raison d'être* of charity for Aquinas is love of God. Aquinas explains that there are two precepts of charity: 'one whereby we are induced to love God as our end, and another whereby we are led to love our neighbor for God's sake, as for the sake of our end'.[65] Aquinas further explains, '…God is to be loved as the last end…'.[66] As Meghan Clark argues, 'The extent to which a human person is capable of friendship with God depends solely upon the infused virtues and does not depend on the natural capacity of an individual'.[67]

Christian action in the world then is animated by charity, and Christians are invited to what Fr. Gilles Emery, O.P. calls an 'adopted sonship', which, as Fr. Emery explains, is a 're-generation, a new birth and a recreation: it reforms God's created human children by raising their sonship to a higher degree of participation'.[68] As Fr. Emery notes, this adopted sonship is obtained by 'the fruits of grace' and is part of an 'ecclesial', not necessarily political communion.[69] This point is critical to our discussion because most Catholic scholars who treat the problems of populism and globalism do so within the context of a religiously and

[62] *S.T.* II-II, q. 44, a. 1.
[63] *S.T.* II-II, q. 44, a. 1.
[64] S.T. II-II, q. 44, a. 6.
[65] *S.T.* II-II, q. 44, a. 3.
[66] *S.T.* II-II, q. 44, a. 4.
[67] Clark, 'Love of God and Neighbor', 417.
[68] Fr. Gilles Emery, OP, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 207.
[69] Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 207.

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ethnically diverse (post-)liberal society. As a result, many if not most of the body politic are not members of the Church and are not united by the bonds of charity. Moreover, 'integralism' or the 'confessional' state is not a feasible option due to the immediate political circumstances of the twenty first century. Nonetheless, several twentieth century philosophers and theologians have presented a methodical approach in which Christendom can be restored brick by brick. In an interesting twist on Thomistic theopolitics, this approach of the leavening of society posits individual Christians as well as Christian families animated by charity under the lordship of Christ the King and His Sacred Heart as the building blocks of a future Christian society.

Human friendship and community, moreover, is, in the thought of Aquinas, inferior to friendship with God, which itself takes the form a deification of the human person. As Aquinas explains in his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* that humans are 'made God-like by charity' and are further thus made 'above mere men'.[70] Thus, despite the importance of family, kinship, nation, and friendship, it is only through charity that the human person can become perfected: 'The perfect vision of human friendship is founded upon virtue and seeking the ultimate good. Any genuine virtue must be infused by God, the ultimate Good. Such infusion occurs through theological friendship'.[71] This is the key missing element in contemporary political discourse—even discourse among Catholics—the emphasis on charity as the most profound solvent in human and broader political relationships. Drawing from Enlightenment notions of fraternity, much of contemporary discourse among Catholics focuses on virtue, (social) justice, and liberty while ignoring the important (perhaps even essential) element of charity in Thomistic conceptions of not only friendship, but politics. However, at the same time, within the current geopolitical milieu in which the entire world is interconnected in digital as well as physical space, the construction of a Christian order is a difficult task.

Short of a radical readjustment of society, one of the primary effects Christian charity and witness can have in a liberal and now postliberal society is what NeoThomist Jacques Maritain in his *Integral Humanism* called a 'leavening effect' in society. Maritain embraced liberal democracy as a positive good and supported the mid twentieth century seeming abandonment of the confessional state by many in

[70] Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity: Readings from the* Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, trans. Peter A. Kwasniewski, Thomas Bolin (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), In III SENT. d. 27, q. 2, a. 1. Br. Raphael Joshua Christianson argues that charity further ultimately leads to true peace and concord with God: 'Such concord and peace occur within charity-friendship, meaning that the human person's intended state is to have friendship with God. Friendship with God implies deification, meaning the human person's intended state is to be deiform', Christianson, 'A Thomistic Model of Friendship', 523.

[71] Christianson, 'A Thomistic Model of Friendship', 524.

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the Catholic Church; indeed, in his *Man and the State*, Maritain wrote that democracy 'is the only way of bringing about a moral rationalization of politics…'.[72] However, such an endorsement of liberalism, democracy, or liberal democracy is not necessary. One can still hold to the Catholic doctrine of the social reign of Christ the King as a just political ideal while recognizing the proximate feasibility of the leavening effect in the post-liberal world order. Pope Pius XI's encyclical on Christ the King, *Quas Primas*, was written in the twentieth century, just forty years before the Second Vatican Council. In his encyclical, the Holy Father argues that 'rulers and princes are bound to give public honor and obedience to Christ'.[73] Pius further argues that if 'the rulers of nations wish to preserve their authority, to promote and increase the prosperity of their countries, they will not neglect the public duty of reverence and obedience to the rule of Christ'.[74] The Holy Father further explains that Christ must become king of the hearts of men:

> He must reign in our minds, which should assent with perfect submission and firm belief to revealed truths and to the doctrines of Christ. He must reign in our wills, which should obey the laws and precepts of God. He must reign in our hearts, which should spurn natural desires and love God above all things, and cleave to him alone. He must reign in our bodies and in our members, which should serve as instruments for the interior sanctification of our souls…[75]

The reign of Christ in the hearts of humans is accomplished through charity, in interesting, the reign of Christ with families was popularized by Fr. Mateo Crawley-Boevey in the early twentieth century. Again, building blocks of the social order are Christian families, and the Lordship of Christ the King over the Christian family has been particularly emphasized over the past two hundred years, in effect, complimenting St. Thomas Aquinas's own theopolitical vision. With the collapse of the confessional state as an immediate feasible goal, this emphasis on interior conversion and the enthronement of Christ as king of Christian hearts, has been taken up as the proper springboard for evangelization.

As a result, for many in the twenty-first century, Maritain's notion of the 'leavening effect' of Christians in society seems a just and feasible option—even recent popes have advocated this approach. In a November 28, 2012 General Audience, Pope Benedict has reiterated such a view of the role as Christians as leaven in the world, arguing that Christians must 'bring to the men and women of our time: not an abstract God, a hypothesis, but a real God, a God who exists, who

[72] Maritain, *Man and the State*, 59.

[73] Pope Pius XI, '*Quas Primas*', *The Holy See*, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_11121925_quas-primas.html

[74] Pius XI, '*Quas Primas*'.

[75] Piux XI, '*Quas Primas*'.

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has entered history and is present in history; the God of Jesus Christ as an answer to the fundamental question of the meaning of life and of how we should live'.[76] Christians must, the Holy Father writes, follow 'God's method…of humility', which was 'brought about through the Incarnation in the simple house of Nazareth; through the Grotto of Bethlehem; through the Parable of the Mustard Seed'.[77] Pope Benedict concludes that Christians 'must not fear the humility of taking little steps, but trust in the leaven that penetrates the dough and slowly causes it to rise (cf. Mt 13:33)'.[78] Certainly such humility is the foundation of the Christian spiritual life. However, as Bishop Marc Aillet of Bayonne France has stated, 'Today is no longer the time for anonymous Christianity, for leaven in the dough; what is urgently needed is to propose the faith explicitly'.[79] Thus, leavening must be accomplished through vocal efforts at evangelization, which themselves, as St. Thomas has noted, must be guided by charity. Finally, such leavening should accompany the creation of a truly Christian social order that takes account of the importance of family and kinship as the building blocks of society.

Thus, a Thomistic vision (complemented by the work of contemporary philosophers and theologians) of a global community patched together from tribes and villages that takes into account the importance of kinship will further responds to one of the key flaws in Yoram Hazony's *The Virtue of Nationalism*. In his work, Hazony does not simply argue for a collection of diverse cultures and peoples. He seems to argue for an ultimate 'live and let live' philosophical relativism. Hazony writes of the need for a global system of 'national freedom, which permits each nation to develop its own unique purposes, traditions, and institutions that may be tested through painstaking trial and error over the centuries'.[80] Hazony, however, qualifies his statement: 'This conception of the need for a diversity of nations, each pursuing the truth according to its own understanding, is not intended to deny that there are principles of government and morals that are best'.[81] However, for

[76] Pope Benedict XVI, 'General Audience: Paul VI Audience Hall, Wednesday, 28 November 2012', *The Holy See*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20121128.html For further treatment, see Emery de Gaál and Matthew Levering, eds. *Joseph Ratzinger and the Healing of Reformation-Era Divisions* (The image of Christians as leaven of the world can be traced to St. John Chrysostom; see Fr. Maximillian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007), 100.

[77] Benedict XVI, 'General Audience'.

[78] Benedict XVI, 'General Audience'.

[79] Bishop Marc Aillet, 'The Sacred Liturgy and the New Communities', in *Sacred Liturgy: The Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*, edited by Alcuin Reed (Ignatius: San Francisco, 2014), 163-182, 166.

[80] Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 129.

[81] Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 129.

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Yazony, this truth must be obtained through reason and experience, and it 'is only through the many national experiments that we can learn, over historical time, what is in fact best'.[82] For Aquinas what is truly best is found through not reason, but ultimately revelation, and what is truly best is God who is ultimately reached through the gift of charity. For Aquinas charity is the foundation of ethics and charity limits and tames ethnic chauvinism while offering a way in which the various diverse peoples of the world can cohere.

It is difficult, indeed, however, to argue for a restoration of Christian charity in a Western world that is largely secularized. Another Catholic philosopher, Charles Taylor, has argued in his famous 'The Politics of Recognition' for a third way between radical multiculturalism and ethnocentric triumphalism. Taylor argues that '[t]here must be some midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other'.[83] However, Taylor does not necessarily provide a suitable answer to the quandary. Taylor argues for a 'comparative culture study of the kind that must displace our horizons in the resulting fusions'.[84] This cultural study, on the other hand, has not readily appeared yet (Taylor was writing in the 90s), and he thus argues for 'an admission that we are very far away from that ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of different cultures might be evident'.[85] Taylor argues for comparative analysis of culture, but he was not able to provide the solution to the tension between multiculturalism and ethnocentricism.

Another contemporary Catholic philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, likewise tackles the tension between ethnocentric posturing and multiculturalism in his essay 'Colors, cultures, and practices'. In this essay, which begins with a discussion of Wittgenstein's analysis of color, MacIntyre argues that a noble culture recognizes its own shortfalls and limits and is willing to change and adapt. He writes, 'It is perhaps in the capacity to recognize the poverties and defects of one's own culture and to move, so far as is possible, towards remedying it, without in the process of discarding that culture in its integrity, that the greatness of a social and cultural order is shown'.[86] While arguing against radical multiculturism, MacIntyre suggests that a great culture is defined by its ability to adapt, and this ability to adapt ultimately comes from the humility of a culture. Like Charles Taylor, MacIntyre does not provide

[82] Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 130.

[83] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 72.

[84] Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 73.

[85] Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 73.

[86] Alasdair Macintyre, *the Tasks of Philosophy, Selected Essays, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 50.

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a necessary solution to the contemporary quandary, but he, like Taylor, provides a hermeneutics of generosity and openness, which combined with Aquinas's notion of charity, can provide a gesture toward a future global community in which the bounds of unity and diversity are defined by love and justice as opposed to hatred and violence.

Conclusion

One of the most difficult elements of shaping a Catholic politics for the twenty-first century is the reality that our interconnected 'post-millennial' diverse and multicultural world is quickly being overwhelmed by a rising tide of tribalism. Catholic and other religious scholars such as R.R. Reno, Patrick Deneen, and Yoram Hazony have attempted to tame this tribalism while, at the same time, affirming the importance of shared kinship, culture and values among a host of disparate peoples. The writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Universal Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, can serve as an important addition to this conversation and can, in fact, serve as the grounding for Catholic theopolitics. Drawing from the work of Aristotle as well as what G.K. Chesterton called the 'common sense' of Aquinas's own lived medieval experience and philosophical reflection, St. Thomas emphasizes the importance of kinship as the foundation of the political community. At the same time, Aquinas underscores charity as the core impetus of the spiritual life and the true bond among Christians. However, even charity has an order that takes account of the priority of kinship. Yet, in the end, Aquinas's political thought is undergirded by an eschatological vision that prioritizes love of God and the communion of saints or *communio sanctorum* over tribal connections. While the bonds of charity are formed within the Church, charity further requires benevolence and love of the other as a human and potential member of the Church. Charity is thus the principal way that Catholics can be, as Jacques Maritain and Pope Benedict XVI after him argued, active, engaged, vocal, and ultimately charitable leaven for the world.

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